



New Testament Student Manual

New Testament Student Manual

Religion 211–212

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Introduction to the Student Manual

Religion 211–212 is designed to help you understand the New Testament both as a collection of ancient scripture and as a source of truths that can guide and bless your life today. Studying the New Testament and applying its truths will give you the opportunity to come to know the Savior in a personal and powerful way. Upon completing these two courses, we hope you will want to proclaim, as Peter did, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16), or to testify as John the Beloved did, “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true” (1 John 5:20).

Religion 211 is designed as a one-semester course focused on the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. This course deals with accounts of Jesus Christ’s life and His teachings, Atonement, and Resurrection. Religion 212 is a one-semester course focused on the books of Acts through Revelation. This course deals with the growth and challenges of the early Christian Church and describes the Savior’s continuing guidance of His Church through the ministry of the Holy Ghost and the Apostles.

Purpose of This Manual

The basic text for Religion 211–212 is the New Testament. This student manual can assist you as you study the books of the New Testament and the doctrines and principles they teach. This manual is not designed to replace your reading of the scriptures, nor can it substitute for the inspired guidance of the Holy Ghost. However, it can be a great help to you as you combine your study with humble prayer and pondering. This manual provides information on the context (the cultural and historical circumstances) of the New Testament passages and provides inspired interpretive help for some passages.

How This Manual Is Organized

The 27 books that make up the New Testament are studied in sequential order in this manual. (*Note:* To study the New Testament as a harmony—meaning studying the life and ministry of Jesus Christ chronologically, referring to all four Gospels in the process—refer to the chart in the Bible appendix titled “Harmony of the Gospels.”)

Each chapter of this *New Testament Student Manual* has four parts: Introduction and Timeline; Commentary, which includes study questions; Points to Ponder; and Suggested Assignments.

Introduction and Timeline

Each chapter begins with a brief introduction of the block of scripture covered in that chapter. The introduction provides a brief summary of the content within each student manual chapter that will help you focus on the central topics found in the block of scripture covered in the chapter.

The timeline and the accompanying map give you a general idea of when and where the events contained in each chapter of this manual took place.

Commentary

At the beginning of the commentary for each of the books in the New Testament, you will find an introduction with helpful information regarding the context and historical setting of the book. These book introductions answer several questions: Why study this book? Who wrote this book? When and where was it written? To whom was it written and why? And what are some distinctive features of this book?

Material in this section will help you understand the historical and cultural background of the world in which Jesus Christ and His Apostles lived and ministered and will provide occasional linguistic and literary insights into the text of the New Testament. In addition, teachings of modern-day prophets and apostles and other Church leaders will provide doctrinal and interpretive commentary and will clarify important as well as difficult scripture passages. In selecting prophetic commentary for this manual, several criteria were considered: statements made by prophets and apostles were given priority over statements made by other General Authorities and leaders of the Church; recent statements were generally selected over equally pertinent statements made by earlier Church leaders; and commentary was sought that directly related to a scripture passage and helped to explain its content. As you carefully study and ponder this commentary in connection with your study of the New Testament, the promptings of the Holy Ghost will deepen your understanding of the gospel and your testimony of Jesus Christ. You are encouraged to keep the other standard works nearby while you study the New Testament—oftentimes, other volumes of scripture provide the best inspired commentary on the New Testament.

Throughout the commentary section, you will find study questions in boxes like the one below. These questions will help you search and understand selected scripture passages and in some instances consider how to apply the passages in your life.

Matthew 19:20–29

What is the difference between Peter’s commitment to follow the Savior and the rich young man’s commitment? How do the rich young man’s possessions compare to what the Lord promised Peter?

Points to Ponder

The Points to Ponder section will help you reflect on the importance of what you have studied in the scriptures and consider ways to apply the doctrines and principles you have learned. As you ponder the questions asked, the Holy Ghost may increase your understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ or prompt you to improve your life as a disciple of Jesus Christ. **President Russell M. Nelson** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “As you ponder and pray about doctrinal principles, the Holy Ghost will speak to your mind and your heart [see D&C 8:2]. From events portrayed in the scriptures, new insights will come and principles relevant to your situation will distill upon your heart” (“Living by Scriptural Guidance,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 18).

Suggested Assignments

At the conclusion of each chapter are assignments that encourage personal application. Your teacher may invite you to do some of these assignments in class or on your own. You may also choose to do these assignments on your

own to enhance your learning experience. Taking time to complete these assignments will help the truths of the New Testament become a part of your life.

As you consider whether to do some or all of the suggested assignments, keep in mind these words by **Elder David A. Bednar** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “A learner exercising agency by acting in accordance with correct principles opens his or her heart to the Holy Ghost—and invites His teaching, testifying power, and confirming witness. Learning by faith requires spiritual, mental, and physical exertion and not just passive reception. It is in the sincerity and consistency of our faith-inspired action that we indicate to our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, our willingness to learn and receive instruction from the Holy Ghost” (“Seek Learning by Faith” [evening with Elder David A. Bednar, Feb. 3, 2006], 3).

As you study the New Testament, you may wish to use a study journal or notebook to record questions, thoughts, goals, and spiritual impressions. **Elder Richard G. Scott** (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “It is through the repeated process of feeling impressions, recording them, and obeying them that one learns to depend on the direction of the Spirit” (“Helping Others to Be Spiritually Led” [Church Educational System Symposium on the Doctrine and Covenants and Church History, Aug. 11, 1998], 3).

Information for Those with Disabilities

Alternate formats of this student manual may be available at institute.lds.org. If you have difficulty using this manual because of a disability, please contact your instructor for additional resources.



Dome of the Rock in modern Jerusalem, by Timothy L. Taggart

Introduction to the New Testament

Introduction and Timeline

The New Testament consists of 27 separate books, written mainly, though not exclusively, by Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. These books teach and testify of the ministry and Atonement of Jesus Christ and the rise of the early Christian Church. The Bible—the Old and New Testaments—has influenced more people than any other book ever written. Elder L. Tom Perry (1922–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated that the New Testament “is the centerpiece of scriptural history, just as the Savior Himself should be the centerpiece of our lives. We must commit ourselves to study it and treasure it!” (“The Sabbath and the Sacrament,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2011, 6).

This chapter contains a brief overview of the historical period between the Old and New Testaments, a short summary of the contents of the four Gospels with emphasis on the final week of the Savior’s mortal life, a brief history of how the New Testament came to be, information about the Joseph Smith Translation, and statements on the importance of the New Testament for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its members.



1. Return of Jewish captives from Babylon to Jerusalem (about 530 B.C.)
2. Book of Malachi written (about 430 B.C.)
3. Maccabean revolt (167–163 B.C.)
4. Roman period (63 B.C. onward)
5. Life of Jesus Christ
6. Canonization of the New Testament (A.D. 100–400)

Commentary

The Intertestamental Period

Knowing some of the main historical events between the end of the Old Testament era and the beginning of the New Testament era helps us better understand the people and circumstances we encounter as we begin to read the New Testament. The time period between the testaments can be divided into the Persian, Hellenistic, Hasmonean, and Roman periods.

Persian period. Around 539 B.C., Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon and permitted Jews who had been brought there as captives between 606 and 586 B.C. to return to Judea (see Ezra 1; Bible Dictionary, “Cyrus,” “Persia”). The Jews who chose to return brought the Aramaic language with them from Babylon, and by New Testament times it had replaced Hebrew as the spoken language of most Jews. With permission from Persian rulers, the Jews rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem (around 516 B.C.). Old Testament books written during the Persian period include Daniel, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The last Old Testament book, Malachi, was written by the prophet Malachi about 430 B.C. After Malachi, scribes, temple priests (led by the Aaronic high priest), and rabbis gradually replaced prophets as spiritual leaders of the Jewish people.

Hellenistic period. Judea was one of the conquests of Alexander the Great (336–323 B.C.), bringing the influence of Hellenistic (Greek) culture to the land of the Jews (see Bible Dictionary, “Alexander”). Many Jews left Judea to live in other Greek cities, furthering the dispersion of the Jewish people. The presence of Jewish communities and synagogues throughout the Mediterranean world later facilitated the spread of Christianity in the first century A.D. (see Bible Dictionary, “Diaspora,” “Dispersion”). New occupations, such as tax collectors and hired day laborers, found their way into Jewish society during the Hellenistic period. The Jewish governing council, the Sanhedrin, was formed during this time. In the third century B.C., the Old Testament began to be translated into Greek, which had become the common language of the Mediterranean world. The finished translation, known as the Septuagint, was the scripture commonly used during New Testament times. Most of the quotations of the Old Testament found in the New Testament are taken from the Septuagint. This Greek translation of the Jewish scriptures later proved to be of special value in spreading the Christian faith to the Gentile world, for it made the religion of the Jews available to the civilized world (see Bible Dictionary, “Hellenists,” “Septuagint”).

Following the death of Alexander (323 B.C.), his generals fought to gain control of his empire. Seleucus Nicator seized control of Syria, Asia Minor (or Turkey), and Greece, while Ptolemy took control of Egypt. Judea lay directly between the realms of the two rivals and changed hands several times during the ensuing years.

Hasmonean period. The Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes (descendant of Seleucus Nicator) began his rule of the Judean area in 175 B.C. (see Bible Dictionary, “Antiochus Epiphanes”). Believing that a complete Hellenization of the region would bring stability to his kingdom, he banned Judaism completely, including Sabbath observance and circumcision. He made the possession or reading of the Torah (see Bible Dictionary, “Torah”) punishable by death. In Jerusalem, the temple altar was desecrated with the sacrificing of swine, and an altar to pagan gods was placed over the temple altar. Though calculated to embarrass Jews and discourage observance of Jewish law, these atrocities outraged the Jewish community. In response, a priest named Mattathias, of the family of Hasmon, and his five sons led a Jewish revolt in 167 B.C., called the Maccabean revolt (see Bible Dictionary, “Maccabees”). By 165 B.C., Maccabean forces had recaptured Jerusalem and rededicated the temple. The Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah) mentioned in the New Testament commemorated this momentous event (see Bible Dictionary, “Feasts”). Maccabean leaders succeeded in establishing an independent Jewish state for the first time in over 440 years. Simon Maccabeus, a son of Mattathias, became both high priest and governor of Judea, thus establishing the Hasmonean dynasty.

Roman period. Over time, Hasmonean leadership degenerated into a corrupt political entity. In 63 B.C., at a time when two Hasmonean brothers were vying for power, the Roman general Pompey invaded Jerusalem, and the land of the Jews fell under the control of the Roman Empire (see Bible Dictionary, “Roman Empire”). At the time Jesus Christ was born, the Roman-appointed ruler of Judea was the Jewish king Herod the Great, who, threatened by reports of the birth of the Messiah, ordered the slaying of the children of Bethlehem age two and under (see Matthew 2:1–18). A powerful, ruthless leader who was unpopular with his people, Herod attempted to win their favor by undertaking massive building projects, especially the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple, which continued long after Herod’s death and throughout the duration of Jesus Christ’s ministry (see Bible Dictionary, “Herod,” “Temple of Herod”). After Herod’s death in 4 B.C., his lands were divided between three of his sons. They ruled as tetrarchs (Greek meaning “rulers of a

part or portion”) and not as full-fledged kings like their father. One of them, Herod Antipas, ruled Galilee and is the Herod mentioned most frequently during the time of Jesus Christ’s ministry.

Beginning in A.D. 6, after one of Herod’s sons was deposed, leaders of the Roman Empire began to appoint governors over the province of Judea. They were first called *praefectus* and then procurators from the time of Emperor Claudius (A.D. 41–54) onward (see Acts 11:28). Pontius Pilate was appointed governor in A.D. 26 and ruled until A.D. 36.

Throughout the New Testament period, the office of high priest—the official head of the Aaronic or Levitical Priesthood—was filled by corrupt men. During the Hasmonean era, the legitimacy of the office was increasingly challenged. Under the Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV, the office was sold to the highest bidders, and Herod the Great relegated the office to a marginal role. But with the coming of the Roman governors, the high priest was given greater power so that the office could become a pro-Roman aristocracy. The high priest during Jesus Christ’s adulthood was Caiaphas, who was a son-in-law of Annas (see John 18:24). Annas was high priest from A.D. 6 to 15, and Caiaphas ruled from A.D. 18 to 36. Annas was so powerful that several of his sons went on to become high priests.

The Roman period is generally regarded as ending in A.D. 324.

The events of the intertestamental period help us understand the great desire many Jews felt for the coming of the promised Messiah. After centuries of conquest and humiliation, many felt desperately that only the Messiah could rid them of foreign oppressors and reclaim their national dignity.

The New Testament Setting

A basic understanding of the following terms will be helpful as you study the New Testament:

Messiah. An Aramaic and Hebrew word meaning “anointed one.” In ancient Israel, prophets, kings, and priests were anointed with oil, indicating they were chosen and set apart by God. The term *Messiah* came to indicate a specific king of Israel of the lineage of David who would one day come to save his people. The Greek equivalent of Messiah is *Christos*, from which comes the title *Christ*. At the time of the New Testament, the people were expecting the coming of the Messiah.

Galilee. The area north of Jerusalem, bordering on the north and west of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus was raised

in the small Galilean village of Nazareth and spent the majority of His mortal ministry teaching in Galilean towns and villages such as Capernaum, Cana, Bethsaida, Nain, and others.

Judea. The area west of the Dead Sea and surrounding Jerusalem. The Savior was not as readily accepted here as in Galilee, particularly by the Jewish leaders, who were the chief priests, scribes, and elders.

Samaria. The area west of the Jordan River and between Judea and Galilee. The Samaritans were descendants of Israelites and foreigners who intermarried and inhabited the land following the Assyrian conquest in the eighth century B.C. (see 2 Kings 17:24–41). The animosity between Samaritans and Jews dated back to at least the Persian period. Jews traveling between Judea and Galilee often traveled a longer route near the Jordan River in order to avoid passing through Samaria.

Pharisees. A group of pious Jews whose name denotes separatists—in particular, they separated themselves from Gentile impurities. Pharisees sought strict observance of the law of Moses and Jewish rituals. They upheld the authority of oral tradition as being of equal value to written scripture. In general, the Pharisees were a major source of opposition to Jesus Christ.

Sadducees. An elite group composed of aristocratic high priestly families who had gained prominence during the Hasmonean period. Though relatively few in number, they held considerable power, especially over the administration of the temple in Jerusalem. They opposed Jesus Christ for His cleansing of the temple, which they regarded as an affront to their authority. They rejected traditions and beliefs not found in the written law of Moses, putting them at odds with the Pharisees and many other Jews. In particular, they rejected belief in angels, immortality, judgment, and resurrection. These beliefs were the cause of much of the animosity they had toward the Savior.

Sanhedrin. This Greek term means “council.” There were many Sanhedrins in different areas of Jewish life. When the term (or its English equivalent “council”) is used without qualification in the New Testament, however, it generally refers to the Great Sanhedrin that was headquartered in Jerusalem. This Jewish council regulated the internal affairs of the Jewish nation. It consisted of 70 members and a high priest who presided over the council. Its membership was drawn from the Jewish elite—chief priests, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and elders. Though Rome retained political power, the Sanhedrin

was allowed jurisdiction over the religious laws of Judea as long as it was able to keep the Jews under control.

Scribes. Educated men who made their livelihood as record keepers and as copyists of the scriptures. They supplied scriptures to the growing number of synagogues and also became interpreters and teachers of the law of Moses.

Synagogue. Synagogues were Jewish congregations, or the actual buildings where Jews assembled for prayer and worship on Sabbaths, festivals, and other holy days. The institution of the synagogue became pronounced during the Babylonian exile and the intertestamental period as Jews sought ways to worship the Lord while separated from His temple. Remains of several synagogues dating to New Testament times have been discovered. Jesus and His Apostles taught in such synagogues.

Scriptures. The scriptures used by Jews in Jesus’s day were sometimes divided into three main categories. The *Torah*, also known as “the Law,” consisted of the five books of Moses (the first five books of the Old Testament). The *Prophets* referred to a collection of books by and about prophets and included the historical books from Joshua through 2 Kings as well as the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the 12 “minor prophets” (Hosea through Malachi). The *Writings* were a collection that included literary works (Psalms, Proverbs, and Job), “the five scrolls” (Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther), the book of Daniel, and the historical books of 1 and 2 Chronicles.

**Matthew 7:12; 22:40; Luke 24:27, 44;
John 1:45**

What categories of Jewish scripture are mentioned in these verses?

The Gospels Written as Testimonies of the Ministry and Atonement of Jesus Christ

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles summarized the contents of the New Testament: “The New Testament . . . recounts the fulfillment of the ancient promises; tells of the birth and ministry and atoning sacrifice of the Promised One; expounds the saving doctrines of his everlasting gospel; records the growth and expansion of the gospel cause in the meridian day; predicts the universal falling away from the faith once delivered to the saints; promises a glorious restoration of the gospel in the last days; and foretells, in graphic and dramatic imagery, the events preceding, attending, and succeeding the Second

Overview of the Four Gospel Writers' Testimonies of Jesus Christ				
	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Material in common with other Gospels *	58 percent	93 percent	41 percent	8 percent
Material found only in this Gospel *	42 percent	7 percent	59 percent	92 percent
Primary audience	Jewish people	Romans	Greeks	Members of the Church of Jesus Christ
Focus on Jesus Christ	Christ the King, fulfillment of prophecy	Christ the suffering Son of God and servant of all	Christ the Savior of all mankind	Christ the divine Son of God
Focus on last week of Savior's life	8 chapters, 21–28	6 chapters, 11–16	6 chapters, 19–24	10 chapters, 12–21
Examples of testimonies of the Savior	Matthew 1:21–23; 8:16–17; 21:1–9; 27:54	Mark 1:1; 4:41; 8:27–31; 10:45; 14:61–62; 15:2, 39	Luke 1:1–4, 35; 2:10–11; 24:5–8, 25–32, 44–48	John 1:1–4, 14; 5:36–39; 8:12, 58; 18:36–37; 20:30–31

* Percentages taken from Robert L. Millet, "The Testimony of Matthew," in *Studies in Scripture, Volume Five: The Gospels*, ed. Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet (1986), 49

Coming of the Son of Man. Its chief purpose is to bear witness of Christ" (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [1985], 392).

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were written not as biographical sketches of Jesus Christ but as testimonies that He was the Messiah, the Son of God. Rather than revealing a day-to-day story of the life of Jesus Christ, the Gospels emphasize His atoning mission, as told in the context of His mortal life and ministry. The public ministry of Jesus Christ spanned about three years; however, the four Gospels relate information about a small number of specific days of the Savior's life. John stated that the authors were selective in what they recorded (see John 21:25).

Inasmuch as the Atonement of Jesus Christ is at the heart of our Heavenly Father's plan for the redemption of His children, it is important to recognize the emphasis that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John each gave to events of the Atonement—the suffering in Gethsemane, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through careful narrative, the inspired Gospel writers showed how these sacred events were central to Jesus Christ's mortal ministry. And, as recorded by John, "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31).

The first two rows on the overview chart show that Matthew, Mark, and Luke share much of the same content. "The records of Matthew, Mark, and Luke present a somewhat similar collection of materials and have considerable phraseology in common, as well as similar main points, and thus are sometimes labeled as the 'Synoptic Gospels' (meaning 'see-alike'). Even so, each is unique and has much detail that is not shared by the others. John's record is quite different from the other three in vocabulary, phraseology, and presentation of events" (Bible Dictionary, "Gospels").

The Canonization of New Testament Texts

The earliest surviving New Testament text dated to the first half of the second century A.D. There are no surviving autographs of New Testament books—original manuscripts written by the author. The earliest full manuscripts of individual New Testament books date to around A.D. 200, while the earliest collections of all the books of the New Testament date to the fourth century.

The Apostasy began to occur in the early Christian Church while the Apostles were still alive (see Acts 20:29–30; 1 Corinthians 1:10–13; Galatians 1:6–8; 2 Peter 2:1–3; 3 John 1:9–10; Jude 1:3–4, 18–19). After apostolic authority was taken from the earth through the deaths of the Apostles, which resulted in the loss of priesthood keys, the Apostasy accelerated, and diverse and competing groups of Christians claimed scriptural support

for their beliefs. As debates over the authenticity and value of various texts intensified, Christians felt a need to gather together an accepted collection of authentic Christian writings. It was generally understood that some writings were authentic and others were questionable, with some being of greater value than others. In time, Christian leaders of the third and fourth centuries determined which texts would be included in the accepted canon of scripture—based on whether texts had known apostolic authority, continuous and widespread support among Christian communities, and an absence of false teachings. Using these criteria, in A.D. 367 Athanasius of Alexandria recommended a list of the 27 books currently in the New Testament. This collection was confirmed by the third council of Carthage in A.D. 397.

From the first century, Christians began producing copies of New Testament texts in codex form—a “book” format with separate pages bound together—rather than scroll form, which had been the customary way to write Old Testament texts. This may have been a factor in the development of the collection of books now known as the Bible. The word *Bible* derives from the Greek *biblia* and literally means “books.” With a codex, a collection of multiple books could be created in one bound volume. The earliest complete text of the New Testament is the Codex Sinaiticus, written in the fourth century A.D.



Replica of Greek papyrus codex

Translations of the Bible

Once the 27 books of the New Testament were canonized, they were translated and organized into the Bibles we use today. Following is an overview of a few of the major translations of the Bible throughout history. As this overview makes clear, many of the people responsible for bringing the Bible to the four corners of the earth “sacrificed, even to the point of death, to bring the word of God out of obscurity” (D. Todd Christofferson, “The Blessing of Scripture,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 32).

The Vulgate: Jerome’s Latin Translation. (In Latin, *vulgate* means “common.”) When the need arose to take the scriptures into Latin-speaking areas, such as northern Africa, Latin translations were made of the Greek Septuagint (Old Testament) and the New Testament. However, because these translations were not closely controlled, church leaders soon became concerned about the many corruptions and variances in the separate texts. To address this problem, Pope Damasus in A.D. 383 commissioned his secretary, Jerome, a very able scholar in Greek and Latin, to produce a new suitable Latin translation. In the preface to his Vulgate translation of the New Testament, Jerome wrote a letter to Pope Damasus, describing the problem with creating a new translation: “For if we are to pin our faith to the Latin texts, it is for our opponents to tell us *which*; for there are almost as many forms of texts as there are copies. If, on the other hand, we are to glean the truth from a comparison of *many*, why not go back to the original Greek and correct the mistakes introduced by inaccurate translators, and the blundering alterations of confident but ignorant critics, and, further, all that has been inserted or changed by copyists more asleep than awake?” Jerome’s words describe the same problem Joseph Smith dealt with as he created the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible.

Jerome’s Latin Bible, known as the Vulgate, eventually supplanted all other translations and became the Bible of the western world for close to a thousand years. The Vulgate was given official sanction at the Council of Trent (1545–63). It has been said that the Vulgate was the pillar that preserved Europe’s spiritual and intellectual heritage against attacking waves of northern barbarism.

The Luther Bible: Martin Luther’s German translation. The history of the Bible’s translation into German began in A.D. 348. To escape religious persecution by a Gothic chief, a Catholic priest named Wulfila (sometimes known as Ulfilas) fled with his followers from Germany to what is now northern Bulgaria.

There, Wulfila translated the Bible from Greek into the Gothic dialect. This version established much of the Germanic Christian vocabulary that is still in use today. In the late 15th and early 16th centuries, a number of German translations of the Bible were produced, but the German translation that had the greatest influence was the one produced by Martin Luther. Luther was a German priest and theologian, whose break from the Catholic church helped to fuel the Protestant Reformation. He disagreed with many church practices that he felt did not accord with the teachings of scripture, and he came to regard the Bible rather than the church as the reliable source of authority for Christians.

After publicly announcing his disagreements with the church in 1517, Martin Luther began to work on translating the Bible into German. He completed work on the New Testament in 1522 and published his translation of the entire Bible in 1534. This translation into the vernacular of German-speaking peoples was one of the most important acts of the Reformation. It not only gave the German people access to the Bible, but it influenced German culture, standardized German religious and literary language, and helped create national unity. Its influence on the German language is comparable to the influence the King James Bible had on the English language. The Luther Bible was also one of the factors leading to the production of the King James Bible. A 2017 revision of the Luther Bible is used widely today.

It is of interest to know that the Prophet Joseph Smith possessed a copy of the New Testament in several languages, including Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into the German language. He compared the various translations of some New Testament passages and felt that Luther's translation was very good (see *History of the Church*, 6:307).

John Wycliffe's English translation. A century and a half before Martin Luther, the work of translating the Bible into English was pioneered by John Wycliffe. One of the most prominent scholars of his day, Wycliffe loved the scriptures and was troubled by the ignorance of scripture that he observed among many clergymen and lay persons alike. Like Luther, he grew disillusioned with the church and concluded that the only accurate guide the people still had was the Bible; thus he embarked on the arduous task of taking "God's law" to his countrymen in the English language they understood. Working from Jerome's Latin translation, Wycliffe and his associates completed an English translation of the New Testament in 1380 and portions of the Old Testament in 1382. Approximately 30 years after his death, he was

denounced as a heretic. Later in 1432, by order of Pope Martin V, his bones were dug up and burned and the ashes scattered. His followers, the Lollards, were persecuted long after his death.

William Tyndale's English translation. Despite Wycliffe's pioneering efforts, English speakers did not have widespread access to the Bible until after the time of William Tyndale, who has been called "the father of the English Bible." **Elder D. Todd Christofferson** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described the contributions made by Tyndale:

"Tyndale, born in England about the time Columbus sailed to the new world, was educated at Oxford and Cambridge and then became a member of the Catholic clergy. He was fluent in eight languages, including Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. Tyndale was a devoted student of the Bible, and the pervasive ignorance of the scriptures that he observed in both priests and lay people troubled him deeply. In a heated exchange with a cleric who argued against putting scripture in the hands of the common man, Tyndale vowed, 'If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough, shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost!'

"He sought the approval of church authorities to prepare a translation of the Bible in English so that all could read and apply the word of God. It was denied—the prevailing view being that direct access to the scriptures by any but the clergy threatened the authority of the church and was tantamount to casting 'pearls before swine' (Matthew 7:6).

"Tyndale nevertheless undertook the challenging work of translation. In 1524 he traveled to Germany, under an assumed name, where he lived much of the time in hiding, under constant threat of arrest. With the help of committed friends, Tyndale was able to publish English translations of the New Testament and later the Old Testament. The Bibles were smuggled into England, where they were in great demand and much prized by those who could get them. They were shared widely but in secret. The authorities burned all the copies they could find."

In 1535 Tyndale was arrested for heresy and treason, and for nearly a year and a half he was imprisoned in a castle dungeon near Brussels, Belgium. The dungeon was dark, cold, and solitary. On October 6, 1536, he was taken outside the castle wall and fastened to a post. Elder Christofferson continued:

“He had time to utter aloud his final prayer, ‘Lord! open the king of England’s eyes,’ and then he was strangled. Immediately, his body was burned at the stake. . . .

“ . . . Within three years of Tyndale’s death, God did indeed open King Henry VIII’s eyes, and with publication of what was called the ‘Great Bible,’ the scriptures in English began to be publicly available. Tyndale’s work became the foundation for almost all future English translations of the Bible, most notably the King James Version” (“The Blessing of Scripture,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 32).

Tyndale’s was the first English translation of the Bible to draw directly from both Hebrew and Greek texts and the first English translation to take advantage of the recently invented Gutenberg printing press, which allowed for wide distribution.



King James Version. From 1604 through 1611, a team of approximately 50 translators commissioned by King James I of England (1566–1625) worked on a new English translation of the Bible, which became known as the King James Version, sometimes called the Authorized Version. The translators used Tyndale’s text and consulted other helpful resources, including other translations of the Bible in English, Spanish, French, German, and Italian; numerous scholarly works; and manuscripts of Bible texts in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. The resulting translation had a tremendous influence on the English language, similar to the impact of the Luther Bible on German. It was the King James Version of the Bible that was studied and used by the Prophet Joseph Smith. Its vocabulary and style of

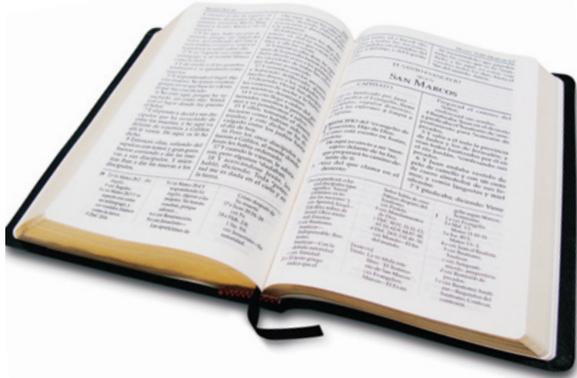
language can be seen throughout the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants (see D&C 1:24). The King James Version is of lasting value in the restored Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In August of 1992, the **First Presidency** of the Church—Ezra Taft Benson, Gordon B. Hinckley, and Thomas S. Monson—released a statement on the King James Version of the Bible. Part of the statement reads: “While other Bible versions may be easier to read than the King James Version, in doctrinal matters latter-day revelation supports the King James Version in preference to other English translations. All of the Presidents of the Church, beginning with the Prophet Joseph Smith, have supported the King James Version by encouraging its continued use in the Church. In light of all the above, it is the English language Bible used by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (“First Presidency Statement on the King James Version of the Bible,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1992, 80).

Reina-Valera Spanish translation. As early as 1490, a translation was made of the four Gospels from the Latin Vulgate into Spanish. In 1543 Francisco de Enzinas, a Protestant, translated a complete New Testament and was imprisoned for what were considered perverse readings. In 1569 Casiodoro de Reina produced and published a translation of the entire Bible in Spanish. Reina had been a monk, but he left the Catholic church after hearing the message of the reformers. Like many other reformers and Bible translators, he faced persecution and threats on his life—King Philip of Spain put a price on Reina’s head in 1564—and he spent much of his life in exile. One of Reina’s colleagues, Cipriano de Valera, worked for 20 years to revise and improve Reina’s translation, and in 1602 at the age of 70, he published what has become known as the Reina-Valera translation. This version has become the classic translation of the Bible in Spanish. It has been as central to the understanding of the scriptures in Spanish as the King James Version has been in English. Over the centuries, numerous revisions have been made to the Reina-Valera version. Reina and Valera are remembered with honor as “two men in whose hearts existed the noble purpose of giving to Spain the Bible in their mother tongue” (Eduardo Balderas, “How the Scriptures Came to Be Translated into Spanish,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1972, 27).

In 2009, under the direction of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints produced an LDS edition of

the Reina-Valera version, with updated language, new chapter headings, footnotes, cross-references to all the standard works of the Church, maps, and other study aids (see “Church Publishes LDS Edition of the Holy Bible in Spanish,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2009, 77–78).



Santa Biblia, Reina-Valera, the LDS edition of the Bible in Spanish, published in 2009

2 Nephi 29:7; 31:3; D&C 90:11

How do the translations of the Bible described here help fulfill the promises made in these verses?

Miraculous Nature of the Bible

The miraculous nature of the Bible was described by **Elder M. Russell Ballard** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“It is a miracle that the Bible’s 4,000 years of sacred and secular history were recorded and preserved by the prophets, apostles, and inspired churchmen.

“It is a miracle that we have the Bible’s powerful doctrine, principles, poetry, and stories. But most of all, it is a wonderful miracle that we have the account of the life, ministry, and words of Jesus, which was protected through the Dark Ages and through the conflicts of countless generations so that we may have it today.

“It is a miracle that the Bible literally contains within its pages the converting, healing Spirit of Christ, which has turned men’s hearts for centuries, leading them to pray, to choose right paths, and to search to find their Savior.

“The Holy Bible is well named. It is holy because it teaches truth, holy because it warms us with its spirit, holy because it teaches us to know God and understand His dealings with men, and holy because it testifies throughout its pages of the Lord Jesus Christ” (“The Miracle of the Holy Bible,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 80).

D&C 42:12; Articles of Faith 1:8

What do these scriptures teach about Latter-day Saint belief in the Bible?

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Bible

The Bible plays a central role in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. **Elder M. Russell Ballard** spoke of the importance of the Bible and encouraged us not to neglect it in our personal study:

The Bible “is one of the pillars of our faith, a powerful witness of the Savior and of Christ’s ongoing influence in the lives of those who worship and follow Him. The more we read and study the Bible and its teachings, the more clearly we see the doctrinal underpinnings of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. We tend to love the scriptures that we spend time with. We may need to balance our study in order to love and understand all scripture.

“You young people especially, do not discount or devalue the Holy Bible. It is the sacred, holy record of the Lord’s life. . . . It is the bedrock of all Christianity. . . .

“I am puzzled by any who would question this Church’s belief in the Bible and our position as Christians. The name of the Church is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In our last general conference, here in this building, our Church leaders quoted from the Bible nearly 200 times. This Church is organized and functions like the Church that Christ and His Apostles established in the New Testament. . . .

“I bear solemn witness that we are true and full believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and in His revealed word through the Holy Bible. We not only believe the Bible—we strive to follow its precepts and to teach its message” (“The Miracle of the Holy Bible,” 82).

Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible

The Bible Dictionary explains that the Joseph Smith Translation (JST) is “a revision or translation of the King James Version of the Bible begun by the Prophet Joseph Smith in June 1830. He was divinely commissioned to make the translation and regarded it as ‘a branch of his calling’ as a prophet. Although the major portion of the work was completed by July 1833, he continued to make modifications while preparing a manuscript for the press until his death in 1844. . . .

“The translation process was a learning experience for the Prophet, and several sections of the Doctrine and Covenants (and also other revelations that are not published in the Doctrine and Covenants) were received in direct consequence of the work (D&C 76–77; 91). Also, specific instruction pertaining to the translation is given in D&C 37:1; 45:60–61; 76:15–18; 90:13; 94:10; 104:58; 124:89. The book of Moses and the 24th chapter of Matthew (JS—M), contained in the Pearl of Great Price, are actual excerpts from the JST. . . . The JST to some extent assists in restoring the plain and precious things that have been lost from the Bible (see 1 Ne. 13–14)” (Bible Dictionary, “Joseph Smith Translation”).

President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency has stated that the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible “is a member of the royal family of scripture. . . . It should be noticed and honored on any occasion when it is present” (“Scripture Reading,” in *Plain and Precious Truths Restored*, ed. Robert L. Millet and Robert J. Matthews [1995], 13).

In the LDS edition of the King James Version of the Bible, short excerpts from the Joseph Smith Translation can be found in the footnotes, while longer revisions are included in the Bible appendix.

Points to Ponder

- The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were written as testimonies of Jesus Christ rather than as comprehensive biographical sketches of His life. How are these testimonies of Christ more important to us than biographies of His life?
- Why should we be grateful to men like Jerome, Wulfila, John Wycliffe, Casiodoro de Reina, and William Tyndale, even though their translations of scripture are not widely used today?
- Considering that many men gave their lives as martyrs so we can have the Bible today, what could you do to make the Bible more important in your life?

Suggested Assignments

- Write one or two paragraphs relating your personal feelings about the New Testament. Include in your writing how you plan to strengthen your testimony of the New Testament.
- In the library or on the internet, do further research on one of the individuals, Bible translations, or topics covered in the commentary under the heading “Translations of the Bible,” or learn about the translation of the Bible in your native language. Share with your institute class or a friend what you learn and how that knowledge affects your appreciation for the New Testament.

2

Matthew 1–4

Introduction to the Gospel According to St. Matthew

Why study Matthew?

Some of the most beloved passages of the Bible are found in Matthew—the Beatitudes, the Sermon on the Mount, and many of the parables, teachings, and miracles of Jesus. The Prophet Joseph Smith often quoted from Matthew in his sermons.

Who wrote Matthew?

The earliest Christian writers to mention this Gospel all agreed that its author was Matthew, who was one of the Savior’s Twelve Apostles and an eyewitness to many of the events he described. This is supported by the title given to his Gospel in the Joseph Smith Translation: “The Testimony of St. Matthew.” Before his conversion and call to the apostleship, Matthew was a publican, or tax collector, known as Levi, the son of Alphaeus (see Matthew 9:9; Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27–32).

When and where was Matthew written?

Some evidence suggests that Matthew used Mark’s Gospel as a source. Matthew may have placed confidence in Mark’s account because Mark had relied heavily on Peter’s eyewitness accounts of the Master’s life. Matthew edited, corrected, reorganized, and added significantly to the material he obtained from Mark; he may also have drawn upon other oral and written sources. Most scholars date the writing of the book of Matthew to A.D. 70–90.

To whom was Matthew written and why?

Matthew appears to have written to a Jewish audience (to both Jews who may have accepted Jesus as the Messiah and those who did not) to show that Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of Old Testament messianic prophecy. Matthew frequently referred to Old Testament prophecies and used the phrase “that it might be fulfilled.” In his Gospel, Matthew employed the term “Son of David” 12 times as testimony that Jesus Christ was the rightful heir to King David’s throne and the fulfillment of messianic expectations.

Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus Christ traces His lineage through David, Judah, and Abraham (see Matthew 1:1–3), demonstrating Jesus’s right to rule and His role

as the fulfillment of God’s promises to Israel. Matthew’s inclusion of significant events and teachings involving Gentiles also seems to have had the purpose of encouraging his readers to accept the work being done among the Gentiles at the time he wrote (see Matthew 8:5–13; 15:21–38; 28:19–20).

What are some distinctive features of Matthew?

Though a large amount of Matthew’s material is also found in Mark and Luke, about 42 percent of Matthew’s Gospel is unique. A major theme in Matthew is that Jesus Christ came to establish His kingdom. Matthew mentioned “the kingdom of heaven” numerous times, and he is the only Gospel author to include teachings of Jesus mentioning the “church” (see Matthew 16:18; 18:17). As part of his focus on the Savior’s establishment of His kingdom, Matthew emphasized Jesus Christ’s authority in the following ways:

1. Jesus was born through a recognized line of authority (see Matthew 1:1–17).
2. He announced that the kingdom of heaven was at hand (see Matthew 4:17).
3. He delivered the Sermon on the Mount, describing the characteristics of exalted beings and the laws that govern His kingdom (see Matthew 5–7).
4. He organized His Church—the kingdom of God on earth—with the Twelve Apostles as authorized servants, whom He empowered with priesthood authority (see Matthew 10; 16:18–19).
5. Through parables, He foretold the establishment of His kingdom, followed by a period of apostasy and a restoration of the kingdom in the last days (see Matthew 13). During His ministry, He invited all people to be a part of His kingdom on earth.

The Gospel of Matthew helps us see parallels between the ministries of Moses and Jesus Christ. Both were saved as infants from attempts of a king to slay them (see Exodus 2:1–10; Matthew 2:13–18). Both came out of Egypt. Both came to deliver their people. There are five books of Moses (Genesis–Deuteronomy), and Matthew recorded five great sermons that Jesus Christ gave (Matthew 5–7; 10; 13; 18; 24–25). Moses revealed the

lesser law; Jesus restored the higher law, fulfilling the law of Moses (see Matthew 5:17–48). Matthew seems to have organized his Gospel in a way that would have helped his Jewish readers recognize Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of Moses’s prophecy: “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken” (Deuteronomy 18:15; see also Acts 3:22).

The Gospel of Matthew shows that God had not abandoned His people, Israel. Matthew referred to the Son of God as Emmanuel, or “God with us” (Matthew 1:23). The Savior’s actions, teachings, and miracles illustrate that God was with the people of Israel and had sent them His Son. Matthew concluded his Gospel with the promise Jesus gave His disciples: “I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20).

Outline

Matthew 1–4 Genealogy and birth of Jesus Christ. The Wise Men sought the King of the Jews. Guided by dreams, Joseph took Mary and the child Jesus to Egypt and later to Nazareth. John the Baptist preached the gospel of repentance and baptized Jesus Christ. The Savior was tempted in the wilderness. He began His mortal ministry by teaching, preaching, and healing all manner of sickness.

Matthew 5–7 Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 8–12 The Savior healed a leper, calmed a storm, cast out devils, raised Jairus’s daughter from the dead, and gave sight to the blind. Jesus Christ called Twelve Apostles, gave them authority to do as He had done, and sent them forth to preach the gospel. Jesus proclaimed John the Baptist to be more than a prophet.

Matthew 13–15 Jesus taught using the parables of the sower, the wheat and tares, a grain of mustard seed, the leaven, the treasure in a field, the pearl of great price, and the net cast into the sea. John the Baptist was beheaded. After the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus and Peter walked on the Sea of Galilee. Scribes and Pharisees contended against Jesus.

Matthew 16–18 After testifying that Jesus is the Christ, Peter was promised the keys of the kingdom. Jesus Christ foretold His own death and Resurrection. He was transfigured on a mountain. Jesus gave instructions to His disciples on how to guide the Church. He told the parable of the unmerciful servant.

Matthew 19–23 The Savior taught about the eternal nature of marriage. He entered Jerusalem and cleansed the temple. Through the use of parables, Jesus exposed the

evil intentions of the Jewish leaders who opposed Him and pronounced woes upon them for their deliberate hypocrisy.

Matthew 24–25; Joseph Smith—Matthew Jesus Christ foretold the destruction of Jerusalem. He taught how His followers could be prepared for His return.

Matthew 26–27 Jesus kept the Passover with His disciples and instituted the sacrament. He suffered in Gethsemane. Jesus was betrayed, arrested, tried before Jewish and Roman authorities, and crucified. He died and was buried.

Matthew 28 The resurrected Savior appeared to His disciples. Jewish leaders attempted to prevent public awareness of the Resurrection by creating and spreading a false story. Jesus commissioned the Apostles to take His gospel to all nations.

Introduction and Timeline for Matthew 1–4

Matthew 1–4 constitutes a prelude to the mortal ministry of Jesus Christ. In Matthew 1–2, you will have the opportunity to study about the birth and childhood of Jesus Christ. One of the messages of these chapters, in keeping with Matthew’s theme of fulfillment of prophecy, is that the Savior’s birth fulfilled Old Testament prophecies. In Matthew 3, John the Baptist declared that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” and “he that cometh after me is mightier than I” (Matthew 3:2, 11). These declarations prepare the reader for the baptism of Jesus Christ, at which time Heavenly Father declared that He was “well pleased” with His Son (Matthew 3:17). In further preparation for His public ministry, Jesus Christ went into the wilderness “to be *with God*” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 4:1 [in Matthew 4:1, footnote *b*]). Satan also tempted Jesus in the wilderness—but Jesus promptly rejected each of his temptations.



1. In Nazareth, Joseph learned that Mary would bring forth a son, to be named Jesus.
2. Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem.
3. The Wise Men visited Jesus Christ in Bethlehem.
4. Joseph, Mary, and Jesus fled to Egypt and later returned to Nazareth.
5. Jesus Christ was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River.
6. Jesus Christ was tempted in the wilderness.

Commentary for Matthew 1–4

Matthew 1:1, 17. Jesus Christ Was a Descendant of David and Abraham

Old Testament prophecies declared that the Messiah would be a descendant of David (see 2 Samuel 7:12–13; Isaiah 9:6–7; Jeremiah 23:5–6) and that an offspring of Abraham would bless “all the nations of the earth” (Genesis 22:18; see also Abraham 2:11). Some scholars have suggested that Matthew’s inclusion of three sets of 14 generations (see Matthew 1:17) was purposeful and is significant because the number 14 is associated with the name-title “David.” Hebrew and other ancient languages used letters of the alphabet to represent numbers as well as sounds. The Hebrew letters in the name David carry a numeric value of 14 (the letters in the name David [D-V-D] are 4 and 6 and 4 = 14). Since the promised Messiah was to be born into the lineage of David, some scholars have speculated that Matthew may have divided the genealogy as he did to subtly emphasize that Jesus Christ was the long-awaited Davidic Messiah. Also, the number 14 is double the number 7, which is the number signifying perfection and completeness. Jesus Christ is the embodiment of divine perfection and completeness.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught about messianic expectations

at the time Jesus was born: “No single concept was more firmly lodged in the minds of the Jews in Jesus’ day than the universal belief that their Messiah would be the Son of David. . . . They looked for a temporal deliverer who would throw off the yoke of Roman bondage and make Israel free again. They sought a ruler who would restore that glory and worldwide influence and prestige which was enjoyed when the Son of Jesse sat on Israel’s throne” (*The Promised Messiah* [1978], 188).

Matthew 1:1–17. The Genealogy of Jesus Christ

Both the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke record genealogies of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 1:1–17; Luke 3:23–38). **Elder James E. Talmage** (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles discussed these genealogies: “The consensus of judgment on the part of investigators is that Matthew’s account is that of the royal lineage, establishing the order of sequence among the legal successors to the throne of David, while the account given by Luke is a personal pedigree, demonstrating descent from David without adherence to the line of legal succession to the throne through primogeniture or nearness of kin. Luke’s record is regarded by many, however, as the pedigree of Mary, while Matthew’s is accepted as that of Joseph. The all important fact to be remembered is that the Child promised by Gabriel to Mary, the virginal bride of Joseph, would be born in the royal line” (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 86).

Though both Matthew’s and Luke’s accounts are correct, the most important aspect of Jesus Christ’s genealogy has been made clear on several occasions by God the Father: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matthew 17:5; see also Matthew 3:17; 3 Nephi 11:7; Joseph Smith—History 1:17).

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) declared his testimony of the Savior’s divine birth: “I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the eternal, living God. . . . I believe that He was born of Mary of the lineage of David as the promised Messiah, that He was in very deed begotten of the Father, and that in His birth was the fulfillment of the great prophetic declaration of Isaiah: ‘For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder’ [Isaiah 9:6]” (“The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 50).

Matthew 1:3, 5–6, 16. Women in the Genealogy of Jesus

Several women are mentioned in Matthew’s pedigree of Jesus Christ. Tamar was from Adullam in Canaanite territory (see Genesis 38); Rahab was a Canaanite of Jericho (see Joshua 2:1–7); Ruth was a Moabitess before converting to Judaism (see Ruth 1:4); and Bathsheba was the wife of Uriah, a Hittite (see 2 Samuel 11:3). Thus, all four were either non-Israelites or associated with non-Israelites. What can we learn from Matthew’s inclusion of these four women in the genealogy of Jesus Christ?

First, it demonstrates that God had worked through Gentiles in the past, thus preparing Matthew’s readers to appreciate the commission to “teach all nations” that would come at the end of his Gospel (Matthew 28:19). Second, the mention of these particular women, each of whom figured in a controversy of some sort in the Old Testament, shows that in Israel’s past, God had worked through people and situations that the Jews would not have expected, thus preparing Matthew’s readers for the account that is immediately to follow—Mary and the virgin birth. Third, it shows all of us today that personal righteousness is not dependent on possessing the “perfect” lineage, since Jesus Christ’s lineage was not perfect. Finally, the inclusion of women in the Savior’s pedigree reflects the important truth that men and women are equal in the eyes of God.

Matthew 1:18. “Mary Was Espoused to Joseph”



LYLE BEEDÉS

Marriage between a young man and a young woman was arranged and agreed to by the heads of the respective families—usually the fathers. Once a prospective wife had been identified by the groom’s father or family head, negotiations were begun. They focused on, but were not limited to, the size of the “bride price,” a kind of dowry in reverse, paid by the groom’s father or family head to the bride’s family. Once the marriage was agreed upon, the wedding consisted of two stages: betrothal (also called espousal; see Matthew 1:18) and a wedding ceremony.

Betrothal was legally and religiously more significant than the subsequent marriage ceremony, after which the couple began living together. Betrothal was regarded as the final part of a solemn covenant. It carried the force of a covenant to be honored between God-fearing parties (see Genesis 2:24; Ezekiel 16:8; Ephesians 5:21–33). Though betrothed couples were legally regarded as husband and wife (see Deuteronomy 22:23–24), between the time of betrothal and the wedding ceremony, a strict code of chastity was enforced (see Matthew 1:18, 25).

Matthew 1:18–25. Joseph Was a Righteous Man

When Mary was found to be with child, Joseph, knowing he was not the father, had several options. First, he could have subjected Mary to a public divorce and perhaps even execution, for people would have presumed that Mary was guilty of adultery—a crime punishable by death under the law of Moses (see Leviticus 20:10; John 8:5). Second, Joseph could have had his betrothal to Mary privately annulled before two witnesses. A third option was to proceed with the marriage. Joseph was inclined to show mercy to Mary by quietly annulling the betrothal agreement (see Matthew 1:19). However, when assured by an angel that Mary’s child was the Son of God, Joseph elected to marry her, though doing so could have brought upon him public shame and ridicule (see Matthew 1:20–25; Luke 3:23; John 8:41).

Gerald N. Lund, who later became a member of the Seventy, discussed Joseph’s visions and spiritual sensitivity: “Matthew tells us that [Joseph] was of the lineage of King David, that he was a just and considerate man, that in a dream an angel told him who Jesus would be, that he was obedient, and that he gave Jesus his name, which means *savior*. (See Matt. 1.) We know that he took Mary to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born. (See Luke 2:4–6.) Less than two years later, Joseph took his family into Egypt to escape Herod, after being warned in a dream. In Egypt, a dream again told him when to return, and another dream told him to go to Galilee. (See Matt. 2:13–15, 19–22.) Four dreams from God! Joseph must have been an exceptionally visionary and spiritually sensitive man” (*Jesus Christ, Key to the Plan of Salvation* [1991], 51–52).



The Nativity, by Ted Henninger

Matthew 1:20. “That Which Is Conceived in Her Is of the Holy Ghost”

Alma explained the role of the Holy Ghost in the conception of Jesus Christ: “And behold, he shall be born of

Mary, at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers, she being a virgin, a precious and chosen vessel, who shall be overshadowed and conceive by the power of the Holy Ghost, and bring forth a son, yea, even the Son of God” (Alma 7:10).

Matthew 1:21. “Thou Shalt Call His Name Jesus: for He Shall Save His People from Their Sins”

The name *Jesus* comes from *Iēsous*, a Greek form of the Hebrew name *Yeshua* (Joshua in English). *Yeshua* means “Jehovah saves,” and the long form of the name, *Yehoshua*, means “Jehovah is salvation.” Both forms of the name bear witness of the identity and mission of Jesus Christ, who was Jehovah in the premortal life. Matthew described the Savior’s mission of salvation by declaring, “He shall save his people from their sins” (see also Helaman 5:10).

Matthew 1:23; 28:20. The Savior’s Mortal Ministry Affirms That God Is with His People Always

The first chapter in Matthew announces that Jesus Christ would be called, in Hebrew, Emmanuel, “which being interpreted is, *God with us*” (Matthew 1:23; italics added). The last verse in Matthew contains the Savior’s promise to His disciples: “*I am with you always*, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20; italics added). By placing these parallel declarations at the beginning and the end of his Gospel, Matthew may be identifying a message running throughout the Gospel of Matthew—God will not forget us; He is with us always.

Matthew 1:25. The Year of Christ’s Birth

Concerning the year in which Jesus Christ was born, “the Church has made no official declaration on the matter” (J. Reuben Clark Jr., *Our Lord of the Gospels* [1954], vi). The calendar currently used throughout most of the world was created many centuries after Jesus Christ lived, and experts disagree about how to use existing historical information to calculate the year of His birth. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** wrote: “This is not a settled issue. Perhaps also it does not matter too much as long as we have an accepted framework of time within which to relate the actual events of [Christ’s] life” (*The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 4 vols. [1979–81], 1:350).

Luke 3:23 states that the Savior began His ministry when He “began to be about thirty years of age.”

Recorded scriptural events help us understand the length of His ministry. Jesus attended at least three annual Feasts of Passover—one described in John 2:13, another in John 6:4, and one at the time of His Crucifixion, described in John 11:55–57. Based on that information, Jesus’s ministry lasted two years, at the very least. Because of multiple recorded events that took place between the Savior’s baptism and the first Passover that He attended, most scholars place the length of His ministry at about three years. The Book of Mormon account of the physical upheavals at the time of the Savior’s Crucifixion attests that the Crucifixion occurred in the beginning of the 34th year after Jesus’s mortal birth (see 3 Nephi 8:5–11:14).

Matthew 2:1–12. The Wise Men

While there has been much speculation about the identity, origin, number, and names of the Wise Men, Matthew did not provide these details. Matthew used the Greek word *magoi*, which originally referred to religious wise men from Persia or Babylon, but by Matthew’s day the word encompassed a variety of religious practitioners.

Regarding the identity and origin of the Wise Men, **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** observed: “It would appear they were true prophets, righteous persons like Simeon, Anna, and the shepherds, to whom Deity revealed that the promised Messiah had been born among men. Obviously they were in possession of ancient prophecies telling of the rise of a new star at his birth. That they did receive revelation for their personal guidance is seen from the inspired dream in which they were warned not to return to Herod after they had found and worshiped the Son of Mary” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 1:103).

Matthew’s account of the Wise Men makes clear that they were familiar with prophecies about the Savior. The Wise Men asked King Herod where they could find the Messiah (see Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 3:2 [in Matthew 2:2, footnote *a*]). The star they had seen “in the east” was interpreted by them as a sign of the Messiah (see Matthew 2:2; Helaman 14:5). As a result of the Wise Men’s inquiry, Herod called together the chief priests and scribes, who quoted to him from the prophet Micah, whose prophecy declared that the One the Wise Men were seeking would “rule” in Israel (see Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:6). Also, the name *Bethlehem* (Matthew 2:6),

which means “house of bread,” was the place where the “Bread of Life” would be born.

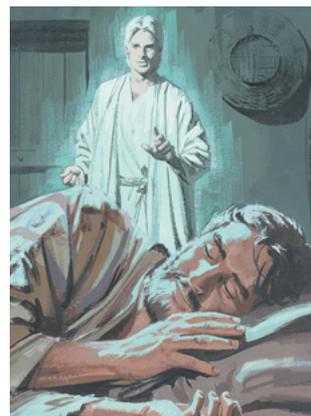
Regardless of who the Wise Men were or where they came from, their visit shows that those who should have been aware of the signs accompanying the birth of Jesus Christ failed to recognize them, while righteous people from other lands, directed by the Holy Ghost, not only noticed the signs but acted upon them.

The exact time of the Wise Men’s visit is unknown; however, Matthew 2:11 suggests that some time had passed since the birth of Jesus Christ, for the Wise Men found Jesus in a “house,” not a manger, and He was a “young child,” not a baby.

Matthew 2:12–13, 19, 22. Dreams as a Form of Revelation

Matthew 2 records dreams received by the Wise Men and by Joseph that contained revelation from God.

President Wilford Woodruff (1807–98)



An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, by Paul Mann

confirmed that dreams are an avenue of revelation:

“The Lord warned Joseph in a dream to take the young child Jesus and his mother into Egypt, and thus he was saved from the wrath of Herod. Hence there are a great many things taught us in dreams that are true, and if a man has the spirit of God he can tell the difference between what is from the Lord and what is not. And I want to say to my brethren and sisters, that whenever you have a dream that you feel is from the Lord, pay attention to it.

“ . . . The Lord does communicate some things of importance to the children of men by means of visions and dreams as well as by the records of divine truth. And what is it all for? It is to teach us a principle” (*The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, ed. G. Homer Durham [1990], 285–86).

Matthew 2:12–20

What in these verses serves as an illustration that Satan cannot overthrow the purposes of God?

Matthew 2:12–16. Slaughter of Innocent Children

Herod's attempt to kill the baby Jesus (see Matthew 2:12–16) was one of a number of violent actions committed by Herod the Great. Like Jesus, Moses escaped miraculously from an attempt on his life when he was a baby—one of many ways in which Moses's life has parallels with Jesus's life (see Exodus 1:17–2:10).

Matthew 2:23. Childhood of Jesus Christ

The Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible provides added details into the childhood and youth of Jesus Christ:

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

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

“And after many years, the hour of his ministry drew nigh” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 3:24–26 [in the Bible appendix]).

The phrase “for he needed not that any *man* should teach him” (italics added) indicates that Jesus was taught, but not by man. The Savior explained that He was taught by His Father in Heaven (see John 8:28–29).

Matthew 3:2. “The Kingdom of Heaven”

The Savior frequently used the phrase “kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 3:2). To learn more about the kingdom of heaven, see “What are some distinctive features of Matthew?” in chapter 2.

Matthew 3:6. John the Baptist Taught the People to Repent and Prepare for the Savior

As the time for the Savior's ministry drew near, John the Baptist began preaching to the people about the need

for repentance. He was the promised forerunner to the Messiah (see Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1; 2 Nephi 31:4; see also the commentary for Luke 1:14–19, 26). He taught the people that confession of sins was an important part of repenting and preparing to receive Jesus Christ. **Elder Neal A. Maxwell** (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles similarly taught about the essential role of confession in repentance:

“True repentance also includes *confession*: ‘Now therefore make confession unto the Lord God of your fathers.’ (Ezra 10:11.) One with a broken heart will not hold back. As confession lets the sickening sin empty out, then the Spirit which withdrew returns to renew. . . .

“All sins are to be confessed to the Lord, some to a Church official, some to others, and some to all of these. A few may require public confession. Confessing aids forsaking” (“Repentance,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 31).

Matthew 3:9. “God Is Able of These Stones to Raise Up Children unto Abraham”

For an explanation of God being “able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham,” see the commentary for Luke 3:8. The main discussion of John's life and ministry will be presented in the commentaries for Luke 3.

Matthew 3:11. The Baptism of Fire

John the Baptist taught that baptism “with the Holy Ghost, and with fire” is necessary following baptism with water (Matthew 3:11; see also Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16). **President Marion G. Romney** (1897–1988) of the First Presidency described the effect that the “baptism of fire” has upon the soul: “The baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost . . . effects the great change in the hearts of men referred to by Alma [see Alma 5:14]. It converts them from carnality to spirituality. It cleanses, heals, and purifies the soul. . . . It is the spiritual rebirth spoken of by Jesus to Nicodemus [see John 3:3–5]. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance, and water baptism are all preliminary and prerequisite to it, but it is the consummation. To receive it is to have one's garments washed in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ” (*Learning for the Eternities*, comp. George J. Romney [1977], 133).

Matthew 3:12. “Whose Fan Is in His Hand”

The “fan” referred to in Matthew 3:12 is a winnowing fan that was used to toss wheat into the air. This allowed the wheat to be separated from the chaff. Wheat kernels would fall back to the ground while the wind blew the lighter chaff away. The wheat was then gathered into a garner, or storehouse, and the chaff was burned with fire. John the Baptist taught that the Savior, who would come after him, would separate believers from nonbelievers in the same way that wheat was separated from chaff.



RICHARD L. W. CLEAVE

Separating the wheat from the chaff

Matthew 3:13–17. Jesus Christ’s Baptism Teaches about the Godhead

At the baptism of Jesus Christ, all three members of the Godhead were separately manifest: Jesus was in the water, the voice of Heavenly Father was heard from heaven, and the Holy Ghost descended upon the Savior like a dove (see also Luke 3:22–23). **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles emphasized that the doctrine of the Godhead is repeated throughout the scriptures:

“We declare it is self-evident from the scriptures that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are separate

persons, three divine beings, noting such unequivocal illustrations as the Savior’s great Intercessory Prayer . . . , His baptism at the hands of John, the experience on the Mount of Transfiguration, and the martyrdom of Stephen—to name just four.

“With these New Testament sources and more ringing in our ears, it may be redundant to ask what Jesus meant when He said, ‘The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do’ [John 5:19; see also John 14:10]. On another occasion He said, ‘I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me’ [John 6:38]. Of His antagonists He said, ‘[They have] . . . seen and hated both me and my Father’ [John 15:24]. And there is, of course, that always deferential subordination to His Father that had Jesus say, ‘Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God’ [Matthew 19:17]. ‘My Father is greater than I’ [John 14:28].

“To whom was Jesus pleading so fervently all those years, including in such anguished cries as ‘O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me’ [Matthew 26:39] and ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ [Matthew 27:46]” (“The Only True God and Jesus Christ Whom He Hath Sent,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 41).



To help you visualize the importance of the Savior’s baptism, review the video segment “The Baptism of Jesus” (2:55) from *The Life of Jesus Christ Bible Videos*, available on LDS.org. This segment covers Matthew 3:13–17.

Matthew 3:15. “To Fulfil All Righteousness”

As recorded in 2 Nephi 31:6–12, the Book of Mormon prophet Nephi explained how Jesus Christ “did fulfil all righteousness in being baptized by water” (2 Nephi 31:6).

Matthew 3:16. The Holy Ghost Descended like a Dove

For insights on the Holy Ghost descending like a dove, see the commentary for Luke 3:22.

Matthew 3:17. Voice of the Father

The voice of Heavenly Father was heard at the time of the Savior’s baptism—one of the few times when the voice of the Father is recorded in scripture (see Matthew 3:17; 17:5; 3 Nephi 11:7; Joseph Smith—History 1:17). In each of these instances, He spoke to introduce His Son to a mortal man.

Matthew 4:1–11

According to these verses, what are some things the Savior did prior to His public ministry to draw near to His Father in Heaven? How can you follow His example to draw closer to your Father in Heaven?

Matthew 4:1, 5, 8. Jesus Went into the Wilderness “to Be with God”

The Joseph Smith Translation makes important corrections to these verses. Jesus Christ did not go “into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil” (Matthew 4:1), nor did the devil have power to transport Jesus Christ in order to tempt Him (see Matthew 4:5, 8).

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

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

“And again, *Jesus was in the Spirit*, and it taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 4:1, 5, 8 [compare Matthew 4:1, footnote *b*; Matthew 4:5, footnote *a*; Matthew 4:8, footnote *a*]).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie added these insights into why Jesus went into the wilderness: “Jesus did not go into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil; righteous men do not seek out temptation. He went ‘to be with God.’ Probably he was visited by the Father; without question he received transcendent spiritual manifestations. The temptations came after he ‘had communed with God,’ ‘after forty days’ [Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 4:1–2; Luke 4:2]” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:128).

Matthew 4:2. The Savior Fasted to Prepare for His Ministry

Fasting was an important part of the Savior’s preparation for His ministry, as taught by **President**



Judean wilderness

Howard W. Hunter (1907–95): “Soon after his baptism Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wild, uncultivated wilderness. There he remained for forty days and nights, preparing himself for the formal ministry which was then to begin. The greatest task ever to be accomplished in this world lay before him, and he needed divine strength. Throughout these days in the wilderness he chose to fast, that his mortal body might be completely subjected to the divine influence of his Father’s Spirit” (“The Temptations of Christ,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 17).

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described some blessings that come from fasting: “Fasting, coupled with mighty prayer, is powerful. It can fill our minds with the revelations of the Spirit. It can strengthen us against times of temptation. Fasting and prayer can help develop within us courage and confidence. They can strengthen our character and build self-restraint and discipline. Often when we fast, our righteous prayers and petitions have greater power. Testimonies grow. We mature spiritually and emotionally and sanctify our souls. Each time we fast, we gain a little more control over our worldly appetites and passions” (“The Law of the Fast,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 73).

It is of interest to note that when the number “forty” is mentioned in the scriptures, it can be understood literally or figuratively. In some instances, forty days can refer to a long period of time.

Matthew 4:1–3. Satan Tempts When We Are Vulnerable (see also Luke 4:2)

When God has revealed Himself to a mortal, as recorded in the scriptures, Satan has often also revealed himself, seeking to diminish God’s influence (see Moses 1:12–24; Joseph Smith—History 1:15–16). At the beginning of His ministry, the Savior went into the wilderness “to be *with God*” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 4:1 [in Matthew 4:1, footnote b]). While He was there, Satan came to tempt Him at a time when He was weakened by hunger (see Matthew 4:1–3).

President Howard W. Hunter explained that Satan’s temptations are often strongest when we are vulnerable: “When Jesus had completed the fast of forty days and had communed with God, he was, in this hungry and physically weakened state, left to be tempted of the devil. . . . Such a time is always the tempter’s moment—when we are emotionally or physically spent, when we are weary, vulnerable, and least prepared to resist the insidious suggestions he makes. This was an hour of danger—the kind of moment in which many men

fall and succumb to the subtle allurements of the devil” (“The Temptations of Christ,” 17).

Matthew 4:2–10. The Nature of Jesus Christ’s Temptations (see also Luke 4:2–13)

Bishop Keith B. McMullin of the Presiding Bishopric spoke about the temptations Jesus Christ experienced and about how we face the same type of temptations today:

“The temptations He suffered at the outset of His ministry typify those that beset us. Speaking of these temptations—to turn stones into bread, to cast Himself from the temple’s pinnacle, and to sell His soul for earth’s treasures (see Matt. 4:2–10)—President David O. McKay said, ‘Classify them, and you will find that under one of those three nearly every given temptation that makes you and me spotted . . . comes to us as (1) a temptation of appetite; (2) a yielding to the pride and fashion and vanity of those alienated from the things of God; or (3) a gratifying of the . . . desire for the riches of the world, or power among men’ (in Conference Report, Apr. 1911, 59)” (“Welcome Home,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 80).

Matthew 4:3–10. Jesus Christ Gave No Heed to Satan’s Temptations (see also Luke 4:4–13)

Elder Neal A. Maxwell said of the Savior’s example in resisting temptation: “By emulating the Master, who endured temptations but ‘gave no heed unto them’ [D&C 20:22], we, too, can live in a world filled with temptations ‘such as [are] common to man’ (1 Corinthians 10:13). Of course Jesus noticed the tremendous temptations that came to Him, but He did not process and reprocess them. Instead, he rejected them promptly. If we entertain temptations, soon they begin entertaining us!” (“Overcome . . . Even as I Also Overcame,” *Ensign*, May 1987, 71).

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) taught that showing interest in sin can make us more vulnerable to being tempted: “It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the devil to enter a door that is closed. He seems to have no keys for locked doors. But if a door is slightly ajar, he gets his toe in, and soon this is followed by his foot, then by his leg and his body and his head, and finally he is in all the way” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* [2006], 106–7).

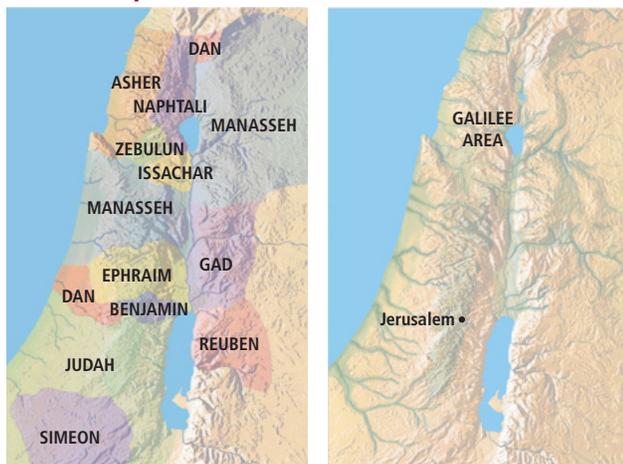
Matthew 4:4–11. Scripture Study and Obedience Help Us Overcome Temptation

The Savior’s response to each of Satan’s temptations included the phrase, “It is written” (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10;

see also Luke 4:1–13). Christ’s knowledge of the scriptures was part of what had prepared and strengthened Him to turn aside from temptation. The Savior later taught, “Whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived” (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:37). While serving as a member of the Seventy, **Elder Merrill J. Bateman** noted the strength that scripture study provides against temptation: “There are certain blessings obtained when one searches the scriptures. As a person studies the words of the Lord and obeys them, he or she draws closer to the Savior and obtains a greater desire to live a righteous life. The power to resist temptation increases, and spiritual weaknesses are overcome” (“Coming unto Christ by Searching the Scriptures,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 28).

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin explained that following the Savior’s example of obedience helps us overcome temptation: “Willing obedience provides lasting protection against Satan’s alluring and tantalizing temptations. Jesus is our perfect example of obedience. Learn to do as He did when Satan tempted Him in the wilderness. Even though He was weakened by fasting, His answer was quick and firm: ‘Get thee behind me, Satan’ [Luke 4:8]. . . . When Satan comes calling, cast him out as quickly as possible” (“Live in Obedience,” *Ensign*, May 1994, 40).

Matthew 4:13–16. “The Land of Zabulon, and the Land of Nephthalim”



The Old Testament lands of Zebulun and Naphtali became the land of Galilee in New Testament times.

In Matthew 4:13–16, Matthew was referring to Isaiah 9:1–2. Jesus Christ spent the majority of His life and ministry in the villages of Galilee—places like Capernaum, Nain, Nazareth, and Bethsaida. During Old Testament times this area was the inheritance of

the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali. Over the centuries, numerous battles were waged to secure control over this strategic region. Some have suggested that because so many people lost their lives in battle here, Isaiah referred to the people of this region as “them which sat in the region and shadow of death” (Matthew 4:16). Isaiah prophesied that in this death-stricken land a “great light” would spring up (Isaiah 9:2). That light is Jesus Christ, the Light of the World. Matthew wanted his readers to know that the Savior’s ministry in the land of Galilee was a fulfillment of this messianic prophecy.

Matthew 4:18–22

In these verses, what can you learn from the examples of Peter, Andrew, James, and John about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?

Matthew 4:18–22. The Calling of Early Disciples

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin helps us see a modern application of the experience the early disciples had in leaving their nets and following the Savior:

“They were fishermen before they heard the call. Casting their nets into the Sea of Galilee, Peter and Andrew stopped as Jesus of Nazareth approached, looked into their eyes, and spoke the simple words, ‘Follow me.’ Matthew writes that the two fishermen ‘straightway left their nets, and followed him.’ . . . ‘If the Savior were to call you today, would you be just as willing to leave your nets and follow Him?’ I am confident that many would. . . .

“. . . We might define a net as anything that entices or prevents us from following the call of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. Nets in this context can be our work, our hobbies, our pleasures, and, above all else, our temptations and sins. In short, a net can be anything that pulls us away from our relationship with our Heavenly Father or from His restored Church.

“Let me give you a modern example. A computer can be a useful and indispensable tool. But if we allow it to devour our time with vain, unproductive, and sometimes destructive pursuits, it becomes an entangling net.

“Many of us enjoy watching athletic contests, but if we can recite the statistics of our favorite players and at the same time forget birthdays or anniversaries, neglect our families, or ignore the opportunity to render acts of Christlike service, then athletics may also be an entangling net. . . .

“It is impossible to list the many nets that can ensnare us and keep us from following the Savior. But if we are

sincere in our desire to follow Him, we must straight-way leave the world’s entangling nets and follow Him” (“Follow Me,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 15).

For additional insights on the calling of the early disciples, see the commentaries for Luke 5:1–9 and for Luke 5:10–11.

Matthew 4:23. Teaching That Leads to Healing (see also Mark 1:39; Luke 4:43)

Matthew 4:23 states that Jesus went about “preaching” and “healing.” In later chapters, Matthew recorded Jesus’s preaching in the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5–7) and His healing of numerous individuals (see Matthew 8–9). **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** linked *preaching* and *healing* together when he taught that gospel teaching has the potential to heal the soul:

“This is what Matthew says: ‘And Jesus went about all Galilee, *teaching* in their synagogues, and *preaching* the gospel of the kingdom, and *healing* all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people’ (Matthew 4:23; emphasis added).

“Now, the teaching and the preaching we know and would expect. But we may not be quite as prepared to see healing in the same way. Yet from this earliest beginning, from the first hour, healing is mentioned almost as if it were a synonym for teaching and preaching. At least there is a clear relationship among the three. In fact, the passage that follows says more about the healing than the teaching or the preaching. . . .

“Now, let me make myself absolutely clear. By ‘healing,’ as I have been speaking of it, I am *not* talking about formal use of the priesthood or administration to the sick or any such thing as that. That is *not* the role of those called as teachers in our Church organizations.

“But I believe our teaching can lead to healing of the spiritual kind. . . . As with the Master, wouldn’t it be wonderful to measure the success of our teaching by the healing that takes place in the lives of others?

“. . . Could we try a little harder to teach so powerfully and so spiritually that we really help that individual who walks alone, who lives alone, who weeps in the dark of the night?” (“Teaching, Preaching, Healing,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2003, 33–34, 37).

The Joseph Smith Translation makes clear that the Savior healed all manner of sickness and disease “among the people *which believed on his name*” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 4:22 [in Matthew 4:23, footnote *f*]).

Points to Ponder

- What are some things you can do to make the birth of Jesus Christ more meaningful in your life?
- John the Baptist prepared the way for the coming of the Savior in mortality. What can you do to prepare yourself and those around you for the Savior’s Second Coming and for eternal life with our Father in Heaven?
- In times of temptation, what can you do to follow the Savior’s example, as recorded in Matthew 4:3–11?

Suggested Assignments

- As you study the Gospel of Matthew, look for reminders that God is with us (see the commentary for Matthew 1:23; 28:20). Compile a list of what you find. Write about a time when you have experienced reminders in your own life that God is with you.
- Read the following scriptures to discover details about the Savior’s birth that were known to the Nephites: 1 Nephi 11:13–15, 20–21; Mosiah 3:8; Alma 7:10; Helaman 14:3–6; 3 Nephi 1:14–21.
- Complete the following chart to discover ancient prophecies that were fulfilled by the birth and early childhood of Jesus Christ:

Ancient Prophecy	New Testament Fulfillment	Event
Mosiah 3:8	Matthew 1:18	
Isaiah 7:14; 1 Nephi 11:20	Matthew 1:18–25	
Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1, 5–6	
Helaman 14:5	Matthew 2:2	
Hosea 11:1	Matthew 2:13–15	
Jeremiah 31:15	Matthew 2:16–18	

3

Matthew 5–7

Introduction and Timeline for Matthew 5–7

President Thomas S. Monson spoke of the Sermon on the Mount and the Galilean hillside where it took place: “Here it was that the greatest person who ever lived delivered the greatest sermon ever given—the Sermon on the Mount” (“The Way Home,” *Ensign*, May 1975, 15). As the Savior began His Galilean ministry, He declared that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17), and then in the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5–7) taught doctrines and principles of righteousness that govern the lives of those who belong to His kingdom and lead to happiness and eventual perfection.

At the conclusion of the sermon, “the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Matthew 7:28–29; see similar sermons in Luke 6:17–49 and 3 Nephi 12–14). In other words, the people were astonished by what He said and by how He said it. He did not teach by citing precedent or previous authority, as the scribes and rabbis did. He taught as one having the authority of God Himself.



Jesus Christ taught the Sermon on the Mount in Galilee.

Commentary for Matthew 5–7

Matthew 5:1–12. The Beatitudes

The Beatitudes is the name commonly used to refer to the Savior’s declarations of blessedness found in Matthew 5:1–12. **President Harold B. Lee** (1899–1973) taught:

“In his Sermon on the Mount the Master has given us somewhat of a revelation of his own character, which was perfect, . . . and in so doing has given us a blueprint for our own lives. . . . In that matchless Sermon on the Mount, Jesus has given us eight distinct ways by which we might receive [real] joy. Each of his declarations is begun by the word ‘Blessed.’ . . . These declarations of the Master are known in the literature of the Christian world as the Beatitudes. . . . They embody in fact *the constitution for a perfect life*” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* [2000], 200).

 To help you visualize the impact of the Beatitudes, review the video segment “Sermon on the Mount: The Beatitudes” (2:09) from *The Life of Jesus Christ Bible Videos*, available on LDS.org. This segment covers Matthew 5:3–16.

Matthew 5:3. “Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit”

President Harold B. Lee taught that the poor in spirit are “those who are spiritually needy, who feel so impoverished spiritually that they reach out with great yearning for help” (*Teachings: Harold B. Lee*, 197). The account of the sermon in 3 Nephi states, “Blessed are the poor in spirit *who come unto me*” (3 Nephi 12:3; italics added).

Matthew 5:4. “Blessed Are They That Mourn”

President Harold B. Lee explained that “they that mourn” relates to those who mourn over their sins: “‘And again, blessed are all they that mourn’ (3 Nephi 12:4; see also Matthew 5:4). . . . He is talking about repentance. He is talking about the promise that will come to whom? All who would ‘come down into the depths of humility’ and have been baptized and have received the gift of the Holy Ghost (see 3 Nephi 12:2)” (*The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams [1996], 112).

Another meaning of this teaching is provided in Mosiah 18:9, which teaches that one requirement of Church membership is being “willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort.”

Matthew 5:5. “Blessed Are the Meek”

To be “meek” means to be “Godfearing, righteous, humble, teachable, and patient under suffering. The meek are willing to follow gospel teachings” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Meek, Meekness”; scriptures.lds.org). Meekness does not imply weakness; rather, as **Elder Neal A. Maxwell** (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, meekness is “*kindness and gentleness*. It reflects certitude, strength, serenity; it reflects a healthy self-esteem and a genuine self-control” (“Meekly Drenched in Destiny” [Brigham Young University devotional, Sept. 5, 1982], 2; speeches.byu.edu).

While serving as the Presiding Bishop of the Church, **Bishop H. David Burton** explained the necessity of being meek: “Meekness will allow us to be tutored by the Spirit” (“More Holiness Give Me,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 99).

When Jesus promised that the meek would inherit the earth, He was quoting from Psalm 37:11. To “inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5) means to inherit the celestial kingdom. This earth will one day be “sanctified from all unrighteousness, that it may be prepared for the celestial glory” (D&C 88:18), and “the meek of the earth shall inherit it” (D&C 88:17).

Matthew 5:6. “Blessed Are They Which Do Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness”

The Greek word that was translated as “filled” also means “to feed or fatten an animal in a stall” and connotes the idea of eating until completely satisfied. This helps us understand the Lord’s promise to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness—He will feed them spiritually until they are completely satisfied. The account of the sermon in 3 Nephi adds, “They shall be filled *with the Holy Ghost*” (3 Nephi 12:6; italics added).

Matthew 5:7. “Blessed Are the Merciful”

This is one of the many times the Savior taught that the way we treat others affects how God will treat us (see Matthew 6:12, 14–15; 7:1–2; 18:23–35; 25:31–46). **President Gordon B. Hinckley** (1910–2008) wrote: “I plead for a stronger spirit of compassion in all of our relationships, a stronger element of mercy, for if we are merciful we shall obtain mercy from the Ultimate Judge. . . . It is impressive to watch those who with a compelling spirit of kindness reach out to those in distress, to help and assist, to feed and provide for, to nurture and to bless. As these extend mercy, I am confident that the

God of Heaven will bless them, and their posterity after them, with His own mercy. . . . One cannot be merciful to others without receiving a harvest of mercy in return [see Matthew 5:7]” (*Standing for Something* [2000], 75, 77).

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) placed mercy in the context of forgiving others: “Ever keep in exercise the principle of mercy, and be ready to forgive our brother on the first intimations of repentance, and asking forgiveness; and should we even forgive our brother, or even our enemy, before he repent or ask forgiveness, our heavenly Father would be equally as merciful unto us” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 392–93).

Matthew 5:8. “Blessed Are the Pure in Heart”

While serving as a member of the Seventy, **Elder Gerald N. Lund** explained that a pure heart is free from contamination and open to the Holy Spirit: “In the Sermon on the Mount, the Savior said, ‘Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God’ [Matthew 5:8]. If something is pure, it is not polluted or tainted by things which do not belong to it. Purity of heart is certainly one of the most important qualifications for receiving inspiration from God. While none of our hearts are perfect, the more diligently we strive to eliminate impurity, or push out things which do not belong there, the more we open our hearts to the Holy Spirit” (“Opening Our Hearts,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 33).



Sermon on the Mount,
by James Tissot

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles discussed the connection between being pure in heart and being able to see God: “Purity of heart is a figure for purity of soul. They are the ones who received a remission of their sins in the waters of baptism; who, after baptism, have so lived as to retain a remission of sins; who have had their sins burned out of their souls

as though by fire by the power of the Holy Ghost. They are God-fearing and righteous souls; and being pure, they qualify to see and associate with other pure beings, the chief of whom is the Lord of Purity” (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [1985], 492).

Matthew 5:13. “If the Salt Have Lost His Savour”

In addition to its uses in flavoring and preserving food, salt was added to sacrificial offerings under the law of Moses. Thus salt was associated with joy, permanence, and covenant making. When Jesus admonished disciples to be the “salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13), part of the meaning was that their lives should reflect their covenants with the Lord and serve as a preservative for the world in general. **Elder Carlos E. Asay** (1926–99) of the Presidency of the Seventy explained that salt loses its savor by contamination and that we keep our “savor” by avoiding spiritual contamination. Though directed specifically to priesthood holders, Elder Asay’s words have application to each of us:

“A world-renowned chemist told me that salt will not lose its savor with age. Savor is lost through mixture and contamination. Similarly, priesthood power does not dissipate with age; it, too, is lost through mixture and contamination.

“When a young man or older man mixes his thoughts with pornographic literature, he suffers a loss of savor.

“When a priesthood bearer mixes his speech with lies or profanity, he suffers a loss of savor.

“When one of us follows the crowd and becomes involved in immoral acts and the use of drugs, tobacco, alcohol, and other injurious substances, he loses savor.

“Flavor and quality flee a man when he contaminates his mind with unclean thoughts, desecrates his mouth by speaking less than the truth, and misapplies his strength in performing evil acts. . . .

“I would offer these simple guidelines, especially to the young men, as the means to preserve one’s savor: If it is not *clean*, do not think it; if it is not *true*, do not speak it; if it is not *good*, do not do it” (“Salt of the Earth: Savor of Men and Saviors of Men,” *Ensign*, May 1980, 42–43).

Matthew 5:14–16. “Let Your Light So Shine”

Elder Robert D. Hales (1932–2017) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles encouraged us to think about how our lives can lead others to glorify our Father in Heaven:

“Wouldn’t it be pleasing to Jesus if we could let our light so shine that those who followed us would be following the Savior? . . .

“Have you ever stopped to think that perhaps you are the light sent by Heavenly Father to lead another safely home or to be a beacon from a distance to show the way back to the straight and narrow path that leads

to eternal life? Your light is a beacon and should never stop burning or mislead those who are looking for a way home” (“That Ye May Be the Children of Light” [Brigham Young University fireside, Nov. 3, 1996], 8–9; speeches.byu.edu).



The “candle” in Matthew 5:15 refers to a ceramic oil lamp; the “candlestick” refers to a lamp stand.



To help you visualize the impact your example can have on others, review the video segment “Sermon on the Mount: the Higher Law” (2:19) from *The Life of Jesus Christ Bible Videos*, available on LDS.org. This segment covers Matthew 5:17–48.

Matthew 5:16; 6:1

In each of these verses, what are the motives for doing good works? How do the different motives explain the different teachings of each verse? Why are our motives for doing good works so important?

Matthew 5:22. What Is Meant by the Term *Raca*?

The word *raca* comes from an Aramaic word meaning “imbecile, fool, or empty-headed person.” **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained a broader meaning of the term: “Profane and vulgar expressions vary from nation to nation and age to age, but the intent of this passage is to condemn any language which conveys improper feelings about another” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 1:222).

Matthew 5:22. “Whosoever Is Angry”

Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 5:24 (compare Matthew 5:22, footnote *b*) does not contain the phrase “without a cause” (see also 3 Nephi 12:22). **Elder**

Lynn G. Robbins of the Seventy referred to these verses when teaching the importance of eliminating anger from our lives:

“A cunning part of [Satan’s] strategy is to dissociate anger from agency, making us believe that we are victims of an emotion that we cannot control. . . . The Lord expects us to make the choice *not* to become angry. . . . When the Lord eliminates the phrase ‘without a cause,’ He leaves us without an excuse. . . .

“Anger is a yielding to Satan’s influence by surrendering our self-control. It is the thought-sin that leads to hostile feelings or behavior. . . . Understanding the connection between agency and anger is the first step in eliminating it from our lives” (“Agency and Anger,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 80–81).

President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) reminded us that we *can* choose not to become angry:

“To be angry is to yield to the influence of Satan. No one can *make* us angry. It is our choice. If we desire to have a proper spirit with us at all times, we must choose to refrain from becoming angry. I testify that such is possible. . . .

“. . . We are all susceptible to those feelings which, if left unchecked, can lead to anger. We experience displeasure or irritation or antagonism, and if we so choose, we lose our temper and become angry with others. Ironically, those others are often members of our own families—the people we really love the most. . . .

“May we make a conscious decision, each time such a decision must be made, to refrain from anger” (“School Thy Feelings, O My Brother,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 68–69).

Matthew 5:25. “Agree with Thine Adversary Quickly”

While serving as a member of the Presidency of the Seventy, **Elder David E. Sorensen** explained that agreeing with one’s adversary means working out disagreements before they lead to a worse situation: “The Savior said, ‘Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him’ [Matthew 5:25], thus commanding us to resolve our differences early on, lest the passions of the moment escalate into physical or emotional cruelty, and we fall captive to our anger. Nowhere does this principle apply more than in our families” (“Forgiveness Will Change Bitterness to Love,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2003, 11).

Matthew 5:27–28. “Whosoever Looketh on a Woman to Lust after Her”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles discussed the seriousness of the sin of lust: “Why is lust such a deadly sin? Well, in addition to the completely Spirit-destroying impact it has upon our souls, I think it is a sin because it defiles the highest and holiest relationship God gives us in mortality—the love that a man and a woman have for each other and the desire that couple has to bring children into a family intended to be forever. . . . Love makes us instinctively reach out to God and other people. Lust, on the other hand, is anything but godly and celebrates self-indulgence. Love comes with open hands and open heart; lust comes with only an open appetite” (“Place No More for the Enemy of My Soul,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 44–45).

President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency spoke about the effects of pornography—a prevalent cause and promoter of lust—on those who view it: “Pornography impairs one’s ability to enjoy a normal emotional, romantic, and spiritual relationship with a person of the opposite sex. It erodes the moral barriers that stand against inappropriate, abnormal, or illegal behavior. As conscience is desensitized, patrons of pornography are led to act out what they have witnessed, regardless of its effects on their life and the lives of others” (“Pornography,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2005, 89).

Matthew 5:29–30. “Pluck It Out, and Cast It from Thee”

The Joseph Smith Translation makes it clear that the Savior did not encourage His followers to literally cut or disfigure themselves. The Savior said, “*And now this I speak, a parable concerning your sins; wherefore, cast them from you, that ye may not be hewn down and cast into the fire*” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 5:34 [in Matthew 5:30, footnote *b*]).

The Savior used startling images to teach followers the importance of casting away their sins and removing themselves from sinful places, people, and situations (see Matthew 5:29–30; 18:8–9; Mark 9:43–48; Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 9:40–48 [in the Bible appendix]).

President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) taught that the terms “right eye” or “right hand” can mean “close friends or relatives who [endeavor] to lead us from the path of rectitude and humble obedience to the divine commandments we receive from the Lord. If any friend or relative endeavors to lead a person away from the commandments, it is better to dispense with

his friendship and association than to follow him in evil practices to destruction" (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5 vols. [1957–66], 5:79).

Matthew 5:43. "Ye Have Heard That It Hath Been Said"

The commandment "Love thy neighbour" is found in Leviticus 19:18, but no scripture in the Old Testament commands us to hate thine enemy. It appears the Savior was referring to a saying common in His day. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1946 may reveal that some Jews at the time of Christ did in fact teach that they should love fellow members of their community but hate outsiders (see Dana M. Pike, "Is the Plan of Salvation Attested in the Dead Sea Scrolls?" in Donald W. Parry and Dana M. Pike, eds., *LDS Perspectives on the Dead Sea Scrolls* [1997], 93, note 19).

Matthew 5:44; 6:12, 14–15. "Love Your Enemies"

President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency taught about the healing power of forgiveness:

"Our natural response [to injuries inflicted by others] is anger. We may even feel justified in wanting to 'get even' with anyone who inflicts injury on us or our family.

"Dr. Sidney Simon, a recognized authority on values realization, has provided an excellent definition of forgiveness as it applies to human relationships:

"Forgiveness is freeing up and putting to better use the energy once consumed by holding grudges, harboring resentments, and nursing unhealed wounds. It is rediscovering the strengths we always had and relocating our limitless capacity to understand and accept other people and ourselves' [with Suzanne Simon, *Forgiveness: How to Make Peace with Your Past and Get On with Your Life* (1990), 19]. . . .

". . . It is not easy to let go and empty our hearts of festering resentment. The Savior has offered to all of us a precious peace through His Atonement, but this can come only as we are willing to cast out negative feelings of anger, spite, or revenge. For all of us who forgive 'those who trespass against us,' even those who have committed serious crimes, the Atonement brings a measure of peace and comfort.

". . . With all my heart and soul, I believe in the healing power that can come to us as we follow the counsel of the Savior 'to forgive all men' [D&C 64:10]" ("The

Healing Power of Forgiveness," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2007, 68–69).

For more information about the Savior's teachings on forgiveness, see the commentary for Matthew 18:21–22.

Matthew 5:48. "Be Ye Therefore Perfect"

President Russell M. Nelson explained the meaning of the word *perfect* as used in Matthew 5:48:

"The term *perfect* was translated from the Greek *teleios*, which means 'complete.' . . . The infinitive form of the verb is *teleiono*, which means 'to reach a distant end, to be fully developed, to consummate, or to finish.' Please note that the word does not imply freedom from error; it implies achieving a distant objective. . . .

"We need not be dismayed if our earnest efforts toward perfection now seem so arduous and endless. Perfection is pending. It can come in full only after the Resurrection and only through the Lord. It awaits all who love him and keep his commandments" ("Perfection Pending," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 86, 88).

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** taught: "When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the gospel—you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned them. It is not all to be comprehended in this world; it will be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave" (*Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 268).



To help you visualize the principle of perfection, review the video segment "Sermon on the Mount: The Lord's Prayer" (2:18) from *The Life of Jesus Christ Bible Videos*, available on LDS.org. This segment covers Matthew 6:1–13.

Matthew 6:1–4. "Do Not Your Alms before Men, to Be Seen of Them"

"Alms" can be defined as acts of righteousness or religious devotion, including acts of service or charity.

President Dallin H. Oaks helped us understand the Savior's teaching that our service should be done for the right reasons:

"Some may serve for hope of earthly reward. Such a man or woman might serve in Church positions or in private acts of mercy in an effort to achieve prominence or cultivate contacts that would increase income or



aid in acquiring wealth. Others might serve in order to obtain worldly honors, prominence, or power. . . .

“In contrast, those who serve quietly, even ‘in secret,’ qualify for the Savior’s promise that ‘thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.’ (3 Ne. 13:18; see also Matt. 6:4.) . . .

“‘Charity is the pure love of Christ.’ (Moro. 7:47.) The Book of Mormon teaches us that this virtue is ‘the greatest of all.’ (Moro. 7:46.) . . .

“If our service is to be most efficacious, it must be accomplished for the love of God and the love of his children. . . .

“I know that God expects us to work to purify our hearts and our thoughts so that we may serve one another for the highest and best reason, the pure love of Christ” (“Why Do We Serve?” *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 13–15).

Matthew 6:5. Praying to “Be Seen of Men”

Elder Bruce R. McConkie described some of the prayer practices that the Savior warned against in Matthew 6:5: “Devout Jews, at set times, faced Jerusalem, covered their heads, cast their eyes downward, and ostentatiously went through the ritual of prayer. If the hour of prayer found them in the streets, so much the better, for all men would see their devoutness! To attract attention by saying one’s own prayers aloud in the synagogue was not uncommon. Such were among the practices of the day” (*The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 4 vols. [1979–81], 2:147).

Matthew 6:7. “Vain Repetitions”

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained what is meant by “vain repetitions” and how we can avoid them in our prayers:

“Our prayers become hollow when we say similar words in similar ways over and over so often that the words become more of a recitation than a communication. This is what the Savior described as ‘vain repetitions’ (see Matthew 6:7). . . .

“Do your prayers at times sound and feel the same? Have you ever said a prayer mechanically, the words pouring forth as though cut from a machine? Do you sometimes bore yourself as you pray?

“Will prayers that do not demand much of your thought merit much attention from our Heavenly Father? When you find yourself getting into a routine with your prayers, step back and think. Meditate for a while on the things for which you really are grateful. Look for them. They don’t have to be grand or glorious. . . .

“Think of those things you truly need. Bring your goals and your hopes and your dreams to the Lord and set them before Him. Heavenly Father wants us to approach Him and ask for His divine aid” (“Improving Our Prayers,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2004, 24, 26).

Matthew 6:8. “Your Father Knoweth What Things Ye Have Need of, before Ye Ask”



Some people might ask what purpose is served in asking for blessings if Heavenly Father already knows what we need. Through prayer we acknowledge our dependence on the Lord, exercise our faith in His ability to bestow desired blessings, and acknowledge that ultimately all blessings come from Him. Approached properly, prayer helps us evaluate our lives and align with the will of God.

Elder David E. Sorensen taught that one reason we pray is because the process of prayer changes us: “I believe that our Heavenly Father teaches us to pray because the very act of praying will improve us. We worship our Father in Heaven as all-knowing and all-powerful. Surely, as our Creator, He knows our cares, our worries, our joys, our struggles without our informing Him. The reason our Heavenly Father asks us to pray cannot be that we are able to tell Him something He does not already know. Rather, the reason He asks us to pray is that the process of learning to communicate

effectively with Him will shape and change our lives” (“Prayer,” *Ensign*, May 1993, 31).

The Bible Dictionary teaches that we also pray to gain blessings the Lord desires to give but requires us to ask for: “Prayer is the act by which the will of the Father and the will of the child are brought into correspondence with each other. The object of prayer is not to change the will of God but to secure for ourselves and for others blessings that God is already willing to grant but that are made conditional on our asking for them. Blessings require some work or effort on our part before we can obtain them. Prayer is a form of work and is an appointed means for obtaining the highest of all blessings” (Bible Dictionary, “Prayer”).

Matthew 6:9. “After This Manner Therefore Pray Ye”

President Russell M. Nelson observed: “The Lord prefaced His prayer by first asking His followers to avoid ‘vain repetitions’ [Matthew 6:7] and to pray ‘after this manner’ [Matthew 6:9]. Thus, the Lord’s Prayer serves as a pattern to follow and not as a piece to memorize and recite repetitively” (“Lessons from the Lord’s Prayers,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 46).

Matthew 6:9–13

The Lord’s Prayer is a model for our prayers. What does each verse teach you about the pattern of prayer?

Matthew 6:9. “Hallowed Be Thy Name”—the Special Language of Prayer

President Dallin H. Oaks taught that we should use special prayer language when addressing our Father in Heaven:

“When we go to worship in a temple or a church, we put aside our working clothes and dress ourselves in something better. This change of clothing is a mark of respect. Similarly, when we address our Heavenly Father, we should put aside our working words and clothe our prayers in special language of reverence and respect. In offering prayers in the English language, members of our church do not address our Heavenly Father with the same words we use in speaking to a fellow worker, to an employee or employer, or to a merchant in the marketplace. We use special words that have been sanctified by use in inspired communications, words that have been recommended to us and modeled for us by those we sustain as prophets and inspired teachers.

“The special language of prayer follows different forms in different languages, but the principle is always the same. We should address prayers to our Heavenly Father in words which speakers of that language associate with love and respect and reverence and closeness” (“The Language of Prayer,” *Ensign*, May 1993, 15–16).

Matthew 6:10. “Thy Kingdom Come”

Jesus Christ taught that we should pray for the kingdom of God to come. As President of the Church, **President Thomas S. Monson** called upon the Saints to petition the Lord in prayer to open those areas of the world where the gospel is not currently allowed to be preached:



President Thomas S. Monson

“The Church is steadily growing; it has since its organization over 178 years ago. . . . There remain, however, areas of the world where our influence is limited and where we are not allowed to share the gospel freely. As did President Spencer W. Kimball over 32 years ago, I urge you to pray for the opening of those areas, that we might share with them the joy of the gospel. As we prayed then in response to President Kimball’s pleadings, we saw miracles unfold as country after country, formerly closed to the Church, was opened. Such will transpire again as we pray with faith” (“Welcome to Conference,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 6).

Matthew 6:13. “Lead Us Not into Temptation”

The Joseph Smith Translation clarifies that the Lord does not lead us into temptation: “And *suffer* us not to be led into temptation, but deliver us from evil” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:14; compare Matthew 6:13, footnote *a*; see also James 1:13).

Matthew 6:19–21. “Lay Up for Yourselves Treasures in Heaven”

While serving in the Presidency of the Seventy, **Elder Joe J. Christensen** taught: “How do we determine where our treasure is? To do so, we need to evaluate the amount of time, money, and thought we devote to something” (“Greed, Selfishness, and Overindulgence,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 10).

President Thomas S. Monson declared:

“The Savior of the world spoke of treasure. In His Sermon on the Mount He declared:

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth. . . .

“But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. . . .

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also’ [Matthew 6:19–21].

“The promised reward was not a treasure of ivory, gold, or silver. Neither did it consist of acres of land or a portfolio of stocks and bonds. The Master spoke of riches within the grasp of all—even joy unspeakable here and eternal happiness hereafter” (“In Search of Treasure,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2003, 19).



To help you visualize your heavenly treasures, review the video segment “Sermon on the Mount: Treasures in Heaven” (4:33) from *The Life of Jesus Christ Bible Videos*, available on LDS.org. This segment covers Matthew 6:19–21; 7:1–27.

Matthew 6:22. “If Therefore Thine Eye Be Single”

Single, as used in this verse, comes from a Greek word meaning “sound, healthy, simple, sincere.” Knowing this definition helps us understand the Savior’s instructions concerning the giving of alms, praying, and fasting. These should all be done with a simple and sincere focus on our Father in Heaven or on the recipient. We might consider such questions as: When I give to the poor, do I hope to bring glory to God or to myself? When I serve the Lord, am I doing so to receive approval from the Lord or from men? When I pray in public, am I addressing God or those in the congregation? (See 2 Nephi 2:30; D&C 88:67–68; Moses 4:2; Joseph Smith—History 1:46.)

Matthew 6:24. “Ye Cannot Serve God and Mammon”

Mammon comes from an Aramaic term meaning “worldly riches” or “wealth.”

Matthew 6:25–34. “Take No Thought”

The Greek phrase that translated to “take no thought” in Matthew 6:25, 34 of the King James Version means to not be overly anxious or worried (see also Matthew 6:27–28, 31; compare the same meaning in Luke 10:41 and Philippians 4:6–7). Although the Joseph Smith Translation of these verses and the version in 3 Nephi 13:25–34 indicate that these teachings are directed specifically to the Apostles, they are applicable to each of us (see D&C 84:81). The Lord is teaching all of us that we are not to let worldly concerns cause us to lose trust in our Father in Heaven or become diverted from seeking His kingdom.



“Consider the lilies of the field” (Matthew 6:28). Photograph taken in Israel

Matthew 6:33. Seeking First the Kingdom of God

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) explained why we should place God and His kingdom above all else in our lives:

“When we put God first, all other things fall into their proper place or drop out of our lives. Our love of the Lord will govern the claims for our affection, the demands on our time, the interests we pursue, and the order of our priorities.

“We should put God ahead of *everyone else* in our lives. . . .

“We should give God, the Father of our spirits, an exclusive preeminence in our lives. He has a prior parental claim on our eternal welfare, ahead of all other ties that may bind us here or hereafter” (“The Great Commandment—Love the Lord,” *Ensign*, May 1988, 4–5).

President Dallin H. Oaks made a similar observation: “‘Seek . . . first to build up the kingdom of God’ [Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38 (in Matthew 6:33, footnote *a*)] means to assign first priority to God and to His work. The work of God is to bring to pass the eternal life of His children (see Moses 1:39), and all that this entails.

. . . As someone has said, if we do not choose the kingdom of God first, it will make little difference in the long run what we have chosen instead of it" ("Focus and Priorities," *Ensign*, May 2001, 83–84). For further information, see the commentary for Matthew 12:30.

Matthew 6:34. "Sufficient unto the Day Is the Evil Thereof"

Matthew's counsel from the Savior, "no thought for the morrow" (Matthew 6:34), means "Don't borrow trouble from tomorrow—you have enough to deal with today."

Matthew 7:1. Judging Righteous Judgment

The Joseph Smith Translation clarifies the Savior's words: "Judge not *unrighteously*, that ye be not judged: *but judge righteous judgment*" (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 7:2 [in Matthew 7:1, footnote a]). **President Dallin H. Oaks** explained these teachings and their application, basing his comments on the principle "that there are two kinds of judging: final judgments, which we are forbidden to make, and intermediate judgments, which we are directed to make, but upon righteous principles":

"*First*, a righteous judgment must, by definition, be intermediate. It will refrain from declaring that a person has been assured of exaltation or from dismissing a person as being irrevocably bound for hellfire. It will refrain from declaring that a person has forfeited all opportunity for exaltation or even all opportunity for a useful role in the work of the Lord. The gospel is a gospel of hope, and none of us is authorized to deny the power of the Atonement to bring about a cleansing of individual sins, forgiveness, and a reformation of life on appropriate conditions.

"*Second*, a righteous judgment will be guided by the Spirit of the Lord, not by anger, revenge, jealousy, or self-interest. . . .

"*Third*, to be righteous, an intermediate judgment must be within our stewardship. We should not presume to exercise and act upon judgments that are outside our personal responsibilities. . . .

"*Fourth*, we should, if possible, refrain from judging until we have adequate knowledge of the facts. . . .

"A *fifth* principle of a righteous intermediate judgment is that whenever possible we will refrain from judging people and only judge situations. . . . We can set and act upon high standards for ourselves or our homes without condemning those who do otherwise. . . .

"*Sixth*, forgiveness is a companion principle to [this] commandment. . . . In modern revelation the Lord has declared, 'I, the Lord, will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men' (D&C 64:10).

"*Seventh*, a final ingredient or principle of a righteous judgment is that it will apply righteous standards" ("Judge Not' and Judging," *Ensign*, Aug. 1999, 7, 9–12).

Matthew 7:1–5. "Judge Not"

President Thomas S. Monson shared the following story, illustrating the need to refrain from judging others:

"A young couple, Lisa and John, moved into a new neighborhood. One morning while they were eating breakfast, Lisa looked out the window and watched her next-door neighbor hanging out her wash.

"That laundry's not clean!" Lisa exclaimed. "Our neighbor doesn't know how to get clothes clean!"

"John looked on but remained silent.

"Every time her neighbor would hang her wash to dry, Lisa would make the same comments.

"A few weeks later Lisa was surprised to glance out her window and see a nice, clean wash hanging in her neighbor's yard. She said to her husband, 'Look, John—she's finally learned how to wash correctly! I wonder how she did it.'

"John replied, 'Well, dear, I have the answer for you. You'll be interested to know that I got up early this morning and washed our windows!'

". . . I'd like to share with you a few thoughts concerning how we view each other. Are we looking through a window which needs cleaning? Are we making judgments when we don't have all the facts? What do we see when we look at others? What judgments do we make about them? . . .

"None of us is perfect. I know of no one who would profess to be so. And yet for some reason, despite our own imperfections, we have a tendency to point out those of others. We make judgments concerning their actions or inactions.

"There is really no way we can know the heart, the intentions, or the circumstances of someone who might say or do something we find reason to criticize. Thus the commandment: 'Judge not'" ("Charity Never Faileth," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 122).

Matthew 7:3–5. What Are a Mote and a Beam?

The Greek word translated as *mote* refers to a tiny speck, chip, or splinter. The Greek word translated as *beam* refers to a large wooden beam used in constructing houses. The Savior’s reference to the mote and beam is an example of *hyperbole*, a figure of speech that uses exaggeration to make a point (compare Matthew 5:29; 19:24). The Savior’s teaching in these verses turns our focus from other people’s faults to our own.

Matthew 7:7. Ask, Seek, Knock

Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that the Lord will give us what we need, not necessarily what we ask for: “Our Father in Heaven has invited you to express your needs, hopes, and desires unto Him. That should not be done in a spirit of negotiation, but rather as a willingness to obey His will no matter what direction that takes. His invitation ‘Ask, and ye shall receive’ (3 Ne. 27:29) does not assure that you will get what you *want*. It does guarantee that, if worthy, you will get what you *need*, as judged by a Father that loves you perfectly, who wants your eternal happiness even more than do you” (“Trust in the Lord,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 17).

Whereas much of the Sermon on the Mount was directed to the multitude (see Matthew 5:1), the Joseph Smith Translation teaches that the Savior’s words recorded in Matthew 7:1–28 were directed to His disciples (see Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 7:1 [in Matthew 7:1, footnote a]).

Matthew 7:21–23

How do these verses refute the false belief that all a person must do to be saved is verbally accept Jesus Christ?

Matthew 7:21. “Not Every One That Saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, Shall Enter into the Kingdom of Heaven”

President Dallin H. Oaks taught that it is not enough for us just to know and profess that the gospel is true: “The conversion [Jesus] required for those who would enter the kingdom of heaven (see Matt. 18:3) was far more than just being converted to testify to the truthfulness of the gospel. To testify is to *know* and to *declare*. The gospel challenges us to be ‘converted,’ which requires us to *do* and to *become*. If any of us relies solely upon our knowledge and testimony of the gospel, we

are in the same position as the blessed but still unfinished Apostles whom Jesus challenged to be ‘converted’ [see Luke 22:32]” (“The Challenge to Become,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 33).

Matthew 7:23. “I Never Knew You”

The Joseph Smith Translation changed “I never knew you” to “Ye never knew *me*” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 7:33 [in Matthew 7:23, footnote a]). Similarly, the Joseph Smith Translation changed “I know you not” to “Ye know *me* not” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 25:11 [in Matthew 25:12, footnote a]). We might ask ourselves, “Is it possible to be active in Church programs but not have the gospel active in our hearts?”

Matthew 7:29. “As One Having Authority”

For insight about how the Savior taught with authority and differently from the scribes, see the commentary for Mark 1:22.

Points to Ponder

- How can following the Beatitudes help lead you to perfection?
- What did the Savior teach about prayer in Matthew 6:5–15 and 7:7–12 that can help you get more from your private and public worship?
- What are examples of anonymous service you could give to family, friends, and strangers with whom you come in contact?

Suggested Assignments

- Using the Beatitudes as a guide, evaluate your life. Write a sentence or two for each of the attributes identified in Matthew 5:3–11 (such as the poor in spirit, they that mourn, or the meek), describing how well your life is conforming to each of the qualities listed there.
- Make a written record of your activities during a one-week period and how much time you spend on each activity. What do you notice about how much time you spend seeking the kingdom of God? Write two or three paragraphs evaluating how your use of time reflects your priorities.

4

Matthew 8–12

Introduction and Timeline for Matthew 8–12

Matthew 8–12 presents a continuation of the Savior’s Galilean ministry overviewed in Matthew 4:23: “Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching . . . and preaching . . . and healing all manner of sickness” (see also Matthew 9:35). Having recorded an important part of the Savior’s *teaching* and *preaching* in chapters 5–7, Matthew next documented in chapters 8–9 numerous miracles that Jesus Christ performed. These miracles illustrate the Savior’s power and authority over all things and prepare readers for Matthew 10, which records the Savior conferring on His Apostles the power to minister and to perform similar miracles. The Savior’s power can give us confidence in His promise and ability to lighten the burdens of all who come unto Him (see Matthew 11:28–30).



1. The Savior used His power to heal many people, calm a storm, and cast out devils.
2. Jesus called Twelve Apostles and gave them power and authority.
3. Jesus taught throughout the area of Galilee.

Commentary for Matthew 8–12

Matthew 8:2–4. Leprosy

For information about the disease of leprosy, see the commentary for Mark 1:40–45 and the Bible Dictionary, “Leprosy.”

Matthew 8:5. Capernaum

Capernaum is referred to as the Savior’s “own city” (Matthew 9:1). It was a prosperous town, located on the famous Roman road, the Via Maris (the Way of the Sea), which linked ancient Egypt with Syria and Mesopotamia. It was the home of Peter, the chief Apostle, and his brother Andrew, another of the Twelve Apostles. Jesus delivered a powerful discourse at the synagogue located in Capernaum (see John 6:24–65). More recorded miracles occurred at Capernaum than at any other site.

Matthew 8:5–13. Healing of the Centurion’s Servant

For insights on the miracle of the centurion’s servant, see the commentary for Luke 7:2–10.

Matthew 8:14–17. Healing Peter’s Mother-in-Law

One of the things we learn from this account is that Peter was married. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles used the account of Peter’s mother-in-law being healed by the Savior to teach

that “Jesus’ specially selected disciples were married men with wives and children and families of their own” (*The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary* [1980], 2:37). Elder McConkie further explained that “some persons in some of the churches in the world are bound by vows of celibacy whereunder they agree to remain unmarried. Celibacy is not of God, whose law is that ‘Marriage is honourable in all’ (Heb. 13:4), and that men should ‘Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.’ (Gen. 1:28.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 119).

Matthew 8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 11:19; 12:8, 32, 40. Jesus Christ Is the “Son of Man”

The title “Son of man” appears to have been the Savior’s preferred way of referring to Himself in the four Gospels. Jesus used the title over 80 times in reference to Himself. Passages such as Matthew 12:8 and Mark 8:29–31 make clear that it is a messianic title. Though we cannot say with certainty why Jesus used this title, the following are possible reasons:

First, Daniel 7:13 contains a prophecy of the coming of the “Son of man.” Jesus may have used this title to show that He was the one who would fulfill this prophecy (compare Mark 14:61–62).

Second, in Moses 6:57 and 7:35 we read that another name for God the Father is “Man of Holiness.” “When Jesus called Himself the Son of Man, it was an open declaration of His divine relationship with the Father”

(Guide to the Scriptures, “Son of Man”; scriptures.lds.org). **Elder James E. Talmage** (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles wrote: “He knew His Father to be the one and only supremely exalted Man, whose Son Jesus was both in spirit and in body—the Firstborn among all the spirit-children of the Father, the Only Begotten in the flesh—and therefore, in a sense applicable to Himself alone, He was and is the Son of the ‘Man of Holiness,’ Elohim, the Eternal Father” (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 143).

Third, using the title “Son of man” may have been one way in which Jesus Christ intended to reveal the nature of Heavenly Father. The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) explained: “God Himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! . . . I say, if you were to see Him today, you would see Him like a man in form—like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man; for Adam was created in the very fashion, image and likeness of God” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 40).

Matthew 8:21–22. “Let the Dead Bury Their Dead”

For help understanding the meaning of the saying “Let the dead bury their dead,” see the commentary for Luke 9:59–60.

Matthew 8:23–27. Jesus Calmed the Sea

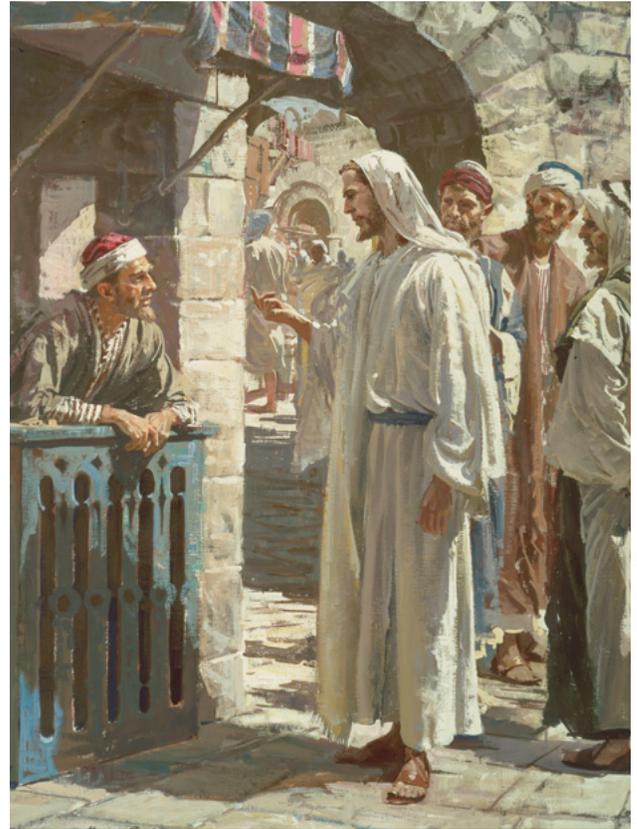
For insights into the account of Jesus calming the tempestuous sea, see the commentary for Mark 4:35–41.

Matthew 8:28–34. Healing of Men Possessed by Devils

To read about the Savior casting devils out of possessed men, see the commentary for Mark 5:1–20.

Matthew 9:1–8. Jesus Healed a Paralytic

A bedridden man, plagued by some sort of paralysis, was brought before Jesus by four of his friends. Jesus was moved by their faith, but rather than immediately healing the man, He spoke something infinitely more significant: “Man, thy sins are forgiven thee” (Luke 5:20). Some Jewish leaders complained and criticized that such talk was blasphemous—only God can forgive sins. Jesus was indeed God and was forgiving the man’s sins. In various dispensations the Lord has taught that great faith can bring forgiveness of one’s sins (see James 5:15). Forgiveness can also come through bearing fervent testimony of the Savior (see D&C 62:3; 84:61) and



He Saw a Man Named Matthew, by Harry Anderson

dedicating oneself to preaching the gospel (see D&C 31:5; 60:7). To read more about the healing of this paralytic, see the commentary for Mark 2:2–5.

Matthew 9:9–13. The Calling of Matthew

The term *publicans* (Latin, *publicani*) refers to men who were responsible to the Roman government for overseeing the collection of taxes in Israel, as well as to those who worked for them and actually collected the revenue. Tax collectors were required to pay a fixed amount to the government each year, but they were free to collect as much from the public as they could. Thus, in Jesus’s day, publicans were one of the most corrupt and detested groups of people among the Jewish populace. Jews who became publicans were often excommunicated.

One of the Lord’s original Apostles, Matthew (also known as Levi before his conversion), was a publican. Matthew 9:9 highlights Matthew’s readiness to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. At the simple invitation “Follow me,” Matthew left “the receipt of custom” (tax office) and followed Jesus. Matthew hosted a feast attended by many of his fellow publicans, whom the Pharisees labeled as sinners. Jesus took the opportunity to teach a powerful

lesson on pride (see Luke 5:27–32). Many of these other publicans also followed Jesus (see Mark 2:15). Many of the publicans mentioned in the New Testament accepted the gospel, perhaps because they were humbled by their lowly social status (see Matthew 9:9–11; 10:2–3; 21:31–32; Luke 7:29; 18:13–14; 19:2, 8).

Matthew 9:14–17. New Cloth and New Bottles

The disciples of John came to the Savior and asked Him why His disciples did not fast. Jesus answered by comparing Himself to a bridegroom and His disciples to the bridegroom’s friends. A marriage feast was a time of great rejoicing—like the time when the Savior was among His friends. Fasting in those days was normally associated with sorrow and would not be appropriate while He was with them. Soon He would not be with them, and then it would be a time of fasting.



Wineskin. Photograph taken in Nazareth, Israel

The “bottles” Jesus Christ referred to in Matthew 9:17 were containers made from goatskins, often called wineskins—not those made of glass or earthenware we commonly think of today. With time wineskins became stretched, cracked, and brittle. Gases produced by the fermentation of newly made wine would expand and stretch old wineskins and could cause them to burst. The “new cloth” mentioned in

Matthew 9:16 refers to unshrunk cloth, which would have been undesirable as a patch because when it shrank it would tear away from the surrounding fabric, the old cloth not being strong enough for the new.

Both analogies—the new cloth and new bottles—point to the incompatibility of the old with the new. In the context of the Savior’s response to the Pharisees (see Matthew 9:14–15), the Savior seemed to be teaching that the gospel He offered was meant not merely to mend Judaism, but to replace many religious and cultural practices of His day. In the same way, the Savior came to make us not just *better* men and women, but “new creatures” (2 Corinthians 5:17; see also Galatians 6:15; Mosiah 27:26). The Joseph Smith Translation adds: “For when that which is new is come, the old is ready to be put away” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 9:21 [in the Bible appendix]).

Matthew 9:18, 23–26. Healing the Ruler’s Daughter

To read about the healing of the ruler’s daughter, see the commentary for Mark 5:22–24, 35–42.

Matthew 9:20–22. Healing of a Woman with an Issue of Blood

To read about the Savior’s healing of a woman with an issue of blood, see the commentary for Mark 5:25–34.

Matthew 9:37–38. “The Harvest Truly Is Plenteous, but the Labourers Are Few”

As the Savior taught in “all the cities and villages” in Galilee (Matthew 9:35), multitudes gathered to hear Him and He perceived that there were many who would accept the gospel, but, He declared, “The labourers are few.” More ministers of the gospel were needed. As recorded in the very next chapter, the Twelve Apostles were called, given authority, and sent forth (see Matthew 10:1). Later, the Savior sent forth 70 more men to preach (see Luke 10:1). **Elder M. Russell Ballard** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that in our day the Church also needs more laborers. He gave the following example of what can happen when Church members become actively involved in sharing the gospel with friends and neighbors:

“Some years ago a faithful convert, Brother George McLaughlin, was called to preside over a small branch of 20 members in Farmingdale, Maine. He was a humble man, driving a milk delivery truck for a living. Through his fasting and earnest prayer, the Spirit taught him what he and the members of his branch needed to do to help the Church grow in their area. Through his great faith, constant prayer, and powerful example, he taught his members how to share the gospel. It’s a marvelous story, one of the great missionary stories of this dispensation. In just one year there were 450 convert baptisms in the branch. The next year there were an additional 200 converts. . . .

“Just five years later, the Augusta Maine Stake was organized. Much of the leadership of that new stake came from those converts in the Farmingdale Branch. Now we might ask why there was such great success in those days, and the answer may be because of the urgent need to strengthen the Church. Let me assure you that that same urgency in all units of the Church is every bit as critical today as it was then” (“The Essential Role of Member Missionary Work,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2003, 38–39). See also the commentary for Luke 10:2.

Matthew 10:1–5. “He Gave Them Power” and Sent Them Forth (see also Luke 6:12–13; Mark 3:13–15)

Matthew 10 records the calling of the Twelve Apostles and the Lord’s instructions to them. The word *apostle* means “one sent forth” (Bible Dictionary, “Apostle”). The title also implies that the person “sent forth” has authority and a message to proclaim. In these latter days, the Lord has declared that Apostles are sent forth to be “special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world” (D&C 107:23).



These Twelve Jesus Sent Forth, by Walter Rane

Elder L. Tom Perry (1922–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that modern Apostles have

the same assignment as Apostles in New Testament times: “An Apostle today continues to be ‘one sent forth.’ The conditions we face are different from those of the early Brethren as we make our journeys to fulfill our assignment. Our manner of travel to all corners of the earth is very different from that of the early Brethren. However, our assignment remains the same as that which was given by the Savior as He instructed His called Twelve to ‘go ye therefore, and teach all nations’” (“What Is a Quorum?” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 24).

After declaring that latter-day Apostles are “men who have a witness of [the Lord’s] divinity, and whose voices have been and will be raised in testimony of his reality,” **President Gordon B. Hinckley** (1910–2008) further described the work of the Apostles: “Their one chief concern must be the advancement of the work of God on the earth. They must be concerned with the welfare of our Father’s children, both those within the Church and those out of the Church. They must do all that they can to give comfort to those who mourn, to give strength to those who are weak, to give encouragement to those who falter, to befriend the friendless, to nurture the destitute, to bless the sick, to bear witness, not out of belief but out of a certain knowledge of the Son of God, their Friend and Master, whose servants they are” (“Special Witnesses for Christ,” *Ensign*, May 1984, 49–50).

Matthew 10:2–4. The Twelve Apostles

The following chart provides a brief overview of the Savior’s original Twelve Apostles:

Jesus Christ’s Twelve Apostles			
Name	Other Names	Home	Other
Simon	Peter, Cephas, Simeon, brother of Andrew	Bethsaida (see John 1:44) and Capernaum (see Mark 1:21, 29)	Fisherman with Andrew and Zebedee’s family. Senior Apostle following Savior’s death; missionary as far as Rome. Tradition says he was crucified head downward in Rome about A.D. 64–68. With James and John, he conferred the Melchizedek Priesthood on Joseph Smith.
Andrew	Brother of Peter	Bethsaida (see John 1:44) and Capernaum (see Mark 1:21, 29)	Fisherman with Peter and Zebedee’s family. First introduced Peter to Jesus Christ. Tradition says he preached in Scythia (Ukraine and Russia), Greece, and Asia Minor and was crucified on an X-shaped cross.
James	Son of Zebedee; he and his brother John were “Boanerges” or “sons of thunder.”	Possibly Bethsaida	Fisherman with John, Peter, and Andrew. Preached in Jerusalem and Judea. Member of the First Presidency with Peter and John. Beheaded by Herod in A.D. 44 in Jerusalem (see Acts 12:2), first of the Twelve to be martyred.
John	“The Beloved”; he and his brother James were “Boanerges” or “sons of thunder.”	Possibly Bethsaida	Fisherman with James, Peter, and Andrew. Member of the First Presidency with Peter and James. Labored among churches of Asia Minor, especially Ephesus. Banished to the Isle of Patmos, where he wrote the book of Revelation. Was later translated (see D&C 7).

Jesus Christ's Twelve Apostles			
Name	Other Names	Home	Other
Philip		Bethsaida (see John 1:44; 12:21)	Shared news of the long-awaited Messiah with Nathanael. Tradition says he preached in Asia Minor and died in Hierapolis.
Bartholomew	Nathaniel or Nathanael	Cana (see John 21:2)	Tradition says he preached in southern Arabia and was flayed to death or crucified.
Matthew	Levi; son of Alphaeus	Capernaum	Tax collector (see Matthew 9:9). Tradition says he preached in Parthia and Ethiopia, where he died as a martyr.
Thomas	Didymus	Probably Galilee	Tradition says he was a missionary to Parthia (modern Iran) and India and died when shot by arrows while in prayer.
James	The Less; the Younger; son of Alphaeus	Probably Galilee	Tradition says he preached in Palestine and Egypt and was crucified in Egypt or stoned by Jews for preaching of Christ.
Simon	The Canaanite; Zelotes (the Zealot)	Probably Galilee	May have taught the gospel in Britain and Egypt. Tradition says he suffered death by crucifixion.
Judas	Son of James; Jude; Thaddaeus; Lebbaeus	Probably Galilee	Tradition says he preached in Assyria and Persia, where he was martyred.
Judas Iscariot	Iscariot	Kerioth (Judea)	Betrayed Jesus Christ and then hanged himself.

Information on the missionary travels and traditional deaths of the Apostles is based on Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, Eric D. Huntsman, and Thomas A. Wayment, *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament* (2006), 303.

Matthew 10:5–6. Go Not to the Gentiles, but to the House of Israel

The Savior's instruction in these verses shows that in His time, the preaching of the kingdom of God was "to the Jew first," and later to the Gentiles (Romans 1:16; see also Matthew 15:24). After the Savior's Resurrection, He instructed His Apostles to take the gospel message to all nations, both Jewish and Gentile (see Matthew 28:19–20; Acts 1:8; 8:4–25). To read more about the tension between Jews and Samaritans at the time of Christ, see the commentary for John 4:20–24.

Matthew 10:9–10. Without Purse or Scrip

In the Savior's time, a purse carried money, while a scrip was a larger bag used to carry food and other supplies. The Savior instructed His Apostles that they were not to worry about food, clothing, lodging, or other temporal needs; they were to rely on the Lord and the mercies of others for their sustenance. This was in harmony with the hospitality and social customs of the day. Later, in Luke 22:35–36, Jesus revoked this command to rely on the hospitality of the people, perhaps because the Apostles would soon carry the gospel to Gentile nations that did not have the same standards of hospitality and because they would face opposition from the Jews as they went out into the world (see John 15:18–22).

Matthew 10:14. "Shake Off the Dust of Your Feet"

Elder James E. Talmage provided this insight about the Savior's instructions regarding shaking off the dust of one's feet: "To ceremonially shake the dust from one's feet as a testimony against another was understood by the Jews to symbolize a cessation of fellowship and a renunciation of all responsibility for consequences that might follow. It became an ordinance of accusation and testimony by the Lord's instructions to His apostles as cited in [Matthew 10:14]. In the current dispensation, the Lord has similarly directed His authorized servants to so testify against those who wilfully and maliciously oppose the truth when authoritatively presented" (*Jesus the Christ*, 345; see also D&C 24:15; 75:18–22; 84:92–96). Because of its serious nature, however, this should never be done except under the direction of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Matthew 10:16. Wise as Serpents

When the Savior sent His disciples out to preach the gospel, He told them to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16). In modern times, the Savior gave similar counsel to His disciples, declaring, "Be ye as wise as serpents and yet without sin" (D&C 111:11). Both accounts teach that the Savior's disciples should combine wisdom with innocence and purity. The Joseph Smith Translation emphasizes the importance of being a wise servant of the Master: "Be ye therefore

wise *servants*, and as harmless as doves” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 10:14; compare Matthew 10:16).

Matthew 10:16–39

Which parts of the Savior’s counsel do you think would have given the Apostles the greatest comfort? Though this counsel was given specifically to His Apostles, what teachings do you think also apply to all members of the Church? How can you apply them in your life?

Matthew 10:34–37. “He That Loveth Father or Mother More Than Me” (see also Luke 14:26)

In these verses Jesus Christ declared that His message would not always bring peace. In fact, choosing to make God preeminent in one’s life might even result in divisions within a family. **President Ezra Taft Benson** (1899–1984), in commenting on this scripture passage, noted that one of the most difficult choices a person might make is choosing between God and a family member:

“One of the most difficult tests of all is when you have to choose between pleasing God or pleasing someone you love or respect—particularly a family member.

“Nephi faced that test and handled it well when his good father temporarily murmured against the Lord (see 1 Nephi 16:18–25). Job maintained his integrity with the Lord even though his wife told him to curse God and die (see Job 2:9–10).

“The scripture says, ‘Honour thy father and thy mother’ (Exodus 20:12; see also Mosiah 13:20). Sometimes one must choose to honor Heavenly Father over a mortal father” (“The Great Commandment—Love the Lord,” *Ensign*, May 1988, 5).

Matthew 10:39. “He That Loseth His Life for My Sake Shall Find It” (see also Matthew 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; 17:33)

President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency taught that losing our lives means overcoming selfishness and committing ourselves to the service of others:

“For each of us unselfishness can mean being the right person at the right time in the right place to render service. Almost every day brings opportunities to perform unselfish acts for others. Such acts are unlimited and can be as simple as a kind word, a helping hand, or a gracious smile.

“The Savior reminds us, ‘He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it’ [Matthew 10:39]. One of life’s paradoxes is that a person who approaches everything with a what’s-in-it-for-me attitude may acquire money, property, and land, but in the end will lose the fulfillment and the happiness that a person enjoys who shares his talents and gifts generously with others.

“. . . The greatest fulfillment in life comes by rendering service to others, and not being obsessed with ‘what’s in it for me’” (“What’s in It for Me?” *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 21–22).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that losing our lives means submitting our will to God’s will, thereby finding our true identity: “So many of us are kept from eventual consecration because we mistakenly think that, somehow, by letting our will be swallowed up in the will of God, we lose our individuality (see Mosiah 15:7). What we are really worried about, of course, is not giving up self, but selfish things—like our roles, our time, our preeminence, and our possessions. No wonder we are instructed by the Savior to lose ourselves (see Luke 9:24). He is only asking us to lose the old self in order to find the new self. It is not a question of one’s losing identity but of finding his true identity!” (“Swallowed Up in the Will of the Father,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 23). For additional insights on what it means to lose your life for the Lord’s sake, see the commentaries for Mark 8:34–38 and for Mark 8:38.

Matthew 10:41. Receiving a Prophet in the Name of a Prophet

To receive a prophet “in the name of a prophet” means to accept him *as* a prophet and to recognize his words as coming from the Lord (see D&C 1:38). **Elder M. Russell Ballard** shared an example of a young woman who showed by her actions that she received President Gordon B. Hinckley as a prophet. Elder Ballard referred to counsel that President Hinckley had given to youth of the Church concerning their physical appearance, including admonishing young women to wear only one pair of earrings (see “A Prophet’s Counsel and Prayer for Youth,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2001, 7). Elder Ballard then said:

“I know a 17-year-old who, just prior to the prophet’s talk, had pierced her ears a second time. She came home from the fireside, took off the second set of earrings, and simply said to her parents, ‘If President Hinckley says we should only wear one set of earrings, that’s good enough for me.’

“Wearing two pair of earrings may or may not have eternal consequences for this young woman, but her willingness to obey the prophet will. And if she will obey him now, on something relatively simple, how much easier it will be to follow him when greater issues are at stake” (“His Word Ye Shall Receive,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 66).

Matthew 11:2–6. Did John the Baptist Doubt That Jesus Was the Messiah?

While Jesus was ministering throughout the cities of Galilee, John the Baptist, who had been put into prison by Herod, “sent two of his disciples to inquire of Jesus to reassure their faith. Many have thought this event reflected a lack of confidence in John’s own mind. However, Jesus took the occasion to bear testimony of the great work John had done, emphasizing that he was unwavering and true” (Bible Dictionary, “John the Baptist”).

Robert J. Matthews further explained that John wanted his followers to become disciples of Jesus Christ: “The question they were to put to Jesus was for their edification, not for his own. John knew, as no one else knew, who Jesus was, and he had known it for a long time. He had had revelation from heaven to this effect: he had seen with his eyes, he had heard with his ears, and he had the testimony of the Holy Ghost. . . . The most satisfactory answer seems to be that John sent his disciples to question Jesus about his identity so that they themselves would at long last realize the truth of what John had been testifying” (*A Burning Light: The Life and Ministry of John the Baptist* [1972], 92).

Matthew 11:11. “He That Is Least”

For insights on being “least,” see the commentary for Luke 7:28.

Matthew 11:13–14. John the Baptist Was a Forerunner to Jesus Christ

After the disciples of John departed, Jesus began teaching the people about the greatness of John the Baptist. John the Baptist was foreordained to be a forerunner to Jesus Christ, a mission that fulfilled Old Testament prophecy, as made clear in the Joseph Smith Translation:

“But the days will come, when the violent shall have no power; for all the prophets and the law prophesied that it should be thus until John.

“Yea, as many as have prophesied have foretold of these days.

“And if ye will receive it, verily, he was the Elias, who was for to come and prepare all things” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 11:13–15 [in the Bible appendix]).

The following scripture passages describe John the Baptist’s foreordained mission as a forerunner to Jesus Christ: Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1; Luke 1:76–77; 1 Nephi 10:7–10; Doctrine and Covenants 84:27–28.

Matthew 11:16–19. The Children in the Market

In Matthew 11:16–19 the Savior illustrated the inconsistency and unbelief of those who rejected Him and John the Baptist. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** paraphrased these verses: “What illustration can I choose to show how petty, peevish, and insincere are you unbelieving Jews? You are like fickle children playing games; when you hold a mock wedding, your playmates refuse to dance; when you change the game to a funeral procession, your playmates refuse to mourn. In like manner you are only playing at religion. As cross and capricious children you reject John because he came with the strictness of the Nazarites, and ye reject me because I display the warm human demeanor that makes for pleasant social intercourse” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 1:263).

Matthew 11:28–30. “Come unto Me”

The Savior promised rest to all who come unto Him, no matter how difficult life’s trials. **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained how we follow the Savior’s repeated invitation “Come unto me”:

“Just believing, just having a ‘molecule’ of faith— . . . that simple step, when focused on the Lord Jesus Christ, has ever been and always will be the first principle of His eternal gospel, the first step out of despair.

“Second, we must change anything we can change that may be part of the problem. In short we must repent, perhaps the most hopeful and encouraging word in the Christian vocabulary. . . . Anything we can change we should change, and we must forgive the rest. In this way our access to the Savior’s Atonement becomes as unimpeded as we, with our imperfections, can make it. He will take it from there.

“Third, in as many ways as possible we try to take upon us His identity, and we begin by taking upon us His name. That name is formally bestowed by covenant in the saving ordinances of the gospel. These start with baptism and conclude with temple covenants, with many others,

such as partaking of the sacrament, laced throughout our lives as additional blessings and reminders. . . .

“Following these most basic teachings, a splendor of connections to Christ opens up to us in multitudinous ways: prayer and fasting and meditation upon His purposes, savoring the scriptures, giving service to others, ‘succor[ing] the weak, lift[ing] up the hands which hang down, . . . strengthen[ing] the feeble knees’ [D&C 81:5]. Above all else, loving with ‘the pure love of Christ,’ that gift that ‘never faileth,’ that gift that ‘beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, [and] endureth all things’ [Moroni 7:45]. Soon, with that kind of love, we realize our days hold scores of thoroughfares leading to the Master and that every time we reach out, however feebly, for Him, we discover He has been anxiously trying to reach us” (“Broken Things to Mend,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2006, 69–70).

Matthew 11:28–30. “Take My Yoke upon You”

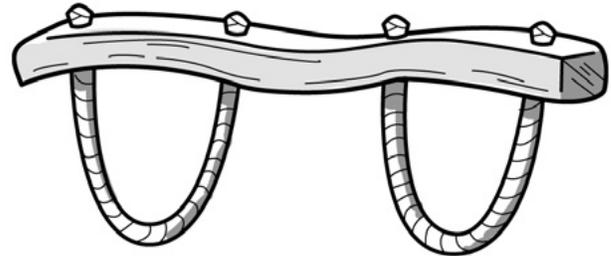
In times past, wooden yokes were usually carefully crafted by carpenters to fit the necks of the animals that would wear them. Since yokes were used to bind one animal to another animal, they can be seen as symbolic of the covenant relationship that binds us to the Savior and allows us to “pull together” with Him. **President Howard W. Hunter** (1907–95) explained:

“In biblical times the yoke was a device of great assistance to those who tilled the field. It allowed the strength of a second animal to be linked and coupled with the effort of a single animal, sharing and reducing the heavy labor of the plow or wagon. A burden that was overwhelming or perhaps impossible for one to bear could be equitably and comfortably borne by two bound together with a common yoke. . . .

“Why face life’s burdens alone, Christ asks, or why face them with temporal support that will quickly falter? To the heavy laden it is Christ’s yoke, it is the power and peace of standing side by side with a God that will provide the support, balance, and strength to meet our challenges and endure our tasks here in the hardpan field of mortality.

“Obviously, the personal burdens of life vary from person to person, but every one of us has them. Furthermore, each trial in life is tailored to the individual’s capacities and needs as known by a loving Father in Heaven. Of course, some sorrows are brought on by the sins of a world not following the counsel of that Father in Heaven. Whatever the reason, none of us seems to be completely free from life’s challenges. To one and all,

Christ said, in effect: As long as we all must bear some burden and shoulder some yoke, why not let it be mine? My promise to you is that my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. (See Matt. 11:28–30.) (“Come unto Me,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 18).



To those who take upon them the Savior’s yoke, He promises “rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:29). This promised “rest” can be a lightening of our burdens (see Mosiah 24:15) and ultimately a fullness of God’s glory (see D&C 84:24; Hebrews 4:1–11).

Matthew 12:1–13. “It Is Lawful to Do Well on the Sabbath Days” (see also Mark 2:27–3:5; Luke 6:9)

For insights on being “lawful” on the Sabbath, see the commentaries for Mark 2:23–3:7, for Mark 2:27–28, and for Mark 3:4–6.

Matthew 12:22–30, 33. “Either Make the Tree Good . . . or Else Make the Tree Corrupt”

The Pharisees took an untenable position when they accused Jesus of using the power of the devil to do something good by healing a man possessed with a devil (see Matthew 12:22–24). The Savior taught that “a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit” (Matthew 7:18). In challenging the Pharisees to “either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt” (Matthew 12:33), Jesus was telling them they needed to make a choice about Him. Because of His good works they could not consistently call Him evil, and they could not take a neutral position (see Matthew 12:30). Confronted with His testimony and good works, the Pharisees had to choose whether or not they would accept Him as the Christ and follow Him.

Christian writer C. S. Lewis taught that we too must make an all-or-nothing choice in response to Jesus Christ: “You must make your choice. Either this man [Jesus Christ] was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can

spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to" (*Mere Christianity* [1952], 41).

The term *Beelzebub* used by the Pharisees (see Matthew 12:24) literally means "Lord of flies." It refers to an ancient Phoenician deity who was a chief among demons. In scripture, Beelzebub is another name for Satan.

Matthew 12:30. "He That Is Not with Me Is against Me"



Pharisees regularly opposed the actions and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie spoke of truths that stem from the Savior's statement in Matthew 12:30:

"There is, in fact, no such thing as neutrality where the gospel is concerned. Jesus said: 'He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.' (Matt. 12:30.) . . . If we do not sustain and uphold and support the kingdom of God in all things, we are thereby aiding a cause other than the Lord's."

Elder McConkie further explained: "On every issue it behooves us to determine what the Lord would have us do and what counsel he has given through the appointed officers of his kingdom on earth. No true Latter-day Saint will ever take a stand that is in opposition to what the Lord has revealed to those who direct the affairs of his earthly kingdom" ("The Caravan Moves On," *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 84–85).

Matthew 12:31–32, 43–45. "Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost"

"Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost" is sometimes used interchangeably with the terms "denying the Holy Ghost" or "the unpardonable sin." Other scriptures

provide further understanding of the unpardonable sin (see Hebrews 6:4–6; D&C 29:43–45; 76:30–37; 88:32).

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** defined this blasphemy: "What must a man do to commit the unpardonable sin? He must receive the Holy Ghost, have the heavens opened unto him, and know God, and then sin against him. After a man has sinned against the Holy Ghost, there is no repentance for him. He has got to say that the sun does not shine while he sees it; he has got to deny Jesus Christ when the heavens have been opened unto him, and to deny the plan of salvation with his eyes open to the truth of it; and from that time he begins to be an enemy" (in *History of the Church*, 6:314).

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) noted that few will commit this sin: "The sin against the Holy Ghost requires such knowledge that it is manifestly impossible for the rank and file [members of the Church] to commit such a sin" (*The Miracle of Forgiveness* [1969], 123).

President Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles similarly reassured Church members: "Save for those few who defect to perdition after having known a fulness, there is no habit, no addiction, no rebellion, no transgression, no offense exempted from the promise of complete forgiveness" ("The Brilliant Morning of Forgiveness," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 19).

The Joseph Smith Translation makes clear that in Matthew 12:43–45, the Savior is discussing the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, for when a person commits this sin, the Holy Ghost does not return to him:

"Then came some of the scribes and said unto him, Master, it is written that, Every sin shall be forgiven; but ye say, Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven. And they asked him, saying, How can these things be?"

"And he said unto them, When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest and findeth none; but when a man speaketh against the Holy Ghost, then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth him empty, swept and garnished; for the good spirit leaveth him unto himself" (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 12:37–38 [in the Bible appendix]).

Matthew 12:39–40. Sign Seeking

When the Pharisees asked the Savior for a sign, He replied, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign" (Matthew 12:39). The **Prophet Joseph Smith** commented on this statement made by the Savior: "He who seeketh a sign is an adulterous person; and that

principle is eternal, undeviating, and firm as the pillars of heaven; for whenever you see a man seeking after a sign, you may set it down that he is an adulterous man” (in *History of the Church*, 3:385). On another occasion, Joseph Smith taught the following about sign seeking: “Faith comes not by signs, but by hearing the word of God” (*Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 384).

Matthew 12:41–42. “The Men of Nineveh” and “the Queen of the South”

Ancient Assyria, whose capital was Nineveh, was notorious for its brutal treatment of war captives, who were often tortured, beheaded, dismembered before family members, flayed alive, roasted over a slow fire, or sent back to Assyria for forced relocation or public execution. Nonetheless, the ancient inhabitants of Nineveh, who were not of Israelite descent, responded to Jonah’s cry of repentance (see Jonah 3:1–9). Similarly, the queen of the south (queen of Sheba), also not of Israel, had great respect for Solomon, the Israelite king (see 1 Kings 10:1–13).

The Savior referred to the men of Nineveh and the queen of Sheba while rebuking the Pharisees for failing to believe in Him. He was “greater than Jonas” (Matthew 12:41) and “greater than Solomon” (Matthew 12:42)—yet to the shame of the Jewish leaders, who were of Israel and ought to have known better, they were refusing to honor and hearken to Jesus Christ, the greatest of all. (See similar rebukes in Matthew 8:10; 11:20–24; Luke 4:25–27.)

Matthew 12:48–50. Those Who Do the Will of the Father Belong to His Eternal Family

In these verses, the Savior took the arrival of His family as an opportunity to teach that those who do the will of Heavenly Father belong to His eternal family. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** said of the Savior’s words: “The blessings of heaven are available—freely, without money and without price—to all men. All men cannot be born into this world as the sons of God, after the manner of the flesh, but all, through righteousness, can be adopted into the family of the Eternal God and become joint-heirs with Christ of the fullness of the glory and power of the Father” (*Mortal Messiah*, 2:227).

In this dispensation, the Savior again taught this principle: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, that as many as receive me, to them will I give power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on my name” (D&C 11:30).

Points to Ponder

- Matthew gave numerous accounts of people coming to Jesus Christ to be healed (see Matthew 8–9). He followed those accounts with the Savior’s invitation, “Come unto me, . . . and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). How does one come unto Christ? What kind of rest does the Savior offer to those who come unto Him? (see D&C 84:24).
- The Lord stated, “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:30). In what sense is the Savior’s yoke easy?
- The Savior taught, “He that is not with me is against me” (Matthew 12:30). How are you striving *to be with* the Savior in your life?

Suggested Assignments

- Read Matthew 10:1–4; Mark 3:13–19; and Luke 6:13–16, and highlight the names of the original Twelve Apostles. Look up the names of the Apostles in the Bible Dictionary or Guide to the Scriptures (scriptures.lds.org) and study what is written there. Write a few paragraphs about what you learned from studying about the ancient Apostles that helps you better appreciate the ministry of living Apostles in our day.
- Read Matthew 11:28–30. Make a list of various challenges people experience that could cause them to feel “heavy laden.” Write a paragraph or two describing how you have had your own burdens lightened or seen someone else’s burdens lightened by coming unto Christ.

5

Matthew 13–15

Introduction and Timeline for Matthew 13–15

The events in Matthew 13–15 took place at a time when Jesus Christ and His disciples were facing increasing opposition from many of the Pharisees (see Matthew 12:14; 15:1–20). At this point in the Savior’s public ministry, He began using a teaching method that reached listeners at their individual levels of spirituality—He began to teach in parables (see Mark 4:34). Jesus Christ used the parables found in Matthew 13 to teach truths about the kingdom of heaven, which is the Church, including the eventual Apostasy and latter-day Restoration (see Bible Dictionary, “Kingdom of heaven or kingdom of God,” “Parables”).

The account in Matthew 14 of Jesus Christ walking on the waters of the Sea of Galilee provides an example of the Savior’s power over the elements. This experience teaches that the Savior, who can walk on water and calm storms, can also lift His disciples and give them peace during storms of opposition. The storm can also be seen as a symbol of the opposition the Lord and His disciples were facing at that time. The Savior’s power to lift and to heal is further illustrated by the healings described in Matthew 15.



1. Jesus Christ continued to minister in Galilee.
2. Jesus Christ taught in parables.
3. The Savior walked on water on the Sea of Galilee.
4. The Savior healed the daughter of a Gentile woman.

Commentary for Matthew 13–15

Matthew 13. Parables

In chapter 13, Matthew recorded eight parables of the Savior. The word *parable* means “a comparison” or “a setting side by side” (Bible Dictionary, “Parables”). Each of the eight parables recorded in Matthew 13 compares the “kingdom of heaven” to a physical object or objects. (For a definition of the “kingdom of heaven,” see the commentary for Matthew 13:11.) There are often contextual clues that clarify the interpretation of a parable, such as the audience to whom the parable was directed or the question Jesus was addressing. The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) taught, “I have a key by which I understand the scriptures. I enquire, what was the question which drew out the answer, or caused Jesus to utter the parable? . . . To ascertain its meaning, we must dig up the root and ascertain what it was that drew the saying out of Jesus” (in *History of the Church*, 5:261).

In some instances the Savior Himself gave the interpretation. For example, Jesus explained the meaning of the parables of the sower and the wheat and the tares (see Matthew 13:3–8, 18–30, 36–43). Although there is normally one intended interpretation of a parable, there

may be many lessons and truths from a parable that can be applied to modern circumstances.

President Hugh B. Brown (1883–1975) of the First Presidency pointed out that the Savior’s parables most likely developed out of ordinary day-to-day experiences: “His parables were not woven from fancy. They were word pictures of what he had observed as he lived among the people. He had seen the sower at work in the field, the shepherd with his sheep, the repentant son returning to his father, the barren fig tree; he knew the publican and the Pharisee and had attended wedding feasts where foolish virgins had no oil in their lamps. He taught from the richness of his own life, and he taught because he loved the people” (*Eternal Quest*, sel. Charles Manley Brown [1956], 181).

Matthew 13:3–52. Parables of the Gathering

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** taught that the Savior’s parables in Matthew 13 help us understand the gathering of people into the Church during New Testament times and also during the latter-day establishment of the gospel on the earth: “The sayings of the Savior, recorded in the 13th chapter of His Gospel according to St. Matthew, . . . in my mind, afford us as clear an understanding

upon the important subject of the gathering, as anything recorded in the Bible” (in *History of the Church*, 2:264).

The following chart summarizes some of the Prophet Joseph Smith’s teachings on the parables of Matthew 13

and shows what they teach about the gathering of Israel and about the marvelous growth and destiny of the kingdom of heaven (the Church) from the days of Jesus Christ through the Millennium.

Parable in Matthew 13	The Gathering
Sower (verses 3–23)	<p>People who hear the preaching of the gospel respond in various ways. Also, the Church was established by Jesus and the Apostles in the meridian of time.</p> <p>“This parable [of the sower] was spoken to demonstrate the effects that are produced by the preaching of the word; and we believe that it has an allusion directly to the commencement, or the setting up, of the Kingdom in that age [New Testament times]” (<i>Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith</i> [2007], 298–99).</p>
Wheat and tares (verses 24–30, 36–43)	<p>The righteous and wicked grew together in New Testament times, eventually leading to the Great Apostasy. In the latter days, they will grow together until the end of the world, when the wicked will be destroyed and the righteous will be gathered in the kingdom of God.</p> <p>“We learn by this parable [of wheat and tares], not only the setting up of the Kingdom in the days of the Savior, which is represented by the good seed, which produced fruit, but also the corruptions of the Church, which are represented by the tares, which were sown by the enemy, which His disciples would fain have plucked up, or cleansed the Church of, if their views had been favored by the Savior. But He, knowing all things, says, Not so. As much as to say, your views are not correct, the Church is in its infancy, and if you take this rash step, you will destroy the wheat, or the Church, with the tares; therefore it is better to let them grow together until the harvest, or the end of the world, which means the destruction of the wicked, which is not yet fulfilled” (<i>Teachings: Joseph Smith</i>, 299).</p>
Mustard seed (verses 31–32)	<p>The Church will be restored in the latter days.</p> <p>“‘The Kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed’ [Matthew 13:31–32]. . . . This figure is given to represent the Church as it shall come forth in the last days. . . . Let us take the Book of Mormon, which a man took and hid in his field, securing it by his faith, to spring up in the last days, or in due time; let us behold it coming forth out of the ground, which is indeed accounted the least of all seeds, but behold it branching forth, yea, even towering with lofty branches and Godlike majesty, until it, like the mustard seed, becomes the greatest of all herbs. . . . God is sending down His powers, gifts, and angels to lodge in the branches thereof” (<i>Teachings: Joseph Smith</i>, 301).</p>
Leaven and treasures new and old (verses 33, 52)	<p>The latter-day Church will spread throughout the earth, aided by the leaven of the testimonies of the Three Witnesses and the latter-day scriptures.</p> <p>“‘The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened’ [Matthew 13:33]. It may be understood that the Church of the Latter-day Saints has taken its rise from a little leaven that was put into three witnesses. Behold, how much this is like the parable! It is fast leavening the lump, and will soon leaven the whole. . . .</p> <p>“‘Then said He unto them, therefore every scribe which is instructed in the Kingdom of Heaven, is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things that are new and old’ [Matthew 13:52].</p> <p>“For the works of this example, see the Book of Mormon coming forth out of the treasure of the heart. Also the covenants given to the Latter-day Saints [the Doctrine and Covenants], also the translation of the Bible—thus bringing forth out of the heart things new and old, thus answering to three measures of meal undergoing the purifying touch by a revelation of Jesus Christ, . . . which will answer to the leaven which leavened the whole lump” (<i>Teachings: Joseph Smith</i>, 302–3).</p>

Parable in Matthew 13	The Gathering
Hidden treasure (verse 44) and pearl of great price (verses 45–46)	<p>The gathering of the righteous.</p> <p>“The Saints work after this pattern [of the hidden treasure]. See the Church of the Latter-day Saints, selling all that they have, and gathering themselves together unto a place that they may purchase for an inheritance, that they may be together and bear each other’s afflictions in the day of calamity.</p> <p>“. . . See men traveling to find places for Zion and her stakes or remnants, who, when they find the place for Zion, or the pearl of great price, straightway sell that they have, and buy it” (in <i>History of the Church</i>, 2:272).</p> <p>It should be noted that although in the early days of the Church, Saints were encouraged to gather to a common geographical location, like Nauvoo or Salt Lake City, today Church leaders have encouraged us to stay where we are and to build up the Church in our current cities and towns.</p>
Net (verses 47–50)	<p>All types of people will be gathered into the Church.</p> <p>“‘Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind . . .’ [Matthew 13:47–48]. For the work of this pattern, behold the seed of Joseph, spreading forth the Gospel net upon the face of the earth, gathering of every kind, that the good may be saved in vessels prepared for that purpose, and the angels will take care of the bad” (<i>Teachings: Joseph Smith</i>, 303).</p>



The Sower, by George Soper

Matthew 13:4–8. The Different Types of Soil (see also Mark 4:1–20)

In the parable of the sower (also called the parable of the soils), the field represents the world, and the sowers represent the Apostles. The different types of soil represent the conditions of people’s hearts. “The word of the kingdom” is “sown in [one’s] heart” (Matthew 13:19), the Savior taught, and the parable describes the various ways in which people respond to the gospel word.

The *way side* was a path or road around or through fields. It became hardened as farmers and travelers regularly walked upon it. The hardness of the way side prevented seeds that fell upon it from sinking into the soil and taking root, allowing birds to easily see and eat them. *Stony places* were rocky surfaces covered by a thin layer of fertile soil. Though seeds could send forth shallow roots, the rock that lay just below the surface prevented the roots from going deeper, and the plant was unable to withstand the scorching heat of the day. The ground with *thorns* was fertile soil; however, it was overgrown by thorns and other weeds that crowded out more productive plants by depriving them of water and needed nutrients. The *good ground* was fertile soil with sufficient depth for healthy roots so the plants could grow and bring forth varying amounts of fruit.

Matthew 13:10–12. “Whosoever Hath, to Him Shall Be Given” (see also Mark 4:11–12)

We receive more understanding of the meaning of the Lord’s words in Matthew 13:12 from His statement in 2 Nephi 28:30: “Unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have” (see also Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 13:10–11 [in Matthew 13:12, footnote *a*]). The Savior’s words in Matthew 13:12 could therefore be taken to mean, “For whosoever hath [a capacity to receive], to him shall be given.” This underscores the importance of individual agency in understanding the gospel. Even an all-powerful God cannot give to someone who will not receive. Another Book of Mormon passage reinforces this principle, teaching that when people continue to harden their hearts against spiritual truth, they may lose the spiritual knowledge they once had (see Alma 12:10–11).

Matthew 13:11. The Kingdom of Heaven

The phrase “the kingdom of heaven” occurs eight times in Matthew 13. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that the “kingdom of heaven” as used in Matthew means “the Church and kingdom of God on earth; the Church as formally set up and organized by the Lord Jesus Christ in the meridian of time” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 1:296; see also Bible Dictionary, “Kingdom of heaven or kingdom of God”).

Matthew 13:13. “They Seeing See Not”

The Savior used parables to hide meaning from those who were spiritually unprepared and to reveal great truths to those who were ready to receive them (see Matthew 13:10–16). “The parable conveys to the hearer religious truth exactly in proportion to his faith and intelligence; to the dull and uninspired it is a mere story, ‘seeing they see not,’ while to the instructed and spiritual it reveals the mysteries or secrets of the kingdom of heaven. Thus it is that the parable exhibits the condition of all true knowledge. Only he who seeks finds” (Bible Dictionary, “Parables”). The Savior’s parables therefore included an implied invitation to seek further understanding of the truths they contained, and those who did so were rewarded with greater enlightenment (see Matthew 13:10, 36).

Elder James E. Talmage (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles provided a simple illustration showing why some people may fail to understand the

truths taught in parables: “Two men may hear the same words; one of them listens in indolence and indifference, the other with active mind intent on learning all that the words can possibly convey; and, having heard, the diligent man goes straightway to do the things commended to him, while the careless one neglects and forgets. The one is wise, the other foolish; the one has heard to his eternal profit, the other to his everlasting condemnation” (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 297).

Matthew 13:19–23

Which of the soils in these verses do you think most resembles the Pharisees and scribes described in Matthew 12:22–24, 38–40?

Matthew 13:23. Preparing the Good Soil of Our Hearts (see also Mark 4:20; Luke 8:15)

President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency taught how we can increase the receptivity of our hearts to the gospel message:

“For the seeds of faith to sprout in our lives, we must avoid Satan’s grasp.

“We also need to prepare our own seedbeds of faith. To do this we need to plow the soil through daily humble prayer, asking for strength and forgiveness. We need to harrow [break up] the soil by overcoming our feelings of pride. We need to prepare the seedbed by keeping the commandments to the best of our ability” (“Of Seeds and Soils,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 48).

President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency taught that studying the word of God can open our hearts to spiritual things: “The word of God is the doctrine taught by Jesus Christ and by His prophets. Alma knew that words of doctrine had great power. They can open the minds of people to see spiritual things not visible to the natural eye. And they can open the heart to feelings of the love of God and a love for truth” (“The Power of Teaching Doctrine,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 73).

Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43. Parable of the Wheat and the Tares

“The word [*tares*] denotes darnel grass, a poisonous weed, which, until it comes into ear, is similar in appearance to wheat” (Bible Dictionary, “Tares”). The Savior explained that the gathering and burning of the tares represented the destruction of the wicked at the end of this world (see Matthew 13:38–42). **President Marion G. Romney** (1897–1988) of the First Presidency stated: “The tempo of wickedness and destruction has

been greatly accelerated . . . , and so has the gathering in of the wheat. Even now the tares are binding themselves in bundles, making ready for the field to be burned” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1966, 53).

In addition to the explanation of this parable that the Lord gave in Matthew 13:36–43, He gave further explanation in Doctrine and Covenants 86:1–7, clarifying how the parable applies to the Apostasy, the Restoration, and the end of the world. The Lord also stated that the gathering of the wheat is taking place in this dispensation, and the burning of the tares will occur at His triumphal return (see D&C 101:63–68).



The Enemy Sowing Tares, by James Tissot

Matthew 13:31–32. A Tiny Mustard Seed Becomes a Great Tree (see also Mark 4:30–32; Luke 13:18–19)

Though the mustard seed is very small, it can grow into a tree where birds can dwell and find protection in its branches. When the Church was restored in 1830, it was like a tiny mustard seed. Since then it has grown until its “branches” are found in almost every nation on earth, and its members find in them a spiritual “home” and protection from the world. The Savior used the parable

of the mustard seed to teach that His Church would grow from a small beginning into a very large organization (compare Daniel 2:44; D&C 65:1–2).

President Wilford Woodruff (1807–98) recalled the words of the **Prophet Joseph Smith** to brethren gathered in a priesthood meeting in Kirtland, Ohio, in April 1834: “The Prophet said, ‘Brethren, . . . I want to say to you before the Lord, that you know no more concerning the destinies of this Church and kingdom than a babe upon its mother’s lap. You don’t comprehend it.’ I was rather surprised. He said, ‘It is only a little handful of Priesthood you see here tonight, but this Church will fill North and South America—it will fill the world!’” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 137).



Left: Mustard seeds, showing their size in relation to a mustard pod. Right: A mustard tree.

Matthew 13:35. “Things Which Have Been Kept Secret from the Foundation of the World”

Matthew wrote that the Savior’s parables fulfilled prophecy (see Psalm 78:2–3) by revealing truths that had “been kept secret from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 13:35). **President Russell M. Nelson** taught that the Lord continues to reveal such truths in our day: “The Lord had long planned to reveal ‘things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world’ [Matthew 13:35]. Those things included revelations recorded in the Book of Mormon [see 2 Nephi 27:10]. They also included ordinances and covenants of the holy temple [see D&C 124:40–41]. To the Prophet Joseph Smith the Lord declared that ‘I deign to reveal unto my church things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world, things that pertain to the dispensation of the fulness of times’ [D&C 124:41]” (“How Firm Our Foundation,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 76).

Matthew 13:44–46. The Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Price

The parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price have several details in common. In each, a man sold all that he had to purchase the valued item—a treasure and a pearl. In each instance the valued item represents the gospel of Jesus Christ. Placing these parables back to back gives emphasis to the great value of the gospel of Jesus Christ. One difference in these two parables is the manner in which the treasure and pearl are found. The treasure in the field appears to be found accidentally, while the merchant man was actively seeking for pearls. This illustrates that no matter how we find the gospel of Jesus Christ, whether seemingly by accident or through purposeful searching, it is worth sacrificing everything we have to obtain it.

Matthew 13:53–58

Why were the inhabitants of Nazareth, where Jesus had been raised, astonished at His teachings? How do you think the reaction of these people related to the Savior’s decision not to perform “many mighty works there”?

Matthew 13:55–56. The Family of Jesus Christ

Matthew 13:55–56 provides the most detailed list in the four Gospels of Jesus Christ’s family members. From these verses it appears that following the birth of Jesus Christ, Joseph and Mary had at least six children: James, Joses, Simon, Judas, and more than one daughter. James was later called to the apostleship (see Galatians 1:19). Many people have surmised that the omission of Joseph’s name in these verses implies he had already died.

Matthew 14:1–12. The Death of John the Baptist

For insights on the death of John the Baptist, see the commentary for Mark 6:14–29.

Matthew 14:13–14. “Moved with Compassion”

Though Matthew did not say why Jesus Christ departed to a solitary place, one possible reason may be that He went to privately mourn the death of John the Baptist (see Matthew 14:13). Despite His desire to be alone, when He saw the multitudes seeking Him, His reaction was not resentment or annoyance, but compassion.

The writers of the Gospels repeatedly mention the Savior’s compassion. **President Thomas S. Monson** (1927–2018) spoke of the Savior’s great compassion: “He brought reality to the word *compassion*. He showed us

the way. He marked the path we should follow. Selfless service characterized His life. . . . The Savior’s entire ministry exemplified love of neighbor” (“The Way of the Master,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 51).

Matthew 14:15–21. The Feeding of the Five Thousand (see also Mark 6:34–44; Luke 9:11–17; John 6:3–14)

To learn more about the miracle of feeding the “five thousand men, beside women and children,” see the commentaries for Mark 6:32–44 and for John 6:15.

Matthew 14:22–33. Jesus Walking on the Sea of Galilee “in the Fourth Watch” (see also Mark 6:45–52; John 6:15–21)

The Romans divided the night hours into four watches, corresponding roughly to 6:00–9:00 p.m., 9:00 p.m.–midnight, midnight–3:00 a.m., and 3:00–6:00 a.m. When the Savior came to the disciples in the fourth watch (see Matthew 14:25), they had been rowing all night against a contrary wind. **Sister Susan W. Tanner**, while serving as Young Women general president, testified that the Lord will come to each of us, though we may need to be patient:



The early Apostles journeyed across the Sea of Galilee in a small fishing boat.

“I know that [the Lord’s] tender mercies and His miracles, large and small, are real. They come in His way and on His timetable. Sometimes it is not until we have reached our extremity. Jesus’s disciples on the Sea of Galilee had to toil in rowing against a contrary wind all through the night before Jesus finally came to their aid. He did not come until the ‘fourth watch,’ meaning near dawn. Yet He did come. (See Mark 6:45–51.) My testimony is that miracles do come, though sometimes not until the fourth watch” (“My Soul Delighteth in the Things of the Lord,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 83).

Matthew 14:26. “When the Disciples Saw Him . . . They Cried Out for Fear”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles used the account of the Savior walking on water to illustrate how fear can keep us from trusting in Christ and coming unto Him:

“This scriptural account reminds us that the first step in coming to Christ—or his coming to us—may fill us with something very much like sheer terror. It shouldn’t, but it sometimes does. One of the grand ironies of the gospel is that the very source of help and safety being offered us is the thing from which we may, in our mortal shortsightedness, flee. For whatever the reason, I have seen investigators run from baptism, I have seen elders run from a mission call, I have seen sweethearts run from marriage, and I have seen young couples run from the fear of families and the future. Too often too many of us run from the very things that will bless us and save us and soothe us. Too often we see gospel commitments

and commandments as something to be feared and forsaken” (“Come unto Me” [Brigham Young University fireside, Mar. 2, 1997], 8; speeches.byu.edu).

Matthew 14:27–31. “Be of Good Cheer; It Is I; Be Not Afraid”

The phrase “be of good cheer” (Matthew 14:27) appears numerous times in the standard works. In most cases this reassurance comes from the Savior at times when individuals like the Apostles were in desperate or discouraging circumstances. **President Howard W. Hunter** (1907–95) taught:

“In [the disciples’] moment of greatest extremity they looked and saw in the darkness an image in a fluttering robe, walking toward them on the ridges of the sea. They cried out in terror at the sight, thinking that it was a phantom that walked upon the waves. And through the storm and darkness to them—as so often to us, when, amid the darkneses of life, the ocean seems so great and



Christ Walking on the Water, by Robert T. Barrett

our little boats so small—there came the ultimate and reassuring voice of peace with this simple declaration, ‘It is I; be not afraid.’ Peter exclaimed, ‘Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.’ And Christ’s answer to him was the same as to all of us: ‘Come.’

“Peter sprang over the vessel’s side and into the troubled waves, and while his eyes were fixed upon the Lord, the wind might toss his hair and the spray might drench his robes, but all was well. Only when with wavering faith he removed his glance from the Master to look at the furious waves and the black gulf beneath him, only then did he begin to sink. Again, like most of us, he cried, ‘Lord, save me.’ Nor did Jesus fail him. He stretched out his hand and grasped the drowning disciple with the gentle rebuke, ‘O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?’ . . . (Adapted from [Frederic W.] Farrar, *The Life of Christ*, pp. 310–13; see Matt. 14:22–33.)

“It is my firm belief that if as individual people, as families, communities, and nations, we could, like Peter, fix our eyes on Jesus, we too might walk triumphantly over ‘the swelling waves of disbelief’ and remain ‘unterrified amid the rising winds of doubt.’ But if we turn away our eyes from him in whom we must believe, as it is so easy to do and the world is so much tempted to do, if we look to the power and fury of those terrible and destructive elements around us rather than to him who can help and save us, then we shall inevitably sink in a sea of conflict and sorrow and despair.

“At such times when we feel the floods are threatening to drown us and the deep is going to swallow up the tossed vessel of our faith, I pray we may always hear amid the storm and the darkness that sweet utterance of the Savior of the world: ‘Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.’ (Matt. 14:27.)” (“The Beacon in the Harbor of Peace,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 19).

Matthew 14:30. “Wind Boisterous”

As already noted, it was the boisterous winds that caused Peter to turn his focus away from the Lord. While serving as second counselor in the Young Women general presidency, **Sister Patricia P. Pinegar** listed some of today’s distractions that can turn our hearts and minds away from the Savior:

“When [Peter] began to pay more attention to what was happening around him, ‘the wind boisterous,’ he began to sink. What are the winds boisterous in our lives? What are the things that distract us from the Savior, that turn our hearts and our minds away from Him? It may

be thinking more about pleasing our friends or other people than we do about pleasing God (see John 5:44). It may be the loud and confusing voices we hear on TV, in videos, in music. Sometimes we just don’t care. Our hearts are hard (see John 12:37). There will always be distractions, winds boisterous, but if we choose to turn to the Lord, to believe in Him, to follow Him, we can increase our faith.

“When Peter began to sink, he turned to the Lord and cried out, ‘Lord, save me,’ and Jesus immediately ‘stretched forth his hand, and caught him.’ He will do that for you. He will do that for each one of us [Matthew 14:30–31]” (“Increase in Faith,” *Ensign*, May 1994, 95).

Matthew 15:1–9. Unwashed Hands

For help understanding the dispute about unwashed hands, see the commentary for Mark 7:1–13.

Matthew 15:8. “Nigh unto Me with Their Mouth, . . . but Their Heart Is Far from Me”

As recorded in Matthew 15:8 the Savior quoted Isaiah 29:13, applying it to people in His day. Though they professed God with their mouths, their hearts were far from Him. **President Dallin H. Oaks** of the First Presidency taught that in the Final Judgment it will not be enough for us to know and profess that the gospel is true:

“In contrast to the institutions of the world, which teach us to *know* something, the gospel of Jesus Christ challenges us to *become* something. . . .

“. . . [Jesus] told Simon Peter, ‘I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren’ (Luke 22:32). . . .

“Jesus’ challenge shows that the conversion He required for those who would enter the kingdom of heaven (see Matt. 18:3) was far more than just being converted to testify to the truthfulness of the gospel. To testify is to *know* and to *declare*. The gospel challenges us to be ‘converted,’ which requires us to *do* and to *become*” (“The Challenge to Become,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 32–33).

Matthew 15:21–28. The Woman of Canaan

At a time when the gospel was being proclaimed to the Jews and not yet to the Gentiles, a Gentile woman recognized Jesus as the “Son of David,” the promised Messiah. The Greek word translated “dogs” referred to small dogs that could be household pets. Such pets would eat morsels of food given to them from the table or carelessly dropped. Understanding the Savior’s

distinction between Israel and Gentiles, the woman correctly pointed out that household pets were allowed to eat that which had been rejected. She did not take offense at Jesus's words, but she humbly recognized that she was a beggar at Israel's table. The Savior commended her expression of faith.

This account is part of a theme in the Gospel of Matthew concerning the Lord's plan to take the gospel to the Gentiles. Though a Gentile, the woman had great faith, yet the disciples asked Jesus to send her away. Instead, Jesus ministered to her. When the time came for the disciples to carry the gospel to the Gentiles (see Matthew 28:19–20), they could expect to find many individuals who, like this woman, were ready to receive their message.

Matthew 15:29–39. The Feeding of the Four Thousand (see also Mark 8:1–9)

For information on the miracle of feeding the “four thousand men, beside women and children,” see the commentary for Mark 8:1–9.

Points to Ponder

- What can you do to cultivate the spiritual “soil” of your heart to eliminate impediments to spiritual growth and productivity?
- Considering that the parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price teach that the gospel is worth everything we have (see Matthew 13:44–46), what sacrifices have you or those you know made for the gospel?
- How well are you keeping your focus on the Lord Jesus Christ rather than on the winds and waves of life? (see Matthew 14:30). How does keeping Him in the forefront of your life help you overcome the challenges of daily living?

Suggested Assignments

- Write a brief description of how the four soils described in the parable of the sower are similar to the different groups of people in Lehi's vision of the tree of life (see 1 Nephi 8:21–23, 24–28, 30, 31–33).
- Make a list of “thorns” (see Matthew 13:22) that you see affecting the testimonies of young single adults in the Church. How can choosing to keep God's commandments and to follow Church standards help you avoid being choked out by these thorns?
- Imagine yourself as a participant in the events of Matthew 14:25–33. Then write a journal entry describing your experience that night.

Matthew 16–18

Introduction and Timeline for Matthew 16–18

Matthew 16 records that the Savior promised to give Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven (see Matthew 16:18–19). Six days later the Lord took Peter, James, and John onto a mountain, where He was transfigured before them in the presence of Moses and Elias, who was Elijah (see Matthew 17:1–13). Latter-day prophets have taught that Peter, James, and John received the promised priesthood keys on this occasion. Then, as recorded in Matthew 18, the Savior taught His disciples doctrines and principles that would help them use these keys when they would lead the Church after His departure.

As recorded in Matthew 16, Peter bore his testimony that Jesus is the Christ, and the Savior explained that Peter had received that knowledge by revelation.



1. Pharisees and Sadducees tempted Jesus Christ to show them a sign.
2. Peter testified near Caesarea Philippi that Jesus is the Christ.
3. On a Galilean mountain, Jesus Christ was transfigured in the presence of Peter, James, and John.
4. In Galilee, the Savior instructed His disciples in Church leadership.

Commentary for Matthew 16–18

Matthew 16:1–4. The Pharisees and Sadducees Rebuked for Sign Seeking

The Savior rebuked the Pharisees and Sadducees for insisting that He show them a sign from heaven. He declared that they were able to forecast the weather based on the appearance of an evening sky, yet they were unable to discern the “signs of the times” (Matthew 16:3), by which the Savior meant the evidence that He was the promised Messiah.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained why it is that “a wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign” (Matthew 16:4): “*Why does this generation seek a sign?* queried Jesus with a deep sigh. (See Mark 8:12.) The more wicked and adulterous the people of a particular period, the more they demand signs as a condition of belief. Sensual individuals crave and live by sensations. Disciples, instead, walk and ‘overcome by faith’ (D&C 76:53), accepting gratefully the evidence of things not seen which are true (see Heb. 11:1; Alma 32:21)” (“Answer Me,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 31–32). See also the commentary for Matthew 12:39–40.

Matthew 16:1, 16–17

How was the witness sought by the Pharisees and Sadducees different from the witness Peter received? What personal revelation have you received that Jesus is the Christ?

Matthew 16:4. “The Sign of the Prophet Jonas” (see also Matthew 12:39–41; Luke 11:29–30)

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles defined the sign of the prophet Jonas: “Jonah’s burial in and coming forth from the ‘great fish’ (Jonah 1:15–17; 2) symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 1:278).

Matthew 16:6–12. “Beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees” (see also Mark 8:14–21; Luke 12:1)

The Savior taught His disciples to beware of “the leaven” of the Pharisees and Sadducees, which was their doctrine. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained that this teaching of the Savior can be likened to the need to beware of false doctrines and philosophies in all ages: “Literally, leaven is a substance that produces fermentation, as for instance yeast which causes bread to rise. Figuratively, leaven is any element which, by its

fermenting, spreading influence, affects groups of people so that they believe and act in particular ways. Thus to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees is to shun their false doctrines, their concept that the Messiah must prove his claim to divinity by signs, for instance. Similarly, today, the warning is to beware of the leaven of any group whose false doctrines and antichrist philosophies work to keep men from accepting the truths of the restored gospel” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:379).

Matthew 16:13–19. The Savior Taught the Disciples about Revelation

Caesarea Philippi is a region (“coasts” means region) composed of small towns (see Matthew 16:13; Mark 8:27). It is located near the base of Mount Hermon, is one of the sources of the Jordan River, and is overlooked by the most prominent geological feature of the area—a huge rock formation at the base of Mount Hermon. It was here that an important conversation occurred between the Savior and His disciples, as recorded in Matthew 16:13–19, in which the Savior taught about revelation—both individual revelation and the revelation needed to govern the Church. **President Russell M. Nelson** wrote about the appropriateness of this setting for the conversation that took place between Jesus and His disciples:



Headwaters of the Jordan River near Caesarea Philippi

“The modern-day scene in Caesarea Philippi is unique. There is a mountain at the base of which is a mighty rock from which water seems to be flowing. These cascades comprise one of the three major headwaters of the River Jordan, literally the liquid lifeline of this country. As Jesus was preparing to conclude His mortal ministry [His Crucifixion took place six months later], here He trained future leaders of His Church. Could it be that

the Savior brought His disciples to this spot to teach the lesson that this majestic mountain symbolized the rock of Christ from whom revelation would flow?—revelation to bring light and life to them, just as that flowing water of the River Jordan nourishes Israel” (“Why This Holy Land?” *Ensign*, Dec. 1989, 15–16).

Just as Moses struck the rock with his staff and water flowed from it, saving the people of Israel from death in the wilderness, the Savior is the rock from which the saving doctrines and ordinances flow, empowering us to lay hold on eternal life (see Numbers 20:11; 1 Nephi 17:29; 2 Nephi 25:20).

Matthew 16:13, 15

As you reflect on modern attitudes toward Jesus Christ and your own testimony of Him, how would you answer the Savior’s two questions in these verses? What do you think is important about this conversation between Jesus Christ and His Apostles?

Matthew 16:17–18. Individual Revelation Needed for a Testimony of Jesus Christ

As recorded in Matthew 16:17–18, Jesus Christ commended Peter, recognizing that his testimony came not from the testimony of others or from physical evidences, but from revelation from Heavenly Father. **Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that faith in Jesus Christ should be the core of our testimony and that this testimony must come to each person through individual revelation:

“We cannot depend on the testimonies of other people. We need to know for ourselves. President Gordon B. Hinckley said, ‘Every Latter-day Saint has the responsibility to know for himself or herself with a certainty beyond doubt that Jesus is the resurrected, living Son of the living God’ (‘Fear Not to Do Good,’ *Ensign*, May 1983, 80).

“The source of this sure knowledge and firm conviction is divine revelation. . . .

“We receive this testimony when the Holy Spirit speaks to the spirit within us. We will receive a calm and unwavering certainty that will be the source of our testimony and conviction irrespective of our culture, race, language, or socioeconomic background. These promptings of the Spirit, rather than human logic alone, will be the true foundation upon which our testimony will be built.

“The core of this testimony will always be the faith in and the knowledge of Jesus Christ and His divine

mission” (“The Power of a Personal Testimony,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 38).

Matthew 16:18. Revelation Is the Rock upon Which the Church Is Built

As the Savior taught Peter about revelation, He used a wordplay on Peter’s name, declaring to Simon, “Thou art Peter [*Petros*], and upon this rock [*petra*] I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18). The Greek word *petros* means an isolated small rock or stone. The Greek word *petra* can also mean “a stone,” but in addition it can refer to stony soil, bedrock, or a large mass of rock. From these words we learn that it was not upon Peter as a man that the Church would be built, but upon the bedrock of revelation. To read about the significance of Peter’s name being changed from Cephas, see the commentary for John 1:42.

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) taught: “‘And upon this rock I will build my church.’ Upon what rock? Peter? Upon a man? No, not upon a man, upon the rock of revelation, the thing which they were talking about. He had just said, ‘. . . flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.’ This revelation that Jesus is the Christ is the foundation upon which he would build his Church” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1965, 112; see also *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 195).

Matthew 16:18. “The Gates of Hell Shall Not Prevail against It”

In the scriptures the phrase “the gates of hell” can refer to the powers of death or the powers of evil. Thus, the Savior’s promise that “the gates of hell shall not prevail” means that death and evil will not permanently overpower the Church. The Restoration of the Church in the latter days is one way this promise has been fulfilled. One reason the gates of hell will not prevail is because the keys spoken of in Matthew 16:18–19 are instrumental in “the salvation of the children of men, both as well for the dead as for the living” (D&C 128:11).

President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) explained that providing temple ordinances for our deceased loved ones is another way of preventing the gates of hell from prevailing against the Lord’s Church: “Now, the gates of hell would have prevailed against the Lord’s work if there hadn’t been given the ordinances pertaining to the salvation of those who are dead. During those periods when the priesthood to perform the saving ordinances of the gospel was not upon the earth,

there were millions who lived, many of whom were faithful souls. If there hadn’t been a way by which the saving ordinances of the gospel could be performed for those who thus died without the knowledge of the gospel, the gates of hell would have prevailed against our Father’s plan of salvation” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* [2000], 104).

Matthew 16:19. “I Will Give unto Thee the Keys of the Kingdom”

In the first century A.D., keys were typically made of iron and were bulkier, more expensive, and less common than modern house keys. To hold the keys of a house was a position of great trust. Thus, keys were a fitting symbol of special authority, responsibility, and purpose. Ancient scriptures make repeated use of the symbol of keys, which represents the power to lock and unlock, open and shut, and permit or prevent entrance (see Isaiah 22:22; Matthew 16:19; 18:18; Revelation 1:18; 3:7; 9:1; 20:1).



Drawings of Roman-era keys found in Israel

Six days after Jesus told Peter, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 16:19; 17:1), Peter, together with James and John, received the promised keys on the Mount of Transfiguration (see Matthew 17:1–9; in *History of the Church*, 3:387).

President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) defined the keys of the priesthood: “The Priesthood in general is the authority given to man to act for God. Every man ordained to any degree of the Priesthood has this authority delegated to him. But it is necessary that every act performed under this authority shall be done at the proper time and place, in the proper way, and after the proper order. The power of directing these labors constitutes the *keys* of the Priesthood” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* [1998], 141). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** wrote that priesthood keys “are the right of

presidency, the directing, controlling, governing power” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 411).

Peter exercised these priesthood keys when he presided over the selection of a new Apostle (see Acts 1:15–26), oversaw the spreading of the gospel to Samaria (see Acts 8:14–25), received a revelation regarding Gentile converts (see Acts 10:9–48), and presided over the Jerusalem conference (see Acts 15:6–29).

The President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints holds all the keys of the kingdom. The President and his counselors—the First Presidency—have the right to preside over the Church (see D&C 81:2; 107:22).

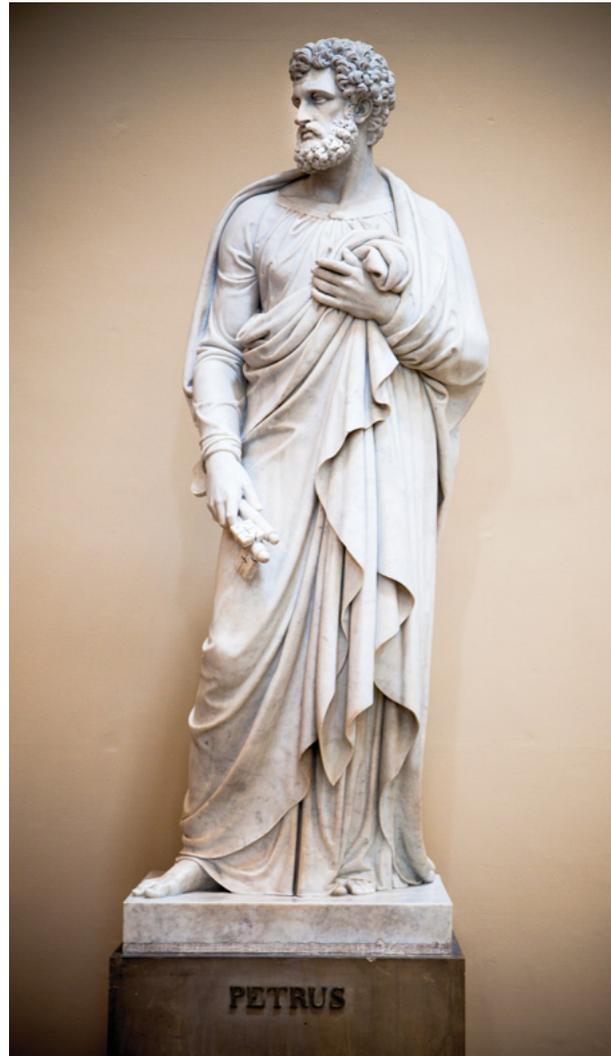
Matthew 16:19. “Whatsoever Thou Shalt Bind on Earth Shall Be Bound in Heaven” (see also Matthew 18:18; John 20:23)

Peter and the other Apostles received priesthood keys that made their actions and decisions binding both on earth and in eternity. **President Russell M. Nelson** explained that the keys promised to Peter in Matthew 16:19 included the sealing authority exercised in our temples today, authority that makes it possible for families to be bound together for eternity: “We should understand the sealing authority of the priesthood. Jesus referred to this authority long ago when He taught His Apostles, ‘Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven’ [Matthew 16:19]. That same authority has been restored in these latter days. Just as priesthood is eternal—without beginning or end—so is the effect of priesthood ordinances that bind families together forever” (“Personal Preparation for Temple Blessings,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 33).

President Boyd K. Packer shared an experience in which **President Spencer W. Kimball** testified that modern-day Apostles hold the keys given to Peter anciently:

“In 1976 following a conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, President Spencer W. Kimball invited us to a small church to see the statues of Christ and the Twelve Apostles by Bertel Thorvaldsen. The ‘Christus’ stands in an alcove beyond the altar. Standing in order along the sides of the chapel are the statues of the Twelve, with Paul replacing Judas Iscariot.

“President Kimball told the elderly caretaker that at the very time Thorvaldsen was creating those beautiful statues in Denmark, a restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ was taking place in America with Apostles and prophets receiving authority from those who held it anciently.



The Apostle Peter holding keys. Statue by Bertel Thorvaldsen located in the Vor Frue Kirke (Church of Our Lady) in Copenhagen, Denmark

“Gathering those present closer to him, he said to the caretaker, ‘We are living Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ,’ and pointing to Elder Pinegar, he said, ‘Here is a Seventy like those spoken of in the New Testament.’

“We were standing near the statue of Peter, whom the sculptor depicted holding keys in his hand, symbolic of the keys of the kingdom. President Kimball said, ‘We hold the real keys, as Peter did, and we use them every day.’

“Then came an experience I will never forget. President Kimball, this gentle prophet, turned to President Johan H. Benthin, of the Copenhagen Stake, and in a commanding voice said, ‘I want you to tell every prelate [ecclesiastical leader] in Denmark that they do NOT hold the keys! I HOLD THE KEYS!’

“There came to me that witness known to Latter-day Saints but difficult to describe to one who has not experienced it . . . and I knew that, in very fact, here stood the living prophet who held the keys” (“The Shield of Faith,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 8).

Matthew 16:20. Jesus Charged His Disciples to “Tell No Man”

For information about why Jesus told His disciples to “tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ” (Matthew 16:20), see the commentary for Mark 8:30.

Matthew 16:21–23. “Get Thee behind Me, Satan”

For insights about this conversation between Peter and the Savior, see the commentary for Mark 8:33.

Matthew 16:24–28. “Take Up His Cross, and Follow Me”

To read about the Savior’s teachings on taking up our crosses and losing ourselves for His sake, see the commentary for Mark 8:34–38.

Matthew 17:1–13. The Transfiguration

Matthew 17:1–13 records the Transfiguration—the glorious experience when the Savior was transfigured in the presence of Peter, James, and John. This event occurred six days after Peter’s confession that Jesus is the Christ (see Matthew 16:16) on an unnamed mountain that is sometimes referred to as the Mount of Transfiguration. Throughout the scriptures, mountains are used as places of divine instruction and revelation to mortals (see Exodus 3:1; 1 Kings 19:8; 1 Nephi 17:7; Ether 3:1; Joseph Smith—History 1:51–54). The Gospel of Matthew records a number of times when the Savior used mountains as places of spiritual retreat and instruction (see Matthew 5:1; 14:23; 15:29–39; 21:1; 24:3; 28:16–20).



RICHARD L. W. CLEAVE

Caesarea Philippi with Mount Hermon in the background. Mount Hermon is one of the plausible locations of the Transfiguration.

On numerous occasions, the Savior separated Peter, James, and John from the other Apostles. Only these three Apostles witnessed the raising of Jairus’s daughter from the dead (see Mark 5:22–24, 35–43). Only they were present on the Mount of Transfiguration, where they received priesthood keys. Only they were taken to a certain location within Gethsemane, where they beheld the Savior’s agony as He took upon Himself the sins of the world. These experiences and perhaps many more helped to prepare Peter, James, and John for the time following the death of Jesus Christ, when they served as the First Presidency of the Church (see Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, ed. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 3:152).

Matthew 17:2. Jesus “Was Transfigured before Them”

The Guide to the Scriptures defines transfiguration as “the condition of persons who are temporarily changed in appearance and nature—that is, lifted to a higher spiritual level—so that they can endure the presence and glory of heavenly beings” (“Transfiguration”; scriptures.lds.org).

Matthew 17:3. Elias

In Matthew’s account of the Savior’s transfiguration, the name *Elias* is used to mean the prophet Elijah. The Guide to the Scriptures explains that the name or title *Elias* has several different meanings in the scriptures:

“*Elijah*: Elias is the New Testament (Greek) form of Elijah (Hebrew), as in Matt. 17:3–4, Luke 4:25–26, and James 5:17. In these instances, Elias was the ancient prophet Elijah whose ministry is recorded in 1 and 2 Kings.

“*Forerunner*: Elias is also a title for one who is a fore-runner. For example, John the Baptist was an Elias because he was sent to prepare the way for Jesus (Matt. 17:12–13).

“*Restorer*: The title Elias has also been applied to others who had specific missions to fulfill, such as John the Revelator (D&C 77:14) and Gabriel (Luke 1:11–20; D&C 27:6–7; 110:12).

“*A man in Abraham’s dispensation*: A prophet called Esaias or Elias who apparently lived in the days of Abraham (D&C 84:11–13; 110:12)” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Elias”; scriptures.lds.org).

The title Elias can also be applied to Jesus Christ Himself (see Joseph Smith Translation, John 1:28 [in the Bible appendix]).

The Joseph Smith Translation clarifies that Peter, James, and John understood that John the Baptist was an Elias sent to prepare the way for the Savior’s first coming. It

Persons Involved in the Transfiguration and the Restoration		
Person	Transfiguration	Restoration of the Gospel
God the Father	Spoke from the cloud, saying, "This is my beloved Son . . . ; hear ye him" (Matthew 17:5).	Spoke in the Sacred Grove, saying, "This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!" (Joseph Smith—History 1:17).
Jesus Christ	Was transfigured on the mount (see Matthew 17:2–8).	Appeared with God the Father in the Sacred Grove and in the Kirtland Temple (see Joseph Smith—History 1:17; D&C 110).
Peter, James, and John	Were transfigured and received priesthood keys from angelic ministers (see Matthew 17:1, 3–8).	As angelic ministers, conferred the Melchizedek Priesthood and all its keys on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery (see Joseph Smith—History 1:72; D&C 27:12–13).
John the Baptist	Appeared as a spirit on the mount (see Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 9:3 [in Mark 9:4, footnote a]).	As a resurrected personage, conferred the Aaronic Priesthood on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery (see Joseph Smith—History 1:68–71; D&C 13).
Moses	Appeared as a translated being on the mount and conferred the keys of the gathering of Israel on Peter, James, and John (see Matthew 17:3).	As a resurrected personage, conferred the keys of the gathering of Israel on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple (see D&C 110:11).
Elijah	Appeared as a translated being on the mount and conferred the keys of the sealing power on Peter, James, and John (see Matthew 17:3).	As a resurrected personage, conferred the keys of the sealing power on Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple (see D&C 110:13–16).

Chart adapted from D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, *Verse by Verse: The Four Gospels* (2006), 343.

also teaches that another Elias would “*come and restore all things, as it is written by the prophets*” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 17:10–14 [in the Bible appendix]). In this respect, the Prophet Joseph Smith was an Elias who would come to restore all things.

Matthew 17:3–5. The Transfiguration and the Restoration of the Gospel in the Latter Days

The accompanying chart (above) illustrates that the persons present on the Mount of Transfiguration played a prominent role in the latter-day Restoration of the gospel. This helps us to see that the same priesthood authority and keys held in previous dispensations were restored in this final dispensation.

Matthew 17:3–9. Peter, James, and John Were Given Priesthood Keys (see also Mark 9:2–13; Luke 9:28–36)

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) taught, “The Savior, Moses, and Elias [Elijah], gave the keys to Peter, James, and John, on the mount, when they were transfigured before him” (*Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 105). Also on the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses conferred the keys of the gathering of Israel on Peter, James, and John, who, as the First Presidency, would soon be sending out missionaries to gather the righteous into the gospel. Elijah conferred the sealing power of the priesthood, which made it possible for ordinances performed on earth to be bound or loosed in heaven. **Joseph Smith** summarized the importance of Elijah’s mission as

follows: “The spirit, power, and calling of Elijah is, that ye have power to hold the key of the revelation, ordinances, oracles, powers and endowments of the fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood and of the kingdom of God on the earth; and to receive, obtain, and perform all the ordinances belonging to the kingdom of God” (*Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 311).

President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) taught that Peter, James, and John did receive the sealing power, although they could not use it in behalf of the dead until after the Resurrection of the Savior:

“[The sealing power] was conferred upon Peter, James, and John. . . . We, therefore, conclude that the saints in that dispensation had the privilege of receiving all the keys and authorities that are necessary for the salvation and exaltation of man. However, these powers were exercised only for the living, until *after* the resurrection of Christ, when they were exercised also in behalf of the dead. . . .

“. . . These keys [for the salvation of the living and the dead] were given to Peter, James, and John on the mount when they received this power from Elias [Elijah] and Moses, the latter conferring the keys of the gathering of Israel. Christ told these three men, who I believe received their endowments on the mount, that they were not to mention this vision and what had taken place until after he was resurrected” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:164–65).



The Transfiguration, by W. H. Margetson

Matthew 17:3–9. What Took Place on the Mount of Transfiguration

From the New Testament accounts and from knowledge revealed through the Prophet Joseph Smith, **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** summarized what we know took place on the Mount of Transfiguration:

“(1) Jesus singled out Peter, James, and John from the rest of the Twelve; took them upon an unnamed mountain; there he was transfigured before them, and they beheld his glory. . . . [Peter] said they ‘were eyewitnesses of his majesty.’ (2 Pet. 1:16.)

“(2) Peter, James, and John, were themselves ‘transfigured before him’ [*Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 105], . . . thus enabling them to entertain angels, see visions and comprehend the things of God. . . .

“(3) Moses and Elijah—two ancient prophets who were translated and taken to heaven without tasting death, so they could return with tangible bodies on this very occasion, an occasion preceding the day of resurrection—appeared on the mountain; and they and Jesus gave the keys of the kingdom to Peter, James, and John [*Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 105].

“(4) John the Baptist, previously beheaded by Herod, apparently was also present. . . .

“(5) Peter, James, and John saw in vision the transfiguration of the earth, that is, they saw it renewed and returned to its paradisiacal state—an event that is to take place at the Second Coming when the millennial era is ushered in. (D. & C. 63:20–21. . . .)

“(6) It appears that Peter, James, and John received their own endowments while on the mountain [Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:165]. . . . It also appears that it was while on the mount that they received the more sure word of prophecy, it then being revealed to them that they were sealed up unto eternal life. (2 Pet. 1:16–19; D. & C. 131:5.)

“(7) Apparently Jesus himself was strengthened and encouraged by Moses and Elijah so as to be prepared for the infinite sufferings and agony ahead of him in connection with working out the infinite and eternal atonement [James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. (1916), 373]. . . .

“(8) Certainly the three chosen apostles were taught in plainness ‘of his death, and also his resurrection’ [Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 9:31 (in Luke 9:31, footnote a)]. . . .

“(9) It should also have been apparent to them that the old dispensations of the past had faded away, that the law (of which Moses was the symbol) and the prophets (of whom Elijah was the typifying representative) were subject to Him whom they were now commanded to hear.

“(10) Apparently God the Father, overshadowed and hidden by a cloud, was present on the mountain” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:399–401).

Matthew 17:14–21. “This Kind Goeth Not Out but by Prayer and Fasting” (see also Mark 9:29)

To understand more about the Savior’s teaching in Matthew 17:14–21, see the commentary for Mark 9:18, 28–29.

Matthew 17:20. “Faith as a Grain of Mustard Seed”

Matthew 17:20 is the only place where the scriptures record the Savior’s teaching that it is possible to move mountains if we have “faith as a grain of mustard seed” (Matthew 17:20). While the scriptures record that the brother of Jared moved a literal mountain by his faith (see Ether 12:30), **Bishop Richard C. Edgley** of the Presiding Bishopric spoke about other kinds of

“mountains” that can miraculously be moved by the exercise of faith: “I have never witnessed the removal of an actual mountain. But because of faith, I have seen a mountain of doubt and despair removed and replaced with hope and optimism. Because of faith, I have personally witnessed a mountain of sin replaced with repentance and forgiveness. And because of faith, I have personally witnessed a mountain of pain replaced with peace, hope, and gratitude” (“Faith—the Choice Is Yours,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 33).

Matthew 17:24–27. Payment of the Temple Tax

The tribute money, or tax, referred to in Matthew 17:24–27 was the temple tax required of all Israelite males over the age of 20 (see Exodus 30:11–14). This money was used to support the daily costs associated with the temple, such as the cost of incense, robes worn by the priests, and oil for the lamps. Jesus taught Peter that since the temple was His Father’s house (see Matthew 17:25–26; John 2:16), He was exempt from the payment of this tax. However, aware that others would follow His example and not wanting to give any cause for offense, Jesus, with His divine foreknowledge, instructed Peter how to make provision for payment.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell used this experience of the Savior miraculously paying taxes as an example of the Savior’s knowledge of all things: “[The Savior] told His disciples to go and catch a fish and they would find the requisite coin in there. . . . They did and the coin was just the right denomination to pay the tribute. We can’t comprehend the staggering omniscience, but it is there and it operates to bless each of our lives” (“We Can’t Comprehend the Capacity of God,” *Church News*, Feb. 22, 2003, 3).

Matthew 18:1–22. Jesus Christ Taught His Disciples Principles to Use in Guiding His Church

As recorded in Matthew 18:1–22, the Savior taught His disciples important principles that would help them guide the Church following His death and Resurrection. These principles include the following: Effective leaders are personally converted (see verse 3); are humble (see verses 2–4); repent of their wrongdoing (see verses 7–9); are mindful of children (see verse 10); seek out those who are lost (see verses 11–14); handle the trespasses of others sensitively and discreetly (see verses 15–17); are unified and seek the Lord’s assistance in their work (see verses 19–20); and forgive others (see verses 21–22).

Matthew 18:1–4. To Become Great in the Kingdom of God, We Must Become like a Little Child

Responding to a question about who would be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus Christ emphasized that greatness in the kingdom of heaven is achieved by being converted and humbling oneself as a little child. Scriptures record that other desirable qualities of little children include being submissive, meek, patient, full of love, alive in Christ, and without sin (see Mosiah 3:19; Moroni 8:12; D&C 74:7). **President Henry B. Eyring** of the First Presidency taught: “To be like a child is not to be childish. It is to be like the Savior, who prayed to His Father for strength to be able to do His will and then did it. Our natures must be changed to become as a child” (“As a Child,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2006, 15).

President Howard W. Hunter taught that true greatness is a daily process of giving one’s life to the Savior and doing one’s best to live the gospel. It is doing well “the things God has ordained to be the common lot of all mankind”:

“[Such things include] the thousands of little deeds and tasks of service and sacrifice that constitute the giving or losing of one’s life for others and for the Lord. They include gaining a knowledge of our Father in Heaven and his gospel. They include bringing others into the faith and fellowship of his kingdom. . . . To do one’s best in the face of the commonplace struggles of life, and possibly in the face of failures, and to continue to endure and persevere with the ongoing difficulties of life—when those struggles and tasks contribute to the progress and happiness of others and the eternal salvation of one’s self—this is true greatness. . . .

“. . . Let us remember that doing the things that have been ordained by God to be important and needful and necessary, even though the world may view them as unimportant and insignificant, will eventually lead us to true greatness” (“True Greatness,” *Ensign*, May 1982, 19–20).

Matthew 18:5–10. A Warning Not to Offend Little Ones

Though Jesus was speaking to leaders of His day when He issued a stern warning not to offend little ones, the message recorded in Matthew 18:5–10 applies to all of us (see D&C 50:40–41 for a broader definition of “little children”). We must not cause anyone seeking greater understanding of the gospel plan to stumble in their faith, nor should we do anything to block their progress toward eternal life. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** taught about this warning:



JAMES JEFFERY

Millstone located at BYU Jerusalem Center (see Matthew 18:6)

“Few crimes are as gross and wicked as that of teaching false doctrine and leading souls away from God and salvation. . . . If eternal joy is the reward given those who teach the truth and bring souls to salvation, shall not those who teach false doctrines and lead souls to damnation receive as their reward eternal remorse? (D. & C. 18:10–16.)

“. . . It is better to die and be denied the blessings of continued mortal existence than to live and lead souls from the truth, thereby gaining eternal damnation for oneself” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:420).

Matthew 18:11

In this verse, how did Jesus Christ summarize the purpose of His mortal ministry? How do you see the Savior continuing to carry out that ministry today? How can you, as one of His disciples, participate in the continuing ministry of the Savior?

Matthew 18:12–14. Seeking the Lost Sheep

To read about seeking after the sheep that are lost, see the commentaries for Luke 15:3–7 and for Luke 15:11–32.

Matthew 18:15–20. The Law of Witnesses

The Savior’s teachings in Matthew 18:15–20 refer to the law of witnesses. The foundation of this law, which required that two or three witnesses establish or decide certain matters, was set forth in Deuteronomy 19:15. The Savior’s teachings also establish a pattern of keys of authority being given first to Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration (see Matthew 17:1–13; 18:18) and then later to all the Apostles. This pattern was followed in our day when the keys of the kingdom were

given first to Joseph Smith and then later to the Twelve Apostles (see D&C 13; 27:5–14; 128:18–21; 132:46–47).

Matthew 18:21–22. Forgiving Others “Seventy Times Seven”

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained the meaning of Peter’s question about forgiving others and the Savior’s response: “Rabbinism called upon the offender to initiate a course of reconciliation with his brother and specified that forgiveness should not be extended more than three times to any offender. His soul as yet not afire with the Holy Spirit, Peter asked a question that, as he must have then supposed, assumed a far more liberal rule than that imposed by the Rabbis. ‘Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?’ Jesus answered: ‘I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven,’ meaning there is no limit to the number of times men should forgive their brethren” (*The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 4 vols. [1979–81], 3:91).



Jesus Christ teaching His disciples

Matthew 18:23–35. Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

Following Peter’s question about how often he should forgive others, the Savior taught His disciples further about the need to forgive by giving the parable of the unmerciful servant. In this parable, the king represents the Lord; the first servant represents each of us, who stand in debt to the Lord; and the second servant represents anyone who may have offended us.

The parable refers to “ten thousand talents” (verse 24) and “an hundred pence” (verse 28). “During the first century A.D., it is estimated that 10,000 talents equaled 100,000,000 denarii. One denarius was a typical day’s wage for a common laborer. If that laborer worked three hundred days a year, it would take about 33 years for him to be able to purchase *one* talent. And it would take

over 300,000 years to earn 10,000 talents, the sum of the servant's debt" (Jay A. Parry and Donald W. Parry, *Understanding the Parables of Jesus Christ* [2006], 95). By comparison, the 100 pence owed by the fellow servant is about one million times less than the debt owed by the first servant.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles recalled a time when as a student in an institute class he learned the value of the money mentioned in the parable of the unmerciful servant and came to understand some of the eternal truths taught in the parable:

"[The teacher] noted that the 100-pence forgiveness, which we were all expected to give one another and acknowledged as a pretty fair amount of money, was now preciously little to ask in light of the 10,000-talent forgiveness Christ had extended to us.

"That latter debt, our debt, was an astronomical number, [the teacher] reminded us, almost incapable of comprehension. But that, he said, was exactly the Savior's point in this teaching, an essential part of the parable. Jesus had intended that his hearers sense just a little of the eternal scope and profound gift of his mercy, his forgiveness, his Atonement. . . . For the first time in my life I remember feeling something of the magnitude of Christ's sacrifice for me; a gift bordering to this day on incomprehensibility, but a gift that made me for the first time seriously consider my need to forgive other people and to be unfailingly generous regarding their feelings and their needs and their circumstances" ("Students Need Teachers to Guide Them" [Church Educational System satellite broadcast, June 20, 1992], 3).

Matthew 18:33. "Shouldest Not Thou Also Have Had Compassion on Thy Fellowservant"?

One of the messages of the parable of the unmerciful servant is that we must forgive others if we are to receive forgiveness from the Lord (see Matthew 5:7; 6:12, 14–15). **President Gordon B. Hinckley** (1910–2008) also taught this principle, pleading with each of us to be more forgiving toward those who sin against us:

"The great Atonement was the supreme act of forgiveness. The magnitude of that Atonement is beyond our ability to completely understand. I know only that it happened, and that it was for me and for you. The suffering was so great, the agony so intense, that none of us can comprehend it when the Savior offered Himself as a ransom for the sins of all mankind.

"It is through Him that we gain forgiveness. It is through Him that there comes the certain promise that

all mankind will be granted the blessings of salvation, with resurrection from the dead. . . .

"May God help us to be a little kinder, showing forth greater forbearance, to be more forgiving, more willing to walk the second mile, to reach down and lift up those who may have sinned but have brought forth the fruits of repentance, to lay aside old grudges and nurture them no more" ("Forgiveness," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 84).

While serving as a member of the Presidency of the Seventy, **Elder David E. Sorensen** taught that when we forgive others, we let go of the past and move with faith and love into the future:

"When someone has hurt us or those we care about, that pain can almost be overwhelming. It can feel as if the pain or the injustice is the most important thing in the world and that we have no choice but to seek vengeance. But Christ, the Prince of Peace, teaches us a better way. It can be very difficult to forgive someone the harm they've done us, but when we do, we open ourselves up to a better future. No longer does someone else's wrongdoing control our course. When we forgive others, it frees us to choose how we will live our own lives. Forgiveness means that problems of the past no longer dictate our destinies, and we can focus on the future with God's love in our hearts" ("Forgiveness Will Change Bitterness to Love," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2003, 12).

Points to Ponder

- How have you been blessed through the keys given to Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration and later restored to the Prophet Joseph Smith?
- How could you use the teachings of the Savior in Matthew 18:21–35 to help you forgive others?

Suggested Assignments

- Write down two or three experiences that have helped you come to know that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.
- Read "Keys of the Priesthood" in the Guide to the Scriptures (available under "Study Helps" on the Church's scripture website, scriptures.lds.org).
- Write about how the events that took place on the Mount of Transfiguration would have helped prepare Peter, James, and John to lead the Church following Jesus Christ's death. Also, write a paragraph or two about how the Lord has prepared you for important events in your life.

Matthew 19–23

Introduction and Timeline for Matthew 19–23

Jesus Christ’s mortal ministry was drawing to a close. After a final journey from Galilee to Judea and a few days in Jerusalem, it would be complete. With only a few weeks remaining in His mortal life, the Savior taught doctrines of the kingdom—such as the sanctity of marriage; the reward of eternal life for those who keep their covenants; and the two great commandments, which are to love God and to love our neighbor. Knowing what awaited Him, the Savior boldly entered Jerusalem and confronted the Jewish leadership, openly revealed their secret plots to kill Him, and rebuked them for their hypocrisy.



1. Jesus Christ taught and ministered near Jerusalem.
2. Jesus Christ made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem.
3. The Savior cleansed the temple and taught there.
4. The Savior cursed the fig tree.

Commentary for Matthew 19–23

Matthew 19:1–12. “What Therefore God Hath Joined Together, Let Not Man Put Asunder” (see also Mark 10:2–21)

During the time of the Savior’s mortal ministry, divorce was a vexing issue, debated without resolution among rabbis. For many people, divorce was justified even for trivial reasons. The Pharisees sought to involve Jesus in the controversy by asking His opinion about divorce. In response, the Savior emphasized the sanctity of marriage by referring to Adam and Eve, who provided the ideal of marital unity and permanence (see Matthew 19:4–6; see also Genesis 2:24).

Matthew 19:7 records that the Pharisees referred to Deuteronomy 24:1, which some of their leaders understood to mean that if a man married a woman and she did not please him, he could provide her a written bill of divorcement. When asked why Moses permitted divorce, Jesus Christ declared, “Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: *but from the beginning it was not so*” (Matthew 19:8; italics added). Latter-day scriptures affirm that in the Lord’s plan of happiness, marriage is meant to be eternal (see D&C 132:15–20; Ecclesiastes 3:14; Moses 4:18).

President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency taught about the seriousness of divorce:

“Modern prophets have warned that looking upon marriage ‘as a mere contract that may be entered into at pleasure . . . and severed at the first difficulty . . . is an evil meriting severe condemnation,’ especially where children are made to suffer [David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Apr. 1969, 8–9].

“In ancient times and even under tribal laws in some countries where we now have members, men have power to divorce their wives for any trivial thing. Such unrighteous oppression of women was rejected by the Savior [see Matthew 19:8–9]” (“Divorce,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 70).

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) taught, “There may be now and again a legitimate cause for divorce. I am not one to say that it is never justified. But I say without hesitation that this plague among us, which seems to be growing everywhere, is not of God, but rather is the work of the adversary of righteousness and peace and truth” (“What God Hath Joined Together,” *Ensign*, May 1991, 74).

Matthew 19:9. Is It Adultery for a Divorced Person to Remarry? (see also Mark 10:11; Luke 16:18)

President Dallin H. Oaks explained that in our day divorced individuals may remarry without their new marriage being considered adultery, but in the celestial kingdom there will be no divorce: “The kind of marriage

required for exaltation—eternal in duration and god-like in quality—does not contemplate divorce. In the temples of the Lord, couples are married for all eternity. But some marriages do not progress toward that ideal. Because ‘of the hardness of [our] hearts’ [Matthew 19:8], the Lord does not currently enforce the consequences of the celestial standard. He permits divorced persons to marry again without the stain of immorality specified in the higher law” (“Divorce,” 70).

Matthew 19:12. “Made Themselves Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven’s Sake”

From verse 12 in Matthew 19, it may appear that the Savior approved of celibacy or self-mutilation. Modern prophets and apostles, however, have clarified, “that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children. . . . God’s commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that anciently some people held the false belief that a life of celibacy was to be sought after: “Apparently those who made themselves eunuchs were men who in false pagan worship had deliberately mutilated themselves in the apostate notion that such would further their salvation. It is clear that such was not a true gospel requirement of any sort. There is no such thing in the gospel as wilful emasculation; such a notion violates every true principle of procreation and celestial marriage” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 1:549).

Matthew 19:13–15. Little Children

Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 19:13–14 states:

“Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them and pray. And the disciples rebuked them, saying, *There is no need, for Jesus hath said, Such shall be saved.*

“But Jesus said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (compare Matthew 19:13, footnote *b*).

Matthew 19:16–22. Christ and the Rich Young Ruler (see also Mark 10:17–22; Luke 18:18–23)

A rich young man came to Jesus, asking what he needed to do in order to have eternal life (see Matthew 19:16–22). The Savior asked him to give up his earthly possessions and follow Him, but riches had gained

such a powerful hold on the young man that he went away grieved, unwilling to make the sacrifices necessary to inherit eternal life. This account shows the power of material possessions to obscure what should be our real goal in mortality. However, we are not told that the young man’s decision was final—we do not know that he absolutely refused to comply with Jesus’s instruction.



Christ and the Rich Young Ruler, by Heinrich Hofmann

Drawing a lesson from the account of the rich young man, **Elder Neal A. Maxwell** (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that being a valiant disciple of the Savior means not just avoiding sin but actively doing good:

“Failing to be valiant in Christian discipleship will leave us without significant happiness. Therefore, our active avoidance of wickedness must be followed by our active engagement in righteousness. Then we can come to know true joy—after all, man is that he ‘might have joy’ (2 Nephi 2:25).

“It is very often the sins of omission that keep us from spiritual wholeness because we still lack certain things. Remember the rich, righteous young man who came to Jesus asking, ‘Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?’ . . .

“A customized commandment thus came for that man [see Matthew 19:21–22]. It was something he needed to do, not something he needed to stop doing, that kept him from wholeness” (“The Pathway of Discipleship” [Brigham Young University fireside, Jan. 4, 1998], 4; speeches.byu.edu).

Matthew 19:20–29

What is the difference between Peter’s commitment to follow the Savior and the rich young man’s commitment? How do the rich young man’s possessions compare to what the Lord promised Peter?

Matthew 19:24. A Camel through the Eye of a Needle

Some have asserted that the eye of the needle was a small door in the Jerusalem city wall, requiring a camel to be stripped of its load in order to enter. There is no evidence that such a door ever existed. Others have proposed that altering one letter in the Greek text would change the scripture to mean that a rope, not a camel, would have to pass through the eye of a needle. However, when Jesus Christ referred to a camel passing through the eye of a needle, it was likely an example of hyperbole, an intentional exaggeration to teach “that a rich man shall hardly [with difficulty] enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:23). The Joseph Smith Translation adds, “With men *that trust in riches*, it is impossible; but not *impossible with men who trust in God and leave all for my sake*, for with *such all these things are possible*” (Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 10:26 [in Mark 10:27, footnote a]).

President Brigham Young (1801–77) spoke of the difficulty people face when they accumulate riches: “The worst fear that I have about this people is that they will get rich in this country, forget God and His people, wax fat, and kick themselves out of the Church. . . . This people will stand mobbing, robbing, poverty, and all manner of persecution, and be true. But my greater fear for them is that they cannot stand wealth” (quoted in James S. Brown, *Life of a Pioneer* [1971], 122–23).

Matthew 19:27–29. Forsaking the World for Jesus Christ’s Sake

In contrast to the rich young man, who was not willing to give up his possessions to follow Jesus Christ, Peter declared that he and his fellow Apostles had “forsaken all” to follow the Savior (Matthew 19:27). In our time, we must also be willing to make the sacrifices required of us as disciples of the Savior. **Elder M. Russell Ballard** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles reminded us of the great sacrifices made by the Latter-day Saints who were required to leave their homes and cross the plains, and he taught that their spiritual power came from keeping their gospel covenants:

“We often hear of the suffering and the sacrifice those early Saints endured, and we ask ourselves, How did they do it? . . . Those early Latter-day Saints had made covenants with God, and those *covenants burned like unquenchable fire in their hearts*.

“Sometimes we are tempted to let our lives be governed more by convenience than by covenant.

It is not always convenient to live gospel standards and stand up for truth and testify of the Restoration. It usually is not convenient to share the gospel with others. It isn’t always convenient to respond to a calling in the Church, especially one that stretches our abilities. Opportunities to serve others in meaningful ways, as we have covenanted to do, rarely come at convenient times. But there is no spiritual power in living by convenience. The power comes as we keep our covenants” (“Like a Flame Unquenchable,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 86).

Matthew 20:1–16. The Parable of the Laborers

A common practice in Jesus’s day was for landowners to go to a central gathering place and hire temporary laborers. In this parable the householder went into the marketplace at about 6:00 a.m. and hired laborers to work for a “penny” (or *denarius*, which was a typical day’s wages). He returned to the marketplace at 9:00 a.m., 3:00 p.m., and 5:00 p.m. (the eleventh hour), found other unemployed men who were willing to work, and hired them, promising to pay them “whatsoever is right” (Matthew 20:4, 7).

It would have been unusual to pay first those who had worked the least (see Matthew 20:8). However, this parable is an extension of what Jesus Christ taught in Matthew 19:30: “But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.” Those hired in the eleventh hour might represent those who become converted late in life but thereafter labor diligently in the kingdom. One truth this parable illustrates is that whether people become disciples of Christ in their youth, in their young adulthood, in the later stages of life, or in some instances in the spirit world (see D&C 137:7–8), eternal life is the reward for all people who make and keep sacred covenants with the Lord (see D&C 76:95; 84:38; 88:107).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles offered these additional lessons from this parable of the laborers:

“This parable—like all parables—is not really about laborers or wages any more than the others are about sheep and goats. This is a story about God’s goodness, His patience and forgiveness, and the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a story about generosity and compassion. It is a story about grace. It underscores the thought I heard many years ago that surely the thing God enjoys most about being God is the thrill of being merciful, especially to those who don’t expect it and often feel they don’t deserve it.

“. . . However late you think you are, however many chances you think you have missed, however many

mistakes you feel you have made or talents you think you don't have, or however far from home and family and God you feel you have traveled, I testify that you have *not* traveled beyond the reach of divine love. It is not possible for you to sink lower than the infinite light of Christ's Atonement shines.

" . . . There is no dream that in the unfolding of time and eternity cannot yet be realized. Even if you feel you are the lost and last laborer of the eleventh hour, the Lord of the vineyard still stands beckoning.

" . . . *His concern is for the faith at which you finally arrive, not the hour of the day in which you got there.*

"So if you have made covenants, keep them. If you haven't made them, make them. If you have made them and broken them, repent and repair them. It is *never* too late so long as the Master of the vineyard says there is time" ("The Laborers in the Vineyard," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 32–33).

Matthew 20:22–23. What Is Meant by Drinking the Savior's Cup?

For help in understanding what it means to drink the Savior's cup, see the commentary for Mark 10:38–39.

Matthew 20:28. Jesus Christ Came "to Give His Life a Ransom for Many"

For help understanding the "ransom" Jesus Christ paid, see the commentary for Mark 10:45.

Matthew 20:29–34. Healing the Blind Men

To read about the healing of the two blind men, see the commentary for Mark 10:46–52.

Matthew 21:1–11. Entering Jerusalem on a Donkey (see also Mark 11:1–10; Luke 19:29–44; John 12:12–19)

The Savior's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, during the observance of the Passover, directly fulfilled the prophecy recorded in Zechariah 9:9–10 and publicly declared that Jesus was the Messiah. In ancient times, the ass was a symbol of Jewish royalty. During the time of the monarchy in ancient Israel, following the enthronement of King Saul, the Jews held annual reenthronement rituals that featured a king riding into Jerusalem upon a donkey. The rider approached Jerusalem from east of the city, through the Mount of Olives and the Kidron Valley, and then came to the temple. These rituals looked forward to the time when the Messiah would come to His people in this same way. Thus, at a time when Jerusalem

was flooded with Jews, Jesus entered Jerusalem in a manner that demonstrated He was the Messiah, the King of Israel. Riding on a donkey also showed that Jesus came as a peaceful and "lowly" Savior, not as a conqueror upon a warhorse (see Zechariah 9:9–10).

At the Second Coming, Jesus will return to earth in great power and glory. As a symbol of His glory, the book of Revelation describes Him coming to earth on a "white horse," rather than on the ass that He rode into Jerusalem (see Revelation 19:11–16).

Matthew 21:8. The Multitude "Spread Their Garments in the Way" (see also Mark 11:8; Luke 19:36)

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained the significance of the multitude spreading garments and branches before the Lord as He entered Jerusalem: "Only kings and conquerors received such an extraordinary token of respect as this. (2 Kings 9:13.) . . . Amid shouts of praise and pleas for salvation and deliverance, we see the disciples strewing our Lord's course with palm branches in token of victory and triumph. This whole dramatic scene pre-figures that yet future assembly when 'a great multitude,' . . . shall stand 'before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands,' crying with a loud voice, 'Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.' (Rev. 7:9–10.)" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:578).



Christ's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, by Harry Anderson

Matthew 21:9–11. "Hosanna" (see also Mark 11:9–10; Luke 19:38; John 12:13)

Hosanna is a Hebrew word that "means 'please save us' and is used in praise and supplication. . . . At the Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the multitudes

cried ‘Hosanna’ and spread palm branches for Jesus to ride upon, thus demonstrating their understanding that Jesus was the same Lord who had delivered Israel anciently (Ps. 118:25–26; Matt. 21:9, 15; Mark 11:9–10; John 12:13). These people recognized Christ as the long-awaited Messiah” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Hosanna”; scriptures.lds.org). The phrase “all the city was moved” (Matthew 21:10) suggests that Jesus’s triumphal entry was noised throughout the city and was known by many people.

Matthew 21:17–22. The Barren Fig Tree



RICHARD L. W. CLEAVE

Figs

This truth helps us appreciate that His willingness to be arrested and crucified just a few days later was “truly voluntary” (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 526).

Matthew 21:12–16, 23–27. “By What Authority Doest Thou These Things?”

The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem saw Jesus’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem and His cleansing of the temple as a challenge to their authority (see Matthew 21:15–16). Temple priests oversaw the money changing that was taking place in the temple, thus profiting thereby. When Jesus overturned the tables and referred to the temple as “My house” (Matthew 21:13), He openly questioned their authority to do so. Later, when Jesus was teaching in the temple, the Jewish leaders issued a dramatic challenge to Him by asking, “By what authority doest thou these things?” (Matthew 21:23).

The priests claimed authority based on their ancestry; the scribes, based on their education; and the elders, based on their social standing and wealth. The Savior, however, had authority from His Father, which had been manifest in His teachings and works throughout His public ministry (see Matthew 7:29; Mark 1:27; John 3:2).

The leaves on the fig tree indicated that it should have had fruit, but it did not. With its misleading appearance, the tree symbolized hypocrisy, and its fate perhaps represented what awaited those who professed righteousness, yet plotted the Savior’s death. **Elder James E. Talmage** (1862–1933) stated that another truth we learn from this account is that Jesus had “power to destroy by a

The Savior responded to the Jewish leaders’ challenge by posing yet another question that silenced them (see Matthew 21:25). This set the stage for a vivid teaching moment, as the Savior proceeded to teach His challengers and the listening multitude three successive parables dealing with the failure of Jewish leaders to repent and believe in Him (see Matthew 21:28–44; 22:1–14).

Matthew 21:28–32. The Parable of the Two Sons

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained the meaning of this parable:

“The Father of the sons is God himself who offers employment in his earthly vineyard to all his children. The first son, who initially refused to labor in his Father’s vineyard but later repented and served him, is symbolical of the publicans and harlots who repented of their early sins and became faithful servants in their Father’s cause. . . .

“The second son, who willingly accepted an assignment in the vineyard but then failed to render the appointed labors, is symbolical of the Jewish leaders who professed to be about their Father’s business but were in fact letting the vineyard degenerate. . . .

“[In Matthew 21:31, Jesus] . . . teaches in forceful and plain language that repentance is a living, abiding principle which actually works. ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.’ (1 Tim. 1:15.) What, publicans and harlots in the kingdom of God! Yes, and even the chief priests, scribes, and elders—if they also repent and keep the commandments” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:589–90).

Matthew 21:33–46. The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen

In this parable, the householder represents God Himself, the husbandmen represent the leaders of Israel, and the servants represent the prophets sent to teach the people of Israel. Through the parable, the Lord taught that over the course of the preceding centuries, the leaders of Israel had rejected many prophets—men like Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, and numerous others (see 1 Kings 19:10; 2 Chronicles 36:15–16). The “heir” who came “last of all” and was cast “out of the vineyard” and slain (Matthew 21:37–39) represents Jesus Christ. This part of the parable was fulfilled three days later when Jesus was taken outside of the city and slain (see Hebrews 13:12).

Then, by referring to prophecies about a stone that would be rejected but would become “the head of the corner” (Matthew 21:42), the Lord announced to the

Jewish leaders that He was the Messiah and that there would be terrible consequences for rejecting Him.

Matthew 22:2–10. The Parable of the Marriage of the King’s Son

An invitation from a king was tantamount to a command; to refuse his invitation was to reject the king and his authority. Through this parable the Savior taught that, as invited guests, the Jewish leaders were refusing to partake of the feast offered them by God. Several attitudes indicated that the guests were rejecting the king: refusing outright to come (see Matthew 22:3); feeling that what they wanted to do was more important than responding to the king’s invitation (see verse 5); and rejecting the king’s servants (see verse 6). Each of these attitudes, evident also in today’s world, indicates unworthiness to enter into God’s kingdom. (For insights on the similar parable of the great supper, see the commentary for Luke 14:12–24.)

Matthew 22:11–14. “A Man Which Had Not on a Wedding Garment”

In ancient times, it was sometimes the custom for wealthy individuals, such as kings, to provide invited guests with proper clothing to wear to events such as weddings. Despite being invited to the wedding, this man chose to attend on his own terms rather than those of the king, and he was not permitted to remain. There are requirements for entering the kingdom of God, even though everyone is invited (see Matthew 22:9). While the meaning of the required garment is not specified, elsewhere in the scriptures, garments and robes often symbolize righteousness and purity—qualities required to enter into the Lord’s presence (see Isaiah 61:10; Revelation 19:8; 2 Nephi 9:14; D&C 109:76). Today, the clothing worn in the temple symbolizes clothing ourselves in covenants, righteousness, and purity in preparation for entering into God’s presence. We cannot participate in the great “marriage supper” of the Son of God unless we have accepted and put on the protective clothing of His Atonement (see Revelation 19:8–9).

Matthew 22:15–22. Render unto Caesar and unto God

Matthew recorded that both Pharisees and Herodians sought to entrap Jesus with the question, “Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?” (Matthew 22:17). **President Howard W. Hunter** (1907–95) explained the dilemma this posed and identified truths we learn from the Savior’s answer (see also Genesis 1:26–27; Revelation 3:12; Alma 5:14):

“If he had said, ‘Yes, pay the tax,’ he would have been called a traitor. It would have driven a wedge between him and his followers and created rebellion. If his answer had been, ‘No, it is not lawful to pay the tax,’ they would have delivered him into the hands of Rome on the charge of treason.

“His adversaries intended that Jesus would be gored on whichever horn of dilemma he might choose. . . .

“The wisdom of [the Savior’s] answer defines the limitations of dual sovereigns and defines the jurisdiction of the two empires of heaven and earth. The image of monarchs stamped on coins denotes that temporal things belong to the temporal sovereign. The image of God stamped on the heart and soul of a man denotes that all its faculties and powers belong to God and should be employed in his service” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1968, 64–65).

Matthew 22:23–30. Marriage in the Resurrection

Some people have misinterpreted the Savior’s words in Matthew 22:30 to mean there is no eternal marriage. **Elder James E. Talmage** pointed out that the Savior’s words do not state that marriages will not *exist* after the Resurrection, but that marriages will not *be performed* after the Resurrection: “In the resurrection there will be no marrying nor giving in marriage; for all questions of marital status must be settled before that time” (*Jesus the Christ*, 548).

An important key to understanding the Savior’s words is to remember that they were spoken to Sadducees, who “say that there is no resurrection” (Matthew 22:23). Therefore, the question they posed to the Savior was insincere—they were not truly interested in knowing about marriage in the Resurrection. The Savior’s reply that “in the resurrection *they* neither marry, nor are given in marriage” (Matthew 22:30; italics added) referred to the individuals in question, who were Sadducees, for the questioners said that “there were *with us* seven brethren” (Matthew 22:25; italics added). For those who do not marry for eternity, marriage does not endure beyond this life (see D&C 132:15–17). In these latter days, the Lord revealed that marriage can be eternal only if it is entered into according to His law, performed by one who has authority, and sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise (see D&C 132:19).

Another key to understanding the Savior’s words is to realize that when the Sadducees referred to the words of Moses (see Matthew 22:24), they were referring to what is sometimes termed “levirate marriage.” According to the law of Moses, when a man died leaving his

wife childless, his brother was supposed to marry the deceased man's wife to provide for her and to raise up children for the deceased man (see Deuteronomy 25:5; Bible Dictionary, "Levirate marriage").

Though the doctrine of eternal marriage is not explicitly taught in the Bible, the Bible does state that husband and wife are "heirs together of the grace of life" (1 Peter 3:7), that "whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever" (Ecclesiastes 3:14), and that "neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:11).

Matthew 22:35–40. The Two Great Commandments

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) discussed the importance of the first great commandment and its relationship to the second:

"To love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength is all-consuming and all-encompassing. It is no lukewarm endeavor. It is total commitment of our very being—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually—to a love of the Lord.

"The breadth, depth, and height of this love of God extend into every facet of one's life. Our desires, be they spiritual or temporal, should be rooted in a love of the Lord. Our thoughts and affections should be centered on the Lord. . . .

"Why did God put the first commandment first? Because He knew that if we truly loved Him we would want to keep all of His other commandments. . . .

"We should put God ahead of *everyone else* in our lives.

"When Joseph was in Egypt, what came first in his life—God, his job, or Potiphar's wife? When she tried to seduce him, he responded by saying, 'How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' (Genesis 39:9). . . . When Joseph was forced to choose, he was more anxious to please God than to please his employer's wife. When we are required to choose, are we more anxious to please God than our boss, our teacher, our neighbor, or our date? . . .

"If someone wants to marry you outside the temple, whom will you strive to please—God or a mortal? . . . You should qualify for the temple. Then you will know that there is no one good enough for you to marry outside the temple. If such individuals are that good, they will get themselves in a condition so that they too can be married in the temple.

"We bless our fellowmen the most when we put the first commandment first" ("The Great Commandment—Love the Lord," *Ensign*, May 1988, 4–6; see also Mark 12:28–34).

Matthew 22:41–46. "What Think Ye of Christ?"

In Matthew 22:41–46 Jesus referred to an inspired psalm of David (see Psalm 110:1), in which David called the Messiah his Lord, even though the Messiah was prophesied to be David's son. The Pharisees believed that the Messiah would be an earthly king who would deliver the nation of Israel, but David, inspired by the Spirit, knew that the Messiah would be the Son of God. Therefore, David could call his own descendant Lord. The Savior was teaching the Pharisees that according to their own scriptures, Christ was *more than just* the son of David—He was also the Son of God.

President David O. McKay (1873–1970) taught this insight about the importance of the question, "What think ye of Christ?": "What you sincerely in your heart think of Christ will determine what you are, will largely determine what your acts will be. No person can study this divine personality, can accept his teachings without becoming conscious of an uplifting and refining influence within himself" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1951, 93).



"Moses' seat" (Matthew 23:2). This stone seat was found in the excavation of a synagogue at Chorazin, and similar stone seats have been discovered in other ancient synagogues. They may have been used by scribes and other teachers of the law of Moses. To sit in someone's seat meant to succeed that person, to serve in his place. As teachers of the law, the scribes were the successors of Moses.

JAMES JEFFERY

Matthew 23:1–5. “They Make Broad Their Phylacteries”

Jesus began His critique of the scribes and Pharisees by acknowledging that they taught truths that would bring men closer to God and that those teachings should be followed. But the scribes and Pharisees did not follow their own teachings; they acted out of pride and self-interest (see Matthew 23:1–5).



JAMES JEFFERY

Modern phylacteries around forearm and forehead

The way the scribes and Pharisees wore “phylacteries” showed their pride. Through a traditional interpretation of Exodus 13:9 and Deuteronomy 6:8, Jews adopted the custom of wearing tefillin, or phylacteries, which were small leather boxes strapped onto the forehead and arm. Inside the phylacteries were small rolls of parchment, on which were inscribed, in whole or in part, several Old Testament texts—Exodus 13:2–10, 11–16; Deuteronomy 6:4–9; 11:13–21. Most Jews wore phylacteries only

at prayer time, but the Pharisees sometimes displayed them throughout the day. The Pharisees also made “broad their phylacteries,” or wore enlarged boxes, thus drawing attention to their supposed piety (Matthew 23:5). The Savior also warned His disciples not to follow the example of the scribes, who wore “long robes” to draw attention to themselves (Luke 20:46).

Matthew 23:5–6, 11–12. “He That Is Greatest among You Shall Be Your Servant”

The Savior chastened the scribes and Pharisees for their efforts to be seen and praised by others. **President Howard W. Hunter** similarly counseled us to serve the Lord without concern for status: “Don’t be overly concerned with status. Do you recall the counsel of the Savior regarding those who seek the ‘chief seats’ or the ‘uppermost rooms’? ‘He that is greatest among you shall be your servant.’ (Matt. 23:6, 11.) It is important to be appreciated. But our focus should be on righteousness, not recognition; on service, not status. The faithful visiting teacher, who quietly goes about her work month after month, is just as important to the work of the Lord as those who occupy what some see as more prominent positions in the Church. Visibility does not equate to value” (“To the Women of the Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 96–97).

Matthew 23:11–12

In what way is Jesus Christ the greatest example of these teachings? What do these teachings mean to you personally?

Matthew 23:13–33. Woes Pronounced upon Hypocrites

The word *hypocrite* is translated from a Greek word meaning “actor” and refers to one who pretends, exaggerates a part, or is deceitfully inconsistent in his or her actions. The Lord denounced the scribes and Pharisees for exaggerating their outward observance of the law of Moses, while their hearts were arrogant and insincere. The Savior pronounced a series of eight “woes” that would befall the scribes and Pharisees because of their hypocritical actions. The word *woe* means a condition of misery, distress, and sorrow resulting from great affliction or misfortune. The following chart briefly identifies some actions of the scribes and Pharisees that the Lord identified as hypocrisy:

Matthew 23	Actions of the Scribes and Pharisees Identified as Hypocrisy
Verse 13	They not only rejected Christ, His Church, and His offer of salvation, but they also sought to prevent others from accepting Christ and salvation.
Verse 14	They were greedy and materialistic, and they preyed upon the misfortunes of others.
Verse 15	They were recruiting souls to false beliefs.
Verses 16–22	Through their oaths, they gave more reverence to the gold and furnishings of the temple than to the Lord, whom the temple honors.
Verse 23	They obeyed rules but ignored the more important doctrines and principles the rules were based upon.
Verses 25–28	They hid internal greed and self-indulgence beneath an exterior show of righteousness. They looked clean and good on the outside, but on the inside they were full of corruption and spiritual decay.
Verses 29–30	They rejected living prophets while claiming allegiance to dead prophets.

Matthew 23:23–28. The Weightier Matters of the Law Focus on Internal Requirements

When the Savior accused the scribes and Pharisees of omitting the “weightier matters of the law,” he told them they were “blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel” (Matthew 23:23–24). This was a reference to the practice of some Jewish leaders who carefully strained their drinking water to avoid mistakenly swallowing the smallest of unclean animals. Yet they would symbolically swallow a camel—the largest of unclean animals (see Leviticus 11:4).

President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency explained how the Savior’s teachings focused on the “weightier” internal requirements of God’s law:

“The Savior taught that judgment, mercy, and faith are the ‘weightier matters of the law’ [Matthew 23:23].

“I wish to state unequivocally that the commandments of God must be kept to receive the blessings and promises of the Savior. The Ten Commandments are still a vital thread in the fabric of the gospel of Christ, but with His coming came new light and life which brings a fuller measure of joy and happiness. Jesus introduced a higher and more difficult standard of human conduct. It is simpler as well as more difficult because it focuses on internal rather than external requirements: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Love your neighbor as yourself. When smitten, turn the other cheek. When asked for a coat, give your cloak also. Forgive, not just once but seventy times seven. This was the essence of the new gospel. There was more emphasis on *do* than *do not*. More moral agency was given to each of us [see Matthew 7:12; 22:37–39; Luke 6:29; Matthew 5:40; 18:21–22]” (“The Weightier Matters of the Law: Judgment, Mercy, and Faith,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 53).

Elder Lynn G. Robbins of the Seventy taught that hypocrisy involves inconsistency between what one *does* and the weightier matter of what one *is*:

“The Savior often denounced those who *did* without *being*—calling them hypocrites: ‘This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me’ (Mark 7:6). *To do* without *to be* is hypocrisy, or feigning to be what one is not—a pretender. . . .

“The Savior chastised the scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy: ‘Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe’—something they *did*—‘of mint

and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith’ (Matthew 23:23). Or in other words, they failed *to be* what they should *have been*.

“While He recognized the importance of *do*, the Savior identified *be* as a ‘weightier matter.’ The greater importance of *being* is illustrated in the following examples:

- “Entering the waters of baptism is something we *do*. The *be* that must precede it is faith in Jesus Christ and a mighty change of heart.
- “Partaking of the sacrament is something we *do*. *Being* worthy to partake of the sacrament is a weightier and much more important matter.
- “Ordination to the priesthood is an act, or *do*. The weightier matter, however, is power in the priesthood, which is based ‘upon the principles of righteousness’ (D&C 121:36), or *be*” (“What Manner of Men and Women Ought Ye to Be?” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 103–4).

Matthew 23:25–28. “Ye Are Like unto Whited Sepulchres”

It was common during New Testament times to apply a white finish to the exterior of tombs, thus making the exterior look clean, while the dead body decayed within. No amount of exterior polish could abate what was happening on the inside. The Savior used this image, along with that of a cup that is clean on the outside but not on the inside, to illustrate the glaring inconsistency between the inward and outward states of hypocrites. **President Dallin H. Oaks** applied this teaching to those who view pornography:

“One of the Savior’s most memorable teachings applies to men [and women] who are secretly viewing pornography:

“‘Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

“‘Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also’ (Matthew 23:25–26; see also Alma 60:23). . . .

“The immediate spiritual consequences of such hypocrisy are devastating” (“Pornography,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2005, 88).

Matthew 23:34–37

What do you learn from these verses about the nature and disposition of Jesus Christ?

Matthew 23:34. “I Send unto You Prophets”

When Jesus Christ stated, “I send unto you prophets” (Matthew 23:34), His words clearly implied that He was Jehovah of the Old Testament, and that He is the one who directs the inspired priesthood leaders of all ages. He was referring to those prophets who were sent to save the Jews and who would be persecuted and killed as a result of their efforts, including Himself and His Apostles.

Matthew 23:37–39. Jesus Christ Lamented over Jerusalem

As the Savior approached the end of His ministry, He lamented over Jerusalem (see Matthew 23:37–39; Luke 34–35). The Joseph Smith Translation includes this touching introduction to the Savior’s lament: “*And in this very hour he began to weep over Jerusalem*” (Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 13:34 [in Luke 13:33, footnote b]).

Why would Jesus weep over Jerusalem? **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** declared:

“Jerusalem—the holy city!

“Jerusalem—city of depravity, ‘which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt!’ (Rev. 11:8.)

“Jerusalem—doomed spiritually and soon to be desolated temporally. (See Luke 19:41–44.)

“Jerusalem—site of the temple; home of the prophets; city of our Lord’s ministry.

“Jerusalem—city where the Son of God was crucified, crucified by ‘the more wicked part of the world,’ for ‘there is none other nation on earth that would crucify their God.’ (2 Ne. 10:3.)

“Jerusalem—future world capital and center from which ‘the word of the Lord’ shall go unto all people. (Isa. 2:3.)

“Truly Jerusalem’s history is like that of no other place; and truly Jesus with cause, wept because of the rebellion of her children” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:626).



O Jerusalem, by Greg K. Olsen

Points to Ponder

- Review the parable of the laborers in the vineyard (see Matthew 20:1–16). What would you say to someone who feels that it is unfair that each laborer was paid equally? How does this parable help you understand the Lord’s mercy and love for all people?
- What is significant about the order in which Jesus Christ taught the two great commandments? (see Matthew 22:35–40). What opportunities do you have each day to choose the Lord over all else?

Suggested Assignments

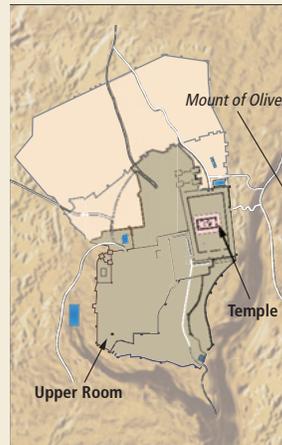
- Briefly explain in writing how the Jewish leaders of Christ’s day were like each of the following: the fig tree in Matthew 21:17–20; the second son in Matthew 21:28–32; the husbandmen in Matthew 21:33–41; the wedding guests and the man without the wedding garment in Matthew 22:1–14.
- Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated: “When we love the Lord, obedience ceases to be a burden. Obedience becomes a delight” (“The Great Commandment,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 30). Write a paragraph describing how you currently feel about keeping the commandments. Refer to Matthew 22:37–40 in your answer.

Matthew 24–25; Joseph Smith—Matthew

8

Introduction and Timeline for Matthew 24–25; Joseph Smith—Matthew

Chapters 24–25 of Matthew contain what is sometimes called the Olivet Discourse, so named because the Savior delivered it on the Mount of Olives. After spending much of the final week of His mortal ministry teaching at the temple, Jesus looked back on the temple and its surrounding structures and prophesied: “I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (Matthew 24:2; Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:3). Peter, James, John, and Andrew later approached Jesus privately with two questions: (1) “When shall these things be?”—referring to the destruction of the temple; and (2) “What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (Matthew 24:3; see also Mark 13:3–4). In Matthew 24 and Joseph Smith—Matthew, you will study the Savior’s response to these two questions.



On the Mount of Olives overlooking Jerusalem, Jesus Christ taught His disciples about the destruction of Jerusalem and His Second Coming.

Jerusalem at the Time of Jesus Christ (Traditional Locations)

Commentary for Matthew 24–25; Joseph Smith—Matthew

Joseph Smith—Matthew; Matthew 24. Comparison of Matthew 24 and Joseph Smith—Matthew

After Jesus Christ prophesied the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem, His disciples asked Him two questions (see Matthew 24:3; Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:4). In Matthew’s account it is sometimes difficult to determine which question Jesus answered in which verses. However, the changes found in the Joseph Smith Translation of Matthew 24, known as Joseph Smith—Matthew in the Pearl of Great Price, clearly separate the answers to the two questions. The Savior’s answer to the disciples’ first question about the destruction of Jerusalem is found in Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:5–21, and His answer to their question about the Second Coming and the end of the world is found in Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:22–55.

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:2–4; Matthew 24:1–3. Destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem

As described in these verses, the Savior prophesied that the temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed, a prophecy that was fulfilled about 40 years later when the Jews were fighting for freedom from their Roman rulers. In A.D. 70, after months of intense fighting between the

Roman army and Jewish rebels, the rebels took refuge within the walls of Jerusalem, and the Romans laid siege to the city. The famine and hunger that followed were so severe that some resorted to cannibalism. Any Jew caught trying to escape was crucified in front of the walls of the city for all inside to see.

The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus described the destruction and violence that occurred when the Roman army finally broke into the city and set the temple on fire:



My Father’s House, by Al Rounds. The Jerusalem temple is depicted as seen from the Mount of Olives, with the Garden of Gethsemane in the foreground.

“While the temple blazed, the victors plundered everything that fell in their way and slaughtered wholesale all who were caught. No pity was shown for age, no reverence for rank; children and greybeards, laity and priests, alike were massacred; every class was pursued and encompassed in the grasp of war. . . . There were the war-cries of the Roman legions sweeping onward in mass, the howls of the rebels encircled by fire and sword, the rush of the people who, cut off from above, fled panic-stricken only to fall into the arms of the foe. . . . You would indeed have thought that the temple-hill was boiling over from its base, being everywhere one mass of flame, but yet that the stream of blood was more copious than the flames and the slain more numerous than the slayers” (Josephus, *The Jewish War*, trans. H. St. J. Thackeray, Loeb Classical Library [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928], 257).

In the end, the magnificent temple was destroyed and has not been rebuilt since. Josephus estimated that 1,100,000 Jews perished in the conflict.



Detail from the Arch of Titus in Rome. This arch depicts Roman soldiers carrying objects from the temple of Jerusalem. The Arch of Titus was built in A.D. 81 to commemorate the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Roman general Titus and his armies. As prophesied by Jesus Christ, not one stone of the temple was left standing on another (see Matthew 24:2).

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:4; Matthew 24:3. What Is “the End of the World”?

Part of the second question that the disciples asked the Savior included the phrase “the end of the world.” The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) explained the meaning of this phrase while commenting on the parable of the wheat and the tares (see Matthew 13:36–43): “According to [the Savior’s] language, the end of the world is the destruction of the wicked; the harvest and

the end of the world have an allusion directly to the human family in the last days, instead of the earth, as many have imagined” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 300). Thus, the end of the world is not the end of the earth but the end of wickedness.

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:5–6, 9, 22; Matthew 24:4–5, 11, 24. “Take Heed That No Man Deceive You”

Many of the Savior’s prophecies about the destruction of Jerusalem can also apply to our day, when we are preparing for the Second Coming of the Savior (see Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:5–21). The Savior taught that false Christs and false prophets would arise and would “deceive many . . . if possible,” including, as recorded in verse 22, “the very elect, who are the elect according to the covenant.”

The term *elect* refers to “those who love God with all their hearts and live lives that are pleasing to Him” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Elect”; scriptures.lds.org). In some instances, it refers more specifically to baptized members of the Church. **President Harold B. Lee** (1899–1973) taught that “‘according to the covenant’ means members of the Church of Jesus Christ” (*The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams [1996], 401; see also D&C 29:7; 33:6).

Much of what Jesus taught in the Olivet Discourse was to prepare His disciples, both then and now, so they would not be deceived and overcome by evil. **Elder M. Russell Ballard** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, while commenting on these prophecies made by the Savior, cautioned Church members not to accept unauthorized teachings:

“As Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is our duty to be watchmen on the tower, warning Church members to beware of false prophets and false teachers who lie in wait to ensnare and destroy faith and testimony. Today we warn you that there are false prophets and false teachers arising; and if we are not careful, even those who are among the faithful members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will fall victim to their deception.

“President Joseph F. Smith gave wise and clear counsel that applies to us today:

“We can accept nothing as authoritative but that which comes directly through the appointed channel, the constituted organizations of the priesthood, which is the channel that God has appointed through which to make

known His mind and will to the world. . . . And the moment that individuals look to any other source, that moment they throw themselves open to the seductive influences of Satan. . . . Whenever you see a man rise up claiming to have received direct revelation from the Lord to the Church, independent of the order and channel of the priesthood, you may set him down as an impostor' (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 42)" ("Beware of False Prophets and False Teachers," *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 62).

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:10; Matthew 24:12

What does this verse teach about how sin affects one's ability to love? What examples of this cause and effect relationship have you seen in the world today?

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:11. "Remaineth Steadfast"

The Savior taught that in the perilous times that were coming for the Jews in Jerusalem, those who remained "steadfast" would be saved. This teaching applies to our day as well. **Elder David A. Bednar** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles defined what it means to be steadfast:

"A person who is steadfast and immovable is solid, firm, resolute, firmly secured, and incapable of being diverted from a primary purpose or mission. . . .

"A building or structure that is stable and immovable must be built upon a strong foundation. If you and I desire to become steadfast and immovable disciples of the Master, we must build appropriately and effectively upon Him as our foundation. . . .

"As we become more spiritually mature and increasingly steadfast and immovable, we focus upon and strive to understand the fundamental and foundational doctrines of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Disciples who are steadfast and immovable do not become fanatics or extremists, are not overzealous, and are not preoccupied with misguided gospel hobbies" ("Steadfast and Immovable, Always Abounding in Good Works," *New Era*, Jan. 2008, 2, 4–5).

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:12–20, 31–32; Matthew 24:15–22. What Is the "Abomination of Desolation"?

The Bible Dictionary helps us understand what "abomination of desolation" means:

"Daniel spoke prophetically of a day when there would be 'the abomination that maketh desolate' (Dan. 11:31;

12:11), and the phrase was recoined in New Testament times to say 'the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet' (Matt. 24:15).

"Conditions of desolation, born of abomination and wickedness, were to occur *twice* in fulfillment of Daniel's words. The first was to be when the Roman legions under Titus, in A.D. 70, laid siege to Jerusalem (Matt. 24:15; JS—M 1:12).

"Speaking of the last days, of the days following the Restoration of the gospel and its declaration 'for a witness unto all nations,' our Lord said: 'And again shall the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, be fulfilled' (JS—M 1:31–32). That is, Jerusalem again will be under siege.

"In a general sense, abomination of desolation also describes the latter-day judgments to be poured out upon the wicked wherever they may be. And so that the honest in heart may escape these things, the Lord sends His servants forth to raise the warning voice, to declare the glad tidings of the Restoration, lest 'desolation and utter abolishment' come upon them [D&C 84:114]" (Bible Dictionary, "Abomination of desolation").

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:12; Matthew 24:15. "Stand in the Holy Place"

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, referring to the events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, stated that "the counsel that the saints should then 'stand in the holy place' meant that they should assemble together where they could receive prophetic guidance that would preserve them from the desolations of the day" (*The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 4 vols. [1979–81], 3:430).



Destruction of Jerusalem, by Gary L. Kapp

Modern scriptures refer to standing in “holy places” (D&C 87:8; 101:22). **President Ezra Taft Benson** (1899–1994) noted that today, “holy places consist of our temples, our chapels, our homes, and stakes of Zion, which are, as the Lord declares, ‘for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth’ (D&C 115:6)” (*The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* [1988], 106).

While serving in the Presidency of the Seventy, **Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander** similarly noted: “For Latter-day Saints, such holy places include . . . our homes, sacrament meetings, and temples. Much of what we reverence, and what we teach our children to reverence as holy and sacred, is reflected in these places. The faith and reverence associated with them and the respect we have for what transpires or has transpired in them make them holy” (“Holy Place, Sacred Space,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2003, 71).

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:13–20; Matthew 24:16–22. “Flee into the Mountains”

Prior to the Roman siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, Christians living in Jerusalem remembered that the Savior had warned, “Then let them who are in Judea flee into the mountains,” and they fled to a city called Pella in the northern foothills of the Jordan Valley. Though the Jews living in Jerusalem experienced starvation and eventual destruction during the Roman siege, those who heeded the Savior’s warning safely escaped.

The Savior’s prophecy recorded in Matthew 24:16–22 refers both to the great tribulation suffered by the Jews in A.D. 70 and to great tribulations in the latter days. In A.D. 70, things became so bad that if the Lord had not intervened and shortened those tribulations, the Jewish people would have been annihilated. The Lord’s intervention will also be necessary in the last days in order for His people to survive.

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:22–23, 27, 29, 37, 39

What did Jesus Christ teach concerning the “elect” in these verses? What do you learn from these verses to help you deal with the challenges of the last days?

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:22; Matthew 24:24. “If Possible, They Shall Deceive the Very Elect”

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:21–22 signals the transition from events associated with the destruction of Jerusalem to signs that will precede the Second Coming and the preparation the Saints must make to remain faithful during the last days. Many of the Savior’s warnings on the Mount of Olives were given to help the elect avoid being deceived during this time.

The phrase “if possible” suggests that if the elect are going to avoid being deceived, they must keep their covenants and hearken to the word of the Lord. **Elder M. Russell Ballard** shared an experience illustrating how a Church member overcame deception:

“One of my fine missionaries who served with me when I was the mission president in Toronto came to see me some years later. I asked him, ‘Elder, how can I help you?’ ‘‘President,’ he said, ‘I think I’m losing my testimony.’

‘I couldn’t believe it. I asked him how that could be possible.

‘‘For the first time I have read some anti-Mormon literature,’ he said. ‘I have some questions, and nobody will answer them for me. I am confused, and I think I am losing my testimony.’

‘I asked him what his questions were, and he told me. They were the standard anti-Church issues, but I wanted a little time to gather materials so I could provide meaningful answers. So we set up an appointment 10 days later, at which time I told him I would answer every one of his questions. As he started to leave, I stopped him.

‘‘Elder, you’ve asked me several questions here today,’ I said. ‘Now I have one for you.’

‘‘Yes, President?’

‘‘How long has it been since you read from the Book of Mormon?’ I asked.

‘His eyes dropped. He looked at the floor for a while. Then he looked at me. ‘It’s been a long time, President,’ he confessed.

‘‘All right,’ I said. ‘You have given me my assignment. It’s only fair that I give you yours. I want you to promise me that you will read in the Book of Mormon for at least one hour every day between now and our next appointment.’ He agreed that he would do that.

“Ten days later he returned to my office, and I was ready. I pulled out my papers to start answering his questions, but he stopped me.

“‘President,’ he said, ‘that isn’t going to be necessary.’ Then he explained: ‘I know that the Book of Mormon is true. I know Joseph Smith is a prophet of God.’

“‘Well, that’s great,’ I said. ‘But you’re going to get answers to your questions anyway. I worked a long time on this, so you just sit there and listen.’

“And so I answered all his questions and then asked, ‘Elder, what have you learned from this?’

“And he said, ‘Give the Lord equal time.’

“May we engrave that thought on our minds and carry it with us as we walk through this process of mortality. Let us give the Lord equal time” (“When Shall These Things Be?” *Ensign*, Dec. 1996, 60).

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:23; Matthew 24:6. “See That Ye Be Not Troubled”

Some of the events that will precede the Second Coming—including “wars, and rumors of wars”—sound ominous, but the Lord counseled, “Be not troubled, for all I have told you must come to pass” (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:23). This counsel teaches that the signs of the times need not bring us only fear, but they can also provide assurance that the Lord is in control and that prophecy is being fulfilled. During a time of economic and social turmoil, when many people were troubled about the future, **President Thomas S. Monson** (1927–2018) encouraged Latter-day Saints:

“Though the storm clouds may gather, though the rains may pour down upon us, our knowledge of the gospel and our love of our Heavenly Father and of our Savior will comfort and sustain us and bring joy to our hearts as we walk uprightly and keep the commandments. There will be nothing in this world that can defeat us.

“My beloved brothers and sisters, fear not. Be of good cheer. The future is as bright as your faith” (“Be of Good Cheer,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 92).

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:27; Matthew 24:28. “Wheresoever the Carcass Is, There Will the Eagles Be Gathered Together”

The Savior taught that one of the signs of the times would be the establishment of His Church and the gathering of the Saints to it from around the world: “And now I show unto you a parable. Behold, wheresoever the

carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together; so likewise shall mine elect be gathered from the four quarters of the earth” (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:27). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** taught: “In the parable, as here given, the carcass is the body of the Church to which the eagles, who are Israel, shall fly to find nourishment” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 1:648).



President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency discussed how Saints today are blessed as they gather in stakes throughout the world: “With the creation of stakes and the construction of temples in most nations with sizeable populations of the faithful, the current commandment is not to gather to one place but to gather in stakes in our own homelands. There the faithful can enjoy the full blessings of eternity in a house of the Lord. There, in their own homelands, they can obey the Lord’s command to enlarge the borders of His people and strengthen her stakes (see D&C 101:21; 133:9, 14). In this way, the stakes of Zion are ‘for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth’ (D&C 115:6)” (“Preparation for the Second Coming,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2004, 8).

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:28–29; Matthew 24:7. Earthquakes and Other Natural Disasters in Various Places

The Savior’s teachings in the scriptures indicate there will be an increase in wars and rumors of wars and also in natural disasters as His Second Coming approaches; the scriptures also teach that these have a purpose (see D&C 43:25–26; 88:88–90). **President Joseph F. Smith** (1838–1918) explained some of these purposes:

“We believe that these severe, natural calamities are visited upon men by the Lord for the good of his children, to quicken their devotion to others, and to bring out their better natures, that they may love and serve him. We believe, further, that they are the heralds and tokens of his final judgment, and the schoolmasters to teach the people to prepare themselves by righteous living for the coming of the Savior to reign upon the earth” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* [1998], 393). As Samuel the Lamanite told the people of his day, these events are foretold “that ye might know of the signs of his coming, to the intent that ye might believe on his name” (Helaman 14:12).

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:30; Matthew 24:12–13. Iniquity Shall Abound before the Savior’s Return

Jesus warned that because of the great iniquity of the world, “the love of men shall wax cold” (Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:30). This is one of the promised signs of our time. **President Ezra Taft Benson** declared: “We constantly hear or read of wars and rumors of wars. Atheism, agnosticism, immorality, and dishonesty are flaunted in our society. Desertion, cruelty, divorce, and infidelity have become commonplace, leading to a disintegration of the family. Truly we live in the times of which the Savior spoke, when ‘the love of men shall wax cold, and iniquity shall abound’ [D&C 45:27]” (*Come unto Christ* [1983], 111–12).

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:31; Matthew 24:14. The Gospel of the Kingdom “Preached in All the World”

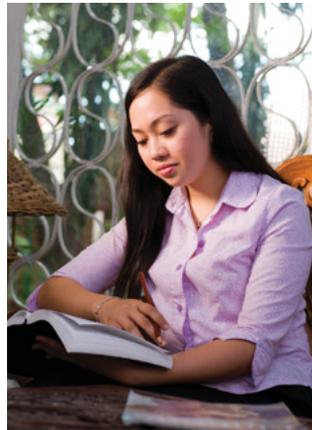
Numerous latter-day scriptures affirm that in the last days the gospel will go to the four corners of the earth—to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people (see Mosiah 3:20; D&C 133:37). Many obstacles must be overcome before this can happen. However, as **Elder M. Russell Ballard** pointed out, these changes may occur quickly: “This work is moving; it is beginning to cover the earth. While it is true that many of our Heavenly Father’s children have never had the opportunity to hear the message of the Restoration, it is also true that the circumstances preventing them from receiving the gospel could quickly change” (“When Shall These Things Be?” 60).

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:36; Matthew 24:30. “The Sign of the Son of Man”

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** stated: “Then will appear one grand sign of the Son of Man in heaven. But what will the world do? They will say it is a planet, a comet, etc. But the Son of Man will come as the sign of the coming of the Son of Man, which will be as the light of the morning cometh out of the east” (*Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 252–53).

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:37. “Whoso Treasureth Up My Word, Shall Not Be Deceived”

From the Savior’s words, it is evident that placing a high priority on the word of God will be critical in overcoming the deceptions of the last days. Commenting on this scripture passage, **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** discussed what it means to treasure up the Lord’s word: “It is not sufficient merely to *know* what the scripture *says*. One must *treasure it up*, meaning take it into his possession so affirmatively that it becomes a part of his very being; as a consequence, . . . one actually receives the companionship of the Spirit” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:662).



President Harold B. Lee noted that some Church members seek information from unreliable sources concerning the signs that will precede the Second Coming. He specifically recommended that Church members study Matthew 24; Joseph Smith—Matthew; and Doctrine and Covenants sections 38, 45, 101, and 133. President Lee then stated: “These are some of the writings with which you should concern yourselves, rather than commentaries that may come from those whose information may not be the most reliable and whose motives may be subject to question” (“Admonitions for the Priesthood of God,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1973, 106).

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:38–40; Matthew 24:36. No Man Knows the Time of His Coming

Though Jesus has not revealed the time when He will come again, He has used the analogies of the fig tree (see Matthew 24:32–33; Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:38–39) and a woman in travail (see 1 Thessalonians 5:3) to assure us that we can know when His coming is near. By using the analogy of the fig tree, Jesus refrained from specifying the exact day or the hour when He would return, but He taught that He would return in the season when the promised signs are shown. Commenting on the timing of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, **Elder M. Russell Ballard** stated:

“I am called as one of the Apostles to be a special witness of Christ in these exciting, trying times, and I do not know when He is going to come again. As far as I know, none of my brethren in the Quorum of the Twelve or even in the First Presidency knows. And I would humbly suggest that if we do not know, then nobody knows. . . . The Savior said that ‘of that day, and hour, no one knoweth; no, not the angels of God in heaven, but my Father only’ (JST, Matt. 1:40).

“I believe that when the Lord says ‘no one’ knows, He really means that no one knows” (“When Shall These Things Be?” 56).

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:41–43; Matthew 24:37. “As It Was in the Days of Noah”

The days of Noah were “corrupt before God” and “filled with violence” (Genesis 6:11–12; Moses 8:28). **Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin** (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles affirmed this comparison between the days of Noah and the last days: “In terms of the sin, evil, and wickedness upon the earth, we could liken our time to the days of Noah before the flood” (“Our Lord and Savior,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 5). Furthermore, as in the days of Noah, many people will be living their everyday lives and ignore the warnings of the prophets and the signs leading up to the destruction of the wicked.

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:44–45; Matthew 24:40–41. “One Shall Be Taken, and the Other Left”

The Apostle Paul wrote that at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, “the dead in Christ shall rise,” and the

Saints who are alive upon the earth “shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17; see also D&C 27:18; 76:102; 88:96; 109:75). On the other hand, “all the proud and they that do wickedly” will not abide the Lord’s coming, which will cleanse the earth by fire (D&C 64:24; see also Malachi 3:2; 4:1; 101:24–25).

Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:46–54; Matthew 24:42–51. Being Prepared for the Second Coming

As recorded in Matthew 24:42–51, the Savior taught His disciples to be watchful and ready for His coming. In modern revelation we are told that if we are prepared, we need not fear (see D&C 38:30). **President Dallin H. Oaks** encouraged us to be prepared always for the Second Coming:

“While we are powerless to alter the fact of the Second Coming and unable to know its exact time, we can accelerate our own preparation and try to influence the preparation of those around us. . . .

“What if the day of His coming were tomorrow? If we knew that we would meet the Lord tomorrow—through our premature death or through His unexpected coming—what would we do today? What confessions would we make? What practices would we discontinue? What accounts would we settle? What forgivenesses would we extend? What testimonies would we bear?

“If we would do those things then, why not now? Why not seek peace while peace can be obtained? If our lamps of preparation are drawn down, let us start immediately to replenish them” (“Preparation for the Second Coming,” 8–9).

Matthew 25. Three Parables of Preparation

Matthew 25 is a continuation of the Savior’s teaching on the Mount of Olives. The three parables in Matthew 25 each teach how to be prepared to meet the Lord when He comes again.

Matthew 25	Parable	Main Message
Verses 1–13	Ten virgins	Prepare spiritually for the Second Coming.
Verses 14–30	Talents	We are accountable to the Lord for what we have done with spiritual gifts. He will reward us for developing those gifts.
Verses 31–46	Sheep and goats	The Lord will judge each of us. Those who have faithfully served their fellowman will sit on “his right hand.”

Matthew 25:1–13. Parable of the Ten Virgins

The parable of the ten virgins alludes to several Jewish wedding customs. Traditionally, the bridegroom, accompanied by his close friends, would go at night to the bride’s house. Following the completion of the wedding ceremonies there, the wedding party would proceed to the groom’s house for a feast. Wedding guests who joined the procession were expected to carry their own lamps or torches. The “bridegroom” in this parable represents the Savior (see Matthew 9:15; John 3:28–29), and His arrival with the wedding procession represents His Second Coming. The tarrying of the bridegroom teaches that the Lord has His own timetable for His Second Coming.

President Dallin H. Oaks spoke about the ten virgins who had been invited to join the wedding party: “The ten virgins obviously represent members of Christ’s Church, for all were invited to the wedding feast and all knew what was required to be admitted when the bridegroom came. But only half were ready when he came” (“Preparation for the Second Coming,” 8).

The oil in this parable represents spiritual preparation. In reference to the parable of the ten virgins, the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith:

“And at that day, when I shall come in my glory, shall the parable be fulfilled which I spake concerning the ten virgins.



Parable of the Ten Virgins, by Dan Burr

“For they that are wise and have received the truth, and have taken the Holy Spirit for their guide, and have not been deceived—verily I say unto you, they shall not be hewn down and cast into the fire, but shall abide the day.

“And the earth shall be given unto them for an inheritance” (D&C 45:56–58; see also D&C 63:54).

President Spencer W. Kimball (1899–1985) discussed what the oil symbolizes and why it cannot be shared with those who are foolish:

“The kind of oil that is needed to illuminate the way and light up the darkness is not shareable. How can one share obedience to the principle of tithing; a mind at peace from righteous living; an accumulation of knowledge? How can one share faith or testimony? How can one share attitudes or chastity, or the experience of a mission? How can one share temple privileges? Each must obtain that kind of oil for himself. . . .

“In the parable, oil can be purchased at the market. In our lives the oil of preparedness is accumulated drop by drop in righteous living. Attendance at sacrament meetings adds oil to our lamps, drop by drop over the years. Fasting, family prayer, home teaching, control of bodily appetites, preaching the gospel, studying the scriptures—each act of dedication and obedience is a drop added to our store. Deeds of kindness, payment of offerings and tithes, chaste thoughts and actions, marriage in the covenant for eternity—these, too, contribute importantly to the oil with which we can at midnight refuel our exhausted lamps” (*Faith Precedes the Miracle* [1972], 255–56).

Matthew 25:10–12. The Dangers of Procrastination

Elder Lynn G. Robbins of the Seventy made this observation about why the unwise virgins found the door closed and why they were denied entrance: “The closed door is a poignant reminder that ‘this life is the day for men to perform their labors’ (Alma 34:32). . . . The fact that the five foolish virgins knocked, *expecting* to enter the marriage supper, indicates one of two things: (1) they thought they could prepare themselves *after* the Bridegroom came, or (2) knowing that they at first had not been prepared to enter, they were hoping for mercy. Either way, the door was shut” (“Oil in Our Lamps,” *Ensign*, June 2007, 47).

President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency warned: “There is a danger in the word *someday* when what it means is ‘not this day.’ ‘Someday I will repent.’ ‘Someday I will forgive him.’ ‘Someday I will speak

to my friend about the Church.’ ‘Someday I will start to pay tithing.’ ‘Someday I will return to the temple.’ ‘Someday . . .’ The scriptures make the danger of delay clear. It is that we may discover that we have run out of time” (“This Day,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 89).

Matthew 25:14–30. The Parable of the Talents (see also Luke 19:11–27)

In the Savior’s time, a “talent” was a unit of weight and also a large sum of money. In modern usage, the word “talent,” as used in this parable, has come to represent any spiritual gift or any skill or ability given to us by God, and the parable teaches that we are responsible to use these gifts wisely and profitably. The Second Coming is represented by the arrival, “after a long time,” of a master who had entrusted his servants with talents (Matthew 25:19). The servant who doubled his two talents received the same commendation as the one who doubled his five talents (see Matthew 25:21, 23); each was expected to try to improve on what he had been given. Thus, in the end, only the servant who did nothing with his talent was rejected by his master. **President James E. Faust** (1920–2007) of the First Presidency explained that the Lord will hold all people accountable for what they do with their talents:

“Some of us are too content with what we may already be doing. We stand back in the ‘eat, drink, and be merry’ mode when opportunities for growth and development abound. We miss opportunities to build up the kingdom of God because we have the passive notion that someone else will take care of it. The Lord tells us that He will give more to those who are willing. They will be magnified in their efforts. . . . But to those who say, ‘We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have’ [2 Nephi 28:30].

“The Lord entrusts all of His servants, including every priesthood holder, with spiritual talents. . . . While we are not all equal in experience, aptitude, and strength, we have different opportunities to employ these spiritual gifts, and we will all be accountable for the use of the gifts and opportunities given to us” (“I Believe I Can, I Knew I Could,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 50).

Matthew 25:31–46. The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats

In the Savior’s time, sheep and goats typically grazed together, but they were separated at the end of the day. In this parable, the separating of the sheep and goats represents the Judgment that will occur at the Savior’s

Coming. The righteous will receive a place at the King's right (representing a place of honor and power), and the unrighteous will be assigned to the King's left (representing disfavor). This judgment will largely be based on how well individuals have shown their love for God by caring for others (see Matthew 25:34–46; see also Matthew 22:35–40). As in the two previous parables in Matthew 25, the righteous are prepared because of what they have done, while the unrighteous are unprepared because of what they have neglected to do.



JAMES JEFFERY

Sheep and goats grazing together

Referring to the parable of the sheep and the goats, **Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin** testified: “At the final day the Savior will not ask about the nature of our callings. He will not inquire about our material possessions or fame. He will ask if we ministered to the sick, gave food and drink to the hungry, visited those in prison, or gave succor to the weak [see Matthew 25:31–40]. When we reach out to assist the least of Heavenly Father’s children, we do it unto Him [see Matthew 24:40]. That is the essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (“The Great Commandment,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 30).

Matthew 25:35–36

Find six actions in these verses that permitted the “sheep” to receive their reward at the King’s right hand. What are some spiritual or physical needs of people around you that are similar to those listed here?

Points to Ponder

- How does knowing the signs of the Savior’s Second Coming help you to have hope and confidence in the Savior and prepare for the last days?
- As you study the parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1–13), what can you learn from the detail that the bridegroom came at “midnight,” while the wedding guests “slumbered and slept”? How does this apply to our preparation for the Savior’s Second Coming?
- Consider the three parables found in Matthew chapter 25. How does each of the following help us prepare to meet the Lord? (1) Doing things that invite the Holy Spirit into our lives. (2) Doing good with the gifts and opportunities the Lord has given us. (3) Caring for those around us who are in need.

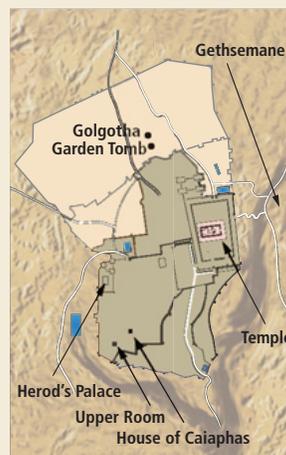
Suggested Assignments

- Carefully study Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:12, 27, 30, 37, 39, 48; 2 Timothy 1:7; and Doctrine and Covenants 38:30; 45:35, 56–57. Write a short paper on how being prepared for the Second Coming can help you live with confidence rather than fear. Incorporate at least one of the parables from Matthew 25 in your paper.
- Outline a plan to better develop and use one of the talents or spiritual gifts the Lord has given to you.

Matthew 26

Introduction and Timeline for Matthew 26

The information in Matthew 26 begins Matthew’s account of the events of the Atonement—from the Savior’s foretelling of what was about to happen to Him through Peter’s three denials of Christ. The important events leading up to and including the Atonement account include (1) the Savior’s Last Supper with His disciples, at which He instituted the sacrament—an ordinance that represents His Atonement; (2) His suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane, during which He experienced intense agony of body and soul, yet submitted His will to His Heavenly Father; and (3) His betrayal, arrest, and trial before the Jewish council.



Jerusalem at the Time of Jesus Christ (Traditional Locations)

1. Jesus Christ ate the Last Supper with His disciples.
2. Jesus Christ instituted the sacrament.
3. The Savior suffered in Gethsemane.
4. Jesus Christ was betrayed, arrested, and tried before Caiaphas.
5. Peter denied knowing Jesus Christ.

Commentary for Matthew 26

Matthew 26:1–5. The Chief Priests and Scribes Sought to Kill Jesus

As the Feast of the Passover approached, the Savior knew that His betrayal and Crucifixion were near, and He prophesied to His disciples that these things would occur during the feast time. The chief priests and scribes gathered together at the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest, to consult about how they could take Jesus and kill Him without creating an uproar among the people. The chief priests and elders represented the religious and lay leadership of the great Jerusalem Sanhedrin. They knew that many people admired Jesus Christ, and they were concerned that if they tried to take Jesus when there were so many pilgrims in Jerusalem for the holidays, there would be riots.

Matthew 26:6–13. The Anointing in Bethany

For insights on the Savior being anointed with oil, see the commentaries for Mark 14:3–9 and for John 12:1–8.

Matthew 26:14–16. “Thirty Pieces of Silver”

The chief priests covenanted to pay Judas Iscariot “thirty pieces of silver” to betray Jesus Christ into their hands (Matthew 26:15). This sum fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah: “If ye think good, give me my price. . . .

So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver” (Zechariah 11:12). According to the law of Moses, thirty shekels of silver would compensate an owner for the death of a slave (see Exodus 21:32). Thus, in addition to fulfilling prophecy, the betrayal price reflects the low regard Judas and the chief priests had for the Savior.

No one is foreordained to do evil—Judas chose to betray the Savior. The Joseph Smith Translation explains that one reason for Judas’s betrayal was the doctrine the Savior taught: “*Nevertheless, Judas Iscariot, even one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests to betray Jesus unto them; for he turned away from him, and was offended because of his words*” (Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 14:31; compare Mark 14:10, footnote *a*).

Matthew 26:17–30. The Passover and the Sacrament (see also Mark 14:12–25; Luke 22:7–30; John 13:1–2)

During the time of Moses, the Lord had instituted the Passover feast to help the children of Israel commemorate the time when He delivered them from bondage in Egypt. On that occasion, the Lord smote the firstborn of the Egyptians, but He “passed over” the houses of the children of Israel who put the symbol of the blood of a sacrificial lamb on their doorposts (see Exodus 12:3–14, 26–32). At the Last Supper, the Savior instituted the sacrament, a new symbolic “meal” of commemoration. Just as partaking of the emblems of the Passover pointed to the future sacrifice of Jesus Christ and helped ancient

Israel remember their release from Egyptian bondage, partaking of the sacrament helps us remember Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice, which can release us from the bondage of sin.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles asked: "Do we see [the sacrament] as *our* passover, remembrance of *our* safety and deliverance and redemption?" ("This Do in Remembrance of Me," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 68).

Matthew 26:21–22. "Lord, Is It I?"

The Apostles had traveled with the Savior throughout Galilee and Judea. In the course of their travels and interactions with Him, they had become His trusted friends. Surely they were shocked by His announcement during the Passover meal, "One of you shall betray me." Each of them in turn began to ask, "Lord, is it I?" (Matthew 26:21–22). **President Boyd K. Packer** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles encouraged us to follow the example of the Apostles in these verses and consider whether counsel from the Lord and His servants pertains to us:

"There is a lesson to be drawn from the twenty-sixth chapter of Matthew. The occasion, the Last Supper.

"And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.' (Matthew 26:21.)

"I remind you that these men were apostles. They were of apostolic stature. It has always been interesting to me that they did not on that occasion nudge one another and say, 'I'll bet that is old Judas. He has surely been acting [strange] lately.' It reflects something of their stature. Rather it is recorded that:

"They were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?' (Matthew 26:22.)

"Would you, I plead, overrule the tendency to disregard counsel and assume for just a moment something apostolic in attitude at least and ask yourself these questions: Do I need to improve myself? Should I take this counsel to heart and act upon it? If there is one weak or failing, unwilling to follow the Brethren, Lord, is it I?" ("*That All May Be Edified*" [1982], 237).

Matthew 26:23. "He That Dippeth His Hand with Me in the Dish"

For insights on the custom of dipping in a dish, see the commentary for John 13:26–27.

Matthew 26:24, 54, 56; 27:9

What do these verses all have in common? How would these references help Matthew's readers to recognize Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah?

Matthew 26:26–28. The Emblems of the Sacrament

When Jesus instituted the sacrament during the Last Supper, He taught His Apostles that the emblems of the sacrament represented His body and His blood (see also 3 Nephi 18:1–3, 7, 11). **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** discussed the significance of the sacramental emblems:

"With a crust of bread, always broken, blessed, and offered first, we remember his bruised body and broken heart, his physical suffering on the cross where he cried, 'I thirst,' and finally, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' (John 19:28; Matt. 27:46.)

"The Savior's physical suffering guarantees that through his mercy and grace (see 2 Ne. 2:8) every member of the human family shall be freed from the bonds of death and be resurrected triumphantly from the grave. . . .

"With a small cup of water we remember the shedding of Christ's blood and the depth of his spiritual suffering, anguish which began in the Garden of Gethsemane. There he said, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death' (Matt. 26:38). He was in agony and 'prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground' (Luke 22:44).



"The Savior's spiritual suffering and the shedding of his innocent blood, so lovingly and freely given, paid the debt for what the scriptures call the 'original guilt' of Adam's transgression (Moses 6:54). Furthermore, Christ suffered for the sins and sorrows and pains of all the rest of the human family, providing remission for all of our

sins as well, upon conditions of obedience to the principles and ordinances of the gospel he taught (see 2 Ne. 9:21–23). As the Apostle Paul wrote, we were ‘bought with a price’ (1 Cor. 6:20). What an expensive price and what a merciful purchase!

“That is why every ordinance of the gospel focuses in one way or another on the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, and surely that is why this particular ordinance with all its symbolism and imagery comes to us more readily and more repeatedly than any other in our life” (“This Do in Remembrance of Me,” 67). For additional information on the sacrament, see the commentary for 1 Corinthians 11:28–29.

Matthew 26:26–29. Commemorating the Savior’s Atonement

The Joseph Smith Translation clarifies that the Savior commanded His disciples to continue to perform the ordinance of the sacrament. These verses also make clear that one purpose of the sacrament is to provide the opportunity for the Savior’s followers to commemorate His Atonement:

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and *brake* it, and *blessed* it, and gave to *his* disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is *in remembrance* of my body *which I give a ransom for you*.

“And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it.

“For this is *in remembrance* of my blood of the new testament, which is shed for *as many as shall believe on my name*, for the remission of *their* sins.

“*And I give unto you a commandment, that ye shall observe to do the things which ye have seen me do, and bear record of me even unto the end.*

“But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I *shall come and drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom*” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 26:22–26; compare Matthew 26:26–29).

Matthew 26:28. “This Is My Blood of the New Testament”

The Savior’s statement, “This is my blood of the new testament” (Matthew 26:28), alluded to important terms in the Old Testament. The word that is translated *testament* can mean “covenant.” When the Lord made His covenant with the children of Israel, the people covenanted

to obey the words of the Lord. Moses offered a sacrifice to the Lord, and then he took blood from the sacrifice and sprinkled it on the people, saying, “Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you” (Exodus 24:8; see also Exodus 24:3–8). When Jesus Christ alluded to this statement, as recorded in Matthew 26:28, He taught that the new “testament,” or covenant, was about to be ratified with blood, just like the old covenant, and that the blood He would shed for us would cover our sins and blot them out, just as the sacrificial blood symbolically covered the people in Moses’s day.



Peace I Leave with You, by Walter Rane. “This is my blood of the new testament” (Matthew 26:28).

The prophet Jeremiah recorded, “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel” (Jeremiah 31:31), indicating that Israel’s old covenant with the Lord would be replaced. When Jesus presented the cup of wine to His Apostles, He was signaling the fulfillment of the old covenant and the establishment of the new covenant.

Matthew 26:29. The Savior Will Partake of the “Fruit of the Vine”

As recorded in Matthew 26:29, the Savior told His disciples that He would not drink the fruit of the vine again until He drank it with them in His Father’s kingdom. Thus, the sacrament not only symbolizes the Savior’s Atonement but also looks forward in anticipation to the time when He will return to the earth in glory (see 1 Corinthians 11:26).

In the latter days, the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith details of a future occasion when He will drink the fruit of the vine on the earth. As recorded in

Doctrine and Covenants 27, the Lord revealed that He will partake of the sacrament again on the earth with His followers, including many ancient prophets, such as Moroni, Elias, John the Baptist, Elijah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph who was sold into Egypt, Peter, James, and John, “and also with Michael, or Adam, the father of all” (see D&C 27:4–14). The Lord’s followers include “all those whom my Father hath given me out of the world” (D&C 27:14). This means that if we remain true and faithful to the covenants that we have made and endure to the end, we will be among those who partake of the emblems of the sacrament with the Savior at this future time.

Matthew 26:30. “When They Had Sung an Hymn”

The “hymn” the Savior and His disciples sang at the conclusion of the Last Supper was probably the traditional Jewish recitation from Psalms 113–18, called the *Hallel*. Psalms 113–14 were traditionally sung at the beginning of the meal, and Psalms 115–18 were traditionally sung as part of the formal closing of a Passover meal.

Matthew 26:31–35. “All Ye Shall Be Offended Because of Me This Night”

As the Savior and His disciples left the upper room and walked toward the Mount of Olives, the Savior told the disciples that all of them would be offended because of Him that night. He then referred to a prophecy found in Zechariah 13:7 by saying, “Smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad” (Matthew 26:31). Peter responded by saying that he would never be offended because of the Master, but Jesus’s reply to him illustrates that He knew Peter better than Peter knew himself—and that He likewise knows each of us better than we know ourselves. Following the Savior’s arrest later that night, His disciples temporarily became scattered and Peter denied the Savior three times.

This prophecy that the Shepherd would be smitten is one of many uttered by the Savior during His mortal ministry to prepare His disciples for His coming death. Examples of such prophecies are found in Matthew 12:38; 16:21; 17:9, 22–23; 20:17–19; and 21:33–39.

Matthew 26:36. “A Place Called Gethsemane”

Found on or near the Mount of Olives just outside Jerusalem’s walls, Gethsemane was a garden of olive trees the Savior often visited (see Luke 22:39; John 18:1–2). On this night, the Savior had come to Gethsemane to suffer for the sins of all mankind and work out the infinite Atonement. The garden lay to the

east of the temple in Jerusalem. As outlined in the law of Moses, when someone desired to make a burnt offering, he selected a “male [animal] without blemish” and presented it to the priest at the east door of the tabernacle (Leviticus 1:3). During New Testament times, the offering was presented to the priest at the eastern gate of the temple in Jerusalem. These acts can be seen as a similitude of the Savior presenting Himself to His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane.



Reconstruction of an ancient lever-type olive press found in Hazor, Israel. Weights hung on the lever would bring pressure down on the stack of baskets containing crushed olives, and oil would seep out of the baskets and drain into a stone basin.

President Russell M. Nelson explained: “There in the garden bearing the Hebrew name of *Gethsemane*—meaning ‘oil press’—olives had been beaten and pressed to provide oil and food. There at Gethsemane, the Lord ‘suffered the pain of all men, that all . . . might repent and come unto him’ [D&C 18:11]. He took upon Himself the weight of the sins of all mankind, bearing its massive load that caused Him to bleed from every pore [see Luke 22:44; D&C 19:18]” (“The Atonement,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 35).

The following account illustrates one way in which the oil exuded from pressed olives can graphically represent the blood Jesus Christ shed in Gethsemane:

“One fall semester I supervised the students at the BYU Jerusalem Center as they participated in their own olive harvest and pressing activity. The olives were placed in the *yam*, or rock basin, and the crushing stone was pushed around and around the basin until the olives began to ooze their oil. When the oil began to run down the lip of the limestone basin, it had the distinctive red color characteristic of the first moments of the new pressing each year.

“At that instant an audible gasp came from the 170 students who surrounded the olive press to witness our re-creation of the ancient pressing process. It was a stunning, even chilling, minute until the oil turned back to its usual golden color. I believe everyone in that group had the same thought as we watched this happen. It was more than just an amazing confirmation of the symbolism we had discussed. This was, right before our very eyes, a real-life reflection of Gethsemane. . . . In the place called the ‘oil press,’ Gethsemane, the Savior was pressed in our behalf as he wrought for all mankind the infinite and eternal atonement” (Andrew C. Skinner, *Gethsemane* [2002], 89–90).

Matthew 26:37, 40–45. He Took with Him Peter, James, and John

As the Lord had done on previous occasions, He separated out Peter, James, and John from the other Apostles (see Matthew 17:1; Mark 5:37). It is not known why He singled out these three on this occasion; however, we do know that they would preside over the Church following

His Ascension into heaven. Perhaps their experience in Gethsemane would provide them valuable knowledge of the Savior’s suffering, allowing them later to serve as witnesses of the Atonement. Through this they learned that because “the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak,” they needed to “watch and pray” so they would “enter not into temptation” (Matthew 26:41).

Matthew 26:37–39. The Savior’s Sufferings in Gethsemane

While Matthew’s account tells us about some *events* of Gethsemane, we learn from additional scriptural and prophetic sources more about the *meaning* of what transpired there. King Benjamin taught that Jesus Christ felt “pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue,” and “anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people” (Mosiah 3:7). Alma recorded that Jesus experienced the pains, afflictions, temptations, sicknesses, and infirmities of His people “that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their



O My Father, by Simon Dewey

infirmities” (see Alma 7:11–12). Alma also stated that “the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance” (Alma 7:13).

Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated that in carrying out the Atonement, the Savior faced great challenges:

“First, an enormous sense of responsibility, for He realized that except it be done perfectly, not one of His Father’s children could return to Him. They would be forever banished from His presence since there would be no way to repent for broken laws and no unclean thing can exist in the presence of God. His Father’s plan would have failed, and each spirit child would have been under the eternal control and torment of Satan.

“Second, in His absolutely pure mind and heart, He had to personally feel the consequences of all that mankind would ever encounter, even the most depraved, despicable sins.

“Third, He had to endure the vicious attack of Satan’s hordes while physically and emotionally pressed to the limit. Then, for reasons we do not fully know, while at the extremity of His capacity, at the time the Savior most needed succor, His Father allowed Him to shoulder the onerous responsibility with only His own strength and capacity” (“He Lives! All Glory to His Name!” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 76–77).

Elder Tad R. Callister of the Presidency of the Seventy described some of what Jesus endured in Gethsemane and later on the cross in order to free all mankind from the evil one: “With merciless fury Satan’s forces must have attacked the Savior on all fronts. . . . The Savior pressed forward in bold assault until every prisoner was freed from the tenacious tentacles of the Evil One. This was a rescue mission of infinite implications. Every muscle of the Savior, every virtue, every spiritual reservoir that could be called upon would be summoned in the struggle. No doubt there was an exhaustion of all energies, a straining of all faculties, an exercise of all powers. Only then, when seemingly all had been spent, would the forces of evil abandon their posts and retreat in horrible defeat. . . . The Great Deliverer has rescued us—saved the day, saved eternity. But, oh, what a battle! What wounds! What love! What cost!” (*The Infinite Atonement* [2000], 130–31).



To help you visualize Christ’s suffering in Gethsemane, review the video segment “The Savior Suffers in Gethsemane” (8:31) from *The Life of*

Jesus Christ Bible Videos, available on LDS.org. This segment covers Matthew 26:36–57.

Matthew 26:39. “Nevertheless Not as I Will, but as Thou Wilt”

The Savior’s words, “Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt,” indicate His submission to His Father in Heaven (Matthew 26:39). What sustained Him and strengthened Him so that He could drink the bitter cup of the Atonement? Certainly, there were many factors. Scriptural and prophetic teachings give us some answers to this question.

He was motivated by complete and perfect love for His Father in Heaven and devotion to Him (see John 8:29; 17:1–26). He revealed that He “so loved the world that he gave his own life” (D&C 34:3; see also 1 Nephi 19:9). He “endured the cross” “for the joy that was set before him” (Hebrews 12:2). **President Lorenzo Snow** (1814–1901) taught that the Atonement “required all the power that [Jesus] had and all the faith that He could summon for Him to accomplish that which the Father required of Him” (*The Teachings of Lorenzo Snow*, comp. Clyde J. Williams [1984], 98).

The Savior’s submission to the will of the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane set an example for us, inviting us to submit to God’s will in our life. **Elder Robert D. Hales** (1932–2017) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained: “It takes great faith and courage to pray to our Heavenly Father, ‘Not as I will, but as thou wilt’ [Matt. 26:39]. The faith to believe in the Lord and endure brings great strength. Some may say if we have enough faith, we can sometimes change the circumstances that are causing our trials and tribulations. Is our faith to change circumstances, or is it to endure them? Faithful prayers may be offered to change or moderate events in our life, but we must always remember that when concluding each prayer, there is an understanding: ‘Thy will be done’ (Matt. 26:42). Faith in the Lord includes trust in the Lord” (“Behold, We Count Them Happy Which Endure,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 77).

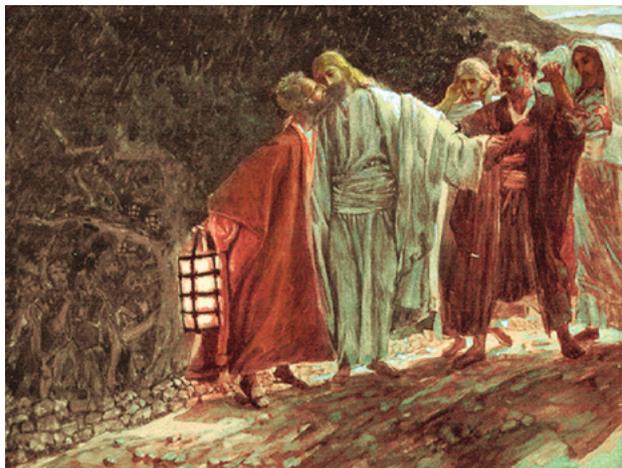
Matthew 26:45–54

What details in these verses indicate that Jesus Christ willingly submitted to what was about to happen to Him?

Matthew 26:47–50. The Betrayal of the Savior

During New Testament times, it was customary for men to greet each other with a kiss on the cheek (see Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:26). Such

greetings were a symbol of respect, particularly when bestowed by a pupil upon a great rabbi. They communicated brotherhood and friendship. Thus, there was irony in Jesus's words when He said to Judas, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" (Matthew 26:50), and "Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48).



Judas Betraying Jesus with a Kiss, by James Tissot

Matthew 26:51–54. The Savior Could Have Summoned Legions of Angels

The Savior's statement that He could pray and summon "more than twelve legions of angels" (Matthew 26:53) helps us appreciate His willing submission to His arrest and the abuse that followed. Taken literally, "twelve legions of angels" would have been between 36,000 and 72,000 angels. His cursing of a fig tree a few days before had shown that He could destroy with a word (see Matthew 21:19–20). He had power to defend Himself but chose not to use it at this time. The Book of Mormon prophet Jacob taught his people of the Lord's power, saying, "He can pierce you, and with one glance of his eye he can smite you to the dust!" (Jacob 2:15).

Gerald N. Lund, who later became a member of the Seventy, wrote about the Savior's voluntary choice not to use His power to defend Himself from the abuses He experienced:

"Imagine the Being whose power, whose light, whose glory holds the universe in order, the Being who speaks and solar systems, galaxies, and stars come into existence—standing before wicked men and being judged by them as being of no worth or value!

"When we think of what he could have done to these men who took him to judgment, we have a new and different sense of his condescension. When Judas led

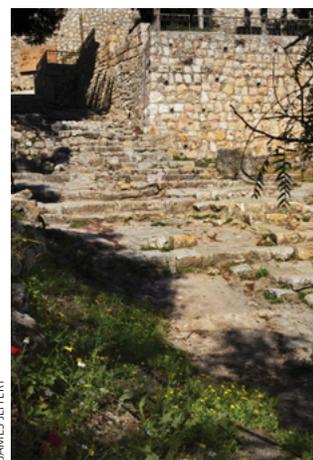
the soldiers and the high priests to the Garden of Gethsemane and betrayed him with a kiss, Jesus could have spoken a single word and leveled the entire city of Jerusalem. When the servant of the high priest stepped forward and slapped his face, Jesus could have lifted a finger and sent that man back to his original elements. When another man stepped forward and spit in his face, Jesus had only to blink and our entire solar system could have been annihilated. But he stood there, he endured, he suffered, he condescended" ("Knowest Thou the Condescension of God?" in Bruce A. Van Orden and Brent L. Top, eds., *Doctrines of the Book of Mormon: The 1991 Sperry Symposium* [1992], 86).

Jesus Christ's response when Peter cut off the ear of the high priest's servant shows the compassion of the Son of God even toward those who wished to harm Him.

Matthew 26:57. Who Was Caiaphas?

Caiaphas was the high priest from A.D. 18 to 36 and was a son-in-law of Annas, who was the high priest from A.D. 7 to 14. Caiaphas belonged to the Sadducees.

During New Testament times, the position of high priest had become a corrupt political appointment rather than a legitimate priesthood office. Caiaphas held the position longer than any other high priest in New Testament times, indicating his close cooperation with Roman government leaders like Pontius Pilate.



Steps leading to a traditional site of Caiaphas's palace

Caiaphas's responsibilities as high priest included controlling the temple treasury and overseeing temple rituals, which made him considerable money. Because of these temple responsibilities, he probably would have regarded the Savior's cleansing of the temple courtyards as a challenge to his authority and a threat to his wealth (see Matthew 21:12–15). After the Savior raised Lazarus from the dead, Caiaphas

stated that it was necessary to put Jesus to death, and he possibly even led out in the conspiracy (see John 11:49–53). As high priest, Caiaphas presided over the Sanhedrin and was one of the main interrogators of Jesus Christ on the night of His arrest.

Matthew 26:59. “To Put Him to Death”

The council referred to in Matthew 26:59 was the great Sanhedrin of Jerusalem—an assembly of 71 members, including Levites, chief priests, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and those of other political persuasions, all presided over by the high priest, who was Caiaphas at this time. It was the highest Jewish court of justice and the supreme legislative council in Jerusalem. Its main function was to interpret Jewish law and regulate Jewish life. The chief priests and others of this council “sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death,” implying that they were unable to find credible witnesses, that their case against Him was weak, and that their actions were premeditated (see also Bible Dictionary, “Sanhedrin”).

Matthew 26:61–66. The Charge of Blasphemy

By definition, *blasphemy* meant to revile, despise, mock, or curse God. Jesus Christ did none of these, but Caiaphas considered the Savior’s statement that He would sit “on the right hand of power” to be blasphemous (see Matthew 26:63–64). However, the Savior’s claim to divine power and authority would have been blasphemy only if it had been untrue. When Caiaphas heard this statement, he rent his clothes and declared that the Savior had spoken blasphemy—an offense punishable by death under the law of Moses (see Leviticus 24:11–16). He and the members of the council pronounced that the Savior was now “guilty of death.” However, since blasphemy was a Jewish matter and of no concern to the Romans, the Jewish leaders changed the charge to sedition when they took Jesus to Pilate. For more information on this charge of sedition, see the commentary for Mark 15:1–2.

Matthew 26:64. “Hereafter Shall Ye See the Son of Man”

For insights on the Savior’s statement about seeing “the Son of man” (Matthew 26:64), see the commentary for Mark 14:53–65.

Matthew 26:66–68. Mistreatment of the Savior by the Jewish Council

The Son of God would have been in terrible physical condition as He stood trial before Jewish leaders. During the hours prior to His interrogation, Jesus had experienced the agony of Gethsemane. He had been back and forth across the Kidron Valley. He would have also

been experiencing the effects of blood loss and likely the effects of chills from the night air upon His weakened body. He had also likely not slept in many hours. It was in this weakened physical condition that He faced additional abuse at the hands of His accusers. Nephi prophesied that “because of his loving kindness and his long-suffering towards the children of men,” the Savior would willingly suffer the indignities and abuses heaped upon Him (1 Nephi 19:9).

The Jewish leaders spit in Jesus Christ’s face, buffeted Him, and slapped Him (see Matthew 26:67). They blindfolded Him and mocked Him (see Mark 14:65; Luke 22:63–64). The Apostle Peter later declared, “Christ also suffered for us, . . . who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not” (1 Peter 2:21, 23).

Elder Bruce D. Porter of the Seventy taught that the Atonement required the Savior to endure the abuses of the Jewish and Roman leaders without sinning: “The cruelties and indignities suffered by Jesus during the various trials represented a last-ditch effort by Lucifer to cause Christ to stumble. A single misstep—a cross word, an angry outburst, even a moment’s indulgence in self-pity or pride—and all was lost. Hence, every possible indignity was heaped upon the Savior: false accusations; blasphemous outbursts; a crown of thorns; the horrible scourging by bone-embedded whips; the mock robe of royalty; the spitting, taunting, and physical blows of the soldiers. The whole pitiable drama was masterminded by Lucifer in the hope that he might yet find a way to nullify the Redeemer’s triumph at Gethsemane” (*The King of Kings* [2000], 106–7).

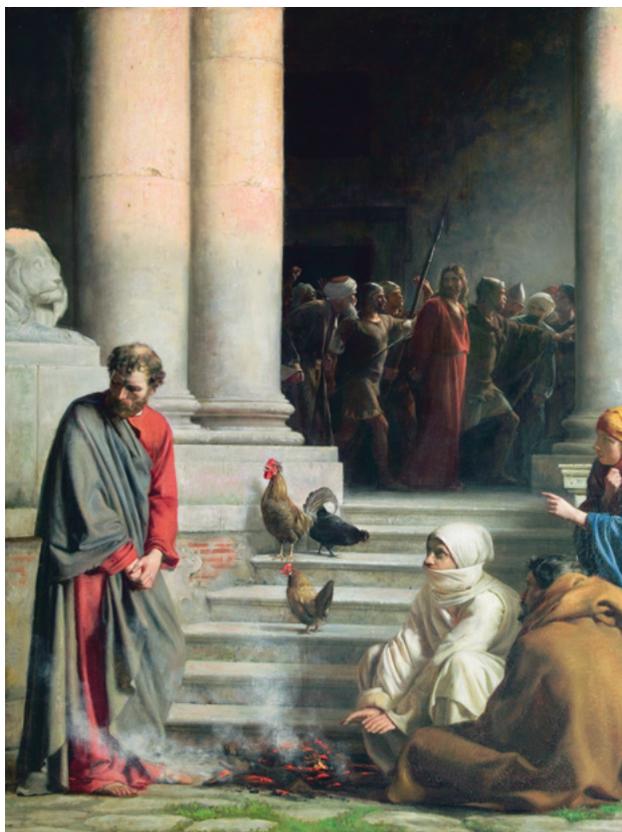
Matthew 26:69–75. Peter’s Denials of Jesus Christ (see also Mark 14:66–72)

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) invited us to remember Peter’s great love for the Savior and the Savior’s trust in him as we think about Peter’s actions in denying the Savior three times:

“I do not pretend to know what Peter’s mental reactions were nor what compelled him to say what he did that terrible night. But in light of his proven bravery, courage, great devotion, and limitless love for the Master, could we not give him the benefit of the doubt and at least forgive him as his Savior seems to have done so fully. Almost immediately Christ elevated him to the highest position in his church and endowed him with the complete keys of that kingdom.

“... Hearing the bird’s announcement of the dawn reminded him not only that he had denied the Lord but also that all the Lord had said would be fulfilled, even to the crucifixion. He went out and wept bitterly. Were his tears for personal repentance only, or were they mingled with sorrowful tears in realization of the fate of his Lord and Master and his own great loss?

“Only hours passed until he was among the first at the tomb as the head of the group of believers. Only weeks passed until he was assembling the saints and organizing them into a compact, strong, and unified community. It was not long before he was languishing in prison, being beaten, abused, and ‘sifted as wheat’ as Christ had predicted. (See Luke 22:31.)” (*Peter, My Brother*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year [July 13, 1971], 5). For more on Peter’s denial, see the commentary for John 18:15–18, 25–27.



Peter’s Denial, by Carl H. Bloch

Points to Ponder

- Read Elder Jeffrey R. Holland’s statement in the commentary for Matthew 26:17–30. What will you do to see the sacrament as *your* passover and as remembrance of *your* safety, deliverance, and redemption?
- The Savior prayed that Heavenly Father’s will would be done rather than His own. When have you experienced the need to submit faithfully to the will of Heavenly Father? How can you follow the Savior’s example and more fully submit your will to God, our Father?
- What are your true feelings for the Atonement of Jesus Christ? What could you do to deepen your feelings of gratitude for the Atonement?

Suggested Assignments

- Write your thoughts about the Savior’s prayer, “O my Father, . . . nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39). What is required to submit one’s will to the Father in this way? When have you followed the pattern the Savior exemplified in these verses by submitting to Heavenly Father’s will even though it was very difficult to do so?
- Read the following Old Testament prophecies and find their fulfillment in Matthew chapter 26: Psalm 41:9; Isaiah 50:6; 53:6–7; Zechariah 11:12–13; 13:7.

10

Matthew 27–28

Introduction and Timeline for Matthew 27–28

In Matthew 27–28 we read about Jesus Christ’s terrible suffering and painful death for all mankind and about His Resurrection. Matthew showed how these events and others leading up to it fulfilled prophecy. After experiencing ridicule, trials, and abuse at the hands of Roman soldiers, Jesus Christ was crucified. His body was placed in a tomb. At the dawning of the first day of the week, an angel of the Lord proclaimed the joyful news that Jesus had risen from the dead. Many others were also resurrected shortly thereafter, a manifestation of the truth that the Savior’s Resurrection made possible the Resurrection of all mankind. After His Resurrection, Jesus Christ met His disciples at an appointed place in Galilee and commissioned them to take His gospel to all nations. President Gordon B. Hinckley taught: “The Resurrection of Jesus Christ was the great crowning event of His life and mission. It was the capstone of the Atonement” (in “Special Witnesses of Christ,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2001, 15).



1. Jesus Christ was condemned before Pilate.
2. Barabbas was released.
3. Jesus Christ died and was buried.
4. Jesus Christ was resurrected.
5. On a mount in Galilee, the Savior commissioned His disciples to preach the gospel to all the world.

Commentary for Matthew 27–28

Matthew 27:1–10. The Death of Judas Iscariot

Matthew was obviously affected by the suicide of Judas, a fellow Apostle, but he knew it was also a fulfillment of prophecy. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles wrote the following regarding the death of Judas Iscariot as the fulfillment of prophecy: “However desirable the thirty pieces of silver seemed before the deed, their ill-gotten weight became a crushing burden on the soul now. In his frenzy Judas discards them so as to fulfill in literal detail the remainder of Zechariah’s Messianic utterance about them: ‘And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord.’ (Zech. 11:13–14.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 1:798).

The Old Testament quotation Matthew cited (Matthew 27:9–10) may be a combination of words from Zechariah 11:12–13 and words from the prophet Jeremiah (perhaps Jeremiah 18:2; 19:1–2), even though Matthew cited Jeremiah as the writer. Early Christian writers knew the Old Testament prophecies so well that sometimes they combined the information from various sources.

For information about the fulfillment of the prophecy regarding the 30 pieces of silver, see the commentary for Matthew 26:14–16.

Matthew 27:11. “Before the Governor”

Pontius Pilate served as a very unpopular Roman prefect (governor) over Judea from A.D. 26 to 36. Shortly after assuming office, he angered many of the Jews by marching troops into Jerusalem bearing standards with a representation of the Roman emperor on them. The Jews viewed these standards as idolatry. He later appropriated temple treasures to build an aqueduct, which led to a public riot. Pilate also ordered the slaughter of certain Galileans (see Luke 13:1–2). When the chief priests took Jesus to Pilate, they apparently had changed their charges against Him from blasphemy—a religious charge that the Romans did not consider a crime—to sedition, a political charge recognized by the Romans (see Luke 23:2, 5; John 18:30).

Matthew 27:15–21. Barabbas or Jesus? (see also Mark 15:7–11)

The name *Barabbas* ironically means “son of the father.” The crowd, most of whom were stirred up by the chief priests and elders, called for the release of Barabbas while rejecting the true Son of the Father. In one sense, we are all like Barabbas—we are the sinful sons set free

because the true Son of the Father was condemned to death. According to the Greek text of Matthew 27:26, Barabbas’s first name was Jesus. Jesus Barabbas was a thief, murderer, and traitor, while Jesus the Christ was perfect. Those who condemned the Savior to death were presented with a clear choice, and they chose evil.

The law of Moses provided a foreshadowing of Barabbas’s release centuries before it happened. The law of Moses taught that once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest selected two goats. One goat became the scapegoat and was released alive into the wilderness, while the other was “for the Lord” and was killed as an offering for the sins of the people (see Leviticus 16:8–10). The high priest then took blood from the slain goat into the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle. He sprinkled it on the lid of the ark of the covenant (called the mercy seat), symbolically making atonement for the sins of Israel.



The Scapegoat, by Ted Henninger

Gerald N. Lund, who later became a member of the Seventy, explained how the events on the Day of Atonement foreshadowed the Savior’s offering of His blood: “Christ, as the lamb of Jehovah as well as High Priest, shed his own blood to enter the heavenly Holy of Holies where that blood ransomed from their sins those who would believe in him and obey his commandments. (See Heb. 9:11–14, 24–28; 10:11–22; D&C 45:3–5.)” (*Jesus Christ, Key to the Plan of Salvation* [1991], 67).

Matthew 27:19–24. Pilate “Washed His Hands”

Pilate recognized that Jesus was innocent of the accusations made against Him; even his wife had warned him of Jesus Christ’s innocence (see Matthew 27:19–24). One provision of the Mosaic law stated that if a person was found to have been killed, the elders of the city could

wash their hands to signify that they were not responsible (see Deuteronomy 21:6–7). There are also examples in Greek and Roman literature of washing oneself as a symbolic gesture of absolving oneself of responsibility for shedding another’s blood. Thus, when Pilate washed his hands, he may have been claiming innocence in a way the Jewish leaders would have understood. Washing his hands, however, did not allow Pilate to evade responsibility. **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles noted that “Pilate’s freshly washed hands could not have been more stained or more unclean” (“None Were with Him,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 86). For more information on Pilate’s role in the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ, see the commentaries for Luke 23:4–12 and for John 19:4–16.

Matthew 27:25. “His Blood Be on Us, and on Our Children”

Over the past 2,000 years, people have sometimes used the statement “His blood be on us, and on our children” (Matthew 27:25) to blame all the Jews of Jesus’s time, or even Jews of later generations, for the death of Jesus Christ. Such accusations ignore scriptural accounts stating that a great many Jews of Jesus’s time believed in Him and that His Crucifixion was brought about by Roman authorities in cooperation with a relatively small group of Jewish leaders (see Matthew 26:3–5; 27:20; Luke 21:38; 23:27; John 12:42). Any anti-Semitism based on Matthew 27:25 also ignores scriptural testimony that the Lord loves the people of Israel and has a plan for their salvation (see Matthew 23:39; Romans 11:1, 26; 1 Nephi 19:13–17).

Mormon, the Nephite prophet-historian, wrote, “Yea, and ye need not any longer hiss, nor spurn, nor make game of the Jews, nor any of the remnant of the house of Israel; for behold, the Lord remembereth his covenant unto them, and he will do unto them according to that which he hath sworn” (3 Nephi 29:8).

Matthew 27:26. Scourging

Generally, a scourging consisted of being beaten with a whip 39 times (see Deuteronomy 25:3). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained what it meant to be scourged: “This brutal practice, a preliminary to crucifixion, consisted of stripping the victim of clothes, strapping him to a pillar or frame, and beating him with a scourge made of leather straps weighted with sharp pieces of lead and bone. It left the tortured sufferer bleeding, weak, and sometimes dead” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:807).

The torture and mistreatment the Savior received at the hands of the Romans (see Matthew 27:26–31) were part of the Atonement, along with His suffering in Gethsemane and His death on the cross. As Isaiah testified: “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

Matthew 27:28–29. Mocking Images of Royalty

A theme in Matthew is that Jesus Christ is the rightful King of Israel. After the Savior was scourged, the Roman soldiers put a robe on Him, made a crown of thorns (*plaited* means “woven”) and put it on his head, and put a reed in His right hand. Then they mockingly bowed before Him and called Him King of the Jews. The robe was purple, a color known to be used by royalty (see Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 27:30 [in Matthew 27:28, footnote *a*]; see also Mark 15:17; John 19:2).

Matthew 27:33. Golgotha



Golgotha. Tradition holds that the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified near here.

The scriptures say that the Crucifixion took place at Golgotha (Aramaic) or Calvary (Latin). The traditional and oldest proposed site of the Crucifixion, burial, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the current site of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Gordon’s Calvary, sometimes referred to as the Garden Tomb, is adjacent to Golgotha, and in the 19th century it was proposed as an alternate site for the Savior’s burial and Resurrection. Many Latter-day Saints think that Gordon’s Calvary is the actual site of these events because of statements made by Church leaders. If Gordon’s Calvary is the site, then its location is symbolically significant. Gordon’s Calvary is on the mount called Moriah in the Old Testament. It was on this mount that Abraham was commanded to offer up his son Isaac as a sacrifice (see

Genesis 22:3, 14), a sacrifice that was a similitude of the atoning sacrifice of the Savior. It is also noteworthy that this traditional site is north of the Jerusalem temple and outside the city walls. In Old Testament times, the law of Moses required that the sin offering, which was offered for an atonement or expiation, be offered at a location north of the altar and outside the camp of Israel (see Bible Dictionary, “Sacrifices”; Exodus 29:14; Leviticus 4:11–12; Hebrews 13:12).

Matthew 27:34. “Vinegar to Drink”

To read about Jesus Christ refusing to drink the vinegar and gall, see the commentary for Mark 15:23.

Matthew 27:35–50. Death by Crucifixion (see also Mark 15:15–37; Luke 23:24–46; John 19:16–30)

Bible scholar Frederic W. Farrar described the particularly cruel nature of death by crucifixion:

“The feet were but a little raised above the earth. The victim was in full reach of every hand that might choose to strike, in close proximity to every gesture of insult and hatred. He might hang for hours to be abused, outraged, even tortured by the ever-moving multitude. . . .

“For indeed a death by crucifixion seems to include all that pain and death *can* have of horrible and ghastly—dizziness, cramp, thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, traumatic fever, tetanus, publicity of shame, long continuance of torment, horror of anticipation, mortification of untended wounds—all intensified just up to the point at which they can be endured at all, but all stopping just short of the point which would give to the sufferer the relief of unconsciousness. The unnatural position made every movement painful; the lacerated veins and crushed tendons throbbed with incessant anguish; the wounds, inflamed by exposure, gradually gangrened; the arteries—especially of the head and stomach—became swollen and oppressed with surcharged blood; and while each variety of misery went on gradually increasing, there was added to them the intolerable pang of a burning and raging thirst; and all these physical complications caused an internal excitement and anxiety, which made the prospect of death itself—of death, the awful unknown enemy, at whose approach man usually shudders most—bear the aspect of a delicious and exquisite release. Such was the death to which Christ was doomed” (*The Life of Christ* [1874], 640–41).

Matthew 27:35. “That It Might Be Fulfilled”

The following chart identifies some prophecies fulfilled by events of the trial and death of Jesus Christ:

Ancient Prophecies Fulfilled	
Isaiah 53:7. "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth."	Matthew 27:14. "He answered him to never a word."
Isaiah 53:5. "The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." 1 Nephi 19:9. "Wherefore they scourge him, and he suffereth it."	Matthew 27:26. Roman soldiers "scourged Jesus."
Isaiah 50:6. "I hid not my face from shame and spitting." 1 Nephi 19:9. "They spit upon him, and he suffereth it."	Matthew 27:30. "They spit upon him."
Psalms 69:21. "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."	Matthew 27:34. "They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall."
Psalms 22:16. "They pierced my hands and my feet." 1 Nephi 19:10. He "yieldeth himself . . . to be lifted up, . . . and to be crucified."	Matthew 27:35. "They crucified him."
Psalms 22:18. "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."	Matthew 27:35. The Roman soldiers "parted his garments, casting lots."
Isaiah 53:9, 12. "He made his grave with the wicked. . . . He was numbered with the transgressors."	Matthew 27:38, 44. "Then were there two thieves crucified with him."
Psalms 22:7–8. "All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, he trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him."	Matthew 27:41–43. "The chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, he saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now."
Psalms 22:1. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"	Matthew 27:46. "About the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, . . . My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"
Isaiah 53:9. "He made his grave with . . . the rich in his death."	Matthew 27:57–60. "A rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple . . . wrapped [the body of Jesus] in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb."

Matthew 27:37. Pilate's Inscription

Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 27:39–40, reads: "And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross, and the writing was, *Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew*" (compare Matthew 27:37). Pilate, who knew Jesus was an innocent man and who had the power to set Him free, had the truth printed and placed on the cross over Jesus's head for all to see.

Matthew 27:39–44

Which individuals reviled Jesus Christ while He hung on the cross? What in their words and actions indicates that they probably would not have believed in Jesus even if He had come down from the cross?

Matthew 27:40–43. "If Thou Be the Son of God, Come Down from the Cross"

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) explained that the taunt to "come down from the cross" was similar to many temptations the Savior had earlier withstood:

"There is, of course, running through all of these temptations, Satan's insidious suggestion that Jesus was not the Son of God, the doubt implied in the tempter's repeated use of the word *if*. 'If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.' (Matt. 4:3.) 'If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down.' (Matt. 4:6.) These, of course, were foreshadows of that final, desperate temptation which would come three years later: 'If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.' (Matt. 27:40.) But Jesus patiently withstood that ploy also, knowing in due time every knee would bow and every tongue confess.

"It was not necessary then, or ever, for Jesus to satisfy the curiosity of men, least of all unholy men. . . .

"It is important to remember that Jesus was capable of sinning, that he could have succumbed, that the plan of life and salvation could have been foiled, but that he remained true. . . . He was perfect and sinless, not because he had to be, but rather because he clearly and determinedly wanted to be" ("The Temptations of Christ," *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 18–19).

Matthew 27:45. Darkness “from the Sixth Hour . . . unto the Ninth Hour”

“It was the third hour” of the day, or about 9:00 a.m., when Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross (Mark 15:25). Matthew recorded that “there was darkness over all the land” (Matthew 27:45) from the sixth hour (about 12:00 noon) until the ninth hour (about 3:00 p.m.), which was when the Savior died. When the Light of the World died, darkness prevailed upon the land for three hours in Jerusalem and for three days in the ancient Americas (see 3 Nephi 8:20–23).

Matthew 27:46. “My God, My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?” (see also Mark 15:34)

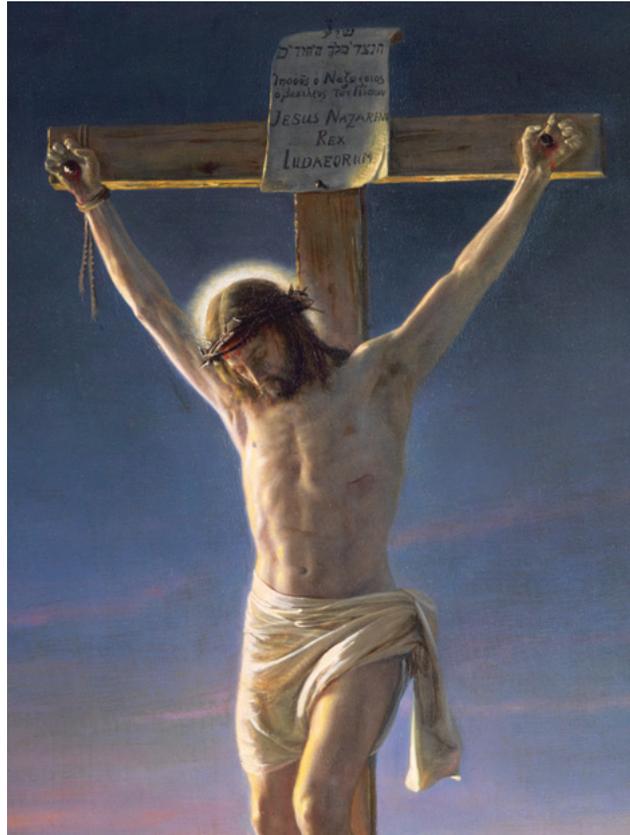
The Savior’s cry of forsakenness was prefigured centuries earlier in the 22nd Psalm (see verse 1). Though the Savior had never sinned and had never been separated from the Father because of His own actions, He experienced that separation on our behalf during the Atonement. For more information on the withdrawal of the Father’s comforting Spirit while Jesus was on the cross, see the commentary for Mark 15:34. To read about each of the seven statements Jesus Christ uttered from the cross, see the commentaries for John 19:26–30.

Matthew 27:50. Jesus Cried with a Loud Voice

The Joseph Smith Translation reads: “Jesus when he had cried again with a loud voice, saying, *Father, it is finished, thy will is done*, yielded up the ghost” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 27:54 [in Matthew 27:50, footnote a]). In the premortal world, Jesus Christ had selflessly offered to do the will of the Father for the redemption of all mankind (see Moses 4:1–4). With His mortal death, Jesus had now fulfilled that promise.

Matthew 27:51. “The Veil of the Temple Was Rent” (see also Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45)

The Holy of Holies was the most sacred room in the ancient temple; it symbolized the presence of God. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest passed through the veil of the temple and entered into the Holy of Holies, where he sprinkled the blood of a sin offering to atone for the sins of all the congregation of Israel (see Leviticus 16). When the veil of the temple was “rent in twain” (torn in two) at the death of Jesus Christ (Matthew 27:51), it was a dramatic symbol that the Savior, the Great High Priest, had passed through the veil of death and would shortly enter into the presence of God. For more information on Jesus as High Priest, see the commentary for Hebrews 9:11–15, 23–28; 10:1.



The Crucifixion, by Carl H. Bloch

Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote that in addition to the Savior entering the presence of the Father, “the Holy of Holies is now open to all, and all, through the atoning blood of the Lamb, can now enter into the highest and holiest of all places, that kingdom where eternal life is found. Paul, in expressive language (Heb. 9 and 10), shows how the ordinances performed through the veil of the ancient temple were in similitude of what Christ was to do, which he now having done, all men become eligible to pass through the veil into the presence of the Lord to inherit full exaltation” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:830). The Apostle Paul taught that just as the torn veil of the temple allowed symbolic entrance into the Holy of Holies, it is the torn flesh of Jesus Christ that opens the way for us into the presence of the Father (see Hebrews 10:12, 19–20).

Matthew 27:51, 54. An Earthquake Accompanied the Death of Jesus Christ

Prophets before the time of Jesus Christ had prophesied of the geologic upheavals that would signal the death of the Creator of the universe (see 1 Nephi 19:10–12; Helaman 14:21–22; Moses 7:55–56).

Matthew 27:52–53. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ Began the Resurrection of All God’s Children

It is not known why the verses in Matthew 27 about the Resurrection are placed where they are in the text, but it is clear that the appearances of these resurrected beings in Jerusalem occurred “*after* [Christ’s] resurrection” (Matthew 27:53; italics added), not immediately following His death. Scriptures confirm that Jesus Christ was the first person resurrected (see Acts 26:23; 1 Corinthians 15:20; Revelation 1:5). The Book of Mormon prophet Abinadi taught that those who were resurrected at the time of the Savior’s Resurrection were all the prophets and those who had kept God’s commandments (see Mosiah 15:21–22; D&C 138:38–51).

Other scriptures teach that because of Jesus Christ’s Resurrection, everyone will be resurrected (see John 5:28–29; 1 Corinthians 15:22; Alma 11:43–44). **President Thomas S. Monson** (1927–2018) boldly testified that because Christ rose from the dead, all shall live again:

“The empty tomb that first Easter morning brought comforting assurance, an affirmative answer to Job’s question, ‘If a man die, shall he live again?’ [Job 14:14].

“To all who have lost loved ones, we would turn Job’s question to an answer: If a man die, he *shall* live again. . . .

“Through tears and trials, through fears and sorrows, through the heartache and loneliness of losing loved ones, there is assurance that life is everlasting. Our Lord and Savior is the living witness that such is so.

“With all my heart and the fervency of my soul, I lift up my voice in testimony as a special witness and declare that God does live. Jesus is His Son, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. . . . He became the firstfruits of the Resurrection. Because He died, all shall live again” (“I Know That My Redeemer Lives!” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 25).



To help you better understand the Savior’s Resurrection, review the video segment “Jesus Is Laid in a Tomb” (3:29) from *The Life of Jesus Christ Bible Videos*, available on LDS.org. This segment covers Matthew 27:57–60.

Matthew 27:57–60. Joseph of Arimathea (see also Mark 15:43–46; Luke 23:50–53; John 19:38–40)

Joseph of Arimathea was a wealthy member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish governing council (see Matthew 27:57; Mark 15:43). He was a disciple of Jesus Christ, “but secretly for fear of the Jews” (John 19:38). After the



Christ Being Taken Down from the Cross, by Wilson Ong

Crucifixion, Joseph put his position at risk as he “went in boldly unto Pilate” (Mark 15:43) and obtained permission to bury the Savior’s body prior to the Sabbath. Joseph used his own tomb for the burial of Jesus (see Matthew 27:60). Nicodemus, another member of the Sanhedrin, brought a costly “mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight” (John 19:39) to anoint the body. Together, Joseph and Nicodemus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecy that the Savior would

be “with the rich in his death” (Isaiah 53:9). The amount of myrrh and aloes purchased by Nicodemus was similar to that used in royal burials, indicating that the Savior’s followers acknowledged His status as a king (see 2 Chronicles 16:14).

Matthew 28:1. “As It Began to Dawn toward the First Day of the Week”

As a result of Jesus Christ resurrecting early in the morning of Sunday, the observance of the Sabbath was changed from Saturday to Sunday:

“In Old Testament times, God’s covenant people observed the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week because God rested on the seventh day when He had created the earth. . . .

“After the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, which occurred on the first day of the week, the Lord’s disciples began observing the Sabbath on the first day of the week, Sunday (see Acts 20:7)” (*True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* [2004], 145–46). See also the commentary for John 20:1–10.

Matthew 28:6. “He Is Not Here: For He Is Risen”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) taught about the crowning importance of the Resurrection of the Savior:

“He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay’ [Matthew 28:6].

“These are the most reassuring words in all of human history. Death—universal and final—had now been conquered. . . .

“Never had this occurred before. There had been only death without hope. Now there was life eternal. Only a God could have done this. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ was the great crowning event of His life and mission. It was the capstone of the Atonement. The sacrifice of His life for all mankind was not complete without His coming forth from the grave, with the certainty of the Resurrection for all who have walked the earth.

“Of all the victories in the chronicles of humanity, none is so great, none so universal in its effects, none so everlasting in its consequences as the victory of the crucified Lord, who came forth from the tomb that first Easter morning.

“Those who were witnesses of that event, all who saw and heard and spoke with the Risen Lord, testified of the reality of this greatest of all miracles. His followers through the centuries lived and died in proclamation of the truth of this supernal act.



He Is Risen, by Del Parson

“To all of these we add our testimony that He who died on Calvary’s cross arose again in wondrous splendor as the Son of God, the Master of life and death” (“Special Witnesses of Christ,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2001, 15).

Matthew 28:7, 10, 18–20

What is similar about the instructions given to followers of Jesus Christ in these verses? What does this suggest about what the Savior expects us to do with our knowledge of His Resurrection?

For additional information on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, see the commentaries for Mark 16:1–7 and for John 20:1–10.

Matthew 28:8. The Joy of the Resurrection (see also Mark 16:1–7; Luke 24:2–9; John 20:1–18)

The disciples of Jesus Christ must have felt great sorrow at His death, but the news of His Resurrection brought them “great joy” (Matthew 28:8). **Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin** (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that the Savior’s Resurrection reassures us that there will be an end to the dark times in our lives:

“I think of how dark that Friday was when Christ was lifted up on the cross. . . .

“I think that of all the days since the beginning of this world’s history, that Friday was the darkest.

“But the doom of that day did not endure.

“The despair did not linger because on Sunday, the resurrected Lord burst the bonds of death. He ascended from the grave and appeared gloriously triumphant as the Savior of all mankind. . . .

“Each of us will have our own Fridays—those days when the universe itself seems shattered and the shards of our world lie littered about us in pieces. We all will experience those broken times when it seems we can never be put together again. We will all have our Fridays.

“But I testify to you in the name of the One who conquered death—Sunday will come. In the darkness of our sorrow, Sunday will come.

“No matter our desperation, no matter our grief, Sunday will come. In this life or the next, Sunday will come.

“I testify to you that the Resurrection is not a fable. We have the personal testimonies of those who saw Him. Thousands in the Old and New Worlds witnessed the risen Savior. . . .

“Because of our beloved Redeemer, we can lift up our voices, even in the midst of our darkest Fridays, and proclaim, ‘O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?’” (“Sunday Will Come,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 29–30).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that our gratitude for the Resurrection can affect how we perceive the negative experiences of life: “The gift of immortality to all mankind through the reality of the Resurrection is so powerful a promise that our rejoicing in these great and generous gifts should drown out any sorrow, assuage any grief, conquer any mood, dissolve any despair, and tame any tragedy” (“All Hell Is Moved” [Brigham Young University devotional, Nov. 8, 1977], 7; speeches.byu.edu).

Matthew 28:11–15. A Conspiracy to Deny the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

The lie recorded in Matthew 28:13 is extraordinary. It would have been very unusual for Roman soldiers to fall asleep on guard duty—the penalty for doing so was death. It is also unlikely that the disciples could have removed the stone and taken the body of Jesus Christ without the guards taking notice. The implausibility of the story shows the desperation of the chief priests, who as Sadducees did not believe in resurrection

(see Matthew 22:23). In the weeks that followed the Resurrection, they continued to suppress news of the Resurrection (see Acts 4:1–3). Matthew said the story of the body being stolen was still “commonly reported among the Jews” (Matthew 28:15) at the time he wrote his Gospel, probably sometime after A.D. 70.

Matthew 28:16–20. “All Power Is Given unto Me in Heaven and in Earth”

Matthew 28:16–20 records a meeting of Jesus and His disciples in Galilee after the Resurrection. At this time, the Savior said, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18). He spoke these words as a resurrected, glorified Being. The Doctrine and Covenants helps us understand that Jesus Christ did not possess “all power” when He was born into mortality, but that He received it later (see D&C 19:2–3; 93:12–17). This power included power over life and death, power to be resurrected, power to exalt, power to execute judgment, power to destroy Satan, and power to rule in the heavens.

Matthew 28:19–20. “Go Ye Therefore, and Teach All Nations” (see also Mark 16:15–18)

The Savior commissioned His disciples to take the gospel to “all nations” (Matthew 28:19). This verse is the



Go Ye Therefore, and Teach All Nations, by Harry Anderson

culmination of many indications throughout the Gospel of Matthew that the gospel would eventually go forth to the Gentiles (see Matthew 4:15–16; 8:5–13; 10:18; 13:47; 24:14). In the New Testament books of Acts through Revelation, we read about how the disciples obeyed this commandment to take the gospel to all nations.

President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency taught that we all have the responsibility to carry out the Savior’s commission to bring the gospel to the world: “To proclaim the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is a fundamental principle of the Christian faith. Three of the gospel writers report this direction by the Savior. . . . Matthew quotes the Savior’s command, ‘Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost’ (Matt. 28:19). [See also Mark 16:15–16; Luke 24:46–47.] . . . Applying the Savior’s directions to our day, modern prophets have challenged each of us to share the gospel” (“Sharing the Gospel,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 7).

Matthew 28:19–20. The Baptism and Instruction of Converts

The Greek phrase translated as “teach all nations” (Matthew 28:19) implies that the Apostles of the Lord were to find and baptize disciples of the Savior in all the nations. Receiving baptism is one of the requirements of becoming a disciple. Matthew 28:20 refers to additional teaching after a person is baptized. The writings in the rest of the New Testament consistently describe the *baptism* and *instruction* of converts.

Matthew 28:20. “I Am with You Always”

The Savior promised to be with His followers always, a promise that must have been of great comfort to them.

President Thomas S. Monson promised that as we serve the Lord, He will be with us: “Whatever our calling, regardless of our fears or anxieties, let us pray and then go and do, remembering the words of the Master, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who promised, ‘I am with you always, even unto the end of the world’ [Matt. 28:20]” (“They Pray and They Go,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 51).

Points to Ponder

- Consider how Jesus Christ responded to Pilate, the chief priests, the Roman soldiers, and others who mocked and insulted Him. What can you do to follow the Savior’s example when you are falsely accused or mocked because of your beliefs?
- How would you explain the necessity of Jesus Christ’s death to someone who is unfamiliar with Christianity?

Suggested Assignments

- The Resurrection brought joy to those who followed the Savior. List the ways that your belief in the Resurrection brings hope and joy to your life.
- Briefly review Matthew 26:36–27:50 and John 19:26–27. Make a list of the individuals to whom Jesus Christ showed compassion during His last hours of mortality. Write a description of what Jesus said or did to demonstrate compassion for each one.

Mark 1–4

Introduction to the Gospel According to St. Mark

Why study Mark?

As you study the Gospel of Mark, you will be reading one of the most powerful surviving testimonies of the ministry, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Mark relates events in a fast-moving, dramatic account that focuses more on the powerful deeds of the Savior than on His teachings. Foremost among those deeds was the Atonement, which Mark emphasized was central to Jesus’s mission as the Christ—the long-promised Messiah. As you study Mark’s account of how the Savior fulfilled His atoning mission, you can find courage to take up your cross and follow Him, as He asked His disciples to do.

Who wrote Mark?

According to early Christian sources, Mark was not among the original disciples of Jesus Christ, but he later converted, became an assistant to the Apostle Peter, and wrote his Gospel based on what he learned from Peter (see Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Kirsopp Lake, Loeb Classical Library, no. 153 [1926], 297). If Matthew and Luke used Mark as a source when writing their Gospels, as some scholars postulate, then Mark’s association with Peter may help explain why Matthew and Luke would use Mark as a source.

Mark (also called John Mark) and his mother, Mary, lived in Jerusalem; their home was a gathering place for some of the earliest Christians (see Acts 12:12). Mark left Jerusalem to help Barnabas and Saul (Paul) on their first missionary journey to the Gentiles (see Acts 12:25; 13:5). But for reasons that are not stated, Mark left before the mission was completed and returned home to Jerusalem (see Acts 13:13). This became a source of contention between Paul and Barnabas when they prepared to leave on a second missionary journey (see the commentary for Acts 15:30–40). Mark and Paul evidently reconciled, for Paul later wrote that Mark was with him in Rome (see Colossians 4:10; Philemon 1:24) and praised Mark as a companion who was “profitable to [him] for the ministry” (2 Timothy 4:11). Peter referred to him as “Marcus my son,” suggesting the closeness of their relationship (1 Peter 5:13).

When and where was Mark written?

Early Christian sources state that Mark wrote his Gospel in Rome, perhaps shortly after the Apostle Peter suffered martyrdom in about A.D. 64. Most scholars today believe that the Gospel of Mark was written between A.D. 66 and A.D. 73.

To whom was Mark written and why?

The Gospel of Mark contains textual details—such as translated Aramaic quotations, Latin expressions, and explanations of Jewish customs—that seem intended for an audience made up primarily of Romans and people from other Gentile nations, as well as those who were converted to Christianity, most likely in Rome and throughout the Roman Empire. Many believe Mark may have been with Peter in Rome during a period marked by severe trials of faith to many members of the Church.

This period began in A.D. 64 when a terrible fire in Rome destroyed more than half the city, and rumors circulated that the emperor Nero was to blame for setting the fire. The Roman historian Tacitus recorded that to fight the rumor, “Nero substituted as culprits, and punished with the utmost refinements of cruelty, a class of men, loathed for their vices, whom the crowd styled Christians. . . . Vast numbers were convicted, not so much on the count of arson as for hatred of the human race. And derision accompanied their end: they were covered with wild beasts’ skins and torn to death by dogs; or they were fastened on crosses, and, when daylight failed were burned to serve as lamps by night” (Tacitus, *Annals*, trans. John Jackson, Loeb Classical Library, no. 322 [1937], 283, 285). The Apostles Peter and Paul are said to have been among the Christians killed during the time of Nero.

The years that followed were tumultuous ones for Christians in many locations throughout the Roman Empire. They suffered intense persecution, grief at the loss of beloved Apostles and fellow Saints, and the hardships of social and economic upheaval. Mark seems to have recorded teachings about Jesus Christ that would help readers in these circumstances. His narrative emphasized that the Son of God Himself had faced persecution throughout His ministry and had repeatedly taught that suffering and death would precede His Resurrection.

One-third of Mark's Gospel deals with the Savior's teachings during the last week of His life. Mark bore witness that the suffering Son of God was ultimately vindicated—Jesus did in fact rise from the dead. This testimony meant that the Savior's followers need not fear; when they faced persecution, trials of faith, or even death, they were following their Master. They could endure with confidence that the Lord would help them and that all His promises would ultimately be fulfilled.

What are some distinctive features of Mark?

Mark's narrative begins suddenly and dramatically and maintains a brisk pace, recounting events in quick succession. Mark frequently used the words *straightway*, *immediately*, and *anon* (at once), giving the effect of rapid pace and action. Even though over 90 percent of the material in Mark is also found in Matthew and Luke, Mark's account often includes additional details that help us more fully appreciate the Savior's

compassion and the responses of people around Him (compare Mark 9:14–27 with Matthew 17:14–18). Mark is the only Gospel that relates the parable of the seed growing by itself (see Mark 4:26–27), the healing of a deaf person in the Decapolis region (see Mark 7:31–37), and the gradual healing of a blind man at Bethsaida (see Mark 8:22–26).

Mark, more than the other Gospel writers, recorded the disciples' shortcomings (see Mark 4:36–41; 6:52; 8:14–21). The disciples' weaknesses stand in contrast to their great faith and successes, which are depicted in the book of Acts, helping us appreciate the transformation brought about by the Resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. Among the important themes in Mark are the question of who Jesus was and who understood His identity, the Messiah's role as a suffering servant, and the disciple's role as one who must "take up his cross, and follow [Jesus]" (Mark 8:34).

Outline

Mark 1–4 When Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, the voice of God declared that Jesus was His Beloved Son. With authority, Jesus began preaching, calling disciples, and working miracles. As opposition to Him increased, He taught in parables.

Mark 5–7 The Savior continued to work many miracles, demonstrating

His compassion for others. Opposition to Him increased after Herod Antipas killed John the Baptist. Jesus taught against false traditions.

Mark 8–10 Jesus Christ continued to work miracles. Peter testified that Jesus was the Christ. The Savior prophesied three times of His suffering, death, and Resurrection,

but His disciples did not yet fully understand His impending Atonement. He taught them about the humility and service required of His disciples.

Mark 11–16 Mark recorded the last week of Jesus Christ's life, including His final teachings, suffering, death, and Resurrection.



Fishing on the Sea of Galilee

Introduction and Timeline for Mark 1–4

Mark 1–4 begins and ends by calling special attention to the identity of Jesus Christ. Mark 1:1 reads almost like a title to the Gospel of Mark: “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” Mark 4:41 records the awestruck disciples’ exclamation after the Savior had calmed a storm at sea: “What manner of man is this?” Remembering these verses as you study Mark 1–4 can help you focus on Mark’s testimony concerning what manner of man Jesus Christ was. These chapters will, as Mark 1:1 suggests, begin to present the gospel (literally, the “good news”) of Jesus Christ, repeatedly testifying that He is the all-powerful Son of God (see Mark 1:11, 22, 24, 27, 34; 2:10, 28; 3:11, 22–27; 4:35–41).

These chapters also show that people responded to the Savior’s work in a variety of ways. Both Jesus Christ and John the Baptist preached repentance and forgiveness (see Mark 1:4, 14–15; 2:17). Many people were “astonished” and “amazed” by the Savior’s teachings and miracles, and they gathered around Him (see Mark 1:22, 27, 33, 45). Others, however, failed to understand who

He was and increasingly opposed Him (see Mark 2:1–3:7). Even the Savior’s disciples had to grow in their faith and understanding of who He was (see Mark 4:40–41).



1. Jesus Christ was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River.
2. Jesus Christ began teaching, calling disciples, and working miracles in the Galilee area.

Commentary for Mark 1–4

Mark 1:2–11. Why Did Mark Begin His Gospel with the Baptism of Jesus Christ?

While the Gospels of Matthew and Luke begin with accounts of the birth of Jesus Christ and the Gospel of John begins with teachings about the premortal Christ, the Gospel of Mark is unique in beginning with the account of Jesus’s baptism. Mark’s decision to start his Gospel in this way may reflect the Apostle Peter’s pattern in teaching people about Jesus Christ. Peter appears to have been Mark’s main source of information (see “Who wrote Mark?” at the beginning of this chapter).

As recorded in Acts 10:37–40, Peter’s message to Cornelius and his household followed the same general outline found in the Gospel of Mark—Jesus was baptized, the Holy Ghost came upon Him, the power of God was with Him, He traveled about doing good and healing people, He was crucified in Jerusalem, and on the third day He rose from the dead. Evidently for

Peter and Mark, the baptism of Jesus Christ marked the important starting point in the Savior’s public ministry (see Acts 1:21–22).

It was at the baptism of Jesus Christ that the voice of God the Father declared to Jesus, “Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11). **President Gordon B. Hinckley** (1910–2008) pointed out the importance of the Father’s testimony: “[The Savior’s] ministry began with His baptism in the river Jordan at the hands of His cousin John. When He arose from the water, the Holy Ghost descended upon Him in the form of a dove, and His Father’s voice was heard [see Mark 1:11]. . . . That declaration became the affirmation of His divinity” (“He Is Not Here, but Is Risen,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 71). Since Mark’s stated purpose was to testify of “Jesus Christ, *the Son of God*” (Mark 1:1; italics added), it is fitting that Mark’s opening chapter records the voice of God the Father affirming that Jesus Christ is His Son.



To Fulfill All Righteousness, by Liz Lemon Swindle. “There came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son” (Mark 1:11).

Mark 1:4–5, 15; 2:5–12, 17. The Invitation to Repent and the Promise of Forgiveness

The essence of John the Baptist’s teaching and Mark’s first recorded words of Jesus Christ’s preaching both centered on the doctrines of repentance and forgiveness (see Mark 1:4–5, 15; 2:5–12, 17). This focus helps us understand the importance of this doctrine in the Savior’s earthly ministry and in our individual lives. “Repentance is one of the first principles of the gospel (see Articles of Faith 1:4). It is essential to your happiness in this life and throughout eternity. Repentance is much more than just acknowledging wrongdoings. It is a change of mind and heart that gives you a fresh view

about God, about yourself, and about the world. It includes turning away from sin and turning to God for forgiveness” (*True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* [2004], 132).

President Russell M. Nelson explored the meaning of the word *repent* as it appears in the New Testament:

“When Jesus said ‘repent,’ His disciples recorded that command in the Greek language with the verb *metanoeo*. This powerful word has great significance. In this word, the prefix *meta* means ‘change.’ The suffix relates to four important Greek terms: *nous*, meaning ‘the mind’; *gnosis*, meaning ‘knowledge’; *pneuma*, meaning ‘spirit’; and *pnoe*, meaning ‘breath.’

“Thus, when Jesus said ‘repent,’ He asked us to change—to change our mind, knowledge, and spirit” (“Repentance and Conversion,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 103).

Mark 1:4–5

What actions did the people in these verses take to receive a remission of their sins? Why are these actions essential to the process of receiving a remission of sins?

Mark 1–4. Commentary Found Elsewhere in This Manual

Many of the teachings and events in the Savior’s ministry that are found in Mark 1–4 are also found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The following chart identifies where you can find student manual commentary for these teachings and events:

Location of Topic in Mark	Commentary in This Manual
Mark 1:12–13. Jesus’s temptations in the wilderness	Matthew 4:1, 5, 8 and Matthew 4:2 and Matthew 4:1–3 and Matthew 4:2–10
Mark 1:16–20. Calling of Peter, James, and John	Luke 5:1–9 and Luke 5:10–11
Mark 1:30–31. Jesus’s healing of Peter’s mother-in-law	Matthew 8:14–17
Mark 2:14–17. The calling of Levi (Matthew)	Matthew 9:9–13
Mark 2:21–22. Old and new garments and bottles	Matthew 9:14–17
Mark 3:13–19. Calling and ordaining the Apostles	Matthew 10:1–5
Mark 3:31–35. Who are the Lord’s brethren?	Matthew 12:48–50
Mark 4:1–34. Parables	Matthew 13

Mark 1:22. “He Taught Them as One That Had Authority, and Not as the Scribes”

Scribes were considered experts in the legal aspects of the law of Moses. When preaching and interpreting the law, they typically added greater weight and authority to their teaching by appealing to former authorities and experts. In contrast, Jesus spoke with the authority of the Lawgiver, for He was the giver of the law of Moses.

Mark 1:23–27, 34; 3:11, 14–15, 22–30. Jesus Christ Cast Out “Unclean Spirits” and “Devils”

While all three of the synoptic Gospels tell of confrontations between “unclean spirits” and the Savior, such confrontations are prominent in the Gospel of Mark. In several places, Mark made a point of stating, where Matthew and Luke did not, that the devils and unclean spirits knew that Jesus was the Son of God (see Mark 1:34; 3:11; see also Mark 1:24; 5:7). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught about the unclean spirits and devils that Jesus Christ cast out:

“However much it may run counter to the carnal mind to read of men possessed of devils, and of other men who cast them out, such is one of the realities of mortal life. One-third of the hosts of heaven—all spirit children of our Eternal Father who is God—were cast out of heaven for rebellion. As angels of the devil and as sons of him who is Perdition, they stalk the earth, seeking whom they may destroy. Their condemnation: they are denied bodies; for them there is no further progression; they are miserable and seek the misery of all mankind; they are damned souls, without hope, forever. If, as, and when—subject to the restrictions and laws of our gracious God—they can gain temporary tenancy in a tenement of clay, they take up their habitation in the bodies of others.

“We do not know how or under what circumstances such tenancy is permitted. That all things are governed and controlled by law, we do know. . . . We do know from the Messianic utterance—‘And he shall cast out devils, or the evil spirits which dwell in the hearts of men’ (Mosiah 3:6)—that Jesus was destined, as he did, to cast out devils, and that this power was given to his apostles and seventies and, of course, is in the true church today” (*The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 4 vols. [1979–81], 2:36–37).

When studying accounts of the Savior casting out evil spirits, it is important to remember that Satan can have

no power over people without their consent. **President James E. Faust** (1920–2007) of the First Presidency explained: “We need not become paralyzed with fear of Satan’s power. He can have no power over us unless we permit it. He is really a coward, and if we stand firm, he will retreat. The Apostle James counseled: ‘Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you’ (James 4:7). He cannot know our thoughts unless we speak them. And Nephi states that ‘he hath no power over the hearts’ of people who are righteous (see 1 Nephi 22:26)” (“The Great Imitator,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 35).

Mark 1:33–39, 45; 2:2; 3:7–9, 20; 4:1. Multitudes Sought Out Jesus

Many verses in Mark 1–4 recount the enormous popularity and enthusiastic reception the Savior experienced early in His Galilean ministry. For insights into how the popular response to Jesus Christ became a factor in His ministry, see the commentary for Mark 8:30.

Mark 1:40–45. The Healing of a Man with Leprosy

In the Bible “leprosy” refers to a variety of skin ailments, including Hansen’s disease, which is the illness often called leprosy in our day. Leprosy is a chronic disease that attacks skin, nerves, eyes, bones, and limbs. Left untreated, it progressively disables its victims before subjecting them to a painful death. Lepers in ancient Israel were quarantined, were commanded to call out “Unclean!” to warn anyone approaching them, and were considered to spread their uncleanness to anyone who came in contact with them (see Leviticus 13:45–46). It is therefore remarkable that Jesus touched this leper while healing him (see Mark 1:41). That act may refer to the laying on of hands, but it also reflects the Savior’s compassion and perhaps also His priority on mercy as one of the “weightier matters of the law” that supersedes ceremonial requirements (Matthew 23:23). After healing the man, the Savior commanded him to obey the Mosaic commandment that healed lepers present themselves to a priest, offer sacrifice, and undergo a purification ritual (see Mark 1:44; Leviticus 14:1–32).

Leprosy was considered a living death because it destroyed the physical body as well as the person’s social standing, leaving the victim isolated and alone. By healing this leper, the Savior not only healed his physical body but also restored him to society.



Be Thou Clean, by Kyle Vincent. “There came a leper . . . saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean” (Mark 1:40).

President Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles wrote a poem likening the Savior’s healing of lepers to the forgiveness that is available through repentance and the Atonement of Jesus Christ:

*In ancient times the cry “Unclean!”
 Would warn of lepers near.
 “Unclean! Unclean!” the words rang out;
 Then all drew back in fear,
 Lest by the touch of lepers’ hands
 They, too, would lepers be.
 There was no cure in ancient times,
 Just hopeless agony.

 But there was One, the record shows,
 Whose touch could make them pure;
 Could ease their awful suffering,
 Their rotting flesh restore.
*

*The day He made ten lepers whole,
 The day He made them clean,
 Well symbolized His ministry
 And what His life would mean.
 However great that miracle,
 This was not why He came.
 He came to rescue every soul
 From death, from sin, from shame.
*

*What must be done to make us clean
 We cannot do alone.
 The law, to be a law, requires
 A pure one must atone.
 He taught that justice will be stayed
 Till mercy’s claim be heard
 If we repent and are baptized
 And live by every word.
*

*If we could only understand
 All we have heard and seen,
 We’d know there is no greater gift
 Than those two words—“Washed clean!”
 (“Washed Clean,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 10–11.)*

Mark 2:1–3:7. Increasing Opposition

Opposition to the Savior is one of the themes in the Gospel of Mark. Mark 2–3 presents Mark’s account of the beginning of opposition to the Savior’s ministry. Mark records that the Savior healed and forgave the man with palsy, called Matthew to the ministry, ate with sinners, and healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. The scribes and Pharisees opposed each event, increasing their opposition from skeptical thoughts (see Mark 2:6–7) to plotting to destroy Jesus (see Mark 3:6).

Mark 2:2–5. The Combined Faith of the Paralytic and the Four Who Carried Him to the Savior

We gain a greater appreciation of the faith and determination of the man who was “sick of the palsy” and his friends (Mark 2:3) when we consider what would have been involved in their gaining access to the Savior. (The word *palsy* in this context means “paralysis,” so the man could not walk to the Savior but had to be carried.) First-century houses in Capernaum were constructed of stone walls that were topped by a flat roof made from wooden beams, thatch, and packed earth. The four persons carrying the paralytic on a stretcher found that the house where Jesus was teaching was too crowded to enter by the door. They gained access for their friend by climbing up to the roof, tearing a large opening through the mud-and-thatch construction (or perhaps through a

palm-leaf-covered awning), and lowering the stretcher down to where the Savior was. The statement that “Jesus saw *their* faith” (Mark 2:5; italics added) refers to the combined faith of all five, as demonstrated by their unusual persistence and united effort in striving to reach the Savior.



JAMES JEFFERY

Underside of the roof of a reconstructed ancient house in Israel

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the First Presidency shared the following experience to teach the importance of combining our righteous efforts with others:

“Some years ago in our meetinghouse in Darmstadt, Germany, a group of brethren was asked to move a grand piano from the chapel to the adjoining cultural hall, where it was needed for a musical event. None were professional movers, and the task of getting that gravity-friendly instrument through the chapel and into the cultural hall seemed nearly impossible. Everybody knew that this task required not only physical strength but also careful coordination. There were plenty of ideas, but not one could keep the piano balanced correctly. They repositioned the brethren by strength, height, and age over and over again—nothing worked.

“As they stood around the piano, uncertain of what to do next, a good friend of mine, Brother Hanno Luschin, spoke up. He said, ‘Brethren, stand close together and lift where you stand.’

“It seemed too simple. Nevertheless, each lifted where he stood, and the piano rose from the ground and moved into the cultural hall as if on its own power. That was the answer to the challenge. They merely needed to stand close together and lift where they stood.

“I have often thought of Brother Luschin’s simple idea and have been impressed by its profound truth. . . .

“Although it may seem simple, lifting where we stand is a principle of power” (“Lift Where You Stand,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 53–54).

Regarding the power that comes when individuals combine their faith, **President Henry B. Eyring** of the First Presidency taught: “Adding together the prayers and faith of many draws down the influence of the Spirit” (“To Know and to Love God” [evening with President Henry B. Eyring, Feb. 26, 2010], 4).

 To help you visualize the scriptural account of the man with palsy, review the video segment “Jesus Forgives Sins and Heals a Man Stricken with Palsy” (2:57) from *The Life of Jesus Christ Bible Videos*, available on LDS.org. This segment covers Mark 2:1–12.

Mark 2:5–11

As described in these verses, what two miracles did the Savior do for the man? Which miracle could people see, and which could they not see? According to these verses, how could people know that Jesus had performed the unseen miracle?

Mark 2:7. “Who Can Forgive Sins but God Only?”

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained that the healing of the paralytic was an important statement about who the Savior was:

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

“Both Jesus and the ‘doctors of the law’ who were then present knew that none but God can forgive sins. Accordingly, as a pointed and dramatic witness that the power of God was resident in him, Jesus took (perhaps sought) this appropriate occasion to forgive sins. Being then called in question by the scripturalists who knew (and that rightly) that the false assumption of the power to forgive sins was blasphemy, Jesus did what no imposter could have done—he proved his divine power by healing the forgiven man. To his query, ‘Does it require more power to forgive sins than to make the sick rise up and walk?’ there could be only one answer! They are as one; he that can do the one, can do the other” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 1:177–78).



Christ Healing the Palsied Man, by David Lindsay

Mark 2:12. Healing the Man with Palsy

The Joseph Smith Translation makes clear that the crowd recognized that the man with palsy was healed *by the power of God*: “And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and *many glorified God, saying, We never saw the power of God after this manner*” (Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 2:9; compare Mark 2:12).

Mark 2:15–17. Eating and Drinking with Publicans and Sinners

In the ancient Near East, sharing a meal with others meant much more than simply eating and drinking together. It was a sign of fellowship; it indicated that a bond of friendship and peace existed or was at least being offered (see Genesis 31:43–54; Exodus 18:12; 2 Samuel 3:12–21). The Savior often used the occasion of sharing a meal to extend the invitation to repent and obtain forgiveness. On a number of these occasions, pious Jews criticized Jesus for dining in fellowship with people they regarded as sinners (see Mark 2:15–17; Luke 15:2; 19:1–10).

Those regarded by the pious Jews as “sinners” could have included not only people guilty of breaking commandments but also people who did not live in accordance with the Pharisees’ traditions—people whose daily work was considered unholy (like publicans) and people who were not Israelites (like Samaritans and Gentiles; see Acts 10:28). For more information about publicans, see the commentary for Matthew 9:9–13.

Mark 2:23–3:7. Disputes about the Sabbath Day

Many of the objections Jewish leaders brought against the Savior during His mortal ministry concerned what activities were appropriate on the Sabbath day. In ancient Israel the Sabbath was regarded as something that set Israel apart from all other people. Other cultures had holy sites, sacrificial laws, and various religious customs, but only Israel had the Sabbath (see Exodus 31:12–17; Ezekiel 20:12, 20). To safeguard their holy day, Jewish rabbis developed many rules about what activities were or were not permissible on the Sabbath. Such traditions of the “oral law” were intended to prevent violations of the written law. By New Testament times, these traditions of forbidding certain activities on the Sabbath day had become points of contention among many Jews.

An example of Jewish leaders objecting to the Savior’s Sabbath activities occurred when the Savior’s disciples picked some grain as they walked through a field with Him (see Mark 2:23–24). The law of Moses permitted a person walking through a field to pick some grain by hand as long as he did not take this privilege too far by using a sickle to harvest what was not his (see Deuteronomy 23:25). The Pharisees’ oral law, however, went further than the law of Moses and said that hand-picking grain on the Sabbath was forbidden. The Pharisees who saw the Savior’s disciples told Him that His followers had broken the law.

Mark 2:27–28. “The Sabbath Was Made for Man” (see also Matthew 12:8; Luke 6:5)

The Joseph Smith Translation adds text immediately following Mark 2:27: “*Wherefore the Sabbath was given unto man for a day of rest; and also that man should glorify God, and not that man should not eat; for the Son of man made the Sabbath day, therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath*” (Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 2:26–27 [in the Bible appendix]). For more information on the phrase “Son of man,” see the commentary for Matthew 8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 11:19; 12:8, 32, 40.

President James E. Faust gave counsel to help us understand what we should do on the Sabbath:

“The Mosaic injunctions of Sabbath day observance contained many detailed do’s and don’ts. This may have been necessary to teach obedience to those who had been in captivity and had long been denied individual freedom of choice. Thereafter, these Mosaic instructions were carried to many unwarranted extremes which the Savior condemned. In that day the technicalities of Sabbath day observance outweighed the ‘weightier matters of the law’ (Matt. 23:23) such as faith, charity, and the gifts of the Spirit.

“In our time God has recognized our intelligence by not requiring endless restrictions. Perhaps this was done with a hope that we would catch more of the spirit of Sabbath worship rather than the letter thereof. In our day, however, this pendulum of Sabbath day desecration has swung very far indeed. We stand in jeopardy of losing great blessings promised. After all, it is a test by which the Lord seeks to ‘prove you in all things’ (D&C 98:14) to see if your devotion is complete.

“Where is the line as to what is acceptable and unacceptable on the Sabbath? Within the guidelines, each of us must answer this question for ourselves. While these guidelines are contained in the scriptures and in the words of the modern prophets, they must also be written in our hearts and governed by our conscience. . . . It is quite unlikely that there will be any serious violation of Sabbath worship if we come humbly before the Lord and offer him all our heart, our soul, and our mind. (See Matt. 22:37.)

“What is worthy or unworthy on the Sabbath day will have to be judged by each of us by trying to be honest with the Lord. On the Sabbath day we should do what we have to do and what we ought to do in an attitude of worshipfulness and then limit our other activities. I wish to testify unequivocally concerning the blessings of Sabbath day worship” (“The Lord’s Day,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 35).

Mark 3:2. “They Watched Him”

In Mark 3:2, the Greek word translated “watched” implies that the Pharisees were scrutinizing Jesus with malicious intent. They had come to the synagogue not to worship, but to find fault.

Mark 3:4–6. “Is It Lawful to Do Good on the Sabbath Days, or to Do Evil?”

The Savior’s questions, “Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?” set the stage for a vivid teaching moment (Mark 3:4–5). Some rabbis had determined that only in emergency situations was it permissible to save a life on the Sabbath. Of course, it would have been just as unlawful to murder on the Sabbath as on any other day. Yet ironically, after the Savior did good by healing the man’s hand, the very people who thought He was guilty of breaking the law—and who imagined themselves the keepers of the law—began on that Sabbath to plot how to destroy Jesus (see Mark 3:6).

The Savior’s words help us understand that the Sabbath is a day for doing good. One way to “do good” on the Sabbath is to “go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments . . . , and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High” (D&C 59:9–10). Other ways of doing good on the Sabbath “may include praying, meditating, studying the scriptures and the teachings of latter-day prophets, writing letters to family members and friends, reading wholesome material, visiting the sick and distressed, and attending other Church meetings” (*True to the Faith*, 146).

Mark 3:6. Herodians

The Herodians were a political group with religious objectives. They supported the Herodian family and its leadership—in particular Herod Antipas during Jesus’s ministry. They appear to have been in league with the Pharisees in opposing the Savior and attempting to entrap Him (see Matthew 22:15–16; Mark 3:6; 12:13). To what extent they were influenced by the Pharisees is not known.

Mark 3:22–27. The Analogy of the One Who Overcomes “the Strong Man” (see also Matthew 12:29; Luke 11:21–22)

As part of their increasing attempts to oppose the Savior, the scribes and Pharisees accused Him of casting out devils by the power of the devil. As recorded in Mark 3:22–27, the Savior explained that a man who can overcome and bind a strong man must be even stronger than him. In this context, “the strong man” represented the devil, and Jesus was the one who could bind him (Mark 3:27). The fact that the Savior was casting out

devils should have made it plain to His accusers that He had power over Satan (see Luke 11:22). **Elder James E. Talmage** (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained: “Christ had attacked the stronghold of Satan, had driven his evil spirits from the human tabernacles of which they had unwarrantably taken possession; how could Christ have done this had He not first subdued the ‘strong man,’ the master of devils, Satan himself?” (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 268).

Mark 4:1–20, 30–34. Parables

For information on why Jesus Christ taught using parables, as well as insights on the parable of the sower (or soils) and the parable of the mustard seed, see the commentary for Matthew 13.

Mark 4:26–29. The Parable of the Seed Growing by Itself

This parable of the seed growing by itself, found only in the Gospel of Mark, teaches about the partnership between God and man. The man plants seeds in an environment where growth can occur, but then he must wait for that growth to happen (see Mark 4:26–27). As time passes, the earth that God created gradually brings “forth fruit of herself” (Mark 4:28). As Paul wrote, men may plant and water, but it is God who miraculously “giveth the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:6–7). Only God can make things grow. This principle applies to spiritual growth in individuals and to the growth of the Church throughout the world.

While serving as an Area Seventy, **Elder Wilfredo R. López** discussed this parable and its application to our lives: “An important lesson of this parable is for those of us who are teachers, whether in the home or Church classroom, or who are involved in missionary work. The germination and full flowering of living gospel seeds in the hearts and minds of those we teach depend on factors over which we may have little control. The choice of whether a person will ponder and accept the truths of the gospel belongs, as a matter of personal agency, with those we teach. If a person’s testimony is to grow until it bears mature fruit, or conversion, God must be the primary force behind our harvest. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, we may participate in the education of those who are growing and becoming fruitful. We, as authorized sowers, need to understand and trust

that the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is a living seed and that if we will teach it, the grace of God will attend those we teach, as they grow to spiritual maturity and bring forth good works. Our joy will then be full in the day of the harvest” (“The Parable of the Seed Growing Secretly,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2003, 58).

Mark 4:35–41. Jesus Christ Calmed a Storm

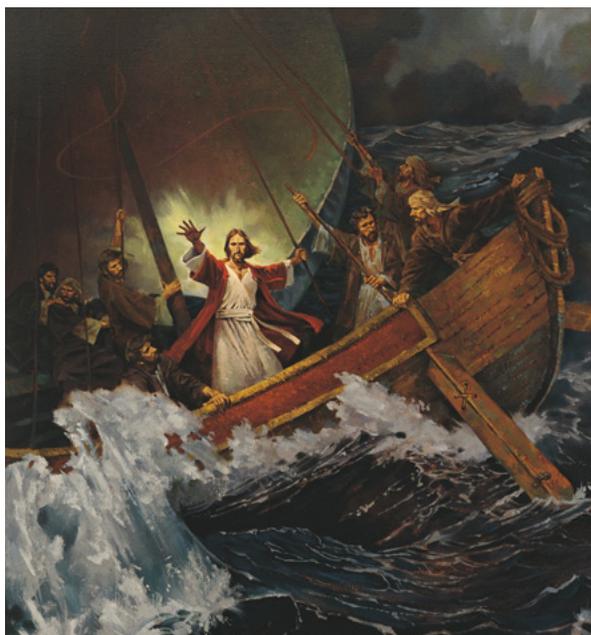
The Sea of Galilee is a freshwater lake in northeastern Israel. It is located in the Jordan Rift Valley at nearly 700 feet below sea level and is surrounded by high mountains on the west, north, and east. Winds can whip down the western slopes and create sudden, intense storms with formidable waves on this relatively small body of water. Fishermen in the middle of the lake can be frightened for their lives. On the occasion Mark described, Jesus slept calmly while the tempest raged until His friends, who were full of fear, awakened Him. **President Howard W. Hunter** (1907–95) discussed some important truths in Mark’s account of the Savior calming a storm on the Sea of Galilee:

“All of us have seen some sudden storms in our lives. A few of them, though temporary like these on the Sea of Galilee, can be violent and frightening and potentially destructive. As individuals, as families, as communities, as nations, even as a church, we have had sudden squalls arise which have made us ask one way or another, ‘Master, carest thou not that we perish?’ And one way or another we always hear in the stillness after the storm, ‘Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith?’



The Sea of Galilee and Mount Arbel

JAMES JEFFERY



Stilling the Storm, by Ted Henninger

“None of us would like to think we have *no* faith, but I suppose the Lord’s gentle rebuke here is largely deserved. This great Jehovah, in whom we say we trust and whose name we have taken upon us, is he who said, ‘Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.’ (Gen. 1:6.) And he is also the one who said, ‘Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear.’ (Gen. 1:9.) Furthermore, it was he who parted the Red Sea, allowing the Israelites to pass through on dry ground. (See Ex. 14:21–22.) Certainly it should be no surprise that he could command a few elements acting up on the Sea of Galilee. And our faith should remind us that he can calm the troubled waters of our lives. . . .

“But Jesus was not spared grief and pain and anguish and buffeting. . . . His ship was tossed most of his life, and, at least to mortal eyes, it crashed fatally on the rocky coast of Calvary. We are asked not to look on life with mortal eyes; with spiritual vision we know something quite different was happening upon the cross.

“Peace was on the lips and in the heart of the Savior no matter how fiercely the tempest was raging. May it so be with us—in our own hearts, in our own homes, in our nations of the world, and even in the buffetings faced from time to time by the Church. We should not expect to get through life individually or collectively without some opposition” (“Master, the Tempest Is Raging,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 33, 35).

Points to Ponder

- Which of the events in these first chapters of Mark is most meaningful to you?
- Think about how the paralyzed man and his four friends combined their faith in a way that resulted in forgiveness and healing (see Mark 2:1–12). When have you seen the combined faith and prayers of people bring blessings from heaven?
- After studying these chapters, how would you answer this question about Jesus Christ: “What manner of man is this?” (Mark 4:41).

Suggested Assignments

- Repentance can be defined as “turning away from sin” and “turning to the Lord.” As you study the accounts of the following individuals, list words and phrases from the verses that describe how each person turned to the Lord: Simon and Andrew (see Mark 1:16–18), the leper (see Mark 1:40–41), the paralytic (see Mark 2:1–5), and Levi (see Mark 2:14–15). Write about how these descriptive words and phrases can guide anyone who needs to repent. Why is it insufficient to turn away from sin without turning to the Lord? In your own repentance, how have you done both kinds of turning?
- As Jesus Christ began His ministry, His teachings and miracles helped many people recognize that He had come with divine authority (see Mark 1:22, 27). When has a teaching or miracle of the Savior brought you greater understanding of His divine authority? Share your answer with a friend or family member, or write it in your journal.

12

Mark 5–7

Introduction and Timeline for Mark 5–7

Chapters 5–7 of Mark’s Gospel advance themes that were introduced in Mark 1–4. Mark’s accounts of the Savior’s miracles reveal the Savior’s great compassion and teach eternal truths about the plan of salvation. The opposition toward the Savior (see Mark 2:1–3:7) intensified with the death of John the Baptist at the hands of Herod Antipas (see Mark 6:14–29)—an event that foreshadowed the Savior’s own impending suffering and death, as well as the future martyrdom of many of His disciples (see Mark 8:34–35; 10:38; 13:11–13). As some Pharisees continued to find fault with Jesus Christ and His disciples, the Savior reproved them for placing their traditions above the commandments of God (see Mark 7:1–13).



1. Jesus Christ cast devils out of a man in the Gentile territory east of the Sea of Galilee.
2. The Savior healed a woman with an issue of blood and raised Jairus’s daughter from the dead in Capernaum.
3. John the Baptist was beheaded by Herod Antipas.
4. Jesus Christ miraculously fed a multitude of over five thousand in the Galilee area.
5. In the Gentile region of Decapolis, the Savior healed a person who was deaf and unable to speak.

Commentary for Mark 5–7

Mark 5–7. The Savior’s Miracles Teach Eternal Truths

The miracles discussed in Mark 5:1–43; 6:30–44; 7:31–37 give important insights into the truths the Savior taught. Miracles were “an important element in the work of Jesus Christ, being not only divine acts, but forming also a part of the divine teaching. . . . They were intended to be a proof to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ (Matt. 11:4–5; John 2:11; 10:25; 20:30–31). Many of them were also symbolic, teaching such divine truths as the result of sin and the cure of sin; the value of faith; the curse of impurity; and the law of love” (Bible Dictionary, “Miracles”). Thus, a profitable way to study the Savior’s miracles is to remember that each miracle points to something larger than the event itself, and to look for specific truths about God and His work that the miracle affirms (see the commentaries for Mark 5:1–20, for Mark 5:22–24, 35–42, and for Mark 5:25–34).

Mark 5:1–20. Jesus Christ Cast Out Devils and Allowed Them to Enter a Herd of Swine (see also Matthew 8:28–34; Luke 8:26–39)

Though Mark and Luke identified the location of this miracle as Gadara and Matthew identified it as Gergesa, it is clear that the miracle took place on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, which was inhabited by Gentiles. This explains the presence of swine herding in

the area—Gentiles could eat pork, but Jews could not, for eating pork was forbidden by the law of Moses (see Leviticus 11:1–8). The possessed man called himself “Legion,” a word that in New Testament times referred to a division of the Roman army usually composed of 3,000 to 6,000 soldiers. Mark and Luke clarified that the name “Legion” meant that the man was possessed by “many” evil spirits (Mark 5:9; Luke 8:30).

After Jesus cast out the devils, they asked Him to be allowed to enter a herd of swine. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles identified several truths that we learn from this miracle:

“This particular instance of ejecting spirit beings from a stolen tenement is set forth in detail by the gospel writers to show:

“(1) That evil spirits, actual beings from Lucifer’s realm, gain literal entrance into mortal bodies;

“(2) That they then have such power over those bodies as to control the physical acts performed . . . ;

“(3) That persons possessed by evil spirits are subjected to the severest mental and physical sufferings and to the basest sort of degradation—all symbolical of the eternal torment to be imposed upon those who fall under Satan’s control in the world to come;

“(4) That devils remember Jesus from pre-existence . . . ;

“(5) That the desire to gain bodies is so great among Lucifer’s minions as to cause them, not only to steal the mortal tabernacles of men, but to enter the bodies of animals;

“(6) That the devils know their eventual destiny is to be cast out into an eternal hell from whence there is no return;

“(7) That rebellious and worldly people are not converted to the truth by observing miracles; and

“(8) That those cleansed from evil spirits can then be used on the Lord’s errand to testify of his grace and goodness so that receptive persons may be led to believe in him” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 1:311).

For more insight into accounts of Jesus Christ casting out evil spirits, see the commentary for Mark 1:23–27, 34; 3:11, 14–15, 22–30.

Mark 5:19. “Go Home to Thy Friends, and Tell Them”

In many instances, the Savior commanded a person whom He had healed not to spread news of the miracle (see the commentary for Mark 8:30). After casting out the legion of devils, the Savior did just the opposite and told the man, “Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee.” Perhaps this was because the miracle occurred in the Gentile region of Decapolis, away from the influence of Jewish leaders.

Mark 5:22–43. Narrative of Two Miraculous Healings

The account of the raising of Jairus’s daughter from the dead is interrupted by the account of the healing of the woman with an issue of blood. By relating events in this way, Mark may have encouraged his readers to consider the two miracles together. Jairus, “one of the rulers of the synagogue” (Mark 5:22), would have been socially respected; the unnamed woman would have been an outcast (see the commentary for Mark 5:25–34). The two miracles together show that the Savior’s compassion and power to heal are extended to all, regardless of social standing.

Mark 5:22–23. A Ruler of the Synagogue

In Jesus’s day, synagogues were presided over by a council of elders under the direction of a chief ruler, such as Jairus. Though he was held in high esteem by the Jews, Jairus showed great reverence to the Savior. The laying on of hands described in Mark 5:23 is the same ordinance of healing used today in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Mark 5:34–36

How might it have helped Jairus to hear the Savior’s words to the woman with the issue of blood (see Mark 5:34), considering what took place next? (see Mark 5:35–36).

Mark 5:22–24, 35–42. Jesus Christ Raised Jairus’s Daughter from the Dead (see also Matthew 9:18–19, 23–26; Luke 8:41–42, 49–55)

This account of the healing of the daughter of Jairus is one of only three recorded instances when Jesus brought the dead back to life in anticipation of the great Resurrection, when He will bring all mankind back to life (see also Luke 7:11–15; John 11:38–44). Each of these accounts allows us to see the Savior’s tenderness toward those who grieve. **President Howard W. Hunter** (1907–95) analyzed the account of the healing of Jairus’s daughter and pointed out several truths the account teaches us about the Savior:



Christ Raising the Daughter of Jairus, by Greg K. Olsen

“Nowhere else in the scriptures does this man [Jairus] or his name appear except on this occasion, yet his memory lives in history because of a brief contact with

Jesus. Many, many lives have become memorable that otherwise would have been lost in obscurity had it not been for the touch of the Master’s hand that made a significant change of thought and action and a new and better life. . . .

“. . . The tremor we hear in Jairus’s voice as he speaks of ‘My little daughter’ stirs our souls with sympathy as we think of this man of high position in the synagogue on his knees before the Savior.

“Then comes a great acknowledgement of faith: ‘I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live’ [Mark 5:23]. These are not only the words of faith of a father torn with grief but are also a reminder to us that whatever Jesus lays his hands upon lives. If Jesus lays his hands upon a marriage, it lives. If he is allowed to lay his hands on the family, it lives. . . .

“. . . When they got to the home of the ruler of the synagogue, Jesus took the little girl by the hand and raised her from the dead. In like manner, he will lift and raise every man to a new and better life who will permit the Savior to take him by the hand” (“Reading the Scriptures,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 65).



To help you visualize the scriptural account of Jairus’s daughter, review the video segment “Jesus Raises the Daughter of Jairus” (3:26) from *The Life of Jesus Christ Bible Videos*, available on LDS.org. This segment covers Mark 5:22–24, 35–43.

Mark 5:25–34. The Healing of a Woman with an Issue of Blood (see also Matthew 9:20–22; Luke 8:43–48)

The Gospel accounts do not define the exact nature of the woman’s “issue of blood” (Mark 5:25). However, under the law of Moses, someone with an issue of blood was considered ritually unclean (see Leviticus 15:19–33), meaning that the woman would have been socially ostracized and excluded from the synagogue and the temple during the 12 long years of her ailment. The desperation she felt about her situation is suggested by the statement that she “had spent all that she had” seeking a cure from physicians (Mark 5:26).

The Savior’s question, “Who touched me?” (Mark 5:31), created the opportunity for the woman to acknowledge her act of faith and the miracle of her healing. The Savior’s response helped the woman and others present avoid the misconception that the miracle had resulted from any miraculous power in His garment itself—“Daughter, *thy faith* hath made thee whole” (Mark 5:34; italics added). It also declared to the woman’s neighbors

and the townspeople that she was now healed and no longer subject to the social and religious exclusions that had been imposed upon her for so many years. God’s power can restore both purity and wholeness.



Trust in the Lord, by Liz Lemon Swindle. “If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole” (Mark 5:28).

While serving as a member of the Seventy, **Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander** spoke about how the woman in this account acted in faith to come to the Savior:

“Among the crowd was a woman. . . . Outwardly, there was little to distinguish her from any other person in the crowd. No one tried to stop her from moving toward Jesus. Certainly, the Apostles neither noticed her nor made any attempt to stop her. But there was something that set her apart from all others in the crowd that day. Though buried among the thronging mass, she resolutely and quietly pressed forward with a single purpose in mind: to come to the Savior, having faith that He had the power to heal her, that He cared about her and would respond to her need. In this one thing she set herself apart from the crowd. The crowd came to see, but the woman came to be healed. . . .

“. . . All of us are among the crowds of this world. Almost all of us are like the woman who, despite the crowd, comes to the Savior. We all have faith that just a touch will bring healing to our aching souls and relief to our innermost needs.

“. . . In all of life’s circumstances let us quietly and resolutely press forward to the Savior, having faith that He cares about us and has the power to heal and save us” (“One among the Crowd,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 101–3).

Mark 5:30. What Is Meant by “Virtue Had Gone Out of Him”? (see also Luke 8:46)

Some translations of Mark 5:30—including the English King James Version and the Spanish Reina-Valera version of the Bible—state that “virtue” (Spanish *virtud*) went out of Jesus Christ when the woman was healed. In the original Greek text of the New Testament, the word corresponding to *virtue* is *dunamis*, which means “power” or “strength.”

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) recorded an experience that helps us understand the “virtue,” or spiritual strength, that is required of a priesthood holder when administering to others: “Elder Jedediah M. Grant enquired of me the cause of my turning pale and losing strength last night while blessing children. I told him that I saw that Lucifer would exert his influence to destroy the children that I was blessing, and I strove with all the faith and spirit that I had to seal upon them a blessing that would secure their lives upon the earth; and so much virtue went out of me into the children, that I became weak, from which I have not yet recovered; and I referred to the case of the woman touching the hem of the garment of Jesus. (Luke, 8th chapter). The virtue here referred to is the spirit of life; and a man who exercises great faith in administering to the sick, blessing little children, or confirming, is liable to become weakened” (in *History of the Church*, 5:303).

Mark 5:35–36. “Be Not Afraid, Only Believe”

One can only imagine the devastation Jairus must have felt at the unexpected declaration that his daughter was dead. **Elder Neil L. Andersen** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles used Jesus Christ’s comforting words to Jairus at that moment of devastation to teach the important principle that following Jesus involves choosing to keep our faith when faced with doubts or fears: “Challenges, difficulties, questions, doubts—these are

part of our mortality. But we are not alone. As disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have enormous spiritual reservoirs of light and truth available to us. Fear and faith cannot coexist in our hearts at the same time. In our days of difficulty, we choose the road of faith. Jesus said, ‘Be not afraid, only believe’ [Mark 5:36]” (“You Know Enough,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 14).

Mark 5:38–40. “Them That Wept and Wailed Greatly”

When a family member died, it was a custom of the Jews of Jesus’s day to mourn with loud wailing and lamentation. Wealthy or prominent families like Jairus’s often hired people to lament with them (see Jeremiah 9:17–18; Amos 5:16). At Jairus’s house, it was likely a group of professional mourners who laughed scornfully at Jesus and who were asked by Jesus to leave (see Mark 5:40) to ensure reverence while the miraculous healing took place.

The raising of the young girl was witnessed only by her mother and father and by Peter, James, and John. While the faith of these five individuals was rewarded, those who had laughed at Jesus forfeited the opportunity to better know Him and witness His power.

Mark 5:41. Jesus Spoke in Aramaic

Aramaic was the language commonly spoken by the Jewish people in the first century A.D., and it is the language the Savior spoke. Mark recorded the actual Aramaic words the Savior spoke to the young girl (see Mark 5:41). *Talitha* is an Aramaic word meaning “young girl” or “damsel” (and may have been a nickname applied to a young girl in a moment of tenderness), while *cumi* is an Aramaic word of command meaning to “stand” or “arise.” After the Savior’s words, the young girl immediately arose.

Mark 6:1–4. Rejection in Nazareth

For insights on the rejection of Jesus by the people of Nazareth, see the commentary for Luke 4:22–30.

Mark 6:5, 13; 7:32. Healing by Laying on Hands and Anointing with Oil

The Gospel of Mark contains more references than the other Gospels to Jesus and His Apostles healing people by the laying on of hands (see Mark 1:41; 5:23; 6:5; 7:32; 8:23–25; 10:16; 16:18). Mark is the only Gospel to mention that the Savior’s Apostles anointed the sick with oil when administering to them (see Mark 6:13).



Christ Healing a Blind Man, by Sam Lawlor

President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency taught that miraculous healings happen today, just as in biblical times, through the power of the priesthood:

“Miracles happen when the authority of the priesthood is used to bless the sick. I have experienced these miracles. As a boy and as a man I have seen healings as miraculous as any recorded in the scriptures, and so have many of you. . . .

“The Old Testament frequently mentions anointing with oil as part of a blessing conferred by priesthood authority. Anointings were declared to be for sanctification and perhaps can also be seen as symbolic of the blessings to be poured out from heaven as a result of this sacred act.

“In the New Testament we read that Jesus’s Apostles ‘anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them’ (Mark 6:13). The book of James teaches the role of anointing in connection with the other elements in a healing blessing by priesthood authority:

“Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

“‘And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up’ (James 5:14–15).

“. . . When elders anoint a sick person and seal the anointing, they open the windows of heaven for the Lord to pour forth the blessing He wills for the person afflicted” (“Healing the Sick,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 48).

Mark 6:7–12. Sending Out the Twelve

For more information about the Savior sending out the Twelve Apostles to preach the gospel to the house of Israel, see the commentaries for Matthew 10:1–5, for Matthew 10:2–4, for Matthew 10:5–6, and for Matthew 10:9–10.

Mark 6:11. “Shake Off the Dust under Your Feet”

For insights on what it means to shake the dust off one’s feet, see the commentary for Matthew 10:14.

Mark 6:13. Symbolism of Olive Oil

Throughout the scriptures physical objects, such as olive oil, are used to represent sacred powers and practices. For example, **President Joseph Fielding Smith** (1876–1972) taught: “We find through all the prophetic writings that olive trees and olive oil are emblems of sacredness and purity” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5 vols. [1957–66], 1:152). In ancient times, anointing with oil was a symbol of sanctification. As described in Leviticus 8:12, Moses “poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron’s head, and anointed him, to sanctify him.” And sanctification leads to receiving the Holy Ghost (see Alma 13:12; 3 Nephi 27:20; see also Exodus 28:40–41; 29:36; 40:10–11; Leviticus 8:12).

Olive oil, which is exuded from crushed olives, can also be seen as a symbol of the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. **President Russell M. Nelson** stated: “In the garden bearing the Hebrew name of *Gethsemane*—meaning ‘oil-press’—olives had been beaten and pressed to provide oil and food. There at Gethsemane, the Lord ‘suffered the pain of all men, that all . . . might repent and come unto him’ [D&C 18:11]. He took upon Himself the weight of the sins of all mankind, bearing its massive load that caused Him to bleed from every pore” (“The Atonement,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 35).

Mark 6:14–29. The Death of John the Baptist

“John preached and baptized for about six months before he baptized Jesus. He then continued about six to nine months afterward until he was imprisoned by Herod

Antipas. During the imprisonment John was probably tortured, scourged (see Matt. 17:12–13), and bound with chains, for such was the ancient custom. . . . After nine to twelve months in the dungeon, John was beheaded at the order of Herod, who in his lust for Salome, a dancing girl, had fallen prey to a murderous scheme of Herodias to destroy John. (See Mark 6:17–29.) . . .

“Thus John died as a martyr, as have many of the Lord’s servants” (Robert J. Matthews, “‘There Is Not a Greater Prophet’: The Ministry of John the Baptist,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1991, 16–17).

In the Gospel of Mark, John the Baptist’s death is given more emphasis than his ministry (compare Mark 1:4–9, 14 with Mark 6:14–29). Mark recounted John’s death between accounts of the sending forth of the Twelve Apostles (see Mark 6:7–13) and their return (see Mark 6:30)—another “interrupted narrative” like the account of the healing of Jairus’s daughter. The effect is to underscore the potential cost of being a servant of God. Since John the Baptist was the forerunner of the Messiah, his death at the hands of wicked men foreshadowed the Savior’s own impending suffering and death (see Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34) and illustrated the persecution and violence many of the disciples of Jesus Christ would eventually face (see Mark 8:34–35; 10:38; John 15:20; 16:2).

Mark 6:17–20. Herod Antipas and Herodias

While visiting Rome, Herod Antipas became infatuated with Herodias, who, at the time, was married to Herod’s brother Philip. Herod proposed that Herodias leave Philip in order to marry him. That being done, Herod Antipas divorced his wife to marry Herodias. Herodias and Philip, however, were never legally divorced. When John the Baptist condemned the marriage as a violation of the law of Moses (see Leviticus 18:16), Herod had him put in prison (see Mark 6:17–18).

From Matthew 14:5 we learn that when Herod desired to put John to death, he feared to do so because the people knew John to be a prophet. The Joseph Smith Translation adds that Herod knew John to be “a just man, and a holy man, and one who feared God and observed to worship him” (Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 6:21 [in Mark 6:20, footnote b]). Despite his knowledge that John was a righteous and holy man, Herod chose to order John’s execution, thereby ending the mortal life of one of God’s greatest prophets—a dreadful choice for which Herod will be held accountable by God.

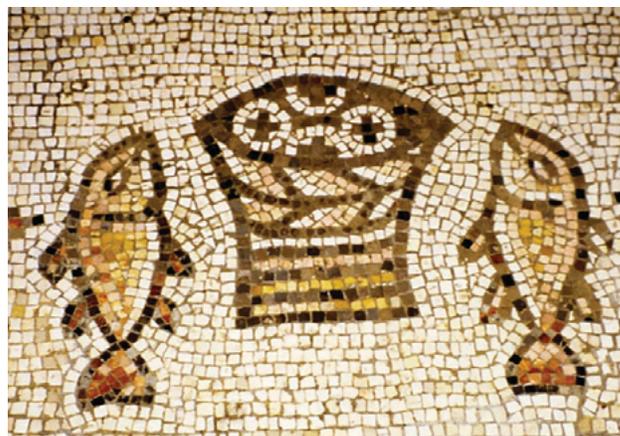
Mark 6:21–29, 34–44. Two Feasts

Mark 6 presents contrasting accounts of two very different feasts: the self-indulgent and licentious birthday feast of Herod Antipas, which resulted in the death of John the Baptist, and the Savior’s miraculous feeding of a multitude of five thousand. Thus a worldly king brought death, while the King of kings sustained life.

Mark 6:32–44. The Feeding of the Five Thousand (see also Matthew 14:15–21; Luke 9:12–17; John 6:3–14)

The Greek text of Mark 6:44 makes clear that the phrase “five thousand men” meant five thousand *males*. Matthew 14:21 makes this unmistakable by adding the statement “beside women and children.”

The feeding of the five thousand is one of the only miracles besides the Resurrection that is found in all four Gospels. **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles identified an eternal truth we learn from this miracle: “Don’t worry about Christ running out of ability to help you. His grace is sufficient. That is the spiritual, eternal lesson of the feeding of the 5,000” (*Trusting Jesus* [2003], 73).



Mosaic depicting two fish and a basket containing round loaves of bread. The mosaic is from the floor of a church built in the fifth century A.D. at the traditional site of the feeding of the five thousand. This miracle showed the compassion Jesus had for the people (see Mark 6:34).

Similarly, **Elder J. Devn Cornish** of the Seventy taught that the feeding of the five thousand is one of the scriptural accounts that “can teach us symbolically of the power and abundance of the Savior’s atoning grace. . . . His grace is truly abundant and more than sufficient to meet all our needs” (“Learning How the Atonement Can Change You,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2002, 23). This truth can be appreciated by noticing the sequence of statements and actions:

1. The Savior gave a commandment beyond the disciples' present ability: "Give ye them to eat" (Mark 6:37). The impossibility of this task is reflected in the disciples' response, found only in Mark. They said that the amount of bread needed to feed such a multitude would have been "two hundred pennyworth," or two hundred *denarii*—roughly eight months' wages for a common laborer.
2. The Savior asked the disciples what they *could* provide: "How many loaves have ye?" (Mark 6:38). The disciples told the Savior they had found five loaves and two fishes.
3. The Savior instructed, "Bring them hither to me" (Matthew 14:18).
4. The disciples gave the Savior what they had.
5. The Savior blessed and multiplied what the disciples were able to provide, miraculously meeting and surpassing what was needed.

This sequence mirrors a pattern in our relationship with the Savior. On our own, we fall far short of the perfection and glory of God (see Matthew 5:48; Romans 3:23). But when we offer our whole souls to the Savior, the abundant power and grace of His Atonement will more than compensate for our shortcomings (see 2 Nephi 25:23; Omni 1:26; Moroni 10:32–33).



The disciples found a boy with five loaves and two fish, by Paul Mann

President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency taught that the Savior's power to multiply the loaves and fishes shows that He will magnify our faithful

efforts to serve in His Church, even if we feel that our efforts are equal to only a few loaves and fishes:

"Many nameless people with gifts equal only to five loaves and two small fishes magnify their callings [in the Church] and serve without attention or recognition, feeding literally thousands. . . . These are the hundreds of thousands of leaders and teachers in all of the auxiliaries and priesthood quorums, the home teachers, the Relief Society visiting teachers. These are the many humble bishops in the Church, some without formal training, but greatly magnified, always learning, with a humble desire to serve the Lord and the people of their wards. . . .

"A major reason this church has grown from its humble beginnings to its current strength is the faithfulness and devotion of millions of humble and devoted people who have only five loaves and two small fishes to offer in the service of the Master" ("Five Loaves and Two Fishes," *Ensign*, May 1994, 5–6).

Mark 6:46–53. The Savior Walked on a Stormy Sea

Mark pointed out that the disciples' fear and amazement came because they had not fully understood the miracle they had witnessed the previous day. For insights about the account of the Savior walking upon the sea, see the commentary for Matthew 14:27–31.

Mark 7:1–13. False Traditions Can Lead People to Reject or Neglect the Word of God

The washing of hands described in Mark 7:1–5 refers to a ceremonial washing for the sake of ritual purity. Under the law of Moses, many aspects of daily life were divided into categories of "clean" and "unclean." Uncleanness referred to being ceremonially or ritually unclean and did not mean that the person was either unsanitary or morally unclean, though ritually "unclean" persons were excluded from certain religious and social activities until they were purified. By New Testament times, Jewish concern for ritual purity had given rise to many traditions, including the ritual washings described in Mark 7:1–5. These traditions in Jesus's day were oral (not written) and were passed down from rabbi to rabbi and to their followers or students. They later became incorporated in written form in the Talmud.

When the Pharisees found fault with the Savior's disciples for not observing these traditional rituals, the Savior reproved the Pharisees for professing devotion to God while placing a higher priority on man-made traditions than on God's commandments. Such inconsistency was hypocrisy (see Mark 7:6). An example of this hypocrisy was the Pharisees' observance of the

tradition of “corban” (see Mark 7:10–13). *Corban* meant “given to God.” A tradition of the elders held that if a man had money or other resources he intended to give to God or the temple, those resources could be declared “corban” and need not be used to care for his aging parents, even though God had commanded, “Honour thy father and thy mother” (Exodus 20:12). Placing man-made tradition above the word of God in ways like this showed that traditions had taken precedence over the word of God (see Mark 7:6, 13).

President Dallin H. Oaks declared that as members of the Church, we must be willing to give up “all of our practices—personal, family, ethnic, and national—that are contrary to the commandments of God”:

“The teachings of Jesus also challenged the traditions of different groups. . . . ‘Hypocrites’ is what He called those whose adherence to their traditions kept them from keeping the commandments of God [see Mark 7:6; Matthew 15:7]. . . .

“The traditions or culture or way of life of a people inevitably include some practices that must be changed by those who wish to qualify for God’s choicest blessings.

“Chastity is an example. . . . Always the prophets of God have condemned whoredoms. Yet these eternal commands have frequently been ignored, opposed, or mocked by powerful traditions in many lands. . . . Sexual relations out of wedlock are tolerated or advocated by many. So is the rapidly expanding culture of pornography. All who have belonged to these cultures of sin must repent and change if they are to become the people of God, for He has warned that ‘no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom’ (3 Nephi 27:19). . . .

“Another example is honesty. Some cultures allow lying, stealing, and other dishonest practices. But dishonesty in any form—whether to appease, to save face, or to get gain—is in direct conflict with gospel commandments and culture. God is a God of truth, and God does not change. We are the ones who must change” (“Repentance and Change,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2003, 38).

Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that we will find greater happiness and peace when we make sure our family and cultural traditions align with the gospel of Jesus Christ: “I testify that you will remove barriers to happiness and find greater peace as you make your first allegiance your membership in the Church of Jesus Christ, and His teachings the foundation of your life. Where family or national traditions or customs conflict with the

teachings of God, set them aside. Where traditions and customs are in harmony with His teachings, they should be cherished and followed to preserve your culture and heritage. There is one heritage that you need never change. It is that heritage that comes from your being a daughter or son of Father in Heaven. For happiness, control your life by that heritage” (“Removing Barriers to Happiness,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 87).

Mark 7:4. The Washing of Cups

Mark recorded that Jewish traditions about ritual purity included ceremonies for purifying “of cups, and pots, brasen [brass] vessels, and of tables” (Mark 7:4). Limestone vessels were valued because they were believed to retain ritual purity over other kinds of vessels.



JAMES JEFFERY

First century A.D. limestone plates and cups found in Israel

Mark 7:6, 14–23. Purity of the Heart

As recorded in Mark 7:6, 14–23, the Savior directed His disciples’ attention away from outward rituals to the condition of one’s *heart* (see especially verses 6, 19, 21, 23). The Joseph Smith Translation emphasizes this: “There is nothing from without, *that entering into* a man, can defile him, *which is food*; but the things which come out of him; those are they that defile the man, *that proceedeth forth out of the heart*” (Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 7:15; compare Mark 7:15, footnote *a*). For more insights on this aspect of the Savior’s teachings, see the commentary for Matthew 15:8.

Mark 7:21–22. That Which Defiles a Man

While speaking to the Pharisees, the Savior identified various violations of God’s law that prevented a person from being pure, such as evil thoughts, immorality, murder, theft, covetousness, deceit, pride, blasphemy, and foolishness (see Mark 7:21–22). After quoting

Mark 7:21–22, **Elder Quentin L. Cook** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles warned against the dangers of modern-day “foolishness,” one of the “evil things” that defile a person:

“The definition of the Greek word translated as ‘foolishness’ in Mark 7:22 includes ‘senselessness’ and ‘egotism.’ It is derived from a Greek word meaning ‘mindless,’ ‘stupid,’ ‘ignorant,’ ‘egotistic,’ ‘rash,’ or ‘unbelieving.’ Most of the scriptures that use the word imply lack of wisdom. These are all serious matters in their own right.

“But I think there is an additional reason ‘foolishness’ was included by the Savior with other, more serious conduct. Foolishness often accompanies and leads to more serious transgressions. Think of all the pranks of which you are aware and how many cross over the line of propriety and become coarse, indecent, raunchy, and smutty. For some time I have worried about the frivolous and immoral exhibitionism that is so prevalent in modern society. Celebrities, sports and movie stars, and participants on the Internet engage in conduct and set examples that are at the very least decadent. . . .

“When there are so many needs in the world to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, spend wholesome time with our family and friends, house the homeless, feed the poor, heal the sick, improve the environment, love our neighbors as ourselves, then time spent in foolish endeavors is seen in its true light” (“Choices and Challenges” [evening with Elder Quentin L. Cook, Feb. 27, 2009], 6–7).

Mark 7:24–30. The Healing of the Daughter of a Gentile Woman

Mark 7:31–32

According to these verses, where did the healing of the deaf person take place? Compare this to Mark 5:19–20. How might the healed man described in Mark 5:19–20 have prepared the way for the miracle recorded in Mark 7:31–37?

For insights about the healing of the daughter of a Gentile woman, see the commentary for Matthew 15:21–28.

Mark 7:31–37. The Healing of a Deaf Man

Before performing this miracle of healing, the Savior took the deaf man aside privately, touched his ears and tongue, and looked up to heaven (see Mark 7:33–34).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained, “The Lord is dealing with a believing soul who cannot hear his words or give fluent answer to them. And so what is more natural than to make use of common signs, known to and understood by the deaf and speech inhibited man, to indicate what the Master could and would do in accordance with the law of faith?” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:373).

The Savior’s communications to the deaf man reflect the scriptural teaching that “the Lord God giveth light unto the understanding; for he speaketh unto men according to their language, unto their understanding” (2 Nephi 31:3).

Mark recorded that, at the Savior’s word, the deaf man was immediately able to hear and that “he spake plain,” meaning he could speak clearly (see Mark 7:34–35). Thus there was more to this miracle than the restoration of hearing. The deaf man had been described as both deaf and having “an impediment in his speech” (Mark 7:32). The Savior’s healing enabled this man to speak immediately and plainly.

Points to Ponder

- After the Savior healed the man who had been possessed by devils, He told him, “Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee” (Mark 5:19). What “great things” has the Lord done for you that you could tell your friends about?
- Compare Mark 7:9 with Alma 3:8 and Doctrine and Covenants 93:39. What can result from false traditions? What traditions do you encounter that conflict with the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Suggested Assignment

- Study each of the following miracles and create two lists—one identifying eternal truths you learn from each miracle, and the other listing details that show the Savior’s compassion for people in need: casting out devils (Mark 5:1–20); raising Jairus’s daughter from the dead (Mark 5:21–24, 35–43); healing a woman with an issue of blood (Mark 5:25–34); feeding the five thousand (Mark 6:34–44); and healing a man who was deaf and could not speak (Mark 7:31–37).

Mark 8–10

Introduction and Timeline for Mark 8–10

Chapters 8–10 represent a turning point in the Gospel of Mark. Up to this point in the Savior’s ministry, most people had failed to understand who He was—the Pharisees had called Him a blasphemer, the scribes had accused Him of having the power of the devil, and the Gadarenes had feared Him and asked Him to leave their territory (see Mark 2:7; 3:22; 5:15–17). Though many followers regarded Jesus as a powerful teacher or one who could work miracles (see Mark 1:40; 5:23, 28; 6:56), even those closest to Him were slow to understand Him (see Mark 1:22; 4:41; 6:2, 51–52). This confusion regarding Jesus’s identity can indicate a “spiritual blindness,” sometimes seen in the Gospel of Mark, among those whom the Savior taught. The events and teachings recorded in chapters 8–10 show how people gradually came to see Jesus Christ as the Messiah who would ultimately overcome man’s spiritual enemies through His atoning suffering and death.

Mark 8–10 records three occasions when the Savior taught His disciples about His impending suffering, death, and Resurrection (see Mark 8:31–33; 9:30–32; 10:32–34). After each foretelling, the Savior clarified the “vision” of His

disciples by teaching them more about their own role. Just as Jesus Christ’s mission involved humility, suffering, and death, the missions of His disciples would involve taking up their crosses, losing their lives for His sake, and becoming servants of all (see Mark 8:34–38; 9:32–37, 43–48; 10:35–45).



1. Jesus fed the four thousand in the Gentile territory south-east of the Sea of Galilee.
2. Jesus healed a blind man at Bethsaida in two phases.
3. Jesus healed a child whose father pleaded, “Help thou mine unbelief.”
4. Near Jericho Jesus gave sight to a blind man named Bartimaeus.

Commentary for Mark 8–10

Mark 8:1–9. The Feeding of the Four Thousand Prefigured the Gospel Going to the Gentiles (see also Matthew 15:29–38)

According to Mark 7:31, the feeding of the four thousand occurred in the largely Gentile Decapolis region, which was on the southeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. There had been people in this area who believed in Jesus Christ from at least the time of the healing of the man out of whom the Savior cast a legion of devils (see Mark 5:19–20; Matthew 4:25), and the number of believers had grown to a “very great” multitude (Mark 8:1).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that the feeding of the four thousand among the Gentiles foreshadowed the blessings of the gospel going forth to all nations of the world: “This miraculous feeding of the four thousand is not a mere duplication or repetition of the feeding of the five thousand which took place a short time before near Bethsaida. Then our Lord was mingling with his own kindred of Israel; now he is teaching other hosts

who in substantial part, being inhabitants of Decapolis, are presumed to be Gentile. Then he was laying the foundation for his incomparable sermon on the Bread of Life; now he is prefiguring the future presentation of the living bread to the Gentile nations. And significantly, this mixed multitude from the east of the Jordan were more receptive, and took a more sane and sound view of the matchless miracle of feeding thousands by use of the creative powers resident in him, than did the members of the chosen seed” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 1:375).

Mark 8:4–6. “He Took the Seven Loaves, and Gave Thanks”

The disciples had witnessed the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, yet a short time later, faced with a smaller multitude, they asked the Savior, “From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?” (Mark 8:4). Why would they ask such a question after what they had earlier witnessed? One consideration is that even though the disciples had witnessed the earlier miracle, they were still somewhat

weak in their faith. The Savior reproved them on this occasion for their lack of perception and hardness of heart (see Mark 8:17–21).

The disciples also may not have known whether the Savior would perform such a miracle for Gentiles, and, as **Elder James E. Talmage** (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles proposed, they may have “deemed it beyond their duty or privilege to suggest a repetition of the miracle” (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 358).

President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) taught that the feeding of the four thousand illustrates how expressing gratitude to God invites the power of God:

“[The Savior] took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.”

“Notice that the Savior gave thanks for what they had—and a miracle followed: ‘And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full’ [see Matthew 15:32–38; italics added; see also Mark 8:1–8]. . . .

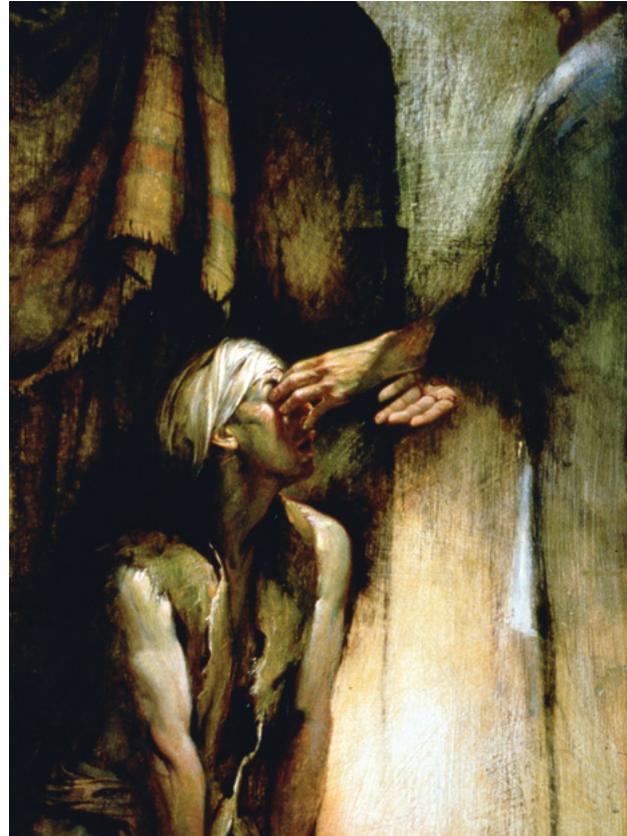
“Regardless of our circumstances, each of us has much for which to be grateful if we will but pause and contemplate our blessings. . . . To live with gratitude ever in our hearts is to touch heaven” (“The Divine Gift of Gratitude,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 88, 90).

Mark 8–10. Commentary Found Elsewhere in This Manual

Many of the teachings and events in the Savior’s ministry that are found in Mark 8–10 are also found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The following chart identifies where you can find student manual commentary for these teachings and events:

Location of Topic in Mark	Commentary in This Manual
Mark 8:10–12. Pharisees seek a sign.	Matthew 16:1–4
Mark 8:14–21. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.	Matthew 16:6–12
Mark 8:27–30. “Thou art the Christ.”	Matthew 16:13–19
Mark 8:31. “Son of man.”	Matthew 8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 11:19; 12:8, 32, 40
Mark 9:1–13. Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John.	Matthew 17:1–13 and Matthew 17:2 and Matthew 17:3 and Matthew 17:3–5 and Matthew 17:3–9 (Peter, James, and John Were Given Priesthood Keys) and Matthew 17:3–9 (What Took Place on the Mount of Transfiguration)
Mark 10:13–16. Suffer the little children.	Matthew 19:13–15
Mark 10:2–12. Teachings about marriage and divorce.	Matthew 19:1–12 and Matthew 19:9
Mark 10:17–31. The rich young man.	Matthew 19:16–22

Mark 8:22–25. The Gradual Healing of a Blind Man



He Anointed the Eyes of the Blind Man, by Walter Rane

Elder Bruce R. McConkie pointed out truths we can learn from this miracle:

“This miracle is unique; it is the only recorded instance in which Jesus healed a person by stages. It may be that our Lord followed this course to strengthen the weak but growing faith of the blind man. It would appear

that the successive instances of physical contact with Jesus had the effect of adding hope, assurance, and faith to the sightless one. Jesus personally (1) led the blind man by the hand out of the town, (2) applied his own saliva to the eyes of the sightless one, (3) performed the ordinance of laying on of hands, and (4) put his hands a second time upon the man's eyes.

“Certainly the manner in which this healing took place teaches that men should seek the Lord's healing grace with all their strength and faith, though such is sufficient for a partial cure only.” Following the receipt of this partial cure, “they may then gain the added assurance and faith to be made whole and well every whit. Men also are often healed of their spiritual maladies by degrees, step by step as they get their lives in harmony with the plans and purposes of Deity” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:379–80).

Mark 8:27–32. “Peter Took Him, and Began to Rebuke Him”

It may seem surprising that Peter, the senior Apostle, would ever rebuke the Savior, especially so soon after testifying, “Thou art the Christ” (Mark 8:29). A key to understanding this event is to notice what happened between Peter's testimony recorded in Mark 8:29 and his rebuke of the Savior recorded in Mark 8:32. As recorded in Mark 8:31, Jesus prophesied that the Son of Man would suffer and be killed. Because of the popular Jewish expectations of a conquering Messiah, it was difficult for Peter, as well as for many Jews of that time, to understand and accept the idea of a Messiah who would suffer and die.

Paul wrote that the preaching of “Christ crucified”—that is, a Messiah who suffered and died—was “unto the Jews a stumblingblock” (1 Corinthians 1:23). Many Old Testament passages that we now clearly recognize as prophecies about the Savior's Atonement were not as clearly understood prior to the Resurrection. For example, the prophecies in Isaiah 53 do not mention “the Messiah” and do not specify who is described in the prophecies. These and other prophecies about the Atonement of Christ became clear to Peter and the other disciples only after the Resurrection (see Luke 24:13–27, 36–47; 1 Peter 2:21–25).

Mark 8:30. Why Did Jesus Instruct His Apostles Not to Tell People He Was the Messiah?

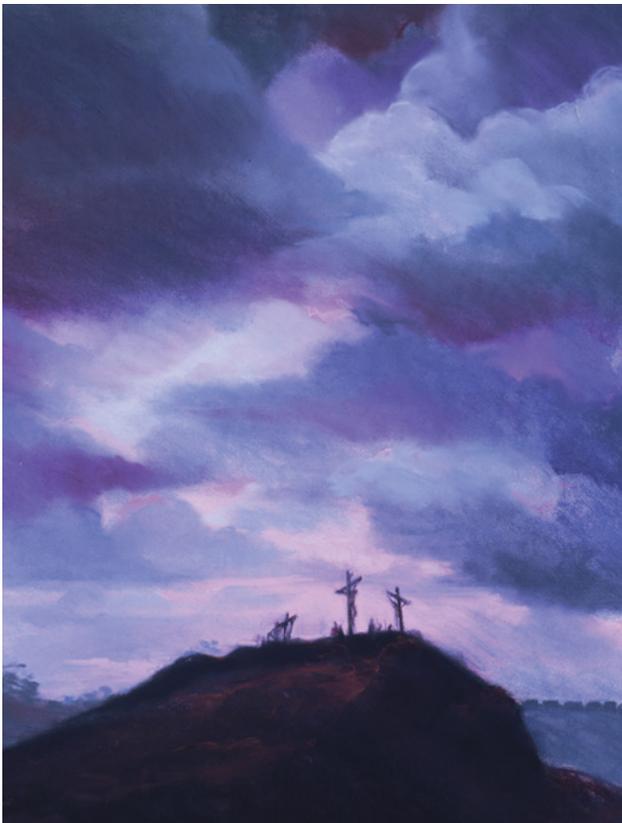
In the synoptic Gospels, and particularly in Mark, we read of instances when Jesus Christ instructed His disciples and others not to speak about miracles He had done or about who He was (see Mark 1:34, 44; 5:43;

7:36; 8:26, 30). The scriptures suggest several possible reasons why the Savior might have asked for secrecy or silence on certain occasions:

1. Mark relates that Jesus's fame grew so great that it created difficulties. At times Jesus could not enter certain villages, people who wanted to see Him could not get through the crowds, and He and His disciples were so beset by throngs of people that they could not even find time or space to eat (see Mark 1:45; 2:2; 3:20). Instructing people not to tell others about His miracles may have been one way the Savior carefully managed such difficulties so as not to hinder His overall mission.
2. The Savior may also have asked for silence in order to forestall the opposition that would lead to His Crucifixion—until the time was right (see Mark 9:30–31; compare John 7:1–10 with Matthew 26:18). The more people learned about Jesus, the more the chief priests increased their opposition to Him, for they did not want Him to undermine their place in society. After Jesus entered Jerusalem in a way that clearly and publicly proclaimed Him as the Messiah, less than a week passed before He was arrested and put to death (see Mark 11:8–11; 14:1–2; 15:22–25; 2 Nephi 10:5).
3. Some of the Savior's commandments for silence were directed at devils, who vocally acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God (see Mark 1:24, 34; 3:11–12; compare Acts 16:16–18). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** taught that Jesus “consistently refused to permit [devils] to bear record of his divinity. Converting testimony comes from God, not from Lucifer. Had Jesus let unclean spirits go unrebuked, or had he acquiesced in their testimony of him (though in fact it was true), the Jews would have claimed greater justification for their false charge against him, ‘He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?’ (John 10:20.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:168).
4. The Savior knew that most Jews of His day were expecting the Messiah to put an end to Israel's political enemies and reign as a Jewish king. It is clear that Jesus wanted to avoid presenting Himself as the Messiah of popular expectation. Therefore, one likely reason the Savior instructed His disciples not to tell people He was the Christ (see Matthew 16:20; Mark 8:29–30) was that He wanted to teach people a new understanding of what kind of salvation He had come to bring. He had come not to overthrow Rome but to conquer the eternal enemies of mankind—death, sin, and suffering.

Mark 8:31–33; 9:30–32; 10:32–34. Three Foretellings of the Savior’s Suffering, Death, and Resurrection

Mark 8–10 records three foretellings of the Savior’s suffering, death, and Resurrection (see also Matthew 16:21–23; 17:22–23; 20:17–19; Luke 9:22, 44–45; 18:31–34). **Elder Robert D. Hales** (1932–2017) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated: “Jesus knew who He was—the Son of God. He knew His purpose—to carry out the will of the Father through the Atonement. His vision was eternal—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man’ (Moses 1:39)” (“Behold, We Count Them Happy Which Endure,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 75).



Golgotha, by Scott M. Snow. “He began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, . . . and be killed, and after three days rise again” (Mark 8:31).

Mark 8:33. Why Did the Savior Rebuke Peter by Saying, “Get Thee Behind Me, Satan”? (see also Matthew 16:23)

By focusing only on the Savior’s coming death, Peter failed to understand Jesus Christ’s true mission—the redemption of all mankind. When the Savior rebuked Peter and referred to him as “Satan” (Mark 8:33), He

was not implying that Peter was Lucifer. The Hebrew word *satan* means “adversary or tempter.” Thus, Christ recognized that at that moment Peter had put himself in an adversarial role, in opposition to the Savior’s ultimate saving mission.

Peter probably meant well when he objected to the teaching that Jesus Christ would have to suffer and be killed (see Matthew 16:22; Mark 8:32). However, if Jesus had accommodated Peter’s wishes by avoiding the suffering of the Atonement, there would have been no redemption from sins and no Resurrection conquering death. All mankind would unavoidably have perished (see Alma 34:9), and God’s work of bringing to pass “the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39) would not have been fulfilled. All this would have served the destructive aims of Satan. In the moment of his impulsive protest, Peter was unwittingly siding with the adversary.

Satan’s rebellion in the premortal world was essentially an attempt to alter Heavenly Father’s plan to accommodate his own wishes (see D&C 29:36–39; Moses 4:1–4; Abraham 3:27–28). Seen in this light, the Savior’s rebuke can serve as a reminder to us that we cannot alter God’s plan to fit our own wishes; we must “reconcile [ourselves] to the will of God, and not to the will of the devil” (2 Nephi 10:24).

Mark 8:34–38. Taking Up Your Cross and Losing Your Life to Follow the Savior

Even before the Savior’s Crucifixion, the image of “taking up one’s cross” (see Mark 8:34) would have been a familiar and perhaps troubling one for the disciples. Crucifixion was a common means of execution in the Roman Empire, and its victims were made to carry their own crossbeams to the place of execution (see John 19:16–17). By using this imagery, the Savior vividly taught His disciples what they must be ready for and called upon them to follow His example by submitting to the will of the Father in their lives. Luke 9:23 adds that we should be willing to take up our cross *daily* and follow Jesus. The Joseph Smith Translation explains: “*And now for a man to take up his cross, is to deny himself all ungodliness, and every worldly lust, and keep my commandments*” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 16:26 [in Matthew 16:24, footnote e]).

Following Jesus Christ may not require us to literally lose our lives as martyrs like Peter, Paul, or the Prophet Joseph Smith, but we can demonstrate that willingness by giving our lives in service to the Lord (see Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 8:37–38 [in the Bible appendix]).

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) listed some ways modern-day followers of Jesus Christ can “lose their lives” as the Savior taught: “Opportunities to lose oneself for the good of others present themselves daily: the mother who serves her children’s needs; the father who gives his time for their instruction; parents who give up worldly pleasure for quality home life; children who care for their aged parents; home teaching service; visiting teaching; time for compassionate service; giving comfort to those who need strength; serving with diligence in Church callings; community and public service in the interest of preserving our freedoms; financial donations for tithes, fast offerings, support of missionaries, welfare, building and temple projects. Truly, the day of sacrifice is not past” (“This Is a Day of Sacrifice,” *Ensign*, May 1979, 34).

The Joseph Smith Translation provides additional insights into the Savior’s teaching about losing our lives for His sake: “For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; or whosoever will save his life, shall be willing to lay it down for my sake; and if he is not willing to lay it down for my sake, he shall lose it” (Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 8:37 [in the Bible appendix; compare Mark 8:35]).

President Ezra Taft Benson described what happens in the lives of those who “lose their lives” for the Savior: “Men and women who turn their lives over to God will find out that he can make a lot more out of their lives than they can. He will deepen their joys, expand their vision, quicken their minds, strengthen their muscles, lift their spirits, multiply their blessings, increase their opportunities, comfort their souls, raise up friends, and pour out peace. Whoever will lose his life to God will find he has eternal life” (“Jesus Christ—Gifts and Expectations,” *New Era*, May 1975, 20).

Mark 8:38. Consequences of the Choice to Follow the Savior

The Joseph Smith Translation provides additional information about the Savior’s teaching concerning the consequences of our choices to “be ashamed of” Him or to lay down our lives for Him:

“And they [who have been ashamed of the Savior] shall not have part in that resurrection when he cometh.

“For verily I say unto you, That he shall come; and he that layeth down his life for my sake and the gospel’s, shall come with him, and shall be clothed with his glory in the

cloud, on the right hand of the Son of man” (Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 8:42–43 [in the Bible appendix; compare Mark 8:38]).

Mark 9:4. Elias

The Joseph Smith Translation indicates that John the Baptist also appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration (see Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 9:3 [in Mark 9:4, footnote a]). John’s appearance to Jesus, Peter, James, and John foreshadowed his role in the latter days when he would come to restore the Aaronic Priesthood. Many things happened on the Mount of Transfiguration that are not recorded in our scriptures (see 2 Peter 1:16–19; D&C 63:21). For insights into the term “Elias,” see the commentary for Matthew 17:3.

Mark 9:17–24

What details in these verses indicate how desperately the father of the afflicted young man wanted the Savior’s help? What do you think the father meant by what he told Jesus in verse 24? How has the Lord helped you when you might have had a difficult time believing?

Mark 9:17–29. “Lord, I Believe; Help Thou Mine Unbelief”

All things are possible for those who believe—no matter how small that belief may be. **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles drew upon the New Testament account of the father who cried to the Savior, “Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief” (Mark 9:24). From this account Elder Holland stressed three lessons to be learned:

“Observation number one . . . is that when facing the challenge of faith, the father asserts his strength first and only then acknowledges his limitation. His initial declaration is affirmative and without hesitation: ‘Lord, I believe.’ I would say to all who wish for more faith, remember this man! In moments of fear or doubt or troubling times, hold the ground you have already won, even if that ground is limited. In the growth we all have to experience in mortality, the spiritual equivalent of this boy’s affliction or this parent’s desperation is going to come to all of us. When those moments come and issues surface, the resolution of which is not immediately forthcoming, *hold fast to what you already know and stand strong until additional knowledge comes.* . . .



"Master, I Have Brought unto Thee My Son," by Walter Rane (Mark 9:17)

"The second observation is a variation of the first. When problems come and questions arise, do not start your quest for faith by saying how much you do *not* have, leading as it were with your 'unbelief.' . . . I am not asking you to pretend to faith you do not have. I *am* asking you to be true to the faith you *do* have. Sometimes we act as if an honest declaration of doubt is a higher manifestation of moral courage than is an honest declaration of faith. It is not! So let us all remember the clear message of this scriptural account: Be as candid about your questions as you need to be; life is full of them on one subject or another. But if you and your family want to be healed, don't let those questions stand in the way of faith working its miracle. . . .

"Last observation: when doubt or difficulty come, do not be afraid to ask for help. If we want it as humbly and honestly as this father did, we can get it. The scriptures phrase such earnest desire as being of 'real intent,' pursued 'with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God' [2 Nephi 31:13]. I testify that in response to *that* kind of importuning, God will send help from both sides of the veil to strengthen our belief" ("Lord, I Believe," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 93–94).

Mark 9:18, 28–29. Prayer and Fasting Increase Our Spiritual Power (see also Matthew 17:19–21)

When the Savior cast a devil out of a deaf and dumb child, he used the occasion to teach His disciples about the power of fasting and prayer, as recorded in Mark 9:28–29 (see also Matthew 17:19–21). The booklet *True to the Faith* explains how this experience can apply to each of us: "This account teaches that prayer and fasting can give added strength to those giving and receiving priesthood blessings. The account can also be applied to your personal efforts to live the gospel. If you have a weakness or sin that you have struggled to overcome, you may need to fast and pray in order to receive the help or forgiveness you desire. Like the demon that Christ cast out, your difficulty may be the kind that will go out only through prayer and fasting" (*True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* [2004], 66–67). For additional information on the role that fasting and prayer can play in overcoming our weaknesses and lack of faith, see the commentary for Matthew 4:2.

Mark 9:33–37; 10:35–45. The Savior's Teachings about Service and Leadership (see also Matthew 18:1–5; 20:20–28; Luke 22:24–26)

On the occasions described in Mark 9:33–37 and Mark 10:35–45, the Apostles revealed a lack of understanding about leadership in the kingdom of God. In each instance, the Savior patiently taught them that their callings were not about receiving glory and honor, but about humbly serving others.

As recorded in Mark 10:35–45, Zebedee's sons James and John approached Jesus with a question. They wanted to know if they could sit in the honored positions at Jesus's right hand and left hand in the eternal kingdom. The Savior rebuked them by asking them if they could endure all that He would have to endure and then declaring that the Father would decide such things. Jesus then gathered the Twelve Apostles around Him to help them understand that they must not be like Gentile leaders, who exercised authority over others. Those who are greatest in the kingdom of God are the servants of all.

While serving as a member of the Seventy, **Elder Spencer J. Condie** taught that in the kingdom of God, leadership is service: "After Solomon's forty-year reign, his son Rehoboam went to Shechem to be made the king. He sought the counsel of the elders regarding how he should rule. 'And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve *them*, and answer *them*, and speak good

words to *them*, then *they* will be *thy* servants for ever.’ (1 Kgs. 12:7; italics added.) The Savior gave his disciples similar counsel when he taught them, ‘If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.’ (Mark 9:35.) Within the kingdom of God, *to lead is to serve*” (“Some Scriptural Lessons on Leadership,” *Ensign*, May 1990, 27).



President Russell M. Nelson explained that leaders in the Lord’s Church should remember that “it does not matter *where* they serve, but *how*”:

“Position in the Church does not exalt anyone, but faithfulness does. On the other hand, aspiring to a visible position—striving to become a master rather than a servant—can destroy the spirit of the worker and the work.

“Occasionally confusion exists regarding servants and masters. The Bible reports that a group of men ‘had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest’ among them. Jesus said, ‘If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and *servant of all*’ [Mark 9:34–35; italics added]” (“Thou Shalt Have No Other Gods,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 15–16).

Mark 9:36–37. The Savior’s Promise to Those Who Receive Him

The Joseph Smith Translation expands upon the promise that the Savior gave to those who receive Him. This additional information clarifies that those who receive the Savior also receive the Father: “Whosoever shall *humble himself like one of these children, and receiveth me, ye shall receive in my name.* And whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me *only*, but him that sent me, *even the Father*” (Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 9:34–35 [in Mark 9:37, footnote a]).

Mark 9:38–40. “He That Is Not against Us Is on Our Part” (see also Luke 9:49–50)

Some people have wondered how to reconcile the Savior’s statement, “He that is not against us is on our part” (Mark 9:40), with His statement, “He that is not with me is against me” (Matthew 12:30). These sayings can be understood by examining the context in which each was made. In the situation recorded in Matthew 12, the Pharisees said that the Savior cast out devils by the power of the devil. The Savior declared that He cast out devils by the power of God and that the Pharisees could not take a neutral position concerning Him: “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad” (Matthew 12:30; see the commentary for Matthew 12:30).

The situation recorded in Mark 9:38–40 was different. Instead of Pharisees expressing their lack of belief in Jesus’s power, a man who clearly believed in Jesus was casting out devils. However, the Apostle John expressed concern about the man: “Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us” (Mark 9:38).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie suggested reasons for John’s concern by explaining that the man “was not one of the inner circle of disciples who traveled, ate, slept, and communed continually with the Master. Luke has it: ‘He followeth not *with us*’ [Luke 9:49; italics added]; that is, he is not one of our traveling companions. But from our Lord’s reply it is evident that he was a member of the kingdom, a legal administrator who was acting in the authority of the priesthood and the power of faith. Either he was unknown to John who therefore erroneously supposed him to be without authority or else John falsely supposed that the power to cast out devils was limited to the Twelve and did not extend to all faithful priesthood holders. It is quite possible that the one casting out devils was a seventy [see Luke 10:1, 17]” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:417).

The Savior’s answer to John, recorded in Mark 9:40, reassured John and the Twelve that the man was a disciple with authority, though not an Apostle.

Mark 9:42–48. “If Thy Hand Offend Thee, Cut It Off”

In Mark 9:42–48, “offend” comes from the Greek word *skandalizō*, meaning “to put a stumbling block or impediment in the way; to cause to sin.” By teaching that if our hand, foot, or brother offends us, we should cut it off, the Savior was teaching that we must eliminate from our lives any association or influence, no

matter how dear, that would keep us from entering the kingdom of God. **Elder Walter F. González** of the Presidency of the Seventy quoted from the Joseph Smith Translation of these verses as he taught what it means to “cut off” unworthy influences in our lives:

“[The Savior] said, *Therefore, if thy hand offend thee, cut it off; or if thy brother offend thee and confess not and forsake not, he shall be cut off*” (Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 9:40 [in the Bible appendix]; italics added).

“Fortunately, the Savior Himself taught the meaning of cutting off our hand. It’s not about self-mutilation but rather about removing from our lives today those influences that keep us from preparing for tomorrow’s [times of adversity]. If I have friends who are bad influences for me, the advice is clear: *‘It is better for thee to enter into life without thy brother, than for thee and thy brother to be cast into hell’* (Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 9:41 [in the Bible appendix]; italics added). The Lord applied this same principle when warning Nephi to depart from his brethren who became a dangerous influence (see 2 Nephi 5:5).

“It follows that such cutting off refers not only to friends but to every bad influence, such as inappropriate television shows, Internet sites, movies, literature, games, or music. Engraving in our souls this principle will help us to resist the temptation to yield to any bad influence” (“Today Is the Time,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 54–55). Additional insight on this teaching is found in the commentary for Matthew 5:29–30.

Mark 9:49. “Every One Shall Be Salted with Fire”

As recorded in Mark 9:43–48, the Savior emphasized that followers of Jesus Christ must be willing to sacrifice unworthy aspects of their lives (represented by their hands, feet, or eyes) in order to enter the kingdom. As recorded in Mark 9:49, the Savior then spoke of the entire person as a sacrifice to God (compare Romans 12:1). Sacrifices in ancient Israel were made with salt and with fire. Salt was an important symbol of the covenant between the Lord and Israel (see Leviticus 2:13), and fire was often a symbol of spiritual preservation, purification, trials, and complete dedication to God.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained that Mark 9:49 teaches that “every member of the Church shall be tested and tried in all things, to see whether he will abide in the covenant ‘even unto death’ (D. & C. 98:14)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:421).



Jesus Goes Up to Jerusalem, by James Tissot. “They were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed” (Mark 10:32).

Mark 10:36, 51

What question is found in both of these verses? What differences do you see between the two accounts found in Mark 10:35–45 and Mark 10:45–52? What do you learn from the Savior’s response to each? How does this help you know what to ask for in prayer?

Mark 10:38–39. “Can Ye Drink of the Cup That I Drink Of?”

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained that the phrase “drink of the cup” was “a metaphorical expression meaning, ‘To do the things which my lot in life requires of me.’” He explained that the phrase “be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with” means “to follow my course, suffer persecution, be rejected of men, and finally be slain for the truth’s sake” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:566). By asking the questions, “Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” (Mark 10:38), the Savior refocused the attention of James and John on carrying out the Father’s will, rather than on receiving glory and honor.

Mark 10:45. “To Give His Life a Ransom for Many”

The scripture “the Son of man came . . . to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45) is one of the clearest statements in the Gospels about the meaning and purpose of Jesus Christ’s suffering, death, and Resurrection—they were the price He paid to redeem all mankind. “Ransom” is translated from the Greek word *lutron*, meaning a sum paid to secure another person’s



release from bondage or captivity. In Old Testament times, when someone was in bondage, the price of his release was expected to be paid by his kinsmen (see Leviticus 25:48–49). As the Firstborn of our Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ paid the ransom required to free all mankind from the bondage of sin. According to 1 Peter 1:18–19, the ransom was paid not “with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ.”

The phrase “for many” in Mark 10:45 comes from the Greek phrase *anti pollōn* and means “in the place of many.” The many who would be redeemed are in contrast to the One who would pay for their redemption. This is also taught in Isaiah 53: “The Lord hath laid on him [Jesus Christ] the iniquity of us *all*. . . . By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify *many*; for he shall bear their iniquities” (Isaiah 53:6, 11; italics added).

Mark 10:46–52. The Healing of Bartimaeus

The faith and persistence of the blind man named Bartimaeus can be seen in how he cried out to Jesus Christ for mercy—he continued to cry out even after many people ordered him to be quiet (see Mark 10:47–48). **President Spencer W. Kimball** (1895–1985) noted that Bartimaeus “received his sight after his persistent, faithful efforts to reach the Lord” (“President Kimball Speaks Out on Administration to the Sick,” *New Era*, Oct. 1981, 47).

Points to Ponder

- As recorded in Mark 8–10, the Savior’s disciples gradually came to see His mission more clearly. In what ways has your understanding of the Savior’s mission grown with time?
- The Savior commanded His disciples to take up their crosses and follow Him (see Mark 8:34). What “cross” do you need to take up to follow Jesus Christ more fully? How could the Savior’s example in Mark 8:31–38 guide you if a friend were to suggest that you did not need to keep some minor commandment, follow a Church standard, or overcome a certain temptation? What can you do to help others around you carry the burden of their “crosses”?
- Are there any unrighteous influences in your life that you need to “cut off” (see Mark 9:43–48) in order to be prepared to enter into the kingdom of God?

Suggested Assignments

- How does a person lose himself or herself for the sake of Jesus Christ? (see Mark 8:35). Make a list of things you have had to “lose” in order to follow Jesus Christ; then make a list of things you have gained and will yet receive in the future as you continue to follow Him faithfully. Write a few sentences about what Mark 8:35 means to you.
- After studying Mark 9:17–29 and the commentary for Mark 9:17–29, make a plan to pray and fast to increase your faith and spiritual strength in a specific area of your life. After your fast, share with someone whom you trust what praying and fasting did for you (or write your thoughts in your journal).

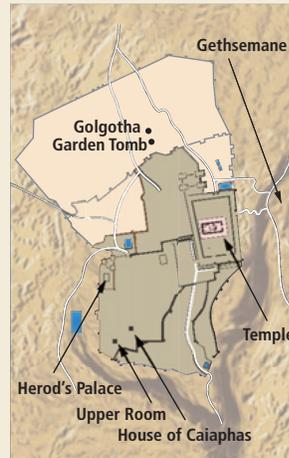
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Mark 11–16

Introduction and Timeline for Mark 11–16

In Mark 11–16 we read about the events of the last week of the Savior’s mortal ministry. Though these chapters cover the span of only a few days, they constitute over a third of Mark’s Gospel, signaling the importance of the events they relate. These chapters record the fulfillment of prophecies Jesus Christ made, recorded in Mark 8–10, concerning His suffering, death, and Resurrection. Mark 14–15 contains Mark’s account of the events of the Atonement—from the Savior’s suffering in Gethsemane through His death on the cross and His burial. This account would have been incomplete, however, without Mark’s concluding testimony, recorded in Mark 16, that Jesus had risen from the dead. The Resurrection completed the Savior’s Atonement. It is the climactic event that truly makes Mark’s work a “Gospel”—a proclamation of “good news.” With this conclusion, the Gospel of Mark testifies that Jesus truly was the Son of God and that He fulfilled His mission to pay the price of our redemption (see Mark 10:45).

This chapter on Mark focuses on details of the Savior’s last week that are distinctive to Mark’s Gospel. For further information on these important events, see the commentaries for Matthew 21–28, for Luke 19–24, and for John 12–21.



Jerusalem at the Time of Jesus Christ (Traditional Locations)

1. Jesus Christ entered Jerusalem, commencing the last week of His mortal ministry.
2. A woman anointed Jesus in recognition of His impending death.
3. The Savior suffered in Gethsemane.
4. Jesus was betrayed, arrested, tried, crucified, and buried.
5. Jesus Christ rose from the dead, appeared to His disciples, and ascended to heaven.

Commentary for Mark 11–16

Mark 11:1–11. The Savior’s Triumphal Entry

The Savior’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem publicly declared that He was the Messiah. This event had ties to Old Testament traditions (see 1 Kings 1:38–40; 2 Kings 9:1–13) and fulfilled Old Testament prophecies (see Psalm 118:25–26; Zechariah 9:9–10). To read more about the triumphal entry, see the commentary for Matthew 21:1–11.

Mark 12:28–34. The Two Great Commandments

Mark 12:28–34 records the answer Jesus gave to a scribe who asked Him which is the first or greatest commandment. In His response, the Savior quoted two Old Testament passages. He first cited Deuteronomy 6:4–5. The opening phrase from a prayer called the “Shema,” which is recited twice each day by observant Jews, begins with words from verse 4—“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord”—affirming that God is the only One worthy of worship and devotion (see Deuteronomy 6:5, 14; 7:9; 10:17). The Savior then cited Leviticus 19:18—“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”—making

clear that this is the second great commandment. To read more about the two greatest commandments, see the commentary for Matthew 22:35–40.

Mark 12:41–44. The Poor Widow’s Mites (see also Luke 21:1–4)

The “mites” the widow donated to the temple treasury were small Jewish coins called *lepta* (Greek for *small*). They weighed about 1/2 gram (less than 1/50 of an ounce) and were worth less than a “farthing” or *quadran*, which was the Roman coin of lowest value at the time (see Mark 12:42).



Both sides of a bronze *lepton* that was minted during the century before the Savior’s ministry

The fact that the widow gave “all that she had” exemplified her sincere devotion to God, in contrast to the pretense of the scribes (see Mark 12:38–40). **Elder James E. Talmage** (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained why the Lord commended the widow even though her offering was a relatively small donation: “The rich gave much yet kept back more; the widow’s gift was her all. It was not the smallness of her offering that made it especially acceptable, but the spirit of sacrifice and devout intent with which she gave” (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 561–62). Elder Talmage also stated: “Whether it be the gift of a man or a nation, the best, if offered willingly and with pure intent, is always excellent in the sight of God, however poor by other comparison that best may be” (*The House of the Lord*, rev. ed. [1968], 3).

Mark 14:1–2, 10–11. Conspiracies against Jesus Christ

From the beginning of the Savior’s ministry, politicians in positions of power felt that their power was being threatened by Him, and they tried to have Him destroyed (see Mark 3:6). Herod ordered the slaughter of infants in Bethlehem to try to destroy Christ (see Matthew 2:16). When Jesus cleansed the temple in Jerusalem, the chief priests plotted to put him to death (see Mark 11:18). These secret combinations even involved the high priest’s office (see Matthew 26:3–4). When the Savior openly entered Jerusalem, He quickly became the object of conspiracies to destroy Him, including the agreement Judas Iscariot made with the chief priests to betray the Savior into the hands of those who wanted to destroy Him (see Mark 14:1–2, 10–11).

Mark 14:3–9. A Woman Anointed Jesus for His Burial (see also Matthew 26:6–13; John 12:1–8)

In John’s record of the event recorded in Mark 14:3–9, John identified the woman who anointed Jesus as Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus (see John 12:1–3). The “alabaster box” was a jar containing “ointment of spikenard,” an aromatic ointment used as perfume and to anoint the dead (Mark 14:3). By anointing Jesus while He was still alive, the woman acknowledged His impending death and burial. “She is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying,” the Savior said (Mark 14:8). The ointment was very expensive, worth more than 300 *denarii* (see Mark 14:5), or about a year’s wages for a common laborer.

Elder James E. Talmage stated: “To anoint the head of a guest with ordinary oil was to do him honor; to anoint his feet also was to show unusual and signal regard; but the anointing of head and feet with spikenard, and in such abundance, was an act of reverential homage rarely rendered even to kings. Mary’s act was an expression of adoration; it was the fragrant outwelling of a heart overflowing with worship and affection” (*Jesus the Christ*, 512).

The Savior stated that the woman’s actions would be “spoken of for a memorial of her” throughout the world (Mark 14:9). What was it about this incident that made it worthy of such lasting remembrance? In addition to her overflowing gratitude, the woman of Bethany stands out as the first disciple in the Gospel of Mark to understand and openly accept the Savior’s teaching that He must suffer and die. Elder Talmage suggested that Mary “may have gathered from the remarks of Christ to the apostles that the sacrifice of His life was impending,” noting that the accounts in both Mark and John are “suggestive of definite and solemn purpose on Mary’s part” (*Jesus the Christ*, 513). For additional information on the account of Mary anointing the Lord, see the commentary for John 12:1–8.

Mark 14:15. “A Large Upper Room”

Mark noted that the Last Supper was held in “a large upper room” in Jerusalem (Mark 14:15). In cities of ancient Israel, upper rooms of houses were the choicest rooms because they were above the crowds of the city streets and provided privacy—an appropriate setting for the sacred events of the Last Supper.



From the Rooftop of the Last Supper, by Al Rounds. This painting portrays the temple of Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives in the background as they might have appeared from the rooftop of the traditional site of the Last Supper.

Mark 14:17–25. The Last Supper

To read about the Last Supper and the symbolism associated with the emblems of the sacrament, see the commentaries for Matthew 26:17–30 and for Matthew 26:26–28.

Mark 14:27–31

What events did the Savior foretell in these verses? What predictions did Peter and the other disciples make?

Mark 14:32–36. The Savior’s Suffering in Gethsemane (see also Matthew 26:36–39; Luke 22:39–44)

Mark’s language bears witness of the reality and severity of the Savior’s suffering (see Mark 14:23–36). The Greek word translated “sore amazed” in the text can refer to a range of emotions, including amazement, awe, astonishment following great shock, and overwhelming distress. The Greek verb translated “very heavy” can mean depressed, dejected, and full of anguish or sorrow. Together, these words depict a deep and extreme agony. The Savior said that His soul was “exceedingly sorrowful unto death” (Mark 14:34)—that is, His anguish was so intense that He felt He was at the point of death.

Elder James E. Talmage stated: “Christ’s agony in the garden is unfathomable by the finite mind, both as to intensity and cause. The thought that He suffered through fear of death is untenable. Death to Him was preliminary to resurrection and triumphal return to the Father. . . . He struggled and groaned under a burden such as no other being who has lived on earth might even conceive as possible. It was not physical pain, nor mental anguish alone, that caused Him to suffer such torture as to produce an extrusion of blood from every pore; but a spiritual agony of soul such as only God was capable of experiencing” (*Jesus the Christ*, 613).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles quoted from these verses of Mark as he spoke of the suffering of the Atonement:

“In Gethsemane, the suffering Jesus began to be ‘sore amazed’ (Mark 14:33), or, in the Greek, ‘awestruck’ and ‘astonished.’

“Imagine, Jehovah, the Creator of this and other worlds, ‘astonished’! Jesus knew cognitively what He must do, but not experientially. He had never personally known the exquisite and exacting process of an atonement before. Thus, when the agony came in its fulness, it was

so much, much worse than even He with his unique intellect had ever imagined! . . .

“The cumulative weight of all mortal sins—past, present, and future—pressed upon that perfect, sinless, and sensitive Soul! All our infirmities and sicknesses were somehow, too, a part of the awful arithmetic of the Atonement. (See Alma 7:11–12; Isa. 53:3–5; Matt. 8:17.) The anguished Jesus not only pled with the Father that the hour and cup might pass from Him, but with this relevant citation. ‘And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me.’ (Mark 14:35–36.) . . .

“In this extremity, did He, perchance, hope for a rescuing ram in the thicket? I do not know. His suffering—as it were, *enormity* multiplied by *infinity*—evoked His later soul-cry on the cross, and it was a cry of forsakenness. (See Matt. 27:46.)

“Even so, Jesus maintained this sublime submissiveness, as He had in Gethsemane: ‘Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.’ (Matt. 26:39.)” (“Willing to Submit,” *Ensign*, May 1985, 72–73).



Gethsemane, by Liz Lemon Swindle. Jesus “began to be sore amazed” and “exceedingly sorrowful unto death” (Mark 14:33–34).

Note: The Joseph Smith Translation for Mark 14:36–38 indicates that the terms “sore amazed” and “very heavy” can also describe the Savior’s disciples in Gethsemane.

Mark 14:36. “Abba, Father”

Mark is the only Gospel writer who recorded that Jesus Christ addressed His Father in prayer using the Aramaic term *Abba*, meaning “Father” or “my Father.” There is no scriptural record of anyone before Jesus

Christ addressing God in this manner. Typical Old Testament ways of addressing God in prayer included “O Lord God,” “O Lord God of hosts,” “O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel,” and “O God of our salvation.” In later years, some people developed a tendency to address God with a litany of titles that paid homage to His sovereignty, glory, graciousness, and other divine attributes. The Savior’s use of “Abba, Father” was a striking contrast to this practice. It was both simple and profound; it indicated a close, personal relationship with a personal Being. The Savior taught His followers to address God in prayer as their Father: “Our Father which art in heaven” (Matthew 6:9).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke of the significance of the Savior’s plea to His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane: “In that most burdensome moment of all human history, with blood appearing at every pore and an anguished cry upon His lips, Christ sought Him whom He had always sought—His Father . . . [Mark 14:36]. This is such a personal moment it almost seems a sacrilege to cite it. A Son in unrelieved pain, a Father His only true source of strength, both of them staying the course, making it through the night—together” (“The Hands of the Fathers,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 16). On another occasion Elder Holland commented further:

“Mark says [Jesus] fell and cried, ‘Abba, Father.’ This is not abstract theology now. This is a Son pleading with His Father, ‘All things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me’ (Mark 14:36).

“Who could resist that from any child, especially the perfect Child? ‘You can do anything. I know You can do anything. Please take this cup from me.’

“That whole prayer, Mark noted, was asking that if it were possible, this hour would be stricken from the plan. The Lord said, in effect, ‘If there is another path, I would rather walk it. If there is any other way—any other way—I will gladly embrace it.’ . . . But in the end, the cup did not pass.

“In the end, He yielded His will to the will of His Father and said, ‘Not my will, but thine, be done’ (Luke 22:42)” (“Teaching, Preaching, Healing,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2003, 41).

Mark 14:36. “This Cup”

The Savior sometimes spoke of His atoning suffering and death as a “cup” (Mark 14:36; see also Mark 10:38; John 18:11). This term drew upon a long history of scriptural symbolism. The “cup” sometimes symbolized God’s wrath; it could also represent judgment and

punishment of the wicked (see Psalm 75:8; Isaiah 51:17; Mosiah 3:24–26). Isaiah prophesied that the day would come when the Lord would plead the cause of His people and remove out of their hand “the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury,” so that His people would “no more drink it again” (Isaiah 51:22).

After His Resurrection, the Savior taught the Nephites: “I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me, and have glorified the Father in taking upon me the sins of the world, in the which I have suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning” (3 Nephi 11:11). In addition to the “cup of wrath,” the Old Testament contains references to a cup of blessing and salvation (see Psalms 16:5; 23:5; 116:13). In the great exchange of the Atonement, the Savior drank out of the “bitter cup” (3 Nephi 11:11; D&C 19:18) for us so that He could offer us “the cup of blessing” (1 Corinthians 10:16). For more information about “the cup,” see the commentary for Mark 10:38–39.

Mark 14:38

How do the Savior’s words about the spirit and the flesh relate to all of us? In what ways did the Savior in Gethsemane set the example of how to deal with conflict between the spirit and the flesh?

Mark 14:50–52. “And They All Forsook Him, and Fled”

Though Jesus Christ was powerful enough to defend Himself against the armed multitude (see Matthew 26:51–54; Jacob 2:15), the disciples saw that He did not intend to do so, and they fled in fear (see Mark 14:50). Mark included the detail about the young man who, wrapped in a linen cloth, followed the Savior until several members of the multitude “laid hold on him,” causing him to leave the linen cloth in their hands and flee (see Mark 14:51–52). The Joseph Smith Translation says that the young man was a disciple of Jesus Christ (see Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 14:57 [in Mark 14:51, footnote *a*]). Among other things, this account shows that Jesus was forsaken by His disciples and left alone to face the cruelties that lay ahead.

Mark 14:53–65. The Hearing before the Council (see also Matthew 26:57–68; Luke 22:63–71; John 18:19–24)

Mark’s account of Jesus’s hearing before the Jewish council is the longest found in the four Gospels. One

important detail that Mark alone preserved is that the witnesses who testified against the Savior bore conflicting testimonies (see Mark 14:56–59). Since the law of Moses required at least two corroborating witnesses to convict anyone of a capital offense, the charges against Jesus were invalid (see Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15). The Savior remained silent, refusing to dignify the falsehoods with any response.



The Lord Jesus Accused before Caiaphas, by Debra Whipple

Finally Caiaphas, the high priest, asked Jesus outright, “Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” (Mark 14:61). The Savior’s affirmation in Mark is the most forthright preserved in the four Gospels: “I am.” To this powerful statement, Jesus added: “And ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven” (Mark 14:62). In making this statement, the Savior drew upon scriptural prophecy, including Daniel 7:13–14, which declares that “the Son of man” will come in the “clouds of heaven,” and Psalm 110:1, which declares that the Messiah will sit at the right hand of God (see also Mark 12:36; 13:26; 16:19). This testimony that Jesus gave about Himself clarified His mission as the Messiah—as “the Son of man.”

The Savior’s testimony also warned the council, even as they were judging Him, that the time would come when He would be enthroned and sit in judgment on them. The Savior’s answer shows that He looked beyond the immediate suffering to the future victory, particularly His Ascension to His Father and His future coming in glory. “Jesus . . . for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2). For more information about the charge of blasphemy, see the commentary for Matthew 26:61–66.

Mark 15:1–2. “The King of the Jews”

As recorded in Mark 15:1–2, the Jewish council decided to take Jesus to Pilate, who represented the Roman authorities. The council wanted to charge Jesus not with blasphemy—a Jewish matter that would not have concerned the Romans—but with treason, which was a serious concern to the Roman leaders. If the Jewish council were to punish Jesus for blasphemy by stoning Him—as prescribed in the law of Moses (see Leviticus 24:14)—it could create a riot among the many people who believed in Jesus (see Mark 12:37). Such civil unrest would bring harsh retribution from the Roman authorities. But if the Jewish leaders could persuade the Romans that Jesus was trying to set Himself up as a king, the Romans themselves would put Him to death as a traitor to Caesar (see Luke 23:2).



Jesus before Pilate for the First Time, by James Tissot

Mark 15:23. “They Gave Him to Drink Wine Mingled with Myrrh: But He Received It Not”

The Old Testament alludes to a Jewish custom of using wine as an anesthetic to ease the suffering of a person who was dying (see Proverbs 31:6–7). Mark recorded

that just before the Savior was nailed to the cross, He was offered “wine mingled with myrrh” (Mark 15:23). Jesus refused it, deliberately choosing not to dull His senses or decrease the pain of the Crucifixion; He was determined to remain conscious and experience all that would be involved in the remainder of His atoning sufferings (see Mark 14:25; Alma 7:11–13).

Mark 15:34. “Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani? . . . My God, My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?” (see also Matthew 27:46)

In recording the Savior’s words just before His death, Mark recorded both the original Aramaic words and their translation: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34). He had done this several times earlier in his Gospel (see Mark 5:41; 7:34; 14:36), probably for the benefit of his Roman audience, who did not understand Aramaic. The Savior’s cry of forsakenness echoed David’s words of anguish because of his sins, recorded in Psalm 22:1. Though Jesus Christ had never sinned and therefore had never been separated spiritually from the Father, He did experience that awful separation when His suffering for our sins continued on the cross (see Isaiah 53:5–6; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Jesus Christ had been blessed with a full measure of His Father’s Spirit throughout His life (see Joseph Smith Translation, John 3:34 [in John 3:34, footnote *b*]), and when this Spirit was withdrawn, the Savior felt the greatest pain, sorrow, and suffering. Yet this withdrawal of the sustaining influence of the Father was necessary so that Christ’s victory would be complete.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland discussed why the Father withdrew His Spirit from His Son:

“With all the conviction of my soul I testify that He *did* please His Father perfectly and that a perfect Father did *not* forsake His Son in that hour. Indeed, it is my personal belief that in all of Christ’s mortal ministry the Father may never have been closer to His Son than in these agonizing final moments of suffering. Nevertheless, that the supreme sacrifice of His Son might be as complete as it was voluntary and solitary, the Father briefly withdrew from Jesus the comfort of His Spirit, the support of His personal presence. It was required, indeed it was central to the significance of the Atonement, that this perfect Son who had never spoken ill nor done wrong nor touched an unclean thing had to know how the rest of humankind—us, all of us—would feel when we did commit such sins. For His Atonement to be infinite and eternal, He had to feel what it was like to die not only physically but spiritually, to sense what it

was like to have the divine Spirit withdraw, leaving one feeling totally, abjectly, hopelessly alone.

“But Jesus held on. He pressed on. The goodness in Him allowed faith to triumph even in a state of complete anguish. . . . Because Jesus walked such a long, lonely path utterly alone, *we* do not have to do so” (“None Were with Him,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2009, 87–88).

Mark 15:39. “Truly This Man Was the Son of God”

In Mark’s account, the first person to speak after the Savior died was the Roman centurion who said, “Truly this man was the Son of God” (Mark 15:39). This statement echoes the one made by Mark at the outset of his Gospel: “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1). Together, these statements frame Mark’s account of the Savior’s mortal ministry and accentuate Mark’s testimony that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.



The centurion said, “Truly this man was the Son of God” (Mark 15:39), by James Tissot.



He Is Not Here, by Walter Rane

Mark 15:39. The Atonement Shows the Love of Both the Father and the Son

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland expressed his gratitude for the love of the Father in allowing the Atonement of Jesus Christ to be accomplished for all mankind:

“I wish to thank not only the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ but also His true Father, our spiritual Father and God, who, by accepting the sacrifice of His firstborn, perfect Son, blessed all of His children in those hours of atonement and redemption. . . . ‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life’ [John 3:16].

“I am a father, inadequate to be sure, but I cannot comprehend the burden it must have been for God in His heaven to witness the deep suffering and Crucifixion

of His Beloved Son in such a manner. His every impulse and instinct *must* have been to stop it, to send angels to intervene—but He did not intervene. He endured what He saw because it was the only way that a saving, vicarious payment could be made for the sins of all His other children from Adam and Eve to the end of the world. I am eternally grateful for a perfect Father and His perfect Son, neither of whom shrank from the bitter cup nor forsook the rest of us who are imperfect, who fall short and stumble, who too often miss the mark” (“The Hands of the Fathers,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 14).

Mark 16:1–7. “He Is Risen” (see also Matthew 28:1–7; Luke 24:1–8; John 20:1–3)

Mark began his Gospel by calling it “the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ”—in other words, the good news about Jesus Christ (Mark 1:1). Ultimately, it is

Mark's testimony of Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice and Resurrection that makes his account "good news."

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) explained why the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is so important:

"Without the Resurrection, the gospel of Jesus Christ becomes a litany of wise sayings and seemingly unexplainable miracles—but sayings and miracles with no ultimate triumph. No, the ultimate triumph is in the ultimate miracle: for the first time in the history of mankind, one who was dead raised himself into living immortality. He *was* the Son of God, the Son of our immortal Father in Heaven, and his triumph over physical and spiritual death is the good news every Christian tongue should speak. . . .

"'He is risen; he is not here.' (Mark 16:6.) These words, eloquent in their simplicity, announced the most significant event of recorded history, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. . . . On the third day, he did arise to live again—the Savior of all mankind and the firstfruits of the Resurrection. Through this atoning sacrifice, all men shall be saved from the grave and shall live again" ("An Apostle's Witness of the Resurrection," *Ensign*, May 1986, 16–17). See the commentaries for Matthew 28:6 and for John 20:11–18.

Mark 16:9–20. The Conclusion of the Gospel of Mark

The most reliable early manuscripts of the Gospel of Mark do not contain Mark 16:9–20, and the style of the Greek language used in these verses differs from the rest of Mark. This suggests that these concluding verses might not have been written by Mark, but rather by scribes who added accounts of the Savior's appearances after His Resurrection to bring the ending of Mark's Gospel more in harmony with the writings of Matthew, Luke, John, and Acts. Whatever the reasons for the manuscript variations, the Church accepts all of Mark 16 as inspired scripture. Its value is based not on which human being wrote it, but on its inspired testimony of truth (see 2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:21; D&C 68:4).

Mark 16:11–14. The Initial Disbelief of the Disciples

President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency explained why it may have been so difficult initially for the disciples to believe that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead:

"Perhaps the Apostles should not be unduly criticized for not believing that Jesus, having been crucified and buried in a tomb, had come back to earth as a

glorified being. In all human experience, this had never happened before. It was completely unprecedented. This was a different experience than the raising of Jairus' daughter (see Mark 5:22, 24, 35–43), the young man of Nain (see Luke 7:11–15), or Lazarus (see John 11:1–44). They all died again. Jesus, however, became a resurrected being. He would never die again. . . .

"Said President David O. McKay of this experience: 'The world would never have been stirred by men with such wavering, doubting, despairing minds as the apostles possessed on the day of the crucifixion.

"'What was it that suddenly changed these disciples to confident, fearless, heroic preachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ? It was the revelation that Christ had risen from the grave. His promises had been kept, his Messianic mission fulfilled. . . . On the evidence of these unprejudiced, unexpectant, incredulous witnesses, faith in the resurrection has its impregnable foundation.' (*Treasures of Life*, comp. Clare Middlemiss, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1962, pp. 15–16.)

"Like the Apostles of old, this knowledge and belief should transform all of us to be confident, settled, unafraid, and at peace in our lives as followers of the divine Christ. It should help us carry all burdens, bear any sorrows, and also fully savor all joys and happiness that can be found in this life" ("The Supernal Gift of the Atonement," *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 13–14).

Mark 16:16. The Necessity of Baptism

For explanation about the necessity of baptism, see the commentary for John 3:5.

Mark 16:17–18. "Signs Shall Follow Them That Believe"

As recorded in Mark 16:17–18, the Savior promised His disciples that as they went forward with faith to preach the gospel, miracles would follow their efforts, for miracles will always follow those who believe. **President Dallin H. Oaks** of the First Presidency taught that signs continue to follow those who believe:

"Many miracles happen every day in the work of our Church and in the lives of our members. Many of you have witnessed miracles, perhaps more than you realize. . . . Miracles worked by the power of the priesthood are always present in the true Church of Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon teaches that 'God has provided a means that man, through faith, might work mighty

miracles' (Mosiah 8:18). The 'means' provided is priesthood power (see James 5:14–15; D&C 42:43–48), and that power works miracles through faith (see Ether 12:12; Moro. 7:37). The scriptures contain many accounts of such miracles. Elijah's raising the widow's son and Peter's healing of the lame man are two familiar examples from the Bible (see 1 Kgs. 17:8–24; Acts 3), and there are many others. . . .

" . . . Elder Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985), then of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, said: 'We do have miracles today—beyond imagination! . . .

"What kinds of miracles do we have? All kinds—revelations, visions, tongues, healings, special guidance and direction, evil spirits cast out. Where are they recorded? In the records of the Church, in journals, in news and magazine articles and in the minds and memories of many people' ['The Significance of Miracles in the Church Today,' *Instructor*, Dec. 1959, 396].

"Most of us are acquainted with miracles that have occurred in our personal lives and the lives of those we love, such as miracles involving births and deaths and miraculous healings. All of these are fulfillments of the Lord's modern promise to 'show miracles, signs, and wonders, unto all those who believe on my name' (D&C 35:8)" ("Miracles," *Ensign*, June 2001, 6, 8–9).

Mark 16:19. "He Was Received Up into Heaven, and Sat on the Right Hand of God" (see also Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9)

Mark 16:19 is the first account in the New Testament of the Savior's Ascension into heaven. It records the fulfillment of the Savior's earlier declarations that He would sit at the right hand of God in heaven (see Mark 12:35–36; 14:62; Psalm 110:1). **President Hugh B. Brown** (1883–1975) of the First Presidency wrote of the importance of the Ascension as the culmination of the Atonement of Jesus Christ: "We believe that the greatest story ever told in all the annals of history, is the story of the atonement of Christ. The record of his resurrection

and ascension, without which the atonement would not have been complete, is the climax to that story, and now, two thousand years after the event, it is still central and pivotal in all true Christian thought" (*Continuing the Quest* [1961], 74).

Points to Ponder

- What lessons about discipleship do you learn from the widow who gave two mites to the temple treasury (see Mark 12:41–44) and the woman who anointed Jesus Christ? (see Mark 14:3–9). When have you seen similar faithfulness demonstrated by men and women who believe in Jesus Christ?
- What details in the Gospel of Mark about the events of the Atonement are most meaningful to you? Why?
- **President Howard W. Hunter** said that without the Resurrection, the gospel would be "sayings and miracles with no ultimate triumph" (see the commentary for Mark 16:1–7). What difference do the angel's words "He is risen; he is not here" (Mark 16:6) make in your life?

Suggested Assignments

- Carefully compare Mark's account of Jesus's suffering in Gethsemane (see Mark 14:32–42) with Matthew's account (see Matthew 26:36–46). Make a list of any additional details and insights you gain from Mark. Write a paragraph summarizing what these additional insights mean to you personally.
- After the resurrected Savior appeared to His Apostles, He sent them forth to tell people everywhere the good news about Him and the Atonement (see Mark 16:15). At an appropriate time, tell your institute class, your family, a friend, or members of your ward or branch about some of the important truths you have learned about the Savior as you have studied the Gospel of Mark.

Luke 1–3

Introduction to the Gospel According to St. Luke

Why study Luke?

As the third of the synoptic Gospels, the book of Luke is treasured for the additional witness it provides of many truths recorded by Matthew and Mark and for its unique content. Luke desired that his account would help others to “know the certainty of those things” (Luke 1:4) that they had previously learned about the Savior. The Gospel of Luke will broaden and deepen your understanding of the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ and help you more fully appreciate the inclusive scope of His love and compassion for all mankind, as manifested during His mortal ministry and through His infinite Atonement.

Who wrote Luke?

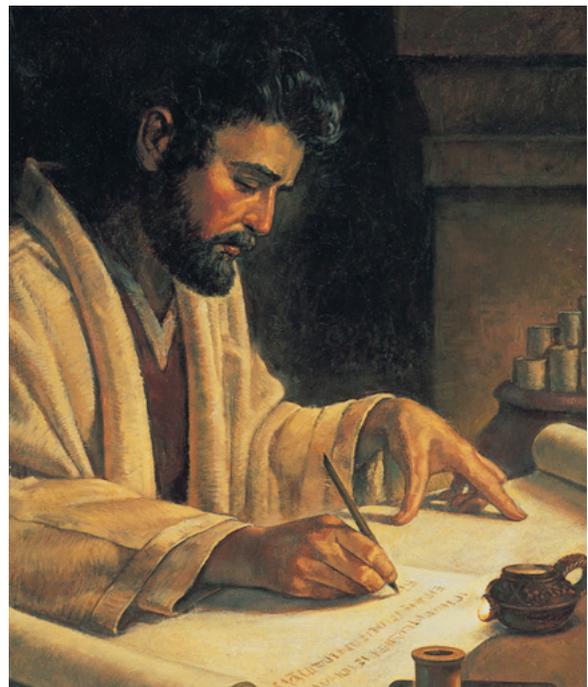
While the writer of the Gospel of Luke is not identified by name within the book, textual evidence as well as tradition credit Luke as the author of this Gospel. Much of this evidence stems from the book of Acts, which was also written by Luke. Though known as the “beloved physician” (Colossians 4:14) mentioned by Paul, Luke was foremost “*a messenger of Jesus Christ*” (Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 1:1 [in Luke 1:1, footnote a]). Luke was one of Paul’s “fellowlabourers” (Philemon 1:24) and Paul’s missionary companion (see 2 Timothy 4:11). Because Luke did not claim to have been an eyewitness of the Savior, but rather to have gained a perfect understanding from those who were “eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word” (Luke 1:2), it may be presumed that he was converted to Christianity at some point following the Savior’s Resurrection and Ascension.

When and where was Luke written?

It is not known exactly when Luke wrote his Gospel, but scholars estimate it was composed between A.D. 60 and 85. Luke’s sources were those people who “from the beginning were eyewitnesses” (Luke 1:2) of the Savior’s mortal ministry and Resurrection. We do not know where the Gospel of Luke was written.

To whom was Luke written and why?

The book of Luke was intended for a Gentile audience, as evidenced by Luke’s use of Greek (Hellenistic) terminology and the literary style that characterizes his writing. Luke specifically addressed his Gospel and the book of Acts to “Theophilus” (Luke 1:3), which in Greek means “friend of God” or “beloved of God.” It is apparent that Theophilus had received previous instruction concerning the life and teachings of Jesus Christ (see Luke 1:4). Luke hoped to provide further instruction by offering a systematic account of the Savior’s mission and ministry. He wanted those who read his testimony to “know the certainty” (Luke 1:4) of the Son of God—His compassion, Atonement, and Resurrection.



Luke writing his Gospel from eyewitness sources

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What are some distinctive features of Luke?

Luke is the longest of the four Gospels and the longest book in the New Testament. Luke's Gospel contains the most unique material of the three synoptic Gospels. Some of the most well-known stories of Christendom are unique to the Gospel of Luke: the traditional Christmas narrative (see Luke 2:1–20); the story of Jesus as a 12-year-old boy in the temple (see Luke 2:41–52); beloved parables such as the good Samaritan (see Luke 10:30–37) and the prodigal son (see Luke 15:11–32); the story of the ten lepers (see Luke 17:11–19); and the account of the resurrected Lord walking beside His disciples on the road to Emmaus (see Luke 24:13–32). Other unique features are Luke's inclusion of teachings of John the Baptist not found in the other Gospels

(see Luke 3:10–14); his emphasis on the prayerfulness of Jesus Christ (see Luke 3:21; 5:16; 9:18, 28–29; 11:1); and his inclusion of the calling, training, and missionary labors of the Seventy (see Luke 10:1–22). Moreover, Luke is the only Gospel writer to record that the Savior shed His blood in Gethsemane (see Luke 22:44).

In recounting the early spread of Christianity, Luke's Gospel demonstrates the Lord's interest in all people—Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles. It emphasizes the Savior's regard for women, His empathy for the downtrodden, and His concern for those considered to be outcasts and sinners (see Luke 19:10). Because Luke's Gospel begins and concludes at the temple, it also signals the temple's importance as a principal location of God's dealings with mankind (see Luke 1:9; 24:53).

Outline

Luke 1–3 The births and missions of John the Baptist and of Jesus Christ were foretold. Witnesses testified that the infant Jesus was the Messiah. At 12 years of age, Jesus was found teaching at the temple. John the Baptist preached repentance and baptized Jesus Christ. Luke recorded a genealogy of Christ.

Luke 4–8 Christ was tempted in the wilderness. In Nazareth He proclaimed Himself as the Messiah and was rejected. Jesus Christ chose Twelve Apostles and taught His disciples. He forgave sins and performed many miracles.

Luke 9–14 The Twelve Apostles were sent to preach and to heal.

Jesus Christ fed five thousand and was transfigured on a mountain. He called the Seventy and sent them forth to teach. He taught about discipleship, hypocrisy, and judgment. He gave the parable of the good Samaritan.

Luke 15–17 Christ taught in parables. He spoke of offenses, forgiveness, and faith. He healed ten lepers and taught of His Second Coming.

Luke 18–22 Jesus Christ continued to teach in parables, healed a blind man, and taught Zacchaeus. He rode triumphantly into Jerusalem, wept over the city, and cleansed the temple. Christ foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and spoke of the

signs to precede His Second Coming. He instituted the sacrament, taught His Apostles, and suffered in Gethsemane. He was betrayed, arrested, mocked, smitten, and interrogated.

Luke 23–24 Jesus Christ was tried before Pilate and Herod, crucified, and buried. Angels at the tomb and two disciples on the road to Emmaus testified that He was resurrected. The Savior appeared to His disciples in Jerusalem, promised His Apostles they would be endowed with power, and ascended into heaven.

Introduction and Timeline for Luke 1–3

Beginning with the testimony of the angel Gabriel (Noah) and culminating with Heavenly Father’s own voice declaring the divine Sonship of Jesus Christ, chapters 1–3 of Luke present numerous testimonies concerning the divinity and redeeming mission of Jesus Christ. These chapters include the testimonies of Zacharias, Elisabeth, Mary, a chorus of angels, shepherds, Simeon, and Anna, as well as Jesus’s statement as a 12-year-old boy that He was about His Father’s business. In presenting a lineage of the Savior, Luke also affirmed the divine Sonship of Jesus Christ by noting that Joseph was the “supposed”—not actual—father of Jesus (Luke 3:23).

The first chapter of Luke also provides knowledge of the foreordained mission of John the Baptist, as announced by Gabriel and prophesied by Zacharias. Luke 3 then records how John fulfilled his mission to prepare others to receive the Savior, and it preserves some of John’s teachings not recorded anywhere else in scripture.



1. The angel Gabriel announced the birth of John the Baptist, and John was born in Judea.
2. The angel Gabriel announced the birth of Jesus Christ, and Jesus was born in Bethlehem.
3. Joseph and Mary presented the infant Jesus at the temple in Jerusalem.
4. Jesus Christ taught at the temple in Jerusalem at 12 years of age.
5. John the Baptist ministered in the wilderness of Judea.
6. Jesus Christ was baptized in the Jordan River.

Commentary for Luke 1–3

Luke 1:1–4. Prologue to the Gospel of Luke

The Gospel of Luke begins with a prologue, which is a formal introduction. The use of this literary style was customary in classical Greek literature and served to establish the purpose and importance of the work as well as the credentials of the author. Luke’s purpose was to help Theophilus “know the certainty of those things” (Luke 1:4) he had previously learned about Jesus Christ. Luke’s assertion that he “had perfect understanding of all things from the very first” (Luke 1:3) does not mean that he was an eyewitness of the Savior, but it reflects his diligence in incorporating the testimonies of eyewitnesses into his work.

Luke 1:5–9. What Is “the Course of Abia”?

Centuries before the birth of Jesus, King David had divided the priests of Israel into 24 families (called “courses”), each of which was called to serve in the temple twice a year for one week each time. Zacharias belonged to the priestly family of Abia (also called Abijah; see 1 Chronicles 23:1–6; 24:1–19). Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 1:8 replaces the word *course* with *priesthood* (see Luke 1:8, footnote *b*). The priests drew lots to determine who among them would receive the high honor of offering incense within the temple.

Because of the large number of priests, the opportunity to burn incense was a rare privilege, one that would have been a high point in Zacharias’s life of service as a priest.

Luke 1:11–20, 26–38; 2:9–14. Angels Heralded the Births of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ

As part of the events recorded in Luke 1–3, numerous witnesses declared the divinity of Jesus Christ, including angels from heaven. While serving as a member of the Seventy, **Elder Merrill J. Bateman** explained why it was fitting for angels to be such an important part of the events surrounding the Savior’s birth and ministry:

“One might ask, ‘Why were angels so prominent at the Savior’s birth? And why were they such an important part of His life and ministry?’ The answers are twofold. The first pertains to the nature and mission of the personage whom they were heralding—a divine Being, the Son of God, the Only Begotten in the flesh who came to earth to save all of God’s children. The second concerns the ushering in of a new dispensation, a period of time when the gospel would be restored in its fulness. The ministry of angels is to assist in the ushering in of dispensations (see Moroni 7:29–31). . . .

“The last prophet of the Old Testament was Malachi, who lived 400 years before the birth of Christ. At that time Israel in large part had turned away from the

covenants made with Jehovah. Consequently, they were in apostasy. Although the Aaronic Priesthood was on earth when Jesus was born, the Melchizedek Priesthood had been taken from the earth. Therefore, there was a need for the priesthood and the gospel to be restored in their fulness. . . .

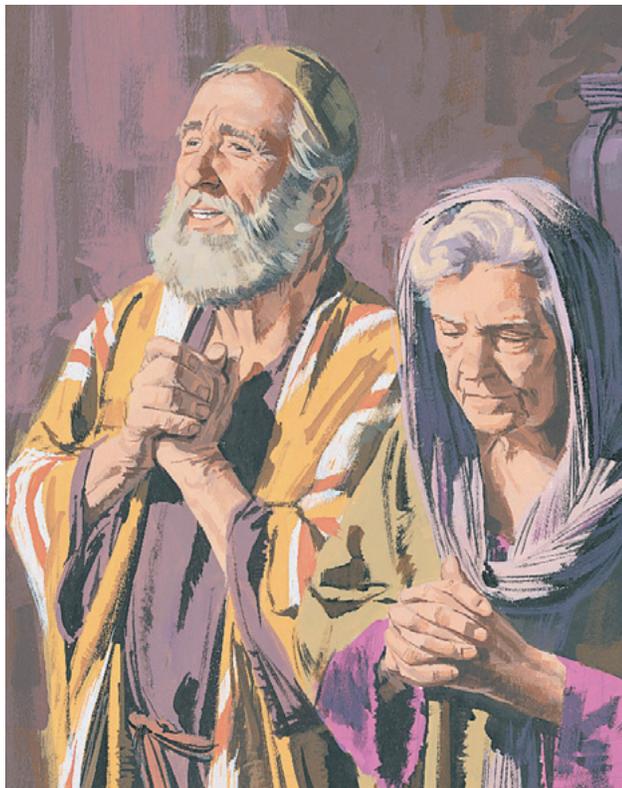
“At the beginning of a new dispensation following a period of apostasy, there is no one with priesthood authority to administer the covenants in their fulness. Consequently, the Lord sends messengers from the other side of the veil to return priesthood keys and the gospel plan to the earth.

“It is not surprising then that an angel visited Zacharias and instructed him with regard to the mission of his son” (“A Season for Angels,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2007, 10, 14).

Luke 1:13–17, 67–79

What words or phrases in these verses indicate that the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus Christ would bring about a restoration of the gospel among the Jews in New Testament times?

Luke 1:13. “Thy Prayer Is Heard”



Zacharias and Elisabeth praying, by Paul Mann

In ancient Israel, childlessness among married couples was regarded as a serious misfortune; some even believed it to be a punishment for sin. It is evident from Luke 1:13 that Zacharias and Elisabeth had prayed for the opportunity to become parents. Zacharias had no posterity through whom his priesthood line could continue, and Elisabeth later remarked that her barrenness had been viewed with “reproach among men” (Luke 1:25). In spite of this trial, however, Zacharias and Elisabeth had remained “righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless” (Luke 1:6). This is the first of many instances recorded in the Gospel of Luke that demonstrates the Lord’s awareness of and mercy toward those who are afflicted or downtrodden.

Luke 1:14–19, 26. Prophecy about John by the Angel Gabriel

The angel Gabriel told Zacharias that his son, John, would go before the Savior “in the spirit and power of Elias” (Luke 1:17; see also verses 14–19). *Elias* is the Greek form of the Hebrew name *Elijah*. “Elias is also a title for one who is a forerunner” (Bible Dictionary, “Elias”). Just as Elijah would appear before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to prepare the way for Him (see Malachi 4:5–6), John the Baptist was foreordained to come before the Savior’s mortal ministry “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17). In this way, John would be like Elijah—a forerunner to the Savior:

“Being the forerunner was neither a simple task nor an honorary title. Difficult and dangerous work needed to be done. . . . John, a mere mortal—armed with the Aaronic Priesthood, a divine commission, personal righteousness, the truth of God, and a huge amount of courage—was launched on his ministry to prepare the way for the Son of God. What John was called to do placed his life in jeopardy.

“The term *forerunner* is descriptive. Forerunners anciently would run before the chariot of the king and clear the path of rocks or other obstacles, and loudly proclaim the coming of the ruler. . . . John was both a forerunner and a proclaimer of Jesus. He was the divinely appointed herald” (Robert J. Matthews, *Behold the Messiah* [1994], 46).

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) taught the identity of the angel Gabriel: “Noah . . . is Gabriel; he stands next in authority to Adam in the Priesthood; he was called of God to this office, and was the father of all living in his day, and to him was given the dominion” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 104).

Luke 1:26–30. Mary Was Highly Favored among Women as the Mortal Mother of Jesus Christ

Long before her birth, prophets knew of Mary's sacred role as the mortal mother of Jesus Christ, and they identified her by name (see Isaiah 7:14–15; 1 Nephi 11:13–20; Mosiah 3:8; Alma 7:10). **President Spencer W. Kimball** (1895–1985) taught that “in the world before we came here, faithful women were given certain assignments while faithful men were foreordained to certain priesthood tasks” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* [2006], 215).



The Annunciation, by John Scott. The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained why Mary was chosen to be the mortal mother of Jesus Christ: “As there is only one Christ, so there is only one Mary. And as the Father chose the most noble and righteous of all his spirit sons to come into mortality as his Only Begotten in the flesh, so we may confidently conclude that he selected the most worthy and spiritually talented of all his spirit daughters to be the mortal mother of his Eternal Son” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 1:85).

Mary is a great role model for women. She exemplifies the attributes that a woman today should seek to develop in her life.

Luke 1:31–35. “The Son of the Highest”

Elder James E. Talmage (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained the importance of Gabriel's declaration regarding the parentage of Jesus Christ (see Luke 1:32): “That Child to be born of Mary . . . was of right to be called the ‘Son of the Highest.’ In His nature would be combined the powers of Godhood with the capacity and possibilities of mortality. . . . The Child Jesus was to inherit the physical, mental,

and spiritual traits, tendencies, and powers that characterized His parents—one immortal and glorified—God, the other human—woman” (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 81).

Elder Talmage also taught that through Jesus's mortal mother, Mary, He inherited the ability to “lay down His life voluntarily.” But from His Heavenly Father, Jesus inherited the ability to endure suffering during His atoning sacrifice “such as no other being who has lived on earth might even conceive as possible” (*Jesus the Christ*, 613). Since this suffering would be “more than man can suffer, except it be unto death” (Mosiah 3:7), only a Being with power over death could endure it.

President Russell M. Nelson declared: “From His immortal Father, Jesus inherited the power to live forever. From His mortal mother He inherited the fate of physical death. Those unique attributes were essential for His mission to atone for the sins of all mankind. Thus Jesus the Christ was born to die (see 3 Nephi 27:13–15). He died that we might live. He was born that all humankind could live beyond the grave” (“Christ the Savior Is Born,” *New Era*, Dec. 2006, 5).

Luke 1:34–35. “How Shall This Be, Seeing I Know Not a Man?”

When Mary asked how she could become the mother of Jesus, “seeing I know not a man” (Luke 1:34), Gabriel simply informed her that she would be overshadowed by the Holy Ghost and that her child would be the Son of God (see Luke 1:35). Other scriptures that refer to the conception of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 1:18–20; 1 Nephi 11:15, 18–21; Alma 7:10) likewise emphasize that He is the Son of God but do not reveal how this miracle took place.

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) cited these particular scriptures and then forthrightly affirmed that “the testimonies of appointed witnesses leave no question as to the paternity of Jesus Christ. God was the Father of His fleshly tabernacle, and Mary, a mortal woman, was His mother. . . . He was not the son of Joseph, nor was He begotten by the Holy Ghost. He is the Son of the Eternal Father!” (“Five Marks of the Divinity of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2001, 10–11).

President Benson further taught: “[Jesus Christ] was the Only Begotten Son of our Heavenly Father in the flesh—the only child whose mortal body was begotten by our Heavenly Father. His mortal mother, Mary, was called a virgin, both before and after she gave birth. (See 1 Ne. 11:20.)” (“Joy in Christ,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1986, 3–4).

President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) offered this caution: “Remember that the being who was brought about by [Mary’s] conception was a divine personage. We need not question [God the Father’s] method to accomplish His purposes. Perhaps we would do well to remember the words of Isaiah 55:8–9: ‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.’

“Let the Lord rest His case with this declaration and wait until He sees fit to tell us more” (*The Teachings of Harold B. Lee*, ed. Clyde J. Williams [1996], 14).

Luke 1:36–37. “For with God Nothing Shall Be Impossible”

As a witness to Mary that “with God nothing shall be impossible,” the angel Gabriel testified that Mary’s cousin Elisabeth, who was an aged and barren woman, was six months pregnant (see Luke 1:36–37). This was a witness to Mary that she could also have a child in a miraculous manner.

Luke 1:38. “Be It unto Me According to Thy Word”

Mary’s consecrated utterance, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word” (Luke 1:38), signaled her complete willingness to accept and to fulfill her sacred role. “Her faith, obedience, and humility set a standard for all women” (Virginia U. Jensen, “Ripples,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 93). To better understand the difficulties Mary may have faced after receiving her calling as the mother of the Son of God, see the commentary for Matthew 1:18–25.

In the same way that Mary eagerly accepted her opportunity to be a mother, women today can prepare to fulfill their own divine potential as mothers. **Sister Julie B. Beck**, while serving as a counselor in the Young Women general presidency, offered the following encouragement:

“Oh, that every girl and woman would have a testimony of her potential for eternal motherhood as she keeps her earthly covenants. . . .

“Female roles did not begin on earth, and they do not end here. A woman who treasures motherhood on earth will treasure motherhood in the world to come, and ‘where [her] treasure is, there will [her] heart be also’ (Matthew 6:21). By developing a mother heart, each girl and woman prepares for her divine, eternal mission of motherhood. . . .

“In my experience I have seen that some of the truest mother hearts beat in the breasts of women who will not rear their own children in this life, but they know that ‘all things must come to pass in their time’ and that they ‘are laying the foundation of a great work’ (D&C 64:32–33). . . .



Be It unto Me, by Liz Lemon Swindle

“. . . [A woman with a mother heart] knows that the influence of righteous, conscientious, persistent, daily mothering is far more lasting, far more powerful, far more influential than any earthly position or institution invented by man. She has the vision that, if worthy, she has the potential to be blessed as Rebekah of old to be ‘the mother of thousands of millions’ (Genesis 24:60)” (“A ‘Mother Heart,’” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2004, 76–77).

Luke 1:41–55, 67–80. “My Soul Doth Magnify the Lord”

Verses 46–55 of Luke 1 are traditionally known as the Song of Mary, or the Magnificat (which in Latin means “magnifies”). Similar hymns of praise were spoken by both Elisabeth and Zacharias. When Mary came to visit Elisabeth after learning that she would be the mother of the Son of God, Elisabeth recognized Mary’s remarkable mission and, filled with the Holy Ghost, spoke words of praise and testimony, as recorded in Luke 1:41–45. When Zacharias’s tongue was loosed at the time his son, John, was circumcised and named, Zacharias, also filled with the Holy Ghost, spoke beautiful words of praise, testifying of the mission of the Savior, as found in Luke 1:67–80. Zacharias’s hymn of praise is known as the Benedictus (which in Latin means “blessed”).

Hymns of praise are also recorded in the Old Testament, which acknowledge Heavenly Father’s gracious blessings upon His people (see Exodus 15:1–21; Judges 5:1–31; 1 Chronicles 16:7–36). Mary’s song closely resembles the song of Hannah. Hannah was a handmaid of the Lord who, through faith, miraculously conceived Samuel and dedicated him to God’s service

(see 1 Samuel 1:11, 28; 2:1–10). The Song of Mary associates the birth of Jesus Christ with Israel’s sacred past and celebrates the Lord’s mercy in once again reaching out to bless and honor His people—particularly those of “low degree” (Luke 1:52).

Luke 1:59. “On the Eighth Day”

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained the significance of what occurred eight days following the birth of John the Baptist: “Naming of children and circumcision of male members of the house of Israel took place on [the eighth] day. In the case of John, he ‘was ordained by the angel of God at the time he was eight days old’—not to the Aaronic Priesthood, for such would come later, after his baptism and other preparation, but—‘unto this power, to overthrow the kingdom of the Jews, and to make straight the way of the Lord before the face of his people, to prepare them for the coming of the Lord, in whose hand is given all power.’ (D. & C. 84:28.) That is, at this solemn eighth day ceremony, an angel . . . gave the Lord’s Elias [John] the divine commission to serve as the greatest forerunner of all the ages” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:89).

Luke 1:69. “Horn of Salvation”

When John’s father, Zacharias, was released by God from his inability to speak, he praised God and prophesied of John’s mission. As recorded in Luke 1:69, he mentioned that God had raised up a “horn of salvation,” which is a messianic title that refers to Jesus Christ (see 2 Samuel 22:3; Psalm 18:2). The horn was a symbol of power—an allusion to the strength of horned animals indigenous to the Near East (see 1 Samuel 2:10; Psalm 75:10).

Luke 2:1–6. To the City of Bethlehem to Be Taxed

Caesar Augustus was a capable and energetic Roman ruler whose reign—from 31 B.C. to A.D. 14—was marked by order and lawfulness. The “taxing” mentioned in Luke 2:2 was actually an enrollment of persons for future taxation purposes, an enrollment that required the taxpayer to personally submit required information. Because both Joseph and Mary were descendants of King David, they were required to make the journey to Bethlehem, which was King David’s hometown. It is also possible that Joseph owned property in Bethlehem, further mandating him to register in Bethlehem. Ancient prophets had testified that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, in the land of Jerusalem (see Micah 5:2; Alma 7:10).

Bethlehem lay approximately 85–90 miles (137–145 kilometers) south of Nazareth, a trek of at least four to

five walking days, perhaps longer considering Mary’s condition. Travelers typically stayed at quarters known as caravansaries, which were rectangular structures with open rooms overlooking a central courtyard, where the travelers’ animals were kept. The Joseph Smith Translation indicates there was no room for Mary and Joseph in the “inns” at Bethlehem (Luke 2:7, footnote *b*). It is therefore likely that there were no openings in the rooms of the caravansaries, and on the night of the Savior’s birth, the couple was required to stay in the crowded courtyard of a caravansary—where the travelers’ animals, including donkeys, dogs, oxen, and camels, were kept.

Luke 2:5. “His Espoused Wife”

To read about New Testament “espousal” traditions, see the commentary for Matthew 1:18.

Luke 2:7. “Swaddling Clothes”

Swaddling clothes were generally blankets or strips of cloth wrapped tightly around tiny infants. To *swaddle* means to “wrap snugly.”

Luke 2:7. A Humble Birth



For unto Us a Child Is Born, by Simon Dewey

Elder Bruce D. Porter of the Seventy identified some lessons we can learn from the Savior’s humble birth: “His birth, like his life, teaches us that there is nothing wrong with humble origins, with poverty, simplicity, and obscurity. There is nothing to be ashamed of in being outcast from society, in being forced to dwell apart from the world, literally or figuratively. Poverty is no disgrace,

and a shelter for animals may be a temple of God's spirit as surely as any more elegant dwelling. . . . Christ's birth and simple upbringing are a reminder to us that we must never look down on anyone because of their origins or worldly status. If we scorn the humble, we may unwittingly scorn the chosen of God's children on the earth" (*The King of Kings* [2000], 26).

Luke 2:8–18

What do you learn from the details Luke recorded about the shepherds' actions after receiving news of the Savior's birth? How can you follow their example?

Luke 2:19, 51. "Mary Kept All These Things, and Pondered Them in Her Heart"

Luke recorded that after the shepherds' visit and after finding the 12-year-old Jesus in the temple, Mary pondered the events and sayings, and she kept them "in her heart" (Luke 2:19, 51). Her actions demonstrate the importance of treasuring sacred experiences. While it is vital that we share our testimonies with others, **President Boyd K. Packer** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that we should ponder our sacred experiences and share them only when we are prompted to do so:

"It is not wise to continually talk of unusual spiritual experiences. They are to be guarded with care and shared only when the Spirit itself prompts you to use them to the blessing of others. . . .

"I heard President Marion G. Romney once counsel mission presidents and their wives . . . , 'I found out that if I talked too lightly of sacred things, thereafter the Lord would not trust me.'

"We are, I believe, to keep these things and ponder them in our hearts, as Luke said Mary did of the supernal events that surrounded the birth of Jesus" ("The Candle of the Lord," *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 53).



To help you better understand the birth of Christ, review the video segment "Shepherds Learn of the Birth of Christ" (6:43) from *The Life of Jesus Christ Bible Videos*, available on LDS.org. This segment covers Luke 2:8–18.

Luke 2:22–24. Mary's Offering Indicated Her Material Poverty

The law of Moses declared women to be ceremonially unclean after giving birth. To become clean, a new mother had to present a lamb at the temple for a burnt offering, and a pigeon or turtledove for a sin offering (see Leviticus

12:5–6). "And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles [turtledoves], or two young pigeons" (Leviticus 12:8). That Mary presented turtledoves or pigeons instead of a lamb is evidence Jesus Christ was born to a mother of little material means.



To help you better understand Mary's offering, review the video segment "The Christ Child Is Presented at the Temple" (1:53) from *The Life of Jesus Christ Bible Videos*, available on LDS.org. This segment covers Luke 2:22–38.

Luke 2:25–38. The Testimonies of Simeon and Anna

President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency explained that Simeon and Anna knew through the Holy Ghost that the infant Jesus was the Promised Messiah:

"In obedience to the law of Moses, Joseph and Mary brought the infant Jesus to the temple at Jerusalem after forty days, to present him to the Lord. There, two aged and spiritual temple workers received a witness of his identity and testified of him. . . .



Simeon Reverencing the Christ Child, by Greg K. Olsen

"Anna and Simeon were eyewitnesses to the infant, but, just like the [Savior's] Apostles, their knowledge of his divine mission came through the witness of the Holy Ghost. 'The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.' (Rev. 19:10.) Therefore, we can properly say that when each received this witness, Simeon was a prophet and Anna was a prophetess. Each then fulfilled the prophetic duty to testify to those around them. As Peter said, 'To [Christ] give all the prophets witness.' (Acts 10:43.) This was what Moses meant when he expressed the wish 'that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!' (Num. 11:29.)" ("Witnesses of Christ," *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 30).

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Luke 2:40. The Childhood of Jesus

Though the scriptures contain little information regarding the youth of Jesus Christ, they contain enough to teach us some powerful lessons. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie**

summarized what has been revealed concerning the childhood of Jesus Christ:

“In our present state of spiritual understanding, it apparently is not intended that we have any appreciable knowledge of the life of Jesus prior to the commencement of his ministry. No doubt complete and full accounts will be available during the millennium, for in that day the Lord has promised to ‘reveal all things.’ (D. & C. 101:32.) Such knowledge as is now available, however, leads us to believe that the Son of Mary (1) participated in the normal activities and experiences of the time, and (2) was endowed with talents and spiritual capacities exceeding those of any other person who ever lived. That he was obedient and sinless is evident; yet, with it all, he was subject to the restrictions and testings of mortality, was in all points tempted as other men are (Heb. 2:10–18; [4:15]; 5:8–9), and having ‘continued from grace to grace,’ he finally (after the resurrection) ‘received a fulness of the glory of the Father,’ and perfected his own salvation. (D. & C. 93:6–16.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:111). For additional scriptural insight on the childhood of Jesus Christ, see the commentary for Matthew 2:23 and the Bible Dictionary, “Education.”

Luke 2:46. “They Found Him in the Temple”

At an early age Jesus Christ was found in the temple, and throughout His ministry He continued to be at the temple. The temple was a source of inspiration and strength for Him. **President James E. Faust** (1920–2007) of the First Presidency explained that the account of Joseph and Mary discovering Jesus at the temple is part of a larger pattern that reveals the significance of the temple throughout the Savior’s mortal life:

“It was in the temple that Jesus received much of his early education. It was there he revealed the spiritual insight he had received to be about his Father’s business. In the temple the Savior announced his Messianic mission. Simeon came by the Spirit to the temple and there had fulfilled for him the promise by the Holy Ghost that he would not die until he had seen ‘the Lord’s Christ’ (see Luke 2:18–29). The last verse of Luke’s gospel states that after the ascension the apostles ‘returned to Jerusalem . . . and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God’ (Luke 24:52–53). Why were the apostles continually in the temple if it was not an important part of what Christ taught?” (James P. Bell, *In the Strength of the Lord: The Life and Teachings of James E. Faust* [1999], 444–45).

Luke 2:46–47. “All That Heard Him Were Astonished”

The Joseph Smith Translation reveals that the doctors conversing with Jesus “were hearing *him*, and asking *him* questions” (Luke 2:46, footnote *c*). The **Prophet Joseph Smith** taught that as a boy, Jesus Christ possessed superior intelligence to all mortals: “When still a boy He had all the intelligence necessary to enable Him to rule and govern the kingdom of the Jews, and could reason with the wisest and most profound doctors of law and divinity, and make their theories and practice to appear like folly compared with the wisdom He possessed” (in *History of the Church*, 6:608). Additional insight into how Jesus Christ gained His great knowledge, even at the age of 12, is provided by the Apostle John, as recorded in John 8:25–30.



Boy Jesus in the Temple, by Grant R. Clawson

Luke 2:51. “And Was Subject unto Them”

The statement “and was subject unto them” (Luke 2:51) provides valuable insight concerning the Savior’s meekness. He was the Creator of the earth and the God of the Old Testament. In spirituality and understanding, Jesus Christ was superior to Joseph and Mary, even at age 12. Nonetheless, He honored His mortal guardians “and was subject unto them.” While serving in the Presidency of the Seventy, **Elder Cecil O. Samuelson Jr.** referred to the Savior’s submission to Joseph and Mary:

“Sometimes you might feel that your parents and leaders respond like Mary and Joseph did. After Jesus answered by asking His important question about His Father’s business, Luke records, ‘They understood not the saying which he spake unto them’ [Luke 2:50].

“Nevertheless, please pay close attention to what Jesus did! It is an example for what we must do if we are really to fulfill our duty to God. ‘And he went down

with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them . . . [Luke 2:51–52].

“You must remember that your duty to God is very clearly linked to your duties to your own family members, particularly your parents. It is not only in being properly subject or submissive to God, but also to parents and priesthood leaders, that we can truly fulfill our duty to God” (“Our Duty to God,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 43).

Luke 2:52. “In Wisdom and Stature, and in Favour with God and Man”

President Ezra Taft Benson taught that the progression of Jesus Christ in His youth provides a perfect pattern for our individual development:

“What manner of man was Jesus during those thirty years when He was personally preparing Himself for His three-year public ministry? Turning to the book of Luke in the New Testament, we read these words: ‘And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.’ (Luke 2:52.)

“From modern-day revelation we learn that Jesus ‘received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace . . . , until he received a fulness.’ (D&C 93:13.)

“We, too, should be moving from grace to grace in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man. . . . May we all follow our leader, Jesus Christ, and increase in stature mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially” (“In His Steps,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1988, 4, 6).

Luke 3:2. “The Word of God Came unto John”

Luke mentioned that although Annas and Caiaphas had filled the presiding office of high priest, the word of God came not to them but to John. This simple observation provides an important insight into the deficient spiritual condition of Israel’s leaders at the time of John the Baptist. The Aaronic Priesthood still operated among the Jews prior to John (see D&C 84:26–27). Following the children of Israel’s rejection of the Lord at Mount Sinai, the Lord had removed the Melchizedek Priesthood from the people. Therefore, until the time of Jesus Christ, under the law of Moses a high priest was the presiding priest in the Aaronic Priesthood and presided over all other priests in their functions and ordinances, particularly in those of the temple. However, the presiding office of high priest had become corrupted. For years, Herod and other Roman officials had appointed high priests based on political expediency or bribery.



John the Baptist Preaching, by Del Parson

The Jews lacked a divinely authorized priesthood leader and, as a nation, they were in need of spiritual rebirth. Because John had been chosen by God and properly ordained to be God’s representative, the children of Israel could again turn to the Lord through the authorized channels of repentance and baptism.

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** explained: “John, at that time, was the only

legal administrator in the affairs of the kingdom there was then on the earth, and holding the keys of power. The Jews had to obey his instructions or be damned, by their own law. . . . The son of Zacharias wrested the keys, the kingdom, the power, the glory from the Jews, by the holy anointing and decree of heaven” (*Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 81–82).

Luke 3:3–6. Isaiah’s Prophecies of the Missions of John the Baptist and the Savior

Luke quoted a prophecy from Isaiah to describe the mission of John the Baptist (see Luke 3:3–6; Isaiah 40:3–5). The Joseph Smith Translation adds additional prophecies from Isaiah that beautifully describe the mission and ministry of the Savior.

“For behold, and lo, he shall come, as it is written in the book of the prophets, to take away the sins of the world, and to bring salvation unto the heathen nations, to gather together those who are lost, who are of the sheepfold of Israel;

“Yea, even the dispersed and afflicted; and also to prepare the way, and make possible the preaching of the gospel unto the Gentiles;

“And to be a light unto all who sit in darkness, unto the uttermost parts of the earth; to bring to pass the resurrection from the dead, and to ascend up on high, to dwell on the right hand of the Father,

“Until the fullness of time, and the law and the testimony shall be sealed, and the keys of the kingdom shall be delivered up again unto the Father” (Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 3:5–8 [in the Bible appendix]).

Luke 3:8. “God Is Able of These Stones to Raise Up Children unto Abraham” (see also Matthew 3:8)

The Jews believed that they were the only people who could provide righteous children for Abraham and that only Abraham’s literal descendants could be saved. But John rebuked their pride and unrighteousness by saying that God could raise up descendants of Abraham from stones. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** gave the following explanation of this statement: “Our Lord’s forerunner is teaching the principle of adoption: that Abraham is ‘the father of *all* them that believe’ (Rom. 4:11) both Jew and Gentile; that through belief in Christ all men become ‘Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise’ (Gal. 3:28–29); that all who believe the gospel shall be accounted as Abraham’s seed and rise up and bless him ‘as their father.’ (Abra. 2:10.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:120).

For further information about John’s rebuke of the Jews, see Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 3:13 (in Luke 3:8, footnote *d*).

Luke 3:12–21

Which words and phrases in these verses suggest the effect that John’s preaching had upon the people?

Luke 3:16. Baptism with “the Holy Ghost and with Fire”

John declared that he would baptize with water but that Jesus would baptize “with the Holy Ghost and with fire” (Luke 3:16). This refers to the purifying and sanctifying effect of receiving the Holy Spirit. After the angel appeared to Alma, he declared, “I have repented of my sins, and have been redeemed of the Lord; behold I am born of the Spirit.” He then taught that “all mankind . . . must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters; and thus they become new creatures; and unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God” (Mosiah 27:24–26).

Luke 3:21–22. The Baptism of Jesus Christ

To read about the baptism of Jesus Christ, see the commentary for Matthew 3:13–17.

Luke 3:22. Did the Holy Ghost Appear as a Dove? (see also Matthew 3:16)

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** explained that the Holy Ghost did not appear as a dove after the baptism of Jesus Christ. Rather, the descending dove signified that the Holy Ghost was present on that occasion: “The sign of the dove was instituted before the creation of the world, a witness for the Holy Ghost, and the devil cannot come in the sign of a dove. The Holy Ghost is a personage, and is in the form of a personage. It does not confine itself to the *form* of the dove, but in *sign* of the dove. The Holy Ghost cannot be transformed into a dove; but the sign of a dove was given to John to signify the truth of the deed, as the dove is an emblem or token of truth and innocence” (*Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 81).

Luke 3:23–38. The Genealogy of Jesus Christ

Luke’s genealogy notes that Jesus was the “supposed”—not actual—son of Joseph and traces the Savior’s descent back to Adam, and from Adam to God (see Luke 3:23, 38). These details confirm the testimony of Gabriel that Jesus would come to earth as “the Son of the Highest” (Luke 1:32). They also confirm the testimony of God the Father that Jesus was His Beloved Son (see Luke 3:22). To learn how Luke’s genealogy of the Savior compares to the one given by Matthew, see the commentary for Matthew 1:1–17.

Points to Ponder

- What are some ways you can follow the example of John the Baptist in preparing the way for others to receive the Savior?
- What significant events recorded in Luke 1–3 occurred at the temple? How can you make the temple a more central part of your life?

Suggested Assignments

- Review Luke 1–3, and make a list of all who bore testimony of Jesus Christ and the truths they mentioned in their testimonies. Write a brief paragraph explaining how these witnesses and the truths of which they testified strengthen your testimony.
- Review Luke 1:26–38, 46–56; 2:19, 51, and then write a journal entry explaining several of Mary’s exemplary qualities. Also, record your thoughts on how these qualities can help women of our day fulfill the divine mission of motherhood.

16

Luke 4–8

Introduction and Timeline for Luke 4–8

Chapters 4–8 of Luke begin with the account of Satan tempting Jesus Christ in the wilderness, followed by Jesus’s declaration in Nazareth that He was the Messiah, who had come to bless those in need. Luke next recorded the Savior’s compassionate efforts to lift individuals from the negative effects of evil spirits, disease, sin, and death. Accompanying these miracles are the Savior’s instructions to His disciples to love others, give generously, show mercy, and forgive as He did.

In addition to illustrating Jesus Christ’s loving ministry among the downcast, these chapters show different ways in which people responded to Him. They show how individuals’ varying levels of humility, faith, and willingness to sacrifice affected their experience with the Savior.



1. In Nazareth, Jesus Christ declared that He is the Messiah.
2. The Savior called disciples to follow Him.
3. He healed a centurion’s servant in Capernaum.
4. He raised a widow’s son from death in Nain.
5. He forgave a woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee.
6. The Apostles and several women accompanied Jesus on His tour through Galilee.

Commentary for Luke 4–8

Luke 4:1–2. “Forty Days Tempted of the Devil” (see also Matthew 4:1–11; Mark 1:12–13)

During Jesus Christ’s 40-day sojourn in the wilderness, “angels ministered unto him” (Mark 1:13) and He was “full of the Holy Ghost” (Luke 4:1). This was a time of great spiritual preparation for His ministry, which would follow. To read more about Christ’s temptations in the wilderness, see the commentary for Matthew 4:2–10.

Luke 4:3–9. Satan’s Temptations in the Wilderness (see also Matthew 4:8–10)

Satan tempted Jesus to use His power for selfish reasons—to save Himself, not all mankind. Satan continued to tempt the Savior in this way even at the end of His life. While Jesus was hanging on the cross, the soldiers and one of the thieves crucified beside Him said: “If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself” (Luke 23:37) and “If thou be Christ, save thyself and us” (Luke 23:39). Satan tried to destroy God’s plan for the redemption of His children by tempting Jesus to use His power selfishly.

Satan also offered the Savior all the kingdoms, power, and glory of the world if He would worship him. However, these were not Satan’s to give. Jesus Christ, as the Creator, already held dominion over this earth, under the direction of His Father. One lesson we can

learn from these verses is that Satan often entices us with allurements he cannot provide, including peace and happiness when we sin (see 1 Nephi 20:22; Alma 41:10; Mormon 2:13).

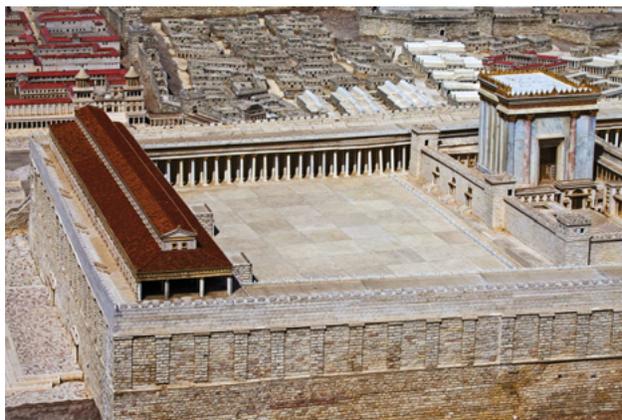
President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) warned against seeking worldly possessions and glory by yielding to Satan’s temptations: “Jesus knew that if he were faithful to his Father and obedient to every commandment, he would inherit ‘all that [the] Father hath’ (D&C 84:38)—and so would any other son or daughter of God. The surest way to lose the blessings of time or eternity is to accept them on Satan’s terms” (“The Temptations of Christ,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 18).

Similarly, the Book of Mormon provides examples of people whom Satan deceived into believing they could obtain success by yielding to temptation and also warns that “the devil will not support his children at the last day, but doth speedily drag them down to hell” (Alma 30:60; see also verses 52–60).

Luke 4:9–12. Jesus Christ Was Tempted on a Pinnacle of the Temple (see also Matthew 4:5–7)

The Savior’s refusal to throw Himself from the temple and trust the angels to prevent His fall provides two important insights into His character. First, He refused to make a self-serving display of His power as the Son of God. Second, He was unwilling to deliberately place Himself in circumstances from which He would need

divine rescue. The Savior’s example encourages us to likewise avoid situations, activities, and materials that are potentially harmful. Joseph Smith’s inspired translation of Luke 4:5, 9 makes clear that it was the Spirit, not the devil, who took Jesus Christ to a high mountain and brought Him to Jerusalem, and then afterward Satan came to tempt Him (see Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 4:5 [in Luke 4:5, footnote *a*] and Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 4:9 [in Luke 4:9, footnote *a*]; see also the commentary for Matthew 4:1, 5, 8).



JAMES JEFFERY

Model of the temple built upon a mount in Jerusalem, surrounded by a series of courtyards and walls

Luke 4:13. Satan Departed for a Season

Luke 4:13 states that “when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season.” However, this respite may not have lasted long, for Luke records that the Savior was subject to later temptations (see Luke 22:28). For additional insight on the temptations faced and overcome by the Savior, see the commentaries for Hebrews 2:10, 14–18 and for Hebrews 4:15.

Luke 4:14–15. Jesus “Returned in the Power of the Spirit”

After Jesus “had fasted forty days and forty nights, and had communed with God,” He returned to Galilee and began teaching the gospel in the synagogues (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 4:2 [in Matthew 4:2, footnote *c*]). The scriptures state that He “returned in the power of the Spirit” (Luke 4:14). **Elder L. Tom Perry** (1922–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained, “Fasting had blessed Him with the power of the Spirit” (“The Law of the Fast,” *Ensign*, May 1986, 33). We can increase our own spiritual power by following the Savior’s example of fasting and praying at a time of need.

Luke 4:16–21. In Nazareth, Jesus Christ Declared He Is the Messiah

Jesus Christ began His ministry in Nazareth by going to the synagogue, reading passages from Isaiah about the mission of the Messiah, and then identifying Himself as the One who fulfilled the prophecies (see Luke 4:16–21). **Elder James E. Talmage** (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described the setting as the Savior attended the synagogue:

“Many times as boy and man He had sat in that house of worship [the synagogue], listening to the reading of the law and the prophets and to the commentaries . . . , as delivered by appointed readers; but now, as a recognized teacher of legal age He was eligible to take the reader’s place. On this occasion He stood up to read, when the service had reached the stage at which extracts from the prophetic books were to be read to the congregation. The minister in charge handed Him the roll, or book, of Isaiah; He turned to the part known to us as the beginning of the sixty-first chapter, and read: [Luke 4:18–19]. . . . The scripture He had quoted was one recognized by all classes as specifically referring to the Messiah, for whose coming the nation waited” (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 179).

After reading the scripture, Jesus Christ sat down to comment. In Jesus’s era, it was customary to stand while reading but to sit while teaching (see Matthew 5:1; 26:55; John 8:2; Acts 16:13). As the eyes of everyone in the synagogue turned on Him, Jesus declared, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears” (Luke 4:21).

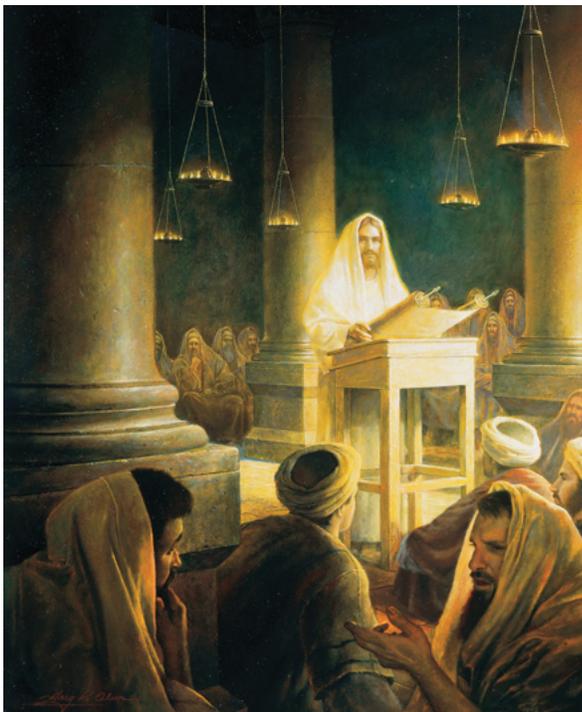
The verses Jesus quoted (see Isaiah 61:1–2) provide a summary of His earthly mission and atoning sacrifice. The verses referred to a person who was “anointed”—a term the Jews recognized as meaning “the Messiah.” As the Messiah, Jesus was sent to “heal the broken-hearted”—His atoning sacrifice would save those who offer the sacrifice of a broken heart and contrite spirit (see 3 Nephi 9:20; D&C 59:8). He was sent to “preach deliverance to the captives”—His gospel would deliver those in spirit prison as well as those in spiritual bondage (see 1 Peter 3:18–20; D&C 138:18–30). He was to provide “sight to the blind”—He would miraculously restore physical and spiritual sight. He was to “set at liberty them that are bruised”—fulfilling the promise to Mother Eve that her posterity, whose heels were bruised by the serpent, would have power to crush the serpent’s head (see Genesis 3:15). He was to “preach the acceptable year of the Lord”—to preach that the Lord had begun His ministry, which He had!

 To help you better understand Christ's declaration, review the video segment "Jesus Declares He Is the Messiah" (3:26) from *The Life of Jesus Christ Bible Videos*, available on LDS.org. This segment covers Luke 4:15–30.

Luke 4:22–30. Jesus Christ Was Rejected in Nazareth (see also Matthew 13:54–58; Mark 6:1–6)

The people of Nazareth "wondered" at Jesus Christ's declaration of Himself as the Messiah and questioned, "Is not this Joseph's son?" (Luke 4:22). **Elder James E. Talmage** explained that the Savior anticipated the people's response to His message and rebuked their unspoken wish to see proof of His Messiahship:

"In their hearts the people were eager for a sign, a wonder, a miracle. They knew that Jesus had wrought such in Cana, and a boy in Capernaum had been healed by His word; at Jerusalem too He had astonished the people with mighty works. Were they, His townsmen, to be slighted? Why would He not treat them to some entertaining exhibition of His powers? He continued His address, reminding them that in the days of Elijah, when for three years and a half no rain had fallen, and famine had reigned, the prophet had been sent to but one of the many widows, and she a woman of Sarepta in Sidon, a Gentile, not a daughter of Israel. And again, though there had been many lepers in Israel in the days of



Jesus in the Synagogue at Nazareth, by Greg K. Olsen

Elisha, [only] one leper, and he a Syrian, not an Israelite, had been cleansed through the prophet's ministration, for Naaman alone had manifested the requisite faith.

"Then great was their wrath. Did He dare to class them with Gentiles and lepers? Were they to be likened unto despised unbelievers, and that too by the son of the vil-lage carpenter, who had grown from childhood in their community? Victims of diabolical rage, they seized the Lord and took Him to the brow of the hill on the slopes of which the town was built, determined to avenge their wounded feelings by hurling Him from the rocky cliffs" (*Jesus the Christ*, 180).

Although Luke does not explain how, Jesus Christ was able to escape from the violent crowd by "passing through the midst of them" (Luke 4:30). This episode clearly illustrates the truth of the Apostle John's statement that Jesus Christ "came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11; see also Isaiah 53:2–3).

Luke 4:31–44. "He Laid His Hands on Every One of Them, and Healed Them"

In contrast to the people of Nazareth who rejected the Savior, many in Capernaum sought Him out and pleaded "that he should not depart from them" (Luke 4:42). This may have been one of the reasons why Capernaum came to be known as Jesus's "own city" (Matthew 9:1) and as Church headquarters for His ministry. The differences in the Savior's ministries in Nazareth and in Capernaum illustrate the truth that the Lord works "not among the children of men save it be according to their faith" (2 Nephi 27:23; see also Matthew 13:58). As described in Luke 4:44, Jesus customarily went first to the synagogues to teach, a practice continued by the Apostles after His Resurrection.

Luke 4:33–37, 40–41. Jesus Christ Cast Out Devils

To learn about the Savior's power to cast out devils, see the commentary for Mark 1:23–27, 34; 3:11, 14–15, 22–30.

Luke 4:38–39. "Simon's Wife's Mother" (see also Matthew 8:14; Mark 1:30)

Luke 4:38 reveals that Simon Peter was married. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that "Jesus' specially selected disciples were married men with wives and children and families of their own" (*The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary* [1980], 2:37). Elder McConkie further explained that "some persons in some of the churches in the world are bound by vows of celibacy whereunder they agree to remain unmarried. Celibacy

is not of God, whose law is that ‘Marriage is honourable in all’ (Heb. 13:4), and that men should ‘Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.’ (Gen. 1:28.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 119).

Luke 5:1–5, 11

What impresses you about Simon Peter’s response to the Savior? How can you follow Peter’s example when you receive direction from the Lord?

Luke 5:1–9. “Launch Out into the Deep” (see also Matthew 4:18–22; Mark 1:16–20)

At the time of his call to be a disciple, Simon Peter was working as a successful fisherman who, with his partners, owned at least two ships. Yet Peter was willing



Cast Your Net to the Other Side, by Minerva Teichert

to forsake everything to follow Jesus Christ. The account of Simon Peter forsaking a spectacular catch of fish to follow the Savior is found only in Luke, though a similar event that occurred after the Resurrection is recorded in John 21:2–6. **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, while serving as a dean at Brigham Young University, explained the significance of this event in Peter’s life:

“Peter was, in President [Spencer W.] Kimball’s words, ‘a diamond in the rough—a diamond that would need to be cut, trimmed, and polished by correction, chastisement, and trials—but nevertheless a diamond of real quality. The Savior knew this apostle could be trusted to receive the keys of the kingdom’ [*Peter, My Brother*, Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year (July 13, 1971), 2]. Time was short. Much had to be done in a matter of months. Jesus prepared Peter as quickly as possible for the call that was to come.

“‘Launch out into the deep,’ he counseled this fisherman one morning in Galilee, ‘and let down your nets for a draught.’ (Luke 5:4.) After an unsuccessful night of effort, Peter’s expert judgment told him a final effort was useless. But this was a man of genuinely childlike faith, and he lowered the net. The number of fish taken in

that single attempt strained the strings until they began to break and filled two boats until they began to sink. In that small ship Peter kneeled, stunned, at the feet of the Master. Jesus said lovingly, ‘Henceforth thou shalt catch men.’ (Luke 5:10.)

“*Launch out into the deep!* Peter could not have known the ever-widening circles that single command would make in the stream of his plain and simple life. He was launching out into the expanse of godliness, into the eternal possibilities of redeemed and celestial life. He would be learning the mysteries of the kingdom. He would be hearing unspeakable things. To launch out into that limitless sea of the gospel of Jesus Christ, Peter brought his craft to shore, turned his back on the most spectacular single catch ever taken from Galilee, ‘forsook all, and followed him.’ (Luke 5:11.)

“From that moment on Jesus taught and trained Peter at every opportunity” (“The Lengthening Shadow of Peter,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1975, 32).

Luke 5:8. Peter Saw Himself as a Sinful Man

When Peter first met the Savior and witnessed His miraculous power, Peter recognized that he was “a sinful man” in great need of the Savior’s redeeming power (Luke 5:8). Peter’s words illustrate that as we draw near to God, we become aware of our sinfulness and unworthiness and desire His help in becoming more like Him.

Luke 5:10–11. “They Forsook All, and Followed Him” (see also Matthew 4:22; Mark 1:20)

Peter, James, and John exemplified the qualities of discipleship as “they forsook all” and followed the Savior. **President James E. Faust** (1920–2007) of the First Presidency used the experience of Peter and his partners James and John to teach about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ:

“Jesus said to Peter, ‘Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.’ Luke then tells us, ‘When they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him’ [Luke 5:10–11]. They became the Lord’s disciples.

“The word for *disciple* and the word for *discipline* both come from the same Latin root—*discipulus*, which means pupil. It emphasizes practice or exercise. Self-discipline and self-control are consistent and permanent characteristics of the followers of Jesus, as exemplified by Peter, James, and John, who indeed ‘forsook all, and followed him.’



Christ Calling Peter and Andrew, by Harry Anderson

“What is discipleship? It is primarily obedience to the Savior. Discipleship includes many things. It is chastity. It is tithing. It is family home evening. It is keeping all the commandments. It is forsaking anything that is not good for us. . . .

“ . . . Discipleship [requires] us to forsake evil transgression and enjoy what President Spencer W. Kimball has called ‘the miracle of forgiveness’ [see *The Miracle of Forgiveness* (1969), 362]. This can come only through repentance, which means that we forsake sin and resolve each day to be followers of truth and righteousness. As Jesus taught, ‘What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am’ [3 Nephi 27:27]” (“Discipleship,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 20, 22). To read more about Jesus Christ’s disciples forsaking their nets, see the commentary for Matthew 4:18–22.

Luke 5–6. Commentary Found Elsewhere in This Manual

Many of the teachings and events in the Savior’s ministry that are found in Luke 5–6 are also found in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. The following chart identifies where you can find student manual commentary for these teachings and events:

Location of Topic in Luke	Commentary in This Manual
Luke 5:12–15. Jesus Christ healed a leper.	Mark 1:40–45
Luke 5:17–26. Jesus healed a man with palsy.	Mark 2:2–5
Luke 5:27–32. Jesus called Levi (Matthew) to follow Him.	Matthew 9:9–13
Luke 5:36–39. Christ told the parables of the old and new garments and bottles.	Matthew 9:14–17
Luke 6:1–11. Jesus taught about proper Sabbath observance.	Mark 2:23–3:7 and Mark 2:27–28
Luke 6:12–13. The Savior chose Twelve Apostles.	Matthew 10:1–5
Luke 6:17–49. Christ taught the Sermon on the Plain.	Multiple commentaries for Matthew 5–7 (Sermon on the Mount) beginning with Matthew 5:1–12

Luke 5:39. “No Man Also Having Drunk Old Wine Straightway Desireth New”

Elder Bruce R. McConkie suggested that the Savior likely gave the one-verse parable in Luke 5:39 in response to a question from disciples of John the Baptist, recorded in Matthew 9:14–17. The meaning of the Savior’s words can be understood in this way: “In following John, who was sent of my Father to prepare the way before me, you have conformed to the law of Moses [the old wine]. Now, however, [one] greater than Moses is here, even the Messiah, and as John taught, you must now follow him, even though it is difficult for you to ‘straightway’ turn from your old teachings and accept the new” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 1:186). Following the counsel of the scriptures and the living prophets can be very difficult when these inspired teachings challenge one’s personal views or traditions.

Luke 6:12

Compare this verse with Luke 4:42 and Luke 5:16. What pattern from the Savior’s life is evident in these verses? How can you apply this pattern in your life to help you become more like the Savior?

Luke 6:17–49. The Sermon on the Plain

Many of the teachings in the Savior’s Sermon on the Plain, recorded in Luke 6, are identical or similar to the teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, recorded in Matthew 5–7. In describing the setting for these teachings, Luke’s account differs from Matthew’s by stating that Jesus Christ “came down” from the mountain with the Twelve and “stood in the plain,” where He began to heal and teach “a great multitude” (Luke 6:17). It is unclear whether “the plain” refers to a low place apart from the mountain or a plateau within the mount. Because of this uncertainty, there are varying views regarding whether the Sermon on the Mount recorded

by Matthew and the Sermon on the Plain recorded by Luke were the same or different events. However, the chronological placement and the context of Luke's record seem to indicate that the same sermon is being recorded in Luke 6 and Matthew 5–7.

While the two accounts of the sermon have much in common, Luke's account includes several distinctive elements. For example, the Beatitudes recorded by Luke, such as, "Blessed are ye that hunger now" (Luke 6:21), are followed with contrasting woes that do not appear in Matthew, such as, "Woe unto you that are full!" (Luke 6:25). This declaration from the Savior can mean that those who are full of a sense of their own righteousness will not hunger and thirst after Him. The Savior also declared, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!" (Luke 6:26), meaning that those who are striving to act righteously will often offend those seeking to do evil.

The inclusion of these teachings contributes to a theme Luke repeatedly emphasized throughout his Gospel—that Jesus Christ came to correct the unjust conditions of a fallen world (see Luke 1:50–53; 16:19–31). The Sermon on the Plain also includes teachings on lending (see Luke 6:34–35), showing mercy (see Luke 6:36–37), and giving generously (see Luke 6:38) that are not found in Matthew 5–7.

Luke 6:38. "Pressed Down, and Shaken Together, and Running Over"

As recorded in Luke 6:38, the Savior asked us to give to others abundantly. The image He used is of a harvest basket that has been filled with produce beyond the specified amount. Then the contents of the basket have been "pressed down" and "shaken together" so that even more produce can be added—until the basket is "running over." This image of giving abundantly carries with it a corresponding blessing—those who do so will receive from others the same measure of generosity. The Savior's instruction to give generously applies to material offerings (see Luke 6:30, 34–35) as well as to intangible gifts, such as love, mercy, and forgiveness (see Luke 6:32–37). Commenting on this verse, **President Dieter F. Uchtdorf** of the First Presidency asked, "Shouldn't this promise be enough to always focus our efforts on acts of kindness, forgiveness, and charity instead of on any negative behavior?" ("The Merciful Obtain Mercy," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 76).

Luke 7:2–10. A Centurion of Great Faith (see also Matthew 8:5–10)

A centurion was an officer in the Roman army in command of a company of 50 to 100 men. The Jews generally viewed centurions with contempt, for they symbolized the Roman political and military authority. However, Luke highlighted several admirable qualities of this particular centurion. He was altruistic, centering his request on the needs of his servant, "who was dear unto him" (Luke 7:2). The centurion's goodness was affirmed by elders of the Jews. He demonstrated genuine humility, deeming himself unworthy to visit Jesus in person or to have Jesus enter his house (see Luke 7:6–7). Another reason the centurion may not have sought a personal visit with Jesus is that observant Jews were forbidden to have close contact with Gentiles, such as eating with them or entering their homes.

The centurion, however, did not allow his feelings of unworthiness to prevent him from seeking the Savior's help. He exercised tremendous faith in Jesus Christ, believing His word alone was sufficient to heal the servant. The centurion acknowledged Jesus's divine authority and by using the word *also* likened it unto the military authority with which he was familiar (see Luke 7:8). The Savior's response that He had "not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (Luke 7:9) corresponds with His messianic declaration that He was anointed to bless all who would accept Him (see Luke 4:16–30) and supports Luke's theme regarding the Lord's concern for Gentiles.



Ruins of a Capernaum synagogue dating to the fourth or fifth century A.D. Beneath the remains of the white limestone synagogue, the black basalt foundation of an earlier synagogue can be seen. It has been dated to the first century A.D. and is likely the synagogue built by the centurion, as described in Luke 7:5. In this synagogue, the Savior taught (see Mark 1:21; John 6:59), cast evil spirits out of a man (see Mark 1:21–26), and healed a man with a withered hand (see Mark 2:1; 3:1–5).

RICHARD L. W. CLEAVE

Luke 7:11–18. Jesus Christ Restored to Life the Son of a Widow of Nain

The account of this miracle, found only in Luke, is one of three accounts of Jesus bringing a dead person back to life (see also Mark 5:35–43; John 11:1–44). The young man described in Luke 7 was “the only son of his mother, and she was a widow” (Luke 7:12). The loss of her only son meant that the widow was left without means of temporal support. Those who witnessed Jesus Christ restore the young man to life acknowledged, “A great prophet is risen up among us” (Luke 7:16). This statement suggests that the miracle may have prompted people to note similarities between the ministries of the Savior and two ancient prophets. Centuries earlier, Elijah had restored to life the son of a widow at Zarephath (see 1 Kings 17:17–24), and Elisha had raised the son of a widow in the village of Shunem, just three miles (five kilometers) northwest of Nain (see 2 Kings 4:17–22, 32–37).



Christ Raises the Son of the Widow of Nain, by Robert T. Barrett

President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) invited us to follow the Savior’s example of compassion: “Few accounts of the Master’s ministry touch me more than His example of compassion shown to the grieving widow at Nain. . . . What power, what tenderness, what compassion did our Master thus demonstrate! We, too, can bless if we will but follow His noble example. Opportunities are everywhere. Needed are eyes to see the pitiable plight and ears to hear the silent pleadings of a broken heart. Yes, and a soul filled with compassion, that we might communicate not only eye to eye or voice to ear but, in the majestic style of the Savior, even heart to heart” (“Meeting Life’s Challenges,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 71).

Luke 7:19–23. Why Did John the Baptist Send Disciples to Jesus Christ?

To better understand why John sent disciples to the Savior, see the commentary for Matthew 11:2–6.

Luke 7:24–30. “There Is Not a Greater Prophet Than John the Baptist”

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) gave three reasons why John the Baptist is considered one of the greatest of prophets:

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

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

“Thirdly. John, at that time, was the only legal administrator in the affairs of the kingdom there was then on the earth, and holding the keys of power. . . . These three reasons constitute him the greatest prophet born” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 81–82).

Luke 7:28. “He That Is Least in the Kingdom of God Is Greater Than He”

Jesus Christ referred to Himself when he spoke of “he that is least in the kingdom of God” (Luke 7:28), as the **Prophet Joseph Smith** explained: “Whom did Jesus have reference to as being the least? Jesus was looked upon as having the least claim in God’s kingdom, and [seemingly] was least entitled to their credulity as a prophet; as though He had said—‘He that is considered the least among you is greater than John—that is I myself’” (*Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 82).

Luke 7:31–35. Children in the Market

To better understand the analogy of children in the market, see the commentary for Matthew 11:16–19.

Luke 7:36–50. “She Is a Sinner”

While dining with a Pharisee named Simon, Jesus Christ was approached by a woman who had a reputation as a sinner (see Luke 7:37, 39). While she was apparently not invited to the feast, the woman was able to enter Simon’s house because of social customs that allowed people in need to visit banquets and receive leftover food. The woman washed the Savior’s feet with her tears, kissed his feet, and anointed them with an ointment. Simon saw this action and, in his thoughts, criticized Jesus Christ for allowing the woman to touch Him. In response, the Lord called attention to Simon’s own faults. In contrast to the woman’s acts of devotion toward the Savior, Simon had given Jesus no water to

wash His feet, had offered no kiss of greeting, and had not anointed His head with oil. By purposely withholding these customary acts of kindness for a guest, Simon had demonstrated a lack of respect for the Savior.

Jesus then told a parable that presented both Simon and the woman as sinners who owed a debt to divine justice (see Luke 7:40–43). Despite the woman’s greater sins, it was she, not Simon, who received the Savior’s blessings of forgiveness and peace because of her faith in the Savior and repentance of her sins (see Luke 7:48, 50). Consistent with the Savior’s parable, **Elder Neil L. Andersen** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that each of us needs to feel the Savior’s love and forgiveness, regardless of the nature or magnitude of our sins:

“There are many degrees of personal worthiness and righteousness. Yet repentance is a blessing to all of us. We each need to feel the Savior’s arms of mercy through the forgiveness of our sins.

“Years ago, I was asked to meet with a man who, long before our visit, had had a period of riotous living. As a result of his bad choices, he lost his membership in the Church. He had long since returned to the Church and was faithfully keeping the commandments, but his previous actions haunted him. Meeting with him, I felt his shame and his deep remorse at having set his covenants aside. Following our interview, I placed my hands upon his head to give him a priesthood blessing. Before speaking a word, I felt an overpowering sense of the Savior’s love and forgiveness for him. Following the blessing, we embraced and the man wept openly.

“I am amazed at the Savior’s encircling arms of mercy and love for the repentant, no matter how selfish the forsaken sin. I testify that the Savior is able and eager to forgive our sins. Except for the sins of those few who choose perdition after having known a fulness, there is no sin that cannot be forgiven. What a marvelous privilege for each of us to turn away from our sins and

to come unto Christ. Divine forgiveness is one of the sweetest fruits of the gospel, removing guilt and pain from our hearts and replacing them with joy and peace of conscience” (“Repent . . . That I May Heal You,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 40–41).

One week before the Savior’s Crucifixion, Mary, the sister of Lazarus, also anointed the Savior’s feet. At that time, the anointing was in anticipation of the Savior’s death and burial (see John 12:3, 7).

Luke 7:47. “To Whom Little Is Forgiven, the Same Loveth Little”

By declaring, “To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little” (Luke 7:47), Jesus Christ taught that people who choose not to seek the blessings of divine forgiveness for their sins are showing their lack of love for Him. **Elder Marion D. Hanks** (1921–2011) of the Presidency of the Seventy said of this teaching: “There is here, of course, no encouragement or condoning of sin. [The woman] had been converted by the Lord and sorely repented, and would obey his commandments and accept his forgiveness. And there would be rejoicing in heaven and should be on earth” (“He Means Me,” *Ensign*, May 1979, 75).

In addition, we are warned that deliberate sin mocks the Savior’s Atonement. We should show our love for the Savior by striving to keep His commandments and sincerely repenting of our sins. “If you delay repentance, you may lose blessings, opportunities, and spiritual guidance. You may also become further entangled in sinful behavior, making it more difficult to find your way back” (*For the Strength of Youth* [booklet, 2011], 28).

Luke 8. Commentary Found Elsewhere in This Manual

Many of the teachings and events in the Savior’s ministry that are found in Luke 8 are also found in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. The following chart identifies where you can find student manual commentary for these teachings and events:

Location of Topic in Luke	Commentary in This Manual
Luke 8:4–15. Christ gave the parable of the sower.	Matthew 13:4–8
Luke 8:19–21. “My mother and my brethren . . . hear the word of God, and do it.”	Matthew 12:48–50
Luke 8:22–25. Jesus Christ calmed a storm.	Mark 4:35–41
Luke 8:26–40. The Savior cast out a legion of devils.	Mark 5:1–20
Luke 8:39. “Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee.”	Mark 5:19
Luke 8:41–56. Jesus Christ raised Jairus’s daughter from the dead.	Mark 5:22–24, 35–42
Luke 8:43–48. The Savior healed a woman with an issue of blood.	Mark 5:25–34

Luke 8:1–3

Which two groups of people did Luke mention as he described the Savior's earthly ministry and travels? How do these two groups carry on the work of the Savior today? How can you apply this pattern in your life to help you become more like the Savior?

Luke 8:1–3. Women Ministered unto Christ

Luke's account of the women who traveled with Jesus emphasized the Savior's concern for all people, including women—who were sometimes marginalized in first-century Jewish society. During the Savior's ministry in Galilee, teaching in "every city and village" of the region (Luke 8:1), His Apostles traveled with Him, as did many women, some of whom had been healed of various maladies. Others could have been wives of the Apostles. Some women followed Jesus to the time of His death and beyond (see Luke 23:27; 24:10; John 20:11–18). Using the means they had, these women were supporting Jesus and His leaders. **President Howard W. Hunter** affirmed the Savior's regard for all women and asked the women of the Church in our day to stand united with the brethren in furthering the work of the Lord:

"It must be comforting to you beloved sisters of his Church to remember that this same Jesus, our Savior through the Atonement, demonstrated his love and concern for the women of his time. He enjoyed the company of women and had close friends among them. . . . Is there any reason to think that he cares any less about women today? . . .

"As our Lord and Savior needed the women of his time for a comforting hand, a listening ear, a believing heart, a kind look, an encouraging word, loyalty—even in his hour of humiliation, agony, and death—so we, his servants all across the Church, need you, the women of the Church, to stand with us and for us in stemming the tide of evil that threatens to engulf us. Together we must stand faithful and firm in the faith against superior numbers of other-minded people. It seems to me that there is a great need to rally the women of the Church to stand with and for the Brethren in stemming the tide of evil that surrounds us and in moving forward the work of our Savior" ("To the Women of the Church," *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 95–96).

Mary Magdalene, the woman to whom the resurrected Savior first appeared (see John 20:10–18), was one of the women who accompanied Jesus. Luke recorded that the Savior had cast seven devils out of her (see Luke 8:2). Mary Magdalene should not be confused with the sinful woman mentioned in Luke 7:36–50 or with Mary of Bethany (see Luke 10:38–42; John 11:1). Mary Magdalene held an honored place in the kingdom—implied in John 20:10–18 and other passages.

Points to Ponder

- Review Luke 6:35–36. When have you experienced Heavenly Father's generosity and kindness? How will you seek to make these attributes part of your character?
- Review Luke 7:1–10. What are some ways in which you, like the centurion, can choose to show great faith in Jesus Christ?
- What do you learn about the Savior's regard for women from the accounts of the widow of Nain, the woman who washed the Savior's feet, and the women who ministered to Jesus Christ? (see Luke 7:11–15; 7:36–50; 8:2–3).

Suggested Assignments

- Study the account of the Savior's temptations in the wilderness recorded in Luke 4:1–13. Luke's account of these temptations shows that the Savior was unwilling to deliberately place Himself in circumstances from which He would need divine rescue (see the commentary for Luke 4:9–12). Write a one-page essay or journal entry about how you can follow the Savior's example by avoiding situations, activities, and materials that are physically and spiritually harmful.
- Write a talk about repentance. To explain and illustrate aspects of repentance, use the example of the woman who washed the Savior's feet, recorded in Luke 7:36–50, and the information under "Repentance" in *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* (2004), pages 132–35.

Luke 9–14

Introduction and Timeline for Luke 9–14

The events recorded in Luke 9–14 represent a new stage in the Savior’s ministry. He began preparing His disciples for greater responsibility, empowering and sending forth the Twelve and the Seventy to preach and heal. In addition, Jesus Christ repeatedly emphasized vital aspects of discipleship, such as compassion, prayer, faith, repentance, sacrifice, humility, and perseverance. He also warned against hypocrisy and the tendency to allow temporal concerns to displace spiritual priorities.

This growing emphasis on the requirements of discipleship occurred as Jesus Christ “steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51), where He knew He would suffer and die (see Luke 9:22, 31). As He faced this difficult aspect of His earthly mission, the Savior modeled perfect devotion to God, reinforcing His teachings on discipleship with “the eloquence of his example” (Neal A. Maxwell, “The Pathway of Discipleship,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1998, 13).



1. Jesus Christ called, empowered, and instructed the Seventy.
2. He taught the parable of the good Samaritan.
3. The Savior taught Mary and Martha at Bethany.
4. He gave the parable of the great supper.
5. Jesus Christ taught about the requirements of discipleship.

Commentary for Luke 9–14

Luke 9. Commentary Found Elsewhere in This Manual

Many of the teachings and events in the Savior’s ministry that are found in Luke 9 are also found in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. The following chart identifies where you can find student manual commentary for these teachings and events:

Luke 9:7–9. Herod Desired to See Jesus

The Herod mentioned in Luke 9 was Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great. The word *tetrarch* technically means a ruler over a fourth part of the country. Antipas was ruler over Galilee and Perea. Herod Antipas had murdered John the Baptist and was haunted by this action because he heard rumors that John, whom he knew to be a great man, had come back from the dead.

Location of Topic in Luke	Commentary in This Manual
Luke 9:1–6. The Savior sent the Twelve out to preach and heal.	Matthew 10:1–5
Luke 9:7–9. Herod had John the Baptist killed and desired to see Jesus.	Mark 6:14–29
Luke 9:10–17. Christ fed the five thousand.	Mark 6:32–44
Luke 9:18–22. Peter testified that Jesus is the Christ.	Mark 8:27–32
Luke 9:23–27. Whoever will “take up his cross” and “lose his life” gains salvation.	Mark 8:34–38
Luke 9:28–36. The Transfiguration took place.	Matthew 17:1–13 and Matthew 17:2 and Matthew 17:3 and Matthew 17:3–5 and Matthew 17:3–9
Luke 9:37–42. A man’s son, who was possessed by an unclean spirit, was healed.	Mark 9:17–29
Luke 9:46–48. The disciples asked which should be greatest among them.	Mark 9:33–37; 10:35–45
Luke 9:49–50. “He that is not against us is for us.”	Mark 9:38–40

He also heard rumors that Jesus could be the fulfillment of the prophesied return of Elias (Greek for Elijah) foretold by Malachi (see Malachi 3:1; 4:5). When Herod Antipas heard these things, he wanted to meet Jesus.

Luke 9:51–56. “Ye Know Not What Manner of Spirit Ye Are Of”

After Jesus completed His mission in Galilee and knew that it was time for Him to travel toward Jerusalem (see Luke 9:51), He sent messengers to prepare a place for Him in a Samaritan village. But because the Samaritans hated the Jews, the villagers would not let the Savior stay in their village. In these circumstances, Jesus demonstrated patience and forbearance and admonished His disciples to do the same. He taught them that they were not acting under the influence of God’s Spirit.

To learn more about historical tensions between Jews and Samaritans, see the commentary for John 4:19–24.

Just as the Savior urged His disciples to exercise forbearance, **President Gordon B. Hinckley** (1910–2008) asked Church members to show respect for those with whom we may differ: “There is so great a need for civility and mutual respect among those of differing beliefs and philosophies. We must not be partisans of any doctrine of ethnic superiority. We live in a world of diversity. We can and must be respectful toward those with whose teachings we may not agree. We must be willing to defend the rights of others who may become the victims of bigotry” (“This Is the Work of the Master,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 71).

Luke 9:57–62. Following Jesus Christ (see also Matthew 8:19–22)

When a “certain man” said that he would follow the Savior wherever He went, the Savior answered that “the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Luke 9:58), indicating that He had no home of His own. His mission was void of comforts and ease, implying that such may also be the case for those who follow Him.

Luke 9:59–60. “Let the Dead Bury Their Dead”

Respect for parents was very important in Jewish culture and included the responsibility to provide a proper burial for them when they died. After preparing a body for burial and placing it in a tomb, family members typically returned a year later to place the bones in a stone box called an ossuary, which remained in the tomb as

a secondary burial. If the disciple was speaking of his father’s secondary burial, the Savior’s response would seem to communicate that now was the time for the man to serve a mission (see Luke 9:59–60). The man could be at peace about letting his deceased father remain in the tomb with other dead members of the family. It is also possible that the Savior’s response could be understood, “Let the [spiritually] dead bury their [physically] dead.”

In either case, the Savior’s words do not mean it is wrong to mourn the loss of a loved one or give proper respect at a funeral. Rather, these words emphasize devotion to the Lord as a disciple’s highest priority.



Left: An ossuary—a stone box in which bones of the deceased are respectfully placed. Right: A niche that has been chiseled out of a stone tomb, where an ossuary is placed for permanent burial.

Luke 9:62. “Looking Back”

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) explained the Savior’s analogy of a man starting to plow a field and then looking back. The Savior used this analogy to teach the dangers of looking back once we have decided to follow Him: “To dig a straight furrow, the plowman needs to keep his eyes on a fixed point ahead of him. That keeps him on a true course. If, however, he happens to look back to see where he has been, his chances of straying are increased. The results are crooked and irregular furrows. We invite those of you who are new members to fix your attention on your new goal and never look back on your earlier problems or transgressions except as a reminder of your growth and your worth and your blessings from God. If our energies are focused not behind us but ahead of us—on eternal life and the joy of salvation—we assuredly will obtain it” (“Am I a ‘Living’ Member?” *Ensign*, May 1987, 17).

Luke 10:1–16. “The Lord Appointed Other Seventy”

Luke is the only Gospel writer to record that Jesus Christ called the Seventy, in addition to the Twelve Apostles, to preach the gospel and prepare the way for Him. The Savior’s calling of the Seventy and instructions to them (see Luke 10:1–16) were similar to the instructions He gave to His Twelve Apostles (see Matthew 10). **President Boyd K. Packer** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that because modern Apostles cannot go everywhere they are needed, they assign members of the Seventy to minister in their stead:

“Each of the Seventy has had conferred upon him the apostolic authority. . . . The Seventy go where the Twelve, limited by their number, cannot. Seventies are scattered across the world, as they were in the early days of the Church” (“Fledgling Finches and Family Life” [Brigham Young University devotional, Aug. 18, 2009], 4; speeches.byu.edu).

The Seventy today are called to be “traveling ministers” (D&C 107:97), while deacons and teachers and elders are appointed to be “standing ministers unto the church” (D&C 84:111; 124:137).

Luke 10:2. “The Harvest Truly Is Great, but the Labourers Are Few”

Just as the Savior declared the need for more laborers to bring about the harvest of salvation, latter-day prophets have consistently called for greater numbers of missionaries. **President Thomas S. Monson** (1927–2018) reiterated this message to the youth of the Church:

“I repeat what prophets have long taught—that every worthy, able young man should prepare to serve a mission. Missionary service is a priesthood duty—an obligation the Lord expects of us who have been given so very much. Young men, I admonish you to prepare for service as a missionary. . . .

“A word to you young sisters: while you do not have the same priesthood responsibility as do the young men to serve as full-time missionaries, you also make a valuable contribution as missionaries, and we welcome your service” (“As We Meet Together Again,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 5–6). For additional information on the Savior’s teaching concerning the harvest and the laborers, see the commentary for Matthew 9:37–38.

Luke 10:21–24

Why did the Savior rejoice? Why did He tell His disciples that they were blessed? How might you liken these verses to yourself?

Luke 10:29–37. “Who Is My Neighbour?”

In response to the lawyer’s question, “And who is my neighbour?” (Luke 10:29), the Savior gave the parable of the good Samaritan (see Luke 10:30–37). There was considerable animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans at the time of Christ. Under normal circumstances, these two groups avoided association with each other.

President Howard W. Hunter taught that by acting with compassion toward a man who was a Jew, “the Samaritan gave us an example of pure Christian love.” Applying the parable to our lives, President Hunter also taught, “We need to remember that though we make our friends, God has made our neighbors—everywhere. Love should have no boundary; we should have no narrow loyalties. Christ said, ‘For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?’ (Matthew 5:46)” (“The Lord’s Touchstone,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 34–35).

Luke 10:31–36. A Priest, a Levite, and a Samaritan

In the written law of Moses, priests and Levites were assigned to serve God and their fellowmen, both in the temple and as teachers and exemplars of God’s law. These priesthood bearers were fully aware of the commandment to “love thy neighbour as thyself” (Leviticus 19:18). In fact, Levites were specifically charged with helping travelers economically and in other ways (see Leviticus 25:35–36). In the Savior’s parable, however, the priest and the Levite violated these commandments—both noticed the wounded man yet “passed by on the other side” (Luke 10:31–32). The priest and Levite were following the oral law or tradition of the rabbis, which stated that Jews were not bound to deliver non-Jews or those of unknown ethnicity from death, for such a person was not a neighbor. The priest and Levite were within the bounds of oral law or tradition, but they were not within the pure law of Moses.

Ironically, the Samaritan filled the roles of the priest and the Levite as outlined in the written Mosaic law, whereas the oral law or tradition excused the behavior of the priest and the Levite.

Jesus’s parable undoubtedly had the ring of authenticity to His listeners. The road that “went down from Jerusalem to Jericho” (Luke 10:30), dropping 3,400 feet in elevation, was in those days infested with robbers and bandits and was known as the “red way” or “bloody path.”



RICHARD L. W. CLEAVE

Aerial view of the Wadi Kelt, near Jericho, in Israel. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho may have followed dry riverbeds like this one leading to modern Jericho. The road was about 17 miles (27 km) long and passed through desolate, hilly terrain notorious for robbers who would lie in wait to attack passing travelers.

Luke 10:33–35. “Oil and Wine”

The Samaritan treated the injuries of the wounded man with oil and wine, both of which have medicinal value. Oil was used to soothe and wine to disinfect. Wine and oil are also symbolic of the Atonement of Christ (see Matthew 26:27–29 and the commentary for Matthew 26:36). The oil and wine used by the Samaritan can be seen as symbolic of the Christlike love he showed to the wounded Jew. Other aspects of this parable further remind us of the Savior’s atoning act. Like the good Samaritan, Jesus Christ saves those in need of help. He has compassion and heals the spiritual wounds of sin. He saves us from death. Jesus brings us to safety and employs others to help us. Through His Atonement, Jesus Christ has personally paid the price for our recovery.



The Good Samaritan, by Walter Rane



To help you better visualize the story of the good Samaritan, review the video segment “Parable of the Good Samaritan” (4:48) from *The Life of Jesus Christ Bible Videos*, available on LDS.org. This segment covers Luke 10:25–37.

Luke 10:37. “Go, and Do Thou Likewise”

President Thomas S. Monson invited us to place ourselves in the parable of the good Samaritan to consider how we will respond to those who need our help:

“Each of us, in the journey through mortality, will travel his own Jericho Road. What will be your experience? What will be mine? Will I fail to notice him who has fallen among thieves and requires my help? Will you? Will I be one who sees the injured and hears his plea, yet crosses to the other side? Will you? Or will I be one who sees, who hears, who pauses, and who helps? Will you?”

“Jesus provided our watchword: ‘Go, and do thou likewise.’ When we obey that declaration, there opens to our view a vista of joy seldom equaled and never surpassed.

“. . . When we walk in the steps of that good Samaritan, we walk the pathway that leads to perfection” (“Your Jericho Road,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1989, 2, 4).

Luke 10:38–42. “Mary Hath Chosen That Good Part”

Hospitality was very important in Jewish society, and a woman’s honor and reputation depended partly on how well she fulfilled cultural expectations regarding the role of hostess. Because of these social customs, Martha’s complaint that her sister, Mary, had left her to serve alone (see Luke 10:40) would have been seen as justified by many people of the time. But the Savior responded to Martha by commending her sister’s choice: “Mary hath chosen that good part” (Luke 10:42). One of the things the Savior’s response clarified is that there are higher priorities than social customs, even if they are good customs. **President Dallin H. Oaks** of the First Presidency observed that righteous members of the Church must, like Mary, learn to discern those activities that are most important in life:

“Just because something is *good* is not a sufficient reason for doing it. The number of good things we can do far exceeds the time available to accomplish them. Some things are better than good, and these are the things that should command priority attention in our lives.

“Jesus taught this principle in the home of Martha. . . . It was praiseworthy for Martha to be ‘careful and troubled about many things’ (v. 41), but learning the gospel from the Master Teacher was more ‘needful.’ The scriptures

contain other teachings that some things are more blessed than others (see Acts 20:35; Alma 32:14–15). . . .

“Consider how we use our time in the choices we make in viewing television, playing video games, surfing the Internet, or reading books or magazines. Of course it is good to view wholesome entertainment or to obtain interesting information. But not everything of that sort is worth the portion of our life we give to obtain it. Some things are better, and others are best. . . .

“Some uses of individual and family time are better, and others are best. We have to forego some good things in order to choose others that are better or best because they develop faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and strengthen our families” (“Good, Better, Best,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 104–5, 107).



Mary Heard His Word, by Walter Rane

Luke 10:40–42. Martha’s Character

Elder Gregory A. Schwitzer of the Seventy invited Church members not to hastily misjudge Martha for being “careful and troubled about many things” on this one occasion:

“Many Sunday lessons have been taught using this story which have cast Martha in a lesser position in terms of her faith. Yet there is another story of this great woman, Martha, which gives us a deeper view of her understanding and testimony. It happened when the Savior arrived to raise her brother, Lazarus, from the dead. On this occasion it was Martha whom we find going to Jesus ‘as soon as she heard’ He was coming.”

The Savior shared with Martha the “great doctrine of the resurrection” and asked her if she believed in Him.

“She responded with her powerful testimony: ‘Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world’ [see John 11:20–27]. . . .

“Many a sister has often heard the first story and wondered if she were a Mary or a Martha, yet the truth lies in knowing the whole person and in using good judgment. By knowing more about Martha, we find she was actually a person of deep spiritual character who had a bold and daring testimony of the Savior’s mission and His divine power over life. A misjudgment of Martha may have caused us not to know the true nature of this wonderful woman” (“Developing Good Judgment and Not Judging Others,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 103–4).

Luke 11:1–4. The Lord’s Prayer

For further insight into the Lord’s Prayer, see the commentaries for Matthew 6:9, for Matthew 6:10, and for Matthew 6:13.

Luke 11:5–10. The Parable of the Friend at Midnight

The Savior’s instructions in Luke 11:5–10 include a parable, sometimes called the parable of the friend at midnight. The friend to whom the host of the traveler goes for bread represents our Father in Heaven. The parable teaches that persistent, righteous, and faithful prayers to our Father open the doors of heaven because of His overwhelming goodness and His love and concern for His children. The Joseph Smith Translation adds an introduction to the parable that helps make this clear: “*Your heavenly Father will not fail to give unto you whatsoever ye ask of him*” (Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 11:5 [in Luke 11:5, footnote a]).

Elder James E. Talmage (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles noted the differences between the friend in this parable and our Heavenly Father: “The Lord’s lesson was, that if man, with all his selfishness and disinclination to give, will nevertheless grant what his neighbor with proper purpose asks and continues to ask in spite of objection and temporary refusal, with assured certainty will God grant what is persistently asked in faith and with righteous intent. No parallelism lies between man’s selfish refusal and God’s wise and beneficent waiting. There must be a consciousness of real need for prayer, and real trust in God, to make prayer effective; and in mercy the Father sometimes delays the granting that the asking may be more fervent” (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 435).

Luke 11–12. Commentary Found Elsewhere in This Manual

Many of the teachings and events in the Savior’s ministry that are found in Luke 11–12 are also found in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. The following chart identifies where you can find student manual commentary for these teachings and events:

Location of Topic in Luke	Commentary in This Manual
Luke 11:14–23. Evil spirits	Matthew 12:31–32, 43–45 and Mark 3:22–27
Luke 11:24–26. Parable of the empty house	Matthew 12:31–32, 43–45
Luke 11:27–32. Sign of Jonah	Matthew 12:41–42
Luke 11:33–36. Light and darkness	Matthew 5:14–16 and Matthew 6:22
Luke 11:37–54. Reproving Pharisees and lawyers	Matthew 23:13–33
Luke 12:1–5. Hypocrisy	Matthew 16:1–4
Luke 12:22–32. Counseling the Apostles	Matthew 10:1–5
Luke 12:32–34. Treasures in heaven	Matthew 6:19–21

Luke 12:13–15. “Beware of Covetousness”

The Savior’s warning to “beware of covetousness” was addressed to a man who complained of his brother’s apparent greed. The exchange between this man and Jesus Christ demonstrates how the Lord will often show us our own weakness (see Ether 12:27), particularly when we are prone to finding fault with another (see Matthew 7:3–5; Luke 10:40–42).

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles warned of the dangers of covetousness: “Beware of covetousness. It is one of the great afflictions of these latter days. It creates greed and resentment. Often it leads to bondage, heartbreak, and crushing, grinding debt” (“Earthly Debts, Heavenly Debts,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2004, 40).

Luke 12:16–21. The Parable of the Foolish Rich Man

The foolish rich man’s selfishness can be seen in Luke 12:17–19, where the words *I* and *my* appear repeatedly; the man failed to consider sharing his fortune with others. Furthermore, he failed to recognize the source of his riches. In no way did the man acknowledge, as the Savior did, that it was “the ground” that “brought forth plentifully” (Luke 12:16), nor did the man thank the Lord for creating the earth in which his crops grew. Ultimately, the man was condemned not for the wise practice of storing temporal provisions but for failing to prepare spiritually for the future.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles provided insights into the Savior’s warning to the covetous man (see Luke 12:13–15) and the parable that followed: “In this conversation with a covetous, worldly-minded man, and in the resultant parable of the rich fool which grew out of it, our Lord teaches that those whose hearts are set on the things of this world shall lose their souls. The parable itself condemns worldly-mindedness, reminds men that death

and judgment are inevitable, and teaches that they should seek eternal riches rather than those things which moth and rust corrupt and which thieves break through and steal” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 1:474).

Luke 12:35–40

What similarities do you see between these teachings of the Savior about His Second Coming and the parable of the foolish rich man in Luke 12:16–21? How well do the terms “watching” and “ready” describe your current spiritual status?

Luke 12:38. The Savior’s Teachings about Preparation for the Second Coming

In the Savior’s parable recorded in Luke 12:35–40, we are compared to servants who do not know when “their lord” will return. They must be ready at all times for His return, just as we must be ready at all times for the Savior’s Second Coming. The Joseph Smith Translation clarifies that the Lord can come at any “watch of the night”—not just at the Second Coming—meaning that we will each face His judgment when we die:

“For, behold, he cometh in the first watch of the night, and he shall also come in the second watch, and again he shall come in the third watch.

“And verily I say unto you, He hath already come, as it is written of him; and again when he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, blessed are those servants when he cometh, that he shall find so doing:

“For the Lord of those servants shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

“And now, verily I say these things unto you, that ye may know this, that the coming of the Lord is as a thief in the night.

“And it is like unto a man who is an householder, who, if he watcheth not his goods, the thief cometh in an hour of which

he is not aware, and taketh his goods, and divideth them among his fellows” (Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 12:41–45 [in the Bible appendix]).

Luke 13:1–5. “Except Ye Repent, Ye Shall All Likewise Perish”

When some people reported to Jesus Christ that a group of Galileans had been killed at the temple by Roman authorities, presumably in the quelling of a riot, the Savior used this occasion to challenge the belief that calamities are always punishments from God. In making His point, He also reminded His listeners of a tower that had fallen in Jerusalem and claimed 18 lives. He further used this opportunity to emphasize that all have need of repentance. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained the Savior’s teachings:

“To say that particular individuals slain in war, killed in accidents, smitten with disease, stricken by plagues, or shorn of their property by natural calamities, have been singled out from among their fellows as especially deserving of such supposed retribution is wholly unwarranted. It is not man’s prerogative to conclude in individual cases of suffering or accident that such has befallen a person as a just retribution for an ungodly course. . . . The Lord brings difficulties upon the most righteous of his saints to test and try them; persecution . . . is the heritage of the faithful.

“The real lesson to be learned from Jesus’ conclusion, ‘Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish,’ is that there was no difference in righteousness between the slain and the living, and that unless the living repent they would perish with the dead. . . . In a broader sense the thought is that as these have perished temporally so shall all perish spiritually unless they repent” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:475–76).

Luke 13:6–9. The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

After teaching that all people must repent or perish (see Luke 13:1–5), the Savior spoke a parable about a barren fig tree. The “certain man” represents God, the “fig tree” represents the Jewish remnant of Israel, “his vineyard” represents the world, and the “dresser of his vineyard” represents the Son of God. For three years the owner of a vineyard waited in vain for a fig tree to produce fruit. He granted a final year for the tree to bear fruit, during which time it had to either produce fruit or be removed from the vineyard. This parable underscored the Savior’s teaching that all must repent or perish. Earlier, John the Baptist had declared a similar message (see Luke 3:8–9).

After giving this parable, the Savior continued to emphasize that Israel was failing to produce righteousness within its season of opportunity (see Luke 13:33–35).



The branches of a fig tree with no fruit

Luke 13:11–17

What is the importance of the words “loosed” and “loose” in this scripture passage? As the Savior healed an infirm woman on the Sabbath day, He twice said that she was “loosed” from her infirmity (Luke 13:12, 16). How can your observance of the Sabbath day help you be “loosed” from Satan’s influence on that holy day?

Luke 13:10–17. Healing on the Sabbath Day

After the Savior healed the woman who had suffered a physical affliction for 18 years (see Luke 13:10–17), the leader of the synagogue where the healing occurred complained because the miracle had been performed on the Sabbath day. The Savior’s response taught that it is lawful to do good things on the Sabbath day and that those who teach otherwise are hypocrites. From this response, we learn the importance of looking for good things we *can do* on the Sabbath day rather than becoming overly concerned with what we *cannot do*.

Luke 13:18–21. Parable of the Mustard Seed

For further insight into the parable of the mustard seed, see the commentary for Matthew 13:31–32.

Luke 13:23–30. “The Strait Gate”

In response to a question regarding the number of people who will be saved, the Savior gave a parable describing conditions of salvation that “many” would fail to meet (see Luke 13:23–30). Jesus Christ’s reference to the “strait gate” (verse 24) reinforces a theme,

prevalent throughout Luke 9–14, concerning the strict requirements of discipleship. The image of a strait gate or narrow way is used elsewhere in the scriptures to describe the necessity of receiving and honoring essential ordinances and covenants (see 2 Nephi 31:17–18; D&C 132:19–25). The Savior’s parable warns that those who possess knowledge of the Savior, yet fail to meet the requirements of discipleship, will be excluded from the celestial kingdom of God.

Luke 13:31–35. Jesus Mourned over Jerusalem

For further insight into the mourning of Jesus over Jerusalem, see the commentary for Matthew 23:37–39.

Luke 14:1–6. “An Ox Fallen into a Pit”

At the time of the Savior’s mortal ministry, many Jewish leaders prided themselves on their strict Sabbath observance. However, Jesus Christ rebuked their hypocrisy for being willing to help an animal, but not a person, on the Sabbath (see Luke 13:15–16; 14:5–6). The phrase “the ox is in the mire,” based on Luke 14:5, is used by some people in our day to justify activities inconsistent with the commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy. **President Spencer W. Kimball** (1895–1985) acknowledged that emergencies may occur on the Sabbath, but he cautioned against intentional or habitual violations of proper Sabbath observance: “The Savior knew that the ox gets in the mire on the Sabbath, but he knew also that no ox deliberately goes into the mire every week” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1953, 55).

Luke 14:7–11. “He That Humbleth Himself Shall Be Exalted”

Luke 14:1 provides context for the Savior’s teaching, “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Luke 14:11), by noting that the Savior was in “the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread.” Verse 7 further states that Jesus Christ noticed how others who were invited to the feast sought places of honor for themselves; the words “chief rooms” mean places of honor. According to custom, the most honored guests were seated closest to the host. The Savior used this setting to teach an eternal principle about the relationship between humility and exaltation: “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Luke 14:11; see also D&C 101:42).

Luke 14:12–24. The Parable of the Great Supper

While teaching the scribes and Pharisees about humility, Jesus provided an example of the actions of those who are humble, as recorded in Luke 14:12–14. He taught that when we treat individuals who are

poor or sick especially well, we will be rewarded in the “resurrection of the just.”

The Savior then presented His parable of the great supper (see Luke 14:15–24). In this parable, the feast represents the blessings of the gospel. This gospel feast is especially prepared for us and can fill and satisfy our needs. Though we are invited to partake of the feast, we may choose to refuse it. In the parable, the gospel blessings were offered to invited guests—the Jews—who chose not to come to the feast. The blessings were then offered to others who had not been invited—the Gentiles. The “certain man” in this parable represents God, and the “servant at supper time” represents Jesus and his Apostles.

Latter-day revelation provides other applications of the parable. In the latter days, all nations will be invited to “a supper of the house of the Lord.” The first people to be invited will be “the rich and the learned, the wise and the noble.” If they do not accept the gospel, “then shall the poor, the lame, and the blind, and the deaf, come in unto the marriage of the Lamb, and partake of the supper of the Lord” (D&C 58:9–11). Also, the statement made by one of Jesus’s listeners—“Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God” (Luke 14:15)—reminds us that just before the beginning of the Millennium, Christ and His servants will partake together of the bread and water of the sacrament (see D&C 27:5–14).



A typical meal in Bible times, consisting of fish, flatbread, grapes, nuts or seeds, and wine

While serving as a member of the Seventy, **Elder F. Burton Howard** referred to Doctrine and Covenants 58:8–10 and explained that these verses help us understand how concern for material things can prevent us from partaking of gospel blessings: “If the Lord is providing his own commentary on the parable of the great supper—and it seems that he is—then it is frightening to

note that those who declined the invitation were those more concerned with temporal problems—for example, a piece of ground, a yoke of oxen, or a wife who did not understand the significance of the supper. As we look at the part riches play in this parable, we can see that there is great risk in them—risk that concern for material things may cloud our view of what is eternally important (“Overcoming the World,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1996, 13).

Luke 14:18–20. Making Excuses

The excuses given in the parable of the great supper would have been considered insulting to the host; the excuses made clear that the guests did not want to attend, even though they had previously agreed to do so. The first two guests declined attending the feast so they could attend to ridiculous financial ventures—the purchase of land without having seen it or the purchase of five costly teams of oxen without having tested them. The third guest’s excuse, that he had recently married, seems more legitimate (see Deuteronomy 24:5), but it foreshadows the Savior’s teaching in Luke 14:26 that even one’s spouse should not take priority over the Lord.

While serving as a member of the Seventy, **Elder F. Melvin Hammond** encouraged us to avoid excuses and do what we must to partake of the Lord’s blessings: “We often must make significant changes in our lives in order to attend the feast at the table of the Lord. Too many of us put those changes off, thinking there is no urgency. Perhaps this parable could be called the ‘don’t bother me now, Lord’ parable. We try to excuse ourselves in various ways. Each rationalization comes from selfishness and almost always relates to something temporal. For some it is the Word of Wisdom. For others it is the law of tithing. Perhaps it is a reluctance to live the law of chastity. Whatever the reason, we who reject or delay our response to the Savior’s invitation show our lack of love for Him who is our King” (“Parables of Jesus: The Great Supper,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2003, 52).

Luke 14:25–33

What does verse 33 teach you about Jesus Christ’s expectations of His disciples? What specific examples of this expectation did the Savior give in verses 25–32?

Luke 14:26. What Is Meant by the Word “Hate”?

In the context of Luke 14:26, the Greek word translated as “hate” means to “love less” or “esteem less.” The Savior was not revoking the commandment to “honour thy father and thy mother” (Exodus 20:12);

He was teaching about priorities. For a disciple, devotion to family must come after devotion to Jesus Christ. For more information on these teachings, see the commentary for Matthew 10:34–37.

Luke 14:26–33. Sacrifice Is Required of All Disciples

As recorded in Luke 14:26–33, Jesus Christ taught His followers about the sacrifices they had to be willing to make in order to persist as His disciples. **Elder Neil L. Andersen** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained how he was affected by hearing of a new convert who made the sacrifices required of him as a disciple of Jesus Christ:

“I had just returned home from my mission. So much seemed ahead of me. Would I be able to consistently make the right choices throughout my life?”

“Then-Elder Gordon B. Hinckley spoke [during April 1973 general conference] of meeting a young naval officer from Asia. The officer had not been a Christian, but during training in the United States, he had learned about the Church and was baptized. He was now preparing to return to his native land.

“President Hinckley asked the officer: ‘Your people are not Christians. What will happen when you return home a Christian, and, more particularly, a Mormon Christian?’

“The officer’s face clouded, and he replied: ‘My family will be disappointed. . . . As for my future and my career, all opportunity may be foreclosed against me.’

“President Hinckley asked, ‘Are you willing to pay so great a price for the gospel?’

“With his dark eyes moistened by tears, he answered with a question: ‘It’s true, isn’t it?’

“President Hinckley responded, ‘Yes, it is true.’

“To which the officer replied, ‘Then what else matters?’ [see ‘The True Strength of the Church,’ *Ensign*, July 1973, 48].

“Through the years, I have reflected on these words: ‘It’s true, isn’t it? Then what else matters?’ These questions have helped me put difficult issues in proper perspective. . . .

“Of course, for all of us, there *are* other things that matter. When I heard President Hinckley’s talk as a 21-year-old, I needed to be serious about my studies; I needed employment to keep me in school; somehow I had to figure out how to convince a special young lady that she should take a chance on me; and I enjoyed other worthy activities.

“How do we find our way through the many things that matter? We simplify and purify our perspective. Some things are evil and must be avoided; some things are nice; some things are important; and some things are absolutely essential” (“It’s True, Isn’t It? Then What Else Matters?” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 74).



JAMES JEFFERY

Tower in a Nazareth village in Israel, reminiscent of the tower described in Luke 14:28–30

Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 14:28. Live in Harmony with the Commandments

While serving as a member of the Seventy, **Elder Larry W. Gibbons** explained that to be “settled” in the gospel requires a decision to live in total harmony with the commandments:

“In Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 14:28 [see Luke 14:27, footnote *b*] the Lord says: ‘Wherefore, settle this in your hearts, that ye will do the things which I shall teach, and command you.’ I love that phrase ‘settle this.’ Brothers and sisters, I pray that we are ‘settled.’ There are precious blessings that come only from the complete yielding of one’s heart to God. . . .

“Now, young men and young women, as you begin to set your priorities in life, remember, the only true security in life is living the commandments. . . .

“. . . What a great thing it is to decide once and for all early in life what you will do and what you will not do with regards to honesty, modesty, chastity, the Word of Wisdom, and temple marriage.

“Brothers and sisters, stay on the straight and narrow path. No, stay in the *middle* of the straight and narrow path. Don’t drift; don’t wander; don’t dabble; be careful.

“. . . Living the commandments will bring you the happiness that too many look for in other places” (“Wherefore, Settle This in Your Hearts,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 103–4).

Luke 14:34–35. Salt of the Earth

For further insights into the Savior’s teaching about being the “salt of the earth,” see the commentary for Matthew 5:13.

Points to Ponder

- Many of the teachings in Luke 9–14 address our need to ensure that temporal concerns do not displace spiritual priorities. Are temporal or material matters crowding out spiritual priorities in your life? If so, what adjustments will you make?
- How have the Savior’s teachings regarding the requirements of discipleship, found in Luke 9–14, increased your understanding of what it means to follow Him?

Suggested Assignments

- Study Luke 10:33–35 and identify seven or eight ways the Samaritan sacrificed to help a person in need. Record your responses to the following questions in your journal: While we are in mortality, in what ways are all of us like the man who fell among thieves? In what ways is the Samaritan like the Savior? What is one way I can follow the Savior’s example to help someone in need?
- A major emphasis in Luke 9–14 is on the commitment required by discipleship. Make a concerted effort to evaluate your own level of commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. Consider your personal prayers, scripture study, Church activity, and service to others. Determine a course of action to deepen your commitment in one of these areas.

Luke 15–17

Introduction and Timeline for Luke 15–17

The events recorded in Luke 15–17 occurred as Jesus traveled from Galilee toward Jerusalem, including in the area of Perea, near the end of His mortal ministry. Luke recorded several of the Savior’s parables, including the well-known parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son (see Luke 15). These three parables illustrate our responsibility to diligently seek out those who have become separated from God, the joy that attends their return to Him, and the love God has for all of His children. Through the parable of the unjust steward (see Luke 16:1–12), the Savior taught that we need to be constantly preparing for the Day of Judgment. Through the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the Lord rebuked self-righteous and covetous Pharisees (see Luke 16:19–31), warning that their attitudes would bring suffering upon themselves in the next life if they did not repent. From the parable of the unprofitable servant (see Luke 17:7–10) and the Savior’s healing of ten lepers (see Luke 17:11–19), we

learn the importance of living in gratitude to God and recognizing our indebtedness to Him.



1. Jesus taught the parables of the lost sheep, lost coin, and prodigal son.
2. Jesus rebuked covetous Pharisees and taught them the parables of the unjust steward and of the rich man and Lazarus.
3. The Savior taught the parable of the unprofitable servant, and He healed ten lepers in the borders of Samaria and Galilee.

Commentary for Luke 15–17

Luke 15–17. Perea Ministry

At least some of the Savior’s teachings recorded in Luke 15–17 were given in Perea, the area east of the Jordan River, and constitute what is often called the Perea ministry, a time that lasted no more than a few weeks.

Of this ministry, **Elder James E. Talmage** (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles noted: “The violent hostility of the Jews in Jerusalem, the headquarters of the theocracy, was such that Jesus withdrew from the city and its neighborhood. The day for His sacrifice had not yet come, and while His enemies could not kill Him until He allowed Himself to be taken into their hands, His work would be retarded by further hostile disturbances. He retired to the place at which John the Baptist had begun his public ministry, which is probably also the place of our Lord’s baptism. The exact location is not specified; it was certainly beyond Jordan and therefore in Perea. . . . People resorted to Him even there, however, and many believed on Him” (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 489–90).

Luke 15. Introduction to Three Parables

Luke recorded three of the Savior’s most well-known parables: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal

(lost) son. The common theme in all three parables is that something was lost. In the case of the lost sheep and the lost coin, a search was made to find the lost object. In all three parables, the people involved rejoiced when that which was lost was found.

Something was lost. **President David O. McKay** (1873–1970) noted that in the three parables found in Luke 15, the sheep, the coin, and the prodigal son each became lost for different reasons. Regarding the sheep, President McKay taught: “How did that sheep get lost? He was not rebellious. If you follow the comparison, the lamb was seeking its livelihood in a perfectly legitimate manner, but either stupidly, perhaps unconsciously, it followed the enticement of the field, the prospect of better grass until it got out beyond the fold and was lost.

“So we have those in the Church . . . who wander away from the fold in perfectly legitimate ways. They are seeking success, success in business, success in their professions, and before long they become disinterested in Church and finally disconnected from the fold.”

Regarding the lost coin, President McKay taught: “In this case the thing lost was not in itself responsible. The one who had been trusted with that coin had, through carelessness or neglect, mislaid it or dropped it. . . . Our

charge is not only coins, but living souls of children, youth, and adults. They are our charges.”

As for the prodigal son, he taught: “Here is a case of volition, here is choice, deliberate choice. Here is, in a way, rebellion against authority. And what did he do? He spent his means in riotous living, he wasted his portion” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1945, 120–21, 123).

Searching for the lost item. The shepherd who lost his sheep and the woman who lost her coin both sought diligently until they found their valued possession (see Luke 15:4, 8). As disciples of Jesus Christ, we too have a responsibility to seek diligently for those who are “lost” to the blessings of the gospel. While serving as a member of the Seventy, **Elder Alexander B. Morrison** wrote concerning this responsibility: “No part of the leader-shepherd’s role is more important than that which takes him or her out into the highways and thickets of the world to find and bring back members of the flock of Christ who have wandered away, in whom the fire of faith and testimony has dimmed and grown cold. As leaders do so, theirs is the joy expressed so beautifully by the Savior in that powerful parable found in Luke 15 [see verses 3–7]” (*Feed My Sheep: Leadership Ideas for Latter-day Shepherds* [1992], 28).

Rejoicing when the lost item was found. Joy is a central message of these parables (see Luke 15:6, 9, 23–24, 32). **Elder James E. Talmage** wrote: “The three parables . . . are as one in portraying the joy that abounds in heaven over the recovery of a soul once numbered among the lost, whether that soul be best symbolized by a sheep that had wandered afar, a coin that had dropped out of sight through the custodian’s neglect, or a son who would deliberately sever himself from home and heaven. There is no justification for the inference that a repentant sinner is to be given precedence over a righteous soul who had resisted sin. . . . Unqualifiedly offensive as is sin, the sinner is yet precious in the Father’s eyes, because of the possibility of his repentance and return to righteousness. The loss of a soul is a very real and a very great loss to God. He is pained and grieved thereby, for it is His will that not one should perish” (*Jesus the Christ*, 461).

In speaking about these three parables, **Elder M. Russell Ballard** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “Why did Jesus teach these parables? He wanted us to know that none of us will ever be so lost that we cannot find our way again through His Atonement and His teachings” (“That the Lost May Be Found,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 100).

Luke 15:1–2. “All the Publicans and Sinners for to Hear Him”

Jesus directed the three parables found in Luke 15 to the Pharisees and scribes who murmured because He associated with publicans and sinners (see Luke 15:1–2; publicans were especially detested among the Jews). These parables reminded those who presumed to be spiritual leaders that they had responsibility toward the spiritually lost. They were to seek out those who were lost and rejoice when any of them found their way back. The Gospels record numerous instances when the Savior reached out to those who were lost, in need, or in trouble, setting an example for all those who seek to serve others (see Mark 5:1–8; Luke 5:29–32; 19:1–10; John 9:35–38).

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) said that one interpretation of the parable is that the “hundred sheep represent one hundred Sadducees and Pharisees” and since they did not accept and follow the Savior’s teachings, He would go outside the sheepfold to search for “a few individuals, or one poor publican, which the Pharisees and Sadducees despised.” When He had found the “sheep that are lost” who would repent and receive Him, they would have “joy in heaven” (in *History of the Church*, 5:262). This interpretation helps us understand that the Savior’s words were a rebuke to help the Pharisees and scribes recognize their own need to repent, for the Lord commands “all men everywhere to repent” (D&C 133:16; see also Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8; D&C 18:9, 42).

Luke 15:3–7. Parable of the Lost Sheep

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles applied the message of the parable of the lost sheep when he taught about why people stray from the Lord and Church activity:

“Some are lost because they are different. They feel as though they don’t belong. Perhaps because they are different, they find themselves slipping away from the flock. They may look, act, think, and speak differently than those around them and that sometimes causes them to assume they don’t fit in. They conclude that they are not needed. . . .”



The Good Shepherd, by Del Parson

“Brothers and sisters, if only we had more compassion for those who are different from us, it would lighten many of the problems and sorrows in the world today. . . .

“Some are lost because they are weary. It’s easy to feel overwhelmed. With all the pressures and demands on our time and the stress we face each day, it’s little wonder we get tired. Many feel discouraged because they have not measured up to their potential. Others simply feel too weak to contribute. And so, as the flock moves on, gradually, almost imperceptibly, some fall behind” (“Concern for the One,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 18–19).

While serving as provost of Brigham Young University, **Elder Bruce C. Hafen** similarly explored the application of the parable of the lost sheep, explaining that at certain points in our life, each of us might be like the lost sheep and in need of help:

“The lost sheep are not just the people who don’t come to church. . . . The lost sheep is a mother who goes down into the valley of the dark shadows to bring forth children. The lost sheep is a young person, far away from home and faced with loneliness and temptation. The lost sheep is a person who has just lost a critically needed job; a business person in financial distress; a new missionary in a foreign culture; a man just called to be bishop; a married couple who are misunderstanding each other; a grandmother whose children are forgetting her. I am the lost sheep. You are the lost sheep. ‘All we like sheep have gone astray.’ (Isaiah 53:6; emphasis added.)

“The times of feeling lost are not always times when we have wandered from the straight and narrow path. Not at all. We may be precisely where the Lord would have us be” (*The Broken Heart: Applying the Atonement to Life’s Experiences* [1989], 60).

Luke 15:8–10. Parable of the Lost Coin

The coin became lost through its owner’s negligence. The woman in the parable can represent anyone who has responsibility to watch over and spiritually care for someone else. In our day, we can apply the Savior’s parable by remembering that a lack of attention or proper care from other Church members may contribute to a member of the Church becoming lost. **President Gordon B. Hinckley** (1910–2008) taught how we can help prevent this from happening, especially with new members of the Church:

“There must be warmth in the work of the Lord. There must be friendship. There must be love unfeigned. There must be appreciation and thanks expressed. There must be constant nurturing with the good word of God. All of these are small things, so easy to do, and they make so great a difference.

“I have come to feel that the greatest tragedy in the Church is the loss of those who join the Church and then fall away. With very few exceptions it need not happen. . . . It is not an easy thing to make the transition incident to joining this Church. It means cutting old ties. It means leaving friends. It may mean setting aside cherished beliefs. It may require a change of habits and a suppression of appetites. In so many cases it means loneliness and even fear of the unknown. There must be nurturing and strengthening during this difficult season of a convert’s life” (“There Must Be Messengers,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1987, 5).



A woman finds a lost coin and rejoices, by Paul Mann

On another occasion, **President Hinckley** taught: “With the ever-increasing number of converts, we must make an increasingly substantial effort to assist them as they find their way. Every one of them needs three things: a friend, a responsibility, and nurturing with ‘the good word of God’ (Moro. 6:4). It is our duty and opportunity to provide these things” (“Converts and Young Men,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 47).

Elder M. Russell Ballard taught why we must reach out to those who are struggling to be active in the Church: “Every soul is very precious to our Heavenly Father. We must never forget that through the Atonement, the Lord Jesus Christ paid a great price for the redemption of each one of us. His suffering must not be in vain because we fail to nurture and teach those who are striving to be active in the Church” (“Are We Keeping Pace?” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 8).

Luke 15:11–32. Parable of the Prodigal Son

Though the text of Luke does not give a name to the parable found in Luke 15:11–32, it has become known as the parable of the prodigal son. The word *prodigal* means wasteful and recklessly extravagant. The parable actually tells of two sons, one wasteful (see Luke 15:11–24) and the other resentful (see Luke 15:25–32), both of whom need to be reconciled to their father.

Luke 15:12–13. “Give Me the Portion of Goods That Falleth to Me”

According to the customs of the Savior’s time, a son received his inheritance only after his father died. For a son to demand his inheritance *before* his father’s death

(see Luke 15:12–13) would have been an enormous offense. The son’s request would have been seen as a rejection of his father, his home, his upbringing, and even his entire community.

Luke 15:13. “A Far Country”

Not long after the father divided his inheritance between his sons, the wasteful son gathered his belongings and left—disclosing his immaturity as well as his desire to be free of parental guidance or restraint. The reference to “a far country” (Luke 15:13) probably means a Gentile country and reflects the extremity of the younger son’s rebellion. **Elder Neal A. Maxwell** (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles likened this detail to each of us: “Like the prodigal son, we too can go to ‘a far country,’ which may be no further away than a vile rock concert. The distance to ‘a far country’ is not to be measured by miles but by how far our hearts and minds are from Jesus! (see Mosiah 5:13). Fidelity, not geography, really determines the distance!” (“The Tugs and Pulls of the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 36).

Luke 15:17–24

What aspects of repentance and forgiveness do you find as you study these verses? Where in the parable do you find aspects such as recognition of sins, confession, humility, forsaking sins, and receiving forgiveness?

Luke 15:14–17. The Prodigal Took Up Employment Feeding Swine

Swine, or pigs, were considered “unclean” according to the law of Moses (Leviticus 11:7); thus, the prodigal’s demeaning employment feeding swine reflects how far he had fallen, and it would have been considered an additional sign of dishonor. It was in these desperate circumstances that finally “he came to himself” (Luke 15:17)—an idiom suggesting that he awoke to a recognition of the awful situation he had fallen into because of his transgression (see Mosiah 2:40). **Elder Neal A. Maxwell** observed, “Of course, it is better if we are humbled ‘because of the word’ rather than being compelled by circumstances, yet the latter may do! (see Alma 32:13–14). Famine can induce spiritual hunger” (“The Tugs and Pulls of the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 36).



The Prodigal Son, by Wilson Ong

Luke 15:20–24. “His Father Saw Him, and Had Compassion, and Ran” to Him

At the time this parable was given, one who had done the acts the prodigal son committed would have faced public scorn and ridicule upon his return. Consequently, those listening to the Savior’s parable would have been startled by the father’s uncharacteristic response. The father saw the returning son “when he was yet a great way off,” which implies that the father had regularly been watching the horizon, hoping to see his son returning. He had not given up on his son. Then, rather than waiting for his son to come to him and beg for forgiveness, the father “had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck [embraced him], and kissed him” (Luke 15:20). The father publicly embraced and kissed his son in an act of forgiveness and reconciliation and then brought him the rest of the way home.

The “best robe,” the ring, the shoes (slaves went barefoot), and slaying the fatted calf for a feast (see Luke 15:22–23) all show that despite the son’s disgraceful actions, the father accepted the returning prodigal as his son, not as a servant or a sinner.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke of the hope that the image of the

prodigal’s father provides to all of us: “The tender image of this boy’s anxious, faithful father running to meet him and showering him with kisses is one of the most moving and compassionate scenes in all of holy writ. It tells every child of God, wayward or otherwise, how much God wants us back in the protection of His arms” (“The Other Prodigal,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 62).

The parable of the prodigal son teaches us much about the nature and attributes of our Father in Heaven. Like the father in the parable, God will not control us, keep us from straying, or keep us from making selfish, foolish errors. Yet His love never diminishes. He is so anxious to have us return that He will run to us when we are still “a great way off” (Luke 15:20). He knows us so well that He can recognize our better selves when no one else can. Each of us, male or female, will be able to recognize something of ourselves in each of the sons in the parable.

The parable also teaches us about what the Savior does for us when we turn from sin and return to Him. Through the Atonement, He runs to welcome us home and does not require us to make the trek of repentance alone.

For a modern-day example of a young man who spent his life in “riotous living” and then found his way back into full activity in the Church, see the story told by Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in the commentary for Luke 7:36–50.

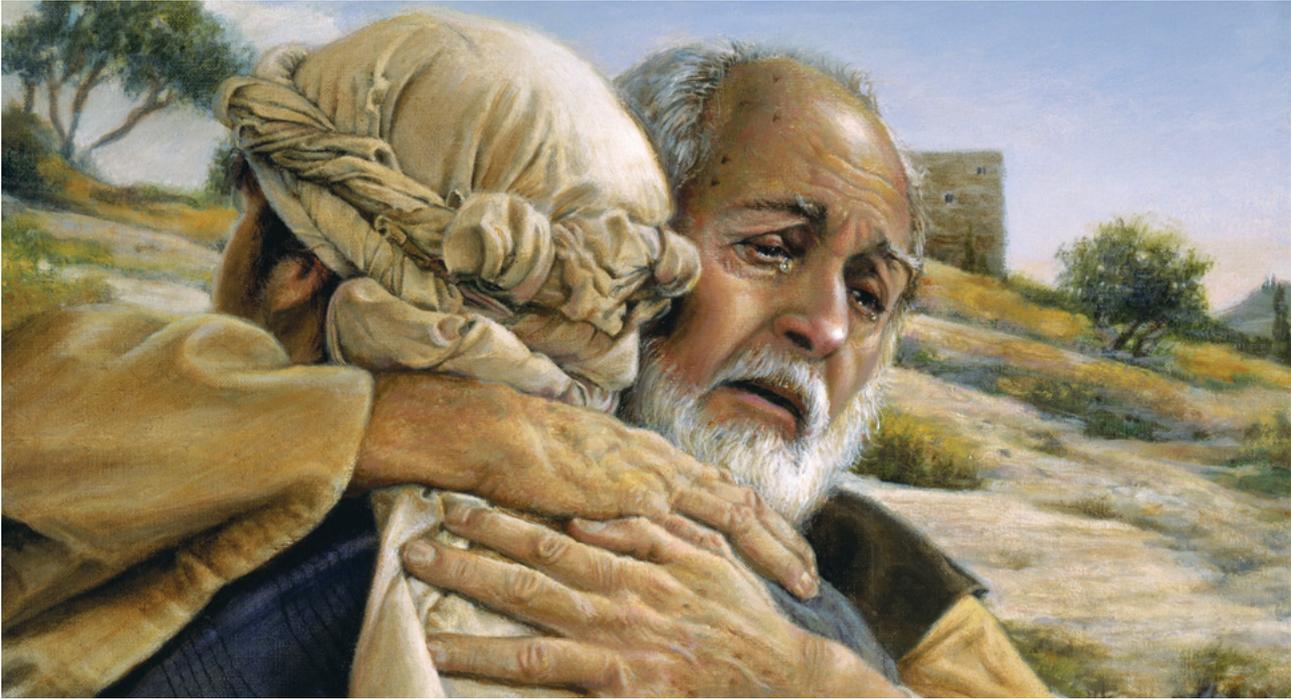
Luke 15:20, 22–24, 28, 31–32

What do you learn about the character of the father in these verses? What do these verses teach you about your Heavenly Father? Why might this parable appropriately be referred to as the parable of the loving father?

Luke 15:25–32. The Elder Son

The older son had been dutiful, but in some ways he too was distant from his father. He did not share his father’s compassion or joy. By refusing to join in the feast, he too publicly brought shame and embarrassment to his father, though not to the extent of the younger son.

The father left the feast to seek out his elder son rather than waiting for the elder son to come to him, as culture would dictate. The father offered love and grace to both sons, the faithful and the less faithful. **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** explained that one of the lessons we can learn from the elder son in the parable is the self-destructive consequence of jealousy:



Prodigal Son, by Liz Lemon Swindle. His father ran and kissed him.

“This son is not so much angry that the other has come home as he is angry that his parents are so happy about it. Feeling unappreciated and perhaps more than a little self-pity, this dutiful son—and he is *wonderfully* dutiful—forgets for a moment that he has never had to know filth or despair, fear or self-loathing. He forgets for a moment that every calf on the ranch is already his and so are all the robes in the closet and every ring in the drawer. He forgets for a moment that his faithfulness has been and always will be rewarded.

“No, he who has virtually everything, and who has in his hardworking, wonderful way earned it, lacks the one thing that might make him the complete man of the Lord he nearly is. He has yet to come to the compassion and mercy, the charitable breadth of vision to see that *this is not a rival returning*. It is his brother. . . .

“Certainly this younger brother had been a prisoner—a prisoner of sin, stupidity, and a pigsty. But the older brother lives in some confinement, too. He has, as yet, been unable to break out of the prison of himself. He is haunted by the green-eyed monster of jealousy. He feels taken for granted by his father and disenfranchised by his brother, when neither is the case. He has fallen victim to a fictional affront. . . . One who has heretofore presumably been very happy with his life and content with his good fortune suddenly feels very unhappy

simply because another has had some good fortune as well” (“The Other Prodigal,” 63).

Luke 16:1–12. Parable of the Unjust Steward

On first reading, the parable of the unjust steward may seem to condone the steward’s dishonesty. Careful study shows, however, that the parable teaches the care with which the Saints of God should approach the task of preparing for their eternal future. Knowing that he had but a short time left in his appointed post, the steward wisely tried to secure his future by winning some friends. **Elder James E. Talmage** explained:

“It was not the steward’s dishonesty that was extolled; his prudence and foresight were commended, however; for while he misapplied his master’s substance, he gave relief to the debtors; and in so doing he did not exceed his legal powers, for he was still steward though he was morally guilty of malfeasance [wrongdoing]. The lesson may be summed up in this wise: . . . Be diligent; for the day in which you can use your earthly riches will soon pass. Take a lesson from even the dishonest and the evil; if they are so prudent as to provide for the only future they think of, how much more should you, who believe in an eternal future, provide therefor! If you have not learned wisdom and prudence in the use of ‘unrighteous mammon,’ how can you be trusted with the more enduring riches?” (*Jesus the Christ*, 464).

Luke 16:13–18. Context for the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

Luke 16:13–18 provides the context that led the Savior to teach the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. When Jesus taught the doctrine that you cannot serve God and mammon—meaning worldly riches or gain—this angered the Pharisees, “who were covetous,” and “they derided him.” The Savior then told them that they were justifying their actions but that God knew the intent of their hearts. (See Luke 16:13–15.) The Joseph Smith Translation expands upon Luke 16:16–18, making clear that in the parable Jesus taught to the Pharisees, he was comparing the rich man to them and teaching them what lay in their future if they continued to pervert the right way:

“And they said unto him, We have the law, and the prophets; but as for this man we will not receive him to be our ruler; for he maketh himself to be a judge over us.

“Then said Jesus unto them, The law and the prophets testify of me; yea, and all the prophets who have written, even until John, have foretold of these days.

“Since that time, the kingdom of God is preached, and every man who seeketh truth presseth into it.

“And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than for one tittle of the law to fail.

“And why teach ye the law, and deny that which is written; and condemn him whom the Father hath sent to fulfill the law, that ye might all be redeemed?”

“O fools! for you have said in your hearts, There is no God. And you pervert the right way; and the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence of you; and you persecute the meek; and in your violence you seek to destroy the kingdom; and ye take the children of the kingdom by force. Woe unto you, ye adulterers!”

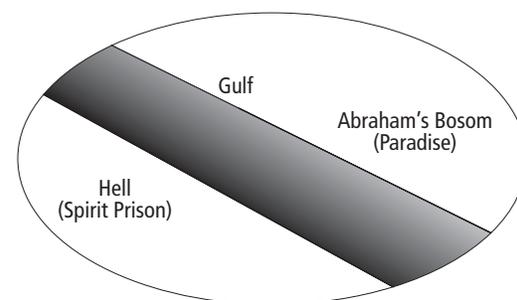
“And they reviled him again, being angry for the saying, that they were adulterers.

“But he continued, saying, Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery; and whosoever marrieth her who is put away from her husband, committeth adultery. Verily I say unto you, I will liken you unto the rich man” (Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 16:16–23 [in the Bible appendix]).

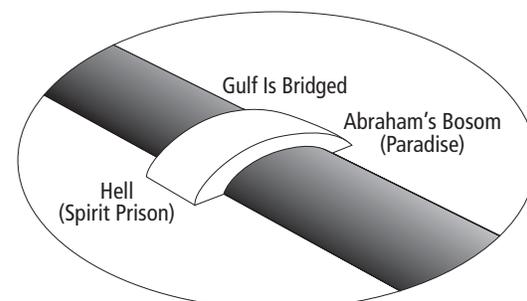
In the parable, the Savior did not say that the rich man was an evil man—only that with all the blessings he had been given, he did not give from his great wealth to someone in need. It may have surprised the Pharisees to hear that the rich man went to hell, while Lazarus went to paradise. In this parable, the Savior taught all of us to be wise in how we use the temporal and spiritual blessings given to us.

Luke 16:19–31. What Do We Learn about the Spirit World from the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus?

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus refers to two different conditions in the postmortal spirit world: “Abraham’s bosom” and “hell” (see Luke 16:22–23). The former is depicted as a place of comfort in the company of the faithful (epitomized by father Abraham), the latter as a place of torment. “Abraham’s bosom conjures up an image of one man reclining companionably against another during a feast or banquet (see John 13:23). Bosom also suggests having close fellowship with another (see John 1:18). In paradise, Lazarus was able to have close association with Abraham, the revered father of all Israelites” (Jay A. Parry and Donald W. Parry, *Understanding the Parables of Jesus Christ* [2006], 156; see also the commentary for John 13:23). Between this abode of the faithful and “hell” there was “a great gulf fixed” (Luke 16:26), which prevented interchange between the two.



“Abraham’s bosom” refers to paradise, and “hell” refers to the spirit prison. The division between these two places existed before Jesus Christ visited the spirit world between the time of His death and His Resurrection. Before Christ’s death, spirits from paradise could not visit those who were in spirit prison. His ministry in the spirit world bridged the gulf between paradise and the spirit prison, making it possible for the spirits in prison to receive the message of the gospel from authorized ministers sent from paradise (see D&C 138:18–37; John 5:25–29; 1 Peter 3:18–21; 4:6).



The Savior’s visit to the spirits in prison opened the way for the salvation of the dead, as **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained: “Since our Lord has proclaimed ‘liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound’ (Isa. 61:1), the gospel is preached in all parts of the spirit world, repentance is granted to those who seek it, vicarious ordinances are administered in earthly temples, and there is a hope of salvation for the spirits of those men who would have received the gospel with all their hearts in this life had the opportunity come to them” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 1:522).

President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) clarified that before spirits can be released from spirit prison, they must hear the gospel and accept it and the saving ordinances must be performed for them: “In relation to the deliverance of spirits from their prison house, of course, we believe that can only be done after the gospel has been preached to them in the spirit, and they have accepted the same, and the work necessary to their redemption by the living be done for them” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* [1998], 413–14).

For further insight on the Savior’s ministry in the spirit world, see the commentaries for John 5:25, 28 and for 1 Peter 3:18–21; 4:6.

Luke 16:24–25. The Law of Justice



Lazarus at the Rich Man’s Door, by James Tissot. Dogs licked his sores.

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus teaches us about the principle of divine justice. In the parable, the rich man found that after his death, he would have to suffer for a time because of the decisions he had made as a mortal. Lazarus found that after his death, he was blessed and comforted. This teaches us that all the inequities of this life will be made up to the righteous in the next life. Justice is the friend of those who rely on the Atonement of Jesus Christ. As Abraham said to the rich man in the parable, in the next life the injustices of mortality are made right: “Remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou are tormented” (Luke 16:25).

Luke 16:31. “Though One Rose from the Dead”

The parable about Lazarus is the only parable in which the Savior used a proper name for one of the characters. In the parable, a rich man who had gone to hell pleaded with Abraham to send Lazarus to his five brothers to convince them that they should repent. Abraham replied that if they would not hear the words of the prophets, “neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead” (Luke 16:31). Such persuasion requires a changed heart—not changed messengers. Failing to hear the prophets is the same thing as failing to hear the Savior—the One who *did* rise from the dead. “He that receiveth my servants receiveth me” (D&C 84:36), the Lord declared. “Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38).

A short time after the parable was given, the Savior’s close friend Lazarus died and the Savior restored him to life (see John 11). In literal fulfillment of Jesus’s prophecy that someone who had risen from the dead would not persuade the wicked to repent, Jewish leaders responded to the raising of Lazarus from the dead by seeking to have him killed (see John 12:10–11). Not too many months later, Jesus Himself would be slain and would rise from the dead, and the Jewish leaders would continue to refuse to be persuaded.

Luke 17:1–4. Sinning and Forgiving

As Jesus continued to teach His disciples, He reminded them that people are certain to encounter things that cause them to sin, but He declared that woe would come to people who tempt others to sin. The “little ones” they offend include those who may not yet be strong in their faith. The Savior’s disciples must watch themselves so they do not cause others to stumble (see Luke 17:1–2). Jesus also taught us to forgive others, even if they trespass “seven times in a day” and then repent

each time (see Luke 17:3–4). Forgiveness is required of everyone (see D&C 64:8–10). This important instruction is what led the Savior to teach the parable of the unprofitable servant.

Luke 17:5–10

The parable of the unprofitable servant was given after the Savior’s instruction to forgive others “seven times in a day” (Luke 17:3–4). How can recognizing our indebtedness to God make us more willing to forgive others?

Luke 17:5–10. The Parable of the Unprofitable Servant

After Jesus taught His Apostles about the need to forgive others, they asked Him, “Lord, Increase our faith” (Luke 17:5). Jesus answered by teaching the parable of the unprofitable servant (see Luke 17:7–10). An important point in this parable is that the servant should not expect any special reward or adopt a sense of entitlement simply because he had done his duty. Masters gave their servants food, shelter, and clothing; servants, in turn, were obligated to work for their masters. No matter how well a servant performed his duties, he was still in his master’s debt for all that he had. Similarly, we are eternally indebted to our Heavenly Father and can never fully pay Him back or place Him in our debt. Thus, in answer to the Apostles’ request to strengthen their faith, the Savior taught that faith in God involves recognizing our indebtedness to Him and dependence on Him. To read more about our indebtedness to God, see King Benjamin’s words recorded in Mosiah 2:22–24, 34.

While serving as a member of the Seventy, **Elder John K. Carmack** taught: “No matter how difficult and impossible the circumstances we face, we must retain the attitude that we are still in the Lord’s debt. Just keeping the commandments, while laudable, may be enough to maintain our faith but not enough to increase it. We must continue sacrificing and serving with no thought of reward. We do it out of love and gratitude for the Lord, to whom we owe everything” (“Lord, Increase Our Faith,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2002, 56).

Luke 17:6. “Faith as a Grain of Mustard Seed”

For explanation about having faith as a grain of mustard seed, see the commentary for Matthew 17:20.

Luke 17:11–19. The Ten Lepers and Gratitude

Although all ten lepers in this account were “cleansed,” only the Samaritan man who returned was made

“whole” (Luke 17:14, 19). **Bishop Merrill J. Bateman**, while serving as Presiding Bishop, taught: “In becoming a whole person, the grateful leper was healed inside as well as on the outside. That day nine lepers were healed skin deep, but only one had the faith to be made whole” (“The Power to Heal from Within,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 14).



Where Are the Nine, by Liz Lemon Swindle

After relating the account of the cleansing of the ten lepers in a general conference of the Church, **President Thomas S. Monson** (1927–2018) shared the following thoughts regarding gratitude: “My brothers and sisters, do we remember to give thanks for the blessings we receive? Sincerely giving thanks not only helps us recognize our blessings, but it also unlocks the doors of heaven and helps us feel God’s love” (“The Divine Gift of Gratitude,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 87).

Luke 17:20–21. “The Kingdom of God Is within You”

Many translations of the New Testament render the phrase “the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21) as “the kingdom of God is *among* you” because the pronoun *you* is plural in Greek. The Joseph Smith Translation changes this phrase to read, “The kingdom of God *has already come unto* you” (Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 17:21 [in Luke 17:21, footnote *b*]). Both renderings of the phrase point to the truth that Jesus Christ had established the kingdom of God, which is His Church, on the earth at that time and would again establish it in our day.

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** defined the “kingdom of God”: “Some say the kingdom of God was not set up on the earth until the day of Pentecost, and that John [the Baptist] did not preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; but I say, in the name of the Lord, that the kingdom of God was set up on the earth from the days of Adam to the present time. Whenever there has been a righteous man on earth unto whom God revealed His word and gave power and authority to administer in His name, . . . there is the kingdom of God” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 82).

Luke 17:20–37. Jesus Taught about the Second Coming

For insights regarding the Savior’s teachings on the Second Coming, see the commentary for Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:23; Matthew 24:6.

Luke 17:29–32. “Remember Lot’s Wife”

While instructing His disciples regarding His Second Coming, Jesus admonished them to “remember Lot’s wife” (Luke 17:32). A clue to the meaning of this statement is found at the end of Luke 17:31: “Let him likewise not return back.” **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** discussed the significance of these admonitions:

“The original story [of Lot’s wife], of course, comes to us out of the days of Sodom and Gomorrah, when the Lord, having had as much as He could stand of the worst that men and women could do, told Lot and his family to flee because those cities were about to be destroyed. ‘Escape for thy life,’ the Lord said, ‘*look not behind thee . . . ; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed*’ (Genesis 19:17; emphasis added).

“ . . . The scriptures tell us what happened at daybreak the morning following their escape:

“The Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven;

“‘And he overthrew those cities.’” (Genesis 19:24–25) . . .

“ . . . With the Lord’s counsel ‘look not behind thee’ ringing clearly in her ears, Lot’s wife, the record says, ‘looked back,’ and she was turned into a pillar of salt. . . .

“ . . . What did Lot’s wife do that was so wrong? . . . Apparently what was wrong with Lot’s wife was that she wasn’t just *looking* back; in her heart she wanted to go back. It would appear that even before they were past the city limits, she was already missing what Sodom and Gomorrah had offered her. . . .

“It is possible that Lot’s wife looked back with resentment toward the Lord for what He was asking her to leave behind. . . . So it isn’t just that she looked back; she looked back *longingly*. In short, her attachment to the past outweighed her confidence in the future. That, apparently, was at least part of her sin.

“ . . . The past is to be learned from but not lived in. . . . When we have learned what we need to learn and have brought with us the best that we have experienced, then we look ahead, we remember that *faith is always pointed toward the future*. Faith always has to do with blessings and truths and events that will *yet* be efficacious in our lives. So a more theological way to talk about Lot’s wife is to say that she did not have faith. She doubted the Lord’s ability to give her something better than she already had. Apparently she thought—fatally, as it turned out—that nothing that lay ahead could possibly be as good as those moments she was leaving behind” (“Remember Lot’s Wife” [Brigham Young University devotional, Jan. 13, 2009], 2–3; speeches.byu.edu).

Points to Ponder

- Do you have friends or family members who are straying from the Lord and Church activity? Consider the parables in Luke 15, and think about what you learn from them that can help you share your righteous influence and testimony with those who have strayed.
- What do you learn from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (see Luke 16:19–31) about the relationship between our actions in this life and what happens to us in the next life?

Suggested Assignments

- Think of someone in your ward or branch who appears not to have many friends. In the spirit of the Savior’s teachings in Luke 15, think of three things you will do to become a closer friend to this person.
- During the coming week, take time each day to record the blessings you feel you have received from the Lord (see Luke 17:5–19). With each new day, try not to duplicate what you have written on previous days. At the end of the week, ponder the blessings you have received and consider what they teach about the Lord’s love for you. How has attention to gratitude affected your faith? Express your gratitude to the Lord.

Luke 18–22

Introduction and Timeline for Luke 18–22

These chapters of Luke relate events that took place in the final weeks of the Savior’s mortal ministry—as He traveled toward Jerusalem and after He arrived at the Holy City. They contribute to an important theme introduced in Luke 15—that Jesus Christ came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10; see also Luke 15:6, 9, 24). Accordingly, they show His compassion for individuals estranged from society and from God. For instance, a widow, one of the most vulnerable members of society, and a publican, one of the despised, serve as positive examples in two of the Savior’s parables recorded only by Luke (see Luke 18:1–14). Luke also recorded the conversion of the chief publican Zacchaeus, a man many would have regarded as corrupt and hopelessly lost (see Luke 19:1–10). Luke 18–22 culminates with the Savior’s suffering in Gethsemane, without which all of us would be forever lost (see 1 Nephi 10:6).



1. Jesus Christ told the parables of the importuning widow and the Pharisee and the publican.
2. The Savior dined with Zacchaeus near Jericho and also taught the parable of the pounds.
3. On His way to Jerusalem, the Savior passed through Bethany and Bethphage.
4. Jesus entered Jerusalem, wept over the city, and cleansed the temple.
5. He instituted the sacrament at the Last Supper.
6. He suffered in Gethsemane and was betrayed and arrested.

Commentary for Luke 18–22

Luke 18:1–8. The Parable of the Importuning Widow and Unjust Judge

Luke stated the main message of the parable of the importuning widow and unjust judge—“men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18:1). The Greek word translated as “to faint” means to become discouraged or weary or to tire of something. In the parable, praying without giving up is represented by a widow who repeatedly appeals to a judge to remedy an injustice. **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “When lonely, cold, hard times come, we have to endure, we have to continue, we have to persist. That was the Savior’s message in the parable of the importuning widow. . . . Keep knocking on that door. Keep pleading. In the meantime, know that God hears your cries and knows your distress. He is your Father, and you are His child” (“Lessons from Liberty Jail,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2009, 30). Perseverance is rooted in the foundational gospel principles of faith and hope. Perseverance reflects our faith that our actions will bring the Lord’s blessings into our lives.



Instant Messages, by G. Bjorn Thorkelson. “Cry day and night unto him” (Luke 18:7).

The parable is another instance when the Savior taught about God’s perfection by contrasting it with human imperfection (see Luke 11:5–8, 11–13; commentary for Luke 11:5–10). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85)

of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained: “If an evil magistrate, caring nothing for a poor widow, will finally adjudge her case, how much more shall the Judge of all the earth, who loves his saints, finally, in the day of vengeance at his coming, avenge his elect upon all their enemies” (*The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 4 vols. [1979–81], 3:289).

The Greek word translated as “avenge” in Luke 18:3, 5, 7–8 means “give justice; see that justice is done.” Thus the parable, given in context of the Savior’s teachings concerning His Second Coming (see Luke 17:20–37; 18:8), affirms that the Lord will see that justice is done for His Saints at His Second Coming and during the Millennium that follows. **President Dallin H. Oaks** of the First Presidency taught: “Many of the most important deprivations of mortality will be set right in the Millennium, which is the time for fulfilling all that is incomplete in the great plan of happiness for all of our Father’s worthy children” (“The Great Plan of Happiness,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 75).

Luke 18:9–14. The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican

Luke stated that the Savior addressed the parable of the Pharisee and the publican to people who “trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others” (Luke 18:9). The parable probably surprised those who heard it, for Pharisees were generally admired and regarded as very obedient to the law, though Jesus had rebuked them for hypocrisy. Publicans, however, were tax collectors and were hated, shunned, and seen as corrupt. Though they were often grouped with harlots and sinners, many were receptive to Jesus’s teaching (see Matthew 21:31–32; Mark 2:15–16; Luke 15:1). The four Gospels record no instance of Jesus being critical of those who were willing to listen, to be taught, and to change their lives for good. To the self-righteous, proud, or hypocritical, however, He was often fearless and unyielding in His denunciation of their behavior, as He was in this parable. The Savior stated the moral of the parable in terms of pride and humility: “For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Luke 18:14; see also D&C 52:15).

Luke 18:11–12

How many times in these verses did the Pharisee refer to himself, and how many times did he refer to God? What does this reveal about the focus of his prayer? What can you do to improve the focus and intent of your prayers?

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) explained that the Pharisee’s prayer was “not one of thankfulness, but of boastfulness” and taught that the contrast between the Pharisee and the publican illustrates the importance of humility and contrition:



Pharisee and publican thank God, by Robert T. Barrett

“Could there be greater contrast in the prayers of the two men? The Pharisee stood apart because he believed he was better than other men, whom he considered as common. The publican stood apart also, but it was because he felt himself unworthy. The Pharisee thought of no one other than himself and regarded everyone else a sinner, whereas the publican thought of everyone else

as righteous as compared with himself, a sinner. The Pharisee asked nothing of God, but relied upon his own self-righteousness. The publican appealed to God for mercy and forgiveness of his sins.

“Continuing the story, Jesus then said: ‘I tell you, this man,’ referring to the publican, the despised tax collector, ‘went down to his house justified, rather than the other.’ (Luke 18:14.) In other words, the Lord said he was absolved, forgiven, or vindicated. . . .

“Humility is an attribute of godliness possessed by true Saints. It is easy to understand why a proud man fails. He is content to rely upon himself only. . . . The proud man shuts himself off from God, and when he does he no longer lives in the light. . . .

“ . . . History bears record that those who have exalted themselves have been abased, but the humble have been exalted. On every busy street there are Pharisees and publicans. It may be that one of them bears our name” (“The Pharisee and the Publican,” *Ensign*, May 1984, 65–66).

Luke 18:15–43. Commentary Found Elsewhere in This Manual

Many of the teachings and events in the Savior’s ministry that are found in Luke 18 are also found in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. The following chart identifies where you can find student manual commentary for these teachings and events:

Location of Topic in Luke	Commentary in This Manual
Luke 18:15–17. The Savior blessed little children.	Matthew 19:13–15
Luke 18:18–30. The Savior addressed the rich ruler.	Matthew 19:16–22
Luke 18:31–34. The Savior foretold His death and Resurrection.	Mark 8:31–33; 9:30–32; 10:32–34 and Mark 8:33
Luke 18:35–43. Jesus healed a blind man.	Mark 10:46–52

Luke 19:1–10. Zacchaeus

Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem for the last time. He passed through Jericho, where he encountered a man named Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was a good man, who gave half of his goods to the poor and made “fourfold” restitution when necessary—well beyond what the law of Moses required (see Leviticus 5:16; Numbers 5:7). He was sincere and determined to do all he could to make things right. However, before his meeting with Jesus, Zacchaeus could have been considered the epitome of the “lost.” Not only was he a despised publican, but he was “the chief among the publicans.” Some people regarded Jewish publicans as having forfeited their claim to be among Abraham’s chosen offspring, but the Savior offered fellowship and salvation even to Zacchaeus, affirming that he “also is a son of Abraham.” The Savior’s own words help us understand the way the Savior viewed him: “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (See Luke 19:1–10.)

For more insight on the Savior’s dining with publicans and sinners, see the commentary for Mark 2:15–17.



Zacchaeus in the Sycamore Tree, by James Tissot

As the Book of Mormon prophet Nephi testified, Jesus Christ invites “all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him” (2 Nephi 26:33).

Luke 19:11–27. The Parable of the Pounds

The parable of the pounds bears some similarities to the parable of the talents found in Matthew 25:14–30. Both

parables tell of a lord who departs, leaving his servants various sums of money that they are to put to good use. When the lord returns and receives an accounting from his servants, he rewards those who have earned a profit by using his gifts well, but he reproves those who have failed to do so. Thus, both parables teach us to be ready for the Lord’s return by making good use of the gifts and responsibilities He has given us (see also the commentary for Matthew 25:14–30).

However, the parable of the pounds teaches additional truths about the Lord’s future millennial reign. The parable implies that Jesus Christ would be rejected in Jerusalem (see Luke 19:14) and would not immediately reign there as king (see Luke 19:11). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained the significance of the parable in its historical context:

“Jesus was enroute to Jerusalem for the last time. In about ten days he would die upon the cross, and to the Jews generally it would appear that he had failed to set up the promised Messianic kingdom. To correct the false concept that ‘the kingdom of God’—meaning the political kingdom, the kingdom which should rule all nations with King Messiah at its head, the millennial kingdom—‘should immediately appear,’ Jesus gave the *Parable of the Pounds*. . . .

“Christ is the nobleman; the far off country is heaven; the kingdom there to be given him is ‘all power . . . in heaven and in earth’ (Matt. 28:18); and his promised return is the glorious Second Coming, when the literal and visible kingdom shall be set up on earth. . . . The servants are commanded to labor in the vineyard on their Lord’s errand until he returns” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* [1965–73], 1:571–72).

Luke 19:28–21:33. Commentary Found Elsewhere in This Manual

Many of the teachings and events in the Savior’s ministry that are found in Luke 19–21 are also found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John and in Joseph Smith—Matthew. The following chart identifies where you can find student manual commentary for these teachings and events:

Location of Topic in Luke	Commentary in This Manual
Luke 19:28–40. The triumphal entry	Matthew 21:1–11 and Matthew 21:8 and Matthew 21:9–11
Luke 19:41–44. The Savior’s lament for Jerusalem	Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:2–4; Matthew 24:1–3
Luke 19:45–48. The cleansing of the temple	John 2:13–22 and John 2:16 and John 2:18–21
Luke 20:1–8. “By what authority”?	Matthew 21:12–16, 23–27
Luke 20:9–18. The wicked husbandmen	Matthew 21:33–46
Luke 20:19–26. Unto Caesar and unto God	Matthew 22:15–22
Luke 20:27–38. Marriage in the Resurrection	Matthew 22:23–30
Luke 20:41–44. The son of David and the Son of God	Matthew 22:41–46
Luke 20:45–47. Rebuke of the scribes	Matthew 23:13–33
Luke 21:1–4. The widow’s mites	Mark 12:41–44
Luke 21:5–38. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Coming	Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:2–4; Matthew 24:1–3 and Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:4; Matthew 24:3

Luke 21:19. “In Your Patience Possess Ye Your Souls”

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the First Presidency taught about the meaning of Luke 21:19: “Patience is a process of perfection. The Savior Himself said that in your patience you possess your souls [see Luke 21:19]. Or, to use another translation of the Greek text, in your patience you *win mastery* of your souls [see Luke 21:19, footnote *b*]. Patience means to abide in faith, knowing that sometimes it is in the waiting rather than in the receiving that we grow the most. This was true in the time of the Savior. It is true in our time as well, for we are commanded in these latter days to ‘continue in patience until ye are perfected’ [D&C 67:13]” (“Continue in Patience,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 59).

Luke 21:24. “Until the Times of the Gentiles Be Fulfilled”

Luke 21:24 is the only place where the phrase “times of the Gentiles” appears in the Bible; the phrase also appears three times in latter-day revelation (see D&C 45:25, 28, 30). In New Testament times, the gospel was preached first to Jews and then to Gentiles (see Romans 1:16). In the latter days, the message of the restored gospel is to go first to Gentile nations and then to the Jews (see D&C 133:8). The period of time when the Gentiles have precedence in receiving the gospel is called the “times of the Gentiles.”

President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) stated, “The times of the Gentiles commenced shortly after the death of our Redeemer. The Jews soon rejected the Gospel and it was then taken to the Gentiles. The times of the Gentiles have continued from that time until now” (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 2 vols. [1953], 1:196). President Smith spoke further about the fulfillment of the times of the Gentiles: “Jesus said the Jews would be scattered among all nations and

Jerusalem would be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled. (Luke 21:24.) The prophecy in Section 45, verses 24–29, of the Doctrine and Covenants regarding the Jews was literally fulfilled. Jerusalem, which was trodden down by the Gentiles, is no longer trodden down but is made the home for the Jews. They are returning to Palestine, and by this we may know that the times of the Gentiles are near their close” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1966, 13).



Orson Hyde Dedicates the Holy Land for the Return of the Jews, by Clark Kelley Price. On October 24, 1841, Elder Orson Hyde visited the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem and offered a prayer of dedication.

Luke 21:34–36. “Surfeiting, and Drunkenness, and Cares of This Life”

Many of the Savior’s teachings about the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Coming found in Luke 21 are also found in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Joseph Smith—Matthew. However, only Luke recorded the Savior’s warning that if people were “overcharged [weighed down] with surfeiting [overindulgence of appetites], and drunkenness, and cares of this life [anxieties and stresses]” (Luke 21:34), they would not be prepared for His Second Coming. This warning about self-indulgence

and drunkenness in the last days is similar to the Savior’s declaration that the last days would be “as the days of Noe [Noah],” when people “were eating and drinking, . . . and knew not until the flood came” (Matthew 24:37–39). To protect Saints in the latter days, the Lord revealed the Word of Wisdom, including the commandment to abstain from alcohol and harmful drugs (see D&C 89:4–7, 18–21). Obeying this commandment not only benefits our physical health but also helps us be spiritually prepared to meet the Savior.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf taught how we can avoid being overwhelmed by the anxieties and stresses of life. He said that those who are wise “resist the temptation to get caught up in the frantic rush of everyday life. They follow the advice ‘There is more to life than increasing its speed.’ In short, they focus on the things that matter most” (“Of Things That Matter Most,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 20).

Luke 21:37–38. Teaching in the Temple

Many verses in the four Gospels attest that Jesus frequently taught in the temple. During the final week of His mortal existence, while He was in Jerusalem, He taught daily in the temple (see Matthew 26:55; Mark 14:49; Luke 19:47; 22:53). This pattern of teaching in the temple was continued by Jesus’s disciples after He ascended into heaven (see Acts 2:46; 5:42). In this matter, like all others, Jesus is our perfect example.

Luke 22. Commentary Found Elsewhere in This Manual

Many of the teachings and events in the Savior’s ministry that are found in Luke 22 are also found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John. The following chart identifies where you can find student manual commentary for these teachings and events:

Location of Topic in Luke	Commentary in This Manual
Luke 22:1–6. Chief priests and scribes sought to kill Jesus; Judas arranged to betray Him.	Matthew 26:1–5 and Matthew 26:14–16
Luke 22:7–18. The Last Supper took place.	Matthew 26:17–30 and John 13:1–17
Luke 22:21–23. Jesus announced Judas’s betrayal.	Matthew 26:21–22 and John 13:18–30
Luke 22:24–27. The disciples had strife about who was the greatest.	Mark 9:33–37; 10:35–45
Luke 22:33–38. Jesus prophesied that Peter would deny Him.	Matthew 26:31–35
Luke 22:47–53. Judas betrayed the Savior.	Matthew 26:47–50
Luke 22:54–62. Peter denied Christ three times.	Matthew 26:69–75 and John 18:15–18, 25–27
Luke 22:63–71. The trial before the chief priests took place.	Matthew 26:59 and Matthew 26:61–66 and Matthew 26:66–68 and Mark 14:53–65

Luke 22:19–20. “This Do in Remembrance of Me”

Both Luke and Paul wrote that when the Savior introduced the symbols of the bread and wine, He instructed His disciples, “This do in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24). The sacrament’s purpose of helping us remember the Savior is reinforced by the Joseph Smith Translation, which adds the terms “remember” and “in remembrance” to the sacrament accounts in Matthew and Mark (see Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 26:22, 24–25 [in the Bible appendix]; Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 14:20–25 [in the Bible appendix]; 3 Nephi 18:7, 11). In Jewish language and practice, *remembering* meant much more than simple mental recollection; it meant re-experiencing, reaffirming, and recommitting.

Remembering was a primary purpose of many Jewish practices, such as the Passover meal. At Passover, as the people of Israel commemorated the Lord’s deliverance of their ancestors from bondage, the symbolic meal and its accompanying story of deliverance connected the past to the present. Observing Passover made a statement about how one would live and about one’s loyalty to the Lord and His people. Similarly, the sacrament, which the Savior instituted at Passover, is a symbolic “meal” of remembrance that replaced the Passover meal. By partaking of the sacrament, followers of Jesus Christ may experience anew the blessings of His Atonement, reaffirm their loyalty to Him and His Church, and recommit their lives to following Him. For insights about the symbolism of the sacrament, see the commentaries for Matthew 26:26–28 and for Matthew 26:26–29.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland explored some of the truths about Jesus Christ that we might choose to remember during the sacrament:

“If remembering is the principal task before us, what might come to our memory when those plain and precious emblems are offered to us?

“We could remember the Savior’s premortal life and all that we know him to have done as the great Jehovah, creator of heaven and earth and all things that in them are. We could remember that even in the Grand Council of Heaven he loved us and was wonderfully strong, that we triumphed even there by the power of Christ and our faith in the blood of the Lamb (see Rev. 12:10–11).

“We could remember the simple grandeur of his mortal birth. . . .

“We could remember Christ’s miracles and his teachings, his healings and his help. We could remember that he gave sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf and motion to the lame and the maimed and the withered. Then, on those days when we feel our progress has halted or our joys and views have grown dim, we can press forward steadfastly in Christ, with unshaken faith in him and a perfect brightness of hope (see 2 Ne. 31:19–20).

“We could remember that even with such a solemn mission given to him, the Savior found delight in living; he enjoyed people and told his disciples to be of good

cheer. He said we should be as thrilled with the gospel as one who had found a great treasure, a veritable pearl of great price, right on our own doorstep. . . .

“We could remember that Christ called His disciples friends, and that friends are those who stand by us in times of loneliness or potential despair. . . .

“We could—and should—remember the wonderful things that have come to us in our lives and that ‘all things which are good cometh of Christ’ (Moro. 7:24). . . .

“On some days we will have cause to remember the unkind treatment he received, the rejection he experienced, and the injustice—oh, the injustice—he endured. When we, too, then face some of that in life, we can remember that Christ was also troubled on every side, but not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed (see 2 Cor. 4:8–9).

“When those difficult times come to us, we can remember that Jesus had to descend below all things before he could ascend above them, and that he suffered pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind that he might be filled with mercy and know how to succor his people in their infirmities (see D&C 88:6; Alma 7:11–12).



In Remembrance of Me, by Walter Rane

“To those who stagger or stumble, he is there to steady and strengthen us. In the end he is there to save us, and for all this he gave his life. . . .

“ . . . All this we could remember when we are invited by a kneeling young priest to remember Christ always” (“This Do in Remembrance of Me,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 68–69).

Luke 22:28–30. “Ye Are They Which Have Continued with Me in My Temptations”

Luke 22:28 reminds us that the three temptations in the wilderness were not the only times the Savior faced temptation, trial, and testing (see Matthew 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13). Jesus Christ “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). As the end of His mortal life approached, the Savior reminded His Apostles that they had continued with Him when He was tempted and tried (see Luke 22:28). Earlier in His ministry, they had witnessed the Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes trying to trap Him with questions. They had seen Him when He was mocked by unbelievers in His own hometown and when mobs tried to stone Him for His teachings. They had been with Him when He was exhausted, hungry, and mournful.

After expressing His appreciation that the Apostles had continued with Him, the Savior told them that they would be forever with Him, sitting on thrones and judging the twelve tribes of Israel (see Luke 22:29–30).

Luke 22:31. “Satan Hath Desired to Have You, That He May Sift You as Wheat”

In Luke 22:31, the Greek pronoun translated as “you” is plural, indicating that the Savior gave this warning to all His disciples. Wheat is sifted by separating kernels of grain from chaff. The valuable grain is kept, while the common chaff is discarded. If Saints yield to temptation and partake of the sins of the world, they lose their distinctiveness and become like chaff. **President Dallin H. Oaks** explained: “Jesus cautioned that Satan desires to sift us like wheat . . . , which means to make us common like all those around us. But Jesus taught that we who follow Him should be precious and unique, ‘the salt of the earth’ (Matthew 5:13) and ‘the light of the world,’ to shine forth to all men (Matthew 5:14, 16; see also 3 Nephi 18:24)” (“Unselfish Service,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2009, 94).

Luke 22:32. “When Thou Art Converted, Strengthen Thy Brethren”

President Dallin H. Oaks explained that the Savior’s words to Simon Peter at the Last Supper, recorded in Luke 22:32, “confirmed the importance of being converted, even for those with a testimony of the truth”:

“In order to strengthen his brethren—to nourish and lead the flock of God—this man who had followed Jesus for three years, who had been given the authority of the holy apostleship, who had been a valiant teacher and testifier of the Christian gospel, and whose testimony had caused the Master to declare him blessed still had to be ‘converted.’

“Jesus’ challenge shows that the conversion He required for those who would enter the kingdom of heaven (see Matt. 18:3) was far more than just being converted to testify to the truthfulness of the gospel. To testify is to *know* and to *declare*. The gospel challenges us to be ‘converted,’ which requires us to *do* and to *become*. If any of us relies solely upon our knowledge and testimony of the gospel, we are in the same position as the blessed but still unfinished Apostles whom Jesus challenged to be ‘converted.’ We all know someone who has a strong testimony but does not act upon it so as to be converted. . . .

“Now is the time for each of us to work toward our personal conversion, toward becoming what our Heavenly Father desires us to become” (“The Challenge to Become,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 33).

Luke 22:39–44. Details about the Savior’s Suffering in Gethsemane

Some modern Bibles do not include verses 43–44 of Luke 22 because they do not appear in all ancient Greek manuscripts of Luke. Historical evidence suggests that some scribes in the centuries following the Apostles’ deaths may have removed these verses. The scribes felt embarrassed at the description of Christ’s agony, which contradicted popular Hellenistic ideals of emotionless suffering. Such tampering with the biblical text verifies the testimony of the Book of Mormon prophet Nephi: “They have taken away from the gospel of the Lamb many parts which are plain and most precious” (1 Nephi 13:26). Latter-day scriptures and prophets affirm the authenticity of what is recorded in Luke 22:43–44 (see Mosiah 3:7; D&C 19:18). For more information on Jesus’s prayer and agony in Gethsemane, see the commentaries for Matthew 26:36, for Matthew 26:37–39, and for Mark 14:32–36.

Luke 22:43. “There Appeared an Angel unto Him from Heaven, Strengthening Him”

Luke recorded that an angel appeared to the Savior to strengthen Him as He suffered in Gethsemane.

President Dallin H. Oaks taught that the angel came in answer to the Savior’s prayer:

“The gospel of Luke . . . describes how he knelt down and prayed: ‘Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done’ (JST, Luke 22:42).

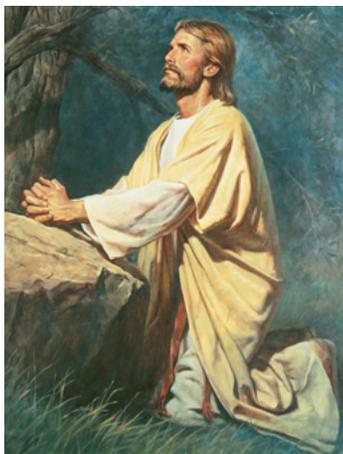
“. . . The Father’s answer was to deny the plea of his Only Begotten Son. The Atonement had to be worked out by that lamb without blemish. But though the Son’s request was denied, his prayer was answered. The scripture records: ‘And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him’ (JST, Luke 22:43).

“Strengthened from heaven to do the will of the Father, the Savior fulfilled his mission” (“Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, May 1994, 99–100).

But eventually even the angel left the Savior, for He was required to complete the great atoning sacrifice by Himself. In these latter days, the Savior has declared that when He comes to earth in glory, His voice will be heard saying, “I have trodden the wine-press alone, and have brought judgment upon all people; and none were with me” (D&C 133:50). The Savior’s triumph over sin and death is complete.

Luke 22:44. “Being in an Agony He Prayed More Earnestly”

President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency explained that all our prayers should be sincere, drawing “from the earnest feelings of our hearts.” But, of necessity, some prayers are more intense than others, as was the Savior’s prayer at the time of His agony in Gethsemane:



The Greatest of All, by Del Parson

“Jeremiah counsels us to pray with all our heart and soul [see Jeremiah 29:13]. Enos recounted how his soul had hungered and that he had prayed all the day long [see

Enos 1:4]. Prayers vary in their intensity. Even the Savior ‘prayed more earnestly’ in His hour of agony [see Luke 22:44]. Some are simple expressions of appreciation and requests for a continuation of blessings on our loved ones and us. However, in times of great personal hurt or need, more may be required than mere asking. . . . Blessings sought through prayer sometimes require work, effort, and diligence on our part” (“The Lifeline of Prayer,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 60).

Luke 22:44. “His Sweat Was as It Were Great Drops of Blood Falling Down to the Ground”

Luke was the only Gospel writer to record the important detail that the Savior’s suffering included “great drops of blood” (Luke 22:44). The Savior’s unparalleled suffering—the extreme pressure caused by taking upon Himself the infinite sin, sorrow, and guilt of all mankind—caused a physical condition in his body known as hematidrosis. This condition leads to the rupture of capillaries just under the surface of the skin, causing the skin to exude a bloody sweat. Any other person would have died before this condition reached the point of bleeding from every pore, but the Savior was the Son of God and so was able to endure this great agony for us.

Other scriptures give further insight into the reality and cause of the Savior’s bleeding from the pores of His skin. In the Book of Mormon, King Benjamin testified that Christ would “suffer temptations, and pain of body, hunger, thirst, and fatigue, even more than man can suffer, except it be unto death; for behold, *blood cometh from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people*” (Mosiah 3:7; italics added). In his Epistle to the Hebrews, Paul encouraged early Christians to remain faithful by remembering that Christ had “resisted unto blood, striving against sin” (Hebrews 12:4). The Lord Himself spoke of bleeding from every pore (see Doctrine and Covenants 19:16–19).

Elder James E. Talmage (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that the Savior’s agony was physical, mental, and spiritual: “It was not physical pain, nor mental anguish alone, that caused Him to suffer such torture as to produce an extrusion of blood from every pore; but a spiritual agony of soul such as only God was capable of experiencing. No other man, however great his powers of physical or mental endurance, could have suffered so; for his human organism would have succumbed, [producing] unconsciousness and welcome oblivion. In that hour of anguish Christ met and overcame all the horrors that Satan, ‘the prince of this world’ could inflict” (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 613).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie testified that though the Savior’s suffering in Gethsemane is beyond our ability to comprehend, we do know some of what He endured in Gethsemane:

“We do not know, we cannot tell, no mortal mind can conceive, the full import of what Christ did in Gethsemane.

“We know he sweat great goutts of blood from every pore as he drained the dregs of that bitter cup his Father had given him.

“We know he suffered, both body and spirit, more than it is possible for man to suffer, except it be unto death.

“We know that in some way, incomprehensible to us, his suffering satisfied the demands of justice, ransomed penitent souls from the pains and penalties of sin, and made mercy available to those who believe in his holy name.

“We know that he lay prostrate upon the ground as the pains and agonies of an infinite burden caused him to tremble and would that he might not drink the bitter cup.

“We know that an angel came from the courts of glory to strengthen him in his ordeal, and we suppose it was mighty Michael, who foremost fell that mortal man might be.

“As near as we can judge, these infinite agonies—this suffering beyond compare—continued for some three or four hours” (“The Purifying Power of Gethsemane,” *Ensign*, May 1985, 9).

During His agonies in the garden, Jesus Christ suffered for the sins of all mankind. In addition, He bore the agonizing burden of all our pains, afflictions, sicknesses, sorrows, and infirmities (see Isaiah 53:4–5; Alma 7:11–12). **Elder Tad R. Callister** of the Presidency of the Seventy suggested some of the mortal experiences that would have been included in the terrible weight Jesus carried:

“What weight is thrown on the scales of pain when calculating the hurt of innumerable patients in countless hospitals? Now, add to that the loneliness of the elderly who are forgotten in the rest homes of society, desperately yearning for a card, a visit, a call—just some recognition from the outside world. Keep on adding the hurt of hungry children, the suffering caused by famine, drought, and pestilence. Pile on the heartache of parents who tearfully plead on a daily basis for a wayward son or daughter to come back home. Factor in the trauma of every divorce and the tragedy of every abortion. Add

the remorse that comes with each child lost in the dawn of life, each spouse taken in the prime of marriage. Compound that with the misery of overflowing prisons, bulging halfway houses and institutions for the mentally disadvantaged. Multiply all this by century after century of history, and creation after creation without end. Such is but an awful glimpse of the Savior’s load. Who can bear such a burden or scale such a mountain as this? No one, absolutely no one, save Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of us all” (*The Infinite Atonement* [2000], 105).

To read more about the Savior’s sufferings in Gethsemane, see the commentaries for Matthew 26:36 and for Mark 14:32–36.

Luke 22:50–51

What unique detail did Luke record in Luke 22:51 about what followed the wounding of the high priest’s servant? What does this detail reveal about the Savior? What does it reveal about the Savior’s mortal ministry generally?

Points to Ponder

- Consider the truths you have learned from the parable of the importuning widow, the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, and the statement that Jesus “prayed more earnestly” when He was suffering. Then think about the earnestness of your own prayers. How can you make your prayers more earnest?
- What have you learned or felt about Jesus Christ that you would want to remember the next time you partake of the sacrament?

Suggested Assignments

- Study Luke 22:32. Then study the following passages and write a brief essay describing evidence of Peter’s conversion and ability to “strengthen [his] brethren”: Luke 22:54–62; Acts 2:1–41; 3:1–16; 4:13–21.
- Consider what the Savior taught about partaking of the sacrament “in remembrance” of Him (Luke 22:19–20). Then study what the following scriptures teach about the importance of remembering: Deuteronomy 15:15; 2 Timothy 2:8; 2 Nephi 9:39; Mosiah 4:30; Alma 5:6; 62:49; Helaman 5:12; 12:5. List truths you learn from these scriptures that apply to always remembering Jesus Christ.

20

Luke 23–24

Introduction and Timeline for Luke 23–24

Chapters 23–24 of Luke provide the opportunity to study some additional details of the events leading up to and following the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The Savior was accused by Jewish leaders; questioned by Pilate, Herod, and then Pilate again; and sentenced to be crucified. Luke’s account helps us see that even while Jesus Christ was being falsely accused and suffering on the cross, He exemplified self-restraint, compassion, love, and forgiveness. Moreover, Luke’s accounts of the Savior’s post-Resurrection appearances are some of the clearest and most detailed witnesses of Jesus’s physical Resurrection. The Savior manifested Himself to two disciples traveling on the road to Emmaus, to Peter, and to the eleven Apostles and those who were with them. His visit to the Apostles is particularly important because He commanded them to handle His physical body so they might know for certain that He had risen. Having done so, they could fulfill their commission to be witnesses of His literal Resurrection.



1. In Jerusalem, Jesus Christ was brought before Pilate, then Herod, and then Pilate again.
2. He was crucified between two thieves; He died and was buried.
3. The resurrected Savior accompanied two disciples on the road to Emmaus.
4. In Jerusalem, the Apostles saw and touched Jesus Christ’s resurrected body.
5. Near Bethany, Jesus ascended into heaven.

Commentary for Luke 23–24

Luke 23:1–5. “We Found This Fellow Perverting the Nation”

Luke 23:2 contains three charges the Jews were bringing against the Savior: “perverting” or causing disruption to the nation, teaching Roman subjects not to pay tribute to Caesar, and claiming to be a king of a competing earthly kingdom. These would have been considered acts of treason, for which the penalty was death. Jesus Christ, of course, was innocent of these trumped-up charges. For insights about the charge of treason, see the commentaries for Matthew 27:11 and for Mark 15:1–2.

Luke 23:4–12. How Jesus Christ Responded to His Accusers

Sensing that there was “no fault” in Jesus, Pilate began looking for a way to dismiss the case against Him (Luke 23:4). When Pilate learned that Jesus was a Galilean, he sent Him to Herod Antipas, who had political jurisdiction over Galilee but was in Jerusalem for Passover. Herod was eager to see Jesus, hoping to witness a miracle of some sort. Herod Antipas was the son of Herod the Great, who had ordered the slaying of

the children of Bethlehem (see Matthew 2:16). Herod Antipas had entered into an adulterous marriage with his brother Philip’s wife. When John the Baptist had heard of this marriage, he had called it unlawful (see Mark 6:18), for which Herod had put John the Baptist to death. Jesus had earlier referred to Herod as “that fox” (Luke 13:31–32), giving us further insight into Herod’s deceptive character.



The Chief Priests Take Counsel Together, by James Tissot

Elder James E. Talmage (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles wrote about the exchange between the Savior and Herod: “Herod began to question the Prisoner; but Jesus remained silent. The chief priests and scribes vehemently voiced their accusations; but not a word was uttered by the Lord. . . . As far as we know, Herod is . . . the only being who saw Christ face to face and spoke to Him, yet never heard His voice. . . . For Herod the fox He had but disdainful and kingly silence. Thoroughly piqued, Herod turned from insulting questions to acts of malignant derision. He and his men-at-arms made sport of the suffering Christ, ‘set him at nought and mocked him’; then in travesty they ‘arrayed him in a gorgeous robe and sent him again to Pilate’ [Luke 23:11]. Herod had found nothing in Jesus to warrant condemnation” (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 636).

Elder Robert D. Hales (1932–2017) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles shared these thoughts on how we might follow the Savior’s example when other people criticize or persecute us:

“When we respond to our accusers as the Savior did, we not only become more Christlike, we invite others to feel His love and follow Him as well.

“To respond in a Christlike way cannot be scripted or based on a formula. The Savior responded differently in every situation. When He was confronted by wicked King Herod, He remained silent. When He stood before Pilate, He bore a simple and powerful testimony of His divinity and purpose. Facing the moneychangers who were defiling the temple, He exercised His divine responsibility to preserve and protect that which was sacred. Lifted up upon a cross, He uttered the incomparable Christian response: ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do’ (Luke 23:34).

“Some people mistakenly think responses such as silence, meekness, forgiveness, and bearing humble testimony are passive or weak. But to ‘love [our] enemies, bless them that curse [us], do good to them that hate [us], and pray for them which despitefully use [us], and persecute [us]’ (Matthew 5:44) takes faith, strength, and, most of all, Christian courage” (“Christian Courage: The Price of Discipleship,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 72).



Christ and Pilate, by Marcus A. Vincent

Luke 23:13–26. Jesus’s Second Appearance before Pilate

Only Luke described Jesus’s appearance before Herod Antipas and Pilate’s subsequent attempt to declare Jesus’s innocence by referring to Herod as a second witness: “I . . . have found no fault in this man . . . : no, nor yet Herod . . . ; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him” (Luke 23:14–15). Luke’s account gives us the clearest understanding that Jesus appeared before Pilate twice—before and after He was sent to Herod. Luke also recorded that Pilate asked the Jews in attendance three times why they wanted Jesus crucified and then, finally giving in to popular pressure, released Barabbas (see Luke 23:1–26).

For more information about Jesus Christ’s arraignment before Pilate and Barabbas’s release, see the commentary for Matthew 27:15–21.

Luke 23:27–31. “Daughters of Jerusalem, Weep Not for Me, but Weep for Yourselves”

After Pilate sentenced the Savior to be crucified, many sorrowful people followed Him as He was led away. Luke particularly mentioned that women were members of this group—one of his numerous references to faithful women who revered Jesus Christ. At least some of them had followed Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem (see Luke 23:49, 55). **Elder James E. Talmage** explained that the Lord’s warning to these women, whom He called “daughters of Jerusalem” (see Luke 23:28–31), referred to the future destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70: “It was the Lord’s last testimony of the impending . . . destruction that was to follow the nation’s rejection of her King. Although motherhood was the glory of every Jewish woman’s life, yet in the terrible scenes which many of those there weeping would live to witness, barrenness would be accounted a blessing; for the childless would have fewer to weep over, and at least would be spared the horror of seeing their offspring die of starvation or by violence” (*Jesus the Christ*, 654).

Luke 23:31. The Green Tree and the Dry Tree

The “green tree” described in Luke 23:31 represents the time of Jesus Christ’s mortal ministry. The Savior’s statement implied that if the oppressors of the Jewish people could carry out such evil acts (see Luke 23:28–30) at a time when Jesus was among them, they would do much worse things to the Jewish people after He was gone—a time represented by the “dry tree.” The Joseph Smith Translation adds a sentence to this verse (see Luke 23:31, footnote *b*), which describes the destruction that would occur after the Savior’s death.

Luke 23:33–56. They Crucified the Lord

Luke’s record of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ shares many common features with the other Gospel writers. The following chart identifies where you can find student manual commentary on these shared features:

Location of Topic in Luke	Commentary in This Manual
Luke 23:33. Jesus Christ was crucified at Calvary.	Matthew 27:33 and Matthew 27:35–50
Luke 23:35–39. “If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.”	Matthew 27:40–43
Luke 23:43. Jesus Christ spoke while on the cross.	John 19:25–27 and John 19:28–29
Luke 23:45. The veil of the temple was rent.	Matthew 27:51
Luke 23:50–56. Joseph of Arimathea and others buried the Savior.	Matthew 27:57–60

Luke 23:33. Crucified at Calvary

Calvariae (in English, *Calvary*) is the Latin translation of the Greek word that means “skull.” The other Gospel writers called the place of execution *Golgotha*, which comes from the Hebrew *gulgoleth* and the Aramaic *gulgutha*, both of which mean “skull.”

Luke 23:34. “Father, Forgive Them”

The Joseph Smith Translation clarifies that the Savior spoke of the soldiers who crucified Him when He prayed, “Father, forgive them”: “Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do (*Meaning the soldiers who crucified him,*) and they parted his raiment and cast lots” (Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 23:35 [in Luke 23:34, footnote *c*]). Luke recorded that after the Roman soldiers nailed Jesus to the cross, they mocked Him and offered Him vinegar (sour wine) when He cried out in thirst near the end of His ordeal (see Luke 23:36; John 19:28–30).



Jesus forgave the Roman soldiers, by Paul Mann

President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency explained one reason why we too should forgive those who offend us: “We must forgive and bear no malice toward those who offend us. The Savior set the example from the cross: ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do’ (Luke 23:34). We do not know the hearts of those who offend us” (“That We May Be One,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 68). For additional prophetic statements on forgiving others, see the commentaries for Matthew 18:21–22 and for Matthew 18:33.

Luke 23:34. “They Parted His Raiment, and Cast Lots” (see also Matthew 27:35)

The soldiers’ actions at the foot of the cross fulfilled a prophecy found in Psalms: “They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture” (Psalm 22:18). The Savior’s clothing was divided among the soldiers, but they decided to cast lots for His “vesture,” which was His robe (see Matthew 27:35; Luke 23:34).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “How marvelous it is to view the fulfillment of prophecy. More than a thousand years before, David, by the power of the Holy Ghost, had foretold in minute detail what these Gentile soldiers would do on this dread occasion as they acted without help or guidance from either the friends or enemies of Jesus” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 1:820–21).

Luke 23:42–43. “To Day Shalt Thou Be with Me in Paradise”

True to the Faith describes how the word *paradise* is generally used in the scriptures and then explains how it is used differently in Luke 23:43:

“In the scriptures, the word *paradise* is used in different ways. First, it designates a place of peace and happiness in the postmortal spirit world, reserved for those who have been baptized and who have remained faithful (see Alma 40:12; Moroni 10:34). Those in spirit prison have the opportunity to learn the gospel of Jesus Christ, repent of their sins, and receive the ordinances of baptism and confirmation through the work we do in temples (see D&C 138:30–35). When they do, they may enter paradise.

“A second use of the word *paradise* is found in Luke’s account of the Savior’s Crucifixion. When Jesus was on the cross, a thief who also was being crucified said, ‘Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom’ (Luke 23:42). According to Luke 23:43, the Lord replied, ‘Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.’ The Prophet Joseph Smith explained that . . .

the Lord actually said that the thief would be with Him in the world of spirits [see *History of the Church*, 5:424–25]” (*True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* [2004], 111).

The thief’s words imply that he was guilty of some crime but also that he had some knowledge of Jesus Christ and faith in Him. Beyond this, we know little about the thief.

While serving as an Area Seventy, **Elder Alain A. Petion** explained that the Savior’s words to the thief appear as a reassurance: “The Savior graciously answered and gave him hope. This criminal likely did not understand that the gospel would be preached to him in the spirit world or that he would be given an opportunity to live according to God in the spirit (see 1 Pet. 4:6; D&C 138:18–34). Truly the Savior cared for the thief who hung beside Him; surely He cares greatly for those who love Him and strive to keep His commandments!” (“Words of Jesus: On the Cross,” *Ensign*, June 2003, 34).



The Crucifixion, by Harry Anderson

Luke 23:46. “Father, into Thy Hands I Commend My Spirit” (see also Matthew 27:50; Mark 15:37)

From Luke 23:46 and other references, we learn that Jesus was in control of His life; He could determine when physical death would come to Him (see John 10:17–18; 19:11). **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles pointed out that only after Jesus Christ had endured all that the Atonement required of Him did He commend His spirit unto the Father: “When the uttermost farthing had then been paid, when Christ’s determination to be faithful was as obvious as it was utterly invincible, finally and mercifully, it was ‘finished’ [see John 19:30]. Against all odds and with none to help or uphold Him, Jesus of Nazareth, the living Son of the living God, restored

physical life where death had held sway and brought joyful, spiritual redemption out of sin, hellish darkness, and despair. With faith in the God He *knew* was there, He could say in triumph, ‘Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit’ [Luke 23:46] (“None Were with Him,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 88).

Luke 23:56–24:5. The Burial of Jesus Christ

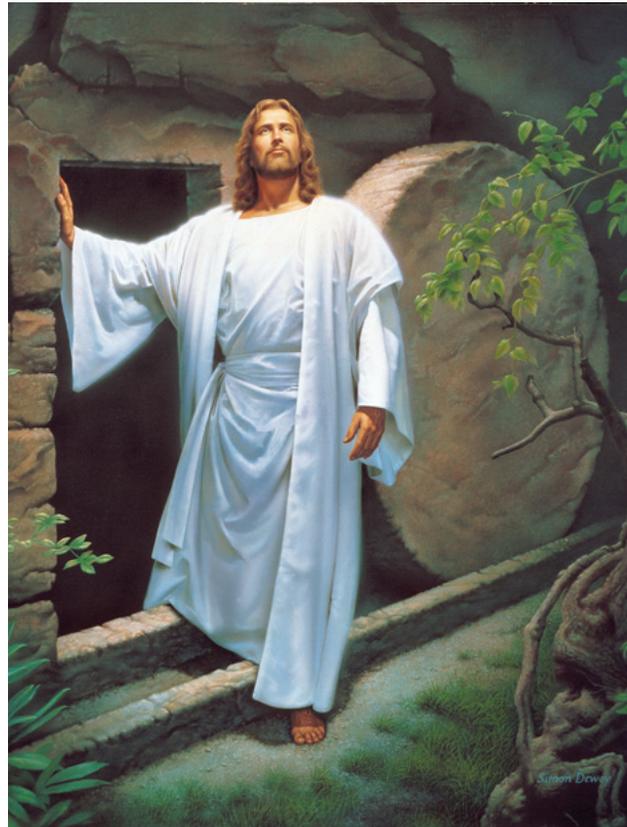
The women had prepared spices and ointments to finish preparation of the body of Jesus because his burial had been done in haste. Yet, the women strictly observed the Sabbath (on Saturday) “according to the commandment” before they went back to the tomb on Sunday to finish their task (Luke 24:1). This information was important to Luke. Even in the midst of their great tragedy, they kept the Sabbath commandment. The Greek word for “spice” is *aroma*. Spices and ointments were usually scented and were used for funerary, cosmetic, and medicinal purposes. To read more about Joseph of Arimathea’s role in the burial, see the commentary for Matthew 27:57–60.

Luke 24:1–10. “He Is Not Here, but Is Risen” (see also Matthew 28:6; Mark 16:6)

When Mary Magdalene and other women came to the Savior’s tomb on Sunday morning, they found the body of Jesus gone. Two heavenly messengers reminded them that Jesus had spoken to them about his death and Resurrection while they were in Galilee. At that time He had testified, “The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again” (Luke 24:7; see also Matthew 17:22–23). It was only after being reminded of this declaration that the women remembered Jesus’s words (see Luke 24:8).

The women then found the eleven Apostles and told them about the words of the angels. Even though Jesus had foretold His death and Resurrection on several occasions (see Luke 9:22, 43–45; 18:31–34), the Apostles found it difficult to believe the news of the Lord’s Resurrection when they heard it. Commenting on this, **President Joseph F. Smith** (1838–1918) asked, “Why were they thus forgetful and seemingly ignorant of all they had been taught by the Savior respecting the objects of his mission to the earth? Because they lacked one important qualification, they had not yet been ‘endowed with power from on high.’ [Luke 24:49.] They had not yet obtained the gift of the Holy Ghost” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 20).

For help understanding the initial disbelief of the disciples, see the commentary for Mark 16:11–14.



He Lives, by Simon Dewey

Luke’s account makes clear that the Savior’s own prophecy about His Resurrection—the central event of Christendom—was fulfilled (see Luke 24:6–7), and it was affirmed by the two angelic witnesses, thus fulfilling the ancient law of witnesses (see Deuteronomy 17:6; Matthew 18:16; 2 Corinthians 13:1). Additional prophetic insights on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ can be found in the commentaries for Matthew 28:1, for Matthew 28:6, for Mark 16:1–7, for John 20:1–10, for John 20:11–18, and for John 20:19–23.

Among the women who approached the tomb that glorious Sunday morning were Mary Magdalene; Mary, the mother of James; and Joanna, wife of Chuza (see Luke 8:3; 24:10). Among the women disciples who followed Jesus, Mary Magdalene seems to have served in a leadership capacity and had a prominent role in serving the Savior and a close association with Him. She is mentioned first in several listings of female followers (see Matthew 27:56; Luke 24:10), and she was the first to see the resurrected Lord (see John 20:1–18).

Luke 24:13–35. The Resurrected Lord Teaches the Disciples on the Road to Emmaus

On the day of the Savior’s Resurrection, two of His disciples were walking toward Emmaus, a distance of “threescore furlongs” from Jerusalem (about seven miles or eleven kilometers; see Luke 24:13). Like Peter, these disciples had hoped that Jesus would be the political and military leader desired by the Jews. Thus, after the Savior began walking with them without them knowing His identity, they sadly spoke of the Savior’s death and said, “We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel” (Luke 24:21).

In response, the Savior expounded the scriptures to them and helped them understand that His death was a vital part of His saving mission.

The prophet Alma summarized the Savior’s saving mission: “Believe in the Son of God, that he will come to redeem his people, and that he shall suffer and die to atone for their sins; and that he shall rise again from the dead, which shall bring to pass the resurrection, that all men shall stand before him, to be judged at the last and judgment day” (Alma 33:22).



Christ on the Road to Emmaus, by Greg K. Olsen

Luke 24:27, 32. He Taught Them from the Scriptures

The Gospels record that initially the followers of Jesus did not fully recognize how Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled in the life of Jesus Christ. This lack of understanding contrasts with their later vivid understanding of His saving mission and the ways it fulfilled prophecy. For example, in Peter’s first public teaching after the Resurrection, he quoted Psalm 16:8–11 and Psalm 110:1 and explained how these prophecies were fulfilled by Jesus (see Acts 2:22–36). In Peter’s next recorded public teaching, he explained how the prophecies in Deuteronomy 18:15 and Genesis 22:18 were fulfilled by Jesus, and he taught that “all the prophets” had “foretold of these days” (see Acts 3:22–26). Later, Peter, Paul, and other disciples consistently referred to ways the scriptures of the Old Testament testified of Jesus and His work.

Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught about the value and power of teaching from the scriptures:

“If the Savior were among us in the flesh today, He would teach us from the scriptures as He taught when He walked upon the earth. In the synagogue at Nazareth, ‘there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. . . . And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears’ [Luke 4:17, 21]. Later when the Sadducees and Pharisees posed a difficult question, ‘Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God’ [Matthew 22:29]. And after His Resurrection, on the road to Emmaus, His disciples ‘said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?’ [Luke 24:32]. To His disciples then and now, His words ring out: ‘Search the scriptures; for . . . they are they which testify of me’ [John 5:39]—a testimony borne by the Holy Ghost, for ‘by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things’ [Moroni 10:5]” (“Holy Scriptures: The Power of God unto Our Salvation,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 26).

Luke 24:32. “Did Not Our Heart Burn within Us?”

As the Savior used the scriptures to teach His disciples that He was the Messiah, their hearts burned within them, for the Holy Ghost was bearing witness to them of the truth. **Jay E. Jensen**, who later became a member of the Seventy, explained that a “burning” in the heart is one of the ways the Holy Ghost can manifest truth to us:

“After one exceptional sacrament meeting, my fifteen-year-old son mentioned, ‘Dad, during the talk I felt a warm feeling.’ We discussed what it means to have a warm feeling and related it to the burning of the bosom mentioned in scripture: ‘You must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right.’ (D&C 9:8.)

“The burning varies in intensity—to my son, it was a generally warm feeling in the chest. In the account of the two disciples who met the resurrected Savior on the way to Emmaus, one of the believers said, ‘Did not our heart burn within us?’ (Luke 24:32.) This feeling may not occur frequently in our lives, but when it does, it is a tangible manifestation that confirms truth or answers prayers” (“Have I Received an Answer from the Spirit?” *Ensign*, Apr. 1989, 22).



Christ at Emmaus, by Walter Rane. “Did not our heart burn within us”? (Luke 24:32).

President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency further explained the “burning” that comes with revelation from the Holy Ghost: “The teachings of the Spirit often come as feelings. That fact is of the utmost importance, yet some misunderstand what it means. I have met persons who told me they have never had a witness from the Holy Ghost because they have never felt their bosom ‘burn within’ them.

“What does a ‘burning in the bosom’ mean? Does it need to be a feeling of caloric heat, like the burning produced by combustion? If that is the meaning, I have never had a burning in the bosom. Surely, the word ‘burning’ in this scripture [D&C 9:8] signifies a feeling of comfort and serenity. That is the witness many receive. That is the way revelation works” (“Teaching and Learning by the Spirit,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1997, 13).

Luke 24:34. The Savior’s Appearance to Simon Peter

On the day of the Savior’s Resurrection, a sacred meeting occurred between the Lord and Peter, His chief Apostle. This meeting is mentioned only in Luke 24:34 and in 1 Corinthians 15:5, but these references give no details about what took place. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** described what may have occurred during this meeting: “We feel free to suppose [that this appearance] was one in which the tears of Peter’s denial in the court of Caiaphas were dried; one in which he was assured that though Satan desired to sift him as wheat, yet because Jesus had prayed for him, the noble Peter would yet come off triumphant; one in which a blessed bond of unity, of love, and of peace was established between the Master and his servant” (*The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 4 vols. [1979–81], 4:272).

Luke 24:36–43

From these verses, what do you learn about a resurrected body? When you think about having a resurrected body, what do you most look forward to?

Luke 24:36–42. A Resurrected Body of Flesh and Bones

The Savior’s appearance to His disciples described in Luke 24:36–42 provides some of the clearest information in the Gospels about what a resurrected body is like (see also Alma 11:44; 40:23). **President Joseph Fielding Smith** (1876–1972) commented on these verses and further described characteristics of a resurrected body:

“After [Jesus Christ] had laid down his life and had taken it again on the third day, he presented himself to his disciples and told them to handle him and see, for a spirit had not a body of flesh and bones as they saw that he had. And so they came, and they handled him.

“Further to convince them, he partook of the fish and honeycomb. He ate in their presence and convinced them by a practical demonstration that it was he himself, that the uneducated may read and understand; and yet the wise men in all their learning, close their eyes against these truths. . . .

“After the resurrection from the dead our bodies will be spiritual bodies, but they will be bodies that are tangible, bodies that have been purified, but they will nevertheless be bodies of flesh and bones. . . . They will no longer be quickened by blood but quickened by the spirit which is eternal, and they shall become immortal and shall never die [see Luke 24:39; 1 Corinthians 15:44; D&C 88:15–32]” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, ed. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 2:268–69, 285).



Behold My Hands and Feet, by Harry Anderson

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained that the Savior’s journey to Emmaus with the two disciples, which had occurred earlier on the day of His Resurrection, further illustrates what a resurrected body is like: “They may have walked together for as long a time as two hours. And all the while to have the Son of God interpret for them the Messianic word! . . . Perhaps some day the conversations of this Emmaus walk will be revealed. But our Lord had a purpose over and above that of interpreting the Messianic word—he could leave that to Peter and Paul and the others, as they were enlightened by the power of the Holy Spirit; his mission was to show them what a resurrected person is like” (*Mortal Messiah*, 4:277).

Luke 24:34–48

Luke 24:48 records that Jesus told His Apostles they were to be His “witnesses.” Review Luke 24:34–47. What specific details had the Apostles witnessed? How would these things prepare them for their assignment to preach the gospel to all nations?

Luke 24:44–48. The Law of Moses, the Prophets, and Psalms

Luke recorded two times when the resurrected Savior expounded the scriptures concerning Himself to His disciples (see Luke 24:26–27, 44–48). The Savior made it possible for the disciples to understand these things as they had not done before: “Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures” (Luke 24:45). These experiences, as well as the knowledge and testimony gained from the reality of the Savior’s Resurrection, seem to have had a profound, lasting effect on the disciples.

The Savior’s declaration that “all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me” (Luke 24:44) referred to the three main categories of Jewish scripture. For an explanation of these categories, see the commentary for “Scriptures” under “The New Testament Setting.”

Luke 24:48. “Ye Are Witnesses of These Things”

To learn more about the New Testament witnesses of the resurrected Jesus Christ, see the chart “New Testament Appearances of the Resurrected Jesus Christ” in the commentary for John 20:29–31.

Luke 24:49. The Apostles to Be Endowed with Power

To read about the fulfillment of the Savior's promise that the Apostles would "be endowed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49), see the commentary for Acts 1:4; 2:33.

Luke 24:49–52. Jesus Christ Ascended into Heaven

After the resurrected Jesus Christ spent time in Galilee and gave the Apostles their great commission (see Matthew 28:16–20; Mark 16:15–18), He went back to Judea and led his disciples to Bethany, on the east slope of the Mount of Olives, and blessed them there. He then ascended into heaven (see Luke 24:49–52).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie affirmed that Jesus Christ's Ascension into heaven to dwell with His Father was literal: "Christ's Ascension is literal in the fullest and most complete sense of the word. He was a resurrected man, a personage of tabernacle who, though immortal, walked and talked and ate with his earthly friends. . . . The resurrected Lord ascended from the earth and went to the place where his Father is. As our latter-day revelation expresses it: He 'ascended into heaven, to sit down on the right hand of the Father, to reign with almighty power according to the will of the Father.' (D. & C. 20:24.)" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:872).

President Joseph Fielding Smith provided insight into the meaning of the phrase "sit down on the right hand of the Father": "Showing favor to the right hand or side is not something invented by man but was revealed from the heavens in the beginning. . . . There are numerous passages in the scriptures referring to the right hand, indicating that it is a symbol of righteousness and was used in the making of covenants" (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 1:156–57; see also Mosiah 5:9–12; 26:23–24; Alma 5:58; Helaman 3:30). For further insights on the Savior's Ascension, see the commentaries for Mark 16:19 and for Acts 1:9–11.

Luke 24:53. They Continued in the Temple

After Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciples returned with joy to Jerusalem. There, they stayed continually in the temple, praising God (see Luke 24:53). Luke's Gospel begins and ends in the temple—with Zacharias and Elisabeth in the temple, then with Mary and Joseph in the temple, and then, after the Savior's Resurrection, with the Apostles and other disciples continually in the temple (see Acts 2:46).

Points to Ponder

- Why were the disciples on the road to Emmaus? And why were the Savior's Apostles so surprised or confused when they learned that the Savior had been resurrected?
- How did the two disciples who walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus describe what they felt as He expounded the scriptures to them? (see Luke 24:25–32). What have you felt as you've studied the life of the Savior?
- There were many people who received a physical witness of Christ's Resurrection by seeing Him or touching Him. Today, most people receive a witness of the Lord's Resurrection through revelation. What experiences have you had that have confirmed to you the reality of the Savior's Resurrection?

Suggested Assignments

- Jesus set a powerful example for us to follow when He asked our Father in Heaven to forgive those who crucified Him. Write a one-page paper answering the following questions: How does the Savior's example of forgiving others relate to what He taught in Doctrine and Covenants 64:9–11? What are some ways you could follow the Lord's counsel to forgive everyone?
- The risen Savior explained to two disciples on the road to Emmaus that the Messiah was meant to suffer and die (see Luke 24:26). Then using the scriptures in the Old Testament, "he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27; see also verses 44–45). Search in the Topical Guide under the entry "Jesus Christ, Prophecies about," and list 10 references from the Old Testament that might have helped the two disciples understand that Jesus Christ fulfilled prophecies about the Messiah. (The Greek version of the Old Testament [Septuagint] used by people in Jesus's day corresponds well with the content of the King James Version. Thus, the Savior's disciples would have studied the same basic prophecies about the Messiah that we study today.)
- Study Luke 24:36–43; Alma 11:43–44; 40:23; Doctrine and Covenants 88:14–16; 93:33–34; 138:16–17, 50–51, and make an outline of what these references teach about resurrected beings.

Introduction to the Gospel According to St. John

Why study John?

During a time of increasing persecution against Christians, political and civil turmoil, growing apostasy, and disputations about the nature of Jesus Christ, the Apostle John recorded his personal testimony of the Savior. Some similar circumstances exist in the modern world, and a careful study of John's account of the Savior's life and teachings can strengthen your faith in Jesus Christ and encourage you as you strive to follow Him. Studying John's Gospel can increase your confidence that, despite contrary pressures and opinions in the world, Jesus Christ is indeed "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

The Joseph Smith Translation changes the title from "The Gospel According to St. John" to "The Testimony of St. John." Thus, the Gospel of John is a firsthand account of one who was eyewitness to the events he recorded.

Who wrote John?

The author of the Gospel of John never referred to himself by name, although he is referred to as the "disciple whom Jesus loved" (see John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20). Christian writers as early as the second century agreed that the author was John, one of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ. Latter-day revelation confirms that this disciple "whom Jesus loved" was John and that the Savior empowered John to continue ministering on the earth until the Second Coming (see John 21:20–22; D&C 7:1–6). There are a few indications that someone else, such as a scribe or editor, might have assisted with the production of the Gospel of John as it has come down to us. For example, in John 21:24, the word *we* is used in a way that might refer to someone helping John.

John and his brother James were fishermen who worked on the Sea of Galilee with their father, Zebedee (see Matthew 4:21), and Simon Peter (see Luke 5:10). Before becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ, John was apparently a follower of John the Baptist (see John 1:35–40; Guide to the Scriptures, "John, Son of Zebedee"; scriptures.lds.org). John served with Peter and James "in the First Presidency in the dispensation of the meridian of time" (David B. Haight, "The Keys of the Kingdom," *Ensign*, Nov. 1980, 74). Accordingly, the Savior regularly included John in some of the more intimate moments of His ministry (see Matthew 17:1–13; 26:36–45; Mark 5:37–43).

Tradition indicates that John may have been Jesus's first cousin. This tradition also indicates that Salome, who is mentioned in Mark 16:1, was the sister of Jesus's mother, Mary, and the mother of James and John. This could mean that John was especially beloved by the Savior on the basis of a family connection.

When and where was John written?

Early Christian writers of the second century A.D. suggested that John wrote this book in Ephesus, which was in Asia Minor (modern Turkey). Proposed dates for the writing of the Gospel of John range from A.D. 60 through A.D. 100. It is likely that John wrote his Gospel after he authored the book of Revelation.

To whom was John written and why?

Because of John's apostolic calling as one of the "special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world" (D&C 107:23), his writings and message, in a general sense, are meant for everyone. However, his message also has a more specific audience, as **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles wrote: "The gospel of John is the account for the saints; it is pre-eminently the gospel for the Church, for those who understand the scriptures and their symbolisms and who are concerned with spiritual and eternal things" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 1:65). John knew that if all the sayings and doings of Jesus were recorded, "even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" (John 21:25), and therefore he carefully selected material for his record.

The final decades of the first century A.D. were a time of increasing apostasy within the Church and opposition from without—conditions that posed tremendous challenges to the faith of the second- or third-generation Christians living at the time. John's stated purpose in writing was that his readers "might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31). "The scenes from Jesus' life that [John] describes are carefully selected and arranged with this object in view. . . . He clearly affirms that Jesus is the Son of God, attested to by miracles, by witnesses, by the prophets, and by Christ's own voice" (Bible Dictionary, "John, Gospel of").

What are some distinctive features of John?

About 92 percent of the material in the Gospel of John is not found in the other Gospel accounts. This is probably because John's intended audience—Church members who already had a basic understanding of Jesus Christ—was decidedly different from Matthew's, Mark's, and Luke's intended audiences. The miracles of Jesus that John recorded serve as an example of the unique nature of this Gospel. Of the seven miracles reported by John, five are not recorded in any other Gospel. While Matthew, Mark, and Luke presented considerable information about Jesus's ministry in Galilee, John recorded numerous events that took place in Judea. John's Gospel is richly doctrinal, with some of its major themes being the divinity of Jesus as the Son of God, the Atonement of Christ, eternal life, the Holy Ghost, and the meaning and importance of belief.

More than any other Gospel writer, John emphasized Jesus's divinity as the Son of God. John recorded over

100 of Jesus's references to His Father with over 20 references in John 14 alone. Every chapter in John, with the exception of John 21, has a reference to the Father. One of John's major contributions is his inclusion of the Savior's teachings to His disciples in the hours just prior to His death, including the great Intercessory Prayer, offered the night He suffered in Gethsemane. This portion of John's account (John 13–17) represents over 18 percent of the pages in John, providing us with a greater understanding of the Savior's doctrine and what He expects of His disciples.

The Gospel of John contains several titles for Jesus Christ that are not found in the other Gospels, such as the Word (see John 1:1–2), the Lamb of God (see John 1:29, 36), the Light of the World (see John 8:12; 9:5), and the Good Shepherd (see John 10:11, 14). More than any other Gospel writer, John recorded Jesus's own testimony of His divinity (see John 5:17–37; 8:23–59; 10:30–38; 16:27–28) and His identity as Jehovah of the Old Testament (see John 4:26; 8:58).

Outline

John 1 John the disciple quoted John the Baptist (see D&C 93:6–18). He testified of Jesus Christ's premortal divinity and stature and showed how Jesus came into this world to offer salvation to all men. Jesus was baptized, and He called His disciples.

John 2–4 Jesus Christ turned water into wine. He taught Nicodemus about spiritual rebirth and testified to the woman at the well that He was the Christ. He healed a nobleman's son.

John 5–7 The Savior healed a lame man at the pool of Bethesda and proclaimed His divine power and authority. After feeding the five thousand, He delivered the Bread of Life discourse. During the Feast of Tabernacles, He declared that He was the Messiah and that only those who receive Him can receive eternal life.

John 8–10 Through the experience of the woman taken in adultery, Jesus taught about compassion and repentance and explained His divine right to judge all mankind. He healed a man born blind and described Himself as the Good Shepherd, who loves and cares for His sheep and lays down His life for them.

John 11–13 The Lord Jesus Christ raised Lazarus from death as evidence of His power over death. He entered Jerusalem triumphantly and promised to lead those who follow Him to glory with the Father. During the Last Supper, Jesus washed the feet of His disciples and taught them to love one another.

John 14–16 Jesus instructed His disciples on the relationship between love and obedience. He promised to send the Comforter (the Holy Ghost)

and to minister personally to His disciples. He declared that He is the True Vine and that He has overcome the world.

John 17–19 Jesus offered the great Intercessory Prayer and was betrayed, arrested, tried, and condemned. After suffering on the cross, He died and was buried.

John 20–21 The resurrected Jesus Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene at the Garden Tomb and then to some of His disciples in Jerusalem. Eight days later, He again visited His disciples, including Thomas. On another occasion, He appeared to seven of the disciples at the Sea of Galilee and commissioned them to minister to others.

Introduction and Timeline for John 1

The unique value and benefit of the Gospel of John has been described by **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles: “In [the Gospel of John] is the most persuasive testimony of the Divine Sonship; in it is the most elaborate imagery and symbolism; in it are many of the more mature doctrinal concepts” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:371).

As the prologue to the Gospel of John, the first chapter teaches about the premortal divinity of Jesus Christ, emphasizes His role as the messenger of the Father, emphasizes that He is the only way to return to the Father, and highlights the impact of personal testimony in bringing others to follow Jesus Christ. John introduced the Savior as “the Word” (John 1:1), the Creator of this world (see John 1:3), “the life” (John 1:4), and “the Light” (John 1:7). He testified that Jesus Christ is “the only begotten of the Father” (John 1:14) and that Jesus gives power to all who receive Him “to become the sons [and daughters] of God” (John 1:12). John also recorded other disciples’ testimonies of Jesus’s divinity. John the Baptist testified that Jesus was “the Lamb of God” sent to take away the sins of the world

(John 1:29). Andrew testified that Jesus was “the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ” (John 1:41). And Nathanael spoke to the Savior Himself, saying, “Thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel” (John 1:49).



1. John the Baptist baptized Jesus Christ in the Jordan River at Bethabara.
2. In Galilee, Jesus Christ began to call disciples to follow Him.

Commentary for John 1

John 1:1–34. Joseph Smith Translation Changes

The Joseph Smith Translation contains numerous changes to John 1:1–34. These changes, which can be found in the Bible appendix, provide important clarifications to the scriptural text.

John 1:1. Jesus Christ Is Called “the Word”

“The Word” is a title of Jesus Christ found in several places in the scriptures (see John 1:1, 14; 1 John 1:1; Revelation 19:13; D&C 93:8–10; Moses 1:32). **President Russell M. Nelson** explained the meaning of the Savior’s title “the Word”: “In the Greek language of the New Testament, that *Word* was *Logos*, or ‘expression.’ It was another name for the Master. That terminology may seem strange, but it is appropriate. We use words to convey our expression to others. So Jesus was the Word, or expression, of His Father to the world” (“Jesus the Christ: Our Master and More,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 4).

Latter-day revelation provides additional information about the title of Jesus Christ: “In the beginning the Word was, for he was the Word, even the messenger of salvation” (D&C 93:8). The Gospel of John emphasizes that Jesus Christ is the messenger of the Father to the world. As such, He declares the Father’s words (see John 7:16; 8:26–28; 12:49–50; 17:8).

Joseph Smith Translation, John 1:1, reads: “In the beginning was the *gospel preached through the Son*. And the *gospel was the word*, and the *word was with the Son*, and the *Son was with God*, and the *Son was of God*” (in the Bible appendix). These words bear witness of the premortal existence of Jesus Christ, for He was “with God” in the beginning of all things. They affirm that His mission of salvation began in the premortal world, for He was “the Word,” even the messenger of salvation (see D&C 93:6–8), who taught the gospel to us “in the beginning.” Elsewhere in scripture we learn that in the premortal world, Jesus Christ was the great Jehovah (see 3 Nephi 15:5; D&C 110:3–4).

John 1:1–2. Jesus Christ Was “in the Beginning with God”

While all four Gospels testify that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, John’s Gospel is the only one that teaches about Jesus’s premortal life (see John 1:1–2). Latter-day scriptures affirm numerous truths about the premortal existence and stature of Jesus Christ. The Savior told the Prophet Joseph Smith, “I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn” (D&C 93:21). The book of Abraham describes the premortal Christ as “like unto God” (Abraham 3:24). The book of Moses states that Jesus Christ was Heavenly Father’s “Beloved Son, . . . Beloved and Chosen from the beginning,” who even before this life said, “Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever” (Moses 4:2; see also Abraham 3:27–28).

Joseph Smith Translation, John 1:1–14 (in the Bible appendix)

What do these verses say Jesus Christ did for us? How do these verses help you understand your relationship with the Savior?

John 1:3, 10. Jesus Christ Is the Creator under the Direction of the Father

John testified that “all things were made by” the Savior (John 1:3, 10). He created “worlds without number” (Moses 1:33), “millions of earths like this” (Moses 7:30), and “all things from the beginning” (Mosiah 3:8). **Elder James E. Talmage** (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles wrote about Jesus Christ’s role as the Creator: “The Father operated in the work of creation through the Son, who thus became the executive through whom the will, commandment, or word of the Father was put into effect. It is with incisive appropriateness therefore, that the Son, Jesus Christ, is designated by the apostle John as the Word; or as declared by the Father ‘the word of my power’ [John 1:1; Moses 1:32]” (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 33).

There are, however, “two creative events” that God the Father reserves for Himself. “First, he is the Father of all spirits, Christ’s included. . . . Second, he is the Creator of the physical body of man [see Moses 2:27]” (Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [1985], 63).



Christ Creating the Earth, by Robert T. Barrett

John 1:6–8, 15–18, 23–34. John the Baptist Was a Witness of the Lord Jesus Christ

Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote the following about John 1:1–18: “From latter-day revelation we learn that the material in the forepart of the gospel of John (the Apostle, Revelator, and Beloved Disciple) was written originally by John the Baptist [see D&C 93:6–18]. . . .

“Even without revelation, however, it should be evident that John the Baptist had something to do with the recording of events in the forepart of John’s gospel, for some of the occurrences include [John the Baptist’s] conversations with the Jews and a record of what he saw when our Lord was baptized—all of which matters would have been unknown to John the Apostle whose ministry began somewhat later than that of the Baptist’s. There is little doubt but that the Beloved Disciple had before him the Baptist’s account when he wrote his gospel” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:70–71).

After quoting John 1:6–8, **President Howard W. Hunter** (1907–95) explained that these passages describe the purpose of John the Baptist’s ministry: “The immediate purpose of the mission of John the Baptist was to bear witness that Jesus was the true Light, the true teacher of the way of life eternal, and to invite men to believe in him for the remission of their sins and be baptized. John the Baptist was not the Messiah or the leader of a great movement; he was the herald and witness, bearing testimony to the nature and divine titles of Jesus, and the witness through whom God attested the divine sonship of Jesus” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1968, 141).

The phrase “I knew him not” in John 1:31 has caused some people to question whether John knew that Jesus was the Messiah. In the Joseph Smith Translation, the phrase “I knew him not” is corrected twice. John 1:31 is changed to read, “I knew him, *and* that he should be made manifest to Israel” (Joseph Smith Translation, John 1:30 [in the Bible appendix]). In John 1:33 the word *not* is again omitted to read, “I knew him” (Joseph Smith Translation, John 1:32 [in the Bible appendix]). These corrections clarify that John knew Jesus was the Messiah, for whom he was to prepare the way. This harmonizes with the clear testimony John himself had just given of Jesus: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me” (John 1:29–30; see also verse 15).

For more on the mission and testimony of John the Baptist, see the commentary for Luke 7:24–30.

John 1:9. “The True Light, Which Lighteth Every Man That Cometh into the World”

John’s writings contain the only New Testament teachings about the Light of Christ. The Bible Dictionary explains:

“The phrase ‘light of Christ’ does not appear in the Bible, although the principles that apply to it are frequently mentioned therein. The precise phrase is found in Alma 28:14, Moro. 7:18, and D&C 88:7. Biblical phrases that are sometimes synonymous to the term ‘light of Christ’ are ‘spirit of the Lord’ and ‘light of life’ . . . The ‘spirit of the Lord,’ however, sometimes is used with reference to the Holy Ghost and so must not be taken in every case as having reference to the light of Christ.

“The light of Christ is just what the words imply: enlightenment, knowledge, and an uplifting, ennobling, persevering influence that comes upon mankind because of Jesus Christ. For instance, Christ is ‘the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world’ (D&C 93:2; see John 1:9). The light of Christ fills the ‘immensity of space’ and is the means by which Christ is able to be ‘in all things, and is through all things, and is round about all things.’ It ‘giveth life to all things’ and is ‘the law by which all things are governed.’ It is also ‘the light that quickeneth’ man’s understanding (see D&C 88:6–13, 41). In this manner, the light of Christ is related to man’s conscience and tells him right from wrong (Moro. 7:12–19).

“The light of Christ should not be confused with the personage of the Holy Ghost, for the light of Christ is not a personage at all. Its influence is preliminary to and preparatory to one’s receiving the Holy Ghost” (Bible Dictionary, “Light of Christ”).

John 1:12–13. “Power to Become the Sons of God”

Because all men and women are spirit sons and daughters of heavenly parents (see “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129), some people may wonder why we need “power to become the sons of God” (John 1:12). Numerous scriptures speak of the need to *become* sons and daughters of God through being born again and entering into gospel covenants with God (see Mosiah 5:7; 27:25). While all people are spirit children of our Heavenly Father, those who make gospel covenants such as baptism and the temple endowment also become God’s covenant children. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** further explained how the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ affords us the opportunity to become the sons and daughters of God in eternity:

“When we accept Christ and join the Church, we have power given us to become the sons of God. We are not his sons and daughters by Church membership alone, but we have the ability and the capacity and the power to attain unto that status after we accept the Lord with all our hearts (see D&C 39:1–6).

“Now the ordinances that are performed in the temples are the ordinances of exaltation; they open the door to us to an inheritance of sonship; they open the door to us so that we may become sons and daughters, members of the household of God in eternity” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1955, 12–13).

John 1:14. Jesus Christ Is the Only Begotten of the Father

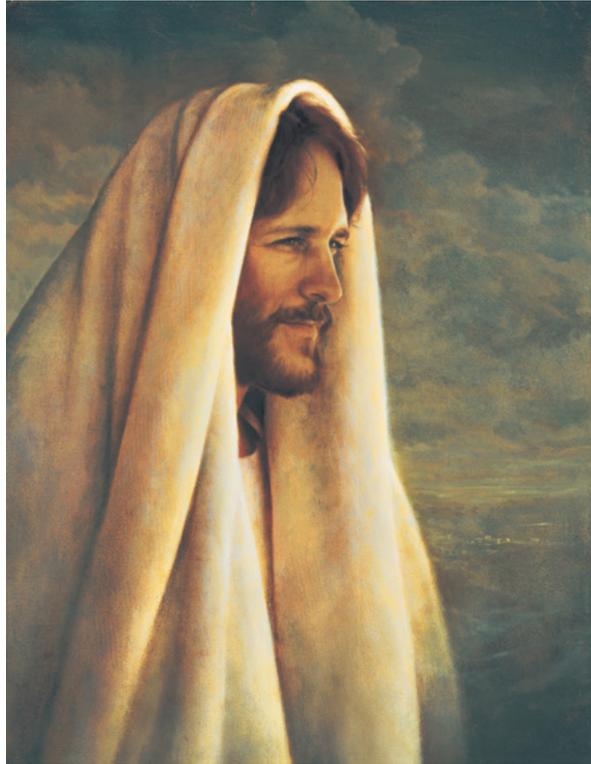
In the New Testament, John 1:14 records the first use of the phrase “only begotten” to describe Jesus as the Son of God. While serving as a member of the Seventy, **Elder Robert E. Wells** described how the title “Only Begotten Son” relates to the mortal mission of the divine Son of God:

“The divine Sonship of Jesus Christ . . . is central to understanding the entire plan of salvation. He is the First Begotten Son of the Father in the premortal existence and the Only Begotten Son of the Father on earth. God the Eternal Father is the literal parent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and of His other spirit children (see 1 Ne. 11:18, 21; James E. Talmage, *The Articles of Faith* [1924], p. 466).

“When we refer to the divine Sonship of Jesus Christ, we are also referring to His role as a God in the premortal sphere. This Firstborn Son of Elohim the Father was chosen and ordained in the primeval councils in heaven to be the Savior of the yet-to-be-born race of mortals (see James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* [1916], p. 4). Jesus was also chosen and sent by the Father to organize and create this earth, our solar system, our galaxy, and even worlds without number.

“Jesus Christ was and is Jehovah of the Old Testament, the God of Adam and of Noah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jehovah appeared to and talked to the ancient prophets. When He spoke He did so on behalf of the Father, and He said what His Father would have said. Jehovah of the Old Testament became Jesus Christ of the New Testament when He was born into mortality.

“The ‘divine Sonship’ also refers to the designation ‘Only Begotten Son in the flesh.’ Ancient and modern scriptures use the title ‘Only Begotten Son’ to emphasize the divine nature of Jesus Christ. This title signifies that Jesus’ physical body was the offspring of a mortal mother and of an immortal Eternal Father, which verity is crucial to the Atonement, a supreme act that could not have been accomplished by an ordinary man. Christ had power to lay down His life and power to take it again because He had inherited immortality from His Heavenly Father. From Mary, His mother, Christ inherited mortality, or the power to die” (“Our Message to the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 65).



Gentle Healer, by Greg K. Olsen. The divinity of Jesus Christ is central to our Father in Heaven’s plan.

John 1:14, 16–17. Jesus Christ Is Full of Grace and Truth

The only time in the New Testament when Jesus Christ is described as being “full of grace and truth” is in John 1:14. Latter-day scriptures describe the Savior as being “full of grace and truth” an additional seven times. The Savior shares with us His “fulness,” as described in John 1:16–17—including His grace, which He freely gives to us. The Greek word *charis*, from which “grace” is translated, can also be understood to mean “loving-kindness, good-will, or favor.” “The main idea of the word is divine means of help or strength, given through the bounteous mercy and love of Jesus Christ. . . . This grace is an enabling power that allows men and women to lay hold on eternal life and exaltation after they have expended their own best efforts” (Bible Dictionary, “Grace”).

The Greek word *alētheia*, from which “truth” is translated, means “fact, reality, or certainty.” The Lord defines truth as “knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come” (D&C 93:24). Truth is absolute and is not influenced by circumstances. It does not change, just as the Lord does not change (see D&C 93:30; Mormon 9:19; D&C 20:17).

The following references may be helpful for understanding how the Savior is “full of grace and truth”: 2 Nephi 2:6–10; Alma 9:26–27; and Doctrine and Covenants 93:8–17.

John 1:18. “No Man Hath Seen God at Any Time”

In the Joseph Smith Translation, the **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) added this inspired qualification to the King James Version wording of John 1:18: “No man hath seen God at any time, *except he hath borne record of the Son; for except it is through him no man can be saved*” (Joseph Smith Translation, John 1:19 [in John 1:18, footnote c]). This important addition emphasizes that salvation comes through Jesus Christ. It also clarifies that the Father speaks to men on earth in order to bear record of His Son, Jesus Christ.

President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) explained: “All revelation since the fall has come through Jesus Christ, who is the Jehovah of the Old Testament. In all of the scriptures, where God is mentioned and where he has appeared, it was Jehovah who talked with Abraham, with Noah, Enoch, Moses and all the prophets. . . . The Father has never dealt with man directly and personally since the fall, and he has never appeared except to introduce and bear record of the Son” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 1:27). The scriptures record a number of occasions when the Father has introduced Jesus Christ: Matthew 3:17; 17:5; 3 Nephi 11:6–7; D&C 76:23; Joseph Smith—History 1:17.

John 1:18 can have another meaning as well. In the scriptures, particularly the Gospel of John, the word *see* can sometimes mean “perceive with our minds” or “understand.” In that light, John 1:18 can be understood to mean that men have not fully “seen” or understood God. Therefore, Jesus Christ came as God’s messenger to “declare” or reveal to men what God the Father is like. This is a theme throughout the Gospel of John (see John 1:1, 14; 8:19; 14:7–9; 1 John 2:23). For more insight on how Jesus Christ came to help mankind understand what God the Father is like, see the commentary for John 14:7–11; 16:25.

John 1:19. What Is the Meaning of the Phrase “the Jews”?

Although the phrase “the Jews” is rarely used in the synoptic Gospels, John used it 71 times in his Gospel. John used this term in several ways throughout his

Gospel, and readers should be thoughtful to interpret the term’s meaning within its specific context. For example, in John 2:6, “Jews” refers to the Jewish people as a race or nation. In John 5:10; 9:22; and 18:12, “Jews” refers to leaders of the Sanhedrin, including the chief priests, scribes, and elders. Often in John’s Gospel, “Jews” refers to members of the Jewish nation who felt hostility toward the Savior.

John 1:19–28. The Identity of John the Baptist

In John 1:19–28, John the Apostle recorded information about the identity and ministry of John the Baptist. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained that when John the Baptist began his ministry, “the whole Jewish nation was stirred up with anxious expectation, awaiting the momentary appearance of the Messiah and his Elias. With great hosts from Jerusalem and all Judea flocking to John and accepting him as a prophet, and with the banks of the Jordan crowded with his baptized converts, it was natural for the leading Jews—members of the great Sanhedrin, whose obligation it was to test prophetic claims—to send priests and Levites to make detailed investigation” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:129).

The Jewish leaders asked John if he was “Elias” (the Greek name for the Hebrew “Elijah”), who was prophesied to someday return (see Malachi 4:5–6). In the Joseph Smith Translation, the Lord revealed a more complete account of John’s response to the Jewish leaders, which conveys John’s knowledge of his own mission as one who came to prepare the way for the Messiah. To their queries, John “confessed, and denied not *that he was Elias*; but confessed, *saying*; I am not the Christ” (Joseph Smith Translation, John 1:21 [in the Bible appendix]).

John understood, as the priests and Levites apparently did not, that there are various meanings for the name—title *Elias* (see Bible Dictionary, “Elias”; Guide to the Scriptures, “Elias”; scriptures.lds.org). John was *an* Elias, which means a forerunner of the Messiah, but he was not *the* Elias, who is Jesus Christ, the Messiah. John was also not Elijah the prophet, whose name in Greek is Elias. “I am not *that Elias who was to restore all things*. . . . I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as saith the prophet Esaias [Isaiah]” (Joseph Smith Translation, John 1:22, 24 [in the Bible appendix]). John’s testimony left no doubt that he knew of his own divinely appointed preparatory mission

and of the divinity of the “preferred” One who would come after him: “I baptize with water, but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is *of whom I bear record. He is that prophet, even Elias*, who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose, *or whose place I am not able to fill; for he shall baptize, not only with water, but with fire, and with the Holy Ghost*” (Joseph Smith Translation, John 1:27–28 [in the Bible appendix]).

When John denied that he was Elijah, the Jewish leaders asked him, “Art thou that prophet?” (John 1:21). Their question likely had reference to the prophecy of Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15: “The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.” However, by asking John if he was “that prophet” after John had already denied that he was the Christ, these Jews showed that they did not understand the messianic nature of Moses’s prophecy. Many of the Jews in Jesus’s day anticipated the coming of a prophet who would be like unto Moses but who was not the Messiah. This is evident when many in Jerusalem later proclaimed that Jesus Christ was “the Prophet,” while others declared that He was “the Christ” (John 7:40–41; see also 6:14).



John the Baptist Preaching in the Wilderness, by Robert T. Barrett. John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus Christ.

John 1:28–34. “These Things Were Done in Bethabara”

Nephi prophesied that John would baptize “in Bethabara, beyond Jordan; . . . even that he should baptize the Messiah” (1 Nephi 10:9). It is thought that the Savior was baptized near the place where the Jordan River enters the Dead Sea. This area is also approximately where Joshua miraculously led the ancient Israelites out of their exile in the desert across the Jordan River into the promised land. Geographically, this is the lowest freshwater location on earth. **President Russell M. Nelson** explained how the symbolism of this place provides insight into the Savior’s mission and into the meaning of our own baptisms:

“The River Jordan was the site Jesus chose for His baptism by John. . . . Is it significant that this sacred ordinance was performed in virtually the lowest body of fresh water on the planet? Could He have selected a better place to symbolize the humble depths to which He went and from which He rose? By example, He taught us that He literally descended beneath all things to rise above all things. Surely, being baptized after the manner of His baptism signifies that through our obedience and effort we, too, can come from the depths to ascend to lofty heights of our own destiny.

“To us, the River Jordan is a sacred stream. The Jordan marked the termination of the wandering of the children of Israel. They had journeyed there from the banks of the Nile. Joshua had led some 600,000 Israelite warriors and their families across that roiling river during flood season, when the waters were suddenly stopped and heaped up to allow the faithful Israelites, carrying the ark of the covenant, to cross an empty river bed. (See Joshua 3.)

“. . . *Bethabara* in Hebrew means ‘house of the crossing.’ . . . Could it be that Christ chose this location for His baptism in the River Jordan as a silent commemoration of the crossing of those faithful Israelites under Joshua’s direction so many years before, as well as a symbol that baptism is a spiritual crossing into the kingdom of God?” (“Why This Holy Land?” *Ensign*, Dec. 1989, 15).

An additional symbolic insight can be drawn from this account. The name *Joshua* is Hebrew, and it is rendered as *Iēsous* in Greek, which became *Iesus* (later *Jesus*) in Latin. Thus, Joshua’s crossing of the Jordan River can be viewed as a type or foreshadowing of the future baptism of Jesus Christ (see Joshua 3–4; Acts 7:44–45, footnote a).

John 1:28 in the King James Version of the Bible is moved to become Joseph Smith Translation, John 1:34 (see the Bible appendix). This change makes clear that the baptism of Jesus, which is described in John 1:29–34, occurred in Bethabara.



RICHARD L. W. CLEAVE

The Jordan River near Bethabara

John 1:29, 36. The Lamb of God (see also Revelation 5:6–12)

John is the only New Testament writer to use “the Lamb” as a title for the Savior. Twice in the Gospel of John, Jesus is called “the Lamb of God” (John 1:29, 36), and the title “the Lamb” appears over 20 times in the book of Revelation, also authored by John. (Elsewhere in the New Testament, Jesus Christ is twice compared to a lamb; see Acts 8:32–35; 1 Peter 1:19.) The Book of Mormon prophet Nephi also frequently used the term “Lamb of God” (see 1 Nephi 11–14; 2 Nephi 31).

President Russell M. Nelson taught that as the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ fulfilled the Mosaic law of sacrifice through His Atonement:

“The Old Testament has many references to *atonement*, which called for animal sacrifice. Not any animal would do. Special considerations included:

- “the selection of a firstling of the flock, without blemish [see Leviticus 5:18; 27:26],
- “the sacrifice of the animal’s life by the shedding of its blood [see Leviticus 9:18],
- “death of the animal without breaking a bone [see Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12], and
- “one animal could be sacrificed as a vicarious act for another [see Leviticus 16:10].

“The Atonement of Christ fulfilled these prototypes of the Old Testament. He was the firstborn Lamb of God, without blemish. His sacrifice occurred by the shedding of blood. No bones of His body were broken—note-worthy in that both malefactors crucified with the Lord had their legs broken [see John 19:31–33]. And His

was a vicarious sacrifice for others” (“The Atonement,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 34–35).

John 1:35–51. Jesus Called Disciples to Follow Him

Early in the Savior’s ministry, He called Andrew, John, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael (also called Bartholomew) to be His disciples (see John 1:35–51). At least two of these men—Andrew and another disciple, who was probably John—had been disciples of John the Baptist, but when they heard the Savior speak, they followed Him (see John 1:35–37).

Robert J. Matthews wrote: “During his public ministry John [the Baptist] gathered followers, or disciples, who called him ‘Rabbi’ (John 3:26), and whom he taught to fast (Matthew 9:14; Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33) and to pray (Luke 11:1). At John’s own urging, many of his disciples left him and followed Jesus, but some stayed with him even though he made it plain that he was not the Messiah. . . . Some of those who first followed John are later found among the twelve whom Jesus selected as apostles. One of these is John, the brother of James, and another is Andrew, the brother of Peter” (*A Burning Light: The Life and Ministry of John the Baptist* [1972], 37–38).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles discussed what we can learn about being disciples from the experiences Jesus’s disciples had as He called them to follow Him:

“You will recall that when Andrew and another disciple, probably John, first heard Christ speak, they were so moved and attracted to Jesus that they followed Him as He left the crowd. Sensing that He was being pursued, Christ turned and asked the two men, ‘What seek ye?’ [John 1:38]. Other translations render that simply ‘What do you want?’ They answered, ‘Where dwellest thou?’ or ‘Where do you live?’ Christ said simply, ‘Come and see’ [John 1:39]. Just a short time later He formally called Peter and other new Apostles with the same spirit of invitation. To them He said, Come, ‘follow me’ [Matt. 4:19].

“It seems that the essence of our mortal journey and the answers to the most significant questions in life are distilled down to these two very brief elements in the opening scenes of the Savior’s earthly ministry. One element is the question put to every one of us on this earth: ‘What seek ye? What do you want?’ The second is His response to our answer, *whatever that answer is*. Whoever we are and whatever we reply, His response is *always* the same: ‘Come,’ He says lovingly. ‘Come, follow me.’ Wherever you are going, first come and see what I do, see where and how I spend my time. Learn of me, walk with me, talk with me, believe. Listen to

me pray. In turn you will find answers to your own prayers. God will bring rest to your souls. Come, follow me" ("He Hath Filled the Hungry with Good Things," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 65).



Two disciples of John the Baptist follow Jesus

John 1:41, 45. Disciples of Jesus Christ Share Their Witness with Others

Elder David B. Haight (1906–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles recounted the time when the Savior met John and Andrew. The two men followed Jesus to where He was dwelling and stayed with Him for some time (see John 1:35–39). Then Elder Haight explained how this scriptural account can inspire us to share our testimonies of the truth:

"John and Andrew were with the Savior for several hours. Just imagine being in His presence or being able to sit and look into His eyes or to hear Him explain who He was and why He had come to earth and to hear that inflection in His voice in describing what He would have told those young men. They would have shaken His hand. They would have felt of that precious, wonderful personality as they listened to Him.

"And following that encounter, the account says that Andrew went to find his brother Simon because he had to share it with someone. . . .

"When Andrew found his brother Simon, he said to him, 'We have found the [Messiah]' (John 1:41). He probably said: 'We've been in His presence. We've felt of His personality. We know that what He is telling us is true.' Yes, Andrew had to share it with someone.

"That is what we do in sharing what we know and what we understand" ("Gratitude and Service," *Ensign*, May 2001, 71).

President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency spoke about why those with testimonies of divine truths should share their testimonies with others:

"Those who have a testimony of the restored gospel also have a duty to share it. The Book of Mormon teaches that we should 'stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in' (Mosiah 18:9).

"One of the most impressive teachings on the relationship between the gift of a testimony and the duty to bear it is in the 46th section of the Doctrine and Covenants. In describing different kinds of spiritual gifts, this revelation states:

"To some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world.

"To others it is given to believe on their words, that they also might have eternal life if they continue faithful' (vv. 13–14; see also John 20:29).

"Those who have the gift to *know* have an obvious duty to bear their witness so that those who have the gift to *believe on their words* might also have eternal life.

"There has never been a greater need for us to profess our faith, privately and publicly (see D&C 60:2). Though some profess atheism, there are many who are open to additional truths about God. To these sincere seekers, we need to affirm the existence of God the Eternal Father, the divine mission of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and the reality of the Restoration. We must be valiant in our testimony of Jesus" ("Testimony," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 27).

John 1:42. Peter Was Called to Be a Seer

As recorded in John 1:42, when the Savior called Peter to be His disciple, He also gave Peter another name. The Joseph Smith Translation includes additional

information about the name: “Thou art Simon, the son of Jona, thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, *a seer, or a stone*” (Joseph Smith Translation, John 1:42 [in John 1:42, footnote *a*]). While explaining the significance of the name the Lord gave to Peter on this occasion, **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** also taught the great value of having seers in the Church:

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

“Added significance will soon be given this designation when, in promising him the keys of the kingdom, our Lord will tell Peter that the gates of hell shall never prevail against the rock of revelation, or in other words against seership. (Matt. 16:18.) Seers are specially selected prophets who are . . . empowered to know past, present, and future things. ‘A gift which is greater can no man have.’ (Mosiah 8:13–18.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:132–33).

John 1:45. Testimony of the Scriptures

When Philip told Nathanael about Jesus, he said that he had found the person “of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write” (John 1:45). Philip and other disciples were able to recognize Jesus as the Messiah because they had been searching the scriptures for signs of the Messiah. The Law was the first five books of Moses, while the Prophets were books such as Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah. Later in His ministry, Jesus commanded His listeners to search the scriptures—which were the books of the Old Testament in His day—because they testified of Him (see John 5:39).

John 1:46. “Can There Any Good Thing Come Out of Nazareth?”

Nazareth was a small village of approximately 200 to 400 residents, situated 15 miles west of the Sea of Galilee and 20 miles east of the Mediterranean Sea. Archaeological remains indicate that no paved roads existed in the village, nor did any significant social, political, or economic activity occur there. While Nazareth was commonly thought of as insignificant by many people during the Savior’s lifetime, it became known later in New Testament times as the hometown of the Redeemer of mankind (see Acts 2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 10:38). Nathanael’s question about whether any good thing could come from Nazareth reflected the thinking

of many others. **President Thomas S. Monson** (1927–2018) posed an answer to Nathanael’s question:

“From Nazareth came he who made blind men to see, lame beggars to walk—even the dead to live. He set before us an example to emulate. He lived the perfect life. He taught the glad tidings that changed the world. . . .

“Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?”

“From Nazareth came example.

“From Nazareth came sight.

“From Nazareth came strength.

“From Nazareth came life.

“From Nazareth came faith.

“From Nazareth came peace.

“From Nazareth came courage.

“From Nazareth came Christ” (“Can There Any Good Thing Come Out of Nazareth?” *Ensign*, Oct. 1988, 3, 5).



Modern-day Nazareth

RICHARD L. W. CLEAVE

John 1:47–51

As Nathanael spoke with the Savior, what did he come to realize about the Savior’s knowledge of him? What evidence from your own life indicates that He knows you perfectly?

John 1:47. Without Guile

While discussing the Savior’s statement that Nathanael was a person in whom there is “no guile” (John 1:47), **Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin** (1917–2008) of the Quorum

of the Twelve Apostles explained what it means to be without guile:

“To be without guile is to be free of deceit, cunning, hypocrisy, and dishonesty in thought or action. To beguile is to deceive or lead astray, as Lucifer beguiled Eve in the Garden of Eden. A person without guile is a person of innocence, honest intent, and pure motives, whose life reflects the simple practice of conforming his daily actions to principles of integrity. . . .

“To be without guile is to be pure in heart—an essential virtue of those who would be counted among true followers of Christ. . . .

“If we are without guile, we are honest, true, and righteous. All of these are attributes of Deity and are required of the Saints. Those who are honest are fair and truthful in their speech, straightforward in their dealings, free of deceit, and above stealing, misrepresentation, or any other fraudulent action. . . .

“I believe the necessity for the members of the Church to be without guile may be more urgent now than at other times because many in the world apparently do not understand the importance of this virtue” (“Without Guile,” *Ensign*, May 1988, 80–81).

John 1:51. Jesus Christ Is the Son of Man

For an explanation of the title “Son of Man,” refer to the commentary for Matthew 8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 11:19; 12:8, 32, 40.

Points to Ponder

- Why is it important to know that Jesus Christ is the Creator of the earth?
- How could the testimonies recorded in John 1 help us understand who the Savior is? How could they strengthen our own testimonies of the Savior?

Suggested Assignments

- Review John 1 and make a list of the various names, titles, and roles of the Savior you identify. Then choose two of these to study. Write a paragraph about them, explaining why those names, titles, or roles are significant to you.
- Write down the names of friends, relatives, or acquaintances with whom you could share your testimony of the Savior. Consider what you might tell them about the Savior. Pray for the opportunity to share your testimony of Jesus Christ with the people you know and care about.

John 2–4

Introduction and Timeline for John 2–4

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles declared: “The gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of transformation. It takes us as men and women of the earth and refines us into men and women for the eternities” (“The Great Commandment,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 30). In New Testament times, individuals felt the Savior’s transforming power when they heard His words or saw the miracles He performed. He turned water into wine (see John 2:1–11). He cleansed the temple so that it would be revered as His “Father’s house” (John 2:16). He healed a nobleman’s son who was on “the point of death” by uttering these simple words, “Thy son liveth” (John 4:47, 50). He invited Nicodemus to experience spiritual rebirth (see John 3:1–21). He helped the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well grow in her understanding until she recognized Him as the Christ (see John 4:5–29).



1. Jesus Christ turned water into wine in Cana of Galilee.
2. The Lord cleansed the temple in Jerusalem.
3. Nicodemus visited the Savior in Jerusalem.
4. The Messiah taught a Samaritan woman at the well in Sychar.
5. While in Cana, Jesus healed a nobleman’s son in Capernaum.

Commentary for John 2–4

John 2:1–11. Jesus Christ’s First Miracle

John 2:1–11 offers no specific interpretation of the meaning or symbolism of this first recorded miracle of the Savior’s mortal ministry—turning water into wine. There are, however, several possible lessons we can learn from it. Jesus Christ’s attendance at the wedding feast shows that He was not a social recluse; He participated in the normal social interactions of His day. His presence at a wedding demonstrates that He approved of marriage. Through His interaction with His mother, we learn the proper respect children should have for their parents as He complied with her request. The Master’s first recorded miracle manifested His power to change the elements from one state to another, thus attesting to His role as the Creator (see Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 1:135–36).

This manifestation of His power to effect change can help us understand how the Savior can change us from our carnal, fallen state to a state of righteousness (see Mosiah 3:19). We can also see how miraculous signs can confirm and increase the faith of those who are willing to believe in Jesus Christ (see D&C 63:9–11). The Joseph Smith Translation makes this clear by changing “his disciples believed on him” to “*the faith of his disciples was strengthened in him*” (Joseph Smith Translation, John 2:11).

At the wedding in Cana, there were “six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece” (John 2:6). According to Jewish tradition, vessels made of stone retained their ritual purity, while ceramic vessels could become ritually impure. A “firkin” was about nine gallons (34 liters), so the six pots could have held between 100 and 160 gallons (about 380 to 600 liters).



Limestone pots from the New Testament era in Israel

John 2:1–11. “Good Wine”

There are many references in the Bible to the evils of drunkenness and strong drink (for example, see Proverbs 23:20–21; Isaiah 5:11–12; Ephesians 5:18). These verses do not specifically forbid the use of alcohol, but they do condemn overindulgence and drunkenness. In our day, the Lord has revealed the Word of Wisdom, which does forbid consumption of alcoholic beverages (see D&C 89:4–7). We should avoid judging the people of earlier dispensations by the commandments the Lord has given us in our day.



The Marriage at Cana, by Carl H. Bloch

John 2:4. “Woman, What Have I to Do with Thee?”

The Savior’s response to His mother may seem abrupt as it reads in the King James Version, but both the Joseph Smith Translation and the Greek version indicate that He spoke with respect. **Elder James E. Talmage** (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained: “The noun of address, ‘Woman,’ as applied by a son to his mother may sound to our ears somewhat harsh, if not disrespectful; but its use was really an expression of opposite import. . . . When, in the last dread scenes of His mortal experience, Christ hung in dying agony upon the cross, He looked down upon the weeping Mary, His mother, and commended her to the care of the beloved apostle John, with the words: ‘Woman, behold thy son!’

[John 19:26]. Can it be thought that in this supreme moment, our Lord’s concern for the mother from whom He was about to be separated by death was associated with any emotion other than that of honor, tenderness and love?” (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 144–45).

The Joseph Smith Translation also helps us understand that Jesus not only asked His mother what she wanted Him to do, but He also expressed willingness to do it: “Woman, what wilt thou have me to do for thee? that will I do” (Joseph Smith Translation, John 2:4 [in John 2:4, footnote a]). The question “What have I to do with thee?” essentially meant “What do you want me to do?” The Savior’s words to His mother can be seen as a subtle, tender way for Him to tell her that while His hour had “not yet come” (John 2:4), He was now making the transition from being the son of Mary to fulfilling His role as the Son of God.

John 2:13–22. The Cleansing of the Temple

The synoptic Gospels relate that Jesus cleansed the temple after entering Jerusalem during the last week of His mortal life (see Matthew 21:12–16; Mark 11:15–18; Luke 19:45–48). The account in John 2:13–22 may refer to the same event, which John decided to relate early in his Gospel, or it may refer to an earlier cleansing of the temple that occurred near the beginning of Jesus’s ministry. Differences in language between John’s account and the others suggest that there may well have been two cleansings, the second of which so enraged the chief priests and scribes that they sought to destroy Jesus (see Mark 11:18; Luke 19:47; Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:636).

John 2:16. The Lord’s House Must Be Kept Holy

When the Savior entered the temple, He encountered a chaotic display of “stalls of oxen, pens of sheep, cages of doves and pigeons. . . . Crowded on every hand were the tables of the money-changers who, for a profit, changed the Roman and other coins into temple coins so that sacrificial animals could be purchased” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:137–38).

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) discussed the Savior’s resolute actions to cleanse the irreverence and worldliness surrounding the temple:

“Love of money had warped the hearts of many of Jesus’ countrymen. They cared more for gain than they did for God. Caring nothing for God, why should they care for his temple? They converted the temple courts into a marketplace and drowned out the prayers and psalms of the faithful with their greedy exchange of

money and the bleating of innocent sheep. Never did Jesus show a greater tempest of emotion than in the cleansing of the temple. . . .

“The reason for the tempest lies in just three words: ‘My Father’s house.’ It was not an ordinary house; it was the house of God. It was erected for God’s worship. It was a home for the reverent heart. It was intended to be a place of solace for men’s woes and troubles, the very gate of heaven. ‘Take these things hence;’ he said, ‘make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise.’ (John 2:16.) His devotion to the Most High kindled a fire in his soul and gave his words the force that pierced the offenders like a dagger” (“Hallowed Be Thy Name,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1977, 52–53).

One way we can emulate the Savior’s attitude toward the sanctity of the temple is by keeping ourselves worthy to enter the house of the Lord, as **Elder Richard G. Scott** (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “Before entering the temple, you will be interviewed by your bishop and stake president for your temple recommend. Be honest and candid with them. That interview is not a test to be passed but an important step to confirm that you have the maturity and spirituality to receive the supernal ordinances and make and keep the edifying covenants offered in the house of the Lord. Personal worthiness is an essential requirement to enjoy the blessings of the temple. Anyone foolish enough to enter the temple unworthily will receive condemnation” (“Receive the Temple Blessings,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 25).

John 2:17. “And His Disciples Remembered”

When Jesus cleared the temple, His disciples remembered a prophecy recorded in Psalm 69:9, “The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up” (John 2:17). This scripture teaches that Jesus’s “zeal”—meaning His fervent love—for His Father and His Father’s house had aroused in Him a righteous indignation that the temple was being used as a house of merchandise.

John 2:18–21. “Destroy This Temple, and in Three Days I Will Raise It Up”

After the Savior cleared the money changers from the temple, some of the leaders of the Jews asked Him to show them a sign to prove He had the power to force those who were desecrating the temple out of His Father’s house. Jesus’s answer seemed to refer to the physical temple, but **President Russell M. Nelson** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that the Savior was actually speaking about the power to lay down His life and to take it up again:

“This great priesthood power of resurrection is vested in the Lord of this world. He taught that ‘all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth’ (Matthew 28:18). . . .

“This power he subtly proclaimed when he said unto the Jews:

“‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. . . . But he spake of the temple of his body’ (John 2:19–21).

“The keys of the Resurrection repose securely with our Lord and Master. He said:

“‘I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live’ [John 11:25]” (“Life after Life,” *Ensign*, May 1987, 10).

John 3:1. Who Was Nicodemus?

As a member of the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus occupied a position of political, social, and religious influence and power (see John 3:1; Bible Dictionary, “Nicodemus”). From other scriptures we learn that Nicodemus appears to have been sincere in the questions He asked Jesus (see John 3:1–9). For example, Nicodemus spoke in defense of the Savior to the chief priests and Pharisees, for which he was ridiculed (see John 7:45–52). After the Savior’s Crucifixion, Nicodemus assisted Joseph of Arimathea in burying the Lord’s body, contributing expensive burial ointments and spices (see John 19:38–42).



Nicodemus speaks with Jesus

John 3:3–5. “Born Again”

The General Authorities of the Church have spoken often on the doctrine of being “born again.” **Elder David A. Bednar** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “We begin the process of being born again through exercising faith in Christ, repenting of our sins, and being baptized by immersion for the remission of sins by one having priesthood authority. . . . Total immersion in and saturation with the Savior’s gospel are essential steps in the process of being born again” (“Ye Must Be Born Again,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 21).

President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency confirmed:

“We were born again when we entered into a covenant relationship with our Savior by being born of water and of the Spirit and by taking upon us the name of Jesus Christ. . . .

“Latter-day Saints affirm that those who have been born again in this way are spiritually begotten sons and daughters of Jesus Christ (see Mosiah 5:7; 15:9–13; 27:25). Nevertheless, in order to realize the intended blessings of this born-again status, we must still keep our covenants and endure to the end. In the meantime, through the grace of God, we have been born again as new creatures with new spiritual parentage and the prospects of a glorious inheritance” (“Have You Been Saved?” *Ensign*, May 1998, 56).

To be born again requires both our own effort and “divine power,” and for most of us, this happens over time rather than all at once, as **Elder D. Todd Christofferson** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained:

“It was Jesus who stated that entry into the kingdom of God requires that one be born again—born of water and of the Spirit (see John 3:3–5). His teaching about a physical and a spiritual baptism helps us understand that both our own action and the intervention of divine power are needed for this transformative rebirth—for the change from natural man to saint (see Mosiah 3:19). . . .

“You may ask, Why doesn’t this mighty change happen more quickly with me? You should remember that the remarkable examples of King Benjamin’s people, Alma, and some others in scripture are just that—remarkable and not typical. For most of us, the changes are more gradual and occur over time. Being born again, unlike our physical birth, is more a process than an event. And engaging in that process is the central purpose of mortality” (“Born Again,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 77–78).

John 3:3–5. Entering into the Lord’s Kingdom

Elder Robert D. Hales (1932–2017) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles provided insight into the Savior’s teaching that we enter into the kingdom of heaven when we are baptized of water and of the Spirit (see John 3:3–5):

“When we are baptized by immersion by one with the proper priesthood authority and choose to follow our Savior, we then are *in* His kingdom and *of* His kingdom. . . .

“At baptism we make a covenant with our Heavenly Father that we are willing to come into His kingdom and keep His commandments from that time forward, even though we still live in the world. . . .

“When we understand our baptismal covenant and the gift of the Holy Ghost, it will change our lives and will establish our total allegiance to the kingdom of God. When temptations come our way, if we will listen, the Holy Ghost will remind us that we have promised to remember our Savior and obey the commandments of God. . . .

“By choosing to be in His kingdom, we separate—not isolate—ourselves from the world. Our dress will be modest, our thoughts pure, our language clean. The movies and television we watch, the music we listen to, the books, magazines, and newspapers we read will be uplifting. We will choose friends who encourage our eternal goals, and we will treat others with kindness. We will shun the vices of immorality, gambling, tobacco, liquor, and illicit drugs. Our Sunday activities will reflect the commandment of God to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. We will follow the example of Jesus Christ in the way we treat others. We will live to be worthy to enter the house of the Lord” (“The Covenant of Baptism: To Be in the Kingdom and of the Kingdom,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 7–8).

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) taught about the Savior’s words in verses 3 and 5, which speak of “seeing” and “entering” the kingdom of God: “It is one thing to see the kingdom of God, and another thing to enter into it. We must have a change of heart to see the kingdom of God, and subscribe the articles of adoption to enter therein” (in *History of the Church*, 6:58). When a person “sees” the kingdom of God, the Holy Ghost has caused the person to have a mighty “change of heart” (see Alma 5:14). Then the person must participate in the ordinances of the gospel in order to “enter” the kingdom of God.

John 3:5. Ordinances Are Necessary to Gain Exaltation

The Savior’s teaching to Nicodemus in John 3:5 makes clear that the ordinances of baptism and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost are necessary if we are to progress toward eternal life: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Many Christians do not believe that ordinances such as baptism are necessary, but gospel ordinances have always been essential in the true Church of Jesus Christ. The **Prophet Joseph Smith** taught, “Being born again, comes by the Spirit of God through ordinances” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 95). **President Boyd K. Packer** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles declared: “Good conduct without the ordinances of the gospel will neither redeem nor exalt mankind; covenants and the ordinances are essential” (“The Only True Church,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 82). President Packer further taught: “Ordinances and covenants become our credentials for admission into His presence. To worthily receive them is the quest of a lifetime; to keep them thereafter is the challenge of mortality” (“Covenants,” *Ensign*, May 1987, 24).

John 3:6–11. “So Is Every One That Is Born of the Spirit”

Nicodemus could not at first understand the Savior’s teaching that individuals must be born again in order to receive eternal life (see John 3:4). As recorded in John 3:6, the Savior taught him that spiritual things must be learned through the Spirit. **President Marion G. Romney** (1897–1988) of the First Presidency explained that Nicodemus had not yet been born of the Spirit, so he “lacked the perception that comes from the Spirit. He simply could not understand that Jesus was saying there are two sources of knowledge, two different processes of learning—one through the normal senses of the flesh, the other through the voice of the Spirit” (“Receiving and Applying Spiritual Truth,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1984, 3).

The Savior further described the process of learning spiritual things by comparing the process to the blowing of the wind (see John 3:7–8). Of this teaching, **President Romney** said: “The Master was here affirming that the knowledge to be obtained through the gift of the Holy Ghost—the rebirth of which the Lord had spoken—is just as sure and certain to us as the wind that blows, even though we cannot see it. The Lord was teaching

Nicodemus that the process of learning about things from the Spirit is real, even though the Spirit’s workings cannot be understood by those who have not been born again” (“Receiving and Applying Spiritual Truth,” 4).

After the Savior explained these truths about being born of water and the Spirit, Nicodemus still wondered at them and said, “How can these things be?” (John 3:9). Jesus responded by saying, “Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?” (John 3:10). The truths the Savior was teaching were taught in Old Testament scriptures, and Nicodemus should have been familiar with them.

John 3:12. “Earthly Things” and “Heavenly Things”

The Savior spoke to Nicodemus about “earthly things”—like birth and the wind—in order to lift his understanding toward “heavenly things”—like conversion and the Spirit (John 3:12). **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, while serving as president of Brigham Young University, pointed out that this pattern of the Savior’s teaching can be seen throughout the Gospel of John. For example, after teaching Nicodemus, the Savior traveled to Samaria, where He taught the Samaritan woman about “living water” to help her understand His true identity as the Messiah, and He used his disciples’ midday meal to help them understand the need to do His Father’s will (see John 4:7–38). Elder Holland taught that in each such instance, the Savior was using everyday things to lift the eyes of His followers to “higher purposes, loftier meanings, more spiritual sustenance. . . .

“. . . It becomes clear that this same lesson is taught by the Savior again and again. Jesus spoke of TEMPLES and the people thought he spoke of temples. (John 2:18–21.) He spoke of BREAD and the people thought he spoke of bread. (John 6:30–58.) And so on. And these were not merely parables in the allegorical sense of multiple applications of a single saying. They were in every case an invitation to ‘lift up your eyes,’ to see ‘heavenly things’—specifically to see and understand Him. But they are also repeated manifestations of his willingness to meet people on their own terms, however limited that understanding, and there lead them on to higher ground. Ultimately, if they would, it would lead them beyond time and space altogether, into eternity” (“Lift Up Your Eyes,” *Ensign*, July 1983, 12–13).

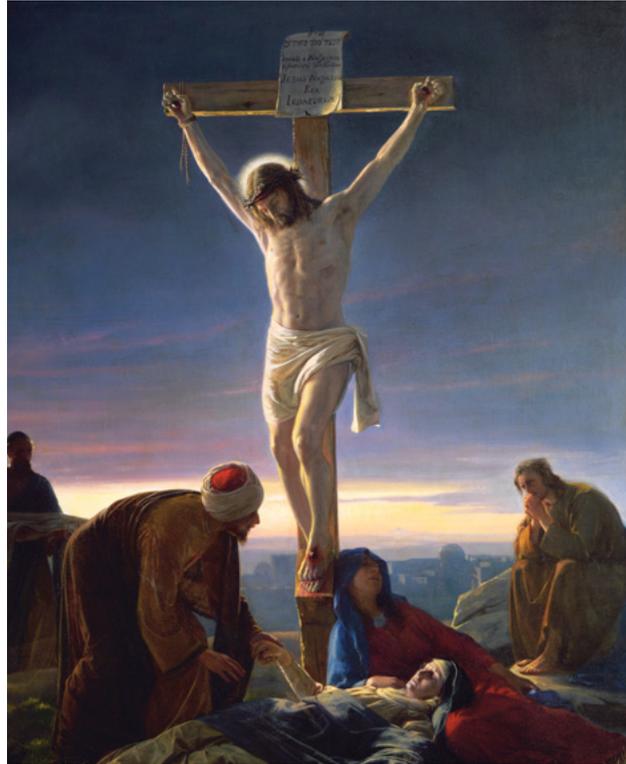


Moses and the Brass Serpent, by Judith A. Mehr

John 3:14–17. The Father Sent His Son into the World Because of His Love for Us

As the Savior continued to teach Nicodemus, He expressed important truths about His redeeming mission, particularly as recorded in John 3:14–17. He used the symbol of the serpent that Moses had raised in the wilderness to teach about His Crucifixion and Atonement. As Israel had looked to the symbol of the serpent in order to be healed from the bites of poisonous serpents, so the Jewish people were encouraged to look to their Redeemer, who would be lifted up on the cross, and they would live because of Him (see 3 Nephi 27:13–14). The serpent was a symbol of Jesus Christ, who was Jehovah in premortality.

President Dallin H. Oaks quoted John 3:16 to affirm that the Atonement of Jesus Christ is the ultimate expression of Heavenly Father’s love for us: “There is no greater evidence of the infinite power and perfection of God’s love than is declared by the Apostle John: ‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son’ (John 3:16). Another Apostle wrote that God ‘spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all’ (Romans 8:32). Think how it must have grieved our Heavenly Father to send His Son to endure



The Crucifixion, by Carl H. Bloch. Moses raised the serpent in the wilderness to symbolize the salvation offered through Jesus Christ (see John 3:14–15).

incomprehensible suffering for our sins. That is the greatest evidence of His love for each of us!” (“Love and Law,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 26).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that John 3:16 “summarizes the whole plan of salvation, tying together the Father, the Son, his atoning sacrifice, that belief in him which presupposes righteous works, and ultimate eternal exaltation for the faithful” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:144).

John 3:18–21

What does the Savior teach in these verses about the relationship between our actions and our belief in Him? What can you do to more fully receive the Light of Jesus Christ in your life?

John 3:22–26; 4:1–2. Jesus and His Disciples Successfully Taught and Baptized Many

The wording of John 3:22 suggests that the Savior performed baptisms, while John 4:1–2 seems to suggest that He did not. The Joseph Smith Translation resolves this apparent discrepancy and adds pertinent information about the evil designs of the Jewish leaders:

“When therefore the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,

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

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

“For he suffered them for an example, preferring one another” (Joseph Smith Translation, John 4:1–4 [in the Bible appendix]).

John 3:25–36. John the Baptist, an Example of Humility, Taught about the Savior’s Mission

As recorded in John 3:25–36, John the Baptist testified to some of his followers about the Savior’s mission, teaching that he was not the Christ and that Jesus Christ was much greater than he.

President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) quoted verse 28 and then observed that John the Baptist’s testimony and example of humility bore witness of the Savior and can be a model for us: “All of us living in the world today need points of reference—even models to follow. John the Baptist provides for us a flawless example of unfeigned humility, as he deferred always to the One who was to follow—the Savior of mankind” (“Models to Follow,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 60). As recorded in John 3:29, the “bridegroom” represents Christ, and the “friend” represents John the Baptist. John the Baptist’s humility and selflessness are well expressed in the statement, “He [the Messiah] must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

John bore powerful testimony of the Savior, as the Joseph Smith Translation helps to clarify: “For God giveth *him* not the Spirit by measure, for he dwelleth in him, even the *fullness*” (Joseph Smith Translation, John 3:34 [in John 3:34, footnote *b*]). God the Father did not give His Son a portion of His Spirit, but rather the fulness.

John 4:1–42. The Woman of Samaria at Jacob’s Well

To better understand the account of Jesus teaching the woman of Samaria at Jacob’s well (see John 4:1–42), see the information about Samaria under the section “The New Testament Setting” and the commentary for John 4:19–24.

Because of increased persecution in Jerusalem from the chief priests and Pharisees, Jesus left Judea for Galilee, traveling through Samaria to a city called Sychar. Being tired and thirsty, he sat down on Jacob’s

well at “about the sixth hour” (John 4:6), which was about noon. Women customarily gathered at the village well in the morning and late afternoon to get water and to socialize. The Samaritan woman who went to the well and spoke with Jesus may have come at this unusual time to avoid the women of the village, who may have shunned her as a sinner (see John 4:16–18). Jesus conversed with the woman, teaching her that He was the Messiah, even though Jews customarily had no contact with Samaritans and rabbis did not ordinarily talk to single women. Even Jesus’s disciples “marvelled that he talked with the woman” (John 4:27), but Jesus did not consider Samaritans to be outcasts.

The woman listened to the Savior’s words and gradually developed a testimony that she had found the Messiah. The progress of her testimony can be seen by the titles she used for Jesus: “a Jew” (verse 9), “sir” (verses 11, 15), “a prophet” (verse 19), and finally “the Christ” (verse 29). From her experience, we learn that Jesus’s presence had converting power for those who would humbly listen to Him.

Jacob’s well was on the land that Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes of Israel, had settled after he returned from working for Laban in Padan-aram in Mesopotamia (see Genesis 33:18). Jacob bequeathed this land to his son Joseph.



Drink and Never Thirst, by Liz Lemon Swindle

John 4:10–14. The Savior Offers Living Water

The Savior told the Samaritan woman that He could offer her “living water” that would be “a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:10, 14). The phrase “living water” is used throughout the scriptures to refer to the Savior (see Jeremiah 2:13; Zechariah 14:8; Revelation 21:6; 22:1; Alma 42:27; D&C 63:23).

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin quoted the Savior’s words in John 4:14 and then taught that “drinking deeply of living waters” will bring us great happiness:

“Fully understood and embraced, the gospel of Jesus Christ heals broken hearts, infuses meaning into lives, binds loved ones together with ties that transcend mortality, and brings to life a sublime joy. . . .

“The abundant life is a spiritual life. Too many sit at the banquet table of the gospel of Jesus Christ and merely nibble at the feast placed before them. They go through the motions—attending their meetings perhaps, glancing at scriptures, repeating familiar prayers—but their hearts are far away. If they are honest, they would admit to being more interested in the latest neighborhood rumors, stock market trends, and their favorite TV show than they are in the supernal wonders and sweet ministrings of the Holy Spirit.

“Do you wish to partake of this living water and experience that divine well springing up within you to everlasting life?

“Then be not afraid. Believe with all your hearts. Develop an unshakable faith in the Son of God. Let your hearts reach out in earnest prayer. Fill your minds with knowledge of Him. Forsake your weaknesses. Walk in holiness and harmony with the commandments” (“The Abundant Life,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2006, 100). For additional insights into “living water,” see the commentary for John 7:37–39.

John 4:19–24. Worshipping the Father

Toward the end of the sixth century B.C., the Jews rejected the Samaritans’ offer to help rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (see Ezra 4:1–10). Shortly thereafter, Manasseh, a priest from Jerusalem who had married the daughter of Sanballat, the Gentile governor of Samaria, was expelled from the priesthood. He then built a rival temple on Mount Gerizim in Samaria. This was the mountain referred to by the woman at the well (see Bible Dictionary, “Gerizim and Ebal”). During the Hasmonean (Jewish) revolt against the Seleucids in the late second century B.C., the Samaritans refused to aid

the Jewish cause. Perhaps as retaliation for this lack of solidarity, John Hyrcanus, a leader of the Hasmonean Jews, destroyed the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim, and it was never rebuilt. The destruction of this temple added to the animosity that already existed between the Samaritans and Jews.

When the Samaritan woman came to understand that Jesus was indeed a prophet, she desired to know how she could worship. The Samaritan temple had been destroyed, Samaritans were not welcome in the temple in Jerusalem, and she did not know where she could worship (see John 4:19–20). The Savior taught her that true worship is not limited to a certain place; rather, it is a matter of knowing the truth about who to worship and of having one’s heart devoted to the true God. Though praying, singing, and scripture study are ways in which we frequently worship, **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** helps us understand that true worship consists in having a knowledge of the true God and in emulating the life of the Savior:

“Our purpose is to worship the true and living God and to do it by the power of the Spirit and in the way he has ordained. The approved worship of the true God leads to salvation; devotions rendered to false gods and which are not founded on eternal truth carry no such assurance.

“A knowledge of the truth is essential to true worship. . . .

“. . . If [a person] worships the true and living God, in spirit and in truth, then God Almighty will pour out his Spirit upon him. . . .

“. . . True and perfect worship consists in following in the steps of the Son of God; it consists in keeping the commandments and obeying the will of the Father to that degree that we advance from grace to grace until we are glorified in Christ as he is in his Father. It is far more than prayer and sermon and song. It is living and doing and obeying. It is emulating the life of the great Exemplar” (“How to Worship,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1971, 129–30).

John 4:20–24. “Worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth”

One reason the Samaritan woman initially appeared to have been reluctant to accept Jesus as the Messiah was because the religion of her people had taught her things that were not true. In response, the Master Teacher turned her focus and allegiance to her Father in Heaven rather than to her ancestral fathers. **President Dieter F. Uchtdorf** of the First Presidency taught that while all

religions and family heritages have great value, our first allegiance should be to the Father of our spirits rather than to our earthly fathers:

“What, then, is the faith of our fathers? Is it the religion of our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents? . . .

“The faith of our Father in Heaven has been consistent since the beginning of time, even from before the foundation of this world. John the Revelator described a great war in heaven [see Revelation 12:7–9]. The issue was moral agency, as it is today. All who have ever lived on this earth were among those who fought against Satan and stood with the Son and the Father. Therefore, do we not owe our allegiance to God, our Heavenly Father? . . .

“I testify that the doctrine of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is the faith of our Heavenly Father. . . . God desires that all of His children receive it, irrespective of their background, culture, or tradition. True religion should not originate from what pleases men or the traditions of ancestors, but rather from what pleases God, our Eternal Father” (“Faith of Our Father,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 75).

John 4:24. Is God a Spirit?

The Greek text of John 4:24 contains no article before the word *spirit*. Thus, the Greek phrase can also be understood to mean “God is spirit,” or “God is spiritual.” The Apostle John also wrote that “God is light” (1 John 1:5) and “God is love” (1 John 4:8), but these statements do not mean that God is only light, or that God is love and nothing else. Neither do we understand the statement that “man is spirit” (D&C 93:33) to mean that man is only spirit and nothing else. In the same sense, John 4:24 does not mean that God is only spirit. From latter-day revelation, we know that “the Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit” (D&C 130:22).

In the context of the Savior’s teachings about true worship, the statement in John 4:24 can be seen as commentary more about the nature of worship than the nature of God. Since God is a spiritual being, people must worship Him “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24), not merely through outward rituals performed at certain locations (see John 4:20–21).

The Joseph Smith Translation gives a clearer understanding of what the Savior was teaching: “*For unto such hath God promised his Spirit. And they who worship*

him, must worship in spirit and in truth” (Joseph Smith Translation, John 4:26 [in John 4:24, footnote *a*]).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie quoted this passage and then taught:

“There is no salvation in worshiping a false god. It does not matter one particle how sincerely someone may believe that God is a golden calf, or that he is an immaterial, uncreated power that is in all things; the worship of such a being or concept has no saving power. Men may believe with all their souls that images or powers or laws are God, but no amount of devotion to these concepts will ever give the power that leads to immortality and eternal life. . . .

“But if he worships the true and living God, in spirit and in truth, then God Almighty will pour out his Spirit upon him, and he will have power to raise the dead, move mountains, entertain angels, and walk in celestial streets” (“How to Worship,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1971, 129).

John 4:25–26. Jesus Proclaimed That He Is the Messiah

Jesus testified to the Samaritan woman that He was the Messiah—the first recorded instance in the Gospels of Jesus announcing who He was. “I that speak unto thee am he,” Jesus declared (John 4:26). The pronoun “he” was absent in the original text; Jesus simply said, “I Am” (John 4:26, footnote *a*). By using the expression “I Am,” Jesus was declaring that He is Jehovah. For more on the significance of the term “I Am,” see the commentary for John 8:53–58.

John 4:28–42. Helping Others to Know the Christ, the Savior of the World

After the Samaritan woman had tasted of the “living water” from the Savior, she “left her waterpot” (John 4:28) and went to invite others to partake of the “living water” that He offered. As a result of the woman’s testimony, “many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him” (John 4:39). Then, as these people saw the Savior and heard His words, their testimonies of Him deepened (see John 3:41–42). **Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin** explained that we should also strive to help those around us find the living water of the gospel:

“When the crowd of curious Samaritans arrived to see and hear the man who had proclaimed himself to be the Messiah, . . . their initial curiosity matured into testimony. They declared, ‘We have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world’ [John 4:42].

“These latter days are a time of great spiritual thirst. Many in the world are searching, often intensely, for a source of refreshment that will quench their yearning for meaning and direction in their lives. They crave a cool, satisfying drink of insight and knowledge that will soothe their parched souls. Their spirits cry out for life-sustaining experiences of peace and calm to nourish and enliven their withering hearts.

“. . . Let us work with all our heart, might, mind, and strength to show our thirsty brothers and sisters where they may find the living water of the gospel, that they may come to drink of the water that springs ‘up unto everlasting life’ [D&C 63:23]. . . .

“As at Jacob’s well, so today the Lord Jesus Christ is the only source of living water. It will quench the thirst of those suffering from the drought of divine truth that so afflicts the world” (“Living Water to Quench Spiritual Thirst,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 18–19).

John 4:35–42

What principles of effective missionary work do you see the Savior teaching and exemplifying in these verses? How can you apply these principles in your efforts to share the gospel?

John 4:46–54. Jesus Christ’s Healing Power Is Not Limited by Geographical Proximity

The account of the nobleman who approached the Savior in Cana is recorded only in the Gospel of John (see John 4:46–54). This nobleman manifested significant faith in the Savior in at least two ways. First, although his home, Capernaum, was about 20 miles (32 kilometers) away from Cana, he made the journey to implore the Savior for His help. Second, when the Savior assured him that his son would live, the nobleman “went his way,” trusting the Savior’s word (John 4:50). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** noted: “Though he was in Cana, Jesus gave the command and the nobleman’s son, some twenty miles away in Capernaum, was healed. By the power of faith the sick are healed regardless of their geographical location. God is God of the universe; his power is everywhere manifest” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:159).

Points to Ponder

- Review John 2–4, looking for the Savior’s actions. How did these actions help people have faith in Him and make necessary changes in their lives?
- When have you felt that you have partaken of the “living water” offered by the Savior? What do you think you can do to have this experience more often in your private and public worship? How could you share “living water” with friends and relatives who are not yet members of the Church?
- What evidence did you discover in John 2–4 of the love of the Father and the Son for mankind? How does knowing that the Father and the Son love you affect your motivation to do Their will?

Suggested Assignments

- Search John 3:25–36 and find the titles used by John the Baptist to identify the Savior. What do each of these titles teach about the mission of Jesus Christ? Describe in writing how your appreciation for the Lord increases as you better understand His mission.
- As you reflect on the miracles recorded in John 2–4, both physical and spiritual, think about how you have seen the power of God manifest in your life. Write two or three paragraphs about a miracle that you have experienced. How has this miracle changed you?

John 5–7

Introduction and Timeline for John 5–7

In addition to being doctrinally rich, chapters 5–7 of John highlight a wide assortment of attitudes toward Jesus Christ, including some of the opposition and hostility that eventually resulted in His death. After commanding a man with a 38-year infirmity to “rise . . . and walk” (John 5:8), the Savior taught that all those who would believe in the Son of God and follow Him would be raised up to everlasting life (see John 5:21–29). The feeding of the five thousand provided the opportunity for the Savior to teach that He was the Bread of Life, the source of eternal life (see John 6:35, 48). Many who had been His disciples previously would not accept this teaching and “walked no more with him” (John 6:66). Amid the growing intensity of various opinions concerning Jesus’s identity and purpose, He proclaimed during the celebrations of the Feast of Tabernacles (see John 7) that only through faithful obedience to His word could people know the truth of His identity and His teachings.



1. Jesus Christ healed an invalid at the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem.
2. He fed five thousand followers.
3. The Savior taught about the Bread of Life in Capernaum.
4. He taught in the temple during the Feast of Tabernacles.

Commentary for John 5–7

John 5:2–4. The Pool of Bethesda

The word *Bethesda* can be translated as “house of mercy” or “house of grace” (see Bible Dictionary, “Bethesda”). Archaeological excavations have identified the site for the pool of Bethesda as being just outside a north gate of the ancient temple precinct in Jerusalem, possibly a gate through which sacrificial sheep were led into the temple grounds (see John 5:2).



Pool of Bethesda today

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles wrote regarding the pool’s supposed curative powers: “Any notion that an angel came down and troubled the waters, so that the first person thereafter entering them would be healed, was pure superstition. Healing miracles are not wrought in any such manner” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 1:188).

John 5:5–15. “Wilt Thou Be Made Whole?”

At the pool of Bethesda, the Savior healed a man who had “had an infirmity” for 38 years, and the man was immediately made whole. **Bishop Merrill J. Bateman**, while serving as the Presiding Bishop, examined the personal significance that the healing at the pool of Bethesda can have for us today:

“Just as the lame man at the Pool of Bethesda needed someone stronger than himself to be healed (see John 5:1–9), so we are dependent on the miracles of Christ’s atonement if our souls are to be made whole from grief, sorrow, and sin. . . . Through Christ, broken hearts are mended and peace replaces anxiety and sorrow. . . . As Isaiah stated concerning the Savior: ‘Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. . . . And with his stripes we are healed’ (Isa. 53:4–5). . . .”

“The Savior’s atonement in the garden and on the cross is intimate as well as infinite. Infinite in that it spans the eternities. Intimate in that the Savior felt each person’s pains, sufferings, and sicknesses. Consequently, he knows how to carry our sorrows and relieve our burdens that we might be healed from within, made whole persons, and receive everlasting joy in his kingdom. May our faith in the Father and the Son help each of us to become whole” (“The Power to Heal from Within,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 13–14).



Pool of Bethesda, by Carl H. Bloch

John 5:16–47. The Savior’s Discourse to the Accusing Jews

After the healing at the pool of Bethesda, the Jews sought to kill the Savior because the healing had occurred on the Sabbath (see John 5:10, 16, 18). The Savior’s lengthy reply to the Jewish elites who were opposing Him is recorded in John 5:17–47. Of this important discourse, **Elder James E. Talmage** (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said: “[The Savior’s] reply to their charges is not confined to the question of Sabbath observance; it stands as the most comprehensive sermon in scripture on the vital subject of the relationship between the Eternal Father and His Son, Jesus Christ” (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 208).

John 5:18. He Said That “God Was His Father, Making Himself Equal with God”

The Jews persecuted the Savior not only because He healed a man on the Sabbath, but because He said that God was His Father (see John 5:18). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained what it meant for the Savior to be “equal with God” during His earthly ministry:

“‘Equal with God!’—awful blasphemy or awesome truth!—one or the other. There is no middle ground, no room for compromise; there are no principles to compose: either Jesus is divine or he is blaspheming!

“‘Equal with God!’—not, as yet, in the infinite and eternal sense, but in the sense of being one with him, of being his natural heir, destined to receive, inherit, and possess all that the Father hath.

“‘Equal with God!’—not that he was then reigning in glory and exaltation over all the works which their hands had made, but in the sense that he was God’s Son, upon whom the Father had placed his own name and to whom he had given glory and honor and power” (*The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 4 vols. [1979–81], 2:71).

John 5:19–21, 23. “The Son Can Do Nothing of Himself”

As He continued to teach the Jews about His mission, the Savior declared that He could do “nothing of himself,” but rather He did what He had seen His Father do (John 5:19). **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles testified that Jesus came to earth to “reveal and make personal to us the true nature of His Father, our Father in Heaven. . . . To come to earth with such a responsibility, to stand in place of Elohim—speaking as He would speak, judging and serving, loving and warning, forbearing and forgiving as He would do—this is a duty of such staggering proportions that you and I cannot comprehend such a thing. But in the loyalty and determination that would be characteristic of a divine child, Jesus could comprehend it and He did it. Then, when the praise and honor began to come, He humbly directed all adulation to the Father [see John 5:19; 14:10]” (“The Grandeur of God,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2003, 70–71).

The Savior’s words recorded in John 5:19–21, 23 emphasize the unity between the Father and the Son, teaching that the work of the Father is also the work of the Son. The Father shows the Son “all things that himself doeth.” The Father “raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them [brings them to life]; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.” And all people “should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.” Such teachings clearly testify of the complete unity between the Father and the Son.

John 5:22, 27, 30. Jesus Christ Will Be Our Final Judge

As part of His discourse on His relationship to His Father, Jesus Christ testified that Heavenly Father had “committed all judgment” unto His Son and “given him authority to execute judgment” among men

(John 5:22, 27). **Elder Richard G. Scott** (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that because of His atoning sacrifice, Jesus Christ will be our Judge:

“The Atonement was a selfless act of infinite, eternal consequence, arduously earned alone, by the Son of God. Through it the Savior broke the bonds of death. It justifies our finally being judged by the Redeemer. . . .

“Lehi taught his son Jacob, ‘No flesh . . . can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the *merits*, and *mercy*, and *grace* of the Holy Messiah’ [2 Nephi 2:8].

“Jesus Christ possessed *merits* that no other being could possibly have. He was a God, Jehovah, before His birth in Bethlehem. . . . Our Master lived a perfect, sinless life and therefore was free from the demands of justice. He is perfect in every attribute, including love, compassion, patience, obedience, forgiveness, and humility. . . .

“I testify that with unimaginable suffering and agony at an incalculable price, the Savior earned His right to be our Redeemer, our Intermediary, our Final Judge” (“The Atonement Can Secure Your Peace and Happiness,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 42).

John 5:25, 28. The Savior Taught That He Would Preach to the Spirits in Prison

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained the Savior’s prophecy that He would preach to the dead: “While yet in life, Jesus prophesied that He would also preach to the dead [see John 5:25]. Peter tells us this happened in the interval between the Savior’s Crucifixion and Resurrection [see 1 Peter 3:18–19]. President Joseph F. Smith witnessed in vision that the Savior visited the spirit world and ‘from among the righteous [spirits] . . . organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness’ [D&C 138:30]” (“The Redemption of the Dead and the Testimony of Jesus,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 9).

John 5:26. Jesus Christ Has Power over Physical Death (see also John 10:17–18)

While serving in the Presidency of the Seventy, **Elder Merrill J. Bateman** explained how the Son of God had “life in himself”: “Unlike mortals who inherit the seeds of death from both parents, Jesus was born of a mortal mother but an immortal Father. The seeds of death received from Mary meant that He could die, but the inheritance from His Father gave Him infinite life,

which meant death was a voluntary act. Thus, Jesus told the Jewish people, ‘For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself’ (John 5:26)” (“A Pattern for All,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 75).

John 5:28–29. “All That Are in the Graves . . . Shall Come Forth”

It was while pondering John 5:29 that the Prophet Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon received the vision that became section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants, a vision that gave them additional understanding about the Resurrection of all mankind (see D&C 76:11–19).

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) recorded: “From sundry revelations which had been received, it was apparent that many important points touching the salvation of man had been taken from the Bible, or lost before it was compiled. It appeared self-evident from what truths were left, that if God rewarded every one according to the deeds done in the body, the term ‘Heaven,’ as intended for the Saints’ eternal home, must include more kingdoms than one. Accordingly, while translating St. John’s Gospel, myself and Elder Rigdon saw the following vision” (Doctrine and Covenants 76, section introduction).

John 5:29 affirms that all mankind will be resurrected—the just as well as the unjust. **Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin** (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles declared: “When the Savior rose from the tomb, He did something no one had ever done. He did something no one else could do. He broke the bonds of death, not only for Himself but for all who have ever lived—the just and the unjust” (“Sunday Will Come,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 29).

John 5:32–47

Identify as many different witnesses of the Savior’s divinity as you can in these verses. How would you explain the significance of each witness the Savior identified? How do these witnesses (and other modern witnesses) strengthen your testimony of the Savior’s divinity?

John 5:39–40. “In Them Ye Think Ye Have Eternal Life”

Many Jews of Jesus’s day studied the scriptures, believing that through this study they would have eternal life: “[Ye] search the scriptures; for in them ye *think* ye have eternal life” (John 5:39; italics added). The Savior tried to correct this false belief by teaching that the scriptures, which the Jews looked to as the final authority, testified that eternal life is found not in

the scriptures but in following Jesus Christ. The Jews also failed to realize that the scriptures are the words of Christ and their purpose is to bring people to Christ, for He is the ultimate source of truth and life. Peter acknowledged Jesus Christ as the source of eternal life when he declared: “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:68).

John 5:39–40. The Scriptures Testify of Jesus Christ

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained how the scriptures are a source of testimony concerning Jesus Christ:



“Jesus taught that we should ‘search the scriptures; for . . . they are they which testify of me’ (John 5:39). These words provide insight and inspiration to all who sincerely seek to know and understand the truth about Jesus Christ. The scriptures are rich in history, doctrine, stories, sermons, and testimonies, all of which ultimately focus on the eternal Christ and His physical and spiritual mission to Heavenly Father’s children. . . .

“The first testament of Christ is the Bible’s Old Testament, which predicted and prophesied of the coming of the Savior, His transcendent life, and His liberating Atonement.

“The second Bible testament of Christ is the New Testament, which records His birth, His life, His ministry, His gospel, His Church, His Atonement, and His Resurrection, as well as the testimonies of His Apostles.

“The third testament of Christ is the Book of Mormon, which also foretells Christ’s coming, confirms the Bible’s account of His saving Atonement, and then reveals the resurrected Lord’s visit to the earth’s other hemisphere. The subtitle of the Book of Mormon, the clarifying purpose statement printed on the cover of every copy, is ‘Another Testament of Jesus Christ.’

“Each of these three testaments is a part of the great, indivisible whole of the Lord’s revealed word to His children. They contain the words of Christ” (“The Miracle of the Holy Bible,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 81–82).

John 5:44. Seeking the Honor of Men

The Savior’s question recorded in John 5:44 teaches that as long as we are focused on what other people think about us, rather than on what God thinks about us, the development of our faith will be hampered.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained why this is so: “Struggles for the honors of men keep men from believing in and centering their hearts upon Christ, and they therefore lose their salvation” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:201).

John 6. The Savior’s Ministry in John 6

When the Savior visited the Nephites, He told them that He was the prophet like unto Moses referred to in Deuteronomy 18:15, 18–19 (see 3 Nephi 20:23). Significant similarities between the ministry of the Savior and the ministry of Moses are found in John 6 and the book of Exodus. The events recorded in John 6 occurred at the time of the Passover (see John 6:4), an event strongly associated with Moses (see Exodus 12). When Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee (called by its official Roman name, the Sea of Tiberias), a large multitude followed Him (see John 6:1–2); the children of Israel were led by Moses through the wilderness by way of the Red Sea (see Exodus 12:38; 13:18). Jesus miraculously fed the multitude of five thousand people with five loaves of bread and two fishes (see John 6:5–14); Moses fed the people with manna miraculously provided from heaven (see Exodus 16:3–4; John 6:31). When the multitude seemed likely to take Jesus by force to make Him a king, He left them and walked that night across the Sea of Galilee to His disciples (see John 6:15–21); led by Moses, Israel crossed through the Red Sea at night (see Exodus 14:21). The day after feeding the multitude, Jesus declared Himself to be “the bread which cometh down from heaven” (see John 6:22–65), another similarity to the manna provided from heaven.

Perhaps one of the most striking similarities between the ministries of Moses and the Savior is the use of “I Am” statements. When Moses asked the Lord what to say when the children of Israel asked for His name, the Lord responded, “I AM THAT I AM” (Exodus 3:13–14). “I Am”—one of the names by which the Savior is known in the Old Testament—is recorded repeatedly by John, and Moses was told to use this name so the Israelites would know that Jehovah had spoken. John recorded that the Savior declared, “*I am* the bread of life” (John 6:35, 48, 51; italics added). He made other similar “I am” statements during His ministry (see John 8:12; 10:9, 11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1).

John 6:1–14. The Miracle of Feeding the Five Thousand

For more information about the feeding of the five thousand, see the commentary for Mark 6:32–44.

John 6:15. Why Did They Seek to Make Jesus Christ Their King?

Following the feeding of the five thousand, the Savior was perhaps at the height of His public popularity. John recorded that some sought to “take him by force, to make him a king” (John 6:15). What was it at that time that elevated Him in the eyes of the people? **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained that Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of a long-cherished tradition:

“There was a tradition, taught by the Rabbis and firmly entrenched in the public mind, that when Messiah came, he would feed them with bread from heaven. . . . It had even become a fixed belief that the Messiah, when He came, would signalize His advent by a repetition of this stupendous miracle. ‘As the first Saviour—the deliverer from Egyptian bondage,’ said the Rabbis, ‘caused manna to fall for Israel from heaven, so the second Saviour—the Messiah—will also cause manna to descend for them once more’ [Cunningham Geikie, *The Life and Words of Christ* [1886], 516–17].

“Thus, when Jesus multiplied the five barley loaves and the two small fishes, it was as though the traditional sign had been given. The peak of his popular appeal had come. In their eyes he stood on the summit. He was the Messiah, they reasoned, and must reign as their king” (*Mortal Messiah*, 2:367–68).

John 6:16–21. Walking on Water

To read about Jesus Christ walking on the Sea of Galilee, see the commentary for Matthew 14:22–33.

John 6:26–27. “Meat Which Endureth unto Everlasting Life”

After Jesus miraculously fed the five thousand, as recorded in John 6:3–14, the people who had been fed sought more food from Jesus. He taught them instead that He was the “living bread” and that they should seek the spiritual food He offered them. After that, many of His disciples no longer followed Him (see John 6:26–27, 66). **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** said of this account:

“In that little story is something of the danger in our day. It is that in our contemporary success and sophistication we too may walk away from the vitally crucial bread of eternal life; we may actually *choose* to be spiritually malnourished, willfully indulging in a kind of

spiritual anorexia. Like those childish Galileans of old, we may turn up our noses when divine sustenance is placed before us. . . .

“ . . . We invite you to join in the adventure of the earliest disciples of Christ who also yearned for the bread of life—those who did *not* go back but who came to Him, stayed with Him, and who recognized that for safety and salvation there was no other to whom they could ever go [see John 6:68]” (“He Hath Filled the Hungry with Good Things,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 65).

For further information about the Savior’s feeding of the five thousand, see the commentary for Mark 6:32–44.

John 6:32–35, 48–51. “The True Bread from Heaven”

As a common food staple in many cultures, bread serves as an ideal metaphor for the fundamental role the Savior and His teachings should have in our lives. As Jesus taught people about “the bread of life,” He drew upon the background of His listeners. He used their religious history as a teaching tool—the feeding of the five thousand and the Bread of Life discourse took place as the Jews were preparing for the Passover, during which the children of Israel ate unleavened bread in memory of their deliverance from Egypt and the manna that God had provided for them in the wilderness. He drew upon the people’s personal experience—many of those who listened to the Master on this occasion had also been among the five thousand who had eaten the bread He miraculously provided just the day before (see John 6:1–14).



Millstone at Capernaum

The Savior also drew upon his listeners’ geographical location—they were now hearing Him teach in Capernaum, a region that appears to have been associated with bread making; more remnants of grinding mills

have been discovered at Capernaum than at any other place in Israel. When the crowd referred to the manna provided for Israel in the days of Moses, the Savior reminded them that the same God who had provided that “bread from heaven” now offered to them the “true bread from heaven” (John 6:32). Jesus had demonstrated that He could indeed provide for them temporally, but He was also “that bread of life” (John 6:48) who could give eternal life to those who would partake of the spiritual nourishment He now offered (see John 6:51).

John 6:44, 65. How Does the Father Help People Come to the Savior?

In His discourse to the Jewish leaders, the Savior highlighted ways God helps people come to His Son. The Father will “draw” us to the Savior—to “draw” is to attract or to pull gently, as with “the enticings of the Holy Spirit” (see John 6:44; Mosiah 3:19). Also, we cannot come to the Savior unless it is “given” unto us by the Father. To have faith or repentance “given” to us means receiving divine help to believe and follow Jesus Christ (see John 6:65; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Nephi 31:19).

John 6:51–58. To Eat of the “Living Bread”

While the metaphor of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Savior may seem startling to some readers, the Savior made it clear that He was using “eating” and “drinking” figuratively (see John 6:58, 63). Jesus explained that to eat in the way He was describing meant to “live by [Him]” (John 6:57). The Savior’s words also foreshadowed the ordinance of the sacrament, which He instituted during the Last Supper.

Elder James E. Talmage explained:

“To eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ was and is to believe in and accept Him as the literal Son of God and Savior of the world, and to obey His commandments. By these means only may the Spirit of God become an abiding part of man’s individual being, even as the substance of the food he eats is assimilated with the tissues of his body.



Christ Holding Sacrament Bread, by Del Parson. He is the Living Bread.

“. . . The figure used by Jesus—that of eating His flesh and drinking His blood as typical of unqualified and absolute acceptance of Himself as the Savior of men—is of superlative import; for thereby are affirmed the divinity of His Person, and the fact of His preexistent and eternal Godship. The sacrament of the Lord’s supper, established by the Savior on the night of His betrayal, perpetuates the symbolism of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, by the partaking of bread and wine in remembrance of Him. Acceptance of Jesus as the Christ implies obedience to the laws and ordinances of His gospel” (*Jesus the Christ*, 342–43).

John 6:60–69. A “Hard Saying” Tests Discipleship

John 6 records a drastic shift in public opinion toward the Savior. He went from the high point of His popularity to a drastic decline. We may wonder how the same group of people who wanted to make Jesus Christ a king one day (see John 6:15) could abandon Him the very next day (see John 6:66). **Elder Neal A. Maxwell** (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles wrote about why people abandoned Jesus and why we must be willing to accept the hard doctrines of the gospel, even when they are unpopular with the world:

“When Jesus first began to preach strong doctrines (the scriptures refer to these as ‘hard sayings’), many of those who followed Him ‘went back, and walked no more with him.’ (John 6:66.) Once His doctrines really began to make demands of people, it was too much for many.

“There are equivalent ‘hard sayings’ about our secular societies that one hesitates to utter but which need to be heard. They are not popular. . . . A truth may touch us, bore us, or merely make us uncomfortable. But those are reactions to truth, and reactions do not alter the reality of truth itself. . . . Hard sayings . . . when pondered, may make it easier to let go of the world. . . .

“Nephi lamented the fact that so many people will not ‘understand great knowledge.’ (2 Nephi 32:7.) Complexity is scarcely the cause, for the gospel is so plain and simple. Rather, the failure to comprehend seems to be rooted in a resolute refusal to let go of the world long enough to ponder the precious truths in the message of the Master” (*Wherefore, Ye Must Press Forward* [1977], 6–7, 22).

John 6:61–69

What connection do you see between the Savior’s question in verse 61 and His question in verse 67? How could you see Peter’s response (see verses 68–69) to help someone who is struggling with a “hard saying” of the gospel?

John 7:1–14. The Savior at the Feast of Tabernacles

Under the law of Moses, ancient Israel celebrated three great annual pilgrimage feasts, during which many Jews traveled to Jerusalem: the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover), the Feast of Harvest (Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost), and the Feast of Ingathering (Tabernacles) (see Exodus 23:14–17; Deuteronomy 16:16).

In New Testament times, the Feast of Tabernacles was considered “the greatest and most joyful” of the feasts. Celebrated in the modern months of September and October, “the events celebrated were the sojourning of the children of Israel in the wilderness (Lev. 23:43) and the gathering-in of all the fruits of the year (Ex. 23:16)” (Bible Dictionary, “Feasts”). During the week-long celebration, Israelites occupied booths (also called tabernacles) that they built out of palm and myrtle branches (see Leviticus 23:42–43; Nehemiah 8:14–15). More sacrifices were offered at the temple during this week than during any other religious commemoration.

The events recorded in John 7 occurred during the week of the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus had been staying in the Galilee area, where he had experienced great popularity, and avoiding the regions surrounding Jerusalem because they were heavily influenced by Jewish leaders who sought to kill Him. “The Jews” referred to in John 7:1 are the Jewish leaders, not the Jewish public in general. “His brethren” mentioned in verse 3 are Jesus’s half-brothers. (To read more about His half-brothers, see the commentaries for Matthew 13:55–56 and for Acts 1:14.) Jesus’s half-brothers urged Him to go to Jerusalem to the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus told them no, but He later went to the feast secretly and began to teach in the temple (see John 7:1–14).

Water and light were used as important symbols during the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Savior used these symbols to call the people to believe in Him as the Messiah. On the temple mount, four large golden candelabras (also called menorahs or candlesticks) illuminated the temple grounds during dances and other festivities held late into the night and early morning. The golden candelabras, which were 50 cubits tall (approximately 73 feet or 22.25 meters), not only provided light for the celebrations, but they symbolized that Israel was to be a light to those who walked in darkness. The most renowned and anticipated ceremony of the feast was the daily procession, during which an appointed priest drew water from the pool of Siloam with a golden pitcher and poured the water into the silver basin at the base of the temple altar, along with the morning wine offering.



Hezekiah Reopens the Temple, by T. C. Dugdale. Priests at the temple altar

During “the last day, that great day of the feast,” after the crowds had celebrated the final pouring of the water, “Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (John 7:37). His words are a fulfillment of the prophecy in Zechariah 14:8 that when the Messiah comes, “living waters shall go out from Jerusalem.” Early in the morning of the next day, which would have been the Sabbath, the Savior

again returned to the temple. As He taught near where the large golden candelabras stood during the feast, He declared, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). It is Jesus Christ who gives light to all.

John 7:14–36. Jesus Taught in the Temple

As Jesus taught in the temple during the Feast of Tabernacles, some Jews marveled that He could teach as He did without having studied their theology. Jesus taught these people that His doctrine came from His Father and that those who applied the doctrine would know of its truth (see John 7:14–17). Of this teaching, **President James E. Faust** (1920–2007) of the First Presidency said: “We acquire a testimony of the principles of the gospel by obediently trying to live them. Said the Savior, ‘If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine’ [John 7:17]. A testimony of the efficacy of prayer comes through humble and sincere prayer. A testimony of tithing comes by paying tithing. . . . I testify that if you continue in the purposeful process of searching for and accepting spiritual light, truth, and knowledge, it will surely come. By going forward in faith, you will find that your faith will increase” (“Lord, I Believe; Help Thou Mine Unbelief,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2003, 22).

Many Jews refused to listen to Jesus because they believed He was not obeying the Mosaic law, which over the centuries had become corrupted. They were angry with Him because He had healed a man on the Sabbath day, which was not allowed by the Mosaic law of that time (see John 5:8–9; 7:21–23). Jesus taught them, “Judge not according to *your traditions*, but judge righteous judgment” (Joseph Smith Translation, John 7:24

[in John 7:24, footnote *b*]). This is an important doctrine not only for the Jews in Jesus’s day but for our time as well. At times, we may need to abandon certain traditions in order to keep the laws of God.

Some people heard the Savior’s teachings and believed that He was the Messiah. The Pharisees, knowing that Jesus was helping the Jews to see the truth, sent officers to arrest Him. Jesus told them that soon they would seek Him but not find Him, for “where I am, thither ye cannot come” (see John 7:30–34). To better understand what the Savior meant by those words found in John 7:34, see the commentary for John 8:21–24.

John 7:37–39. “Living Water”

The Savior taught that when someone believes in Him, “out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38). This phrase suggests that the “living water” will be *within* the believer. It will not be poured out by a priest on the altar as was done at the Feast of Tabernacles; it will arise and flow miraculously from within the believer. This metaphor aptly describes the gift of the Holy Ghost.

In John 7:39, we read a parenthetical comment from John, explaining that the “living water” the Savior mentioned in John 7:38 refers to the Holy Ghost, whose main mission is to testify of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. The Savior’s imagery of “living water” drew upon a long Israelite tradition that water represented important spiritual truths. In the arid climate of the ancient Near East, access to water was crucial for survival, and the scarcity of water made it both a valuable resource and a powerful symbol. The Lord saved Israel in Horeb when Moses miraculously brought forth water out of a rock (see Exodus 17; Numbers 20). The Old Testament prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel used water as a symbol of the Lord’s Spirit, provident care, and healing power (see Isaiah 41:17–18; 58:11; Jeremiah 2:13; Ezekiel 47:1–12).

The Savior’s promise that those who believed in Him would at some future time have “living water” within them reflected the fact that “the Holy Ghost was not yet given” (John 7:39). “For some reason not fully explained in the scriptures, the Holy Ghost did not operate in the fulness among the Jews during the years of Jesus’ mortal sojourn (John 7:39; 16:7). Statements to the effect that the Holy Ghost did not come until after Jesus was resurrected must of necessity refer to that particular dispensation only, for it is abundantly clear that the Holy Ghost was operative in earlier dispensations. Furthermore, it has reference only to the *gift* of

the Holy Ghost not being present, since the *power* of the Holy Ghost was operative during the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus; otherwise no one would have received a testimony of the truths that these men taught (Matt. 16:16–17; see also 1 Cor. 12:3)” (Bible Dictionary, “Holy Ghost”).

John 7:50–51. Nicodemus

For additional information about Nicodemus, see the commentary for John 3:1.

Points to Ponder

- How can a belief in the Resurrection give you spiritual confidence? (see John 5:26–29 and Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin’s statement in the commentary for John 5:28–29).
- What does it mean to partake of the “bread of life”? What are some ways that you are regularly striving to partake of the “bread of life”? How could you more fully eat of the “bread of life”?
- How has the Holy Ghost been like a source of “living water” for you? How might you increase this flow of “living water” into your life?

Suggested Assignments

- Write a paragraph explaining why you continue to follow Jesus Christ even when some of the commandments of the Lord or standards of the Church might seem harder to follow than the ways of the world. Explain in your answer what John 6:66–69 means to you.
- In John 7:17, the Savior gave us a formula to know the truth of His doctrine. Choose a doctrine or principle of the gospel about which you would like to strengthen your testimony. Then write out a plan for what you can do to strengthen your testimony of that truth. After a week or two of striving to strengthen your testimony of that doctrine, write in your journal what you have learned so far.

John 8–10

Introduction and Timeline for John 8–10

Chapters 8–10 of John present a period in the Savior’s ministry when opposition from Jewish leaders was intensifying. In response to an effort to trap Him in His words, the Savior showed compassion in refusing to condemn a woman taken in adultery (see John 8:1–11). When Jesus declared Himself to be the God of Abraham and later explained His oneness with the Father, it incited such ire among His opponents that on two separate occasions they took up stones to kill Him (see John 8:52–59; 10:29–39).

As He taught in the temple during the Feast of Tabernacles, the Savior brought greater understanding about His divinity and mission by using contrasting images: light versus darkness (see John 8:12), freedom versus bondage to sin (see John 8:31–36), and truth versus error (see John 8:40–46). We can often appreciate truth more clearly by seeing its opposite. This is further illustrated when Jesus healed a man born blind and then used the contrast between blindness and sight to teach about spiritual blindness (see John 9:39–41). Then, in

John 10, we are able to compare the loving care of the Good Shepherd with thieves, hirelings, and wolves who threaten the sheep (see John 10:1–16).



1. Jesus Christ refused to condemn a woman taken in adultery.
2. Jesus taught at the temple in Jerusalem.
3. The Savior healed a man born blind.
4. Jesus taught about His role as the Good Shepherd.
5. Jesus proclaimed that He was the Messiah and departed to Perea.

Commentary for John 8–10

John 8:1–11. “The Law Commanded Us, That Such Should Be Stoned: But What Sayest Thou?”

As the Savior was teaching in the temple, scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman who had been taken in adultery. They asked Jesus if she should be stoned, as commanded in the law of Moses. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained their motive when they asked Him this question: “In bringing this adulteress to Jesus, the scribes and Pharisees were laying this trap for the Master: (1) If he *agreed* with Moses that she should be stoned, he would both (a) arouse the ire of the people generally by seeming to advocate the reinstatement of a penalty which did not have popular support, and (b) run counter to the prevailing civil law by prescribing what Rome [prohibited]. (2) If he *disagreed* with Moses and advocated anything less than death by stoning, he would be accused of perverting the law, and of advocating disrespect of and departure from the hallowed practices of the past” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 1:450–51).



Woman taken in adultery

John 8:7–11. “Neither Do I Condemn Thee”

Referring to the Savior’s statement, “Neither do I condemn thee” (John 8:11), **President Dallin H. Oaks** of the First Presidency taught, “In this context, the word *condemn* apparently refers to the final judgment.” President Oaks further explained that Jesus did not condone the woman’s sin, but He was allowing

her time to repent and acknowledging that her final judgment would come later: “The Lord obviously did not justify the woman’s sin. He simply told her that He did not condemn her—that is, He would not pass final judgment on her at that time. This interpretation is confirmed by what He then said to the Pharisees: ‘Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man’ (John 8:15). The woman taken in adultery was granted time to repent, time that would have been denied by those who wanted to stone her” (“‘Judge Not’ and Judging,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1999, 8).

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) similarly taught about the Savior’s words to the woman: “His command to her was, ‘Go, and sin no more.’ He was directing the sinful woman to go her way, *abandon her evil life, commit no more sin, transform her life*. He was saying, Go, woman, and start your repentance; and he was indicating to her the beginning step—to *abandon her transgressions*” (*The Miracle of Forgiveness* [1969], 165).

The Joseph Smith Translation makes clear that the adulterous woman *did* follow the Savior’s counsel and reform her life: “*And the woman glorified God from that hour, and believed on his name*” (Joseph Smith Translation, John 8:11 [in John 8:11, footnote c]).



To help you better visualize the account of Jesus and the woman taken in adultery, review the video segment “Go and Sin No More” (3:22) from *The Life of Jesus Christ Bible Videos*, available on LDS.org. This segment covers John 8:1–11.

John 8:11, 24, 34–36

What principles of repentance did the Savior teach in these verses? How do these principles help us better understand repentance and the Savior’s willingness to forgive us?

John 8:12; 9:5. “I Am the Light of the World”

The Savior continued His teaching in the temple by declaring, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12).

President Dallin H. Oaks identified three ways in which Jesus Christ is “the light of the world”:

“Jesus Christ is the *light* of the world because he is the source of the light which ‘proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space’ (D&C 88:12). . . .

“Jesus Christ is also the light of the world because his example and his teachings illuminate the path we should walk to return to the presence of our Father in Heaven. . . .

“Jesus Christ is also the light of the world because his power persuades us to do good” (“The Light and Life of the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 63–64).



During the Feast of Tabernacles, large menorahs 50 cubits tall (73 feet or 22.25 meters) illuminated the temple courts. The Feast of Tabernacles provided the setting for Jesus Christ’s proclamation, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). See also the commentary for John 7:1–14.

John 8:13–20. The Testimony of Two: The Father and the Son

The Pharisees challenged the Savior’s testimony that He was “the light of the world” by stating that they did not have to accept the witness of one person who bore record of Himself. Jesus responded by appealing to the law of witnesses contained in the law of Moses, with which they were very familiar (see Deuteronomy 19:15; John 8:13–20). In this instance, the law of witnesses was satisfied by the two Beings whose testimonies were irrefutable—the Father and the Son.

John 8:21–24. “Whither I Go, Ye Cannot Come”

The Savior has repeatedly told His followers that those who believe in Him will eventually join Him in His Father’s kingdom (see John 14:2–3; 17:24; Revelation 3:21; D&C 27:18; 132:23). While the Savior invites all to come unto Him and eventually be where He is, some will decline the invitation and “die in [their] sins” (John 8:21, 24)—meaning they will not repent and be made

clean through the Atonement. The Savior’s statement “Whither I go, ye cannot come” (John 8:22) applies to those who understand the invitation and the opportunity to accept the Savior but decline.

John 8:28–29, 54–55. “I Do Always Those Things That Please Him”

Jesus Christ is the only One to ever live on this earth who could accurately say, “The Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him” (John 8:29). Perhaps that is why “*he spake not as other men, neither could he be taught; for he needed not that any man should teach him*” (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 3:25 [in the Bible appendix]). He not only refrained from sin, but He actively did what pleased God. For more insight on the Savior’s perfection and His sinless life, see Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:21–22; Doctrine and Covenants 20:22; and the commentary for Hebrews 7:25–26.



To help you better visualize the account of Jesus’s teaching in John 8, review the video segment “Jesus Declares: I Am the Light of the World, the Truth Shall Make You Free” (4:26) from *The Life of Jesus Christ Bible Videos*, available on LDS.org. This segment covers John 8:12–56.

John 8:30–32. “The Truth Shall Make You Free”

As the Savior taught important truths about His mission as the Messiah, “many believed on him” (John 8:30). He taught these believers that if they continued to obey His word, they would know the truth and the truth would make them free (see John 8:30–31). **President James E. Faust** (1920–2007) of the First Presidency taught that continued obedience to the Lord leads to knowledge of the truth and to freedom:

“Obedience leads to true freedom. The more we obey revealed truth, the more we become liberated. . . .

“Freedom and liberty are precious gifts that come to us when we are obedient to the laws of God and the whisperings of the Spirit. . . . Obedience to [principles of revealed truth] makes us truly free to reach the potential and the glory which our Heavenly Father has in store for us” (“Obedience: The Path to Freedom,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 45, 47).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie identified some ways in which “the truth shall make you free.” These ways include being “free from the damning power of false doctrine; free from the bondage of appetite and lust; free from the shackles of sin; free from every evil and

corrupt influence and from every restraining and curtailng power; free to go on to the unlimited freedom enjoyed in its fulness only by exalted beings” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:456–57).

John 8:33–36. The Son of God Can Make All People Free from Sin

Some of the Jews who believed in Jesus Christ’s teachings seemed astonished by His assertion that following the truths He taught would result in freedom. They declared that they “were never in bondage to any man” (John 8:33)—they had never been in spiritual bondage to any nation because they were the seed of Abraham. They were, in essence, asking how they could possibly be enslaved spiritually with this pedigree. Jesus then taught, “Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin” (John 8:34). The Greek verb translated as “committeth” implies *continuing in sin* rather than a single occurrence of sin. While discussing the use of addictive drugs, **President Russell M. Nelson** described a pattern of enslavement that can inhibit the full use of our agency, a pattern that can also result from continuing in other kinds of sin:

“From an initial experiment thought to be trivial, a vicious cycle may follow. From trial comes a habit. From habit comes dependence. From dependence comes addiction. Its grasp is so gradual. Enslaving shackles of habit are too small to be sensed until they are too strong to be broken. . . .

“Agency, or the power to choose, was ours as spirit children of our Creator before the world was. (See Alma 13:3; Moses 4:4.) It is a gift from God, nearly as precious as life itself.

“Often, however, agency is misunderstood. While we are free to choose, once we have made those choices, we are tied to the consequences of those choices” (“Addiction or Freedom,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 6, 7). For more insight on the effects of continuing in sin, see the commentary for 1 John 3:6–9.

The Savior then declared that a servant—a “servant of sin”—remains in a house only if the owner so desires, but a son—especially “the Son”—has a rightful place and “abideth ever” (John 8:35). Through His Atonement, Jesus Christ extends that rightful place to each of His followers and makes them “free indeed” (John 8:36)—free from humankind’s greatest enemies, which are physical and spiritual death.

John 8:37–52. “If Ye Were Abraham’s Children, Ye Would Do the Works of Abraham”

When the Jewish leaders boasted that they were Abraham’s seed, implying they held special privileges in the sight of God, the Savior reproved them for failing to do the works of their highly esteemed ancestral father. They were not acting like the covenant children of Abraham; rather, they were trying to kill the God of Abraham, who was standing before them and telling them the truth. The book of Genesis records some of Abraham’s works that stand in contrast to the behavior of the Jewish leaders. Abraham converted others to the gospel (see Genesis 12:5). He avoided strife (see Genesis 13:7–9). He was obedient to God (see Genesis 12:1–9; 15:1–6; 22:1–19). He welcomed heavenly messengers (see Genesis 18:1–8). He exercised tremendous faith (see Genesis 22:1–19).



The Jewish leaders were angered when Jesus suggested that if they were Abraham’s children, they should do the works of Abraham (see John 8:31–40).

The Savior reproved the Jewish leaders for their actions by declaring, “Ye do the deeds of your father” (John 8:41). He was clearly implying that the Jews were serving someone other than God. In apparent retaliation, bristling at the suggestion that they were “sons” or followers of the devil, the Jewish leaders said, “We be not born of fornication” (John 8:41), which was an insult about what was thought to be Jesus’s illegitimate birth because Mary and Joseph were not legally married at the time of Mary’s conception. This insult helps us understand the kind of treatment Jesus may have endured throughout His life. In many ways, He knew what it was like to have people revile Him, persecute Him, and say all manner of evil against Him falsely (see Matthew 5:11).

John 8:42–52. “I Proceeded Forth and Came from God”

The Savior proclaimed to the Jewish leaders that if they believed in God, they would love Him, “for I proceeded forth and came from God” (John 8:42). They refused to believe in Christ because the god they worshipped was the devil (see John 8:44), who is a murderer, a liar, and the father of all untruth. The Joseph Smith Translation states, “He that is of God *receiveth* God’s words; ye therefore *receive* them not, because ye are not of God” (Joseph Smith Translation, John 8:47 [in John 8:47, footnote *a*]). The response of the Jewish leaders was to call Jesus a Samaritan—the lowest of all people and not of Jewish descent—and state that He was possessed of a devil (see John 8:48). These leaders had hardened their hearts, refusing to believe that Jesus was the Son of God—even though their father Abraham, all other ancient prophets, and their scriptures taught clearly of Him.

John 8:53–58. “Before Abraham Was, I Am”

When the Lord appeared to Moses in the burning bush, He used the name “I Am” to identify Himself as the God of Israel (see Exodus 3:13–14). When the Savior said to the Jews, “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58), He was referring to Himself by this same title. By using this name, He declared to the Jews that He was Jehovah, the same Being who spoke to Moses from the burning bush and who has communed with prophets in all ages, including in our dispensation (see D&C 29:1; 38:1).

Jesus told the Jews that Abraham had seen His day and been glad (see John 8:56). One occasion when this may have occurred is when Abraham saw Jesus Christ on a mountain before He was born (see Genesis 22:14). Christ was crucified on the mount of Golgotha, making Himself an offering in place of all of us, just as a ram was offered in place of Isaac (see Genesis 22:13).



Sacrifice of Isaac, by Jerry Harston

John recorded a number of occasions when Jesus declared, “I am . . .” The following chart provides some of the Savior’s significant “I am” statements found in the Gospel of John:

Reference in John	"I Am" Statement	Fulfillment
6:35, 48, 51	"I am the bread of life."	Jesus Christ gave Himself for us in the Atonement. He feeds us spiritually.
8:12; 9:5	"I am the light of the world."	Jesus Christ is the source of all truth. If we follow His words and example, we will not stumble or walk in spiritual darkness.
8:58	"Before Abraham was, I am."	Jesus Christ is Jehovah of the Old Testament.
10:7, 9	"I am the door of the sheep."	Jesus Christ protects us like a shepherd at the door of a sheep enclosure. No one can enter His kingdom except through Him.
10:11, 14	"I am the good shepherd."	Jesus Christ leads us. He gave His life for us. He knows each of us individually.
10:36	"I am the Son of God."	Jesus Christ is the Firstborn of the Father's spirit children (see D&C 93:21) and His Only Begotten in the flesh (see John 1:14).
11:25	"I am the resurrection, and the life."	Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ we can overcome physical and spiritual death. Jesus Christ gave us the gift of resurrection.
14:6	"I am the way, the truth, and the life."	Jesus Christ is the only way to the Father, and He is the source of all truth. Because of His Atonement, we will all be resurrected and through our faithfulness may inherit eternal life.
15:1, 5	"I am the true vine."	We depend on Jesus Christ for life. Only by abiding by His teachings will we be able to bear the fruit of righteousness.

John 8:59. They Sought to Stone Him

The Jews Jesus spoke to obviously understood what He was saying—that He was God—for they sought to stone him. They believed that His claims were blasphemous, and this was the prescribed penalty for blasphemy according to the Mosaic law (see Leviticus 24:16).

John 9:1–12. The Works of God Can Be Manifest through Our Adversities

Jesus performed many miraculous healings of those who were blind. Isaiah, the prophet who taught extensively of the Messiah, had prophesied that when the Messiah came to earth, He would restore sight to the blind (see Luke 4:18; Isaiah 29:18; 35:5; 42:7). When Jesus saw a man who had been blind from birth, His disciples asked Him, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2). The disciples' query reflects two concepts found in the Judaism of their day—that suffering was the result of iniquity and that there was a premortal existence of some kind.

The Savior's response to this question teaches that a person suffering from a mortal adversity, such as a disability, is not necessarily guilty of sin: "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (John 9:3). Jesus also declared, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while I am with you; the time cometh when I shall

have finished my work, then I go unto the Father" (Joseph Smith Translation, John 9:4 [in John 9:4, footnote c]).

Like the Savior's disciples on that occasion, we may sometimes wonder about the cause and purpose of mortal afflictions. **President Dallin H. Oaks** explained how the works of God can be manifest in us if we approach adversity with faith in the Lord:

"We are sent here to be tested. There must be opposition in *all* things. We are meant to learn and grow through that opposition, through meeting our challenges, and through teaching others to do the same. . . . The Lord will not only consecrate our afflictions for our gain, but He will use them to bless the lives of countless others.

"Jesus taught this lesson when He and His disciples met a man who was born blind. [President Oaks then quoted John 9:2–3.]

"If we see life through the lens of spirituality, we can see many examples of the works of God being furthered through the adversities of His children. . . .

"When we understand this principle, that God offers us opportunities for blessings and blesses us through our own adversities and the adversities of others, we can understand why He has commanded us again and again to 'thank the Lord thy God in all things' (D&C 59:7)" ("Give Thanks in All Things," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2003, 97–98).

John 9:11, 17, 30–33, 35–38

What details in these verses reveal the blind man's growth in understanding who Jesus was? How do you think his trials may have contributed to his spiritual progression?

Concerning those with disabilities, **President Boyd K. Packer** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:

"It is natural for parents with [disabled] children to ask themselves, 'What did we do wrong?' The idea that *all* suffering is somehow the direct result of sin has been taught since ancient times. It is false doctrine. That notion was even accepted by some of the early disciples until the Lord corrected them.

"As Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.

"And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?

"Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.' (John 9:1–3.)

"There is little room for feelings of guilt in connection with [disabilities]. Some [disabilities] may result from carelessness or abuse, and some through addiction of parents. But most of them do not. Afflictions come to the innocent" ("The Moving of the Water," *Ensign*, May 1991, 7–8).

John 9:4–38. Gradual Gaining of Spiritual Sight

When the Savior saw the man who had been blind from birth, He anointed the man's eyes with clay and told him to wash in the pool of Siloam. In an instant, the man miraculously received his sight, but his understanding of the healing and his Healer grew only with time. Immediately after the healing, he reported only that it was done by "a man that is called Jesus" (John 9:11). Later he declared of his Healer, "He is a prophet" (John 9:17). Still later he emphatically declared, "If this man were not of God, he could do nothing" (John 9:33). Finally, with commitment and resolve, the man believed and accepted Jesus as "the Son of God" (see John 9:35–38). The conversion of this courageous disciple can be a pattern for us. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** taught: "Conversion is a process that seldom occurs in an instant suddenly. Gospel grace dawns gradually upon most believers" (*The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 4 vols. [1979–81], 2:188).



A man who had been blind from birth washed the clay from his eyes and could miraculously see, by Robert T. Barrett

John 9:15–16. Division Concerning Jesus

After Jesus healed the man who had been blind since birth, there was a division among the people concerning their feelings about Him. This division is mentioned frequently by John during the Feast of Tabernacles and immediately afterward (see John 7:12, 43; 9:16; 10:19). About this division, the Savior later said, "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind" (John 9:39).

John 9:22, 34–35. What Does It Mean to Be Cast Out of the Synagogue?

Synagogues served as the religious and social center for many Jewish communities. Synagogues offered access to spiritual instruction and worship, as well as educational and social opportunities. Because the synagogue was so integral to Jewish society, to be cast out of the synagogue (see John 9:22, 34–35) meant more than being excommunicated and losing fellowship with the religious community. It meant banishment from cultural and social affairs as well. This threat was apparently severe enough to keep the parents of the man born blind from getting too involved in the investigation of this miracle.

John 9:35–38. Jesus Christ Heals Physical and Spiritual Blindness

When Jesus heard that the man whose blindness had been miraculously healed had been cast out of the synagogue, He sought out the man and taught him that He was the Son of God. In this way, the Savior helped him

“see” even more clearly. **President Howard W. Hunter** (1907–95) pointed out the physical and spiritual impact the Savior had on the man born blind: “Now sight had been given *twice*—once to remedy a congenital defect and once to behold the King of Kings before He would ascend to His eternal throne. Jesus had quickened both temporal *and* spiritual vision” (“The God That Doest Wonders,” *Ensign*, May 1989, 16–17).

John 9:39–41. Those Who Have Spiritual Sight Are Accountable for Their Sins

After the Savior healed the man born blind, some Pharisees asked Jesus whether they were “blind also.” In reply, the Savior used a metaphor, teaching that individuals who were “blind”—those who did not know who He was—“should have no sin” (John 9:41). On the other hand, individuals who could “see”—those who had received enough witnesses concerning the Savior and His divine mission that they should have known who He was—would be accountable for their actions. The Pharisees were among those who could “see,” and thus their “sin remaineth.” Spiritually speaking, they chose to be blind because they refused to recognize Jesus as the Son of God, despite the many witnesses they had received.

John 10:1–18. Jesus Christ Is the Good Shepherd

Chapter 10 of John contains an important discourse given by the Savior, in which He spoke of Himself metaphorically as the Good Shepherd who cares for His sheep. **President Ezra Taft Benson** (1899–1994) discussed the role of shepherds in ancient Israel to provide insights into how the Savior is “the good shepherd” (John 10:11):



JAMES JEFFERY

A shepherd in Israel walks before his sheep. “He goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice” (John 10:4).

“In Jesus’s time, the Palestinian shepherd was noted for his protection of his sheep. Unlike modern sheepherders, the shepherd always walked ahead of his flock. He led them. The shepherd knew each of the sheep and usually had a name for each. The sheep knew his voice and trusted him and would not follow a stranger. Thus, when called, the sheep would come to him. (See John 10:14, 16.)

“At night shepherds would bring their sheep to a corral called a sheepfold. High walls surrounded the sheepfold, and thorns were placed on top of these walls to prevent wild animals and thieves from climbing over.

“Sometimes, however, a wild animal driven by hunger would leap over the walls into the midst of the sheep, frightening them. Such a situation separated the true shepherd—one who loved his sheep—from the hireling—one who worked only for pay and duty.

“The true shepherd was willing to give his life for the sheep. He would go in amongst the sheep and fight for their welfare. The hireling, on the other hand, valued his own personal safety above the sheep and would usually flee from the danger.

“Jesus used this common illustration of his day to declare that He was the Good Shepherd, the True Shepherd. Because of His love for His brothers and sisters, He would willingly and voluntarily lay down His life for them. (See John 10:17–18.)” (“A Call to the Priesthood: ‘Feed My Sheep,’” *Ensign*, May 1983, 43).

Jesus’s declaration that He was the Good Shepherd should be understood against the backdrop of the Old Testament concept that Jehovah was the Shepherd of Israel, the divine caretaker of His people (see Psalm 23:1; 80:1; Isaiah 40:10–11; Ezekiel 34:11–16, 23). By declaring Himself to be the Good Shepherd, Jesus was testifying again that He was Jehovah—the fulfillment of messianic prophecies.

John 10:3–5, 11–15, 26–29

What do the details in these verses about the relationship between the sheep and the shepherd teach you about the relationship that you should have with the Savior? What can you do to develop a closer relationship with your Heavenly Father and the Savior?

John 10:7, 9. “I Am the Door”

Shepherds in Israel stood at the entrance of a sheepfold and inspected each sheep as it entered, treating injuries as needed. After the sheep were gathered in the

enclosure for the night, the shepherd would lie down to sleep in the entrance, barring the way so predators or thieves could not hurt the sheep. The Savior's statement, "I am the door," makes clear that He was willing to "lay down [His] life for the sheep" (John 10:7, 15), and that He ultimately will decide who will enter the kingdom of heaven. Using an image similar to a door, the Book of Mormon prophet Jacob declared that "the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel" and that "he employeth no servant there" (2 Nephi 9:41).



Looking toward the door of a sheepfold

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles referred to 2 Nephi 9:41 and also to Mormon 6:17, which declares that the Savior waits for us "with open arms." He then suggested why the Lord stands at the door or gate to determine who may enter: "He waits for you 'with open arms.' That imagery is too powerful to brush aside. . . . It is imagery that should work itself into the very center core of one's mind—a rendezvous impending, a moment in time and space, the likes of which there is no other. And that rendezvous is a reality. I certify that to you. He does wait for us with open arms, because his love of us is perfect" ("But a Few Days" [address to CES religious educators, Sept. 10, 1982], 7).

John 10:16. "Other Sheep I Have, Which Are Not of This Fold"

Without the clarifying truths found in the Book of Mormon, it is difficult to understand who the "other sheep" are that Jesus spoke about to the Jews when

He taught in Jerusalem (John 10:16). **Elder James E. Talmage** (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained: "The Bible contains no related passage affording explanation. Commentators treat this verse as an isolated and unconnected utterance, and content themselves with the suggestion that the 'other sheep' may be the Gentile nations who are to be brought into the Jewish fold under the one Shepherd. The Jews who heard the Lord speak so understood Him" (*The Vitality of Mormonism* [1919], 151).

When the resurrected Jesus Christ ministered to the Nephites, He told them that they were the ones He had spoken of when He said, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (see 3 Nephi 15:21–24). **President Dallin H. Oaks** explained that the additional truths taught in the Book of Mormon teach us that the Lord knows and loves all His sheep:

"In addition to [the Savior's] ministry in what we now call the Middle East, the Book of Mormon records His appearance and teachings to the Nephites on the American continent (see 3 Nephi 11–28). There He repeated that the Father had commanded him to visit the other sheep which were not of the land of Jerusalem (see 3 Nephi 16:1; John 10:16). He also said that he would visit others 'who [had] not as yet heard [His] voice' (see 3 Nephi 16:2–3). As prophesied centuries earlier (see 2 Nephi 29:12), the Savior told His followers in the Americas that he was going 'to show [Himself]' to these 'lost tribes of Israel, for they are not lost unto the Father, for he knoweth whither he hath taken them' (3 Nephi 17:4).

"The Book of Mormon is a great witness that the Lord loves all people everywhere. It declares that 'he shall manifest himself unto all nations' (1 Nephi 13:42). 'Know ye not that there are more nations than one?' the Lord said through the prophet Nephi.

"'Know ye not that I, the Lord your God, have created all men, and that I remember those who are upon the isles of the sea; and that I rule in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; and I bring forth my word unto the children of men, yea, even upon all the nations of the earth?' (2 Nephi 29:7)" ("All Men Everywhere," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2006, 79–80).



Christ in the Land Bountiful, by Simon Dewey

John 10:17–18. Jesus Christ Had Power to Lay Down His Life and Take It Up Again

For information about Jesus Christ’s mortal and immortal capacities, see the commentary for Luke 1:31–35.

John 10:22–23. Feast of Dedication

Jesus went to the temple in Jerusalem during the Feast of Dedication (see John 10:22–23). The Feast of Dedication is also known as Hanukkah or the Festival of Lights. Hanukkah means “dedication” in Hebrew. This commemoration celebrates the rededication of the Jerusalem temple and its new altar in about 165 B.C. Syrian warriors led by Antiochus Epiphanes had desecrated the temple in 168 B.C. and tried to wipe out the Jewish religion. But freedom fighters led by a family of priests—Judah Maccabee being the most famous—repulsed the Syrians in a war of liberation for the Jewish people. A story in the Talmud recounts that the Maccabees found only a small amount of oil when they captured the temple and witnessed the oil miraculously burn for eight days. Based on this account, the Feast of Dedication lasts eight days beginning on the 25th of the month of Kislev, which roughly corresponds to the beginning of the month of December.

John 10:26–29. The Lord’s Sheep Hear His Voice

As He taught about His love for His sheep, the Savior declared, “My sheep hear my voice” (John 10:27; see also D&C 50:41–43). **President Brigham Young** (1801–77) posed the question, “How are we to know the voice of the Good Shepherd from the voice of a stranger?” He answered this question by saying: “When an individual, filled with the Spirit of God, declares the truth of heaven, the sheep hear that [see D&C 29:7], the Spirit of the Lord pierces their inmost souls and sinks deep into their hearts; by the testimony of the Holy Ghost light springs up within them, and they see and understand for themselves” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* [1997], 319).

We may not be able to understand why all people do not accept the gospel of Jesus Christ when they hear it, but we do know that the Lord loves all people.

President Dallin H. Oaks affirmed: “The Lord loves all of His children. He desires that all have the fulness of His truth and the abundance of His blessings. He knows when they are ready, and He wants us to hear and heed His directions on sharing His gospel. When we do so, those who are prepared will respond to the message of Him who said, ‘My sheep hear my voice . . . and they follow me’ (John 10:27)” (“Sharing the Gospel,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 9).

We have eternal safety in the sheepfold of the Savior, who promised that no man can “pluck” His sheep out of His hand and that “no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand” (John 10:28–29).

John 10:30, 37–38. “I and My Father Are One”

The unity of the Father and the Son spoken of by the Savior—“I and my Father are one” (John 10:30)—comes from their singleness of purpose and shared love (see also 1 Corinthians 3:6–8; Ephesians 5:31). **President Joseph F. Smith** (1838–1918) clarified the meaning of the declaration that the Savior is “one” with His Father:

“Jesus and his Father are . . . one in knowledge, in truth, in wisdom, in understanding, and in purpose; just as the Lord Jesus himself admonished his disciples to be one with him, and to be in him, that he might be in them. It is in this sense that I understand this language, and not as it is construed by some people, that Christ and his Father are one person. I declare to you that they are not one person, but that they are two persons, two bodies, separate and apart, and as distinct as are any father and son” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* [1998], 357). For more insights about how the Father and Son are “one,” see the commentary for John 17:11, 20–23.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles affirmed that Latter-day Saints believe scriptural teachings about the unity of the Godhead: “Our first and foremost article of faith in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is ‘We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.’ We believe these three divine persons constituting a single Godhead are united in purpose, in manner, in testimony, in mission. We believe Them to be filled with the same godly sense of mercy and love, justice and grace, patience, forgiveness, and redemption. I think it is accurate to say we believe They are one in every significant and eternal aspect imaginable *except* believing Them to be three persons combined in one substance, a Trinitarian notion never set forth in the scriptures because it is not true” (“The Only True God and Jesus Christ Whom He Hath Sent,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 40).

John 10:31–36. As the Son of God, Jesus Christ Showed All Mankind Their Divine Potential

When Jesus declared that He and the Father were one (see John 10:30), the Jews who were present understood that He was declaring His divinity and threatened to stone Him “for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God” (John 10:33). He responded to their accusation by quoting Psalm 82:6, which reads, “I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.” As explained by **Elder B. H. Roberts** (1857–1933) of the Presidency of the Seventy, the Savior then asked the Jews why they should accuse Him of blasphemy when He said He was the Son of God, given that the scriptures in which they believed said that men could be gods:

“Let it be observed that in the above conversation when Jesus was accused of making himself God, he did not deny the charge; but on the contrary, called their attention to the fact that God in the law he had given to Israel had said to some of them—‘Ye are Gods, and all of you are children of the Most High.’ And further, Jesus argued, if those unto whom the word of God came were called Gods in the Jewish law, and the scripture wherein the fact was declared could not be broken, that is, the truth denied or gainsaid [declared untrue or invalid]—why should the Jews complain when he, too, who had been especially sanctified by God the Father, called himself the Son of God?” (*New Witnesses for God*, 3 vols. [1909–11], 1:465–66).

The Savior’s reply also invited those who heard Him to believe in their own divine potential, which He would help them realize if they would follow Him (see 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2; D&C 76:50, 58–62). **President Joseph F. Smith** taught:

“Christ is the great example for all mankind, and I believe that mankind were as much foreordained to become like him, as that he was foreordained to be the Redeemer of man. . . . We are . . . in the form of God, physically, and may become like him spiritually, and like him in the possession of knowledge, intelligence, wisdom and power.

“The grand object of our coming to this earth is that we may become like Christ, for if we are not like him, we cannot become the sons of God, and be joint heirs with Christ” (*Teachings: Joseph F. Smith*, 152).

For more teachings about mankind’s potential to become like God, see the commentary for 2 Peter 1:4 and for 1 John 3:1–3.

Points to Ponder

- In what ways have you experienced the freedom that comes from being obedient to the Lord?
- As you reflect on the account of the Savior restoring sight to the man born blind, consider how the Savior has helped you “see” spiritually. Did your conversion happen quickly, or was it part of a process? How has this spiritual sight made a difference in your life?

Suggested Assignments

- Review the chart of “I am” statements in the commentary for John 8:53–58. Read the verses identified in the chart and mark the various “I am” statements in your scriptures. Write a few sentences about what each of these statements means to you and what each statement teaches about Jesus Christ.

John 11–13

Introduction and Timeline for John 11–13

John devoted almost half of his Gospel to the last week of Jesus Christ’s mortal life. Just prior to this final week, the Savior raised Lazarus from the dead—a miracle that emphasized the power and love of the Son of God (see John 11:1–46). Because of the miraculous raising of Lazarus, plans to murder Jesus intensified. Jesus retreated for a time to a place called Ephraim, but then went back to Bethany, where Mary honored Him with an act of sincere devotion by anointing His feet with ointment (see John 12:1–3), and others—including Judas Iscariot—plotted to destroy Him. Jesus Christ manifested His perfect love for His disciples at the Last Supper by washing their feet. He then taught them that love should characterize their lives as His disciples (see John 13:1–17, 34–35). Despite the turbulence of the final week of His mortal ministry, Jesus Christ focused His teachings on obedience, service, and love—attributes that defined His life and should define the lives of His disciples in all ages.



1. In Bethany, Jesus Christ raised Lazarus from the dead.
2. Mary anointed the Lord’s feet in Bethany in preparation for His death and burial.
3. The Messiah rode triumphantly into Jerusalem.
4. Greeks visited the Savior, and a voice was heard from heaven.
5. The Master washed the feet of His disciples in Jerusalem.
6. The Savior taught the disciples to love one another.

Commentary for John 11–13

John 11. Seven Miracles in the Book of John

Chapter 11 of John records the miracle of the Savior raising Lazarus from the dead. This important miracle is one of seven miracles emphasized in John’s Gospel. John recorded these miracles along with teachings of

the Master, and the miracles can be seen as illustrations of the teachings. The following chart lists these seven miracles, the physical and spiritual powers demonstrated by the Savior, and some of the key doctrines and principles associated with the miracles. These miracles and associated teachings reflect key themes in John, such as the Savior’s divinity and His identity as Jehovah, the Creator of all things.

Miracle	Power Demonstrated	Associated Teachings
Turning water to wine (John 2:1–11)	Power to create or to change something from one condition to another	This “beginning of miracles” may be considered an introduction to the Savior’s teachings to Nicodemus and to the woman at the well in Samaria (see John 3–4). Both individuals experienced a change in their spiritual condition.
Healing a nobleman’s son (John 4:46–54)	Power to restore us to health	This “second miracle”—restoring the nobleman’s son from sickness to health—may be considered a conclusion to the Savior’s teachings recorded in John 3–4, which resulted in both Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman being spiritually healed.
Healing of an invalid at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1–15)	Power to heal us both physically and spiritually	Jesus Christ will bring to pass the Resurrection of all mankind—the time when all physical problems will be healed—and be the Final Judge of all (see John 5:21–29).
Feeding the five thousand (John 6:1–14)	Power to create in order to satisfy physical hunger	In the Bread of Life discourse, Jesus Christ taught that He is divine and we must believe in Him to have everlasting life (see John 6:25–59). Just as Jesus satisfied physical hunger, He can satisfy spiritual hunger as well.

Miracle	Power Demonstrated	Associated Teachings
Walking on water (John 6:16–21)	Power over nature	The Savior can overcome natural elements, and we can have faith that He will help us overcome the natural man; we can walk with Him even when His sayings are hard (see John 6:60–69).
Healing a man born blind (John 9:1–7)	Power over physical sight	Just as the Savior can restore physical sight, He can give spiritual sight to those who believe in Him (see John 9:8–41).
Raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1–45)	Power over physical death	Jesus Christ is “the resurrection, and the life” (see John 11:20–32). Through Him, all mankind will live again and can receive eternal life.

John 11:1–46. The Raising of Lazarus

The raising of Lazarus from the dead was one of the most remarkable miracles in history. Before this miracle occurred, the Savior had brought two individuals back to life: the daughter of Jairus (see Luke 8:41–42, 49–56) and the son of the widow of Nain (see Luke 7:11–17). However, the raising of Lazarus was different from these miracles and had important purposes, as explained by **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles:

“With ‘our friend Lazarus’ it was different. . . . Two reasons in particular stand out. (1) As our Lord neared the climax of his mortal ministry, he was again bearing testimony, in a way that could not be refuted, of his Messiahship, of his divine Sonship, of the fact that he was in very deed the literal Son of God; and (2) He was setting the stage, so as to dramatize for all time, one of his greatest teachings: That he was the resurrection and the life, that immortality and eternal life came by him, and that those who believed and obeyed his words should never die spiritually” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 1:530–31).

John 11:1–16, 21. The Sickness of Lazarus Was for “the Glory of God” and “to the Intent Ye May Believe”

When Lazarus became ill, his sisters, Mary and Martha, sent word to Jesus. Lazarus and his sisters lived in Bethany, which was very close to Jerusalem, and the Savior and His disciples were in Perea, which was at least 25 miles from Bethany. Although His disciples did not immediately comprehend His purposes, the Savior decided to stay where He was for two days before departing to visit the ailing Lazarus. He told the disciples that Lazarus’s sickness was “for the glory of God” (John 11:4). Some of the disciples advised Him not to go into Judea again, “for they feared lest the Jews should take Jesus and put him to death, for as yet they did not understand the power of God” (Joseph Smith Translation, John 11:16 [in John 11:16, footnote *a*]; see also John 11:8).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained Jesus’s response, found in John 11:9–10: “Certainly Jesus would go to Judea in spite of the threats of death that faced him there. ‘Though it be the eleventh hour of my life, yet there are twelve hours in the day, and during that designated period, I shall do the work appointed me without stumbling or faltering. This is the time given me to do my work. I cannot wait for the night when perchance the opposition will die down. He that shirks his responsibilities and puts off his labors until the night shall stumble in the darkness and fail in his work’” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:531).

Like the Savior’s disciples, we must be willing to accept the Lord’s timing in our lives, trusting that His purposes will always be for our good. **President Dallin H. Oaks** of the First Presidency shared the following insights to help us accept the Lord’s timing:

“The first principle of the gospel is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith means trust—trust in God’s will, trust in His way of doing things, and trust in His timetable. We should not try to impose our timetable on His. As Elder Neal A. Maxwell has said:

“The issue for us is trusting God enough to trust also His timing. If we can truly believe He has our welfare at heart, may we not let His plans unfold as He thinks best? . . . [*Even As I Am*, 93] . . .

“Indeed, we cannot have true faith in the Lord without also having complete trust in the Lord’s will and in the Lord’s timing” (“Timing” [Brigham Young University devotional, Jan. 29, 2002], 2; speeches.byu.edu).

John 11:7–16. Thomas’s Willingness to Die

When the Savior decided to return to Judea despite the dangers there, Thomas said that he would go with Jesus even if it meant dying with Him (see John 11:16). This response shows that Thomas was not an inherent doubter or coward. For more information about the Apostle Thomas’s faithfulness to the Savior, see the commentary for John 20:24–29.

John 11:17, 39. Lazarus Was in the Grave Four Days

Lazarus was dead for four days before the Savior brought him back to life (see John 11:17, 39). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** pointed out the significance of these four days: “Decomposition was well under way; death had long since been established as an absolute certainty. . . . To the Jews the term of four days had special significance; it was the popular belief among them that by the fourth day the spirit had finally and irrevocably departed from the vicinity of the corpse” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 1:533).

John 11:21–43. The Raising of Lazarus—A Mark of Jesus Christ’s Divinity

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) taught that the raising of Lazarus witnessed of Jesus Christ’s divinity:

“[The miracle of raising Lazarus] was such irrefutable proof of the Messiahship of Jesus that the Sanhedrin determined Jesus must die because, they said, He ‘doeth many miracles’ which will cause the people to believe (see John 11:47). Sadly, however, John also recorded, ‘But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet [the people] believed not on him’ (John 12:37).



Jesus Wept, by James Tissot

“Today there are unbelievers among us who would spread seeds of heresy that Jesus could not cast out evil spirits, did not walk on the water or heal the sick or miraculously feed 5,000 or calm storms or raise the dead. They would have you believe that such claims are fantastic or that there is a natural explanation for each alleged miracle. Some have gone so far as to publish psychological explanations for His reported

miracles. . . . But I say, Jesus’ entire ministry was a mark of His divinity. He spoke as God, He acted as God, and performed works which only God Himself can do. His works bear testimony of His divinity” (“Five Marks of the Divinity of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2001, 11).

Although Jesus Christ knew that He would raise Lazarus from death, His tears on this occasion show His compassion for all those who suffer and mourn.

John 11:21–27, 32. Mary and Martha’s Faith

Martha testified that she knew her brother, Lazarus, would rise again in the Resurrection. Her knowledge was expressed in her testimony to the Savior on this occasion: “I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God” (John 11:27). Mary also expressed her faith in Him saying, “Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died” (John 11:32). These two sisters had great faith in the Savior. For additional insight on Martha’s faith, see the commentary for Luke 10:40–42.

John 11:25–26. “I Am the Resurrection, and the Life”

The Savior’s confirming words, “I am the resurrection, and the life” (John 11:25), strengthened Martha’s faith. **President Thomas S. Monson** (1927–2018) used these words to teach about the comfort that comes when we have a testimony of the Resurrection:

“Frequently death comes as an intruder. It is an enemy that suddenly appears in the midst of life’s feast, putting out its lights and gaiety. Death lays its heavy hand upon those dear to us and at times leaves us baffled and wondering. In certain situations, as in great suffering and illness, death comes as an angel of mercy. But for the most part, we think of it as the enemy of human happiness.

“The darkness of death can ever be dispelled by the light of revealed truth. ‘I am the resurrection, and the life,’ spoke the Master. ‘He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die’ [John 11:25–26].

“This reassurance—yes, even holy confirmation—of life beyond the grave could well provide the peace promised by the Savior when He assured His disciples: ‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid’ [John 14:27]” (“Now Is the Time,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 59).



I Am the Resurrection, by Liz Lemon Swindle. Jesus Christ raised Lazarus from the dead.

John 11:33–46. God Hears Our Righteous Petitions

Lazarus was a close friend of Jesus. This loving friendship is evident in the Savior's emotions at the time of Lazarus's death (see John 11:35). In our day, the Lord has taught, "Thou shalt live together in love, insomuch that thou shalt weep for the loss of them that die" (D&C 42:45). The miraculous raising of Lazarus from the dead makes clear that in times of need and sorrow, Heavenly Father hears our petitions to Him.

John 11:49–53. Caiaphas's "Prophecy"

The great miracle of restoring Lazarus to life caused many Jews who witnessed it to believe in Jesus Christ. When word of this reached the Pharisees, they met in council to deal with the threat to their power and influence with the people. Rather than exercising righteous leadership, they employed priestcraft, fulfilling the prophecy of Jacob uttered centuries earlier: "Because of priestcrafts and iniquities, they at Jerusalem will stiffen their necks against him [Jesus Christ], that he be crucified" (2 Nephi 10:5; see also 2 Nephi 26:29).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained how, at this meeting, Heavenly Father was able to use Caiaphas, an unrighteous leader serving as the high priest, to declare His Son's redeeming mission:

"Caiaphas began to speak, apparently intending to advocate the death of Jesus as a means of avoiding the supposed ruin that would come upon their nation through his teachings. The high priest's reasoning

seemingly was, 'It is better that one man should perish' (1 Ne. 4:13) than that the Jewish nation with all its philosophies and beliefs should be restricted further by Rome through further tumultuous conditions.

"But Deity decreed that Caiaphas affirm his Son's divinity. Departing from his almost invariable practice of using only righteous persons to give his word to men, God sent the spirit of prophecy to Caiaphas, who was thereby led to say: 'Ye are ignorant of the divine will where this man is concerned. He has come to work out the infinite and eternal atonement, to be sacrificed for the sins of the world. He shall die for us and for all the people of our nation, and not only for us and our nation, but for all men everywhere. Because of his death and by the preaching of his gospel, he shall gather together into one fold all the obedient among the children of God in all nations, for salvation is by and in and of and through him'" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:535). For additional information concerning Caiaphas, see the commentary for Matthew 26:57.

John 11:53–57. Jesus Departed to Ephraim

After the raising of Lazarus, Jesus Christ departed to the city of Ephraim, out of the reach of the Pharisees, where He awaited the time of His final Passover feast. Meanwhile, the conspiracy to execute Jesus continued to intensify. The Pharisees issued an order saying that if anyone knew where Jesus was, they should notify the authorities, who would arrest Him.

John 12:1–8. Mary Honored the Redeemer (see also Matthew 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9)

On the evening before Jesus Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, He ate supper in Bethany, and Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were there. Mary's actions on this occasion demonstrated her deep love for the Savior, as explained by **Elder Bruce R. McConkie**: "Here sat the Lord of Heaven, in the house of his friends, as the hour of his greatest trials approached, with those who loved him knowing he was soon to face betrayal and crucifixion. What act of love, of devotion, of adoration, of worship, could a mere mortal perform for him who is eternal? Could a loved one do more than David had said the Good Shepherd himself would do in conferring honor and blessing upon another, that is: 'Thou anointest my head with oil?' (Ps. 23:5.)" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:700).

Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with costly ointment (300 pence was most of an average year’s wages) and then wiped His feet with her hair, underscoring the gratitude she felt for Him. Judas Iscariot, who would soon sell his soul to Lucifer, protested but only to try to cover up his own thievery. Jesus responded to Judas, “Let her alone; for she hath preserved this ointment until now, that she might anoint me in token of my burial” (Joseph Smith Translation, John 12:7 [in John 12:7, footnote a]). The spiritually attuned Mary had prepared for this hour.



Mary Anoints the Feet of Christ, by Robert T. Barrett

John 12:9–13, 17–19

What lasting effects of the raising of Lazarus do you see in these verses? What manifestations of the Lord’s power in your life have had a lasting effect on you?

John 12:12–19. The Triumphal Entry

To read information about Jesus Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem, see the commentaries for Matthew 21:1–11, for Matthew 21:8, and for Matthew 21:9–11.

John 12:20–26. “Sir, We Would See Jesus”

“Certain Greeks”—perhaps Gentile converts to Judaism—had come to Jerusalem for the Passover, and they approached Philip with the earnest plea, “Sir, we would see Jesus” (John 12:21). The Savior was told of this request, and knowing that the suffering in Gethsemane and on the cross was drawing near, He spoke to the inquirers metaphorically about His upcoming death. He was the “corn [seed] of wheat” that must die so that it could bring forth “much fruit” (John 12:24). The Savior’s statement that the blessings of the gospel were available to “any man” who would follow Him (John 12:26) foreshadowed the fact that the message of salvation would eventually be taken to all the nations of the earth (see Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8; 10:9–43).

John 12:25. “He That Hateth His Life in This World”

To better understand the Savior’s teaching that only a man who “hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal” (John 12:25), see the commentary for Luke 14:26.

John 12:27–34. “For This Cause Came I unto This Hour”

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught about how these words reflect the submissiveness of the Savior as He approached the Atonement: “When the unimaginable burden began to weigh upon Christ, it confirmed His long-held and intellectually clear understanding as to what He must now do. His working through began, and Jesus declared: ‘Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour.’ Then, whether in spiritual soliloquy or by way of instruction to those about Him, He observed, ‘But for this cause I unto this hour.’ (John 12:27.)” (“Willing to Submit,” *Ensign*, May 1985, 72).

John 12:35–36, 46. Those Who Follow Jesus Christ Become “Children of Light”

As His death drew near, the Savior once again declared that He is “the light” and exhorted the people to believe in Him so that they could be “the children of light” (see John 12:35–36, 46). **Elder Robert D. Hales** (1932–2017) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles referred to this declaration and emphasized the protective nature of the Light of Jesus Christ enjoyed by those who follow Him:

“We are engaged in a battle between the forces of light and darkness. If it were not for the Light of Jesus Christ and His gospel, we would be doomed to the destruction of darkness. But the Savior said, ‘I am come a light into the world’ [John 12:46]. ‘He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life’ [John 8:12].

“The Lord is our light and, literally, our salvation [see Psalm 27:1]. Like the sacred fire that encircled the children in 3 Nephi [see 3 Nephi 17:24], His light will form a protective shield between you and the darkness of the adversary as you live worthy of it. You need that light. We need that light” (“Out of Darkness into His Marvelous Light,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 70).

John 12:37–41. Isaiah Saw the Lord Jesus Christ

John confirmed that the Jews fulfilled prophecies of the prophet Isaiah when they rejected Jesus. Isaiah had prophesied that the Jews would despise and reject the Messiah (see Isaiah 53:1–3) because of the blindness of their eyes and the hardness of their hearts (see Isaiah 6:10). John also confirmed that Isaiah had seen the glory of the Savior in vision (see John 12:41; Isaiah 6:1–5; 2 Nephi 11:2–3). By connecting Isaiah’s vision and prophecies with the ministry of Jesus Christ, John reinforced one important theme of his Gospel—that Jesus Christ was indeed Jehovah of the Old Testament, the Lord of Hosts (see John 8:58).

John 12:42–43. “They Loved the Praise of Men More Than the Praise of God”

Some of the chief rulers of the Jews believed in the Savior but refused to openly acknowledge their belief, “for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:43). John’s description of these leaders echoes a warning from the Old Testament: “The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe” (Proverbs 29:25). **Elder Robert D. Hales** taught that there is danger in making decisions based on what others think about us (“the praise of men”) rather than on what will help us attain eternal life (“the praise of God”):

“Every time we make choices in our lives, we should weigh the ultimate effect our decisions will have on our goal of attaining eternal life. . . .



Pharisees loved the praise of men, by Paul Mann

“We make poor and irrational decisions if we are motivated by fear: fear of man, fear of not being popular, fear of failure, fear of public opinion” (“Making Righteous Choices at the Crossroads of Life,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 10–11).

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught about the principle of “never taking counsel from your fears”: “To not take counsel from our fears simply means that we do not permit fear and uncertainty to determine our course in life. . . . To not take counsel from our fears means that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ overrules our fears and that we press forward with a steadfastness in Him” (“Fear Not, I Am with Thee,” BYU–Hawaii commencement address, Dec. 15, 2012; byuh.edu).

John 12:47–50. Men Shall Be Judged by the Words of Jesus Christ

Judaism held staunchly to the belief that the law of Moses, given by Jehovah, was the standard by which His people would be judged at the last day. When the Savior declared, “The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48), He stated that He was Jehovah, the God of Israel, by equating His words with the words of Jehovah. Jesus then testified that He had said only what God had commanded Him to say (see John 12:49–50), affirming that He is God’s messenger—“the Word” of God (John 1:1).

John 13:1–17. The Savior’s Washing of His Disciples’ Feet

John’s Gospel does not record all the events of the Last Supper. John chose to focus on the Savior’s washing of the disciples’ feet at the conclusion of the meal and also on the Savior’s discourse to His disciples. **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that the Savior’s washing of the disciples’ feet showed His “unfailing devotion” to His disciples:

“In the midst of [the Last Supper], Christ quietly arose, girded himself as a slave or servant would, and knelt to wash the Apostles’ feet. (See John 13:3–17.) This small circle of believers in this scarcely founded kingdom were about to pass through their severest trial, so he would set aside his own increasing anguish in order that he might yet once more serve and strengthen them. It does not matter that no one washed his feet. In transcendent humility he would continue to teach and to cleanse them. He would to the final hour—and beyond—be their sustaining servant. As John wrote, who was there and watched the wonder of it all, ‘Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.’ (John 13:1.)

“So it had been, and so it was to be—through the night, and through the pain, and forever. He would *always* be their strength, and no anguish in his own soul would ever keep him from that sustaining role” (“He Loved Them unto the End,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1989, 25).

John 13:4–12. Washing of Feet Is a Gospel Ordinance

The Joseph Smith Translation provides an additional insight into the washing of the disciples’ feet: “*Now this was the custom of the Jews under their law; wherefore, Jesus did this that the law might be fulfilled*” (Joseph Smith Translation, John 13:10 [in the Bible appendix]).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught that when the Savior washed the disciples’ feet, He fulfilled the law of Moses and performed a gospel ordinance:

“Washing of feet is a gospel ordinance; it is a holy and sacred rite, one performed by the saints in the seclusion of their temple sanctuaries. It is not done before the world or for worldly people. For his day and dispensation Jesus instituted it in the upper room at the time of the Last Supper.

“Our Lord did two things in the performance of this ordinance: 1. He fulfilled the old law given to Moses;

and 2. He instituted a sacred ordinance which should be performed by legal administrators among his true disciples from that day forward.

“As part of the restoration of all things, the ordinance of washing of feet has been restored in the dispensation of the fulness of times” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:708).



Jesus Washing the Feet of the Apostles, by Del Parson

On December 27, 1832, the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation that declared: “Sanctify yourselves; yea, purify your hearts, and cleanse your hands and your feet before me, that I may make you clean” (D&C 88:74). In that same revelation the Lord commanded the Prophet to organize the School of the Prophets, saying that those who were part of the school “shall be received by the ordinance of the washing of feet” (D&C 88:139). **Elder McConkie** further explained:

“In the case of [the School of the Prophets] the ordinance [of washing of feet] is to be performed by the President of the Church. In compliance with this revelation the Prophet on January 23, 1833, washed the feet of the members of the school of the prophets [see *History of the Church*, 1:323]. . . .

“On March 29 and 30, 1836, [in the newly dedicated Kirtland Temple] the leading brethren, including the First Presidency, Council of the Twelve, bishops, and presidents of quorums, participated in the ordinance of washing of feet [see *History of the Church*, 2:430–31]. . . .

“Thus the knowledge relative to the washing of feet has been revealed step by step in this day until a full knowledge is now incorporated in the revealed ordinances of the Lord’s house” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:709–10).

John 13:6–10. Peter Objected and Then Consented to Having the Savior Wash His Feet

In New Testament times, people wore open sandals, walked on mostly dirt roads that accumulated the filth of beasts, and had only irregular access to bathing water. Their feet became very dirty, and washing another person's feet could be a distasteful task. Peter's initial rejection of the Master's offer to wash his feet can be understood in light of the fact that this custom of hospitality was usually performed by the lowest level of servants. However, when the Savior explained to Peter that having his feet washed was essential to fellowship with Him, Peter then asked for a more complete washing, which the Savior explained was not necessary. Peter's request illustrates the respect he had for the Lord and his earnest desire to follow Him completely.

John 13:13–15. Disciples of Jesus Christ Follow His Example

President David O. McKay (1873–1970) saw a great example of service in the ordinance of the Savior washing the disciples' feet. Speaking to the Church in the April 1951 general conference, when he was sustained by the members as President of the Church, he said:

"When the Savior was about to leave his Apostles, he gave them a great example of service. You remember he girded himself with a towel and washed his disciples' feet [see John 13:3–17]. . . .

"What an example of service to those great servants, followers of the Christ! He that is greatest among you, let him be least. So we sense the obligation to be of greater service to the membership of the Church, to devote our lives to the advancement of the kingdom of God on earth" (in Conference Report, Apr. 1951, 158–59).

John 13:1, 14–16, 34–35

How do these verses help you better understand the phrase "as I have loved you"? What do you need to do so you can love others the way the Savior has loved you?

John 13:17. "If Ye Know These Things, Happy Are Ye If Ye Do Them"

After providing an example of service for His disciples by washing their feet, the Savior taught them that their happiness was contingent upon their service to others. **President Thomas S. Monson** similarly affirmed this truth: "To find real happiness, we must seek for it in a

focus outside ourselves. No one has learned the meaning of living until he has surrendered his ego to the service of his fellow man. Service to others is akin to duty—the fulfillment of which brings true joy" ("Guideposts for Life's Journey" [Brigham Young University devotional, Nov. 13, 2007], 4; speeches.byu.edu).

John 13:18–30. The Betrayal of Jesus Christ by Judas Iscariot

Judas's betrayal of the Savior was a direct fulfillment of Psalm 41:9. The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) explained that those who were once in fellowship with the Lord and the Saints can become enemies of the truth:

"Judas was rebuked and immediately betrayed his Lord into the hands of His enemies, because Satan entered into him.

"There is a superior intelligence bestowed upon such as obey the Gospel with full purpose of heart, which, if sinned against, the apostate is left naked and destitute of the Spirit of God, and he is, in truth, nigh unto cursing, and his end is to be burned. When once that light which was in them is taken from them they become as much darkened as they were previously enlightened, and then, no marvel, if all their power should be enlisted against the truth, and they, Judas-like, seek the destruction of those who were their greatest benefactors" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 321; see also Alma 24:30).

John 13:23. "There Was Leaning on Jesus' Bosom One of His Disciples"

In New Testament times, those dining at formal meals often reclined on low couches placed around tables, leaning on their left arms with their heads toward the table and their feet pointed away from the table. Therefore, the guest seated to the right of the host would have leaned toward the host. This appears to have been where the Apostle John sat, "leaning on Jesus' bosom," or reclining toward Jesus, during the meal (compare Luke 16:22). This position would have allowed John, the disciple "whom Jesus loved," to have private conversations with the Savior that would not have been heard by everyone at the meal, such as the one concerning Judas's betrayal (see John 13:23–28).

John 13:26–27. What Is a "Sop"?

The "sop" described in John 13:26 was a small piece of bread that those dining would use to scoop broth and meat from a bowl. Since it was a gesture of kindness

and respect for a host to dip a sop and give it to a dinner guest, the Savior by this act presented Judas with an offer of friendship, perhaps one final opportunity for him to abandon his planned betrayal. The Savior gave a sop to Judas, after which “Satan entered into him” (John 13:27). By saying to Judas, “That thou doest, do quickly” (John 13:27), the Lord showed that He already knew what Judas had determined to do and that the time had come for him to act upon his final decision.

John 13:34–35. Disciples of Jesus Christ Are Distinguished by Love

After the Savior dismissed Judas, the setting was prepared for the Savior to give important teachings to the rest of the Apostles, as recorded in John 13:31–16:33. One of the first such teachings was the commandment to love others (see John 13:34–35). This commandment is also found in Leviticus 19:18. However, whereas in the Old Testament we are exhorted to love our neighbors as ourselves, here the Savior commands us to love one another *as He loves us*.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles asked members of the Church this question: “What quality defines us best as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?”

As he answered this question, Elder Wirthlin shared the following thoughts about love as the distinguishing quality of disciples of Jesus Christ:

“Love is the beginning, the middle, and the end of the pathway of discipleship. It comforts, counsels, cures, and consoles. It leads us through valleys of darkness and through the veil of death. In the end love leads us to the glory and grandeur of eternal life. . . .

“Brethren and sisters, as you prayerfully consider what you can do to increase harmony, spirituality, and build up the kingdom of God, consider your sacred duty to teach others to love the Lord and their fellowman. This is the central object of our existence. Without charity—or the pure love of Christ—whatever else we accomplish matters little. With it, all else becomes vibrant and alive.

“When we inspire and teach others to fill their hearts with love, obedience flows from the inside out in voluntary acts of self-sacrifice and service. . . .

“When Jesus gave His disciples a new commandment to ‘love one another; as I have loved you’ [John 13:34], He gave to them the grand key to happiness in this life and glory in the next.

“Love is the greatest of all the commandments—all others hang upon it. It is our focus as followers of the living Christ” (“The Great Commandment,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 28–31).

John 13:38. Prophecy of Peter’s Denial

For additional information and understanding concerning Peter’s denial, see the commentary for Luke 22:32 and for John 18:15–18, 25–27.

Points to Ponder

- As you studied the miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead, found in John 11:17–45, what principles did you learn that can help you have confidence in the power of the Savior? What did you learn that can help you receive comfort through the Savior’s power?
- What are some ways we might be tempted to seek “the praise of men more than the praise of God”? (John 12:43). What do you think are the consequences of doing so?
- How have opportunities to give service to others brought greater happiness into your life?

Suggested Assignments

- As you study the raising of Lazarus, found in John 11:17–45, look for similarities between this miracle and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. How do you think this miracle may have prepared the Savior’s disciples to believe in His Resurrection?
- Identify one or two people you can show greater love to this week. Plan ways you can demonstrate that love for them, and then carry out those plans.

26

John 14–16

Introduction and Timeline for John 14–16

On the final evening of His mortal ministry, after the Last Supper was concluded, the Savior gave instruction to His disciples, as recorded in John 14–16. At that time, the Savior taught His disciples vital truths concerning love, obedience, and the Holy Ghost—truths that would prepare them for His arrest and Crucifixion, as well as for their roles as leaders in His kingdom. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles pointed out that the Lord’s teachings on this occasion included “some of the mysteries of his kingdom, some of the deep and hidden doctrines, some things that can be understood only by the power of the Spirit” (*The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 4 vols. [1979–81], 4:73). The Savior’s teachings about what the Holy Ghost can do for us are among the clearest instructions on the Holy Ghost in all scripture.



Jerusalem at the Time of Jesus Christ (Traditional Locations)

1. After the Last Supper, the Savior taught His disciples privately in the upper room of a house in Jerusalem.
2. As the Savior continued to teach His disciples, they left the upper room and moved toward Gethsemane.

Commentary for John 14–16

John 14:1–3. “In My Father’s House Are Many Mansions”

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) taught that the Savior’s statement, “In my Father’s house are many mansions,” found in John 14:2, should be understood to mean, “‘In my Father’s kingdom are many kingdoms,’ in order that ye may be heirs of God and joint-heirs with me. . . . There are mansions for those who obey a celestial law, and there are other mansions for those who come short of the law, every man in his own order” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 219).

Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that as part of the plan of salvation, the Savior has prepared “many mansions,” or kingdoms of glory, for all of mankind:

“At the time Joseph Smith received revelations and organized the Church, the vast majority of [Christian] churches taught that the Savior’s Atonement would *not* bring about the salvation of most of mankind. The common precept was that a few would be saved and the overwhelming majority would be doomed to endless tortures of the most awful and unspeakable intensity. The marvelous doctrine revealed to the Prophet Joseph

unveiled to us a plan of salvation that is applicable to all mankind, including those who do not hear of Christ in this life, children who die before the age of accountability, and those who have no understanding.

“. . . Because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, all spirits blessed by birth will ultimately be resurrected, spirit and body reunited, and inherit kingdoms of glory that are superior to our existence here on earth [see D&C 76:89]. The exceptions are confined to those who, like Satan and his angels, willfully rebel against God [see Isaiah 14:12–15; Luke 10:18; Revelation 12:7–9; D&C 76:32–37]” (“Our Father’s Plan—Big Enough for All His Children,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 36–37).

The Joseph Smith Translation clarifies the intentions of the Savior by changing the word *if* to *when*: “And *when* I go, *I will* prepare a place for you, *and* come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, ye may be also” (Joseph Smith Translation, John 14:3).

John 14:6. “I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life”

Jesus told His disciples, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). He did not say that He *knew* the way, but that He *was* the way, the truth, and the life. Coming to the Father means we must do more than learn about Jesus Christ—we must follow Him and try to be like Him.

A “way” (Greek *hodos*) was a road or highway for traveling from one place to another and could also refer to one’s course of behavior or “way of life.” **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** expounded on the significance of John 14:6: “He is the *Way* in that it is in and through him that salvation comes; ‘no man cometh unto the Father, but by me,’ he said. (John 14:6.) He is the *Truth* because he is the embodiment and personification of that holy attribute. (Alma 5:48.) And he is the *Life* because in him the light of life centers; except for him and his power there would be no existence; should he withdraw the light of life, death would gain an immediate victory; and without him there would be neither immortal life, nor eternal life, which is life in unending glory” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 832).



Shepherd's View of Bethlehem, by Al Rounds. Jesus taught that He is “the way,” symbolized by this illustration of a path.

Elder Lawrence E. Corbridge of the Seventy quoted John 14:6 and exhorted us to follow Jesus Christ as “the Way”:

“There is only one way to happiness and fulfillment. He is the Way. Every other way, any other way, whatever other way, is foolishness. . . .

“. . . We can either follow the Lord and be endowed with His power and have peace, light, strength, knowledge, confidence, love, and joy, or we can go some other way, any other way, whatever other way, and go it alone—without His support, without His power, without guidance, in darkness, turmoil, doubt, grief, and despair. And I ask, which way is easier? . . .

“There is only one way to happiness and fulfillment. Jesus Christ is the Way” (“The Way,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 34, 36).

John 14:7–11; 16:25. “He That Hath Seen Me Hath Seen the Father”

John’s Gospel records that Jesus Christ frequently referred to His Father as He taught. Chapters 14–16 of John contain over 40 references to the Father. Jesus wanted His followers to know that He loved and revered His Father and was obedient to Him in all things. In response to Philip’s plea, “Shew us the Father,” Jesus explained that to know Him was also to know the Father (see John 14:8–11). **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that the Father sent His Son to help us to know, love, and obey our Father in Heaven:

“In all that Jesus came to say and do, including and especially in His atoning suffering and sacrifice, He was showing us who and what God our Eternal Father is like, how completely devoted He is to His children in every age and nation. In word and in deed Jesus was trying to reveal and make personal to us the true nature of His Father, our Father in Heaven.

“He did this at least in part because then and now all of us need to know God more fully in order to love Him more deeply and obey Him more completely. . . .

“God in His ultimate effort to have us know Him, sent to earth His Only Begotten and perfect Son, created in His very likeness and image, to live and serve among mortals in the everyday rigors of life. . . .

“. . . Jesus [came] to plead with [man] to love their Heavenly Father as He has always and will always love them. The plan of God, the power of God, the holiness of God, yes, even the anger and the judgment of God they had occasion to understand. But the love of God, the profound depth of His devotion to His children, they still did not fully know—until Christ came.

“So feeding the hungry, healing the sick, rebuking hypocrisy, pleading for faith—this was Christ showing us the way of the Father, He who is ‘merciful and gracious, slow to anger, long-suffering and full of goodness’ [*Lectures on Faith* (1985), 42]. In His life and especially in His death, Christ was declaring, ‘This is God’s compassion I am showing you, as well as that of my own’” (“The Grandeur of God,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2003, 70–72).

For further insight on how Jesus Christ came to show mankind what God the Father is like, see the commentary for John 1:18.



God the Father and Jesus Christ, by Del Parson

President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) further explained the meaning of the statement, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father”: “Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is ‘the express image’ of His Father’s person (Hebrews 1:3). He walked the earth as a human being, as a perfect man, and said, in answer to a question put to Him: ‘He that hath seen me hath seen the Father’ (John 14:9). This alone ought to solve the problem to the satisfaction of every thoughtful, reverent mind. The conclusion is irresistible, that if the Son of God be the express image (that is, likeness) of His Father’s person, then His Father is in the form of man; for that was the form of the Son of God, not only during His mortal life, but before His mortal birth, and after His resurrection. It was in this form that the Father and the Son, as two personages, appeared to Joseph Smith, when, as a boy of fourteen years, he received his first vision” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* [1998], 334).

John 14:12. “Greater Works Than These Shall He Do; Because I Go unto My Father”

It may sound startling to some to say that those who believe in Jesus Christ will do greater works than He did. However, the *Lectures on Faith* suggests that this statement is better understood in connection with the Savior’s teachings in John 17:20–24: “All these sayings

put together give as clear an account of the state of the glorified saints as language could give—the works that Jesus had done they were to do, and greater works than those which he had done among them should they do, and that because he went to the Father. He does not say that they should do these works in time; but they should do greater works, because he went to the Father. . . . The greater works which those that believed on his name were to do were to be done in eternity, where he was going and where they should behold his glory” (*Lectures on Faith*, 77–78).

John 14:15–24

What are some ways mentioned in these verses in which Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ will manifest Their love for us if we are obedient?

John 14:15. “If Ye Love Me, Keep My Commandments”

The Savior’s words to His disciples, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15), teach us that we show our love for Jesus Christ by keeping His commandments. **Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin** (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that “when we love the Lord, obedience ceases to be a burden. Obedience becomes a delight” (“The Great Commandment,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 30).

John 14:16–23, 26; 15:26; 16:7. “Comforter” as a Title of the Holy Ghost and of Jesus Christ

In the New Testament, the Greek word *paraklētos*, translated “Comforter” in the King James Version, appears only in the writings of John. The word is composed of *para*, meaning “beside,” and *klētos*, meaning “one who is summoned.” A *paraklētos* is one who is summoned to another’s side as a helper, intercessor, or advocate. In John’s writings, the title *paraklētos* is applied to two individuals: the Holy Ghost and Jesus Christ. The Savior promised His disciples that after He departed, they would not be left alone but would have the companionship of the Holy Ghost to help them (see John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). The Savior’s promise that He would give His disciples the Holy Ghost as “another Comforter” (John 14:16; italics added) meant that He Himself was also a Comforter. The **Prophet Joseph Smith** spoke of the two Comforters in this way:

“There are two Comforters spoken of. One is the Holy Ghost, the same as given on the day of Pentecost, and that all Saints receive after faith, repentance, and baptism. This first Comforter [is the] Holy Ghost. . . .

“The other Comforter spoken of is a subject of great interest, and perhaps understood by few of this generation. After a person has faith in Christ, repents of his sins, and is baptized for the remission of his sins and receives the Holy Ghost, (by the laying on of hands), which is the first Comforter, then let him continue to humble himself before God, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and living by every word of God, and the Lord will soon say unto him, Son, thou shalt be exalted. When the Lord has thoroughly proved him, and finds that the man is determined to serve Him at all hazards, then the man will find his calling and his election made sure, then it will be his privilege to receive the other Comforter, which the Lord hath promised the Saints, as is recorded in the testimony of St. John, in the 14th chapter, from the 12th to the 27th verses.

“Note the 16, 17, 18, 21, 23 verses. . . .

“Now what is this other Comforter? It is no more nor less than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; and this is the sum and substance of the whole matter; that when any man obtains this last Comforter, he will have the personage of Jesus Christ to attend him, or appear unto him from time to time, and even He will manifest the Father unto him, and they will take up their abode with him, and the visions of the heavens will be opened unto him, and the Lord will teach him face to face, and he may have a perfect knowledge of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God” (in *History of the Church*, 3:380–81).

John 14:18, 23. “I Will Not Leave You Comfortless”

While the Savior repeatedly told His disciples during the evening before His death that He would be going away from them for a time, He also reassured them that He was not abandoning them. He told them, “I will not leave you comfortless” (John 14:18). **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** taught about the various ways the Lord provides comfort and companionship for His disciples as they journey through mortality:

“Because Jesus walked such a long, lonely path utterly alone, *we* do not have to do so. His solitary journey brought great company for our little version of that path—the merciful care of our Father in Heaven, the unfailing companionship of this Beloved Son, the consummate gift of the Holy Ghost, angels in heaven, family members on both sides of the veil, prophets and apostles, teachers, leaders, friends. All of these and more have been given as companions for our mortal journey because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the Restoration of His gospel. Trumpeted from the summit of Calvary is the truth that we will never be left alone nor unaided, even if sometimes we may feel that we are.

Truly the Redeemer of us all said: ‘I will not leave you comfortless: [My Father and] I will come to you [and abide with you]’ [John 14:18; see also verse 23]” (“None Were with Him,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2009, 88).

John 14:26. “Teach You All Things, and Bring All Things to Your Remembrance”

As the Savior taught His disciples just before His death, He promised that the Father would send the Holy Ghost to them, who would “teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance” (John 14:26). Two of the vital roles of the Holy Ghost are to teach us and to remind us of what we have learned. **President Gordon B. Hinckley** (1910–2008) taught:

“The Holy Ghost is the Testifier of Truth, who can teach men things they cannot teach one another. . . . Moroni [declared], ‘And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things’ (Moro. 10:4–5)” (“The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1998, 7).

While serving as a member of the Seventy, **Elder Glenn L. Pace** taught that the spiritual witnesses that come to us are sometimes the Holy Ghost helping us to remember truth: “Sometimes the feeling [of a spiritual witness] is like a memory. We first learned the gospel in our heavenly home. We have come to this earth with a veil of forgetfulness. And yet lingering in each of our spirits are those dormant memories. The Holy Ghost can part the veil and bring those things out of their dormancy” (“Do You Know?” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2007, 79).

John 14:27; 16:33. “Peace I Leave with You”

As the Savior faced the end of His mortal life, He knew that His disciples faced many difficult trials in the years that would follow. As part of His last address to them, He promised them His peace and told them not to be troubled or afraid (see John 14:27; 16:33). **Elder M. Russell Ballard** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that the only way to obtain real peace is through faith in the Savior:

“Just hours before He was to begin that glorious yet awful process of the Atonement, the Lord Jesus Christ made this significant promise to His Apostles: ‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you’ (John 14:27).

“Was He promising His beloved associates the kind of peace the world recognizes—safety, security, with the absence of contention or tribulation? Certainly the historical record would suggest otherwise. Those original Apostles knew much of trial and persecution throughout the remainder of their lives, which is probably why the

Lord added this insight to His promise: ‘Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid’ (John 14:27).

“‘These things I have spoken unto you, that in *me* ye might have peace,’ He continued. ‘In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world’ (John 16:33; emphasis added).

“Peace—real peace, whole-souled to the very core of your being—comes only in and through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ” (“The Peaceable Things of the Kingdom,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 88).

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) observed that we can look to the Savior as an example of how to have peace in the midst of tribulation:

“We will all have some adversity in our lives. I think we can be reasonably sure of that. Some of it will have the potential to be violent and damaging and destructive. Some of it may even strain our faith in a loving God who has the power to administer relief in our behalf. . . .

“Jesus said, ‘In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.’ (John 16:33.) On the same occasion, he said, ‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.’ (John 14:27.) Throughout his life and ministry he spoke of peace, and when he came forth from the tomb and appeared unto his disciples, his first greeting was, ‘Peace be unto you.’ (John 20:19.)

“But Jesus was not spared grief and pain and anguish and buffeting. No tongue can speak the unutterable burden he carried, nor have we the wisdom to understand the prophet Isaiah’s description of him as ‘a man of sorrows.’ (Isa. 53:3.) His ship was tossed most of his life, and, at least to mortal eyes, it crashed fatally on the rocky coast of Calvary. We are asked not to look on life with mortal eyes; with spiritual vision we know something quite different was happening upon the cross.

“Peace was on the lips and in the heart of the Savior no matter how fiercely the tempest was raging. May it so be with us” (“Master, the Tempest Is Raging,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 34–35).

John 14:28–31. Concluding Comments in the Upper Room

Before leaving the upper room where the Last Supper was held, Jesus reminded His Apostles once again that He would leave them to go to the Father, but He would come again to them (see John 14:28)—a reference to His ministry following His Resurrection. He testified

that Lucifer had no power over Him (see Joseph Smith Translation, John 14:30 [in John 14:30, footnote *a*]). He declared that He would complete His earthly ministry so that the whole world would know of His love for His Father (see John 14:31). The remainder of the Savior’s final discourse was given as the group made their way to Gethsemane.

John 15:1–8. “I Am the True Vine”

In order to teach His disciples about their relationship to Him, the Savior used the metaphor of a grapevine. Israel’s prophets commonly used grapevines and vineyards as metaphors (see Isaiah 5:1–7; Jeremiah 2:21; Hosea 10:1; Jacob 5) so that disciples could easily understand. **Elder James E. Talmage** (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained how the Savior’s analogy of the vine and branches teaches that the disciples were completely dependent upon Jesus Christ, just as every person who lives on earth is dependent upon Him:

“A grander analogy is not to be found in the world’s literature. Those ordained servants of the Lord were as helpless and useless without Him as is a bough severed from the tree. As the branch is made fruitful only by virtue of the nourishing sap it receives from the rooted trunk, and if cut away or broken off withers, dries, and becomes utterly worthless except as fuel for the burning, so those men, though ordained to the Holy Apostleship, would find themselves strong and fruitful in good works, only as they remained in steadfast communion with the Lord. Without Christ what were they, but unschooled Galileans, some of them fishermen, one a publican, the rest of undistinguished attainments, and all of them weak mortals?” (*Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 604–5).



“The branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me” (John 15:4).

John 15:4–5. “Abide in Me, . . . for without Me Ye Can Do Nothing”

As the Savior taught using the metaphor of a vine and branches, He emphasized that we are to “abide” in Him, using the word *abide* repeatedly in John 15:1–10. To help us understand the concept being taught by the Savior, **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** explained:

“‘Abide in me’ [John 15:4] is an understandable and beautiful enough concept in the elegant English of the King James Bible, but ‘abide’ is not a word we use much anymore. So I gained even more appreciation for this admonition from the Lord when I was introduced to the translation of this passage in another language. In Spanish that familiar phrase is rendered ‘*permaneced en mi.*’ Like the English verb ‘abide,’ *permanecer* means ‘to remain, to stay,’ but even [English speakers] like me can hear the root cognate there of ‘permanence.’ The sense of this then is ‘stay—but stay *forever.*’ That is the call of the gospel message to [everyone] in the world. Come, but come to remain. Come with conviction and endurance. Come permanently, for your sake and the sake of all the generations who must follow you. . . .

“Jesus said, ‘Without me ye can do nothing’ [John 15:5]. I testify that that is God’s truth. Christ is everything to us and we are to ‘abide’ in Him permanently, unyieldingly, steadfastly, forever. For the fruit of the gospel to blossom and bless our lives, we must be firmly attached to Him, the Savior of us all, and to this His Church, which bears His holy name. He is the vine that is our true source of strength and the only source of eternal life” (“Abide in Me,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2004, 32).

John 15:10. “If Ye Keep My Commandments, Ye Shall Abide in My Love”

As recorded in John 15:10, Jesus promised His disciples that if they kept His commandments, they would abide in His love (see also John 14:15, 21, 23). In our day, the Lord has given a similar promise: “Be faithful and diligent in keeping the commandments of God, and I will encircle thee in the arms of my love” (D&C 6:20).

Some people may feel that because God has such great love for His children, it should not matter whether they keep His commandments. They feel that God’s love will excuse them from obeying His laws. **President Dallin H. Oaks** of the First Presidency explained that God loves all his children, and His universal love bestows many gifts on all of them. But we must keep God’s commandments in order to receive God’s “choicest blessings”:

“God’s love is so perfect that He lovingly requires us to obey His commandments because He knows that only through obedience to His laws can we become perfect, as He is. . . .

“God’s choicest blessings are clearly contingent upon obedience to God’s laws and commandments. The key teaching is from modern revelation:

“‘There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—

“‘And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated’ (D&C 130:20–21). . . .

“If a person understands the teachings of Jesus, he or she cannot reasonably conclude that our loving Heavenly Father or His divine Son believes that Their love supersedes Their commandments” (“Love and Law,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 27–28).

John 15:13–15. Jesus Christ Is the Exemplar of True Friendship

As the time of the Savior’s suffering and death drew near, He told His beloved disciples that they were His friends, explaining that His friends are those who “do whatsoever I command you” (John 15:14). His words to them also foreshadowed the great sacrifice that He, as the Exemplar of true friendship, would make for all mankind. He explained to His disciples: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). This He was about to do. **President Gordon B. Hinckley** spoke of the Savior’s sacrifice for us as the ultimate act of friendship: “*Jesus is my friend.* None other has given me so much. ‘Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends’ (John 15:13). He gave His life for me. He opened the way to eternal life. Only a God could do this. I hope that I am deemed worthy of being a friend to Him” (“My Testimony,” *Ensign*, May 2000, 71).

While serving in the Presidency of the Seventy, **Elder Marlin K. Jensen** referred to the Savior’s words found in John 15:13–14 and invited Church members to follow the Savior’s example of true friendship: “Having been so richly blessed by Christ’s friendship, I pray that we will now be to others what He is to us: a true friend. At no time will we be more Christlike than when we are a friend. I testify of the inestimable value of friends. . . . I know that when we offer ourselves in friendship, we make a most significant contribution to God’s work and to the happiness and progress of His children” (“Friendship: A Gospel Principle,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 65).



Christ Ordaining the Twelve Apostles, by Harry Anderson

John 15:16. “Ye Have Not Chosen Me, but I Have Chosen You, and Ordained You”

John 15:16 is an important scripture on the doctrine of ecclesiastical authority. The Savior’s statement in this verse shows that in His Church, He is the one who determines who will be called and set apart to serve in various positions. **President Gordon B. Hinckley** spoke of how this principle is reflected in the current leadership of the Church:

“No faithful member of this Church would think of applying for ecclesiastical office. Rather, ‘we believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.’ (A of F 1:5.)

“The Lord Himself said of the Twelve whom He selected: ‘Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you.’ (John 15:16.)” (“The Church Is on Course,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 54).

John 15:18–21. “Because Ye Are Not of the World, . . . They Will Also Persecute You”

The Savior warned His disciples that those who follow Him will often face persecution in this life from those who “know not him that sent me” (John 15:21). **Elder Robert D. Hales** (1932–2017) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles gave the following counsel about how to respond to criticism and persecution:

“One of mortality’s great tests comes when our beliefs are questioned or criticized. In such moments, we may want to respond aggressively—to ‘put up our dukes.’ But these are important opportunities to step back, pray, and follow the Savior’s example. Remember that Jesus Himself was despised and rejected by the world. . . . When we respond to our accusers as the Savior did, we not only become more Christlike, we invite others to feel His love and follow Him as well.

“To respond in a Christlike way cannot be scripted or based on a formula. The Savior responded differently in every situation. When He was confronted by wicked King Herod, He remained silent. When He stood before Pilate, He bore a simple and powerful testimony of His divinity and purpose. Facing the moneychangers who were defiling the temple, He exercised His divine responsibility to preserve and protect that which was sacred. Lifted up upon a cross, He uttered the incomparable Christian response: ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do’ (Luke 23:34). . . .

“The Prophet Joseph Smith demonstrated [Christian] courage throughout his life. . . . He did not retaliate or give in to hatred. Like all true disciples of Christ, he stood with the Savior by loving others in a tolerant and compassionate way. *That* is Christian courage.

“When we do not retaliate—when we turn the other cheek and resist feelings of anger—we too stand with the Savior. We show forth His love, which is the only power

that can subdue the adversary and answer our accusers without accusing them in return. That is not weakness. *That is Christian courage* (“Christian Courage: The Price of Discipleship,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 72).

John 15:18–25

How would the disciples be treated following the Savior’s return to His Father? Why would the world treat them this way?

John 15:22–16:6. “They Have Not Known the Father, Nor Me”

Jesus declared to His Apostles that after His death and Resurrection, they would go forth with the power of the Holy Ghost and testify of Him. What would be the repercussions of their preaching, teaching, and testifying of the Savior? “They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me” (John 16:2–3). John’s sweeping vision of world history, known as the book of Revelation, tells us that similar tragic scenes were part of the Great Apostasy that lasted for centuries (see Revelation 6:9).

John 16:7–11

What roles of the Holy Ghost are described in these verses? When has the Holy Ghost helped you in one of these ways?

John 16:12–13. “He Will Guide You into All Truth”

As the Savior came to the end of His final discourse to His disciples, He promised that the Holy Ghost would come to them and would “guide [them] into all truth” (John 16:13). This statement makes clear that divine revelation did not end with the death of Jesus Christ. The Holy Ghost guides the Savior’s true Church in every dispensation and also guides individuals in their efforts to find truth and live their lives in accordance with God’s will.

Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that we should seek for the Holy Ghost to guide us to truth: “Father in Heaven knew that you would face challenges and be required to make some decisions that would be beyond your own ability to decide correctly. In His plan of happiness, He included a provision for you to receive help with such challenges and decisions during your mortal life. That assistance will come to you through the Holy Ghost as spiritual guidance” (“To Acquire Spiritual Guidance,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 6).

President Dallin H. Oaks explained what we must do to have the Holy Ghost guide us: “How do we take the Holy Spirit for our guide? We must repent of our sins each week and renew our covenants by partaking of the



The Gift of the Holy Ghost, by Lyle Beddes. The gift of the Holy Ghost is given by the laying on of hands.

sacrament with clean hands and a pure heart, as we are commanded to do (see D&C 59:8–9, 12). Only in this way can we have the divine promise that we will ‘always have his Spirit to be with [us]’ (D&C 20:77). That Spirit is the Holy Ghost, whose mission is to teach us, to lead us to truth, and to testify of the Father and the Son (see John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:13; 3 Nephi 11:32, 36)” (“Be Not Deceived,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 46).

John 16:20–22. “Your Joy No Man Taketh from You”

Elder Quentin L. Cook taught that the trials of mortality often bring sorrow. But we can find great and lasting joy, just as the Savior’s disciples did, through understanding what the Savior has done for us:

“The source of the kind of joy which causes us to rejoice is an understanding of the plan of salvation. The Savior in the Gospel of John was approaching the closing hours of His mortal life when He would take upon Himself the sins of the world. As He prepared His disciples for what He knew was to come, He told them, ‘A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me’ (John 16:16). They were not yet ready to comprehend the Resurrection. Instead the Savior explained in gentle terms that He would leave and return and told them what they would feel: sorrow at His leaving, ‘but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you’ (John 16:22).

“Just as the Savior’s death brought sorrow, the vicissitudes of life, like death, disease, poverty, and injury, can and often will bring unhappiness. Separation from those we love invariably brings sorrow and mourning. Life is not easy, and it would be improper to diminish in any way the trials and tribulations that most experience.

“That having been said, the Resurrection and Atonement wrought by the Savior and the promise of eternal life with our loved ones are of such

overwhelming significance that to not rejoice would demonstrate a lack of understanding of the Savior's gift.

"Joy comes when we have the Spirit in our lives (see Alma 22:15). When we have the Spirit, we rejoice in what the Savior has done for us" ("Rejoice!" *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 28).

John 16:25. "I Shall Shew You Plainly of the Father"

To read more about the Savior revealing the Father, see the commentary for John 14:7–11; 16:25.

John 16:33. "Be of Good Cheer"

Knowing that His mortal ministry would soon be complete and that His disciples would face great tribulation, the Savior admonished them to "be of good cheer" and to remember that He had "overcome the world" (John 16:33). While serving as a member of the Seventy, **Elder Adhemar Damiani** explained what it means to be of good cheer:

"As part of our mortal probation, we pass through affliction, pain, and disappointment. Only in Jesus Christ can we find peace. He can help us to be of good cheer and to overcome all the challenges of this life.

"What does it mean to be of good cheer? It means having hope, not getting discouraged, not losing faith, and living life joyfully. 'Men are, that they might have joy' [2 Nephi 2:25]. It means facing life with confidence.



The gospel of Jesus Christ can help us replace sorrow with peace and joy.

"The gospel of Jesus Christ gives us the strength and the eternal perspective to face what is coming with good cheer" ("Be of Good Cheer and Faithful in Adversity," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2005, 94).

While serving in the Presidency of the Seventy, **Elder Joe J. Christensen** reminded us that to "be of good cheer" is a commandment from the Lord: "Your level of spirituality is also directly related to how well you fill the Lord's commandments to 'Be of good cheer' and 'Lift up your heart and rejoice' (D&C 31:3). How many times in the scriptures did the Lord command us to be of good cheer? He didn't say, 'Be of good cheer if everything is going well, if you have enough money to pay all your bills, if [you are feeling well],' or whatever. No. For us to be of good cheer is a commandment and not merely a suggestion" ("Ten Ideas to Increase Your Spirituality," *Ensign*, Mar. 1999, 59).

Points to Ponder

- When have you felt the comfort the Lord promised to His disciples through the Holy Ghost? What have these experiences taught you about the importance of having the companionship of the Holy Ghost?
- Ponder the Savior's declaration, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). How do these words give you hope?

Suggested Assignments

- According to John 14:1, 27, what condition did Jesus counsel His disciples to avoid? Write about at least three things Jesus taught His disciples, recorded in John 14–16, that can help you avoid that condition.
- After studying John 15:1–8 and the commentary for John 15:1–8, make a list of actions that can help you to "abide" in the Savior. Set one or two specific goals that will help you more fully "abide" in the Savior.

John 17–19

Introduction and Timeline for John 17–19

John chapters 17–19 contain John’s account of the events of the Atonement. The Savior’s prayer recorded in John 17 is often called the Intercessory Prayer because in His prayer, the Savior interceded on our behalf, praying to His Father for His Apostles and for all who would believe in Him—including us. Following the Intercessory Prayer, chapters 18–19 recount the arrest, trials, Crucifixion, and burial of Jesus Christ. John 17 provides valuable insight into the purposes of Jesus’s suffering. He prayed that those who believed in Him would be protected, have joy, be sanctified, be filled with the Father’s love, and truly know His Father and have eternal life. He prayed that His followers might be “one” with the Father, the Son, and one another. The word *Atonement* (at-one-ment) literally means “to make one,” or to reconcile. It was to bring about all these possibilities that Jesus Christ suffered, as described in John 18–19.

While you have already studied about the suffering and Crucifixion of Jesus Christ in the accounts in Matthew,

Mark, and Luke, the following commentary focuses on material that is unique to or emphasized in John.



Jerusalem at the Time of Jesus Christ (Traditional Locations)

1. In Jerusalem, Jesus Christ offered the great Intercessory Prayer.
2. He was betrayed, arrested, and tried before Annas, Caiaphas, and Pilate.
3. Peter denied three times that he was one of Jesus’s disciples.
4. The Savior was crucified at Golgotha.
5. The body of Jesus Christ was placed in a tomb by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus.

Commentary for John 17–19

John 17. The Intercessory Prayer

Unlike the synoptic Gospels, the Gospel of John does not give an account of the Savior’s prayers or suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane. But what John did record adds to and illuminates the meaning of the events recorded in the other Gospels. The Savior’s Intercessory Prayer, recorded only in John 17, provides valuable insight about the purposes of the Atonement.

President Russell M. Nelson stated:

“[The Intercessory Prayer is] so named because the Lord prayerfully interceded with His Father for the benefit of His disciples. Picture in your mind the Savior of the world kneeling in prayer, as I quote from John chapter 17:

“These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, . . . glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee. . . .

“I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. . . .

“For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have



Christ in Gethsemane, by Harry Anderson

known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

“I pray for them’ [John 17:1, 4, 8–9].

“From this prayer of the Lord we learn how keenly He feels His responsibility as our Mediator and Advocate with the Father” (“Lessons from the Lord’s Prayers,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 47).

John 17:3. Eternal Life Is to Know God

The importance of coming to know God is taught repeatedly in the scriptures (see Jeremiah 31:31–34; Hosea 4:6; Alma 22:18; D&C 132:23–24). It is a theme of particular emphasis in the Gospel of John, which testifies that Jesus came to earth to reveal the Father to us (see John 1:18; 14:6–11; 16:25; see also the commentary

for John 14:7–11; 16:25). Knowing God means more than believing that He exists or having an intellectual understanding about Him; it means becoming acquainted with Him through personal experience and living His teachings. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles pointed out the difference between merely knowing *about* God and *knowing* Him:

“It is one thing to know about God and another to know him. We know about him when we learn that he is a personal being in whose image man is created; when we learn that the Son is in the express image of his Father’s person; when we learn that both the Father and the Son possess certain specified attributes and powers. But we know them, in the sense of gaining eternal life, when we enjoy and experience the same things they do. To know God is to think what he thinks, to feel what he feels, to have the power he possesses, to comprehend the truths he understands, and to do what he does. Those who know God become like him, and have his kind of life, which is eternal life” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 1:762).

John 17:4–8. The Savior Reported the Completion of His Mission to His Father

In His Intercessory Prayer, the Savior told His Father in Heaven that He had obediently completed His earthly mission (see John 17:4–5). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained:

“Jesus ‘was like unto God’ (Abra. 3:24) before the world was; he had glory and dominion then; and he then became, under the direction of the Father, the Creator of this earth and of worlds without number. (Moses 1:31–33.) At the appointed time he came to this particular earth to work out both his own salvation and the atonement which would make salvation available to all men.

“In this prayer, speaking as though the atoning sacrifice had already been made, Jesus is certifying to the Father that the Son has done the appointed work, and asks that as a consequence he be given again the state of dignity and honor he once held” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:762).

John 17:9–10. Jesus Prayed That the Father Would Purify His Followers

While Jesus Christ was among the Nephites, He offered a prayer to the Father similar to the prayer recorded in John 17:9–10: “Father, I thank thee that thou hast purified those whom I have chosen, because of their faith, and I pray for them, and also for them who shall believe

on their words, that they may be purified in me, through faith on their words, even as they are purified in me. Father, I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me out of the world, because of their faith, that they may be purified in me, that I may be in them as thou, Father, art in me, that we may be one, that I may be glorified in them” (3 Nephi 19:28–29).

John 17:11, 14–16. The Savior’s Followers Are to Be “in the World” but Not “of the World”

In the Intercessory Prayer, the Savior stated that His disciples were “in the world” (John 17:11), but were “not of the world” (John 17:14). **Elder M. Russell Ballard** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles examined what each of these statements implies for followers of Jesus Christ:

“In the Church, we often state the couplet: ‘Be in the world but not of the world.’ . . .

“Perhaps we should state the couplet . . . as two separate admonitions. First, ‘*Be in the world.*’ Be involved; be informed. Try to be understanding and tolerant and to appreciate diversity. Make meaningful contributions to society through service and involvement. Second, ‘*Be not of the world.*’ Do not follow wrong paths or bend to accommodate or accept what is not right. . . .

“. . . In spite of all of the wickedness in the world, and in spite of all the opposition to good that we find on every hand, we should *not* try to take ourselves or our children *out* of the world. Jesus said, ‘The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven,’ or yeast. (Matt. 13:33.) We are to lift the world and help all to rise above the wickedness that surrounds us. The Savior prayed to the Father:

“‘I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.’ (John 17:15.)

“Members of the Church need to influence more than we are influenced. We should work to stem the tide of sin and evil instead of passively being swept along by it. We each need to help solve the problem rather than avoid or ignore it” (“The Effects of Television,” *Ensign*, May 1989, 80).

John 17:11, 20–23. “That They May Be One, Even as We Are One”

On an earlier occasion, the Savior had stated, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30). The Intercessory Prayer provides further understanding of what that means, for the Savior prayed to His Father that His followers too “may be *one, as we are*” (John 17:11; italics added; see also verses 21–23). He made clear that He was praying

not only for His followers but “for them also which shall believe on me through their word” (John 17:20). The unity that exists between the Father and the Son is something that all those who follow Jesus Christ may experience. **President Gordon B. Hinckley** (1910–2008) explained that the Father and Son are “one” in bringing to pass the salvation of the children of God, and They desire that we be one with Them:

“They are distinct beings, but they are one in purpose and effort. They are united as one in bringing to pass the grand, divine plan for the salvation and exaltation of the children of God. . . .

“It is that perfect unity between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost that binds these three into the oneness of the divine Godhead” (“The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 51).

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught about the process of becoming “one” with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ:

“How glorious it is to contemplate that we have been invited into that perfect unity that exists with the Father and the Son. How can this happen? . . .

“Jesus achieved perfect unity with the Father by submitting Himself, both flesh and spirit, to the will of the Father. . . . Referring to His Father, Jesus said, ‘I do always those things that please him’ (John 8:29). . . .

“Surely we will not be one with God and Christ until we make Their will and interest our greatest desire. Such submissiveness is not reached in a day, but through the Holy Spirit, the Lord will tutor us if we are willing until, in process of time, it may accurately be said that He is in us as the Father is in Him. At times I tremble to consider what may be required, but I know that it is only in this perfect union that a fulness of joy can be found. I am grateful beyond expression that I am invited to be one with those holy beings I revere and worship as my Heavenly Father and Redeemer” (“That They May Be One in Us,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 71–73).

John 17:12. “The Son of Perdition”

The Greek word from which “perdition” is translated (*apōleia*) indicates a condition of being lost or destroyed. Elsewhere in the New Testament, *apōleia* is translated as “destruction” (Matthew 7:13; Romans 9:22), “waste” (Matthew 26:8; Mark 14:4), and “damnation” (2 Peter 2:3). These terms seem appropriate as applied to Judas Iscariot. Speaking of the condition of Judas Iscariot, **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said:

“We know the divine plan required Jesus to be crucified, but it is wrenching to think that one of His special witnesses who sat at His feet, heard Him pray, watched Him heal, and felt His touch could betray Him and all that He was for 30 pieces of silver. Never in the history of this world has so little money purchased so much infamy. We are not the ones to judge Judas’s fate, but Jesus said of His betrayer, ‘Good [were it] for that man if he had not been born.’ [Matthew 26:24]” (“None Were with Him,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 86).

President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) wrote about whether or not Judas is a son of perdition, after first referring to Doctrine and Covenants 76:31–37, 43, which describes the knowledge that must be understood and then rejected by those who become sons of perdition: “That Judas did partake of all this knowledge—that these great truths had been revealed to him—that he had received the Holy Spirit by the gift of God, and was therefore qualified to commit the unpardonable sin, is not at all clear to me. To my mind it strongly appears that not one of the disciples possessed sufficient light, knowledge nor wisdom, at the time of the crucifixion, for either exaltation or condemnation; for it was afterward that their minds were opened to understand the scriptures, and that they were endowed with power from on high; without which they were only children in knowledge, in comparison to what they afterwards became under the influence of the Spirit” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 433).

John 17:17, 19. “I Sanctify Myself, That They Also Might Be Sanctified”

To “sanctify” means to make holy and pure. Jesus Christ lived a sinless, holy life and then took upon Himself the sins of the human family so that we could be sanctified if we follow Him. Our sanctification is “the process of becoming free from sin, pure, clean, and holy through the atonement of Jesus Christ” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Sanctification”; scriptures.lds.org).

John 17:26. “That the Love Wherewith Thou Hast Loved Me May Be in Them”

Jesus Christ concluded His Intercessory Prayer with a plea that His disciples of every age may be filled with the love of God. While serving in the Presidency of the Seventy, **Elder John H. Groberg** taught of the blessings that come into the lives of those who are filled with the love of God:

“When filled with God’s love, we can do and see and understand things that we could not otherwise do or

see or understand. Filled with His love, we can endure pain, quell fear, forgive freely, avoid contention, renew strength, and bless and help others in ways surprising even to us.

“Jesus Christ was filled with unfathomable love as He endured incomprehensible pain, cruelty, and injustice for us. Through His love for us, He rose above otherwise insurmountable barriers. His love knows no barriers. He invites us to follow Him and partake of His unlimited love so we too may rise above the pain and cruelty and injustice of this world and help and forgive and bless” (“The Power of God’s Love,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 11).



RICHARD L. W. CLEAVE

Aerial view of Jerusalem, showing the shaded Kidron Valley to the right of the Temple Mount

John 18:1–6. When Jesus Said “I Am He,” His Captors “Went Backward, and Fell to the Ground”

John recorded that after the Savior’s Intercessory Prayer, Jesus “went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron [Kidron], where was a garden” (John 18:1). The Kidron Valley contained tombs in Jesus’s time, as it does today. The walk Jesus and His disciples would have taken through this area the night before He died evokes the scripture, “I walk through the valley of the shadow of death” (Psalm 23:4).

After Jesus’s suffering in the garden, Judas, along with “a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees” (John 18:3), found Jesus in the garden. Jesus, “knowing all things that should come upon him,” stepped forward and asked, “Whom seek ye?” Jesus was not a passive participant in His own arrest. When the men asked for Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus answered,

“I am he” (John 18:4–8). These words are translated from the Greek phrase *egō eimi*, used in many other places in John in reference to the divinity of Jesus Christ (see the commentary for John 8:53–58). After the Savior said these words, the men and officers “went backward, and fell to the ground” (John 18:6), “apparently unable to exercise power over Jesus unless permitted to do so” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:780). “The simple dignity and gentle yet compelling force of Christ’s presence proved more potent than strong arms and weapons of violence” (James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 615). This detail shows that the Savior had the ability to overpower his captors but voluntarily submitted to arrest and crucifixion. To read about similar details recorded elsewhere in the scriptural record, see the commentary for Matthew 26:51–54.

John 18:8–9. “Let These Go Their Way”

Jesus Christ offered Himself to His enemies if they would let His disciples go free (see John 18:8–9). This ensured the immediate physical safety of the Apostles, who would become the leaders of the Church following Jesus’s death. This small detail is a reflection of the larger event that was then taking place, a mirror of the Atonement of Christ. The Savior gave Himself so all of us could be set free from the eternal enemies of sin and death.

John 18:11. “The Cup Which My Father Hath Given Me, Shall I Not Drink It?”

For help understanding the symbolism of “the cup” spoken of in John 18:11, see the commentary for Mark 10:38–39 and for Mark 14:36.

John 18:13. Annas

After Jesus was arrested, He was taken to Annas first (see John 18:13) and then to Caiaphas (see John 18:24). John is the only Gospel writer to mention that Jesus appeared before Annas. Annas had been the high priest in Jerusalem from A.D. 6 to A.D. 15. After Roman authorities removed him from office, he continued to exert considerable influence in Jerusalem. Five of his sons held the office of high priest at different times, and his son-in-law Joseph Caiaphas held the office at the time of the Savior’s arrest. Historical sources describe Annas’s family in terms of wealth, power, and greed. (To better understand the Savior’s movements through the streets of Jerusalem—from the upper room to Gethsemane, to Annas, to Caiaphas, to Pilate, and so on—see Bible Maps, no. 12, “Jerusalem at the Time of Jesus.”)



Historical sources indicate that the residences of Annas and Caiaphas were in the wealthy upper city of Jerusalem. This model of first-century Jerusalem shows the upper city, where the ruling class lived, with the poorer section below.

John 18:14. Caiaphas

For insights on Caiaphas's statement that "one man should die for the people" (John 18:14), see the commentary for John 11:49–53. For more information about Caiaphas and the office of high priest, see the commentary for Matthew 26:57.

John 18:15–18, 25–27. Simon Peter Denied Knowing the Savior (see also Matthew 26:69–75)

John's account of Simon Peter's three denials appears to be an eyewitness account (see John 18:15); it provides insights not found in the synoptic Gospels. **President Gordon B. Hinckley** discussed what we can learn from the account of Peter's denials:

"My heart goes out to Peter. So many of us are so much like him. We pledge our loyalty; we affirm our determination to be of good courage; we declare, sometimes even publicly, that come what may we will do the right thing, that we will stand for the right cause, that we will be true to ourselves and to others.

"Then the pressures begin to build. Sometimes these are social pressures. Sometimes they are personal appetites. Sometimes they are false ambitions. There is a weakening of the will. There is a softening of discipline. There is capitulation. And then there is remorse, followed by self-accusation and bitter tears of regret. . . .

"Now, if there be those throughout the Church who by word or act have denied the faith, I pray that you may draw comfort and resolution from the example of Peter,



Detail from *Peter's Denial*, by Carl H. Bloch

who, though he had walked daily with Jesus, in an hour of extremity momentarily denied the Lord and also the testimony which he carried in his own heart. But he rose above this and became a mighty defender and a powerful advocate. So, too, there is a way for any person to turn about and add his or her strength and faith to the strength and faith of others in building the kingdom of God” (“And Peter Went Out and Wept Bitterly,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1995, 2, 4, 6). For more insight on Peter’s denials, see the commentary for Matthew 26:69–75.

John 18:28–36. “My Kingdom Is Not of This World”

The hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders was put on display when they led Jesus to Pilate to be judged. They would not enter into the hall of judgment, which was a Gentile structure, because doing so would make them ritually unclean and they desired to eat the Passover meal the next day (see John 18:28). Yet at the same time, they were willing to falsely accuse Jesus before Pilate and seek His death (see the commentaries for Matthew 26:61–66 and for Matthew 27:11).



This model of first-century Jerusalem depicts the palace (foreground) that was probably “the hall of judgment” (John 18:28) where Pilate questioned Jesus. It also depicts the Antonia Fortress (background on right), another possible site of the trial before Pilate.

Pilate questioned Jesus about whether He considered Himself the king of the Jews, and the Savior answered, “My kingdom is not of this world.” Then in response to further questioning, He acknowledged, “Thou sayest that I am a king” (John 18:36–37). His statements are consistent with His refusal throughout His ministry to present Himself as an earthly king (see John 6:15), while openly declaring that He was the Messiah.

The Savior had stated that His followers were also “not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:14; see also John 15:19; 17:16). While serving in the Presidency of the Seventy, **Elder Dennis B. Neuenschwander** taught that as followers of Jesus Christ and members of the kingdom of God, we are to be separate from the world and seek after that which is sacred and eternal:

“In answer to Pilate’s question ‘Art thou the King of the Jews?’ the Savior answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world’ (John 18:33, 36). With these few words, Jesus declares His kingdom independent and distinct from this world. The Savior’s teachings, doctrine, and personal example lift all who truly believe in Him to a divine standard that requires both eye and mind be single to the glory of God (see D&C 4:5; 88:68). The glory of God encompasses all that is holy and sacred. Our ability to seek, recognize, and reverence the holy above the profane, and the sacred above the secular, defines our spirituality. Indeed, without the holy and sacred, we are left with only the profane and secular” (“Holy Place, Sacred Space,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2003, 71).



Christ before Pilate, by Mihaly von Munkacsy

John 18:37. “For This Cause Came I into the World”

While serving as a member of the Seventy, **Elder Alexander B. Morrison** spoke of the Savior’s statement to Pilate, “For this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth” (John 18:37). Elder Morrison used this statement to describe the purpose of Jesus Christ’s mortal existence: “‘For this cause came I into the world.’ What *was* that cause? Why did Jesus, the Lord God Omnipotent who sits at the right hand of the Father, creator of worlds without number, lawgiver and judge, condescend to come to earth to be born in a manger, live out most of His mortal existence in obscurity, trudge the dusty roads of Judea proclaiming a message which was violently opposed by many, and finally, betrayed by one of His closest associates, die between two malefactors on Golgotha’s somber hill? . . . It was love for all of God’s children that led Jesus, unique in His sinless perfection, to offer Himself as ransom for the sins of others. In the words of the beloved hymn, ‘Jesus died on Calvary! That all thru him might ransomed be’ (‘Tis Sweet to Sing the Matchless Love,’ *Hymns*, no. 176). This, then, was the consummate

cause which brought Jesus to earth to ‘suffer, bleed, and die for man.’ He came as ‘a lamb without blemish and without spot’ (1 Pet. 1:19) to atone for our sins, that He, being raised on the cross, might draw all men unto Him (see 3 Ne. 27:14)” (“For This Cause Came I into the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 25–26).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that just as the Savior came into the world for a specific cause, we too have a cause in our mortal lives: “As He began to feel the awful weight of the approaching Atonement, Jesus acknowledged, ‘For this cause came I into the world’ (John 18:37). We too, brothers and sisters, came ‘into the world’ to pass through our particularized portions of the mortal experience. Even though our experiences do not even begin to approach our Master’s, nevertheless, to undergo this mortal experience is why we too are here! Purposefully pursuing this ‘cause’ brings ultimate meaning to our mortal lives” (“Apply the Atoning Blood of Christ,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 22).

John 19:5, 14, 19

What significance would you give to Pilate’s declarations concerning the Savior?

John 19:4–16. Pilate Sought to Release Jesus but Ultimately Delivered Him to Be Crucified

Pilate initially resisted the entreaty of Jewish leaders to get involved with the case against Jesus (see John 18:29–31) and thereafter sought repeatedly to release Jesus (see John 18:38–40; 19:4–6, 12–15). Pilate had a troubled history with the Jewish population he governed during an 11-year appointment in Judea—which included several violent clashes with the Jewish people and an official reprimand from the emperor. So his eventual capitulation to the crowd is no surprise. To quell a possible riot (see Matthew 27:24) and avoid allegations of political disloyalty (see John 19:12), Pilate consented to crucify Jesus of Nazareth. For additional insights about Pontius Pilate, see the commentary for Matthew 27:11.

John 19:11. “Thou Couldst Have No Power At All against Me, Except It Were Given Thee”

Neither Pilate nor anyone else had the power to take the Savior’s life, as **President Boyd K. Packer** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained:

“Pilate, now afraid, said to Jesus: ‘Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?’ (John 19:10).

“One can only imagine the quiet majesty when the Lord spoke. ‘Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above’ (John 19:11).

“What happened thereafter did not come because Pilate had power to impose it, but because the Lord had the will to accept it.

“‘I lay down my life,’ the Lord said, ‘that I might take it again.

“‘No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again’ (John 10:17–18)” (“Atonement, Agency, Accountability,” *Ensign*, May 1988, 69).

John 19:14–18. “It Was the Preparation of the Passover”

The first chapter of John’s Gospel contains the testimony that Jesus Christ is “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Now, at the end of the Savior’s life, John recorded that Jesus Christ was led away to be crucified at the sixth hour on the day of the preparation for the Passover (see John 19:14–18). Concerning this, **President Russell M. Nelson** said, “Pilate delivered the Lamb of God to be crucified at the same time Paschal lambs nearby were being prepared for sacrifice” (“Why This Holy Land?” *Ensign*, Dec. 1989, 18). At the very hour when the Passover lambs were being sacrificed, the “Lamb of God” began His journey to the cross to make the ultimate sacrifice for all mankind.

John 19:19–24. At the Cross

Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote the following about the sign that Pilate hung on the cross (see John 19:19): “In Hebrew, Greek, and Latin—as though to symbolize the fact that here was a message for all nations and tongues—Pilate bore a written testimony of the divine Sonship of our Lord, a testimony which he obdurately refused to change, a testimony which is true and so stands everlastingly” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:817).

The sign was read by many people because the Crucifixion took place “nigh to the city” (John 19:20). Crucifixion in the Roman Empire was for punishment and also for deterrence of crime. The Roman writer, Marcus Quintilian, explained why crucifixions took place where many people could see them: “Whenever we crucify the guilty, the most crowded roads are chosen, where the most people can see and be moved by this fear. For penalties relate not so much to retribution as to their exemplary effect” (cited in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* [1992], “Crucifixion”).

The Savior's clothing was divided among the soldiers (see John 19:23–24). Jewish men usually wore five articles of clothing—headdress, shoes, inner garment, outer cloak, and girdle or belt—which, according to Roman custom, became the property of the soldiers who performed crucifixions. In Jesus's case, all of His clothing besides His coat was divided between the four soldiers at the cross. But His coat was seamless and too valuable to be cut up, so the soldiers cast lots to see who would get it. This episode fulfilled prophecy: "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture" (Psalm 22:18).

John 19:25–27. "Woman, Behold Thy Son! . . . Behold Thy Mother!"

John's Gospel preserves the moving account of Jesus Christ speaking to His mother while He hung on the cross (see John 19:25–27). His statement to the Apostle John, "Behold thy mother!" placed Mary in John's care. **Sister Elaine L. Jack**, former Relief Society general president, taught about the love between the Savior and His mother:



Detail from *The Crucifixion of Christ*

"We read in John, 'There stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister' (John 19:25). They were there as they had been throughout his life. My mind darts back to the early years as Mary and Joseph raised this most remarkable child. I can hear Mary comforting the baby Jesus with soothing words that come so naturally to us: 'I'm right here.' And then at this most dramatic moment of all time, there

was the mother, Mary. She couldn't soothe his pain this time, but she could stand by his side. Jesus, in tribute, offered those grand words, 'Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!' [John 19:26–27]" ("Relief Society: A Balm in Gilead," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 93).

John 19:28–29. "I Thirst"

John recorded that on several occasions, Jesus taught that He offers "living water" to quench forever the spiritual thirst of all who follow Him (John 4:10–14; 7:37–39). But now, on the cross, Jesus declared His own thirst and was offered only vinegar, fulfilling ancient prophecy (see John 19:28–29; Psalm 69:21). **Elder**

James E. Talmage (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said of this passage, "John affirms that Christ uttered the exclamation, 'I thirst,' only when He knew 'that all things were now accomplished'; and the apostle saw in the incident a fulfillment of prophecy" (*Jesus the Christ*, 661).

John 19:30. Jesus Christ Fulfilled His Divine Mission

Two of the statements the Savior made from the cross may be understood in light of what **Elder Robert D. Hales** (1932–2017) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught about the Savior's unwavering determination to accomplish His Father's will: "From before the foundation of the world to the final moments on the cross, the Savior had been about His Father's business. He completed the work He had been sent to do. Therefore, we do not wonder to whom He was talking when, upon the cross, 'he said, It is finished,' [John 19:30] and 'cried with a loud voice, . . . Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost' [Luke 23:46]. We know He was praying to His Heavenly Father" ("Gaining a Testimony of God the Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 31).

Elder Hales also spoke about how the Savior's example can show us the way to endure to the end: "Jesus chose not to be released from this world until He had endured to the end and completed the mission He had been sent to accomplish for mankind. Upon the cross of Calvary, Jesus commended His spirit to His Father with a simple statement, 'It is finished' (John 19:30). Having endured to the end, He was released from mortality.

"We, too, must endure to the end. The Book of Mormon teaches, 'Unless a man shall endure to the end, in following the example of the Son of the living God, he cannot be saved' (2 Ne. 31:16)" ("The Covenant of Baptism: To Be in the Kingdom and of the Kingdom," *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 6).

The Joseph Smith Translation provides additional insight: "Jesus when he had cried again with a loud voice, saying, *Father, it is finished, thy will is done*, yielded up the ghost" (Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 27:54 [in Matthew 27:50, footnote a]).

John 19:26–30. The Seven Statements from the Cross (see also Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34; Luke 23:34, 43, 46)

Jesus Christ made seven statements from the cross that are recorded in the Gospels. The following chart identifies each of these statements, their scriptural location, and where you can find commentary for these statements:

Scripture Reference	Commentary in This Manual
Luke 23:34. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."	Luke 23:34. "Father, Forgive Them"
Luke 23:43. "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise."	Luke 23:42–43
John 19:26–27. "Woman, behold thy son! . . . Behold thy mother!"	John 19:25–27
Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"	Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34
John 19:28. "I thirst."	John 19:28–29
John 19:30. "It is finished."	John 19:30
Luke 23:46. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."	Luke 23:46

John 19:31–37. Two Messianic Prophecies Fulfilled

While Matthew and Mark pointed out that the Savior's death fulfilled certain prophecies (see Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:28), John mentioned two details that other Gospel writers did not:

First, not one of Jesus's bones was broken. Soldiers sometimes broke the leg bones of crucifixion victims to hasten death, but they did not do this with Jesus. Without realizing it, they fulfilled an important part of the symbolism of Passover, for the Lord had instructed that the Passover lamb—which symbolized the Savior—was not to have any broken bones (see Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12). This also fulfilled the messianic prophecy found in Psalm 34:20: "He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken."

Second, Jesus Christ's side was pierced with a spear. This fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah: "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn" (Zechariah 12:10).

Points to Ponder

- How have you grown in coming to *know* the Father and the Son, rather than just knowing *about* Them? What could you do to come to know Them even better?
- Consider the Savior's example of faithfully enduring to the end of His mortal life. How can this inspire you and give you courage to stay true despite the trials and opposition that you face?

Suggested Assignments

- Write a brief talk or lesson about Jesus Christ's role as Intercessor and Advocate. Refer to specific verses in John 17 and the following scriptures: 1 Timothy 2:5; 2 Nephi 2:8–10; Doctrine and Covenants 45:3–5. Include your thoughts about what it means to know that the Savior has prayed and interceded for you.
- As you study the Savior's Intercessory Prayer in John 17, make a list of the blessings that the Lord prayed would come into your life through His Atonement. Write about how you have received some of these blessings in your life.
- As the Savior faced His impending Crucifixion, He stated, "To this end was I born" (John 18:37). Ponder this statement and the quotation by Elder Neal A. Maxwell in the commentary for John 18:37. Write answers to the following questions: How do you think knowing the purpose of His life on earth helped the Savior make decisions and endure to the end? How can understanding the purposes of *your* life give you confidence and courage to endure difficulties?

28

John 20–21

Introduction and Timeline for John 20–21

John chapters 20 and 21 record John’s account of the Savior’s post-Resurrection ministry. John recorded the discovery of the empty tomb and the Savior’s appearance to Mary Magdalene and later that day to ten of the Apostles. Upon hearing of the resurrected Savior, Thomas, who had been absent, said, “Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, . . . I will not believe” (John 20:25). Eight days later Thomas received that opportunity, at which time Jesus taught, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:29). John recorded the Savior’s appearance to His disciples on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias (Galilee) and His charge to Peter to “feed my sheep” (John 21:15–17). John stated his purpose in recording these appearances: “These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31).



1. The resurrected Jesus Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene.
2. The Lord appeared to ten of His Apostles, Thomas being absent.
3. After eight days, He appeared to the eleven Apostles, including Thomas.
4. The Savior appeared again to seven of His disciples at the Sea of Tiberias (the Sea of Galilee).

Commentary for John 20–21

John 20:1–10. At the Empty Tomb

When Peter and John looked in the tomb, they saw “the linen clothes lie, and the napkin [a separate piece of cloth], that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself” (John 20:6–7). That is, the grave clothes were in the same position they had been in when they were placed around Jesus’s body—still wrapped, conforming to the general outline of His body, but now empty, with the head cloth in its place above the linen strips that had wrapped the body.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained: “Together they view the grave-clothes—linen strips that have not been unwrapped, but through which a resurrected body has passed. And then, upon John . . . the reality dawns first. It is true! They had not known before; now they do. It is the third day! Christ is risen! ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ (1 Cor. 15:54.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 1:842).

These details about the position of the grave clothes rule out the possibility that Jesus’s body had been taken by grave robbers or Jewish leaders conspiring to prevent claims of a resurrection (see Matthew 28:9–15;

John 20:2, 13). Anyone interested in stealing Jesus’s body would have either unwrapped it, leaving the linens behind in a heap, or taken the body while it was still wrapped.

Up to the moment when Peter and John looked into the empty tomb, they had not fully comprehended the scriptural witnesses declaring that the Messiah would rise from the dead as an immortal Being. But in that moment they came to know by the power of revelation and personal experience that Jesus was resurrected.



He Is Risen, by Dan Burr. After hearing from Mary Magdalene that Jesus’s body was missing from the sepulchre, Peter and John ran to the empty tomb (see John 20:1–4).

John 20:11–18. The Resurrected Lord Appeared to Mary Magdalene (see also Mark 16:9)



Why Seek the Living among the Dead? by Jan Astle

Mary Magdalene, or Mary of Magdala, likely came from a town called Magdala on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. According to Mark 16:9 and Luke 8:2, the Savior cleansed her of “seven devils.” She was a disciple of Jesus Christ and “became one of the closest friends Christ had among women” (James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd ed. [1916], 264). She is the only person mentioned in each of the four Gospels as a witness to the Crucifixion, burial, and empty tomb.

President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency taught that the Savior’s appearance to Mary Magdalene reflects His esteem for women: “No woman should question how the Savior values womanhood. The grieving Mary Magdalene was the first to visit the sepulchre after the Crucifixion, and when she saw that the stone had been rolled away and that the tomb was empty, she ran to tell Peter and John. The two Apostles came to see and then went away sorrowing. But Mary stayed. She had stood near the cross [see Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40; John 19:25]. She had been at the burial [see Matthew 27:61; Mark 15:47]. And now she stood weeping by the empty sepulchre [see John 20:11]. There she was honored to be the first mortal to see the risen Lord” (“Woman, Why Weepst Thou?” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 54).

John 20:16. “Rabboni”

The Aramaic word *Rabboni*, used by Mary to address the resurrected Savior, is used only twice in the New Testament. In John 20:16, the King James translators retained the Aramaic word and John’s translation for his readers, which is “Master.” In Mark 10:51, the word is translated as “Lord.” The title *Rabbi* was used for respected teachers among first-century Jews. *Rabboni*, a more lofty form of the title *Rabbi*, was a title that was rarely used and was usually reserved for highly esteemed teachers who had both divine knowledge and authority to teach others.

John 20:17–18. “Touch Me Not; for I Am Not Yet Ascended to My Father”

After Mary recognized the risen Savior, the first thing He said to her was, “Touch me not” (John 20:17).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie helped us understand the meaning and importance of Jesus Christ’s statement to Mary:

“The King James Version quotes Jesus as saying ‘Touch me not.’ The Joseph Smith Translation reads ‘Hold me not.’ Various translations from the Greek render the passage as ‘Do not cling to me’ or ‘Do not hold me.’ Some give the meaning as ‘Do not cling to me any longer,’ or ‘Do not hold me any longer.’ Some speak of ceasing to hold him or cling to him, leaving the inference that Mary was already holding him. There is valid reason for supposing that the thought conveyed to Mary by the Risen Lord was to this effect: ‘You cannot hold me here, for I am going to ascend to my Father.’ But the great message that was preserved for us is Jesus’ eternal relationship to his Father. ‘My’ Father and ‘your’ Father—Elohim is the Father of all men in the spirit, and of the Lord Jesus in an added and special sense. He is the Father of both Jesus’ spirit and his body. ‘My’ God and ‘your’ God—and again Elohim is the God of all men, but in Jesus’ case, though he himself is a God and has all power, though he is a member of the very Godhead itself, yet is he everlastingly in subjection to the same God who is our Father” (*The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 4 vols. [1979–81], 4:264–65).

Jesus Christ’s appearance to Mary Magdalene makes clear that after His Resurrection, there would be a respectful separation between the mortal disciples and the immortal Christ. Jesus’s appearance also clarifies that He did not go directly into the presence of God the Father after His death. In the same way, after we die, our spirits will go to the world of spirits and await the time when they will be reunited with our physical bodies. The Book of Mormon prophet Alma declared: “Now, concerning the state of the soul between death and the resurrection . . . the spirits of all men, as soon as they are departed from this mortal body, yea, the spirits of all men, whether they be good or evil, are taken home to that God who gave them life” (Alma 40:11). To be “taken home” to God does not mean that our spirits will go immediately into God’s presence, but rather that they will go into the spirit world, which is under His direction and control.



The Resurrection, by Harry Anderson

John 20:19–23. The Resurrected Savior Met with His Apostles

Sometime during the evening of the day the Savior was resurrected, ten of the twelve Apostles met behind closed doors “for fear of the Jews” (John 20:19). Jesus suddenly appeared in the room, showing that resurrected beings are not bound by physical obstacles.

President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) taught: “Resurrected bodies have control over the elements. How do you think the bodies will get out of the graves at the resurrection? When the Angel Moroni appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Prophet saw him apparently come down and ascend through the solid walls, or ceiling of the building. . . . It was just as easy for the Angel Moroni to come to the Prophet Joseph Smith down through the building as it was for our Savior to appear to his disciples after his resurrection in the room where they were assembled when the door was closed. . . . How could he do it? He had power over the elements” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 2:288).

John 20:22. “Receive Ye the Holy Ghost”

In both Hebrew and Greek, the word *spirit* also carries the meanings “breath” and “wind” (compare John 3:8). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained, “Jesus ‘breathed on them,’ which probably means that he laid his hands upon them as he uttered the decree: ‘Receive the Holy Ghost.’”

Elder McConkie used the experience of the Apostles to illustrate that there is a difference between the bestowal of the gift of the Holy Ghost and actually enjoying that gift: “They thus *received*, but did not at that moment actually *enjoy*, the gift of the Holy Ghost. . . . The gift of the Holy Ghost is the *right*, based on faithfulness, to receive the constant companionship of this member of the Godhead; and this gift is conferred by the laying on of hands following baptism. This gift offers certain blessings provided there is full compliance with the law involved; everyone upon whom the gift is bestowed does not in fact *enjoy* or *possess* the offered gift. In the case of the apostles the actual enjoyment of the gift was delayed until the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:857).

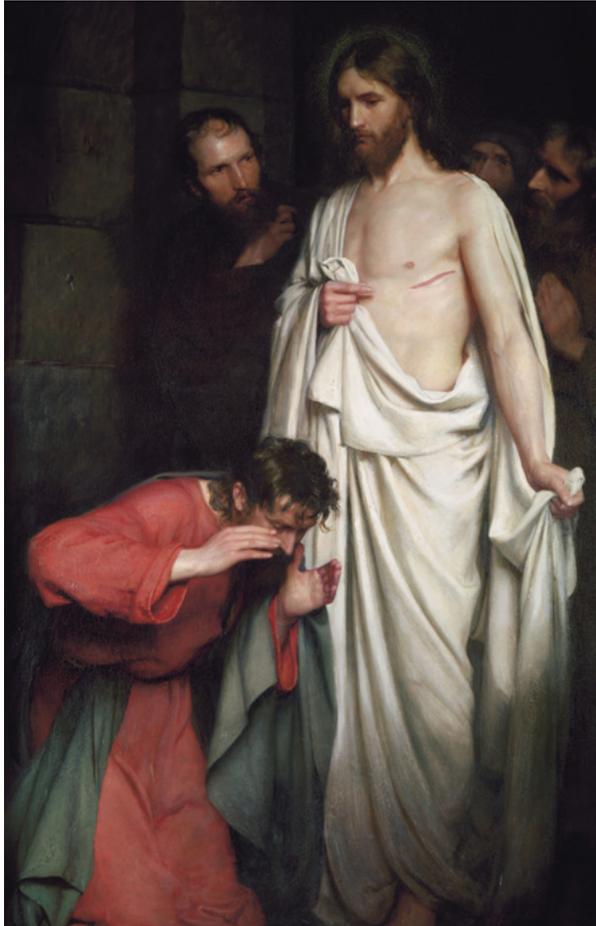
John 20:23. Authority to Remit and Retain Sins

The “keys of the kingdom of heaven” that the Savior had earlier bestowed on the Apostles gave them the power to bind or loose on earth and in heaven (Matthew 16:19; 18:18). The Savior used similar language as He instructed the Apostles about their authority to remit or retain sins (see John 20:23). This same apostolic power is always found in the true Church. Hence, the Lord said to Joseph Smith: “I have conferred upon you the keys and power of the priesthood. . . ; and whosoever sins you remit on earth shall be remitted eternally in the heavens; and whosoever sins you retain on earth shall be retained in heaven” (D&C 132:45–46).

John 20:24–29. The Resurrected Lord Appeared to the Eleven Apostles, Including Thomas

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) discussed Thomas’s reluctance to believe that Jesus had been resurrected unless he first received physical evidence:

“We think of Thomas as one who had traveled and talked with the Master, and who had been chosen by him. Inwardly we wish that Thomas could have turned toward the future with confidence in the things which were not then visible, instead of saying in effect, ‘To see is to believe.’ . . .



The Doubtful Thomas, by Carl H. Bloch

“A week later, the disciples were again together in the same house in Jerusalem. This time Thomas was with them. The door was closed, but Jesus came and stood in the midst of them and said, ‘. . . Peace be unto you.

“Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.’ (John 20:26–27.)

“The record does not indicate that Thomas accepted this invitation—this loving rebuke by the Lord. Thomas could see the print of the nails and the wound of the spear. He only answered: ‘. . . My Lord and my God’ [John 20:28]. Now he believed, but Thomas had missed the highest form of faith.

“Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed’ [John 20:29].

“This occurrence stands as one of the great lessons of all times. Thomas had said, ‘To see is to believe,’ but Christ

answered: ‘To believe is to see’” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1962, 22–23).

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) quoted John 20:25 and then likened the experience of Thomas to modern times: “Have you not heard others speak as Thomas spoke? ‘Give us,’ they say, ‘the empirical evidence. Prove before our very eyes, and our ears, and our hands, else we will not believe.’ This is the language of the time in which we live. Thomas the Doubter has become the example of men in all ages who refuse to accept other than that which they can physically prove and explain—as if they could prove love, or faith, or even such physical phenomena as electricity.”

President Hinckley then quoted John 20:26–29 and continued: “To all within the sound of my voice who may have doubts, I repeat the words given Thomas as he felt the wounded hands of the Lord: ‘Be not faithless, but believing.’ Believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the greatest figure of time and eternity” (“Be Not Faithless,” *Ensign*, May 1978, 59).

While Thomas has traditionally been referred to as “doubting Thomas,” other scriptures affirm his love for the Savior and devotion to Him (see John 11:16). Numerous early Christian writings state that after the Resurrection, Thomas preached the gospel throughout Syria, Mesopotamia, and India. Tradition holds that Thomas died as a martyr in India around A.D. 72.

John 20:25–28

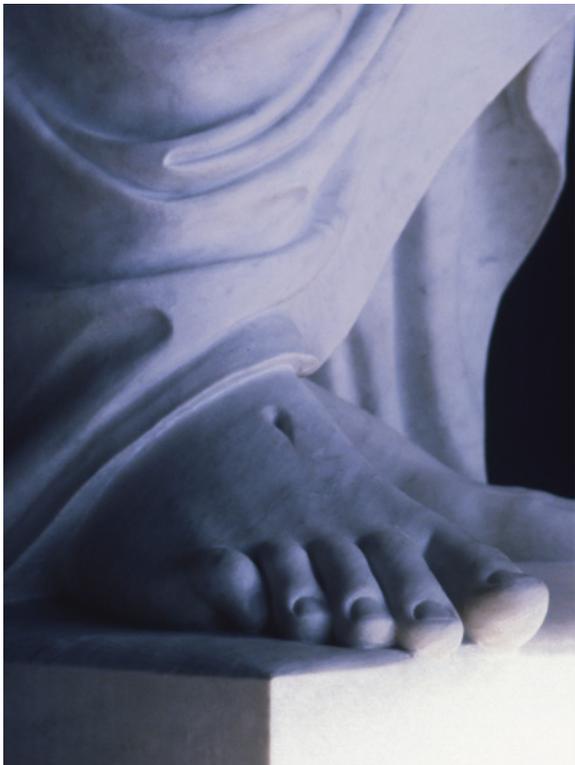
Compare Thomas’s desire expressed in John 20:25 with the Savior’s instructions to him, found in John 20:27. What do these two verses teach about what it means to have faith?

John 20:27. The Savior Retained the Wounds of the Crucifixion

The scriptures suggest several possible reasons why Jesus Christ has retained the wounds of the Crucifixion in His hands, feet, and side: to substantiate His literal, physical Resurrection (see John 20:19–20, 24–28); to testify that He is the Messiah of whom the prophets wrote (see 3 Nephi 11:11–17); to identify Himself as the Messiah to the Jews in the last days (see Zechariah 12:9–10; D&C 45:51–52); and to assure the faithful of His power to save and bless (see D&C 6:34–37).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught further about why the Savior retained the wounds of His Crucifixion:

“Even though the power of the Resurrection could have—and undoubtedly one day will have—completely restored and made new the wounds from the crucifixion, nevertheless Christ chose to retain those wounds for a purpose, including for his appearance in the last days when he will show those marks and reveal that he was wounded ‘in the house of [his] friends’ [Zechariah 13:6; D&C 45:52].



Jesus has retained the wounds in His hands and in His feet.

“The wounds in his hands, feet, and side are signs that in mortality painful things happen even to the pure and the perfect, signs that tribulation is *not* evidence that God does not love us. It is a significant and hopeful fact that it is the *wounded* Christ who comes to our rescue. He who bears the scars of sacrifice, the lesions of love, the emblems of humility and forgiveness is the Captain of our Soul. That evidence of pain in mortality is undoubtedly intended to give courage to others who are also hurt and wounded by life, perhaps even in the house of their friends” (*Christ and the New Covenant* [1997], 258–59).

John 20:28. “My Lord and My God”

Thomas’s declaration to Jesus, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28), reflects a theme in John—that Jesus was

not just a good man, a holy man, or a miracle worker, but He was Deity. He was the Son of God. **President Gordon B. Hinckley** declared of Jesus:

“He, as King of Kings, stands triumphant above all other kings. He, as the Omnipotent One, stands above all rulers. . . .

“Towering above all mankind stands Jesus the Christ, the King of glory, the unblemished Messiah, the Lord Emmanuel. . . .

“He is our King, our Lord, our Master, the living Christ, who stands on the right hand of His Father” (“This Glorious Easter Morn,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 67).

John 20:29–31. Believing in the Witness of Others

In the Gospel of John and in other scriptures, we possess records of numerous appearances of the resurrected Jesus Christ. **President Gordon B. Hinckley** affirmed the reality of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ by citing some of these appearances:

“Can anyone doubt the veracity of that account? No event of history has been more certainly confirmed. There is the testimony of all who saw and felt and spoke with the risen Lord. He appeared on two continents in two hemispheres and taught the people before His final ascension. Two sacred volumes, two testaments speak of this most glorious of all events in all of human history. But these are only accounts, the faithless critic says. To which we reply that beyond these is the witness and the testimony, borne by the power of the Holy Ghost, of the truth and validity of this most remarkable event. Through the centuries untold numbers have paid with the sacrifice of their comforts, their fortunes, their very lives for the convictions they carried in their hearts of the reality of the risen, living Lord.

“And then comes the ringing testimony of the Prophet of this dispensation that in a wondrous theophany he saw and was spoken to by the Almighty Father and the Risen Son. That vision, glorious beyond description, became the wellspring of this The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (“This Glorious Easter Morn,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 67).

The following chart lists those people to whom the resurrected Jesus Christ appeared, as recorded in the New Testament. As John pointed out, “These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (John 20:31).

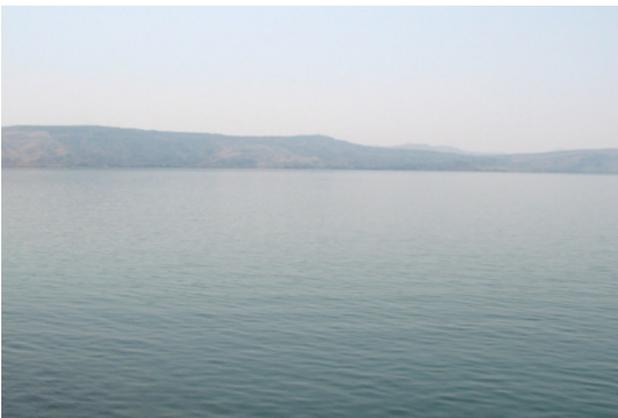
New Testament Appearances of the Resurrected Jesus Christ				
Reference	Persons Visited	Date or Time	Location	What Transpired
John 20:11–18; Mark 16:9	Mary Magdalene	Early Resurrection morning	At the tomb	Mary talked with Jesus.
Matthew 28:1–10; Mark 16:1–8; Luke 24:1–11	Other women	Early Resurrection morning	Somewhere between the tomb and Jerusalem	They held Jesus's feet and worshipped Him.
Luke 24:34; 1 Corinthians 15:5	Simon Peter	Resurrection day	Not known	Not known
Mark 16:12; Luke 24:13–32	Two disciples	Afternoon of Resurrection day	On the road to Emmaus	Walked, talked, and ate with Jesus.
Mark 16:14; Luke 24:33, 36–49; John 20:19–23	Apostles and others with them	Evening of Resurrection day	A room with shut doors, somewhere in Jerusalem	Ate with Jesus, and Apostles felt His hands and feet.
John 20:26–29	Eleven Apostles	Eight days following the Resurrection	A room with shut doors, somewhere in Jerusalem	Jesus showed His wounds to Thomas.
John 21:1–23	Seven Apostles	Sometime later	Shore of Sea of Tiberias (Sea of Galilee)	Jesus fed them and instructed Peter to feed His sheep.
Matthew 28:16–20; Mark 16:15–18	Eleven Apostles	Sometime later	On a mountain in Galilee	Jesus instructed the Apostles to teach all nations.
Mark 16:19–20; Luke 24:50–53	Eleven Apostles	Just before Jesus's ascension	Near Bethany	Jesus taught the Apostles and then ascended into heaven.
1 Corinthians 15:6	More than 500 men	Not known	Not known	Saw Jesus.
1 Corinthians 15:7	James	Not known	Not known	Saw Jesus.
Acts 1:3–12	Eleven Apostles	Sometime after the Resurrection	In Jerusalem	Jesus instructed His Apostles.
Acts 7:55–56	Stephen	At time of Stephen's martyrdom	Probably at or near Jerusalem	Just before he was stoned to death.
Acts 9:4–6; 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:8	Paul (called Saul at that time)	Perhaps two years after the death of Jesus	Road to Damascus	Paul saw Jesus and heard His voice; Jesus called Paul to repentance.
Acts 22:17–21	Paul	Sometime after his conversion	In the temple in Jerusalem	Saw Jesus in a vision and received instruction about serving a mission to the Gentiles.
Revelation 1:9–18	John the Revelator	First century A.D., exact time not known	Isle of Patmos	Saw Jesus in a vision and heard His voice, and Jesus touched him.

John 20:31. “These Are Written, That Ye Might Believe”



John recorded that one purpose of his writing was that those who read his Gospel “might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing [they] might have life through his name” (John 20:31). **Elder D. Todd Christofferson** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles reminded us of this objective of scripture study when he gave this instruction: “In the end, the central purpose of all scripture is to fill our souls with faith in God the Father and in His Son, Jesus Christ—faith that They exist; faith in the Father’s plan for our immortality and eternal life; faith in the Atonement and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, which animates this plan of happiness; faith to make the gospel of Jesus Christ our way of life; and faith to come to know ‘the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom [He has] sent’ (John 17:3)” (“The Blessing of Scripture,” *Ensign*, May 2010, 34–35).

John 21:1–22. The Savior Appeared to His Apostles in Galilee



North shore of the Sea of Galilee near Capernaum. John referred to the Sea of Galilee as “the sea of Tiberias” (John 21:1).

Following His Resurrection, Jesus had promised His Apostles that they would see Him on a future occasion in Galilee (see Matthew 28:10; Mark 16:7). John recorded that sometime after the Savior appeared to His eleven Apostles in Jerusalem, Peter and six other Apostles were in Galilee. They decided to go fishing in the Sea of Galilee (which John called the Sea of Tiberias), as they had been accustomed to doing before the Lord had called them as His Apostles. The men fished all night but caught nothing. As they approached the shore, they saw a man who told them where to cast their nets. John then recognized the man as the Savior.

John 21:3–11

In what ways is the experience described in these verses similar to an earlier experience found in Luke 5:4–11? Why do you think it may have been meaningful for the disciples as the Savior revealed Himself to them in this way?

John 21:5. The Savior Called His Disciples “Children”

The Savior addressed the Apostles as “children” (John 21:5). The Greek word for “children” is *paidia*, meaning “infants” or “very young children” (see also John 4:49; 16:21). Although the Apostles had been with the Savior for several years, the Savior’s use of this word may have indicated that His disciples still needed to grow and develop in their faith. In a similar way, in 1832 the Lord told the Prophet Joseph Smith and other early members of the restored Church: “Ye are little children, and ye have not as yet understood how great blessings the Father hath in his own hands and prepared for you; and ye cannot bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer, for I will lead you along” (D&C 78:17–18).

John 21:7. Was Simon Peter Really “Naked” While Fishing?

The Greek term translated as “naked” in the King James Version does not always mean “nude” but can mean “lightly clad” or “without an outer garment.” When Peter recognized the Lord, he quickly put on his outer cloak and “cast himself into the sea” (John 21:7). This detail reveals how eager Peter was to be with the Savior.

John 21:15. “Lovest Thou Me More Than These?”

While speaking about the first and great commandment (Matthew 22:36–38), **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** used the interaction between Jesus Christ and Peter on the shores of Galilee to encourage us to be loyal in our love for the Savior:

“After a joyful reunion with the resurrected Jesus, Peter had an exchange with the Savior that I consider the crucial turning point of the apostolic ministry generally and certainly for Peter personally, moving this great rock of a man to a majestic life of devoted service and leadership. Looking at their battered little boats, their frayed nets, and a stunning pile of 153 fish, Jesus said to His senior Apostle, ‘Peter, do you love me more than you love all this?’ Peter said, ‘Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee’ [John 21:15].

“The Savior responds to that reply but continues to look into the eyes of His disciple and says again, ‘Peter, do you love me?’ Undoubtedly confused a bit by the repetition of the question, the great fisherman answers a second time, ‘Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee’ [John 21:16].

“The Savior again gives a brief response, but with relentless scrutiny He asks for the third time, ‘Peter, do you love me?’ By now surely Peter is feeling truly uncomfortable. Perhaps there is in his heart the memory of only a few days earlier when he had been asked another question three times and he had answered equally emphatically—but in the negative. Or perhaps he began to wonder if he misunderstood the Master Teacher’s question. Or perhaps he was searching his heart, seeking honest confirmation of the answer he had given so readily, almost automatically. Whatever his feelings, Peter said for the third time, ‘Lord, . . . thou knowest that I love thee’ [John 21:17].

“To which Jesus responded (and here again I acknowledge my nonscriptural elaboration), perhaps saying something like: ‘Then Peter, why are you here? Why are we back on this same shore, by these same nets, having this same conversation? Wasn’t it obvious then and isn’t it obvious now that if I want fish, I can get fish? What I need, Peter, are disciples—and I need them forever. I need someone to feed my sheep and save my lambs. I need someone to preach my gospel and defend my faith. I need someone who loves me, truly, truly loves me, and loves what our Father in Heaven has commissioned me to do. . . .’

“My beloved brothers and sisters, I am not certain just what our experience will be on Judgment Day, but I will be very surprised if at some point in that conversation, God does not ask us exactly what Christ asked Peter: ‘Did you love me?’ I think He will want to know if in our very mortal, very inadequate, and sometimes childish grasp of things, did we at least understand *one* commandment, the first and greatest commandment

of them all—‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind’ [Luke 10:27; Matthew 22:37–38]. And if at such a moment we can stammer out, ‘Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee,’ then He may remind us that the crowning characteristic of love is always loyalty.

“‘If ye love me, keep my commandments’ [John 14:15], Jesus said. So we have neighbors to bless, children to protect, the poor to lift up, and the truth to defend. We have wrongs to make right, truths to share, and good to do. In short, we have a life of devoted discipleship to give in demonstrating our love of the Lord. We can’t quit and we can’t go back. After an encounter with the living Son of the living God, nothing is ever again to be as it was before” (“The First Great Commandment,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 84–85).

John 21:15–17. “Feed My Lambs” and “Feed My Sheep”

President Russell M. Nelson explained how an understanding of the Greek text deepens our knowledge of the Savior’s instructions to Peter and to us:

“In [John 21:15], the word *feed* comes from the Greek term *bosko*, which means ‘to nourish or to pasture.’ The word *lamb* comes from the diminutive term *arnion*, meaning ‘little lamb.’ . . .

“In [John 21:16], the word *feed* comes from a different term, *poimaino*, which means ‘to shepherd, to tend, or to care.’ The word *sheep* comes from the term *probaton*, meaning ‘mature sheep.’ . . .

“In [John 21:17], the word *feed* again comes from the Greek *bosko*, referring to nourishment. The word *sheep* was again translated from the Greek term *probaton*, referring to adult sheep.

“These three verses, which seem so similar in the English language, really contain three distinct messages in Greek:

- “Little lambs need to be nourished in order to grow;
- “Sheep need to be tended;
- “Sheep need to be nourished” (“Shepherds, Lambs, and Home Teachers,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1994, 16).

Elder Marvin J. Ashton (1915–94) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles discussed how we can fulfill the Lord’s commandment to feed His sheep:



Feed My Sheep, by Kamille Corry

“Jesus said, ‘Feed my sheep.’ (John 21:16.) You can’t feed them if you don’t know where they are. You can’t feed them if you give them reason to resist you. You can’t feed them if you don’t have the food. You can’t feed them if you don’t have charity. You can’t feed them if you aren’t willing to work and share. . . .

“Those who need help come in all age brackets. Some of His sheep are young, lonely, and lost. Some are weary, afflicted, and worn with age. Some are in our own family, in our own neighborhood, or in the far corners of the world where we can help with fast offerings. Some are starving for food. Some are starving for love and concern.

“If we give His sheep reasons to resist us, the feeding process becomes difficult, if not impossible. No one can teach or help with sarcasm or ridicule. Dictatorship or ‘I’m right and you are wrong’ will negate all efforts to feed a wandering sheep. A wall of resistance will be built, and no one will benefit. . . .

“By our actions we show our love. Expressions of affection are empty if actions don’t match. All His sheep need the touch of a shepherd who cares” (“Give with Wisdom That They May Receive with Dignity,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 91).

John 21:18–19. “By What Death” Peter Would Glorify God

It is generally believed that Peter was put to death in Rome about A.D. 64 or 65, during Nero’s persecution of Christians (see Bible Dictionary, “Peter”). Tradition holds that Peter was crucified head downward, having protested that he was unworthy to die in the same manner as the Lord. Regardless of the exact manner in which Peter was killed, the Savior’s prophecy that Peter would “glorify God” (John 21:19) was certainly fulfilled. Both in his life and his death, Peter exemplified the kind of discipleship the Lord had invited His followers to have: “Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:34; see also the commentary for Mark 8:34–38).

John 21:20–22. “What Is That to Thee?”

Upon hearing from the Savior what lay in his future (see John 21:18–19), Peter asked what would happen to John (see John 21:21). **Elder Neal A. Maxwell** (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles used this request to caution us against comparing our circumstances in life with what the Lord has given others: “As for what God gives differentially to others, we need not be concerned. Peter, inquiring about John’s future role, was asked by Jesus, ‘What is that to thee? follow thou me.’ (John 21:22.) Sometimes, brothers and sisters, we do too much comparing and too little following. Sometimes also a few resent God’s having chosen someone else; perceiving themselves as passed over, they then go under spiritually” (“Answer Me,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 32).

John 21:22–23. “Tarry Till I Come”

Earlier in His earthly ministry, the Savior had said, “There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom” (Matthew 16:28). The resurrected Christ foretold that John would be one who would fulfill that prophecy and “tarry” on earth until He came again (see John 21:22–23). A more complete account of this conversation between the Savior, Peter, and John is found in Doctrine and Covenants, section 7, which is “a translated version of the record made on parchment by John and hidden up by himself” (D&C 7, section introduction). This revelation clarifies that John asked the Savior for “power over death, that I may live and bring souls unto thee,” and in response, the Savior granted John power to live until His Second Coming (see D&C 7:1–3). John thus became a “translated” being. Such beings are “changed so that they do not experience pain or death until their resurrection to immortality” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Translated Beings”; scriptures.lds.org). For more information on translated beings, see 3 Nephi 28:4–40, which affirms that three Nephite disciples experienced the same change undergone by John (see 3 Nephi 28:6).

John 21:24–25. “We Know That His Testimony Is True”

The pronoun “we” in John 21:24 suggests that others may have either assisted in the original composition of the Gospel of John or added their own testimony to a later copy of the Gospel. It was common for professional scribes to assist in the production and preservation of ancient texts of all kinds. Their roles varied, depending on the author and the scribe. Sometimes scribes wrote down what the original author said, word for word. Sometimes they assisted the author in crafting and

producing a work. At other times, scribes may have noted the main points of a speaker, written the message in their own words, and then submitted it to the speaker for approval. The assistance of scribes at any stage of the production of the Gospel of John does not change its clear testimony that it originated with John, the Beloved Apostle of Jesus Christ.

Points to Ponder

- Ponder for a moment the Savior’s statement to Thomas, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:29). How does the Savior’s statement apply to you and your testimony?
- Consider John 21:15–17 and Elder Marvin J. Ashton’s quotation in the commentary for John 21:15–17. How do you think you could nurture the Lord’s “sheep” as a home teacher or visiting teacher or in your current Church calling?

Suggested Assignments

- John wrote that he recorded the appearances of the resurrected Christ “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (John 20:31). Choose one of the Savior’s appearances recorded in John 20, and ponder how that particular account strengthens your testimony of the Savior. Briefly write your own testimony of Jesus Christ with the intent to share it with someone else.
- Write a two- or three-page paper summarizing what you have learned about the Savior, His teachings, and His Atonement from your study of the Gospel of John. You may want to include this in your personal journal.

29

Acts 1–2

Introduction to the Acts of the Apostles

Why study Acts?

The Acts of the Apostles forms an important bridge between the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and the writings and labors of His Apostles. The book of Acts provides us with our principal view of the Church of Jesus Christ during its formative years. In it we see the members and leaders of the infant Church working to overcome the problems encountered when the teachings of Jesus Christ came in conflict with Jewish traditions and Gentile influences. Unlike the four Gospels, which share a large amount of similar content, the book of Acts stands relatively alone; without it, the only information we would have about the early history of the Church would be the small amount provided by the New Testament epistles. In addition, Acts provides valuable historical context for the epistles of Paul.



New Testament Era Scroll and Candle, by Lyle Beddes. In New Testament times, a typical papyrus scroll measured 32–35 feet (10–11 meters) in length and could contain the entire Greek text of a book the size of Luke or Acts.

Who wrote Acts?

Internal and external evidence indicate that Luke is the author of the Acts of the Apostles and that he wrote Acts as a companion work, or sequel, to accompany his Gospel (see Luke 1:1–4; Acts 1:1; see also “Introduction to the Gospel According to St. Luke” in chapter 15). Several passages in Acts are written in first person (the so-called “we” passages in Acts 16:10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1–28:16), suggesting that Luke was a participant in those parts of the narrative. Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians implies that Luke was a Gentile Christian, because in Colossians 4:7–11, Paul lists greetings from those “of the circumcision” (Jewish Christians), then lists greetings from others, including Luke (see Colossians 4:12–14). Luke was a physician by profession (see Colossians 4:14).

When and where was Acts written?

Acts was written after the Gospel According to St. Luke (see Acts 1:1), which scholars estimate was written between A.D. 60 and A.D. 85. The place of writing cannot be determined with assurance.

To whom was Acts written and why?

Luke addressed the book of Acts and his Gospel to a man named Theophilus (see Acts 1:1; Luke 1:1–4; “Introduction to the Gospel According to St. Luke” in chapter 15). We do not know who Theophilus was or what positions or honors he held, though he appears to have been a Christian. Though Luke addressed his writings to a single individual, anyone who reads his writings will find greater understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the early Church.

What are some distinctive features of Acts?

The events described in Acts occurred over a period of about 30 years (about A.D. 30–62) and focus mainly on the ministries of Peter and Paul. Luke gathered the information he could on the growth of the Church in Jerusalem and Samaria, which he had not witnessed personally. Therefore, he gave only limited attention to leaders such as Peter, Stephen, and Philip. Luke was able to write extensively about Paul because he had served as a missionary companion to Paul and had witnessed many of the events described and had learned Paul’s

part of the story through personal acquaintance. These facts help explain why Acts presents a history of the early Church that emphasizes some people and events more than others. The book of Acts is a work of inspired, sacred history, mentioning more than 30 countries and 50 cities, telling the story of the rise and spread of Christianity, beginning in the provincial Jewish capital of Jerusalem and ending in Rome, the great capital of the empire.

A principal theme of the book of Acts is the growth of the Church through the preaching of God’s word. As recorded in Acts 1:8, the resurrected Savior foretold the progress of apostolic missionary work, and the narrative structure of Acts follows the same progression. The work commenced in Jerusalem (see Acts 1–7), then expanded to Judea and Samaria (see Acts 8–9), and ultimately went “unto the uttermost part of the earth” (see Acts 10–28). Critical to the growth of the early Church were the conversion of Paul (Acts 9) and his subsequent missions; the vision of Peter regarding the acceptance

of Gentiles into the Church without prior conversion to Judaism (Acts 10:9–16, 34–35); the conversion of Cornelius, a Gentile (Acts 10:1–8, 19–48); and the doctrines taught at the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15).

As recorded in Luke 24:49, the Savior instructed the Apostles that they were to begin their ministry only after they had been “endued with power from on high.” Acts records the endowment of this power by the Holy Ghost and describes its dramatic results, beginning with the conversion of thousands on the day of Pentecost (see Acts 2). Throughout Acts, Luke emphasized the workings of the Holy Ghost on individuals and congregations, particularly in the ministry of Paul (see Acts 6:3, 5; 9:17; 11:15, 24; 13:2, 4, 9, 52).

In Acts, the Church is sometimes referred to as the “way” (see Acts 9:1–2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). About 30 percent of Acts covers the time Paul was in custody as a prisoner (see Acts 16:22–40; 21:27–28:31).

Outline

Acts 1–2 For 40 days following His Resurrection, Jesus Christ ministered to His disciples. He ascended into heaven, promising to return in the latter days in like manner. By inspiration, the Apostles called Matthias to fill the vacancy in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. The Holy Ghost was poured out on the day of Pentecost. Six weeks following the Crucifixion, Peter boldly testified in Jerusalem of the resurrected Savior. About three thousand souls were converted.

Acts 3–8 At the temple Peter and John healed a man lame from birth and taught about the mission of Jesus Christ. They were arrested and taken before the Jewish council. Church members had the spirit of unity and had all things in common. Peter and John were again arrested, and an angel delivered them from prison. The Apostles called seven men to assist them in their ministry; one of these men, Stephen, testified before the Jewish council, and the council members put him to

death. Philip preached the gospel throughout Samaria.

Acts 9–12 The Lord appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus. Saul was baptized and began his ministry. The Lord used a vision to instruct Peter that Gentiles were to be accepted into the Church without prejudice. Peter taught Cornelius and oversaw the baptism of many Gentiles. Herod Agrippa I had the Apostle James put to death, and he imprisoned Peter.

Acts 13–15 Saul and Barnabas were called to missionary service. They traveled to Cyprus and throughout Asia Minor, encountering opposition from Jews and some acceptance from Gentiles. They established “churches” (congregations), ordained elders, and returned to Antioch in Syria. Church leaders met in Jerusalem and determined that Gentile converts did not need to be circumcised when they joined the Church. Paul (as Saul was now called) and Silas departed on the mission that would become Paul’s second missionary journey.

Acts 16–20 Paul and Silas visited churches established earlier in Asia Minor and traveled further through Macedonia and Achaia (a region of Greece). On Mars Hill in Athens, Paul preached of “the unknown God” and declared, “We are the offspring of God” (Acts 17:23, 29). Paul concluded his second mission, visiting Ephesus and Jerusalem before returning to Antioch in Syria. Paul departed on a third mission, visiting and strengthening disciples throughout Asia Minor. God worked miracles through Paul in Ephesus. After traveling through Macedonia and Greece, Paul determined to return to Jerusalem. He prophesied of coming apostasy.

Acts 21–28 In Jerusalem, Paul was arrested and continued to testify of Jesus Christ. The Lord again appeared to Paul. Many Jews plotted to kill Paul. In Caesarea, he testified before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa. Paul was shipwrecked on his way to Rome. Paul preached the gospel while under house arrest in Rome.

Introduction and Timeline for Acts 1–2

For a period of 40 days, the resurrected Savior visited His disciples and spoke to them “of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). Though Acts presents little detail of those days, it appears that during that time Church leaders received instruction on how to lead the Church in the Lord’s absence. Near the completion of those 40 days, Jesus Christ commissioned His Apostles to “be witnesses unto me . . . and unto the uttermost part of the earth” and was then “taken up” into heaven (Acts 1:8–9). Ultimately, the lives of many thousands were transformed by the ministries of these apostolic witnesses of Jesus Christ.

The events recorded in Acts 1–2 begin to show how the resurrected Jesus Christ led the Church through the ministration of the Holy Ghost. After seeking the Lord’s direction, Peter presided over the selection of a new Apostle. The Spirit was poured out upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. On that day about three thousand souls “were

pricked in their heart” (Acts 2:37) by the Holy Ghost and, as instructed by Peter, repented and were baptized. The young Church was flourishing.



1. Jesus Christ ministered to His disciples for 40 days in or near Jerusalem.
2. The Savior ascended into heaven, promising to return in the latter days in like manner.
3. Peter presided over the calling of a new Apostle.
4. The Spirit was poured out in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, and about three thousand souls were converted.

Commentary for Acts 1–2

Acts 1–2. The Lord Directs the Church through the Ministration of the Holy Ghost

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that the book of Acts teaches how the resurrected Lord directs authorized ministers of the Church on the earth through the ministration of the Holy Ghost:

“A more complete title for the book of Acts could appropriately be something like ‘The Acts of the Resurrected Christ Working through the Holy Spirit in the Lives and Ministries of His Ordained Apostles.’ . . . Listen to Luke’s opening lines. That is exactly what he said. . . .

“The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

“‘Until the day in which he was taken up, *after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen*’ (Acts 1:1–2; italics added).

“The direction of the Church is the same. The location of the Savior has been altered, but the direction and leadership of the Church is exactly the same. Then, having made that point, as if to prove in this most remarkable string of spiritual experiences all the way through the book, we get manifestations of the Lord’s power through the Holy Ghost at every turn. . . . The first teaching in the book of Acts from the resurrected

Christ to the Twelve is that they ‘shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence’ (Acts 1:5), and that ‘ye shall receive power, *after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you*’ (v. 8; italics added).

“After [Jesus] ascends to heaven before their very eyes, Peter gets the Church together—all one hundred and twenty of them. Can you see what an impact the troubles and the Crucifixion and the opposition had had on them? One hundred and twenty people gather and Peter says, ‘Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the *Holy Ghost* by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas’ (v. 16; italics added). In filling Judas’s vacancy in the Twelve, they prayed exactly the way the Quorum of the Twelve and First Presidency pray today: ‘*Thou, Lord*, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these . . . *thou* hast chosen’ (v. 24; italics added). . . . And Matthias was called.

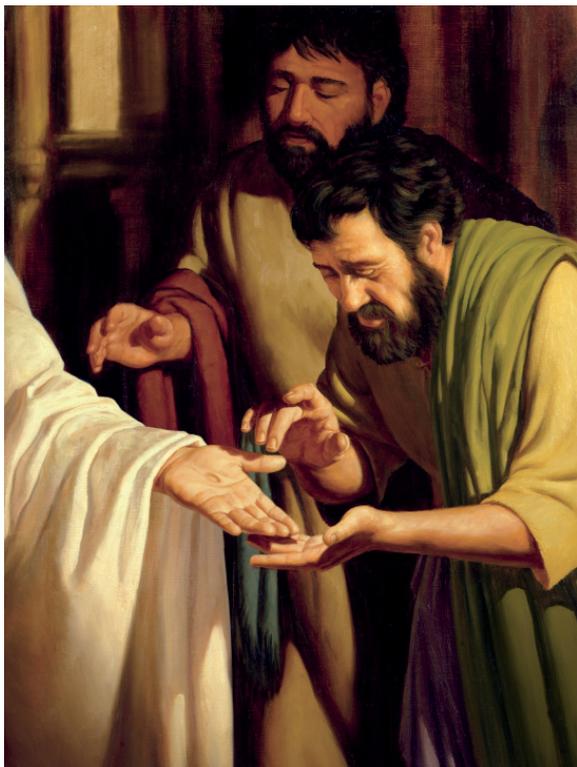
“But that first chapter of turning heavenward, so clearly marking the divine guidance that would continue to direct the Church, is only a warm-up to chapter 2” (“Therefore, What?” [Church Educational System conference on the New Testament, Aug. 8, 2000], 6).

Acts 1:3. “He Shewed Himself Alive after His Passion by Many Infallible Proofs”

The word “passion” refers to the Savior’s intense suffering during the events of the Atonement, particularly His suffering in Gethsemane and on the cross. The

Greek term translated as “infallible proofs” suggests a token or proof that causes something to be known with certainty. During the 40 days when the resurrected Savior taught His disciples (see Acts 1:3), those who saw and spoke with Him witnessed “infallible proofs,” which included the wounds in His resurrected hands, wrists, and feet.

Third Nephi shows a pattern for what the Savior may have done during His 40-day ministry in the Old World (see 3 Nephi 11–26). During His post-Resurrection visit to the Nephites, He showed His disciples the tokens of His Atonement (as He did in Jerusalem), taught the importance of His doctrine, discussed the essential nature of ordinances and how they were to be performed, outlined the authority of His chosen Twelve, taught unspeakable truths of eternity, and blessed His followers.



Two Apostles looking at the wounds in Jesus's hand and wrist, by Jeff Ward

Acts 1:4; 2:33. “The Promise of the Father”

Near the end of the Savior's 40-day ministry with His disciples, He “commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4; this same command from the Savior is recorded in Luke 24:49). **President Boyd K. Packer** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that “the promise of the Father” referred to the gift of the Holy

Ghost, which was given to the Apostles on the day of Pentecost:

“Before [Jesus] ascended, He said, ‘Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be [endowed] with power from on high’ [Luke 24:49].

“That power was not long in coming. On the day of Pentecost, the Twelve were assembled in a house:

“‘Suddenly there came a sound . . . of a rushing mighty wind, . . .

“‘And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

“‘And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost’ [Acts 2:2–4].

“With that the Twelve were fully empowered” (“The Cloven Tongues of Fire,” *Ensign*, May 2000, 7). See also John 14:16–17, 26, when the Savior promised the Apostles that after His departure they would receive the Holy Ghost.

Acts 1:6–8. Receiving the Holy Ghost and Witnessing of the Savior

The Apostles had seen and heard many things during the 40 days the resurrected Savior had spent with them. As He prepared to ascend into heaven, they asked Him if He would soon reestablish the kind of messianic kingdom the Jews had long been expecting—one like King David's kingdom of old. This question set the stage for Jesus's response—the great commission to the Apostles found in Acts 1:8.

Jesus first promised His disciples that they would receive the Holy Ghost, which meant that they would receive power. This power would have included gifts of the Spirit, such as the gifts to teach, heal, prophesy, discern spirits, and speak in tongues (see 1 Corinthians 12:1–10; Moroni 10:9–17; D&C 46:13–26). **Elder Parley P. Pratt** (1807–57) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described additional ways the gift of the Holy Ghost influences and gives power to those who receive it:

“The gift of the Holy Ghost . . . quickens all the intellectual faculties, increases, enlarges, expands, and purifies all the natural passions and affections, and adapts them, by the gift of wisdom, to their lawful use. It inspires, develops, cultivates, and matures all the fine-toned sympathies, joys, tastes, kindred feelings, and affections of our nature. It inspires virtue, kindness, goodness, tenderness, gentleness, and charity” (*Key to the Science of Theology* [1978], 61).

The Savior then declared that the disciples would be witnesses of Him throughout the world. His words recorded in Acts 1:8 aptly outline how the book of Acts proceeds. Acts 1–7 describes the Apostles' labors in Jerusalem. Acts 8–9 recounts some of their labors in Judea and Samaria. Acts 10–28 tells how Apostles carried the gospel to the "uttermost parts of the earth." Though these latter chapters focus mainly on the Apostle Paul, other sources preserve traditions about the missionary labors of other disciples. According to 1 Peter 5:13, Peter ministered in Rome (referred to as Babylon in this verse). According to traditions found in other sources, John ministered from Ephesus; Andrew preached the gospel in the region of modern-day Ukraine, Romania, and Russia; Matthew in Ethiopia; Philip in Syria, Turkey, and Greece; Bartholomew in India; Simon Zelotes in Britain and Persia; Thomas in India; and Mark in Rome and Egypt.

Acts 1:9–11. "Jesus . . . Shall So Come in Like Manner"

When the Savior's time with His disciples was complete, He ascended into heaven, and His disciples witnessed this miraculous event. In accordance with the law of witnesses (see Deuteronomy 17:6; 2 Corinthians 13:1), two angels told them that Jesus Christ would return to the earth in "like manner" as He had ascended. This announcement makes clear to all mankind what they are to watch for in connection with the Savior's Second Coming and protects them against deception. **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** observed that Joseph Smith's First Vision was one fulfillment of that promise: "[Jesus Christ] and His Father, the God and Father of us all, appeared to the boy prophet Joseph Smith in fulfillment of that ancient promise that the resurrected Jesus of Nazareth would again restore His Church on earth and again 'come in like manner as [those Judean Saints had] seen him [ascend] into heaven' [Acts 1:11]" ("Prophets in the Land Again," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 106).



The Ascension, by Harry Anderson

Another fulfillment of this prophecy will occur at the Second Coming when the Savior descends and actually stands on the Mount of Olives, from whence He ascended (see Zechariah 14:4; D&C 45:47–53).

Acts 1:12. How Far Is a Sabbath Day's Journey?

According to Jewish oral traditions, a Sabbath day's journey was the distance a Jew was permitted to walk on the Sabbath. Later rabbinic sources give this as 2,000 cubits—a distance of about 3,600 feet (about 1,100 meters).



D. KELLY OGDEN

The interior of the traditional site of the "upper room" (Acts 1:13) in Jerusalem, where the Apostles and early members of the Church met to pray after the Savior's Ascension and where the Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost. Though this room was built in A.D. 1335, it is located on the site of earlier structures that date to Roman times.

Acts 1:14. "These All Continued with One Accord"

The words "one accord" in Acts 1:14 suggest a unity among the early Saints in Jerusalem. Modern scripture identifies unity as an attribute of the Lord's disciples (see D&C 38:27). **President Henry B. Eyring** of the First Presidency taught the importance of unity, using examples of individuals who united themselves in prayer:

"The Lord Jehovah will return to live with those who have become His people and will find them united, of one heart, unified with Him and with our Heavenly Father. . . .

". . . I was invited to kneel at bedtime with a family when I was a guest in their home. The smallest child was asked to be voice. He prayed like a patriarch for every person in the family, by name. I opened my eyes for an instant to see the faces of the other children and the parents. I could tell that they were joining their faith and their hearts in that little boy's prayer.

“Some Relief Society sisters recently prayed together as they prepared to visit for the first time a young widow whose husband died suddenly. They wanted to know what to do and how to work together to help prepare the home for family and friends who would come at the time of the funeral. They needed to know what words of comfort they could speak for the Lord. An answer to their prayer came. When they arrived at the house, each sister moved to complete a task. The house was ready so quickly that some sisters regretted not being able to do more. Words of comfort were spoken which fit perfectly together. They had given the Lord’s service as one, hearts knit together” (“Our Hearts Knit as One,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 68–69).

Acts 1:14. The “Brethren” of Jesus Christ

The “brethren” of Jesus Christ mentioned in Acts 1:14 were the sons of Mary and Joseph, Jesus Christ’s half-brothers (see Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3). Though Jesus’s brothers had not always believed in His divinity (see John 7:5), they were now counted among the believers. Jesus’s brother James would later become a leader of the Church in Jerusalem (see Acts 12:17; 15:13) and an Apostle (see Galatians 1:19). His brother “Juda” (Mark 6:3) is likely the author of the Epistle of Jude.

Acts 1:18–19. “The Field of Blood”

Acts 1:18–19 refers to the account found in Matthew 27:3–10. Following the suicide of Judas Iscariot (“this man”), the chief priests took the 30 pieces of silver that Judas had cast down in the temple (“the reward of iniquity”) and purchased “the potter’s field,” wherein strangers were later buried.

Acts 1:21–26

What was the process the Apostles followed to select a new Apostle? What qualifications did the new Apostle need to have? What impresses you about the Apostles’ prayer recorded in verse 24?

Acts 1:21–26. How Are Apostles Called in Our Day?

When choosing a replacement for Judas Iscariot in the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, the remaining Apostles understood the importance of the man being a *witness*, with the others, of Jesus’s ministry, from His baptism through His Resurrection (see Acts 1:22). The importance of this eyewitness testimony is a major theme in the early Church and the early chapters of Acts (see Acts 2:32; 3:15; 4:20; 5:32).



Anciently, casting lots was a means of making a decision (see Acts 1:26). Among the Jews it was generally believed that the hand of God would direct the outcome (see Proverbs 16:33). Though the exact method of casting lots in this instance is not known, one ancient method involved each voter writing a name on a broken piece of pottery and then putting it forth to be read or counted.

The Apostles sought to know whom the Lord had chosen (see Acts 1:24). A similar process is followed in the modern Church. Following the calling and sustaining of Elder Robert D. Hales as an Apostle, **President Gordon B. Hinckley** (1910–2008) explained how an Apostle is called today:

“Under the Lord’s plan, those who have responsibility to select officers are governed by one overriding question: ‘Whom would the Lord have?’ There is quiet and thoughtful deliberation. And there is much of prayer to receive the confirmation of the Holy Spirit that the choice is correct.

“. . . In filling that vacancy, each member of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve was at liberty to make suggestions. I am confident that in every case, there was solemn and earnest prayer. A choice was then made by the First Presidency, again after solemn and serious prayer. This choice was sustained by the Council of the Twelve. Today, the membership of the Church in conference assembled has sustained that choice.

“I give you my testimony . . . that the impression to call Brother Hales to this high and sacred office came by the Holy Spirit, by the spirit of prophecy and revelation. Brother Hales did not suggest his own name. His name was suggested by the Spirit” (“God Is at the Helm,” *Ensign*, May 1994, 53–54).

Acts 2:1. The Day of Pentecost

“As part of the law of Moses, the feast of Pentecost or firstfruits was held fifty days after the feast of the Passover (Lev. 23:16). Pentecost was to celebrate the harvest, and in the Old Testament it is called the feast of harvest or the feast of weeks” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Pentecost”; scriptures.lds.org). It is therefore fitting that on this day, which celebrated the first fruits of the harvest, “about three thousand souls” were added to the Church (Acts 2:41). Pentecost was a pilgrimage festival, when all males of the covenant were to come before the Lord at Jerusalem, which is why so many people from various countries were crowded into Jerusalem (see Acts 2:9–10).

Acts 2:2–4. The Outpouring of the Holy Ghost

On the day of Pentecost, the Twelve Apostles were all gathered in one place. Suddenly, the Spirit was poured out upon them. Filled with the Holy Ghost, these Brethren prophesied and spoke in tongues. **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** discussed the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost: “The very name *Pentecost* comes into the Christian vocabulary as synonymous with breathtaking spiritual manifestations and a divine outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon all the people. Revelation came from heaven with the sound ‘as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house’ (Acts 2:2), and it filled the brethren” (“Therefore, What?” 6).

This great pentecostal experience, when the Holy Ghost was poured out upon a large gathering of people, has a parallel in Latter-day Saint history. At the time of the dedicatory services for the Kirtland Temple, the **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) prayed for a special outpouring of the Spirit from on high: “Let it be fulfilled upon them, as upon those on the day of Pentecost,” he pleaded in behalf of the Saints. “Let the gift of tongues be poured out upon thy people, even cloven tongues as of fire, and the interpretation thereof. And let thy house be filled, as with a rushing mighty wind, with thy glory” (D&C 109:36–37). This plea was fulfilled, not just once, but several times during the days following the initial dedicatory services. Joseph Smith recorded that on one occasion, “a noise was heard like the sound of a rushing mighty wind, which filled the [Kirtland] Temple, and all the congregation simultaneously arose, being moved upon by an invisible power; many began to speak in tongues and prophesy; others saw glorious visions; and I beheld the Temple was filled with angels, which fact I declared to the congregation” (*History of the Church*, 2:428).

Acts 2:3. “Cloven Tongues Like as of Fire”

Dramatic spiritual manifestations are often difficult to communicate in human language (see 3 Nephi 17:15–17; 19:31–34; JS—H 1:32) and can be understood only by the power of the Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 2:9–14). “Cloven tongues,” taken literally, refers to tongues that are cloven or forked, or that have the appearance of the flame of a fire. As the Holy Ghost was poured out on the disciples, the “cloven tongues like as of fire” (Acts 2:3) were a visible manifestation of the Spirit’s presence.

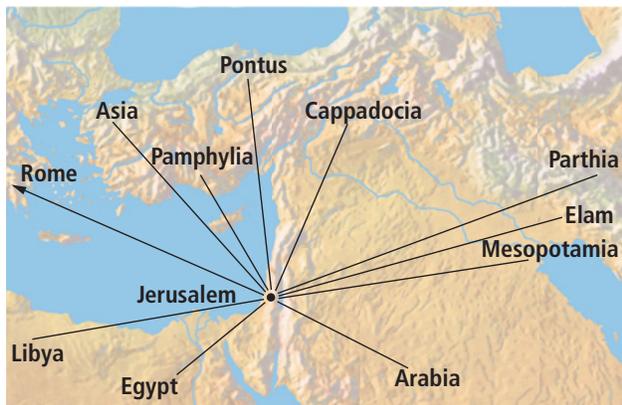
John the Baptist had likened the reception of the Holy Ghost to a baptism of “fire” (Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16). In ancient Israel, fire often symbolized the divine presence (see Exodus 3:2–5; 13:21; 24:17; Helaman 5:22–24, 43–45; 3 Nephi 19:13–14). For example, the “fire” of the Lord had rested upon the tabernacle in ancient Israel (see Exodus 40:38). The image of “cloven tongues,” used to describe the divine fire on the day of Pentecost, symbolized that the disciples had received the gift of the Holy Ghost, promised by the Savior, with the power to preach the word of God by the gift of tongues. The divine fire can be described as the “everlasting burnings of God; for God dwells in everlasting burnings” (Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 6:317). On the day of Pentecost, the environment of heaven was brought to earth.

Acts 2:5–11

How many different groups of peoples or nationalities can you identify in these verses? Why was it remarkable that all of these people heard the gospel in their own languages from the Galilean Apostles? When have you or someone you know experienced some manifestation of the gift of tongues?

Acts 2:5–11. “Every Man Heard . . . in His Own Language”

The crowd that was gathered in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost was a diverse group of Jews who had been part of the Diaspora (the scattering of the house of Israel into lands other than Palestine) who spoke many different languages. Each man heard the Apostles’ words in his own language. The gift of tongues was given to the early Apostles on the day of Pentecost so they could preach the gospel in multiple languages. This gift is one of the signs of the true Church (see Articles of Faith 1:7).



The places from which the people described in Acts 2:5–11 had journeyed to Jerusalem. The map also illustrates the paths by which the gospel spread as the visitors to Jerusalem returned to their homes.

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** explained the proper use of this gift: “The gift of tongues by the power of the Holy Ghost in the Church, is for the benefit of the servants of God to preach to unbelievers, as on the day of Pentecost” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 383). To read more about the gift of tongues, see the commentary for 1 Corinthians 14:2–22.

President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) declared: “The true gift of tongues is made manifest in the Church more abundantly, perhaps, than any other spiritual gift. Every missionary who goes forth to teach the gospel in a foreign language, if he [or she] is prayerful and faithful, receives this gift” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5 vols. [1957–66], 2:29).



Acts 2:14–36. Peter Expounded the Scriptures

After the great outpouring of the Spirit, Peter stood to teach the assembled crowd. Being full of the Holy Ghost, he explained the meaning of scriptures with clarity and insight. He taught that the gift of tongues and other manifestations of the Spirit among the Apostles were a fulfillment of the prophecy found in

Joel 2:28–32 (see Acts 2:14–21). (It should be noted that this was not the only fulfillment of the prophecy found in Joel 2. Modern prophets have taught that the events of the Restoration of the gospel were additional fulfillments of this prophecy.) Peter boldly and courageously proclaimed to the Jews that Jesus of Nazareth, the Man they had seen perform miracles and whom they had delivered to be crucified, had been resurrected and had loosed the “pains of death” (see Acts 2:22–24). As Peter taught about Jesus Christ, he quoted Psalm 16:8–11 (see Acts 2:25–28) and Psalm 110:1 (see Acts 2:34–35), explaining that in these passages, King David had prophesied of the Resurrection of Christ.

In Latter-day Saint history we see a similar example of the Holy Ghost enhancing a prophet’s scriptural understanding. The **Prophet Joseph Smith** recorded that the following occurred after he and Oliver Cowdery were baptized and had received the Holy Ghost: “We were filled with the Holy Ghost, and rejoiced in the God of our salvation. Our minds being now enlightened, we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed unto us in a manner which we never could attain to previously, nor ever before had thought of” (Joseph Smith—History 1:73–74). For more insight on Peter’s teaching from the scriptures of the Old Testament, see the commentary for Luke 24:27, 32.

Acts 2:27. “Thou Wilt Not Leave My Soul in Hell”

Acts 2:27 records King David’s plea that God would not leave his soul in hell. The word *hell* in this verse comes from the word *hadēs* (the Greek translation of the Hebrew word *sheol*, which is translated as “hell” in Psalm 16:10). As used in Acts 2:27, this term means “an abode of departed spirits” (Bible Dictionary, “Hell”). Elsewhere in the scriptures, the word *hell* is used “in at least two senses. First, it is the temporary abode in the spirit world for those who were disobedient in mortality. In this sense, hell has an end. The spirits there will be taught the gospel, and sometime following their repentance they will be resurrected to a degree of glory of which they are worthy. . . .

“Second, it is the permanent location of those who are not redeemed by the atonement of Jesus Christ. In this sense, hell is permanent. It is for those who are found ‘filthy still’ (D&C 88:35, 102). This is the place where Satan, his angels, and the sons of perdition—those who have denied the Son after the Father has revealed him—will dwell eternally (D&C 76:43–46)” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Hell”; scriptures.lds.org).



Day of Pentecost, by Sidney E. King

Concerning King David’s eternal inheritance, **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** taught that David “received the promise that his soul would not be left in hell, that is, he would not be a son of perdition, he would not be cast out eternally with the devil and his angels. Rather, when death and hell deliver up the dead which are in them, he shall come forth from the grave and receive that inheritance which he merits. See Rev. 20:11–15” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 2:39).

Acts 2:37. “They Were Pricked in Their Heart”

The crowd of people who heard Peter were “pricked in their heart” (Acts 2:37), meaning that Peter’s words had “pierced” them, bringing grief and remorse. As the people came to the terrible realization that they had crucified their Messiah, they may have feared that they had lost hope of salvation. Thus, they cried out to the Apostles in anguish, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Calling the Apostles their “brethren” implies that they were already persuaded in their hearts of their need to repent and have faith in the Savior.

Acts 2:38–47

What actions in these verses demonstrate that those baptized on the day of Pentecost were truly converted?

Acts 2:38. “Repent, and Be Baptized”

The crowd’s question, “What shall we do?” demonstrated that they were beginning to have faith in Jesus Christ. In answer to this question, Peter taught the people that they needed to repent, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. The principles that were taught by Peter were declared by the Prophet Joseph Smith to be “the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel” (Articles of Faith 1:4; see also 3 Nephi 11:31–36; 27:13–21). Faith in Christ, repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost, and thereafter enduring in faith are essential to receiving the full blessings of the Atonement of Christ.

Acts 2:39. “The Promise Is unto You”

Peter declared that the promise of remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost was not for the Apostles alone. These blessings are God’s gifts to all who will repent, be baptized, and live worthy of receiving them. Regarding the availability of the gift of the Holy Ghost, **President Boyd K. Packer** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:

“In every language, the Spirit of God—the Holy Ghost—guides, or can guide, every member of the Church. Everyone is invited to come and repent and be baptized and receive of this sacred gift. . . .

“. . . No matter what trials await us, we can find the answer to that question, ‘What shall we do?’ [Acts 2:37]. We, and those we love, will be guided and corrected and protected, and we will be comforted. . . . I know the gift of the Holy Ghost, a sacred spiritual power, can be a constant companion to every soul who will receive it” (“The Cloven Tongues of Fire,” *Ensign*, May 2000, 9).

Acts 2:40–41. “Save Yourselves from This Untoward Generation”

Peter admonished the Jews to be saved from this “untoward generation,” meaning the “crooked” people around them who were rebelling against God (Acts 2:40, footnote *b*). This is an admonition that could apply in our day as well. About three thousand people who heard Peter’s message were converted and received the ordinance of baptism.

Acts 2:42. The Early Saints “Continued Steadfastly”

Luke taught that the Saints in Jerusalem “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship” (Acts 2:42). Doing this helped the early Saints to remain steadfast in the Church. The Savior taught this same principle to the Nephites and to all of us: “Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve whom I have chosen from among you to minister unto you, and to be your servants” (3 Nephi 12:1).



New Testament Era Sacrament, by Lyle Beddes. One way Church members continue steadfast in the Church is by meeting regularly with the Saints and partaking of the sacrament (see Acts 2:42).

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke of the importance of giving heed to the

Apostles’ teachings: “Today I make you a promise. It’s a simple one, but it is true. If you will listen to the living prophet and the apostles and heed our counsel, you will not go astray” (“His Word Ye Shall Receive,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 66).

The Jerusalem Saints also met together for “breaking of bread” and “prayers” (Acts 2:42), probably referring to shared meals that included the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. In our day, we too remain steadfast in the Church by meeting regularly with the Saints and partaking of the sacrament.

Acts 2:43. “And Fear Came upon Every Soul”

The word *fear* in Acts 2:43 means “reverence” or “awe.” The sense of the phrase “and fear came upon every soul” is that all the Saints were filled with reverence and awe.

Acts 2:44–45; 4:32. “All Things Common”

As recorded in Acts 2:44–45 and 4:32, the early Saints in Jerusalem lived so that they had all things in common and took care of the poor and needy among them.

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) taught that in our day we should also seek to become unified and pure in heart, striving to build up God’s kingdom on earth and to care for the poor and needy among us. He suggested “three fundamental things we must do”:

“First, we must eliminate the individual tendency to selfishness that snares the soul, shrinks the heart, and darkens the mind. . . . It is incumbent upon us to put away selfishness in our families, our business and professional pursuits, and our Church affairs. . . .

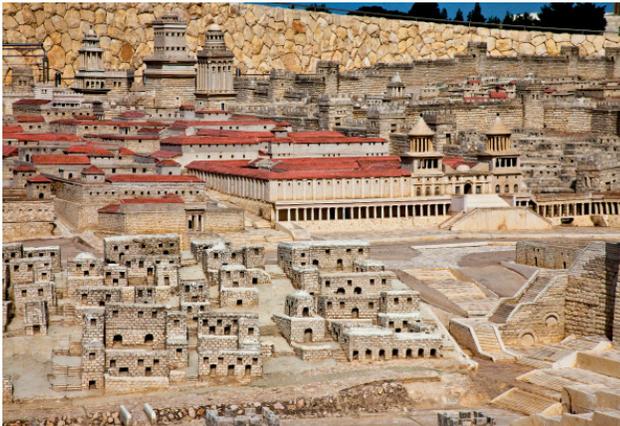
“Second, we must cooperate completely and work in harmony one with the other. There must be unanimity in our decisions and unity in our actions. . . . If the Spirit of the Lord is to magnify our labors, then [a] spirit of oneness and cooperation must be the prevailing spirit in all that we do. . . .

“Third, we must lay on the altar and sacrifice whatever is required by the Lord. We begin by offering a ‘broken heart and a contrite spirit.’ We follow this by giving our best effort in our assigned fields of labor and callings. We learn our duty and execute it fully. Finally we consecrate our time, talents, and means as called upon by our file leaders and as prompted by the whisperings of the Spirit” (“Becoming the Pure in Heart,” *Ensign*, May 1978, 81).

Acts 2:46. Importance of the Temple to the Earliest Christians

Though Jesus Christ had fulfilled the law of Moses—and this law continued to be practiced at the temple in Jerusalem—His followers continued to look to the Jerusalem temple as an important place of worship. References in Acts indicate that the Jewish Christians went often to the temple to pray, worship, teach, minister, and participate in religious celebrations (see Acts 3:1; 5:12, 20, 42; 21:23–31; 22:17–18). The Apostles often preached at the temple, perhaps because they knew they would find individuals interested in God there. When Paul visited Jerusalem, he too worshipped and preached at the temple. When Paul was arrested in Jerusalem in about A.D. 58, his captors took him out of the temple and shut the heavy temple doors behind him (see Acts 21:30). Just 12 years later in A.D. 70, the Jews revolted against Rome, which resulted in the destruction of the temple by Roman armies.

Acts 2:46. Worship in Houses



Houses from a model of first-century Jerusalem

The temple and the synagogue had long been gathering places for public Jewish worship, but the followers of Christ also began to meet for worship in the homes of Church members (see Acts 2:46; 5:42; 12:12; Romans 16:3–5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 1:1–2). Some have called these meeting places “house-churches.” In the book of Acts and in Paul’s letters, we learn that when these early Saints gathered together for worship, they often dined together (see Acts 2:42, 46), partook of the sacrament (see 1 Corinthians 11:26–34), prayed (see Acts 2:42), preached the gospel to one another (see Acts 20:7), and sang hymns (see Ephesians 5:19).

Points to Ponder

- Acts 1–2 records several instances of the Lord directing His Apostles through the ministration of the Holy Ghost. In what ways have you seen the Lord direct His modern Apostles or local Church leaders?
- As part of a Church calling, you may have the responsibility of suggesting names of people to receive a calling in the Church. How might Acts 1:21–24 provide a pattern for you to follow?
- Think about the principles and ordinances Peter mentioned in Acts 2:38. How is each one essential to receiving the full blessings of the Atonement of Christ?

Suggested Assignments

- Compare Peter’s actions as recorded in John 18:15–27 and in Acts 1–2. What differences do you see? Write a short paper explaining what role the Holy Ghost played in Peter’s transformation. Explain how the companionship of the Holy Ghost can make a difference in your life.
- Search Acts 2 and list ways the Holy Ghost blessed people on the day of Pentecost.

Acts 3–7

Introduction and Timeline for Acts 3–7

As recorded in Acts 3–6, Luke recounted the continued growth and activity of the Church in Jerusalem and offered powerful illustrations of how the Lord’s chosen servants led the Church through the guidance of the Holy Ghost. When Peter and John healed a man who had been lame from birth, the miracle created an ideal opportunity for them to bear their apostolic testimony of Jesus Christ to an audience of eager listeners. Five thousand men believed in their words (see Acts 4:4). Jewish leaders attempted to silence Peter and the other Apostles through threats, imprisonment, and physical beatings. Nevertheless, the Apostles defended their testimonies of Jesus by replying, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). The faith of the Apostles and those who followed them invited powerful manifestations of the Holy Ghost, which resulted in the rapid growth of the Church.

Acts 7 relates how Stephen accused some Jewish leaders of resisting the Holy Ghost and rejecting Jesus Christ. When Stephen told them that he saw “the Son of man

standing on the right hand of God” (Acts 7:56), they cast him out and stoned him to death. Stephen is often considered the first Christian martyr, and Saul, later known as the Apostle Paul, was one of the witnesses of his execution.



1. At a gate of the temple in Jerusalem, Peter and John healed a man lame from birth.
2. Peter and John were arrested, questioned, and released by Jewish leaders.
3. Peter and John were put in prison and then released by an angel.
4. The Apostles called seven men to assist them.
5. Stephen testified before a council of Jewish leaders in Jerusalem and was killed by stoning.

Commentary for Acts 3–7

Acts 3:1–5. The Lame Man at the Temple

Peter and John went to the temple for prayer at the “ninth hour,” which was nine hours after sunrise. At one of the temple gates they encountered a lame man seeking money. Peter and John fastened their eyes upon him and said, “Look on us” (Acts 3:4). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained, “Peter said with majestic simplicity, ‘Look on us,’ that is, ‘Exercise your faith in that which we, as ministers of Christ, are about to do in his name and power’” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 2:45). Because the lame man exercised faith and looked, he was healed.

Acts 3:6–7

According to these verses, what did the man lame from birth expect to receive at the temple that day? What did he receive instead from Peter and John? When have you attended a Church meeting expecting to receive one thing, but you received something better from the Lord?

Acts 3:6. “Such as I Have Give I Thee”

Though the lame man at the gate of the temple was begging for money, Peter gave him something much more valuable. **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, while he was serving as dean of religious instruction at Brigham Young University, explained: “Peter had no money but he had riches: ‘such as he had’ included every key to the kingdom of God on earth, priesthood power to raise the dead, faith to strengthen bones and sinews, a strong right hand of Christian fellowship. He could not give silver or gold but he could give that which is always purchased ‘without money and without price’ (Isa. 55:1)—and he gave it” (“The Lengthening Shadow of Peter,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1975, 30).

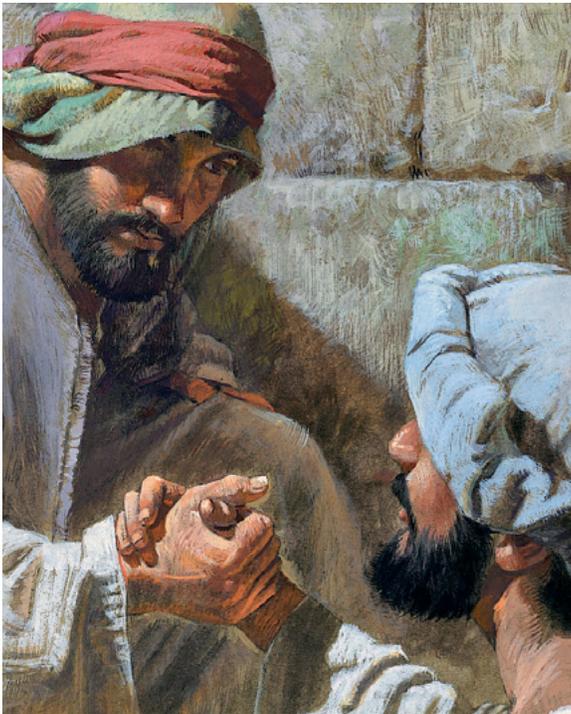
Acts 3:6–8. Peter “Lifted Him Up”

Considering that this man had been lame from birth, his healing was a remarkable miracle. For the man to leap and to walk would have required that his weak and probably disfigured legs suddenly be made of strong bones and muscles. Also, since he had been lame from birth, he had likely never walked in his life. To now

suddenly be able to do so would require balance and physical skills he had never before learned.

President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) used the account of Peter healing the man at the temple gate to illustrate how to lift those around us. After reading Peter’s words commanding the man to “rise up and walk” (Acts 3:6), President Lee said:

“Now in my mind’s eye I can picture this man, what was in his mind. ‘Doesn’t this man know that I have never walked? He commands me to walk.’ But the biblical record doesn’t end there. Peter just didn’t content himself by commanding the man to walk, but he ‘took him by the right hand, and lifted him up.’ (Acts 3:7.)



Peter lifted a man who could not walk, by Robert T. Barrett

“Will you see that picture now of that noble soul, that chiefest of the apostles, perhaps with his arms around the shoulders of this man, and saying, ‘Now, my good man, have courage, I will take a few steps with you. Let’s walk together, and I assure you that you can walk, because you have received a blessing by the power and authority that God has given us as men, his servants.’ Then the man leaped with joy.

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

in another soul unless it is burning in your own soul” (“Stand Ye in Holy Places,” *Ensign*, July 1973, 123).

 To help you visualize Peter and John healing the lame man, review the video segment “Peter and John Heal a Man Crippled Since Birth” (3:22) from *The Life of Jesus Christ Bible Videos*, available on LDS.org. This segment covers Acts 3:1–8.

Acts 3:13–18

What names and titles for Jesus Christ do you see in these verses? What do each of these names and titles teach about Jesus Christ? How does knowing what these titles mean contribute to having “faith in his name”? (Acts 3:16).

Acts 3:12–16. Jesus Christ Is the Source of Healing Power

Peter acted in the role given to Apostles by divine decree when he declared, “We are witnesses” of the Savior (Acts 3:15). That same role and obligation has been given to Apostles in our day (see D&C 107:23). Without hesitation Peter testified to the Jewish leaders that it was not any mortal power that had healed the lame man—Jesus, whom they had delivered up and killed, had healed the man (see Acts 3:12–16).

Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke of the Savior’s power to heal: “Ponder the power of the Atonement. Pray to understand how it can heal you. . . . If you have felt impressions to be free of burdens caused by yourself or others, those promptings are an invitation from the Redeemer. Act upon them now. He loves you. He gave His life that you may be free of needless burdens. He will help you do it. I know that He has the power to heal you. Begin now” (“To Be Free of Heavy Burdens,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 88).

Acts 3:17–21. “Times of Refreshing”

As Peter testified of Christ, he warned the people that they needed to repent and spoke of “the times of refreshing” that would come. The “times of refreshing” refers to the Millennium, when God “shall send Jesus Christ” again to earth (Acts 3:19–20), as **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained:

“This *times of refreshing*, is to take place at the second coming of the Son of Man, in the day when the Lord sends Christ again to earth.

“If we are to catch the vision of Peter’s prophecy, we must know pointedly and specifically what is meant by *the times of refreshing*. It is elsewhere spoken of by Jesus as ‘the

regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory.’ (Matt. 19:28.) It is the day ‘when the earth shall be transfigured, even according to the pattern which was shown unto mine apostles upon the mount, . . .’ the Lord says. (D&C 63:21.) It is the day when ‘the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.’ (Tenth Article of Faith.) It is the day of the ‘new earth’ that Isaiah saw (Isa. 65:17), the earth which will prevail when wickedness ceases, when the millennial era is ushered in” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1967, 43).

Peter also taught that Jesus Christ would remain in heaven until the “times of restitution of all things” (Acts 3:21). Restitution means restoration. This prophecy began to be fulfilled in the spring of 1820 when God the Father and Jesus Christ appeared to Joseph Smith in the Sacred Grove.



The First Vision, by Gary E. Smith

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) referred to Acts 3:17–19 and said that Peter was addressing those who had crucified Jesus. “[Peter] did not say to them, ‘Repent and be baptized, for the remission of your sins;’ but he said, ‘Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.’ [Acts 3:19.]

. . . They could not be baptized for the remission of sins for they had shed innocent blood” (in *History of the Church*, 6:253).

Acts 3:22. A Prophet Like unto Moses

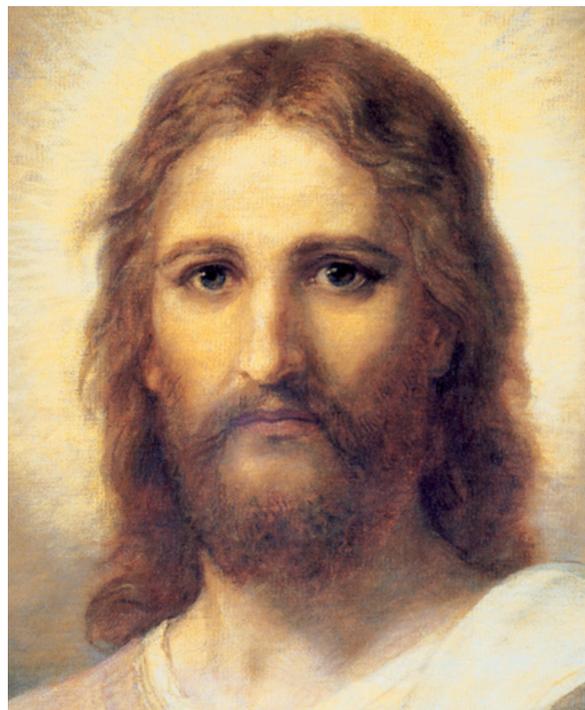
For information on Moses’s prophecy about a prophet being raised up “like unto” himself, see the commentary for Acts 7:37.

Acts 4:4

Read this verse as part of an overall pattern found in Acts 1:15; 2:41, 47; 5:14; and 6:7. What do you notice about the growth of the early Church? Why do you think the Church experienced such remarkable growth at that time?

 To help you visualize Peter’s preaching in Jerusalem and subsequent arrest, review the video segment “Peter Preaches and Is Arrested” (2:51) from *The Life of Jesus Christ Bible Videos*, available on LDS.org. This segment covers Acts 3:12–26; 4:1–3.

Acts 4:7–12. “There Is None Other Name”



Never Alone, by Heinrich Hofmann. Salvation is only in Jesus Christ—there is no other way.

The use of the name of Jesus Christ is a recurring theme in Acts 4 (see verses 7, 10, 12, 17–18, 30; see also Acts 3:16). Peter and John had been arrested after Peter’s

inspired preaching about Jesus Christ, and the two Apostles were brought before a council of Jewish leaders and questioned about the healing of the lame man. In response, Peter alluded to the prophecy found in Psalm 118:22 and proclaimed that the healing of the lame man was done in “the name of Jesus Christ” and that “there is none other name under heaven” that brings salvation (Acts 4:10–12; see also 2 Nephi 25:20; 31:20–21; Mosiah 3:18; D&C 18:23; 93:19; Moses 6:52). When properly invoked, the name of Jesus Christ is accompanied by power (see John 16:23–24). **President Boyd K. Packer** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles discussed the importance of Jesus Christ’s name:

“This is more than just a name we deal with. This relates to spiritual authority and power and lies at the very center of Christian doctrine.

“The Lord said: ‘Therefore, whatsoever ye shall do, ye shall do it in my name. . . .’ (3 Ne. 27:7.)

“In the Church that Jesus Christ established, all things are done in his name. Prayers are said, children are blessed, testimonies borne, sermons preached, ordinances performed, sacrament administered, the infirm anointed, graves dedicated” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1967, 128).

Acts 4:13. “Unlearned and Ignorant Men”

Prior to their calling as Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, Peter and John were fishermen—not scribes or rabbis—and were thus considered unlearned by the Jewish leaders. After they were fully empowered by receiving the Holy Ghost (see Acts 4:8), Peter and John spoke with such authority that the Jewish leaders “marvelled” at their words (Acts 4:13). These “unlearned” fishermen are examples showing that “by very small means the Lord doth confound the wise and bringeth about the salvation of many souls” (Alma 37:7) and that “God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty” (1 Corinthians 1:27; see also D&C 35:13).

Acts 4:19; 5:29. “Right in the Sight of God”

Despite the Jewish council’s demand that Peter and John not teach in the name of Jesus Christ, the Apostles insisted on doing what was “right in the sight of God” (Acts 4:19; see also verses 13–18). When the Jewish council later repeated this demand, Peter and the other Apostles declared, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). Like these early Apostles, Church members today must stand firm for what is right against increasing pressures to conform to the ways of the world. **President Gordon B. Hinckley** (1910–2008) offered the following counsel concerning these pressures:

“The world is constantly crowding in on us. From all sides we feel the pressure to soften our stance, to give in here a little and there a little.

“We must never lose sight of our objective. We must ever keep before us the goal which the Lord has set for us. . . .

“We must stand firm. We must hold back the world. If we do so, the Almighty will be our strength and our protector, our guide and our revelator. We shall have the comfort of knowing that we are doing what He would have us do” (“An Ensign to the Nations, a Light to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2003, 82–83).

Elder Richard G. Scott gave the following reassurance to those who do what is right despite pressures to choose otherwise: “Do what is right even though it seems you will be alone in so doing, that you are going to lose friends, that you will be criticized. What you will find is that by doing what is right, after a period of testing, the finest friends will be discovered and you can mutually support each other in your resolve to be obedient to all of the commandments of the Lord. I have never been sorry on any occasion that I stood for what was right even against severe criticism. You will learn that truth. You will also discover that when you have taken a determined stand for right, when you have established personal standards and made covenants to keep them, when temptations come and you act according to your standards, you will be reinforced and given strength beyond your own capacity, if that is needed” (“Do What Is Right” [address given at Brigham Young University, Mar. 3, 1996], 5; speeches.byu.edu).

Acts 4:23–31

Instead of praying to be protected from further persecution, what did the members of the Church pray for? What was the result of their prayer? What can you learn from the prayer of these early Church members?

Acts 4:20–21. “We Cannot but Speak the Things Which We Have Seen and Heard”

Peter and John felt compelled to speak of Jesus Christ; such was the powerful impact the Holy Ghost had upon them (see Acts 4:8–20). Jeremiah recorded similar feelings during a time when he was mocked and derided daily: “But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay” (Jeremiah 20:9; see also verses 7–8). The prophet Ether also felt the Holy Ghost so intensely that “he could not be restrained”

from prophesying to his people (Ether 12:2; see also 1 Corinthians 9:16; Alma 43:1).

Acts 4:32–35. “They Had All Things Common”

Members of the Church in Jerusalem attempted to live the law of consecration. “They had all things common” (Acts 4:32) probably does not mean that they pooled all of their resources and then divided up equal portions among believers. Rather they used their excess resources to care for the poor and needy among them. Similar attempts to live the law of consecration occurred among the people of Enoch and in the Book of Mormon (see Moses 7:18; 4 Nephi 1:3–18; D&C 105:3–5). To read more about the Saints in the New Testament having “all things common” among them, see the commentary for Acts 2:44–45; 4:32.

Acts 4:36–37. Barnabas Sold His Land

The account of Barnabas selling his land and giving the money to the Apostles stands in stark contrast to the account of Ananias and Sapphira that follows (see Acts 5:1–10). The account of Barnabas serves as an example of the ideal of unity and unselfishness described in Acts 4:32, while the account of Ananias and Sapphira is an extreme example of the consequences of selfishness and lying to the Lord.

Acts 5:1–10. The Importance of Honesty

Ananias and Sapphira made a solemn covenant with God to have “all things common” (see Acts 4:32–35). They were to donate their possessions to the Church to be distributed according to the needs of the members. By lying to Peter, their priesthood leader, they also lied to God about the price they had received for a piece of land so they could avoid giving the full profit to the Church (see Acts 5:1–10). Breaking this covenant by stealing and lying was a serious offense with calamitous consequences for them. This is a powerful illustration of the need to keep our covenants and be honest before our God.

President Gordon B. Hinckley noted: “In our time those found in dishonesty do not die as did Ananias and Sapphira, but something within them dies. Conscience chokes, character withers, self-respect vanishes, integrity dies. . . . We cannot be less than honest, we cannot be less than true, we cannot be less than virtuous if we are to keep sacred the trust given us” (“An Honest Man—God’s Noblest Work,” *Ensign*, May 1976, 61–62).

Bishop Richard C. Edgley of the Presiding Bishopric taught that honesty should be a fundamental value that governs our lives: “Honesty is the basis of a true Christian life. For Latter-day Saints, honesty is an important requirement for entering the Lord’s holy

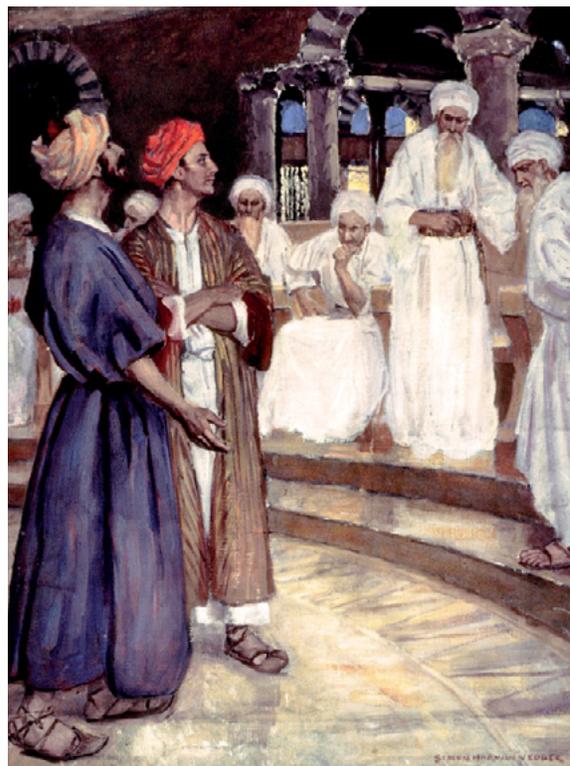
temple. Honesty is embedded in the covenants that we make in the temple. Each Sunday as we partake of the holy emblems of the Savior’s flesh and blood, we again renew our basic and sacred covenants—which encompass honesty. . . . Honesty should be among the most fundamental values that govern our everyday living” (“Three Towels and a 25-Cent Newspaper,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 74).

Acts 5:11. “The Church”

The word *church* is mentioned only three times in the Gospels (see Matthew 16:18; 18:17). However, it appears over 100 times in Acts through Revelation. It seems likely that during the 40 days prior to the Lord’s Ascension into heaven, His teachings to the Apostles about “the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” included instruction about how the Church was to be organized and how it should function (Acts 1:3).

Acts 5:12–42. Peter’s Leadership

The experiences and teachings recorded in chapter 5 of Acts show that Peter—the prophet, seer, and revelator of Jesus Christ’s Church on earth—was quickly becoming a leader of great faith, courage, and power. **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland**, while serving as dean of religious education at Brigham Young University, said of Peter:



Peter and John before Rulers in Jerusalem, by Simon H. Vedder

“Faith in Peter’s faith brought the sick into the streets on their beds of affliction ‘that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.’ (Acts 5:15.) One wonders if there is a single written line in any other record that stands as a greater monument to the faith and power of one mortal man bearing the holy priesthood of God. . . .

“With his own sense of urgency, Peter aggressively defied the injunction not to teach in the name of Christ and he returned again and again to the temple, where his safety was never secure. President [Spencer W.] Kimball pictures him there in the house of the Lord, ‘the number one man in all the world,’ stretching to his full height and speaking with power to those who could imprison him, flog him, even take his life from him. With ‘courage superior and integrity supreme’ [*Faith Precedes the Miracle* (1972), 244], Peter testified plainly, ‘We ought to obey God rather than men. . . . We are his witnesses of these things.’ (Acts 5:29, 32.) Imprisoned and beaten, forbidden to speak, Peter was as irrepressible as Abinadi of old. He and his brethren rejoiced that they were ‘counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ’ (Acts 5:41–42.)” (“The Lengthening Shadow of Peter,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1975, 35).



Peter Delivered from Prison, by A. L. Noakes

Acts 5:17–20. An Angel Opened the Prison Doors

As the Apostles ministered with the power of God and multitudes of people joined the Church, the Jewish leaders once again tried to stop the Church’s progress by putting Peter and John in prison. With this imprisonment and the earlier arrest of Peter and John following the healing of the lame man (see Acts 4:3; 5:18), we see a fulfillment of the Savior’s prophecy that His Apostles would be persecuted by those who thought they were serving God (see John 15:20; 16:20).

As recorded in Acts 5:19, an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and let Peter and John go free. For similar scriptural accounts, see Acts 12:3–11; Alma 14:22–29; and Helaman 5:22–23.

Acts 5:34–39. Gamaliel

Gamaliel was the grandson of the famous rabbi Hillel. He was a member of the Sanhedrin and a distinguished scholar of Jewish law. Paul was tutored by this famous master of the law (see Acts 22:3). Gamaliel had a reputation for being tolerant and kind, relaxing the standards of the Sabbath observance so they were not so rigorous and encouraging more humane treatment of women in divorce laws. His wise counsel likely saved the lives of the Apostles, who had been brought again before the Jewish council after being released from prison by an angel.

In his speech before the Jewish leaders, Gamaliel referred to two historical situations that showed how a movement would fail if the Lord was not with it. The first was a Jewish uprising against the Romans that was led by a man called Theudas, who had gained about 400 followers before he was slain and his followers were scattered. The second occurred in about A.D. 6, when Judas of Galilee and a band of followers revolted against Roman taxation; in the ensuing violence, Judas died and his followers were dispersed.

In effect, Gamaliel’s counsel was, “Let nature take its course. If this movement of Jesus’s followers is of men, it will fail, as did the uprisings of Theudas and Judas. But if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it” (see Acts 5:35–39).

 To help you visualize Peter and John’s continued preaching of the gospel in Jerusalem, review the video segment “Peter and John Continue Preaching the Gospel” (5:39) from *The Life of Jesus Christ Bible Videos*, available on LDS.org. This segment covers Acts 5:12–42.

Acts 6:1–6. The Seven Called to Assist

As the Church grew rapidly, the Apostles were no longer able to care for the needs of all the members.

The “Grecians,” who were Greek-speaking Jewish-Christians, felt that their widows were neglected and complained against the “Hebrews,” who were Palestinian Jewish-Christians (see Acts 6:1). To address the growing need to care for widows and others, seven men were called and given authority to assist the Twelve. These men served under the direction of the Twelve with the specific task of caring for the poor and needy. It is not known what priesthood office the seven men held. In the Church today, bishops and branch presidents have the responsibility to ensure that those in need receive help:

“The bishop has a divine mandate to seek out and care for the poor (see D&C 84:112). He directs the welfare work in the ward. His goal is to help members help themselves and become self-reliant. (In branches, the branch president has these same welfare responsibilities.)

“Bishops are blessed with the gift of discernment to understand how best to help those in need. Each individual circumstance is different and requires inspiration. Guided by the Spirit and the basic welfare principles . . . , the bishop determines whom to assist, how much to give, and how long to assist” (*Providing in the Lord’s Way: Summary of a Leader’s Guide to Welfare* [booklet, 2009], 4–5).

Acts 6:8–14. Those Who Opposed Stephen

Stephen was one of the seven chosen to help the Apostles care for the poor and needy. He was full of faith, performed great miracles, and taught with the power of the Spirit. Those who opposed Stephen were from one or more synagogues where Jews from foreign lands worshipped (see Acts 6:9). Libertines were former slaves who had gained their freedom. Cyrenians were Jews from Northern Africa, Alexandrians were Jews from the Egyptian city of Alexandria, and Cilicia was a Roman province of Asia Minor. From the accusations made against Stephen (see Acts 6:11–14) and his defense (see Acts 7), it appears that his opponents were angered by his teachings that the coming of Jesus Christ had redefined basic Jewish concepts regarding the land of Israel, the law of Moses, and the temple of Jerusalem. Stephen’s opponents “suborned men” (Acts 6:11), meaning that they persuaded men to commit perjury.

Acts 6:15. Stephen Was Transfigured

Elder Bruce R. McConkie identified the reason why Stephen’s face shone like an angel: “Stephen was transfigured before them, visible witness thus being given that God was with him. In a lesser degree, it was with

Stephen as it had been with Moses, the skin of whose face shone visibly after he had communed with the Lord for forty days on the mountain (Ex. 34:29–35.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:67).

By opposing Stephen and his testimony, the Jewish leaders were also opposing God, who had given an obvious sign showing His approval of Stephen. In the life of Stephen we see a reenactment of parts of the life of Moses, notably his transfiguration (Exodus 34:29–30) and rejection as one of God’s authorized servants (see Acts 7:35–39). Stephen’s experience also echoes the transfiguration of the Savior (see Luke 9:28–31), further underscoring Stephen’s charge that opposition to Moses and opposition to Jesus Christ were historic patterns in Israel’s resistance to God (see Acts 7:35–39, 51–52, 57–60).

Acts 7:2–60. Stephen’s Condemnation of the Jewish Leaders

Stephen’s speech to the Jewish council (see Acts 7) focused on great pillars of Jewish identity: (1) the land of Israel (verses 2–36), (2) the law of Moses (verses 37–43), and (3) the tabernacle or temple (verses 44–50). Stephen gave the historical background for how the Lord had given each of these three blessings to Israel and showed how ancient Israel had rejected them. Stephen concluded with a denunciation of his accusers, declaring that they were like their forefathers (see verses 51–53). Stephen argued that his accusers had rejected the Savior, just as some Jews in ancient Israel had rejected Moses. He said to his accusers: Your fathers “have slain [the prophets] which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers” (Acts 7:52), thereby declaring that some of the Jewish leaders were responsible for the betrayal and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The Jews in Stephen’s day were aware of the promise that the Lord would send them a prophet like unto Moses (see Deuteronomy 18:15; Acts 3:22–23; 3 Nephi 20:23; the commentary for Acts 7:37).

Stephen’s declaration that his accusers were like their forefathers and had rejected the Savior is what ultimately led to his martyrdom. When Stephen said that he saw Jesus in vision, the Jews listening to him could stand it no longer, so without a trial or hearing before the Romans, Stephen was taken out of the city and stoned to death (see verses 54–60).

Similarities between Moses and Jesus Christ	
Moses	Jesus Christ
Acts 7:18–21. Moses was saved from slaughter in Egypt while he was an infant.	Matthew 2:13–16. Jesus’s family fled to Egypt so that He would not be slain as an infant.
Acts 7:22. Moses was “learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.”	Mark 6:2. Many were astonished at Christ’s teachings in the synagogue.
Acts 7:25. Moses “supposed his brethren would have understood . . . but they understood not.”	John 1:10–11; John 6:66. “The world knew him not. . . . His own received him not.”
Acts 7:29. Moses fled to the wilderness of Midian before delivering the people.	Matthew 4:1–11. Jesus retired to the wilderness to be with God before His mortal ministry.
Acts 7:30–34. Moses returned to his people after those who sought his life were dead.	Matthew 2:20. Jesus Christ’s family returned to the land of Israel following Herod’s death.
Acts 7:34. Ancient Israel was in bondage to the Egyptians; Moses was sent to deliver them.	John 8:33–36. The Jews were in bondage to sin; Jesus came to deliver them.
Acts 7:35. “This Moses whom they refused, . . . the same did God send to be a ruler.”	Matthew 21:33–39. Jesus Christ, who was the “heir” of the Father, was rejected by the Jews (see also Mark 15:1–2).
Acts 7:36. Moses “shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt.”	Matthew 4:23. “Jesus went about . . . healing all manner of sickness.”
Acts 7:39. “In their hearts,” the people “turned back again into Egypt.”	John 6:66. “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.”

Acts 7:37. A Prophet Like unto Moses

Jesus was that Prophet “like unto” Moses, and the people were to hear Him. Stephen may have hoped that his audience would see parallels between Jesus and Moses. As you study the following chart, notice some of the similarities between Stephen’s teachings concerning Moses and the life of the Savior.

Acts 7:48. “The Most High Dwelleth Not in Temples Made with Hands”

Sometimes Acts 7:48 is used by critics of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to find fault with the practice of building temples. But Stephen did not imply that Israel had been wrong to build the tabernacle or the temple; after all, God had commanded the Jerusalem temple to be built. Stephen meant that God was not confined to the physical structure of the temple, as some people believed in ancient times (see 1 Kings 8:27). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** taught, “The great Creator, by whom all things are, dwelleth not in temples made by the hands of his creatures; but he is worshiped by them in his temples, which holy houses he visits occasionally, and in which sacred spots his Spirit may always be found by the faithful” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:76).

Acts 7:52–53. “Received the Law by the Disposition of Angels”

Acts 7:53 affirms the reality of angels and their role in communicating divine messages from God to man. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** said of this verse: “Whenever a dispensation of the gospel is given to men, it is ‘declared by holy angels sent forth from the presence of God, and by his own voice, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost.’ (Moses 5:58.) What Stephen is here saying is that ‘the law,’ which is the ‘preparatory gospel’ (D. & C. 84:26–27), also was dispensed to Israel by angelic ministration” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:76–77). Just as prophets in ancient Israel received divine messages from angels, angelic visitations have played an important part in the Restoration of the gospel in the latter days. **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** stated: “I believe we need to speak of and believe in and bear testimony to the ministry of angels more than we sometimes do. They constitute one of God’s great methods of witnessing through the veil” (“A Standard unto My People” [Church Educational System symposium on the Book of Mormon, Aug. 9, 1994], 11).

Acts 7:55–56. The Godhead Is Three Divine Persons

Stephen was “full of the Holy Ghost” when he “saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God” (Acts 7:55). In this vision, each member of the Godhead was manifest as a separate Being. The **Prophet Joseph Smith** taught: “[Stephen] saw the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God. Any person that had seen the heavens opened knows that there are three personages in the heavens who hold the keys of power, and one presides over all” (in *History of the Church*, 5:426).

To read more about the separate nature of the members of the Godhead, see Elder Jeffrey R. Holland’s quotation in the commentary for John 10:30, 37–38. It is also interesting to note the similarities between Stephen’s vision and Joseph Smith’s First Vision by reading and comparing Acts 7:55–56 and Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17.

Acts 7:56. “Son of Man”

There are over 80 references to the “Son of man” in the four Gospels. In almost every instance Jesus was referring to Himself by this title. Perhaps that is why Stephen referred to the Savior in this manner—he wanted his



I See the Son of Man Standing on the Right Hand of God,
by Walter Rane

audience to recognize who Jesus Christ really was. For more information on the title “Son of Man,” see Moses 6:57 and the commentaries for Matthew 8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 11:19; 12:8, 32, 40 and for Mark 14:53–65.

Acts 7:57–60. The Death of Stephen

Stephen is generally considered to be the first Christian martyr. As he faced death, Stephen followed the Savior’s example by forgiving his killers and placing his spirit in God’s care (compare Acts 7:59–60 to Luke 23:34, 46). Luke may have included Saul in the account of Stephen’s death in order to prepare the reader for the account of Saul’s conversion (see Acts 8–9). Luke recorded the interesting detail that those who stoned Stephen “laid down their clothes” at the feet of Saul (Acts 7:58).

Points to Ponder

- The Lord used the Holy Ghost to magnify the efforts of Peter and John. How has the Lord magnified your efforts through the Holy Ghost?
- Reflect on Peter’s statement to the man “lame from his mother’s womb” (see Acts 3:2, 6–7). What was Peter able to give to this man? What are you able to give to those seeking your help?
- What lessons do you learn from Acts 3–7 about the power of bearing testimony when given an opportunity to stand as a witness?

Suggested Assignments

- From Acts 3–7, make a list of qualities you find in Peter, John, and Stephen that you would like to develop in your life. Prayerfully decide what you can begin doing to develop one of those qualities.
- Study the sermons about the Savior in Acts 3:13–18, 22; 4:10–12; 5:30–32. What are the main teachings about Jesus Christ in these sermons? Imagine you are writing a letter to a friend about Jesus Christ. Write several paragraphs explaining why these teachings about Jesus Christ are at the core of Latter-day Saint belief and doctrine.

31

Acts 8–12

Introduction and Timeline for Acts 8–12

After His Resurrection, Jesus Christ commanded His Apostles to teach and baptize people in every nation (see Matthew 28:19–20; Mark 16:15–16). He also foretold that the Apostles' ministry would begin in Jerusalem, spread throughout Judea and Samaria, and finally go "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Acts 8–12 describes the beginning of this worldwide expansion of the early Christian Church. Up to this point, the book of Acts recounts the Church's growth among Jews in Jerusalem and Judea. In Acts 8 we read about Philip, one of the seven leaders called to assist the Twelve (see Acts 6:5), who taught and baptized many Samaritans and a man from Ethiopia (see Acts 8:5–7, 12, 26–40). Acts 9 recounts the conversion of Saul, who would become an Apostle and a powerful missionary to the Gentiles. The Lord also gave Peter, as leader of the Church, a vision directing him to accept Gentiles into the Church (see Acts 10–11). Despite growing

opposition, Church leaders pressed forward to take the gospel "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).



1. Philip, Peter, and John ministered in Samaria and other areas outside Judea.
2. The Lord appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus (about A.D. 35).
3. Peter received revelation in Joppa commanding that Gentiles be accepted into the Church (about A.D. 39–40).
4. Cornelius was baptized in Caesarea.
5. James, the brother of John, was martyred (A.D. 44).

Commentary for Acts 8–12

Acts 8:1–4. Opposition to the Church and the Spread of the Gospel



After Stephen's martyrdom, Saul and others in Jerusalem continued to persecute the Church. Saul "made havoc of the church," forcibly taking men and women from their homes and putting them in prison (Acts 8:3). Because of this persecution, many of the followers of Jesus Christ traveled beyond Judea for safety, where they continued to preach the gospel and accelerate its expansion. A theme throughout the book of Acts is that the work of God will progress despite persecution (see Acts 4:3–4; 12:1–2, 24). In modern times the **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) taught: "The Standard of Truth has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 142).

Acts 8:5–8. Philip and the Aaronic Priesthood

Philip was one of the seven men chosen to assist the Apostles in caring for the needy (see Acts 6:1–6). In fulfilling his responsibilities, Philip preached, baptized, cast out unclean spirits, and performed other miracles (see Acts 8). Philip appears to have ministered as a

The gospel went forth from Jerusalem.

holder of the Aaronic Priesthood—he had the authority to baptize but did not have the authority to give the gift of the Holy Ghost (see D&C 84:107–8). Those whom Philip baptized had to wait for the arrival of Peter and John, holders of the Melchizedek Priesthood, to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 8:9–13, 18–24. Simon Desired to Buy Priesthood Authority

Simon, a Samaritan sorcerer who had been baptized by Philip, saw Peter and John exercising priesthood authority and supposed that he could purchase this authority. The fifth article of faith makes clear that priesthood authority cannot be bought but must be received in the way God has ordained: “We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.”

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) stated that in addition to receiving the priesthood from someone having proper authority, “personal worthiness becomes the standard of eligibility to receive and exercise this sacred power” (“Personal Worthiness to Exercise the Priesthood,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 52).

Acts 8:14–17. Samaritan Converts Received the Gift of the Holy Ghost

When the Church leaders in Jerusalem heard about Philip’s success in teaching the gospel, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. There they laid their hands on the Samaritan converts to bestow the Holy Ghost. **Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin** (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated the requirements for receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost: “The gift of the Holy Ghost, which is the right to receive the Holy Ghost as a constant companion, is obtained only upon condition of faith in Christ, repentance, baptism by immersion, and the laying on of hands by authorized servants endowed with the Melchizedek Priesthood. It is a most precious gift available only to worthy members of the Lord’s Church” (“The Unspeakable Gift,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2003, 26; see also D&C 20:38, 41).

Acts 8:15–17, 29; 9:17–18; 10:19–20, 44–47; 11:15–16

As you study these verses, what do you learn about the Holy Ghost? In what ways did the Holy Ghost affect the growth of the early Church?

Acts 8:27. “A Man of Ethiopia”

When Philip traveled south of Jerusalem, as instructed by an angel, he met and baptized a man from Ethiopia (see Acts 8:26–39). Since Ethiopia, in present-day Africa, was not part of Judea, the conversion partially fulfilled the prophecy recorded in Acts 1:8 that the gospel would spread beyond Judea and Samaria, and it foreshadowed the dramatic missionary work about to commence among the Gentiles (from Acts 10 onward).

Acts 8:29–38. “How Can I, Except Some Man Should Guide Me?”

The Spirit prompted Philip to teach this man of Ethiopia that the life and ministry of Jesus Christ fulfilled the prophecy he was reading from Isaiah. The passage quoted in Acts 8:32–33 is found in Isaiah 53:7–8. Philip’s inspired teaching led the man to declare that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and ask for baptism. “And they went down both into the water . . . ; and he [Philip] baptized him” (Acts 8:38). This man was baptized by immersion, for the ordinance of baptism was performed in the meridian of time just as it is performed in the latter-day Church.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that like the man of Ethiopia, we all need inspired teaching of the gospel and should all seek to become better gospel teachers:



Teachers throughout the Church guide others in better understanding the scriptures.

“For each of us to ‘come unto Christ’ [D&C 20:59], to keep His commandments and follow His example back to the Father is surely the highest and holiest purpose of human existence. To help others do that as well—to teach, persuade, and prayerfully lead them to walk that path of redemption also—surely that must be the second most significant task in our lives. Perhaps that is why President David O. McKay once said, ‘No greater responsibility can rest upon any man [or woman] than to be a teacher of God’s children’ [in Conference Report, Oct. 1916, 57]. We are, in fact, all somewhat like the man of Ethiopia to whom Philip was sent. Like him, we may know enough to reach out for religion. We may invest ourselves in the scriptures. We may even give up our earthly treasures, but without sufficient instruction we may miss the meaning of all this and the requirements that still lie before us. So we cry with this man of great authority, ‘How can [we understand,] except some [teacher] should guide [us]?’” (“A Teacher Come from God,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 25).

Acts 9:1. Who Was Saul?

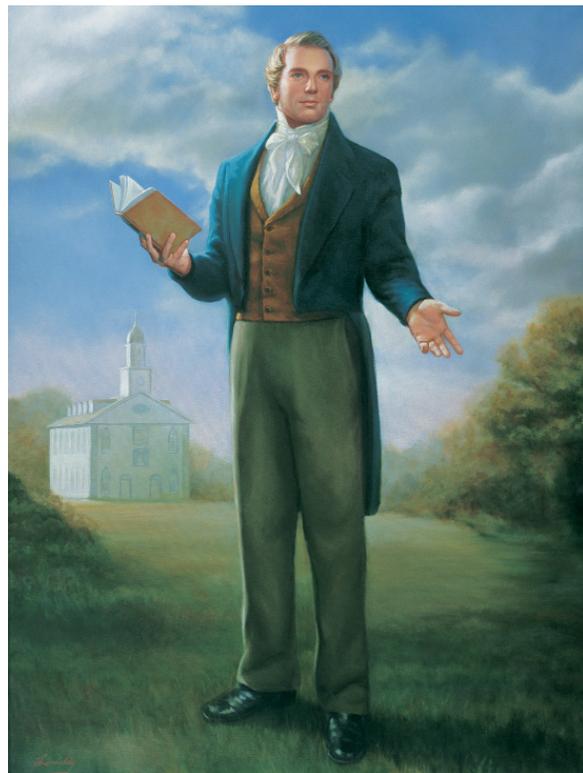
Saul was born in Tarsus, a Greek city in Cilicia (see Acts 21:39). He was a Roman citizen by birth (see Acts 16:37) and spoke a “Hebrew tongue” (probably Aramaic) and Greek (Acts 21:37–40). He was a Jew from the lineage of Benjamin (see Romans 11:1) and a devout Pharisee (see Acts 23:6), who zealously pursued and tormented Jesus Christ’s followers (see Acts 9:1–2). He was later known by his Latin name, Paul.

On one occasion, the **Prophet Joseph Smith** described Paul’s physical appearance: “He [the Apostle Paul] is about five feet high; very dark hair; dark complexion; dark skin; large Roman nose; sharp face; small black eyes, penetrating as eternity; round shoulders; a whining voice, except when elevated, and then it almost resembles the roaring of a lion. He was a good orator” (in “Extracts from William Clayton’s Private Book,” p. 4, Journals of L. John Nuttall, 1857–1904, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University; copy in Church History Library). For more on the Apostle Paul, see “Introduction to the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans” in chapter 35.

Acts 9:2–6. Similarities to Joseph Smith’s First Vision

Damascus was a wealthy city located at a prosperous crossroad 150 miles northeast of Jerusalem. If Christianity were allowed to become entrenched there, it could more easily spread to surrounding areas. Saul was sent to Damascus to thwart Christianity’s progress

but while traveling there had a remarkable vision. His experience on the road to Damascus shares several similarities with Joseph Smith’s First Vision. Both Saul and Joseph Smith saw a light from heaven. Both fell to the earth and heard a voice calling them by name. Both saw the Son of God and heard Him speak to them. Both received divine instruction when they inquired what they should do. Both were later persecuted for saying they had seen a vision, and both nevertheless continued to affirm that they had seen a vision (see Acts 9:2–6; 26:19–21; Joseph Smith—History 1:14–19, 24–25). There are some minor differences in the three accounts of Paul’s vision recorded in Acts, just as there are differences in the accounts that Joseph Smith wrote of his First Vision. For more information on these differences, see the commentary for Acts 26:19–21, 24–25.



Brother Joseph, by David Lindsley

Acts 9:4–6. Saul’s Conversion Is Not Typical

The vision that marked the beginning of Saul’s conversion was dramatic and had immediate effects. For most individuals, the conversion process is less dramatic but just as meaningful. **Elder D. Todd Christofferson** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained: “You may ask, Why doesn’t this mighty change happen

more quickly with me? You should remember that the remarkable examples of King Benjamin's people, Alma, and some others in scripture are just that—remarkable and not typical. For most of us, the changes are more gradual and occur over time. Being born again, unlike our physical birth, is more a process than an event" ("Born Again," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 78).

Acts 9:5. "It Is Hard for Thee to Kick against the Pricks"

A "prick" refers to a goad, which is a sharp spear or stick used to poke animals to make them move ahead. Rather than move forward, stubborn animals sometimes kick back to retaliate, literally kicking "against the pricks." Such a reaction only adds distress as the animal incurs more painful prompting from its master. The Savior is making clear that if Saul continues to fight against Him, he will only bring distress upon himself. In Greek literature, "kicking against the pricks" was a well-known metaphor for opposing deity.



May We So Live, by Sam Lawlor. Saul on the road to Damascus

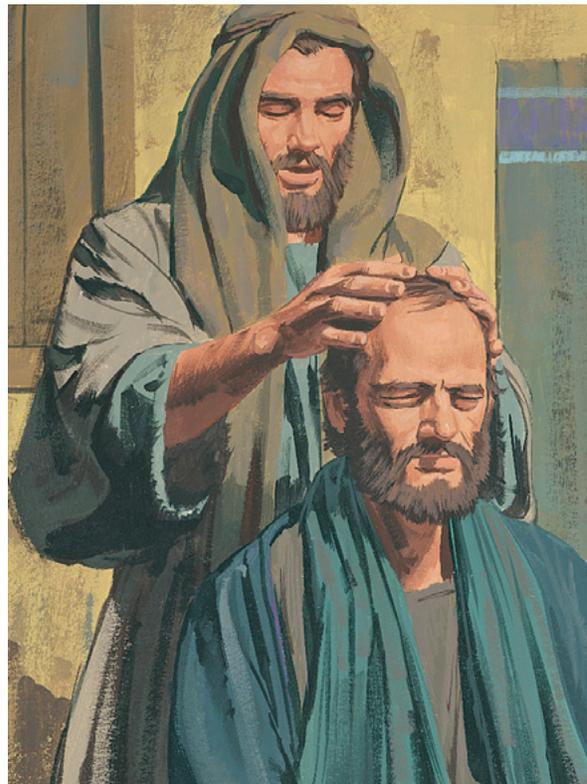
President David O. McKay (1873–1970) speculated on Saul's inner feelings as he traveled the road to Damascus before his vision: "Perhaps during those few days of comparative leisure, [Saul] began to wonder whether what he was doing was right or not. Perhaps the shining face of the dying Stephen and the martyr's last prayer began to sink more deeply into his soul than it had done before. Little children's cries for their parents whom Saul had bound began to pierce his soul more keenly, and make him feel miserably unhappy as he looked forward to more experiences of that kind in Damascus. Perhaps he wondered whether the work of the Lord, if he were really engaged in it, would make

him feel so restless and bitter. He was soon to learn that only the work of the evil one produces those feelings, and that true service for the Lord, always brings peace and contentment" (*Ancient Apostles*, 2nd ed. [1921], 148).

Acts 9:6–8. "Lord, What Wilt Thou Have Me to Do?"

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) spoke of the importance of Saul's question to the Lord: "A man can ask no more important question in his life than that which Paul asked: '... Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' A man can take no greater action than to pursue a course that will bring to him the answer to that question and then to carry out that answer" ("Listen to a Prophet's Voice," *Ensign*, Jan. 1973, 57).

Acts 9:9, 18. Saul Was Three Days without Sight



Ananias Blesses Paul, by Paul Mann

Saul's three days of blindness following his vision can represent his spiritual blindness prior to learning the truth about Jesus Christ; now he had to set aside his past and look to the future, trusting in the Lord and His earthly ministers for guidance. New sight, both physical and spiritual, came to Saul following a blessing received at the hands of Ananias. (See Acts 9:9, 17–18.)

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles compared the conversions of Saul and Alma the Younger to emphasize the remarkable change that began to occur within Saul during his three days of blindness: “Alma remained in a trance for two days and two nights, during which time he received a marvelous spiritual manifestation and regeneration, was born again, and heard the voice of the Lord. (Mosiah 27:22–31.) Saul, similarly, during his three sightless days commenced the character transformation which in due course would change the history of Christianity. What anguish of soul he must have felt, what fires of conscience, what godly sorrow for sin, as he humbled himself preparatory to submitting to the direction of Ananias” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:90).

Acts 9:10–15. “He Is a Chosen Vessel unto Me”

Ananias was likely the leader of the Church in Damascus, and he may have been one whom Saul had targeted for arrest. This would explain Ananias’s initial reluctance to seek out Saul after the Lord commanded him to do so. Nevertheless, Ananias was obedient to the Lord, and he helped place Saul, a future Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, on the path of faith and forgiveness (see Acts 9:10–15).

Some have wondered why the Lord would appear to an enemy of the Church like Saul and subsequently call him to His ministry. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained that this difficulty is resolved by understanding that the Lord’s plan of salvation encompasses our premortal life: “Saul was foreordained; nothing he had done on earth qualified him for what was ahead; but his native spiritual endowment, nurtured and earned in pre-existence, prepared him for the coming ministry” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:91).

Speaking of Saul’s call to the ministry, **President Thomas S. Monson** (1927–2018) said: “When the Savior was to choose a missionary of zeal and power, He found him not among His advocates but amidst His adversaries. The experience of Damascus’s way changed Saul. Of him the Lord declared, ‘He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel [Acts 9:15].’ Saul the persecutor became Paul the proselyter” (“Choose You This Day,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 69).

Acts 9:16. “He Must Suffer for My Name’s Sake”

As well as declaring that Saul was chosen for a great work, the Lord also said, “He must suffer for my name’s sake” (Acts 9:16). To read about some of the suffering Saul experienced as a minister for the Lord Jesus Christ, see Acts 14:5–6, 19; 16:22–24; 21:30–33; and 2 Corinthians 11:23–27.

Acts 9:23–26. Saul’s Journey to Jerusalem

We learn in Galatians that after Saul’s conversion he left Damascus and journeyed to Arabia (see Galatians 1:17). It is not recorded why Saul went there, but he may have gone for study and reflection (perhaps between the events recorded in Acts 9:22 and 23), or he may have fled there for safety (see Acts 9:23–25). He sojourned in Arabia for as long as three years. While there, Saul likely deepened his understanding of how Jesus Christ fulfilled many Old Testament prophecies. After his time in Arabia, he returned to Damascus for a short period of time before journeying to Jerusalem to see Peter and other Church leaders (see Galatians 1:17–18; Acts 9:26–27). For further information about Paul’s life and ministry, see the following chart:

Chronology of Events in Paul’s Life and Ministry		
About A.D. 1–3	Born in Tarsus of the tribe of Benjamin—a Pharisee and a Roman citizen by birth.	Acts 9:11; 22:3, 27–28; Philippians 3:5
About A.D. 19–29	Taught the Jewish religion by Gamaliel in Jerusalem.	Acts 22:3
A.D. 33	Witnessed the martyrdom of Stephen and persecuted Christians in the Jerusalem area.	Acts 7:54–8:4; Philippians 3:6
A.D. 33	On the road to Damascus, saw a vision of Jesus Christ, was converted, and preached of Christ in Damascus.	Acts 9:1–25; 22:6–16; 26:12–20
A.D. 33–35	Fled Damascus to Arabia.	Galatians 1:17
A.D. 35	Returned to Damascus and briefly preached the gospel.	Galatians 1:17
A.D. 35	After three years, visited Jerusalem and spoke with Peter and James the Lord’s brother.	Acts 9:26–29; Galatians 1:18–19

Chronology of Events in Paul's Life and Ministry		
A.D. 35–49	Spent 14 years in Syria and Cilicia (part of this time on his mission with Barnabas). Tarsus, Paul's hometown, was located in Cilicia.	Acts 9:30; 11:19–26; Galatians 2:1
A.D. 46–49	First missionary journey (with Barnabas).	Acts 13:1–14:28
A.D. 49	Attended the Jerusalem conference.	Acts 15:12; Galatians 2:1–2
A.D. 49–53	Second missionary journey.	Acts 15:36–18:20
A.D. 53	Visited Jerusalem.	Acts 18:21–22
About A.D. 54–58	Third and final mission.	Acts 18:23; 19:1–20:38
About A.D. 58	Farewell visit to Greece; traveled to Jerusalem to deliver offerings for the poor.	Acts 21:1–16
About A.D. 58	Reported to the presiding Brethren in Jerusalem, was accused of bringing Gentiles into the temple, and was arrested.	Acts 21:17–23:22
About A.D. 58–60	Imprisoned in Caesarea.	Acts 23:23–26:32
Fall A.D. 60–spring A.D. 61	While under arrest, traveled by sea to Rome. Shipwrecked and spent winter months on the island of Melita (Malta) just south of Sicily.	Acts 27:1–28:15
About A.D. 61–63	Under house arrest in Rome.	Acts 28:16–31
A.D. 63–66	Possible ministry in Rome and other locations in Italy.	Acts 28:30–31
	Second imprisonment in Rome.	
About A.D. 68	Died.	

Chart based on Thomas A. Wayment, *From Persecutor to Apostle* (2006), viii–ix, and Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Understanding Paul* (1983), 393–97.

Acts 9:26–31; 11:22–30. Barnabas and Saul Ministered Together

The Saints in Jerusalem were understandably wary when Saul asked to join with them (see Acts 9:26), but Barnabas escorted Saul to meet the Apostles and vouched for him (see Acts 9:26–28). Barnabas was a Jew from the tribe of Levi (see Acts 4:36), whose first recorded service to the Church was the selling of his property in accordance with the Saints' agreement to have all things in common (see Acts 4:36–37). He spoke Greek (see Bible Dictionary, "Lycaonia"). He was "a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith" (Acts 11:24). Church leaders in Jerusalem sent him to minister in Antioch (in Syria) because a large number of people there had been converted to the gospel. These conversions occurred because Church members who were persecuted in Jerusalem after Stephen's death fled to Antioch and preached there (see Acts 11:19–22).

Note that Acts includes references to two different Antiochs—Antioch in Syria and Antioch in Pisidia. Both Antiochs lie within present-day Turkey. From Antioch, Barnabas traveled to Tarsus to seek Saul, for Saul had

fled there to escape persecution in Jerusalem, and the two men returned to Antioch to teach the gospel. They were chosen to take donations from the Saints in Antioch to members of the Church in Judea, who were suffering during a famine (see Acts 11:22–30). Barnabas later became Saul's missionary companion during his first mission (see Acts 13–14).

Acts 9:32–43. Healing of Aeneas and Tabitha

While ministering in Lydda and Joppa, Peter healed Aeneas and Tabitha (also called Dorcas), illustrating the Savior's statement, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also" (John 14:12). Peter's healing of Aeneas (see Acts 9:32–35) is similar to the Savior's healing of a paralytic man (see Mark 2:1–12; Luke 5:18–26). Likewise, the raising of Tabitha (see Acts 9:36–42) parallels the Savior's raising of Jairus's daughter (see Mark 5:35–43; Luke 8:49–56). Luke's care in recording these similar events reflects one of his purposes: to affirm continuity between Jesus Christ and the Church and show a continuation of Jesus Christ's power and authority in Peter.



Tabitha Arise, by Sandra F. Gagon. Peter healing Tabitha

Acts 9:36. Tabitha, “Full of Good Works and Almsdeeds”

Tabitha’s “good works and almsdeeds” likely included the sewing of clothing for the poor (see Acts 9:39).

President Thomas S. Monson referred to Tabitha (Dorcas) as an example of a woman who gave the type of loving service latter-day members of the Relief Society so frequently give: “To me the scriptural reference to Tabitha, which describes her as a woman ‘full of good works and almsdeeds,’ defines some of the fundamental responsibilities of Relief Society; namely, the relief of suffering, the caring for the poor, and all which that implies” (“Be Thou an Example,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 99).

Acts 10:1–8. An Angel Instructed Cornelius

Cornelius was a Roman centurion living in Caesarea. He was a Gentile, who was described as being God-fearing, devout, generous, and prayerful. An angel appeared to Cornelius and instructed him to send for Peter, who was

then in Joppa. This vision was the first of several events that would culminate in the gospel being preached to the Gentiles, whereas previously only Jews had been admitted into the Church.

Acts 10:9–33. Peter Chosen to Introduce the Gospel to the Gentiles

As Cornelius’s messengers were traveling to Joppa, Peter saw a vision in which he was commanded to kill and eat the meat of animals that were forbidden to be eaten under the law of Moses (see Leviticus 11); these animals symbolically represented Gentiles. Peter refused, and the Lord responded, “What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common” (Acts 10:15). Though Peter did not at first understand the meaning of the vision, he soon came to understand that the time had come for Gentiles to be baptized into the Church without first converting to Judaism. This revelation regarding Gentile converts came to Peter because he was the chief Apostle of the day, and he held priesthood keys for the entire

Church (see Matthew 16:18–19). Revelation for the entire Church is always given through proper channels (see D&C 28:2, 6–7; 43:1–7). **Elder L. Tom Perry** (1922–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke of the order by which revelation is received for the Church:

“There is order in the way the Lord reveals His will to mankind. We all have the right to petition the Lord and receive inspiration through His Spirit within the realm of our own stewardship. Parents can receive revelation for their own family, a bishop for his assigned congregation, and on up to the First Presidency for the entire Church. However, we cannot receive revelation for someone else’s stewardship. The Prophet Joseph Smith declared:

“‘It is contrary to the economy of God for any member of the Church, or any one, to receive instructions for those in authority, higher than themselves’ [Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith (2007), 197–98].

“‘Revelations of the mind and will of God to the Church, are to come through the [First] Presidency. This is the order of heaven’ [Teachings: Joseph Smith, 197]” (“We Believe All That God Has Revealed,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2003, 85–86).

Acts 10:17–34, 44–48. Revelation Is Often Incremental

Peter’s vision of the unclean animals illustrates the principle that revelation from God often comes incrementally or gradually (see Acts 10:17–34, 44–48). In this instance, Peter did not understand the vision when he first received it (see verse 17). As he pondered its meaning and acted in faith, events transpired that helped him gradually understand its meaning—that Gentiles were now to be accepted into the Church without prior conversion to Judaism.

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles likened such incremental revelation to the rising of the sun in the morning: “The gradual increase of light radiating from the rising sun is like receiving a message from God ‘line upon line, precept upon precept’ (2 Nephi 28:30). Most frequently, revelation comes in small increments over time and is granted according to our desire, worthiness, and preparation. Such communications from Heavenly Father gradually and gently ‘distil upon [our souls] as the dews from heaven’ (D&C 121:45). This pattern of revelation tends to be more common than rare” (“The Spirit of Revelation,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 88).

Acts 10:30–33. Cornelius’s Prayer Answered through Peter

The Lord frequently answers prayers through the ministration of other people, and such was the case with Cornelius. Cornelius desired to know God’s will, and he had fasted and prayed for four days (see Acts 10:30). The angel promised Cornelius that Peter would provide him with more information (see Acts 10:6). **President Thomas S. Monson** described the joy of knowing that the Lord has answered someone else’s prayers through us: “In the performance of our responsibilities, I have learned that when we heed a silent prompting and act upon it without delay, our Heavenly Father will guide our footsteps and bless our lives and the lives of others. I know of no experience more sweet or feeling more precious than to heed a prompting only to discover that the Lord has answered another person’s prayer through you” (“Peace, Be Still,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 55).

Acts 10:34. “God Is No Respector of Persons”

The scriptures teach that “God is no respector of persons” (Acts 10:34), meaning that every person from Adam to the last person on earth will receive an opportunity to accept the gospel. The principles of salvation are the same for all of God’s children. Nephi declared: “He inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; . . . all are alike unto God” (2 Nephi 26:33). Before the events described in Acts 10, the gospel was taught predominantly to the Jews. The new revelation and understanding given through Peter opened the doors for the gospel to be taught to all people without consideration of lineage.

A similar pattern followed in 1978, when a revelation received by the First Presidency extended priesthood and temple blessings to “all worthy male members of the Church . . . without regard for race or color” (Official Declaration 2). This revelation, like the revelation received by Peter, teaches that the gospel has always gone forth according to the Lord’s timetable. Shortly after the 1978 revelation was announced to the world, **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** taught:

“Not only is the gospel to go, on a priority basis and harmonious to a divine timetable, to one nation after another, but the whole history of God’s dealings with men on earth indicates that such has been the case in the past; it has been restricted and limited where many

people are concerned. For instance, in the day between Moses and Christ, the gospel went to the house of Israel, almost exclusively. By the time of Jesus, the legal administrators and prophetic associates that he had were so fully indoctrinated with the concept of having the gospel go only to the house of Israel that they were totally unable to envision the true significance of his proclamation that after the resurrection they should then go to all the world. They did not go to the gentile nations initially. In his own ministration, Jesus preached only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and had so commanded the apostles. (Matthew 10:6.)

“It is true that he made a few minor exceptions because of the faith and devotion of some gentile people. There was one woman who wanted to eat the crumbs that fell from the table of the children, causing him to say, ‘O woman, great is thy faith.’ (Matthew 15:28; see also Mark 7:27–28.) With some minor exceptions, the gospel in that day went exclusively to Israel. The Lord had to give Peter the vision and revelation of the sheet coming down from heaven with the unclean meat on it, following which Cornelius sent the messenger to Peter to learn what he, Cornelius, and his gentile associates should do. The Lord commanded them that the gospel should go to the gentiles, and so it was [see Acts 10:1–35, 44–48]. There was about a quarter of a century, then, in New Testament times, when there were extreme difficulties among the Saints. They were weighing and evaluating, struggling with the problems of whether the gospel was to go only to the house of Israel or whether it now went to all men. Could all men come to him on an equal basis with the seed of Abraham? . . .

“You know this principle: God ‘hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him’ (Acts 17:26–27)—meaning that there is an appointed time for successive nations and peoples and races and cultures to be offered the saving truths of the gospel. . . .

“We get our truth and our light line upon line and precept upon precept [see Isaiah 28:9–10; 2 Nephi 28:30; D&C 98:11–12; 128:21]. We have now had added a new flood of intelligence and light on this particular subject, and it erases all the darkness and all the views and all the thoughts of the past. They don’t matter any more. . . .

“On this occasion [the revelation extending the priesthood to all worthy males], because of the importuning and the faith, and because the hour and the time had arrived, the Lord in his providences poured out the Holy Ghost upon the First Presidency and the Twelve in a miraculous and marvelous manner, beyond anything that any then present had ever experienced” (“The New Revelation on Priesthood,” in *Priesthood* [1981], 130–34).

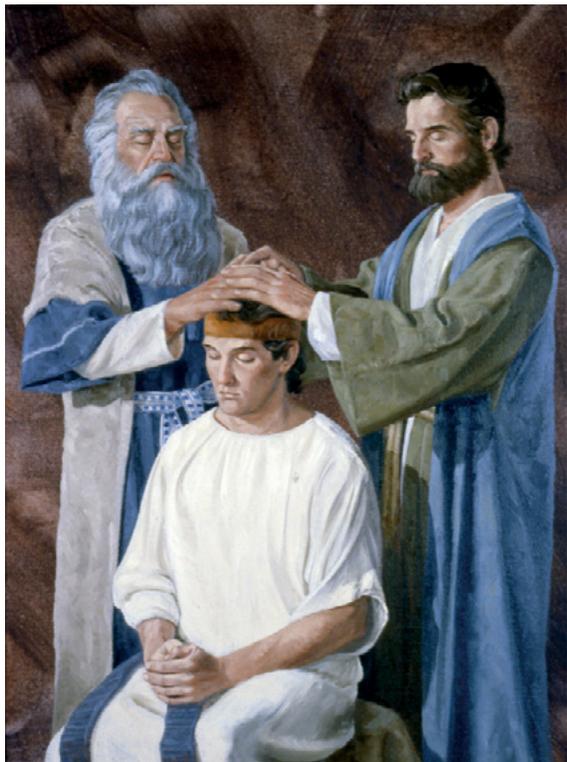
Acts 10:38. The Savior “Went About Doing Good”

Having understood the meaning of his vision, Peter testified that the knowledge of Jesus Christ’s life and mission should be taught to all people. Peter taught that God had “anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power” (Acts 10:38). The name-title “Christ” literally means “Anointed One.” Peter declared that the Savior “went about doing good.” These few words summarize an important aspect of the life of the Savior and provide an invitation to all those who follow Him to serve as He served.

While speaking to priesthood holders, **President Thomas S. Monson** taught principles that apply to everyone: “Jesus was the epitome of service. It was said of Him that He ‘went about doing good’ [Acts 10:38]. Do we, my brethren, do likewise? Our opportunities are many, but some are perishable and fleeting. Brethren, what supernal joy you feel when someone recalls counsel you gave, an example you lived, a truth you taught, the influence you had in prompting another to do good.” (“In Harm’s Way,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 48).

Acts 10:44–48. Difference between the Power of the Holy Ghost and the Gift of the Holy Ghost

Acts 10:44–48 records that the Holy Ghost fell on Cornelius and others before they were baptized. The Bible Dictionary explains that “the Holy Ghost is manifested to men on the earth both as the *power* of the Holy Ghost and as the *gift* of the Holy Ghost. The power can come upon one before baptism and is the convincing witness that the gospel is true. By the power of the Holy Ghost a person receives a testimony of Jesus Christ and of His work and the work of His servants upon the earth. The gift can come only after proper and authorized baptism and is conferred by the laying on of hands, as in Acts 8:12–25 and Moro. 2. The gift of the Holy Ghost is the right to have, whenever one is worthy, the companionship of the Holy Ghost” (Bible Dictionary, “Holy Ghost”).



Laying On of Hands, by Lyle Beddes

Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught: “The testimony before baptism, speaking by way of analogy, comes as a flash of lightning blazing forth in a dark and stormy night. . . . The companionship of the Holy Ghost after baptism is as the continuing blaze of the sun at noonday, shedding its rays on the path of life and on all that surrounds it” (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [1985], 262).

Acts 11:1–18. The Baptism of Cornelius

When Cornelius was baptized, it was the first time in the early Church that an uncircumcised Gentile was baptized into the Church. This event added a new dimension to the preaching of the gospel. Allowing Gentile converts to join the Church without prior conversion to Judaism was difficult for many of the members of the Church to accept; it signified a major shift in how the gospel was to be shared with God’s children. When the Lord had made His covenant with Abraham (which was signified by the rite of circumcision), the Lord had called it an “everlasting” covenant (Genesis 17:7). What the early Christians came to understand was the difference between the covenant of Abraham and the rite of circumcision. Although the covenant was everlasting, the

ordinance by which one entered the covenant was no longer circumcision, but baptism. After Peter rehearsed to the Saints in Jerusalem all that had occurred in Caesarea, the members of the Church had a change of heart and declared, “Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18).

Acts 11:22–30. Growth of the Church in Antioch

See the commentary for Acts 9:26–31; 11:22–30.

Acts 11:26. Early Saints Called Christians

The reference to “Christians” in Acts 11:26 is the first recorded use of the term in the Bible. The term means “follower of Christ” and was first used by non-Christians in Antioch to refer to members of the Church. Eventually members of the Church adopted the term to refer to themselves (see Acts 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16).

This period of time witnessed an increasing parting of the ways between the early Church and the Judaism from which it grew. This separation occurred as the Church began doing missionary work among Gentiles, as Jewish and Gentile members fellowshipped with each other, and as Church leaders declared that members did not need to be circumcised (see Acts 15). The use of the term “Christian” was one of the ways in which the Church differentiated itself from Judaism.

Acts 12:1–2. Who Was the James Killed by Herod?

James was the brother of John the Beloved and was a member of the original Twelve Apostles. James served in the First Presidency, along with Peter and John, until he suffered martyrdom at the hands of Herod Agrippa I in about A.D. 44 (see Acts 12:1–2). He should not be confused with two other men named James in the New Testament: (1) James, the son of Alphaeus and Mary (see Mark 16:1; Acts 1:13), sometimes known as James the less, who was also a member of the original Quorum of the Twelve, or (2) James, the half-brother of Jesus, who like his other brothers did not accept the divinity of Jesus while the Savior lived (see John 7:1–7). To read more about James, the brother of Jesus, see the commentary for Acts 15:13–29.

Acts 12:1–19. James Was Murdered, but Peter Was Delivered

James was killed by Herod’s order, but Peter was rescued from prison by an angel sent from God. Some might wonder why the Lord did not save them both. While we do not always know answers to such questions (see

Isaiah 55:8–9), we do know that if we are faithful, the Lord’s purposes will be accomplished in our lives. We also know that through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, no blessing will be withheld from us in eternity.

Acts 12:12. Who Was John Mark?

John Mark, commonly known as Mark, is probably the author of the Gospel According to St. Mark. He was the son of a woman named Mary, one of the leading women in the early Church in Jerusalem. Believers assembled at her home, and Peter returned there after being freed from prison (see Acts 12:12–17). John Mark was chosen as a companion of Paul and Barnabas as they left on their first missionary journey (see Acts 12:25; 13:5). For further information about John Mark, see “Introduction to the Gospel According to St. Mark” in chapter 11.

Acts 12:21–23. The Death of Herod Agrippa I

Herod Agrippa I was the grandson of Herod the Great. He was generally popular with the Pharisees because he was careful to observe Jewish customs. It may be for this reason—to be popular among the Jews—that he ordered the death of James (see Acts 12:1–2). Agrippa died at the age of 54, in A.D. 44, the same year James was martyred. Luke saw Agrippa’s sudden death as divine retribution, administered by an angel of the Lord.

Points to Ponder

- As you consider the works that Philip was able to perform as an Aaronic Priesthood holder (see Acts 8), how does your appreciation for the power of the Aaronic Priesthood increase?
- Ponder the question that Saul asked the Lord during his vision on the road to Damascus: “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6). How often do you ask the Lord this or similar questions? How do you think that regularly asking the Lord this question might change your life?
- The vision Peter received about unclean animals (see Acts 10) shows that revelation comes through proper channels of authority. Why is this doctrine important in your life and in the Church?

Suggested Assignments

- It is apparent from Acts 10 that Peter did not immediately understand the meaning of his vision of the unclean animals. The meaning of the vision seemed to come to him one piece at a time. Carefully study Acts 10 and identify in writing the points at which Peter seemed to gain increased understanding of his vision. Then write a paragraph or two describing how the Lord has revealed to you “line upon line” a gospel doctrine or something He desired you to do.

Acts 13–15

Introduction and Timeline for Acts 13–15

Acts 13–14 contains events and teachings from Saul's first missionary journey, during which time he began to be known as Paul. This mission led to the establishment of branches of the Church in areas far removed from Jerusalem and "opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27). Despite sometimes facing intense opposition, including enemies who stoned him, Paul persisted in his mission with faith in Jesus Christ and tireless efforts, and he experienced much success in the Lord's work.

As the Church continued to grow, it faced a pivotal juncture, as recorded in Acts 15. The influx of many Gentile converts into the Church gave rise to a disputation among the Saints. Some Jewish Christians insisted that Gentile converts needed to be circumcised in order to be saved (see Acts 15:1), while others, like Peter and Paul, taught that salvation came through Jesus Christ and not through observing the law of Moses (see Acts 13:38–39; 15:11).

Apostles and elders of the Church met at a conference in Jerusalem (often referred to as the Jerusalem conference) and were provided an inspired solution to the problem.



1. Paul departed from Antioch on his first missionary journey, which lasted from about A.D. 46 to 49.
2. Apostles and elders met at the Jerusalem conference in about A.D. 49.

Commentary for Acts 13–15

Acts 13:1–14:26. Saul's First Missionary Journey



Antioch (in Syria) is located 300 miles north of Jerusalem and was the third greatest city in the Roman Empire next to Rome and Alexandria. Its population exceeded 100,000 people. Only the city of Jerusalem was of greater importance to early Christians. Paul began each of his three missionary journeys from Antioch.

During the 10-year period between Saul's conversion and his first recorded missionary journey, Saul (later known as Paul) taught the gospel in Damascus, Arabia,

Tarsus, and finally Antioch. As recorded in Acts 13:1–3, Saul and Barnabas were called by their priesthood leaders in Antioch, including the "prophets" mentioned in verse 1, to go on a mission, which would become Saul's first missionary journey. For more information about Barnabas with Saul, see the commentary for Acts 9:26–31; 11:22–30.



Cities Paul visited on his first missionary journey

This first missionary journey resulted in the establishment of branches of the Church in areas far removed from Jerusalem and Samaria (see Acts 1:8). Saul and Barnabas journeyed over 1,400 miles (2,250 kilometers) on this first mission, teaching the gospel in areas

where people had never heard it before. When Saul and Barnabas arrived at a location where there were no members of the Church, they would typically go first to the local synagogue and announce the gospel message to fellow Jews and to Gentiles who believed Jewish teachings (see Acts 13:5, 14; 14:1; the commentary for Acts 13:14–41). After teaching and baptizing those who accepted the gospel message, they called and set apart local leaders to watch over the Church after they departed (see Acts 14:23). Often they would visit the newly formed branches as they were returning to Church headquarters. The account of this first mission depicts Saul in his new capacity as a Church leader.

Acts 13:2, 4, 9–10, 52

What functions of the Holy Ghost do you see in these verses?
How have you seen the Holy Ghost operate in similar ways in the Church today?

Acts 13:2–3. Leaders Receive Revelation about Callings

The Church leaders who called Saul and Barnabas to go on a mission had fasted and received revelation before making this important calling. **Elder Ronald A. Rasband** of the Presidency of the Seventy told about a time when he assisted President Henry B. Eyring in assigning full-time missionaries to their fields of labor. After sharing what took place that day, Elder Rasband stated: “At the end of the meeting Elder Eyring bore his witness to me of the love of the Savior, which He has for each missionary assigned to go out into the world and preach the restored gospel. He said that it is by the great love of the Savior that His servants know where these wonderful young men and women, senior missionaries, and senior couple missionaries are to serve. I had a further witness that morning that every missionary called in this Church, and assigned or reassigned to a particular mission, is called by revelation from the Lord God Almighty through one of these, His servants” (“The Divine Call of a Missionary,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 53).

Acts 13:3–4. They “Laid Their Hands on Them [and] Sent Them Away”

In connection with Acts 13:3, **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, “Saul and Barnabas were called by prophecy and were either ordained or set apart or both by the laying on of hands” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 2:120). The laying on of

hands by priesthood leaders to set people apart for callings is a long-established practice in both the ancient and modern Church (see Deuteronomy 34:9; D&C 36:1–2; Articles of Faith 1:5).



President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) explained that being set apart is of great importance today, just as it was in the ancient Church:

“The setting apart is an established practice in the Church and men and women are ‘set apart’ to special responsibility, in ecclesiastical, quorum, and auxiliary positions. . . .

“To some folk the setting apart seems a perfunctory act while others anticipate it eagerly, absorb every word of it, and let their lives be lifted thereby.

“The setting apart may be taken literally; it is a setting apart from sin, apart from the carnal; apart from everything which is crude, low, vicious, cheap, or vulgar; *set apart* from the world to a higher plane of thought and activity. The blessing is conditional upon faithful performance. . . .

“In my experience there have been numerous people who like Saul . . . have, through the setting apart, received ‘largeness of heart,’ extended influence, increased wisdom, enlarged vision, and new powers” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1958, 57).

Acts 13:5, 13. John Mark Accompanied Paul on His First Mission

John, who is mentioned in Acts 13:5, is elsewhere called John Mark, Mark, and Marcus. He probably wrote the Gospel According to St. Mark. He was the cousin of Barnabas (see Colossians 4:10), and he accompanied Saul and Barnabas at the beginning of their first missionary journey. John Mark's unexpected departure from the other missionaries at Perga caused a later disagreement between Saul and Barnabas as they prepared to leave on their second mission (see Acts 15:37–40). The scriptures do not mention the reason Mark left the mission field. But he later accompanied Barnabas to Cyprus, was with Timothy at Ephesus, and is probably the Marcus whom Peter spoke of as "my son" (see Acts 15:37–39; 2 Timothy 4:11; 1 Peter 5:13). Thus, Mark became a powerful force for good in the early Church.

Acts 13:9. "Saul, (Who Also Is Called Paul)"

In the early chapters of Acts, Luke referred to Saul by his Hebrew name. But beginning with Saul's first mission among the Gentiles and continuing through the remainder of Acts, Luke referred to Saul by his Latin name, Paul, which means "little" or "small." This was also the name by which Paul referred to himself in his letters.

Acts 13:4–11. Priesthood Power to Curse

At Paphos, a Roman official, Sergius Paulus, desired to hear the gospel and called for Paul and Barnabas. As they attempted to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ, they were opposed by "a false prophet" and "sorcerer" ironically named Bar-Jesus (son of Jesus), also called Elymas (see Acts 13:6–8). Paul declared that Elymas was trying "to pervert the right ways of the Lord" and cursed him with blindness (Acts 13:10–11). This experience demonstrates that the Lord gives His authorized servants the power both to bless and to curse (see D&C 124:93; compare Alma 30:49–50).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie clarified that the priesthood should never be used to curse someone unless the priesthood holder is directed by the Spirit to do so: "Cursings as well as blessings may be administered by the power and authority of the priesthood . . . , but the Lord's earthly agents are sent forth primarily to bless and not to curse, and no curse should ever be decreed except by direct revelation from the Lord commanding such to be done" (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 175–76; see also the commentary for Matthew 10:14).

Acts 13:14–41. Paul's Sermon to Jews and to Gentiles Who Feared God

In Antioch in Pisidia (not to be confused with Antioch in Syria, where Church members were first called Christians), Paul preached both to Jews and to others who "feared God" (see Acts 13:16, 26; 14:1). God-fearers were Gentiles who accepted Jehovah as their God and lived various aspects of Judaism but did not fully convert to Judaism by undergoing the rite of circumcision. Many of Paul's Gentile converts were God-fearers who worshipped in synagogues, knew the Jewish scriptures (the Old Testament), and were in a state of readiness to accept the gospel message. For more on the practice of circumcision, see the commentary for Acts 15:1, 5, 24.

Acts 13:22–23. Jesus Christ as the Seed of David

To read about Jesus Christ as the seed of David, see the commentaries for Matthew 1:1, 17 and for Matthew 1:1–17.

Acts 13:34. "The Sure Mercies of David"

"The sure mercies of David" (Acts 13:34) refer to the promises God made to David of the resurrection (see Psalms 16:10; 89:48–49; Isaiah 55:3).

Acts 13:38–39. Forgiveness of Sins and Justification

Paul taught that "forgiveness of sins" comes only through Jesus Christ (Acts 13:38). **Elder Richard G. Scott** (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained:

"Whether the violation be great or small, the solution is the same: full repentance through faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement with obedience to His commandments. . . .

"I testify that of all the necessary steps to repentance, the most critically important is for you to have a conviction that forgiveness comes in and through Jesus Christ. It is essential to know that only on His terms can you be forgiven. You will be helped as you exercise faith in Christ [see 2 Nephi 9:22–24; Alma 11:40]. That means you trust Him and His teachings" ("Peace of Conscience and Peace of Mind," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 16–17).

Paul also declared that the Savior made possible justification for "all that believe" and that this justification could not happen "by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39). Justification is a gift from the Savior. He declares that a person is guiltless, free from the full demands of justice, being put back into a right relationship with God so that progress toward perfection can continue. To study more about the doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ and not by the law of Moses, see the commentary for Romans 3:27–31.

Acts 13:45–46. “We Turn to the Gentiles”

Many Jews in Antioch reacted to Paul’s sermon by “contradicting and blaspheming” (Acts 13:45). The Bible Dictionary defines *blasphemy* as “contemptuous speech concerning God or concerning something that stands in a sacred relation toward God, such as His temple, His law, or His prophet” (Bible Dictionary, “Blasphemy”).

In response to the Antioch Jews’ opposition, Paul and Barnabas proclaimed that they would “turn to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46). This moment foreshadowed what would increasingly happen in the missionary work of the Church as many Jews opposed the gospel and Gentile conversions. After this event, as Paul traveled to other areas, he typically continued to teach the gospel “to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16), but when Jews rejected his message, Paul readily “turned to” the Gentiles, finding many ready to receive the gospel.

Acts 13:47–48. “As Many as . . . Believed”

Paul taught the Jews of his day that the Lord had called Israel to be “a light of the Gentiles” (Acts 13:47; Isaiah 42:6). Israel was to provide salvation for all people who would accept it, including the Gentiles. The Jews of Paul’s day knew this, but they rejected Jesus Christ and His gospel (see Acts 13:47). However, many Gentiles heard Paul’s words and accepted “the word of the Lord” (Acts 13:48). The Joseph Smith Translation of Acts 13:48 states that “as many as *believed* were ordained *unto* eternal life.”

Acts 13:51. “Shook Off the Dust of Their Feet”

To read about shaking the dust off of the feet, see the commentary for Matthew 10:14.

Acts 14:1–6, 14. Paul and Barnabas Were Apostles

This is the first reference in the New Testament to Paul being an Apostle. According to the Bible Dictionary, “Apostle . . . was the title Jesus gave (Luke 6:13) to the Twelve whom He chose and ordained (John 15:16) to be His closest disciples during His ministry on earth and whom He sent forth to represent Him after His Ascension into heaven. . . . The title was also applied to others who, though not of the number of the original Twelve, yet were called to serve as special witnesses of the Lord. Paul repeatedly spoke of himself as an Apostle (Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; 9:1; Gal. 1:1). He applied the title to James, the Lord’s brother (Gal. 1:19), and also to Barnabas (1 Cor. 9:5–6; see also Acts 14:14)” (Bible Dictionary, “Apostle”).

President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) stated:

“Paul was an ordained apostle, and without question he took the place of one of the other brethren in [the Council of the Twelve]” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 3:153). A vacancy in the Council of the Twelve was probably created because one of the other Apostles had been put to death.

A major theme in Acts, illustrated in Acts 14:1–6, is that the preaching of the gospel caused great divisions among the people.

Acts 14:8–10. “Faith to Be Healed”

When Paul and Barnabas learned of a plot against their lives in Iconium, they departed to Lystra and Derbe. In Lystra, they met a man who had been crippled from birth. Perceiving that the man “had faith to be healed,” Paul commanded the man to walk, which he did (see Acts 14:8–10). This episode illustrates that faith is a prerequisite for all who would be healed through priesthood administration. In a notable talk on administering to the sick, **President Spencer W. Kimball** said: “The need of faith is often underestimated. The ill one and the family often seem to depend wholly on the power of the priesthood and the gift of healing that they hope the administering brethren may have, whereas the greater responsibility is with him who is blessed. . . . The major element is the faith of the individual when that person is conscious and accountable. ‘Thy faith hath made thee whole’ [Matthew 9:22] was repeated so often by the Master that it almost became a chorus” (“President Kimball Speaks Out on Administration to the Sick,” *New Era*, Oct. 1981, 47).

Acts 14:11–18

“Priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world” (2 Nephi 26:29). What did Paul and Barnabas do on this occasion to avoid priestcraft and to give proper glory and honor to the Lord?

Acts 14:11–18. Paul and Barnabas Called Gods

When Paul healed a crippled man at Lystra, the people of the area who believed in and worshipped idols thought he and Barnabas were gods, and they sought to worship Barnabas as Jupiter—probably because Barnabas was older than Paul and perhaps larger in stature—and Paul as Mercury, the messenger of the gods, “because [Paul] was the chief speaker” (Acts 14:12).



This ancient statue of the Greek god Zeus (the chief Greek deity and equivalent of the Roman god Jupiter) was discovered in 1680 at Smyrna.

Acts 14:19–22. Persecution of the Lord’s Servants

Some Jews from Antioch and Iconium so vehemently opposed Paul and Barnabas that they followed them to Lystra and persuaded people there to help stone Paul. Paul survived the ordeal, and it did not dissuade him from continuing his labors in spreading the gospel.

Elder Robert D. Hales (1932–2017) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that one reason the Lord does not always shield His servants from persecution is that trials allow us to experience refining, strengthening blessings:

“There is meaning and purpose in our earthly challenges. Consider the Prophet Joseph Smith: throughout his life he faced daunting opposition—illness, accident, poverty, misunderstanding, false accusation, and even persecution. One might be tempted to ask, ‘Why didn’t the Lord protect His prophet from such obstacles, provide him with unlimited resources, and stop up the mouths of his accusers?’ The answer is, Each of us must go through certain experiences to become more like our Savior. In the school of mortality, the tutor is often pain and tribulation, but the lessons are meant to refine and bless us and strengthen us, not to destroy us” (“Faith through Tribulation Brings Peace and Joy,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2003, 17).

Acts 14:21–22. “Continue in the Faith”



When Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, they were following their general pattern of returning to cities where they had established branches of the Church, “confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith” (Acts 14:22). In this context, “confirm” means to “strengthen.” In modern times, **President Gordon B. Hinckley** (1910–2008) taught that each of us has a similar responsibility to strengthen new members of the Church: “With the ever-increasing number of converts, we must make an increasingly substantial effort to assist them as they find their way. Every one of them needs three things: a friend, a responsibility, and nurturing with ‘the good word of God’ (Moro. 6:4). It is our duty and opportunity to provide these things. . . . This is a work for everyone. It is a work for home teachers and visiting teachers. It is a work for the bishopric, for the priesthood quorums, for the Relief Society, the young men and young women, even the Primary” (“Converts and Young Men,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 47–48).

Acts 14:23. “Ordained Them Elders in Every Church”

Paul and his companions called and set apart faithful men to lead the Church in the various cities where branches of the Church were established and then “commended them to the Lord” (see Acts 14:23). Paul later exhorted Church members to honor and respect their local leaders (see 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13).

President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency also taught that we should support local Church authorities: “The Lord told the early members of His Church that the voice of His servants is the voice of the Lord, and that the hand of His servants is the hand of the Lord (see D&C 1:38; 36:2). I testify to the truthfulness of that principle, which imposes a solemn duty upon the members of this Church to be loyal to their leaders and faithful in following their direction. I affirm that the Lord will bless us for doing so” (“Bishop, Help!” *Ensign*, May 1997, 23).

Acts 14:24–28. Paul and Barnabas Conclude Their First Mission

Paul and Barnabas continued their first missionary journey by visiting several additional cities that lie within present-day Turkey and Cyprus. They concluded this journey by returning to Antioch in Syria, where they had begun their mission over two years earlier.

Acts 15:1–5. “Certain Men Which Came Down from Judea”

Christians from Judea visited Paul, Barnabas, and the other members in Antioch. These men from Judea and others like them are sometimes referred to as “Judaizers” because they insisted that Gentile converts to the Church must also convert to Judaism by undergoing circumcision and living the law of Moses. They likely saw themselves as upholding God’s commandment that Abraham and his followers be circumcised as they entered the covenant with the Lord: “And my covenant shall be in your flesh for an *everlasting* covenant” (see Genesis 17:10–14, italics added). However, Judaizers failed to understand that circumcision was merely a sign of the covenant rather than the covenant itself. They did not understand that for both Jews and Gentiles, entry into the new covenant with Christ was not by circumcision, but by faith, repentance, baptism, and receiving the Holy Ghost (see Acts 2:37–38).

The Judaizers’ teachings conflicted with the teachings of Paul and Barnabas, and as a result, Paul and Barnabas and other Church members were sent to Jerusalem to ask the Apostles how this issue should be resolved.

Acts 15:1, 5, 24. “Circumcised after the Manner of Moses”

Jehovah instituted the practice of circumcision among Abraham and his descendants as a token of their covenant with Jehovah. The token reminded them of their obligations and of the sacred and eternal blessings given to all who served the Lord in righteousness (see Abraham 2:8–11; Genesis 17). The law of Moses directed that every male child was to be circumcised when he was eight days old (see Leviticus 12:3) “*that thou mayest know forever that children are not accountable before me [the Lord] until they are eight years old*” (Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 17:11 [in the Bible appendix]). In New Testament times it was common to refer to Jews as being of the circumcision and to Gentiles as being of the uncircumcision (see Acts 10:45; Romans 3:30; Galatians 2:7–9; Ephesians 2:11).

In the new covenant instituted by Jesus Christ, the token of circumcision was replaced by the ordinance of baptism. In a revelation given to Mormon and recorded in the Book of Mormon, Jesus Christ said: “The law of circumcision is done away in me” (Moroni 8:8). The debate over circumcision concerned not only the interpretation and application of doctrine, but also the accepting of new revelation through Church leaders.

Acts 15:6. Councils Seek Revelation from God



Ward council

In order to settle the dispute regarding circumcision, the Apostles and elders of the Church “came together for to consider of this matter” (Acts 15:6) at what is sometimes called the Jerusalem conference. Acts 15:7–29 relates the discussion that took place among these leaders. Through counseling together and seeking the Spirit of the Lord, Church leaders were able to resolve the dispute and receive a confirming witness from the Holy Ghost.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve

Apostles spoke of the eternal role of councils and how counseling together can bless the Church today:

“God called a grand council in the premortal world to present His glorious plan for our eternal welfare. The Lord’s church is organized with councils at every level, beginning with the Council of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and extending to stake, ward, quorum, auxiliary, and family councils.

“President Stephen L Richards said, ‘The genius of our Church government is government through councils. . . .

‘I have no hesitancy in giving you the assurance, if you will confer in council as you are expected to do, God will give you solutions to the problems that confront you’ (in Conference Report, Oct. 1953, p. 86). . . .

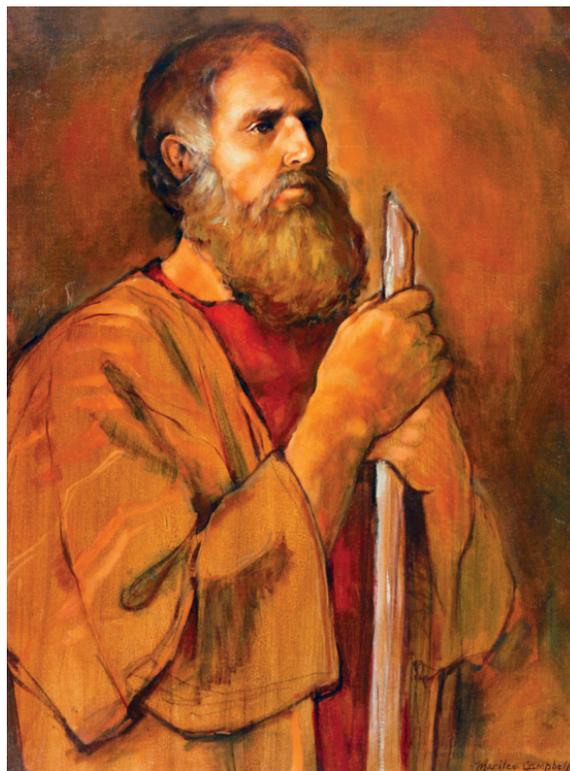
“. . . When we act in a united effort, we create spiritual synergism, which is increased effectiveness or achievement as a result of combined action or cooperation, the result of which is greater than the sum of the individual parts” (“Strength in Counsel,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 76–77).

Acts 15:6–31. The Questions Addressed at the Jerusalem Conference

The council at Jerusalem addressed two main questions. First, were Gentile converts required to be circumcised? Second, what, if any, obligations did Gentile converts have toward the law of Moses?

The question of circumcision was evidently settled early in the proceedings when Peter, the senior Apostle, “rose up” and spoke of his earlier revelation that Gentiles be accepted into the Church (see Acts 10:9–16; 11:18). He also related how uncircumcised Gentile converts had received the Holy Ghost, proving that God had “put no difference between us and them” (Acts 15:7–9). Peter affirmed that circumcision was not a requirement for their salvation. For both Jew and Gentile, salvation came through Jesus Christ (see Acts 15:10–11). The silence that followed Peter’s remarks implies that those in attendance understood and accepted the guiding authority of Peter’s revelation (see Acts 15:12).

James addressed the second issue of whether Gentile converts should conform to other requirements of the law of Moses (see Acts 15:13–21). James first cited scriptural support for Peter’s words, referring to the prophecy in Amos 9:11–12 that Gentiles would seek after the Lord. This scripture would have been persuasive to members of the council who were Pharisees, encouraging them to support Peter in accepting Gentile converts.



Peter, by Marilee Campbell

Next, James proposed that Gentile converts be instructed to observe some requirements of the law of Moses (see Acts 15:20). James recommended that Gentile converts be taught to abstain from “pollutions of idols” (meaning meats that have been polluted by being offered to idols) and from fornication. In short, converts were to avoid becoming entangled with the sexual sin and idolatry that were rampant in the ancient Greco-Roman world. Because the law of Moses prohibited the eating of blood (see Leviticus 3:17; 17:10–14; 19:26), James’s counsel to abstain from “things strangled, and from blood” may have been meant to avoid giving offense to Jews and thus hindering missionary work among them. James explained, “For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him” (Acts 15:21). In other words, since there were Jewish communities throughout the Mediterranean world, Gentile converts should avoid offending Jews and dissuading them from embracing the gospel.

Acts 15:7–30. The Council at Jerusalem

The following chart indicates some of the principles of effective counseling that were demonstrated at the Jerusalem council:

Acts 15	Principles Used by Effective Councils
Verse 7	Members of the council were free to voice their opinions. ("There had been much disputing.")
Verses 7–11	The presiding authority explained his thoughts and referred to previous revelation. (Peter, the chief Apostle, presided over the council and, by referring to revelation he had already received, clarified that Gentiles need not be circumcised.)
Verse 12	Council members shared experiences and listened to each other. (Barnabas and Paul testified of the miracles God had wrought among the Gentiles, supporting the revelation received by Peter.)
Verses 13–21	Council members expressed their opinions. (James expressed his support of Peter's counsel not to require circumcision of Gentile converts and offered his opinions about related problems.)
Verses 22, 28	The council came to a united decision, which was confirmed by the Holy Ghost. (The council's decisions "seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us.")
Verses 22–30	The decision was communicated to those involved. (The decree was sent to the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia.)

Acts 15:13–29. James

James played an important role at the Jerusalem conference. He was the son of Joseph and Mary and the half-brother of Jesus Christ. At this time he was the leader of the branch of the Church in Jerusalem. Because of Jerusalem's importance, James's position in the Church was highly regarded. Paul called him an Apostle (see Galatians 1:19). He is the same James mentioned in Acts 12:17; 21:18; and 1 Corinthians 15:7. He is also the probable author of the Epistle of James.

Acts 15:22–28. The Holy Ghost Guided Leaders

In order to come to a unified decision that was in harmony with God's will, members of the Jerusalem council sought the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Speaking of the proceedings of the conference, **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** stated: "Having arrived at what they considered to be an appropriate solution—that is, adopting James' statements which were based on Peter's announcement of principle—[the council] then asked the Lord if their conclusions were true and in accord with his mind. The answer, coming by the power of the Spirit, certified to the verity of their conclusion" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:144–45). **Elder D. Todd Christofferson** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles also spoke of the Holy Ghost's role in the Jerusalem conference:

"After Paul, Barnabas, and perhaps others spoke in support of Peter's declaration, James moved that the decision be implemented by letter to the Church, and the council was united 'with one accord' (Acts 15:25; see also verses 12–23). In the letter announcing their decision, the Apostles said, 'It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us' (Acts 15:28), or in other words, this decision came by divine revelation through the Holy Spirit.

"These same patterns are followed today in the restored Church of Jesus Christ. The President of the Church may announce or interpret doctrines based on revelation to him (see, for example, D&C 138). Doctrinal exposition may also come through the combined council of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (see, for example, Official Declaration 2). Council deliberations will often include a weighing of canonized scriptures, the teachings of Church leaders, and past practice. But in the end, just as in the New Testament Church, the objective is not simply consensus among council members but revelation from God. It is a process involving both reason and faith for obtaining the mind and will of the Lord" ("The Doctrine of Christ," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 88).

Even though there were differences of opinion and "much disputing" (Acts 15:7) among Church leaders, they ultimately achieved unity as they responded to the promptings of the Holy Ghost. **President James E. Faust** (1920–2007) taught about the importance of harmony in Church councils: "In some legislative assemblies of the world, there are some groups termed the 'loyal opposition.' I find no such principle in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Savior gave us this solemn warning: 'Be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine' (D&C 38:27). The Lord made it clear that in the presiding quorums every decision 'must be by the unanimous voice of the same; that is, every member in each quorum must be agreed to its decisions' (D&C 107:27). This means that after frank and open discussion decisions are reached in council under the direction of the presiding officer, who has the ultimate authority to decide. That decision is then sustained, because our unity comes from full agreement with righteous principles and general response to the operation of the Spirit of God" ("Keeping Covenants and Honoring the Priesthood," *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 37–38).

Acts 15:23–28. Decisions of the Jerusalem Conference

Despite Church leaders' unanimous resolution to not require Gentiles to be circumcised prior to baptism, many Church members did not readily understand or accept the decision. Robert J. Matthews taught: "The action of the Jerusalem council involved a significant policy decision. . . . Peter's unmistakable experience with Cornelius makes it clear that the Brethren understood that the law of Moses was fulfilled in Christ, but evidently many members of the church did not understand. It was a matter of doctrine, tradition, culture, and emotion. Even though the Brethren had settled the matter doctrinally a decade before, considerable time passed before the matter was settled culturally and emotionally in the minds of some Jewish Christians. Furthermore, at least ten years after the council, many Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were still following the law of Moses. (Acts 21:17–25.)

"The decision of the Jerusalem council was not definitive and did not forthrightly say that the law of Moses should be discontinued. Although it declared that Gentiles did not need circumcision for salvation, it did not say that Jewish members of the church need not circumcise their sons" ("Unto All Nations," in *Studies in Scripture, Volume Six: Acts to Revelation*, ed. Robert L. Millet [1987], 39).

In the years following the Jerusalem conference, Paul still found it necessary to combat contrary teachings and attitudes wherever he went (see Romans 2–4; 1 Corinthians 7:19; Galatians 5:6; 6:15; Colossians 2:11; 3:11; Bible Dictionary, "Circumcision").

Acts 15:30–40. Contention between Paul and Barnabas

Paul and Barnabas were chosen to travel to Antioch and report on the Jerusalem council's decision. They took with them two Church leaders, Judas and Silas, "being prophets also themselves," who helped preach and strengthen Church members in Antioch (Acts 15:32). After some time, Paul suggested to Barnabas that they return to the cities they had preached in during their first missionary journey in order to visit their converts "and see how they do" (Acts 15:36). However, a disagreement between Paul and Barnabas began when Barnabas suggested that John Mark join them. John Mark, Barnabas's cousin (or nephew), had accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first mission but had departed from them early on (see Acts 13:13). Though little is known about why John Mark left or what impact it had on the other missionaries, apparently

Paul was still apprehensive about him. Ultimately Paul and Barnabas separated, with Paul choosing Silas as his new missionary companion and Barnabas choosing John Mark. Paul and John Mark were later reconciled, as evidenced in 2 Timothy 4:11 and in Colossians 4:10. Barnabas took John Mark and sailed to Cyprus (see Acts 15:39), and Paul and Silas journeyed to cities on the mainland.

Acts 15:40. Who Was Silas?

Silas was probably the "Silvanus" mentioned by Paul in several of his letters (see 2 Corinthians 1:19; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1). Silas was prominent among Church leaders in Jerusalem, and Paul chose him to accompany him on his second missionary journey. Silas was apparently the scribe for the book of 1 Peter (see 1 Peter 5:12).

Points to Ponder

- In Acts 13–15, we read accounts of Paul and others performing miracles, preaching, and following direction from the Holy Ghost. How does each of these help to bring about the conversion of souls?
- Paul was able to overcome intense opposition because of his faith in Jesus Christ. How strong is your faith and belief in Jesus Christ? How well do you stand against opposition to your faith and beliefs?

Suggested Assignments

- Carefully study the account of the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15:6–31. List four or five things the Apostles and elders did that illustrate principles of counseling together. Write a paragraph or two describing how those same principles could be followed in a family council to address issues faced by a family.

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Acts 16–20

Introduction and Timeline for Acts 16–20

From Acts 16 forward, Luke’s account focuses exclusively on the ministry of Paul, giving no more information about the activities of other Apostles. Acts 16–20 contains a record of Paul’s second and third missions. Being led by the Spirit, Paul journeyed for the first time into what we know today as Europe, where he found many individuals prepared to accept the gospel of Jesus Christ. He established churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and Corinth. Of particular prominence in these chapters is Paul’s sermon on Mars Hill in Athens (see Acts 17). There Paul taught gospel truths that stood in contrast to the philosophies prevalent in Athens. In Ephesus, local merchants and worshippers of the goddess Diana, threatened by Paul’s successful labors, created a citywide uproar against him (see Acts 19; 20:1). As Paul left Asia for Jerusalem near the completion of his

third mission, he warned Ephesian Church leaders about impending dangers and apostasy (see Acts 20:29–30).



1. Paul’s second missionary journey was about A.D. 49 to 53.
2. Paul’s third missionary journey was about A.D. 54 to 58.

Commentary for Acts 16–20

Acts 16:1–2. Paul’s Second Missionary Journey



Cities Paul visited on his second missionary journey

Paul’s second missionary journey is recorded in Acts 15:36–18:22. Paul departed on this mission with several purposes in mind: to watch over and strengthen the branches of the Church he and others established earlier (see Acts 15:36), to bring the Saints word of the decision of the Jerusalem conference (see Acts 16:4), and to begin a collection of donations for the poor in Jerusalem (see Romans 15:25–26). In Antioch, Paul chose Silas as his missionary companion (see Acts 15:40), and the two men went to Lystra. There Paul met Timothy, who joined Paul and Silas on their mission (see Acts 16:1–3). Timothy became one of Paul’s most trusted assistants.

Acts 16:6–7

As described in these verses, in what way was the Holy Ghost prompting Paul and Timothy? How has the Holy Ghost prompted you or someone you know in similar ways?

Acts 16:1–3. Why Did Paul Circumcise Timothy?

Even though Gentile converts were not required to be circumcised or to observe other rituals of the law of Moses to be saved, Paul circumcised Timothy prior to their missionary labors together “because of the Jews which were in those quarters” (Acts 16:3; see also the commentaries for Acts 15:1, 5, 24 and for Acts 15:22–28). After being circumcised, Timothy could labor more effectively among the Jews, who would feel that an uncircumcised missionary lacked respect for the God of Israel and His laws. Effective missionaries may alter behavior in some ways to avoid giving offense to those living in their fields of labor. In making these changes to accommodate others’ feelings, the missionaries would not disobey any gospel principles. For the sake of the gospel, at times Paul himself modified his behavior to reach both Jews and Gentiles (see Acts 21:20–26; 1 Corinthians 9:20–22). He also taught Gentile converts to willingly refrain from any behavior that might be perceived as offensive to the Jews, even though it may not have been prohibited by any commandment (see Romans 14:13–15; 1 Corinthians 8:9–13).

Acts 16:4–10. The Spirit Led Paul to Europe

Paul, Silas, and Timothy traveled to various branches, strengthening the Saints in their faith (see Acts 16:4–5). The Spirit forbade them from preaching the gospel in Asia at that time, so they journeyed to Troas, which was located on the western coast of Asia (modern Turkey). This 500-mile (800-kilometer) journey would have taken the missionaries about six weeks to travel on foot (see Acts 16:6–8). From Troas, the missionaries crossed for the first time into Europe and began ministering in areas of present-day Greece (see the map accompanying the commentary for Acts 16:1–2). In Acts 16:6–10, we see the Lord directing His servants to where they were needed. This journey into Europe was a turning point in the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles, for the missionaries were soon able to preach with power among people who listened to them.



Modern Apostles have had similar experiences that came from following the guidance of the Spirit. While serving a mission in England in 1840, **President Wilford Woodruff** (1807–98), then one of the Twelve Apostles, was prompted by the Spirit to go to the south of England. Through his efforts and the efforts of others serving with him, about 2,000 people were converted in the area of Herefordshire, Worcester, and Gloucester. Reflecting on this extraordinary period of his life, President Woodruff wrote: “The whole history of this Herefordshire mission shows the importance of listening to the still small voice of God and the revelations of the Holy Ghost. The Lord had a people there prepared for the Gospel. They were praying for light and truth, and the Lord sent me to them” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff* [2004], 91).

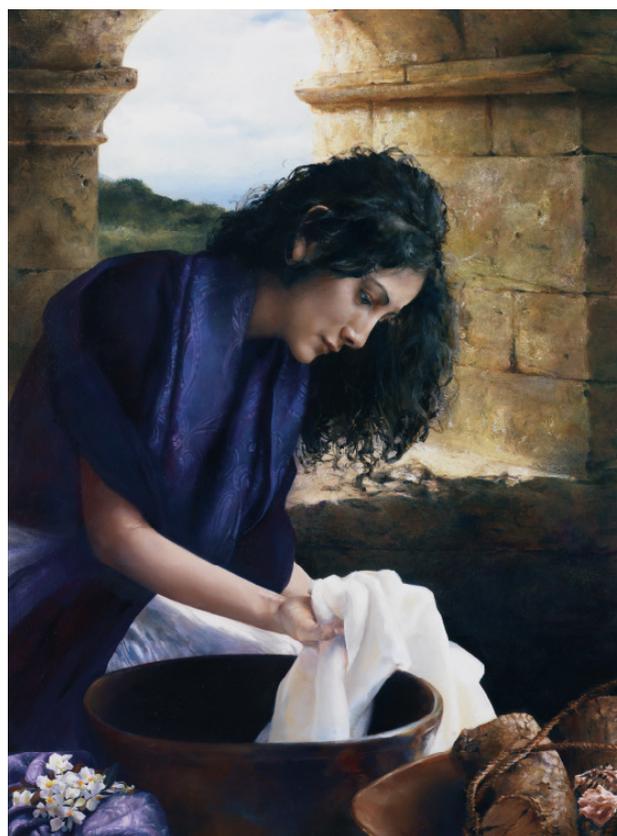
Acts 16:9; 18:9. A Vision in the Night

To read about inspired dreams being a form of revelation, see the commentary for Matthew 2:12–13, 19, 22.

Acts 16:10. The “We” Passages

The pronouns *we* and *us* that appear in Acts, beginning in Acts 16:10, indicate that this part of Luke’s record is an eyewitness account. It is likely that at or near Troas, Luke joined Paul and the other missionaries. This would explain how Luke knew many details of Paul’s ministry and why he focused so much of his record on Paul. Perhaps one reason why Paul and Silas were led by the Spirit to Troas was so that Luke might join them.

Acts 16:12–15. “Lydia, a Seller of Purple”



She Worketh Willingly with Her Hands, by Elspeth Young

While Paul and his companions were ministering in Philippi, they met a woman named Lydia from Thyatira, a city that was famous for its purple textiles. The best natural purple dye was extracted from the shells of mollusks, and the process was very expensive. Therefore in ancient times, the color purple became associated with royalty or saintliness. Lydia worked as a dyer and seller of purple cloth. She has the distinction of being Paul’s first known European convert and also the first person mentioned by name who joined the Church as a result of Paul’s second mission. She appears to have been a wealthy woman who owned her own house and

had servants, who were part of “her household” (see Acts 16:12–15). Later, believers gathered at her home for worship and instruction (see Acts 16:15, 40).

Acts 16:16–18. Paul Rebuked the Evil Spirit in the Damsel

While still in Philippi, Paul and his companions encountered a damsel with “a spirit of divination” (see Acts 16:16–18). Divination is the act of foretelling, or pretending to foretell, the future by using occult practices. Divination, which is also called soothsaying, was and is forbidden to the Lord’s people (see Deuteronomy 18:9–14; Joshua 13:22).

The evil spirit in the damsel bore witness of the divine mission of Paul and his companions, but they rebuked the spirit and cast it out of the young woman. The scriptures also record instances when evil spirits bore witness of the divinity of the Savior and His disciples but were rebuked (see the commentary for Mark 8:30).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained why the Lord and His servants reject the testimony of evil spirits: “The testimony of the devil-led damsel was true. Paul and Silas were prophets; they had the words and power of salvation. But true testimony from Satan’s servants does not lead to salvation. In effect the damsel was saying: ‘Go ahead and believe in Paul and Silas and this Jesus whom they preach. I agree they and their Master are of God; and since we are now united on that point, you can also continue to follow me and enjoy the fruits of my divination.’ And how many other practitioners of false religions there are who give lip service to Jesus and his doctrines so that people will the more readily follow them and their special brand of ‘saving’ grace. It was for the very reason here involved that Jesus himself forbade the devils whom he cast out to testify that he was the Son of God (Luke 4:41.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 2:149).

Acts 16:19–26. Prison Doors Were Opened

The deliverance of Paul and Silas from prison by an earthquake is the third account in Acts of a miraculous deliverance from prison and is part of a theme in Acts showing that Paul, like the Apostle Peter, was a recipient of the Lord’s intervention (compare Acts 5:18–20; 12:3–11). For other scriptural accounts of God delivering His servants from prison, see Alma 14:25–29 and Helaman 5:27–50.



Ruins of what may have been the jail in Philippi where Paul and Silas were kept.

Acts 16:30–34. “What Must I Do to Be Saved?”

When one considers the complete scriptural record of Paul’s teachings, it is clear that his statement to the keeper of the prison is not a complete explanation of what is required of a disciple of Jesus Christ (see Acts 16:30–31). This is implied by the fact that Paul continued to teach the jailer and his household (see Acts 16:32) and then baptized them (see Acts 16:33). Clearly, being instructed and baptized were inseparably connected with believing in Christ (see also Acts 2:37–38; 19:1–6; Galatians 3:26–27; commentary for Romans 10:4–13).

Acts 16:35–39. Magistrates Feared When They Heard Paul Was Beaten

On the morning after Paul and Silas were miraculously released from prison, the magistrates sent a message that the men should be allowed to depart in peace. But Paul said that he and Silas would not depart quietly, for they were Roman citizens and had been beaten without first receiving a trial, which was contrary to Roman law. The magistrates feared when they heard these things. However, the way Paul dealt with being beaten, imprisoned, and put in stocks may have benefited the Church in Philippi. It is likely that following Paul’s mistreatment, embarrassed Roman officials took care not to mistreat Church members. The branch of the Church in Philippi grew to become one of the strongest branches of the early Church, one for which Paul had particular affection (see Philippians 1:3–11; 4:1).

Acts 17:1–3. Paul Taught from the Scriptures

Paul and his companions entered a synagogue in Thessalonica and “reasoned with [the Jews] out of the scriptures” (Acts 17:2), providing an example for all

gospel teachers to follow. He alleged that Christ had died and risen from the dead (see Acts 17:3). The archaic meaning of *allege* is to bring forth proof, to assert, or to declare. Paul referred to scriptural passages to declare, or to provide proof, that Jesus was the Messiah. For insights on Jewish-Christian understanding that the Messiah (Christ) had to suffer and die, see the commentaries for Mark 8:27–32 and for Luke 24:13–35.

Acts 17:5–10. Paul Was Forced to Leave Thessalonica

Paul left Thessalonica because he was being persecuted by the Jews. He later sent letters back to Thessalonica that became known as 1 and 2 Thessalonians. To read more about the background of these epistles, see the “Introduction to the First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians” in chapter 46.

Acts 17:11–12. They “Searched the Scriptures Daily”



After being persecuted by unbelieving Jews in Thessalonica, Paul and his companions traveled to Berea, where they taught in the synagogue and found the Jews “more noble than those in Thessalonica” because they received the word with “readiness of

mind, and searched the scriptures daily” to determine if Paul’s teachings were true.

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) discussed how daily scripture study can lead to greater spiritual understanding: “It is certain that one who studies the scriptures every day accomplishes far more than one who devotes considerable time one day and then lets days go by before continuing. Not only should we study each day, but there should be a regular time set aside when we can concentrate without interference. . . . It would be ideal if an hour could be spent each day; but if that much cannot be had, a half hour on a regular basis would result in substantial accomplishment. A quarter of an hour is little time, but it is surprising how much enlightenment and knowledge can be acquired in a subject so meaningful” (“Reading the Scriptures,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 64).

Acts 17:15–31. Paul Preached in the City of Athens

Athens, the capital of Greece, was one of the wonders of the ancient world. Although in a state of decline by the time of Paul’s visit, Athens had formerly possessed

more intellectual genius, philosophical wisdom, and architectural splendor than any other ancient city. Its inhabitants, even during the period of decline, prided themselves on their brilliant heritage.



The Areopagus (Hill of Ares), an outcropping of rock about 377 feet (115 meters) in height. Some Bible translations refer to this as Mars Hill since the Greek god of war, Ares, was equated with the Roman god Mars.

Some people have called the city of Athens at the time of Paul’s visit the world capital of idolatry. Paul’s spirit was stirred when he arrived, for he saw the city “wholly given to idolatry” (Acts 17:16). Many Greeks were polytheists (believing in many gods). The chief men of Athens gathered in the marketplace each day to hear debates, to conduct business, and to learn something new. Since Paul’s message was new, he attracted listeners. At length, Paul was conducted to the famed “Mars’ hill” to appear before the chief judicial council (the Areopagus), to explain the “new doctrine” he taught (see Acts 17:19–21). Paul’s sermon addressed God’s true nature, man’s responsibility to God, and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul did not recite Jewish history or scripture as he typically did when teaching Jewish and God-fearing audiences (see Acts 13:16–41). Instead, he taught the Athenians by establishing areas of common ground and trying to lead his hearers from those points to true points of doctrine that were contrary to tenets of Greek philosophies and religions.

Acts 17:18. Epicureans and Stoics

In Athens, Paul encountered philosophers of the Epicureans and Stoics (see Acts 17:18). Epicureanism was named for Epicurus (341–270 B.C.). According to his philosophy, the world came into existence by chance and was without purpose or design. Epicureans believed that the gods, if they did exist, did not involve

themselves in the lives of humans and that happiness was to be found in the absence of cares and pain and the enjoyment of pleasures in moderation.

Stoicism began with the teachings of a man named Zeno (333–264 B.C.). Stoicism held that all things were created, ordered, and set in motion by divine reason. Stoics believed that man was endowed with a spark of reason and should seek harmony with the divine order of things, overcome passions, and live a moral and upright life.



Ruins of the Erechtheion, a Greek temple built in the late fifth century B.C. on the Acropolis in Athens. Paul would have seen this and many similar temples and religious shrines in Athens.

Acts 17:21. “To Hear Some New Thing”

Like ancient Athenians, many people today seek to continually learn and to talk about “new things.” **Elder Kevin R. Duncan** of the Seventy observed that in our day, when information and advice from many sources is widely available, we should remember to seek answers to our problems in what the Lord has revealed through His prophets: “This world is full of so many self-help books, so many self-proclaimed experts, so many theorists, educators, and philosophers who have advice and counsel to give on any and all subjects. With technology today, information on a myriad of subjects is available with the click of a keystroke. It is easy to get caught in the trap of looking to the ‘arm of flesh’ [D&C 1:19] for advice on everything from how to raise children to how to find happiness. While some information has merit, as members of the Church we have access to the source of pure truth, even God Himself. We would do well to search out answers to our problems and questions by investigating what the Lord has revealed through His prophets” (“Our Very Survival,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 35).

Acts 17:22–25. “The Unknown God”

Paul complimented the Athenians, acknowledging that they were “too superstitious,” meaning they were “most religious; i.e., careful in divine things” (Acts 17:22, footnote *a*). The altar built by the Athenians to the “unknown god” (verse 23) is referred to in other historical sources as an altar to the unknowable god or to all gods not specifically known by name. The Athenians had apparently built this altar to avoid offending or neglecting some unknown deity. Paul referred to this altar as he began teaching that God can indeed be known by His children. “Him declare I unto you,” Paul said, and then he taught the Athenians some of what is known of God (verse 23).

Paul taught that God “made the world and all things therein” and that He “dwelleth not in temples made with hands” (Acts 17:24; see also Acts 7:48–50). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained, “The great Creator, by whom all things are, dwelleth not in temples made by the hands of his creatures; but he is worshiped by them in his temples, which holy houses he visits occasionally, and in which sacred spots his Spirit may always be found by the faithful” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:76).

Acts 17:24–31

What truths about God do you find in these verses? How have these truths helped you to have faith in God? How have these truths affected the way you choose to live your life?

Acts 17:26. “The Bounds of Their Habitation”

Paul taught the Athenians that God “hath made of one blood all nations of men,” meaning that all people are God’s children. **President Joseph Fielding Smith** (1876–1972) taught that Paul’s words in Acts 17:26, as well as Moses’s teachings in Deuteronomy 32:7–8, “clearly indicate that the numbers of the children of Israel were known and the bounds of their habitation fixed, in the days of old when the Lord divided to the nations their inheritance. We conclude, therefore, that there must have been a division of the spirits of men in the spiritual world, and those who were appointed to be the children of Israel were separated and prepared for a special inheritance” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 1:59).

Acts 17:28–29. “We Are the Offspring of God”

In his famous address on Mars Hill, Paul quoted from the *Phaenomena*, a work by Aratus, a Cilician poet: “As certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring” (Acts 17:28). Nearly identical words occur in the “Hymn to Zeus” written by the earlier poet Cleanthes. Both Aratus and Cleanthes were Stoics. In citing these poets, Paul was establishing beliefs that he had in common with his listeners and attempting to persuade them by citing sources they considered authoritative (compare Alma 18:24–32).



Paul taught the Athenians that we are all “the offspring of God” (Acts 17:29).

President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) clarified the doctrine taught in Acts 17:29: “The Apostle Paul told the Athenians on Mars’ Hill that ‘we are the offspring of God’ [Acts 17:29]. Since we know that our physical bodies are the offspring of our mortal parents, we must probe for the meaning of Paul’s statement. The Lord has declared that ‘the spirit and the body are the soul of man’ [D&C 88:15]. Thus it is the spirit which is the offspring of God. The writer of Hebrews refers to Him as ‘the Father of spirits’ [Hebrews 12:9]” (“The Race of Life,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2012, 91).

“The Family: A Proclamation to the World” also teaches this important doctrine: “All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny” (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129).

President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency spoke of the importance of seeing ourselves first and foremost as spiritual children of God:

“Be careful how you characterize yourself. Don’t characterize or define yourself by some temporary quality. The only *single* quality that should characterize us is that we are a son or daughter of God. That fact transcends all other characteristics, including race, occupation, physical characteristics, honors, or even religious affiliation. . . .

“We have our agency, and we can choose any characteristic to define us. But we need to know that when we choose to define ourselves or to present ourselves by some characteristic that is temporary or trivial in eternal terms, we de-emphasize what is most important about us, and we overemphasize what is relatively unimportant. This can lead us down the wrong path and hinder our eternal progress” (“Be Wise” [devotional address given at Brigham Young University–Idaho, Nov. 7, 2006], byui.edu/presentations).

Acts 17:32–34. Some Mocked, and Others Believed

After Paul finished his address on Mars Hill, some Greeks mocked his teaching about the resurrection of the dead (see Acts 17:32). During the first century A.D., popular Greek philosophy held that the physical body was part of what made the soul of man impure. According to Platonic dualism, the soul of man was imprisoned in a body of flesh. Hence, the teaching that Jesus Christ had a resurrected physical body would have seemed foolish to many Greeks (see 1 Corinthians 1:23) because they believed God to be pure and perfect. They might ask, “Why would a god receive back the limitations of a physical body?” Also, Plato’s idea of divine impassibility (God’s inability to suffer or feel pain) would make it difficult for many Greeks to accept Jesus as God’s Son, one who came to earth in a corruptible body that was subject to sickness, disease, and death and who lived as a servant to mankind.

Acts 17:34. Dionysius

Dionysius was one of those who believed Paul’s teaching (see Acts 17:34). He was called “the Areopagite,” probably meaning that he was a member of the Areopagus, the judicial council that met at Mars Hill. According to tradition, he became a bishop in the Church in Athens. In later years a church named after Dionysius was built on the north slope of the hill, remains of which can be seen today.

Acts 18:1–3. A Tentmaker

Paul traveled to Corinth, where he worked in his trade as a tentmaker to support himself. He may have worked in his trade in other cities in order to avoid being a burden on the Saints he served (see Acts 20:33–34; 1 Corinthians 9:13–18; 2 Corinthians 11:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:7–10).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie noted, “Jesus was a carpenter, Peter a fisherman, Matthew a tax collector; Brigham Young was a carpenter, painter, and glazier, Heber J. Grant a businessman, David O. McKay a teacher; Paul and Aquila were tentmakers. . . . Work is honorable, indeed is an essential part of one’s mortal probation” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:163).

Acts 18:6; 20:26. Paul Shook His Raiment

When the Jews in the synagogue in Corinth rejected his teaching, Paul shook his raiment and declared, “Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean” (Acts 18:6). In so doing, he was following the Israelite custom of enacting his blamelessness from the sins of those he taught. The Book of Mormon alludes to this practice (see 2 Nephi 9:44; Jacob 1:19; Mosiah 2:27). When Paul declared, “I will go unto the Gentiles,” he was stating that the Jews would no longer be his top priority in teaching the gospel (Acts 18:6).

Acts 18:12–17. Paul Concludes His Second Mission



The name Gallio (ΓΑΛΛΙΩ) can be seen in the center of the fourth line of this ancient inscription. Paul was accused before the Roman official Gallio. This inscription establishes that Gallio served in Corinth in A.D. 51–52. It is one of the most valuable historical artifacts for determining the dates of Paul’s missions and epistles.

Paul ministered in Corinth for 18 months. Many of the Corinthians accepted the gospel, fulfilling the promise of the Lord recorded in Acts 18:9–10. During his time in Corinth, a group of Jews tried to stop Paul’s preaching

by accusing him of wrongdoing before the Roman official Gallio, “the deputy of Achaia” (see Acts 18:12–17). Gallio told them that their accusations against Paul were not matters to concern him and “drove them from the judgment seat.” Paul continued his ministry in Corinth for some time, and his departure from that city marked the end of his second mission.

Acts 18:23. Commencement of Paul’s Third Missionary Journey



Cities Paul visited on his third missionary journey

Paul’s third missionary journey, recorded in Acts 18:23–21:15, was the longest of his missions, both in terms of duration (three and a half to four years, about A.D. 54–58) and in distance covered (over 3,500 miles or 5,600 kilometers). Paul visited congregations he had established in his first two journeys, and spent three years at Ephesus, a location he had not previously visited (see Acts 19:10; 20:31). The account of Paul’s third mission portrays his growing influence and effectiveness as a theologian, preacher, writer, and faithful servant of Jesus Christ. During this mission Paul wrote 1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans, and perhaps others of his epistles. During Paul’s second mission he had spread word of the need to make a collection for the poor in Jerusalem. One of his prime concerns on his third journey was to collect these donated funds.

Acts 19:1–6. Baptism Must Be Followed by Receiving the Gift of the Holy Ghost

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) offered the following help in understanding Paul’s experience in Ephesus, as recorded in Acts 19:1–6: “Baptism was the essential point on which [the disciples] could receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. It seems . . . that some sectarian Jew had been baptizing like John, but had forgotten to inform them that there was one to follow by the name of Jesus Christ, to baptize with fire and the Holy Ghost:—which showed these converts that their first

baptism was illegal, and when they heard this they were gladly baptized, and after hands were laid on them, they received the gifts, according to promise, and spake with tongues and prophesied” (“Baptism,” editorial published in *Times and Seasons*, Sept. 1, 1842, 904; spelling modernized; Joseph Smith was the editor of the periodical).

Acts 19:11–12. Healed by the Touch of a Handkerchief

Acts 19:11–12 records remarkable miracles of healing that were wrought by God through Paul. Items that Paul had handled were taken to the sick, and they were healed. (See Acts 5:14–16 for the account of similar healings.)

Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught: “Healings come by the power of faith; there is no healing virtue or power in any item of clothing or other object, whether owned by Paul or Jesus or anyone. But rites and objects may be used to help increase faith” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:169). The people in Ephesus had sufficient faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that they were healed when Paul’s handkerchiefs or aprons were brought to them. In our day, the ordinance of anointing the sick with consecrated oil helps to increase the faith of those involved and helps them call upon God’s power and mercy.

Latter-day Saint history contains a similar experience from the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith. A miraculous healing occurred on July 22, 1839, after the Prophet had healed many individuals near the small town of Montrose, Iowa, and was waiting for a boat to take him home. **President Wilford Woodruff** recalled: “While waiting for the ferry-boat, a man of the world, knowing of the miracles which had been performed, came to [Joseph Smith] and asked him if he would not go and heal two twin children of his, about five months old, who were both lying sick nigh unto death. They were some two miles from Montrose. The Prophet said he could not go; but, after pausing some time, he said he would send some one to heal them; and he turned to me and said: ‘You go with the man and heal his children.’ He took a red silk handkerchief out of his pocket and gave it to me, and told me to wipe their faces with the handkerchief when I administered to them, and they should be healed. . . . I went with the man, and did as the Prophet commanded me, and the children were healed” (Wilford Woodruff, *Leaves from My Journal* [1881], 65).

Acts 19:13–20. “Jesus I Know, and Paul I Know; but Who Are Ye?”

False priests, who were sons of the chief priest in Ephesus, attempted to cast an evil spirit out of a man. The evil spirit answered and said, “Jesus I know, and

Paul I know; but who are ye?” (Acts 19:15). The man with the evil spirit then attacked the false priests and overcame them. This experience teaches the principle that unembodied spirits who follow Satan recognize priesthood authority.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie said of false priests: “In imitation of the true order whereby devils are cast out of people, false ministers (having no actual priesthood power) attempt to cast them out by *exorcism*. This ungodly practice was probably more common anciently than it is now, because few people today believe either in miracles or in the casting out of literal devils. But over the years it has not been uncommon for so-called priests to attempt to expel evil spirits from persons or drive them away from particular locations by incantations, conjuration, or adjuration” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 259).

Acts 19:23–35. “Diana of the Ephesians”



The goddess Artemis

Paul’s success in bringing people to Christ’s Church negatively affected the economy of Ephesus, which relied upon income from visitors to the Temple of Artemis. Artemis was the Greek name for the Roman goddess Diana, and the temple built to her in Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It drew pilgrims from all over the empire, as well as local merchants who earned their living selling temple visitors food, lodging, dedicatory offerings, and souvenirs.



The theater at Ephesus

Craftsmen who made and sold images of the goddess provoked a public uprising against Paul and his message. A large crowd gathered in the theater at Ephesus, which could hold 24,000 people, and chanted for two hours, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians” (see Acts 19:23–34). Paul wanted to address the crowd, but he was dissuaded by Church members and government authorities who were concerned for his safety (see Acts 19:30–31). Shortly thereafter, Paul left the city, traveling through Greece and Macedonia and strengthening Church members.

Acts 20:7–12. The First Day of the Week

Acts 20:7–12 records that Paul participated in the ordinance of the sacrament with other Christians. In celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, Christians partook of the sacrament on the first day of the week (see verse 7; see also John 20:1). This same pattern is followed in the Church today. While Paul was preaching to the assembled disciples, a young man named Eutychus was accidentally killed, and Paul’s exercise of priesthood power restored him to life. With the raising of Eutychus from death, Paul joined with others who exercised this priesthood power—men like the Savior, Peter, Elijah, and Elisha.

Acts 20:17–38. Paul’s Farewell to the Elders of Ephesus

Paul’s farewell to Church leaders from Ephesus is filled with tenderness and strength of testimony. He spoke of his service among them and the conviction the Spirit gave him that he would not see them again, for he knew that his return to Jerusalem would put his life in danger. Paul’s words in Acts 20:22–26 are reminiscent of similar words spoken by the Prophet Joseph Smith shortly before his Martyrdom: “I am going like a lamb to the slaughter; but I am calm as a summer’s morning; I have a conscience void of offense towards God, and towards all men” (D&C 135:4).

Acts 20:28

What admonition did Paul give to Church leaders in this verse? How have you seen bishops or branch presidents follow this counsel? How do these leaders help to protect Church members against evil?

Acts 20:28. Feeding the Flock of God

Knowing of the Apostasy that would soon begin among the Ephesian Saints, Paul admonished Church leaders to “feed the church of God” (Acts 20:28). One of the most important ways Church leaders do this is

by nourishing members with the “good word of God” (Moroni 6:4; Alma 31:5). To be nourished by the word of God is one of the greatest protections against apostasy.

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles expressed how Church members seek spiritual nourishment today: “Most people don’t come to church looking merely for a few new gospel facts or to see old friends, though all of that is important. They come seeking a spiritual experience. They want peace. They want their faith fortified and their hope renewed. They want, in short, to be nourished by the good word of God, to be strengthened by the powers of heaven. Those of us who are called upon to speak or teach or lead have an obligation to help provide that, as best we possibly can” (“A Teacher Come from God,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 26; see also commentary for John 21:15–17).

Acts 20:29–30. Paul Warned of the Coming Apostasy

As he bade farewell to the Church leaders in Ephesus, Paul warned them that an apostasy was coming and that it would be the result of forces working both outside the Church (“grievous wolves”) and inside the Church (“of your own selves”) (Acts 20:29–30). The Greek word *apostasia*, which was translated as “falling away” in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, is closer in meaning to “rebellion” or “revolution.” Thus, Church members themselves contributed to the Great Apostasy by rebelling against Church leaders and doctrine (see the commentary for 2 Thessalonians 2:3). Priestcraft was an important element of this internal rebellion. Paul’s words in Acts 20:30 provide a definition of priestcraft (see also 2 Nephi 26:29).

Elder James E. Talmage (1862–1933) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles affirmed Paul’s message: “Not only would outsiders ingratiate themselves with the saints for purposes of selfish gain—wolves entering in, and not sparing the flock,—but schisms and divisions were imminent; and these dissensions were to come through some then present—men who would aspire to leadership, and who would set up their own doctrines, thus drawing disciples away from the Church and unto themselves” (*The Great Apostasy* [1968], 28).

Discussing the origins of the Great Apostasy, **President Joseph Fielding Smith** declared that some of it was the result of evil men who moved in and displaced the authority of the Apostles: “In time all ordinances of the gospel were changed, commandments were broken, and the simple principles of the gospel were mixed with pagan philosophy by the ‘grievous wolves’ and apostate disciples who displaced the prophets and apostles

who had divine communion with the heavens. Spiritual darkness set in, and unrighteous men took command and closed the heavens against themselves. Visions and contact with the heavens ceased, and the gifts of the spirit came to an end. The blessings and presence of the Twelve Apostles ceased, and the cry went forth that they were no longer needed” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, 5 vols. [1957–66], 5:177).

Acts 20:35. “More Blessed to Give Than to Receive”



As Saints throughout the world provide service to others, they follow the Savior’s admonition, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). In this photo, two young women from Korea fill bags with hygiene items for those in disaster areas throughout the world.

As part of his final counsel to the Ephesian Church leaders, Paul encouraged them to follow his example by working to provide for themselves and to assist the poor. In so doing, he quoted “words of the Lord Jesus” that are not found in any of the four Gospels: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). **President Thomas S. Monson** recalled how one of his boyhood teachers taught his Primary class the importance of this teaching. The lesson came after his Primary class had slowly saved money for a long-awaited class Christmas party:

“None of us will forget that gray morning when our beloved teacher announced to us that the mother of one of our classmates had passed away. We thought of our own mothers and how much they meant to us. We felt sincere sorrow for Billy Devenport in his great loss.

“The lesson this Sunday was from the book of Acts, chapter 20, verse 35: ‘Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ At the conclusion of the presentation of a well-prepared lesson, Lucy Gertsch commented on

the economic situation of Billy’s family. These were Depression times, and money was scarce. With a twinkle in her eyes, she asked: ‘How would you like to follow this teaching of our Lord? How would you feel about taking our party fund and, as a class, giving it to the Devenports as an expression of our love?’ The decision was unanimous. We counted so carefully each penny and placed the total sum in a large envelope. A beautiful card was purchased and inscribed with our names.

“This simple act of kindness welded us together as one. We learned through our own experience that it is indeed more blessed to give than to receive” (“Your Personal Influence,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2004, 21–22).

Points to Ponder

- Consider the ways in which Paul was an effective missionary. What can you do to become better at sharing the gospel? How can you be a better friend to those who are investigating the Church?
- Paul used the scriptures to teach of the Atonement of Jesus Christ (see Acts 17:2–3). What scriptures would you use to teach someone about the Savior’s Atonement?

Suggested Assignments

- Read Acts 16:6–10; 18:9–11. Write a paragraph explaining the ways the Holy Ghost directed Paul and his companions during their journey. Write a second paragraph describing how the Spirit has directed your efforts to share the gospel. Be sure to include at least one thing you could do to receive more of the Spirit’s guidance in your life.
- Read Acts 17:24–31, and write a series of statements that summarize what Paul taught the Athenians about the true nature of God. Write a short explanation of the difference between believing that we are God’s offspring and believing that we are merely His creations.

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Acts 21–28

Introduction and Timeline for Acts 21–28

The events of Paul's ministry recorded in Acts 21–28 have notable similarities with the conclusion of the Savior's mortal ministry. Both Paul and Jesus Christ traveled to Jerusalem; on the way, both foretold hardships that would come upon them in Jerusalem; both faced a plot by certain Jews in Jerusalem; both were arrested and handed over to Gentile authorities; both were tried before the Jewish council and a Roman governor. This portrayal of Paul is part of a theme in Acts emphasizing the continuity between Jesus Christ and His Apostles who followed Him.

In these chapters, Paul gave five speeches defending himself before religious and civil authorities in Jerusalem and Caesarea, culminating in his masterful defense before Agrippa (see Acts 22:1–21; 23:1–10; 24:10–21; 25:8–11; 26:1–29). Paul used these opportunities not only to defend himself against unjust charges, but also to bear testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ. These speeches represent fulfillments of the Lord's prophecy that Paul would testify before kings and rulers (see Acts 9:15). In addition, Paul's

journey to Rome helped fulfill Jesus's commission to the Apostles to take the gospel "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).



1. Paul traveled to Jerusalem to deliver the donations he had gathered for the poor, about A.D. 58.
2. Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea from spring A.D. 58 through fall A.D. 60.
3. Paul traveled by sea to Rome while under arrest, fall A.D. 60 to spring A.D. 61.

Commentary for Acts 21–28

Acts 21:1–12. Paul Finished His Third Mission

As Paul concluded his third mission, he journeyed toward Jerusalem, stopping at various cities along the way. In Caesarea, he stayed with "Philip the evangelist" (Acts 21:8). In the New Testament, an evangelist was one who preached the gospel (see the commentary for Ephesians 4:11). Philip had earlier been called by the Apostles to assist them in caring for the needs of the Church (see Acts 6:5; 8:5–13). While Paul and his fellow laborers were staying at the home of Philip, "a certain prophet, named Agabus" visited them and prophesied that Paul would be bound if he continued on to Jerusalem (Acts 21:10). It is obvious that Agabus had the Spirit of the Lord with him, for Paul was later bound in Jerusalem (see Acts 21:33).

Acts 21:10–14

What consequences did Paul sense would come if he followed the Spirit's direction to go to Jerusalem? What does this teach you about Paul's commitment to the Lord? What are you willing to endure in order to fulfill the Lord's will concerning you?

Acts 21:13. "I Am Ready Not to Be Bound Only, but Also to Die"

Paul, who once persecuted and consented to the death of Christians (see Acts 8:1–3; 9:1; 22:4, 20; 26:9–11), was now ready to suffer persecution and even death for the Lord Jesus Christ. For some time Paul had sensed that in Jerusalem he would face opposition (see Romans 15:30–31). Yet he was determined to go in person to deliver the donations he had gathered for the poor Jerusalem Saints. From Paul's determination to go to Jerusalem, we learn that even if a certain course in life will bring adversity, it may still be the right path to pursue. We also learn that we should put the Lord first regardless of the consequences.

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) described the convictions of true disciples of Jesus Christ: "Men changed for Christ will be captained by Christ. . . . Their will is swallowed up in His will. (See John 5:30.) They do always those things that please the Lord. (See John 8:29.) Not only would they die for the Lord, but more important they want to live for Him" ("Born of God," *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 6).

Acts 21:17–21. Jewish Christians and the Law of Moses

When Paul arrived in Jerusalem, he discovered that many Jewish converts were troubled by reports that he had been speaking out against the law of Moses during his missions, and particularly against the practice of circumcision. The implications of the Jerusalem conference’s decisions concerning the law of Moses (see Acts 15:6–31) were still unclear to many Church members.

According to the Bible Dictionary, “the Church under direction of Peter and the Twelve, and acting under the guidance of the Spirit, declared that circumcision was not obligatory for gentile converts. However, it apparently did not settle the matter of whether or not Jewish members of the Church should have their children circumcised. As one reads the scriptures on the matter, it becomes evident that the real issue was not circumcision only but also the larger question as to continued observance of the law of Moses by members of the Church. . . .

“The Jewish part of the church membership, especially in Jerusalem, appears to have been very reluctant to cease from the rituals and ceremony of the law of Moses (Acts 21:17–25). This is a marked contrast to the Church among the Nephites, in which there seems to have been a cessation of the law immediately upon their awareness of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (3 Ne. 15:1–4; Moro. 8:8)” (Bible Dictionary, “Circumcision”).

Acts 21:21–37. Jewish Purification Rites

It is evident from Acts 21:21 that Jewish Christians in Jerusalem had misunderstood Paul’s teachings about the law of Moses. Even though Paul and the other Apostles had taught that circumcision was not a requirement for Gentile converts, they had not discouraged Jewish converts from following the practice or from observing other aspects of the law of Moses. Jewish Christians continued to worship in the temple (see Acts 2:46; 3:1; 5:19–25, 42), and Paul still considered himself an observant Jew (see Acts 22:3; Romans 11:1; 2 Corinthians 11:22; Philippians 3:4–6).

To help dispel ill feelings toward Paul, Church leaders encouraged Paul to participate in the weeklong temple purification rites that observant Jews customarily underwent after traveling in Gentile lands. Paul’s public observance of these temple rites would demonstrate that he did not teach against the law of Moses or the temple, as was rumored. Sidney B. Sperry, a Latter-day Saint scholar, explained:

“The Apostle, realizing the gravity of the problem and knowing that it was important to hold the Jewish and Gentile groups of the Church together, readily agreed to assume the role of peacemaker. . . . The Temple rituals would occupy seven days of purification and sacrifice. Paul would pay for the four lambs and eight pigeons used for sacrifice and would attend the four men in their Temple appearances and rituals. . . . In so doing the Apostle would be obliged to cross the Court of the Gentiles and the Court of the Women, enter the Court of Israel, and finally approach the altar on which burnt offerings were made. He was bound to be in full view of either friend or foe in these Temple areas” (*Paul’s Life and Letters* [1955], 208–9).

Paul followed the Church elders’ suggestion that he visit the temple and participate in the Jewish purification rites. At one point, Jews from Asia confronted Paul in the temple and caused a riot against him. They accused him of teaching against the law of Moses and the temple and of bringing a Gentile into the inner courts of the temple, where Gentiles were forbidden (see also the commentary for Ephesians 2:12–14, 18–19). Though Paul was innocent of these charges (see Acts 21:29), they were capital offenses, and Paul’s life was in peril as the crowd dragged him out of the temple and began to beat him.

The term “castle” in Acts 21:34, 37 refers to the Antonia Fortress, which was the military barracks where the Roman soldiers stayed.

Acts 21:38. “Art Not Thou That Egyptian?”

A Roman captain, later identified as Claudius Lysias (see Acts 23:26), and several soldiers broke up the mob that was assaulting Paul and took him into custody. The chief captain questioned Paul, mistakenly believing that Paul was an Egyptian rebel. About three years prior to that time, an Egyptian Jew had raised a large following in the wilderness and brought them to the Mount of Olives. He promised his followers that the walls of Jerusalem would crumble when they approached and that they would be able to drive out the Romans with ease. Felix, the Roman governor, met them with his army and defeated them, but he was unable to capture their leader, who still remained a fugitive.

Acts 21:39–22:23. Paul Preached to the Jews Who Opposed Him

Realizing that Paul was not a rebel, the Roman captain allowed Paul to address the crowd who had assailed

him. The crowd at the temple listened to Paul tell his conversion story until he mentioned being sent to the Gentiles. At that point, they reacted with animosity, casting off their outer cloaks and throwing dust into the air—acts by which Jews commonly expressed abhorrence and indignation.



Arrest of Paul, by Simon H. Vedder

Acts 22:24–30. Paul Invoked His Rights as a Roman Citizen

The Roman chief captain could not understand Paul’s speech, which was delivered in Aramaic, nor could he discover why the crowd was angry at Paul. Therefore the captain ordered that Paul be scourged, or whipped, and questioned. A scourge, which was a whip or lash made of long strips of leather that were studded with bits of metal or bone and fastened in a wooden handle, was a weapon of torture that could maim and even kill. In response to the order, Paul protested that he was a Roman citizen and was therefore protected from examination by torture. Roman citizenship carried with it important privileges and was not easily obtained, as made clear by the conversation recorded in Acts 22:24–30.

Acts 22:30–23:10. Paul Appeared before a Jewish Council

When Paul was brought before the Jewish council, the high priest ordered that Paul be struck in the face. This violated Jewish law, which protected accused persons from being punished until found guilty. Paul’s angry response was not purposefully disrespectful to the high priest; he simply failed to recognize the high priest, perhaps because he had been away from Jerusalem for so long. When he realized that he had reviled the high priest, Paul immediately expressed deference to the office, if not the man.

Realizing that the council was composed of two factions—the Pharisees and the Sadducees—Paul cleverly turned the members of the council against one another by declaring that he was a Pharisee and believed in the Resurrection. The Pharisees on the council then defended Paul against the Sadducees, who did not believe in the Resurrection.

Acts 23:6; 24:15, 21; 26:8, 23

What seems to have been one of the central focuses of Paul’s testimony? What have you done to make this doctrine a part of your personal testimony?

Acts 23:10–11. Paul Was Visited by the Savior

Fearing that Paul would be “pulled in pieces” by the angry multitude, the chief captain took Paul into protective custody (Acts 23:10). While Paul was being detained by the Roman soldiers, the resurrected Savior visited him and assured him that he would live to bear his testimony in Rome.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles discussed this visit: “In his persecuted and straitened state, Paul needed comfort and assurance from on high. How shall such be given him? The Lord could have sent an angel; he could have spoken by the power of the Holy Spirit to the spirit within Paul; or he could have opened the heavens and let him see again the wonders of eternity. But this time—thanks to his valiant service, his unwearied devotion, his willingness to suffer even unto death in the Cause of Christ—this time Paul was blessed with the personal ministrations of the Lord of heaven himself. Jesus stood at his side. Without question much was said and much transpired, of which there has been preserved to us only the promise that the Lord’s special apostle would yet bear witness of the Master in Rome” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–1973], 2:191).

Acts 23:12–15. A Conspiracy to Kill Paul

A group of Jews “bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul” (Acts 23:12). This conspiracy was similar to the secret combinations described in the Book of Mormon. Secret combinations work under a cloak of secrecy and are characterized by formal oath making, threats of violence (including murder) and plunder, and the seeking of gain and power (see Alma 37:25–31; Helaman 6:16–31; Ether 8:13–26).

Acts 23:16–24:21. Paul on Trial before Felix

Paul’s nephew heard of the secret plot to kill Paul and quickly told Paul, who sent him to inform the Roman officers. The chief captain, knowing that Paul was a Roman citizen, made arrangements to have Paul escorted by a contingent of soldiers to Caesarea to appear at a trial before the Roman governor Felix. Several Jewish priests from Jerusalem attended Paul’s trial in Caesarea, and they hired Tertullus, a Roman lawyer and orator, to convince Felix of Paul’s alleged wrongdoings.



RICHARD L. W. CLEAVE

Paul was taken as a prisoner to the Roman governor Felix in Caesarea (see Acts 23:33). During the years 25–13 B.C. Herod the Great had an impressive harbor and city built at Caesarea, the remains of which are still visible today.

The charges levied against Paul were that he was a “pestilent fellow” (meaning he was an annoyance who endangered society), that he was the leader of a seditious group, and that he had profaned the temple

(see Acts 24:5–6). (A similar charge of sedition had been brought against the Savior; see Luke 23:2, 5; John 18:30.) After listening respectfully to Tertullus’s oratory, Paul skillfully deflected the charges against him, stating that even though 12 days had passed since he was accused, no credible witnesses had been found to testify against him. He also affirmed his loyalty to God and mentioned that he had come to Jerusalem to deliver alms, showing that his purpose was to relieve suffering and not to incite rebellion.

Acts 24:14–15. “The Way”

In Acts, the term “the way” is often used to refer to Christianity; it denotes the path or course of Christians (see also Acts 9:1–2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:22). Central to Christian belief is the doctrine that Jesus Christ is “the way” of salvation (John 14:6) and that through Him all will be resurrected (see John 5:28–29; 1 Corinthians 15:21–22). Paul declared that the real reason the Jews opposed him was his belief in the Resurrection (see Acts 24:14–15). However, he asserted that his message of the Resurrection was not heresy but was identical to the long-held hope of the Jewish nation (see Acts 26:6–8; 28:20). **President Thomas S. Monson** (1927–2018) spoke of the universal hope that the Resurrection of Christ can bring to us all:

“Through tears and trials, through fears and sorrows, through the heartache and loneliness of losing loved ones, there is assurance that life is everlasting. Our Lord and Savior is the living witness that such is so.

“With all my heart and the fervency of my soul, I lift up my voice in testimony as a special witness and declare that God does live. Jesus is His Son, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. He is our Redeemer; He is our Mediator with the Father. He it was who died on the cross to atone for our sins. He became the firstfruits of the Resurrection. Because He died, all shall live again” (“I Know That My Redeemer Lives!” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 25).

Acts 24:16. “A Conscience Void of Offense” (see also Acts 23:1)

President Russell M. Nelson spoke about what it means to have a conscience void of offense toward God and man:

“One day each of us will give an account to the Lord. This awareness was evident in a serious conversation I had years ago with a dear friend facing the end of his mortal life. I asked him if he was ready to die. I’ll never

forget his answer. With courage and conviction, he said, 'My life is ready for inspection.'

"When the Prophet Joseph Smith faced death, he said, 'I am going like a lamb to the slaughter; but I am calm as a summer's morning; I have a conscience void of offense towards God, and towards all men' [D&C 135:4].

"Now is the time to prepare for your own ultimate interview. You might ask yourself: 'Do I pay tithing with a willing heart? Do I obey the Word of Wisdom? Is my language free from obscenities and swearing? Am I morally righteous? Am I truly grateful for the Atonement that makes my resurrection a reality and eternal life a possibility? Do I honor temple covenants that seal loved ones to me forever?'" ("Personal Priesthood Responsibility," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2003, 44–45).

Acts 24:24–26. "When I Have a Convenient Season"

Felix's time as Roman governor was marked by cruelty and licentiousness. Felix kept Paul in prison for two years, hoping to extort money from him (see Acts 24:25–26). Despite his corrupt nature, Felix was deeply moved by Paul's testimony of Jesus Christ but delayed hearing him further, saying that he would call for Paul later when he had a "convenient season" (Acts 24:25).

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counseled Church members to make decisions based on more than mere convenience: "Sometimes we are tempted to let our lives be governed more by convenience than by covenant. It is not always convenient to live gospel standards and stand up for truth and testify of the Restoration. It usually is not convenient to share the gospel with others. It isn't always convenient to respond to a calling in the Church, especially one that stretches our abilities. Opportunities to serve others in meaningful ways, as we have covenanted to do, rarely come at convenient times. But there is no spiritual power in living by convenience. The power comes as we keep our covenants" ("Like a Flame Unquenchable," *Ensign*, May 1999, 86).

Acts 24:27; 25:9. "Willing to Shew the Jews a Pleasure"

Rather than release Paul, Felix courted the favor of the Jews by leaving Paul in prison for two years (see Acts 24:27). Felix's successor, Porcius Festus, acted with similar political interest when he proposed to send Paul to Jerusalem, where Paul's enemies hoped to

kill him (see Acts 25:3, 9). **President James E. Faust** (1920–2007) of the First Presidency spoke against acting solely to gain the approval of others: "Men and women often attempt to gain notice and approval of the group from whom they seek acceptance. Such peer pressure may cause them to do things they would not otherwise do. This is acting out of weakness, not strength" ("The Power of Self-Mastery," *Ensign*, May 2000, 43–44).

Acts 25:11. Paul Appealed to Caesar

Paul realized that his life would be in danger if he returned to Jerusalem to be tried, as Festus suggested he do. Therefore, Paul chose to appeal to Caesar instead. As a Roman citizen, Paul had the right to appeal to have his case tried directly before Caesar in Rome.

Acts 25:13–22. Herod Agrippa II

Herod Agrippa II (also called Marcus Julius Agrippa) was the seventh and last king in the Jewish Herodian dynasty. He ruled the territory northeast of the Sea of Galilee from about A.D. 55 to 93. He was the son of Herod Agrippa I, who ordered the death of James and imprisoned Peter (see Acts 12:1–4); the grandson of Herod Antipas, who had John the Baptist beheaded (see Matthew 14:1–12); and the great-grandson of Herod the Great, who ordered the slaughter of the infants of Bethlehem (see Matthew 2:16).

Agrippa's kingdom lay to the north of Festus's territory. Agrippa and his sister Bernice (whom some believed he was having an incestuous affair with) visited Festus in Caesarea while Paul was imprisoned there. Because Agrippa was a Jew and was therefore more familiar with Jewish affairs than Festus, who was a Roman, Festus hoped that Agrippa could help him understand the accusations against Paul and also help draft his letter to Caesar (see Acts 25:24–27; 26:3).

Acts 25:23–26:29. Paul's Defense before Agrippa

When Paul spoke before King Agrippa, he recounted how he had persecuted Christians as a Pharisee, how he had seen a vision on the road to Damascus, and how he had thereafter preached the gospel. In this defense before Agrippa, Paul took a different approach than he had taken when he spoke before the Roman governor Felix (see Acts 24:10–21). To the governor, Paul had emphasized that he was innocent of sedition—the charge that would have been of most concern to a Roman ruler. To Agrippa, who was Jewish, Paul emphasized his faithfulness as a Jew. Discerning that Agrippa

believed the writings of the Jewish prophets (see Acts 26:27), Paul explained that his teachings to Jews and Gentiles were in the tradition of the prophets (see Acts 26:22–23; compare Isaiah 42:6; 49:6).

Acts 26:19–21, 24–25. Differences in Paul’s Accounts of His Vision of Jesus Christ

During his defense, Paul recounted his vision of the Savior on the road to Damascus. The book of Acts contains several accounts of Paul’s vision, and each account differs to some degree (see Acts 9:3–20; 22:4–21; 26:9–19; see also Galatians 1:15–16). For example, the description of the “light” is different in each account (see Acts 9:3; Acts 22:6; Acts 26:13); only Acts 9:17 indicates that Ananias restored Paul’s sight by the laying on of hands; and the account in Acts 26 provides less detail about what Paul’s companions experienced.

Furthermore, in the account Paul gave to Agrippa, Paul blended the words of three different revelations as though they were one: the words the Lord spoke to Paul on the road to Damascus (compare Acts 26:14–16 with Acts 9:4–6; 22:7–10); the words Ananias later spoke to Paul (compare Acts 26:16 with Acts 22:15); and the words the Lord spoke to Paul still later in a vision at Jerusalem (compare Acts 26:17 with Acts 22:21). These variations are likely due to the different audiences and purposes of each account.

Some critics have found fault with the Prophet Joseph Smith because there are variations in the several recorded accounts of his First Vision. However, as with Paul, these variations do not discredit the essential truth that the Prophet saw a vision of Heavenly Father and the Savior.

Acts 26:19. “Not Disobedient unto the Heavenly Vision”

Paul declared to Agrippa that he had been true to the heavenly vision he received. Like Paul, we should obey the directions we receive from the Lord, whether they come in the form of promptings from the Holy Ghost, the words of scriptures, or the voice of living prophets.

President Ezra Taft Benson taught:

“The great test of life is obedience to God. ‘We will prove them herewith,’ said the Lord, ‘to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them’ (Abraham 3:25).

“The great task of life is to learn the will of the Lord and then do it.

*“The great commandment of life is to love the Lord” (“The Great Commandment—Love the Lord,” *Ensign*, May 1988, 4).*

Acts 26:24–28

Compare the reactions of Festus (a Roman) and Agrippa (a Jew) to Paul’s testimony. What prevents people in our day from fully accepting the truth when they hear it?

Acts 26:21. Both Paul and Joseph Smith Were Persecuted

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) compared the persecution he experienced after his First Vision to the experiences of the Apostle Paul:

“I felt much like Paul, when he made his defense before King Agrippa, and related the account of the vision he had when he saw a light, and heard a voice; but still there were but few who believed him; some said he was dishonest, others said he was mad; and he was ridiculed and reviled. But all this did not destroy the reality of his vision. He had seen a vision, he knew he had, and all the persecution under heaven could not make it otherwise; and though they should persecute him unto death, yet he knew, and would know to his latest breath, that he had both seen a light and heard a voice speaking unto him, and all the world could not make him think or believe otherwise.

“So it was with me. I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true. . . . I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it” (Joseph Smith—History 1:24–25).

Acts 26:26. “This Thing Was Not Done in a Corner”

Paul testified of the gospel (see Acts 26:18) and of the Savior’s death and Resurrection (see verse 23) to both Festus and King Agrippa, who was a Jew. After Festus objected to his teachings (see verse 24), Paul declared to King Agrippa that the king knew what he was teaching, “for this thing was not done in a corner” (verse 26). The truth of the gospel is not hidden or “done in a corner,” but rather it is a light shining on a hill. This was true in the Savior’s day and in Paul’s day, and it is true in our day as well.

Acts 26:22–31. “Almost Thou Persuadest Me to Be a Christian”

Acts 26:22–29 provides us with a glimpse into Paul’s teaching style. He taught what all prophets, including Moses, have taught—that Jesus Christ should suffer, die, and “rise from the dead” (Acts 26:23; see also Jacob 4:4; D&C 52:9). Paul recognized that King Agrippa knew the truth of these teachings, and Paul wished that the king would make a total commitment to the truth (see Acts 26:27, 29). Instead, Agrippa’s reply, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:28), shows that Agrippa chose not to act on his knowledge that Paul had taught the truth.



Valiant in the Testimony of Jesus Christ, by Daniel A. Lewis.
Paul before King Agrippa

President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) applied the words of King Agrippa to members of the Church who attempt to excuse themselves from obedience:

“A good bishop made an interesting comment about what he called the saddest words that he knows of a man in high station. He read from the words in the days of the Apostle Paul when Paul before King Agrippa had borne his powerful testimony of his conversion. King Agrippa’s reply was, ‘Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.’ (Acts 26:28.) Then the bishop said, ‘The king knew the truth but he lacked the courage to do that which would be required. . . .’

“And then [the bishop] characterized some things that he discovered in his own ward in a short but powerful sermon. ‘In response to the Master, “Come . . . follow me” (Mark 10:21), some members almost,’ he said, ‘but not quite, say, “thou persuadest me almost to be honest but I need extra help to pass a test.”’ . . .

“‘Almost thou persuadest me to keep the Sabbath day holy, but it’s fun to play ball on Sunday.

“‘Almost thou persuadest me to love my neighbor, but he is a rascal; to be tolerant of others’ views, but they are dead wrong; . . . to go home teaching, but it’s so cold and damp outside tonight; to pay tithes and offerings, but we do need a new color TV. . . . Almost! Almost! Almost!’” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1964, 23–24).

Elder Bruce C. Hafen of the Seventy emphasized: “If we must give all that we have, then our giving only *almost* everything is not enough. If we *almost* keep the commandments, we *almost* receive the blessings” (“The Atonement: All for All,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2004, 98).

Agrippa’s famous response to Paul is sometimes translated as, “In so short a time are you trying to persuade me to be a Christian?” or “In a short time you will persuade me to be a Christian!” In the varying translations, Agrippa implied that Paul’s reasoning was persuasive, but he refrained from saying that he personally believed Paul.

Acts 27:9. “The Fast Was Now Already Past”

Agrippa, Bernice, and Festus conferred together and decided that Paul was not guilty of any crime; however, they could not release him because he had not yet been tried by Caesar. Agrippa told Festus, “This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar” (Acts 26:32).



RICHARD L. W. CLEAVE

This model of a Sidonian merchant ship may be similar to the vessel that carried Paul as a prisoner to Rome.

Paul and his companions were sent to Rome by ship, escorted by a Roman centurion. However, sailing was dangerous because the “fast was now already past” (Acts 27:9). “The fast” probably referred to the Jewish holy day called the day of Atonement, which marked the beginning of the season during which it was generally regarded as unsafe to travel on the Mediterranean Sea because of violent storms. The day of Atonement usually took place in late September or early October.

Acts 27:10, 21–22, 31. Paul Exercised the Gift of Seership

Paul foresaw the danger that was to befall the ship that was carrying him to Rome. He perceived that the voyage would end with “hurt and much damage” (Acts 27:10), that there would be “no loss of any man’s life” (Acts 27:22), and that the passengers would be preserved only if they stayed on board the ship (see Acts 27:31). These verses provide an example of Paul acting as a seer. The Book of Mormon teaches that “a seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come, and by them shall all things be revealed, . . . and hidden things shall come to light, . . . and also things shall be made known by them which otherwise could not be known” (Mosiah 8:17).

Elder John A. Widtsoe (1872–1952) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles declared: “A seer is one who sees with spiritual eyes. He perceives the meaning of that which seems obscure to others; therefore he is an interpreter and clarifier of eternal truth. He foresees the future from the past and present. This he does by the power of the Lord. . . . In short, he is one who sees, who walks in the Lord’s light with open eyes” (*Evidences and Reconciliations*, arr. G. Homer Durham [1987], 258).

Acts 27:10–44. Safety in Following Prophetic Counsel

Paul’s warnings of impending danger were ignored.

President Henry B. Eyring of the First Presidency spoke of people today who choose to disregard prophetic counsel: “Every time in my life when I have chosen to delay following inspired counsel or decided that I was an exception, I came to know that I had put myself in harm’s way. Every time that I have listened to the counsel of prophets, felt it confirmed in prayer, and then followed it, I have found that I moved toward safety. Along the path, I have found that the way had been prepared for me and the rough places made smooth. God led me to safety along a path which was prepared with loving care, sometimes prepared long before” (“Finding Safety in Counsel,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 25).

Acts 27:11–12. Rejecting the Counsel of Apostles

Acts 27:11–12 illustrates several reasons why individuals sometimes choose to reject the counsel of Apostles or other Church leaders. (1) *Worldly experience and training*. Just as “the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship” (Acts 27:11) rather than the counsel of Paul, a tentmaker, people today sometimes reject the words of seers or other Church leaders because

their counsel does not coincide with the opinions of “experts” in the world. (2) *Convenience*. The ship’s crew contended that they should continue their journey because “the haven was not commodious to winter in” (Acts 27:12), meaning it was not a convenient location to spend the winter months. Likewise, adhering to the counsel of Church leaders is not always convenient. (3) *Majority mentality*. “The more part” of the passengers advised the centurion “to depart” (Acts 27:12). For many individuals, it makes more sense to agree with the majority than to agree with a servant of God, whose words are not meant to be popular.

President Ezra Taft Benson taught the following regarding prophetic teachings:

“The prophet is not required to have any particular earthly training or credentials to speak on any subject or act on any matter at any time.

“Sometimes there are those who feel their earthly knowledge on a certain subject is superior to the heavenly knowledge which God gives to His prophet on the same subject. They feel the prophet must have the same earthly credentials or training which they have had before they will accept anything the prophet has to say that might contradict their earthly schooling. . . .

“. . . The prophet tells us what we need to know, not always what we want to know. . . .

“How we respond to the words of a living prophet when he tells us what we need to know, but would rather not hear, is a test of our faithfulness. . . .

*“. . . The prophet can receive revelation on any matter—temporal or spiritual” (“Fourteen Fundamentals in Following the Prophet,” in *Brigham Young University 1980 Speeches* [1981], 3–4; speeches.byu.edu).*

Acts 27:14. “Fair Havens” and “Euroclydon”

Paul encouraged those in charge of the ship to remain at a place called the “fair havens,” located on the southern coast of Crete (Acts 27:8), but they rejected his counsel. After departing, the ship encountered Euroclydon (Acts 27:14), a violent, cyclonic Mediterranean storm that threatened the lives of everyone aboard the ship. This experience is representative of what happens to people when they reject the counsel of Apostles and choose instead to go their own way; they leave the calm waters of spiritual safety and sail into tempestuous winds that threaten their spiritual lives (see Mosiah 8:20–21; Mormon 5:18).

Acts 27:20–36. Prophetic Assurances

Paul assured the ship’s crew and passengers that they would not perish in the storm. His words brought comfort to those who had lost all hope (see Acts 27:20). Similarly, we can find hope and reassurance in the words of modern prophets and seers, despite the trials and hardship that are so prevalent in our times.

President Thomas S. Monson taught:

“The moral footings of society continue to slip, while those who attempt to safeguard those footings are often ridiculed and, at times, picketed and persecuted. Wars, natural disasters, and personal misfortunes continue to occur.

“It would be easy to become discouraged and cynical about the future—or even fearful of what might come. . . .

“The history of the Church in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times, is replete with the experiences of those who have struggled and yet who have remained steadfast and of good cheer as they have made the gospel of Jesus Christ the center of their lives. This attitude is what will pull us through whatever comes our way. It will not remove our troubles from us but rather will enable us to face our challenges, to meet them head on, and to emerge victorious. . . .

“I testify to you that our promised blessings are beyond measure. Though the storm clouds may gather, though the rains may pour down upon us, our knowledge of the gospel and our love of our Heavenly Father and of our Savior will comfort and sustain us and bring joy to our hearts as we walk uprightly and keep the commandments. There will be nothing in this world that can defeat us.

“My beloved brothers and sisters, fear not. Be of good cheer. The future is as bright as your faith” (“Be of Good Cheer,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 89, 92).

Acts 28:1–5. A Viper Fastened onto Paul’s Hand

Those on board the ship found safety on the island called Melita, also known as Malta. The term “barbarous people” (Acts 28:2) means speakers of a strange language, not brutal ruffians. After their ship wrecked, Paul and the other passengers made it safely to land. Later, while Paul was building a fire on the shore, he was bitten by a poisonous snake. However, he was unaffected by the venom (see Acts 28:3–5). This incident was a fulfillment of the Savior’s promise that His disciples would “take up serpents” and “it shall not hurt them” (Mark 16:18).

Acts 28:17–31. Paul Preached the Gospel in Rome

Paul finally reached Rome and gained the desire of his heart to preach the gospel there (see Romans 1:11; 15:23–24). As far as we know, Paul was the first missionary to preach the gospel in Rome. As he had done in other cities, Paul preached first to the Jews, some of whom believed him, and then turned his attention to “all that came in unto him” (Acts 28:30), many of whom were likely Gentiles. While under house arrest, Paul wrote what some term his “prison epistles”—Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon, and Philippians. After he spent two years under house arrest in Rome, it is believed that Paul was tried and released and that he thereafter ministered in Asia, Greece, and perhaps Spain before being imprisoned again in Rome. According to tradition, he was killed during the persecutions under Nero, sometime between A.D. 64 and 68. Paul alluded to his future death in 2 Timothy 4:6–8.

Points to Ponder

- Paul declared that he had lived a life “void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16; see also Acts 23:1). What actions might you take to help you to have a conscience free of offense toward God and man?
- In Acts 27, the people on board the ship with Paul were preserved because they hearkened to Paul’s warnings and words of encouragement. In what ways have you been protected by hearkening to the words of modern prophets, seers, and revelators?
- Which of Paul’s experiences in Acts 21–28 show that Paul was always ready and willing to testify of Jesus Christ? What do you learn from Paul’s example about sharing your testimony with others?

Suggested Assignments

- Write a paragraph briefly explaining how Paul was true to the heavenly vision he received from the Lord (see Acts 9:6, 15–16, 20; 26:19). Write another paragraph explaining what it means for you to be true to the heavenly messages you receive through the Holy Ghost and other means.
- In Acts 26:29, Paul said that he wished Agrippa was not just “almost” but “altogether” persuaded to be a Christian. Compile a list of doctrines of the gospel that you feel you are “altogether” converted to. If there are areas of your testimony in which you feel “almost” but not “altogether” converted, write a plan to increase your understanding and conversion in those areas, and pray for help as you follow that plan. Consider sharing what you write with a family member or friend.

Romans 1–3

Introduction to the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans

Why study Romans?

The Epistle to the Romans is regarded by many people as a scriptural masterpiece and the greatest of Paul's epistles. Written near the end of Paul's missionary journeys, this epistle contains some of Paul's most developed thinking, including his most complete explanation of the doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ rather than by the performances of the law of Moses. It contains many teachings about the doctrines of salvation and the practical application of those doctrines to daily life. Moving passages throughout the epistle teach of all humanity's need for the Atonement of Jesus Christ and of the hope and peace that all people may find in Christ.

Who wrote Romans?

Paul's authorship of Romans is undisputed in early Christian sources and is generally accepted by modern New Testament scholars (see Romans 1:1). In writing the Epistle to the Romans, Paul used the assistance of a scribe, who wrote his own greeting to the Roman Saints near the conclusion of the epistle: "I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord" (Romans 16:22). For more information about the use of scribes in ancient letter writing, see the commentary for Romans 16:22.

The Apostle Paul was one of the greatest missionaries the world has ever known, and he was also one of the greatest teachers of the gospel. A description of Paul can be found in the commentary for Acts 9:1.

When and where was Romans written?

The Epistle to the Romans appears to have been written around A.D. 57, near the end of Paul's third missionary journey. It was written after the Epistles to the Galatians and the Corinthians, and it refines many teachings from those earlier epistles. Several clues suggest that Paul wrote Romans during the three months he stayed in Corinth (see Acts 20:2–3; the term "Greece" in these verses refers to Corinth).

To whom was Romans written and why?

The Epistle to the Romans is addressed to members of the Church in Rome (see Romans 1:7). The origins of the

Church in Rome are unknown but probably date to soon after the day of Pentecost, when Jews visiting from Rome heard Peter preach (see Acts 2:10). Though Paul had not yet been to Rome, he wrote greetings to specific Saints he knew either by prior acquaintance or through others who had lived in Rome, such as Priscilla and Aquila (see Acts 18:1–2, 18; Romans 16:1–24).

There seem to be at least three main reasons why Paul sent the Epistle to the Romans:

To prepare for his future arrival in Rome. For years Paul had wanted to preach the gospel in Rome (see Acts 19:21; Romans 1:15; 15:23). Paul had "fully preached the gospel" from Jerusalem to Illyricum (Romans 15:19)—from the center of the Jewish world to the threshold of Rome. He hoped the Church in Rome would provide him assistance and serve as a base from which he could serve a mission to Spain (see Romans 15:22–24, 28).

To clarify and defend his teachings. Paul faced repeated opposition from individuals who misunderstood or distorted his teachings about the law of Moses and faith in Christ (see Acts 13:45; 15:1–2; 21:27–28; Romans 3:8; 2 Peter 3:15–16). Paul evidently had reason to suspect that such misunderstandings had reached the Church members in Rome, so he wrote to alleviate any concerns before he arrived.

To promote unity between Jewish and Gentile members of the Church. In about A.D. 49 the emperor Claudius expelled all Jews, including Jewish Christians, from Rome (see Acts 18:2). By A.D. 54, the year of Claudius's death, Jews were beginning to return to Rome. Jewish Christians would have returned to predominantly Gentile Christian congregations in Rome, a situation that may have given rise to some of the tensions and problems between Jewish and Gentile Christians. As "the apostle of the Gentiles" (Romans 11:13), Paul sought to integrate Gentile converts into the Church; yet as a Jew (see Romans 11:1), Paul continued to feel great desire for his own people to accept the gospel. Paul promoted Church unity by teaching how doctrines of the gospel apply to all Saints (see Romans 3:21–4:25; 11:13–36; 14:1–15:13).

What are some distinctive features of Romans?

The Epistle to the Romans presents a uniquely thorough and reasoned presentation of the gospel truths Paul taught as a missionary. After an opening greeting, Paul began the epistle with a statement of its theme: “The gospel of Christ . . . is the power of God unto salvation” to all who “live by faith” in Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16–17).

Though the Epistle to the Romans has played an important role in Christian history, it has also unfortunately been “the source of more doctrinal misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and mischief than any other Biblical book,” according to **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 2:211). Even among early Christians, Paul’s writings were regarded as “hard to be understood,” and his teachings were sometimes distorted and misrepresented (2 Peter 3:15–16).



A partially deteriorated page of Papyrus 46, one of the oldest surviving Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. Dating to about A.D. 200, the papyrus contains copies of most of the epistles of Paul, first among them the Epistle to the Romans.

Outline

Romans 1–3 Paul explained the doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ. Paul defined the plight of sinfulness that faces all mankind and taught that God’s solution to this problem for all people, whether Jew or Gentile, was the Atonement of Jesus Christ. By faithful acceptance of the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be justified (forgiven) and receive salvation.

Romans 4–8 Paul supported and applied the doctrine of justification by faith. Paul cited the example of

Abraham, someone who was justified by faith and was “strong in faith” (Romans 4:20). He expounded doctrines of salvation and taught how those doctrines affect the lives of all who have faith in Christ. Those with faith in Christ “have peace with God” (Romans 5:1), show their faith by baptism and obedience, live the gospel through the power of the Spirit, and have hope of eternal glory as “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17). Nothing will ever separate them from the love of Christ.

Romans 9–16 Paul wrote about Israel’s election, present rejection of the gospel, and eventual salvation. Paul counseled Jewish and Gentile Church members to live the gospel so there would be peace and unity in the Church. Paul closed his epistle with an account of his plans, a request for the prayers and assistance of the Saints in Rome, and a plea for the Saints in Rome to continue to obey the gospel.

Introduction and Timeline for Romans 1–3

In Romans 1–3, the Apostle Paul set forth a compelling argument explaining the need that all people have for the Atonement of Jesus Christ. After greeting the Roman Saints (see Romans 1:1–15), Paul stated the theme of his Epistle to the Romans: The gospel of Jesus Christ will bring salvation to everyone who lives by faith in Jesus Christ (see Romans 1:16–17). Paul discussed the effects of living in a fallen world and described the plight of sinfulness that faces all humankind. All accountable people sin, and without the Atonement they stand condemned before God (see Romans 1:18–3:20). Gentiles were accountable for their sins because they had rejected evidence of the Creator manifest through His creations (see Romans 1:18–32). Jews stood condemned because they had failed to keep the law of Moses perfectly (see Romans 2:1–3:20). Following this description of the true condition of people’s souls, Paul introduced the solution God had provided, which is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Through faithful acceptance of the Atonement of Christ,

all mankind may be justified, obtain remission of sins, and receive salvation (see Romans 3:21–31).



1. The first members of the Church in Rome were likely former Jews who had been visiting Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and had heard the Apostles preach (see Acts 2:5–10). After accepting Peter’s invitation to be baptized, they returned to

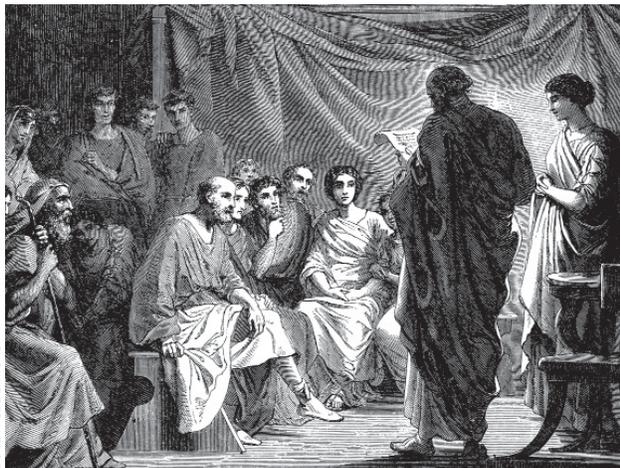
Rome and helped to establish the Church there (see Acts 2:37–41).

2. About A.D. 57, near the end of his third mission, Paul wrote his Epistle to the Roman Saints while staying in Corinth (see Acts 20:2–3).

Commentary for Romans 1–3

Romans 1:1–8. Paul’s Greeting to the Roman Saints

Ancient letters typically began by stating the identity of the sender and the recipients, followed by the sender’s greeting and an expression of thanks. This pattern can be seen at the beginning of many New Testament epistles, including in Romans 1:1–8. The word *epistle* comes from the Greek word *epistole*, meaning a message or communication—in this case, a written communication (see Romans 16:22).



Early Christians in Rome listen to the reading of Paul’s epistle. Paul intended that his epistles written to groups of Saints be read aloud to those Saints (see Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27).

Romans 1:1–2. The Gospel Was “Promised Afore by His Prophets in the Holy Scriptures”

Paul described himself to the Roman Saints as being “separated unto the gospel of God” (Romans 1:1), meaning that he had been set apart to preach the gospel. In Romans 1:1–2 and throughout the Epistle to the Romans, Paul emphasized that the gospel message was not of his own creation but was taught “in the holy scriptures,” meaning the scriptures of the Old Testament. He quoted Habakkuk 2:4 when he stated, “The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17). He seems to have drawn from Psalm 14:3 and Ecclesiastes 7:20 when he wrote, “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10). And he used the language of Psalm 143:2 when he wrote, “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight” (Romans 3:20). For a list of more Old Testament passages quoted by Paul, see “Quotations from the Old Testament in the New Testament” in the Bible Dictionary.

Romans 1:16–17. The Theme of the Epistle to the Romans

Paul declared that he was “ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome” (Romans 1:15) and then introduced what many have called the theme of the Epistle to the Romans—the gospel of Jesus Christ will bring salvation to everyone who lives by faith in Jesus Christ (see Romans 1:16–17). Much of the content of the rest of the epistle relates to key terms and ideas found in these two verses:

Gospel. The word *gospel* is the English translation of the Greek *euangellion*, meaning “good news.” Paul preached the message of the gospel, which is “God’s plan of salvation, made possible through the atonement of Jesus Christ” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Gospel”; scriptures.lds.org).

Salvation. Paul taught that salvation meant both resurrection (see Romans 6:5; 8:11; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 15:22) and forgiveness of sins (see Romans 3:25; 4:7–8). Salvation means “to be saved from both physical and spiritual death. All people will be saved from physical death by the grace of God, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Each individual can also be saved from spiritual death as well by the grace of God, through faith in Jesus Christ” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Salvation”; scriptures.lds.org).

Faith and believeth. “Believeth” (verse 16) and “faith” (verse 17) are translations of the Greek verb *pisteuō* and the related noun *pistis*. These terms can mean both “faith” and “faithfulness.” For Paul, faith in Jesus Christ was not just mental agreement with the idea that Jesus is the Son of God, but wholehearted acceptance of Jesus Christ and trust in Him as the One who offered Himself in Atonement for our sins. This deep trust leads to a life of faithfulness, manifested by repenting of sins, being baptized, and trying to live as Jesus Christ taught (see Acts 16:30–33; Romans 6:1–11; 1 Corinthians 6:9–11). “Faith in Jesus Christ . . . is manifested in a life of obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel and service to Christ” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Salvation”; scriptures.lds.org).



Ruins of the ancient Roman Forum in Rome, Italy. In Paul’s day, this plaza was the thriving center of public life in the capital city of the Roman Empire.

Jew and Greek (Gentile). The Jews were the surviving members of God’s covenant people, Israel, to whom He had revealed the law of Moses over one thousand years before Christ. Paul used both the terms *Greek* and *Gentile* to refer to people who were not born into the house of Israel.

Righteousness and just. These and other related terms in Romans (*justify, justification, righteous*) are translations of the Greek word *dikaiosune*, a legal term that refers to uprightness, justice, and that which is right. God’s work of justification means that He sets right all that is wrong, including restoring people to a right relationship with Him. To be justified by God means “to be pardoned from punishment for sin and declared guiltless. A person is justified by the Savior’s grace through faith in him. This faith is shown by repentance and obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel. Jesus Christ’s atonement enables mankind to repent and be justified or pardoned from punishment they otherwise would receive” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Justification, Justify”; scriptures.lds.org; see also Romans 3:21–28; 4:6–8; 5:10, 19).

Romans 1:16. Being Unashamed of the Gospel

President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency noted that one way we can show that we are not ashamed of the gospel is to share it with others:

“Each of us has many opportunities to proclaim our belief to friends and neighbors, fellow workers, and casual acquaintances. I hope we will take these opportunities to express our love for our Savior, our witness of his divine mission, and our determination to serve him.

“If we do all of this, we can say, like the Apostle Paul, ‘I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.’ (Rom. 1:16.)” (“Witnesses of Christ,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1990, 32).

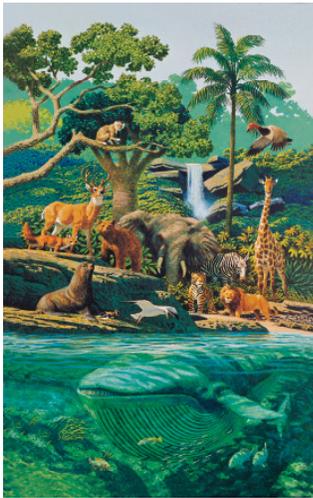
Romans 1:18–32. “The Wrath of God”

Paul taught that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Romans 1:18). He then described the sins of humanity that cause the wrath of God to be revealed (see Romans 1:18–32). The “wrath” of God is not hostility toward mankind; rather, it is rejection of sin. Because God is perfectly righteous, He cannot condone sin in any degree: “For I the Lord cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance” (D&C 1:31; see also John 3:36; Alma 42:22). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained: “Deity manifests *wrath* as one of

his attributes. . . . Inherent in it is the purpose and intent of meting out a just punishment upon those whose acts have caused it to be aroused. The wrath of God does not fall upon the righteous, but upon the wicked” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 851). The Joseph Smith Translation clarifies that God’s wrath is directed toward those “who *love not* the truth, *but remain* in unrighteousness” (Joseph Smith Translation, Romans 1:18 [in Romans 1:18, footnote b]).

Romans 1:19–21. “That Which May Be Known of God Is Manifest in Them”

In the phrase “that which may be known of God is manifest in them” (Romans 1:19), the Greek word translated as *in* means “among.” Paul’s words can be understood to mean that knowledge of God is manifest *among* all people through His creations (see also Psalm 19:1–4; Alma 30:44; D&C 88:45–47; Moses 6:63). Or, as confirmed in the Joseph Smith Translation of Romans 1:20, “God hath *revealed* unto them the invisible things



Creation of Animals and Fowls, by Stanley Galli. God’s nature and power are manifest through His creations.

of him, from the creation of the world, *which* are clearly seen; *things which are not seen* being understood by the things that are made, through his eternal power.” **President Russell M. Nelson** taught this same truth: “The Creation itself testifies of a Creator. We cannot disregard the divine in the Creation. Without our grateful awareness of God’s hand in the Creation, we would be just as oblivious to our provider as are goldfish swimming in a bowl” (“The Creation,” *Ensign*, May 2000, 85).

Romans 1:21–23. Idolatry

Paul wrote that when people refused to worship the Creator, they often turned to the worship of images of men and beasts (see Romans 1:21–23). In the Greco-Roman world in which Paul ministered, idol worship and its accompanying mythologies formed an integral part of ancient religion and culture. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained: “Man once knew God

by revelation; but this knowledge was lost because of disobedience. Then man, by foolish reason, created his own gods” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 2:218).



This marble bas-relief dating to the first century A.D. depicts the Greek goddess Nike and a warrior standing on either side of a column topped by the Trojan Palladium (image of a protective deity). Images like these were worshipped among the people Paul taught.

Romans 1:24–28. Consequences of Sexual Sins

Paul identified various sexual sins that were common among Gentiles in the ancient Greco-Roman world—sins Paul termed “not convenient,” meaning not fitting or correct (see Romans 1:24–28). Paul taught that because of people’s immorality, “God gave them up [abandoned or delivered them] unto vile affections” and “to a reprobate mind [depraved thinking]” (Romans 1:26, 28; see also verse 24). They then “[received] in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet” (Romans 1:27). When people commit sexual sins, they separate themselves from God, and God allows them to experience the consequences of their sins. This does not show a lack of love on God’s part; rather, He is allowing the natural consequences of sinful behavior to occur (see John 15:10; D&C 95:12).

Romans 1:25. Some “Served the Creature More Than the Creator”

Paul taught that those who worshipped idols and indulged in sexual sins were worshipping and serving “the creature” (created things) more than “the Creator” (Romans 1:25). The first commandment God gave to

THE FAMILY A PROCLAMATION TO THE WORLD

THE FIRST PRESIDENCY AND COUNCIL OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES
OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

*W*HERE THE FIRST PRESIDENCY and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator's plan for the eternal destiny of His children.

ALL HUMAN BEINGS—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose.

IN THE PREMORTAL REALM, spirit sons and daughters knew and worshipped God as their Eternal Father and accepted His plan by which His children could obtain a physical body and gain earthly experience to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny as heirs of eternal life. The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood as husband and wife. We declare that God's commandment for His children to multiply and replenish the earth remains in force. We further declare that God has commanded that the sacred powers of procreation are to be employed only between man and woman, lawfully wedded as husband and wife.

WE DECLARE the means by which mortal life is created to be divinely appointed. We affirm the sanctity of life and of its importance in God's eternal plan.

HUSBAND AND WIFE have a solemn responsibility to love and care for each other and for their children. "Children are an heritage of the Lord" (Psalm 127:3). Parents have a sacred duty to rear their children in love and righteousness,

to provide for their physical and spiritual needs, and to teach them to love and serve one another, observe the commandments of God, and be law-abiding citizens wherever they live. Husbands and wives—mothers and fathers—will be held accountable before God for the discharge of these obligations.

THE FAMILY is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. Happiness in family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Successful marriages and families are established and maintained on principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work, and wholesome recreational activities. By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners. Disability, death, or other circumstances may necessitate individual adaptation. Extended families should lend support when needed.

WE WARN that individuals who violate covenants of chastity, who abuse spouse or offspring, or who fail to fulfill family responsibilities will one day stand accountable before God. Further, we warn that the disintegration of the family will bring upon individuals, communities, and nations the calamities foretold by ancient and modern prophets.

WE CALL UPON responsible citizens and officers of government everywhere to promote those measures designed to maintain and strengthen the family as the fundamental unit of society.

This proclamation was read by President Gordon B. Hinckley as part of his message at the General Relief Society Meeting held September 23, 1995, in Salt Lake City, Utah.

In 1995, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated the doctrinal foundation of the Church's teaching of sexual morality: "All human beings—male and female—are created in the image of God. Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny. Gender is an essential characteristic of individual premortal, mortal, and eternal identity and purpose" (*Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129).



D. KELLY OGDEN

A Roman theater, from a model of the city of Jerusalem in the first century A.D. Public indecency was common in the theaters of the Roman world.

Moses on Mount Sinai was "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). **President Russell M. Nelson** taught that if we allow other people or even our own physical appetites to take higher priority than God in our lives, we will reap destruction: "If we break God's first commandment, we cannot escape retribution. If we allow any other person or cause to come before allegiance to him, we will reap a bitter harvest. Paul foresaw 'destruction' for those 'whose God is their belly' [Philippians 3:19]. . . . Any who choose to serve 'the creature more than the Creator' [Romans 1:25] deprive themselves of spiritual reward. Thus, our priorities should be honestly evaluated in terms of that first commandment" ("Thou Shalt Have No Other Gods," *Ensign*, May 1996, 15).

Romans 1:26–27. The Sin of Homosexual Relations

In New Testament times, many Gentiles condoned and even celebrated homosexual relations. As Paul wrote to the Roman Saints, he reaffirmed the clear biblical teaching that engaging in homosexual relations is sinful (see Romans 1:26–27; see also Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9–10; 1 Timothy 1:9–10). In 1991, the First Presidency affirmed the position of the Church on these matters: "The Lord's law of moral conduct is abstinence outside of lawful marriage and fidelity within marriage. Sexual relations are proper only between husband and wife appropriately expressed within the bonds of marriage. Any other sexual contact, including fornication, adultery, and homosexual and lesbian behavior, is sinful" (First Presidency letter, Nov. 14, 1991).

President Dallin H. Oaks further explained the Church's teachings regarding homosexual behavior:

"The distinction between feelings or inclinations on the one hand, and behavior on the other hand, is very clear. It's no sin to have inclinations that if yielded to would produce behavior that would be a transgression. The sin is in yielding to temptation. . . .

"We urge persons with same-gender attractions to control those and to refrain from acting upon them, which is a sin, just as we urge persons with heterosexual attractions to refrain from acting upon them until they have the opportunity for a marriage recognized by God as well as by the law of the land. That is the way to happiness and eternal life. God has given us no commandment that He will not give us the strength and power to observe. That is the Plan of Salvation for His children, and it is our duty to proclaim that plan, to teach its truth, and to praise God for the mission of His Son Jesus Christ. It is Christ's atonement that makes

it possible for us to be forgiven of our sins and His resurrection that gives us the assurance of immortality and the life to come” (“Interview with Elder Dallin H. Oaks and Elder Lance B. Wickman: ‘Same-Gender Attraction,’” mormonnewsroom.org).

Romans 1:32

What does this verse teach about people who approve of others who knowingly break God’s commandments? Why do you think that encouraging others to commit sin is such a serious offense?

Romans 2:1–3, 17–24. Diatribe in Paul’s Epistles

These verses are an example of a “diatribe,” an ancient rhetorical style in which authors would state their readers’ possible objections and then respond to them. Some of the diatribes in Paul’s epistles may reflect real conversations Paul had experienced during his years of teaching the gospel. In Romans 2:1–3, the rhetorical dialogue proceeds as follows: Verse 1—Paul, having just taught about humanity’s sins (see Romans 1:18–32), now turns to an imaginary listener and declares the man to be guilty of judging others of sins the man has committed himself. Verse 2—The man protests that it is only just that God would condemn people who had committed such sins. Verse 3—Paul replies that if it is right for God to condemn people for their sins, then the man, who has also sinned, cannot expect to escape the judgment of God.

In the verses that follow, Paul applied this logic to all his readers, Gentile and Jew, and then presented another dialogue, recorded in Romans 2:17–24. Paul addressed a representative Jewish man, acknowledged his status as a possessor of God’s law (hinting at the man’s pride), and then confronted him with examples of his own disobedience. Further examples of rhetorical diatribe can be seen in Romans 3:1–9, 27–31; 6:1–7:25; 9:14–33; 11:1–15.

Romans 2:4

What is one thing the goodness of God can lead us to do? When has God’s goodness and long-suffering led you to repent?

Romans 2:5–13. God’s Judgment of Those “without Law” and Those “in the Law”

Romans 2:12 is where Paul first mentioned “the law” in his Epistle to the Romans. Here “the law” refers to the law of Moses—the commandments and ceremonies God gave to ancient Israel through Moses. Those “in the law” were the Jews, while those “without law” were the

Gentiles. Some Jews believed that God would condemn Gentiles but judge Jews favorably because they were His chosen people and possessed His law. Paul emphasized that “there is no respect of persons with God” (Romans 2:11); God’s judgment of Jews and Gentiles is impartial (see Romans 2:5–11). Since both Gentiles and Jews were guilty of sin, without the Atonement of Christ they would all perish. But since the Jews had sinned against the law, they would also “be judged by the law” (Romans 2:12; see also 2 Nephi 9:27). The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) taught, “God judges men according to the use they make of the light which He gives them” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 405).

Romans 2:14–15. “When the Gentiles . . . Do by Nature the Things Contained in the Law”

Paul recognized that some Gentiles intuitively lived moral lives—doing “by nature the things contained in the law” (Romans 2:14). These Gentiles were following the Light of Christ, which is “an influence for good in the lives of all people (John 1:9; D&C 84:46–47)” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Light, Light of Christ”; scriptures.lds.org). Though they did not have the law of Moses, Paul said they had “the work of the law written in their hearts” (Romans 2:15). For more insight on the idea of God’s law being written in our hearts, see the commentary for 2 Corinthians 3:3.

Romans 2:19–24

Paul accused the Jews of setting themselves up as leaders and teachers but then disobeying the very laws they taught others to obey (see Romans 2:19–23). Which laws of God were the Jews breaking? (see Romans 2:21–23). Paul declared that Gentiles were blaspheming the name of God because of how they had seen the Jews act (see Romans 1:24). What do you learn from these verses about the effect your actions can have on others?

Romans 2:25–29. “He Is a Jew, Which Is One Inwardly”

Paul reminded the Roman Saints that circumcision, which had been required by the law of Moses, was no longer required of God’s people, for the Savior’s earthly mission and atoning sacrifice had fulfilled the law of Moses. Any outward ordinance—whether circumcision in the Abrahamic covenant or baptism and the sacrament in the gospel covenant—has meaning only if it is done with sincerity and real intent (see Romans 2:25–29; Moroni 7:6). **President Dallin H. Oaks** quoted from Romans 2 to teach about the importance of *becoming* what God wants us to become:

"In the second chapter of Romans, the Apostle Paul teaches that God will 'judge the secrets of men' (Romans 2:16). His judgment will be 'according to truth' (Romans 2:2). In describing that judgment, Paul contrasted the position of those Jews who preached the law and then did not practice it with Gentiles who did not have the law but whose actions 'shew the work of the law written in their hearts' (Romans 2:15). He concluded his example with this teaching:

"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

"But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.' (Romans 2:28–29.)

"To paraphrase, a person is a true Latter-day Saint if he (or she) is so *inwardly*, if his conversion is that of the heart, in the spirit, whose praise is not from men for outward acts but from God for the inward desires of his heart.

". . . The issue is not what we have *done* but what we have *become*. And what we have become is the result of more than our actions. It is also the result of our attitudes, our motives, and our desires" (*Pure in Heart* [1988], 138–39).

Romans 3:3–8. Questions Inviting Paul's Readers to Ponder

As recorded in Romans 3:3–8, Paul posed a series of rhetorical questions and provided some brief answers on subjects to which he would return later in the epistle. These preliminary questions prepared Paul's readers for more complete answers to come.

Romans 3:3–4. Question: If some of God's chosen people were unfaithful, does this nullify God's faithfulness? Answer: "God forbid!" Or, translated differently, "may it not be!" or "absolutely not!" Even if everyone lies, God is always honest and true to His word. (Paul addressed the problem of Israel's unfaithfulness in more depth in Romans 9–11.)

Romans 3:5–6. Question: If our sin makes God's righteousness even more clear for people to see, isn't it unfair for God to punish us? Answer: Absolutely not! If God were unjust, He could not judge the world.

Romans 3:7–8. Question: How can God condemn me as a sinner if my dishonesty highlights His truthfulness and brings Him glory? Why shouldn't I say (as some people slanderously reported Paul as saying), "Let us do evil, that good may come"? Answer: The people who are saying such things are rightly condemned. (In Romans 6, Paul returned to the false idea that the gospel condoned sin; for more insight, see the commentary for Romans 6:1–11.)

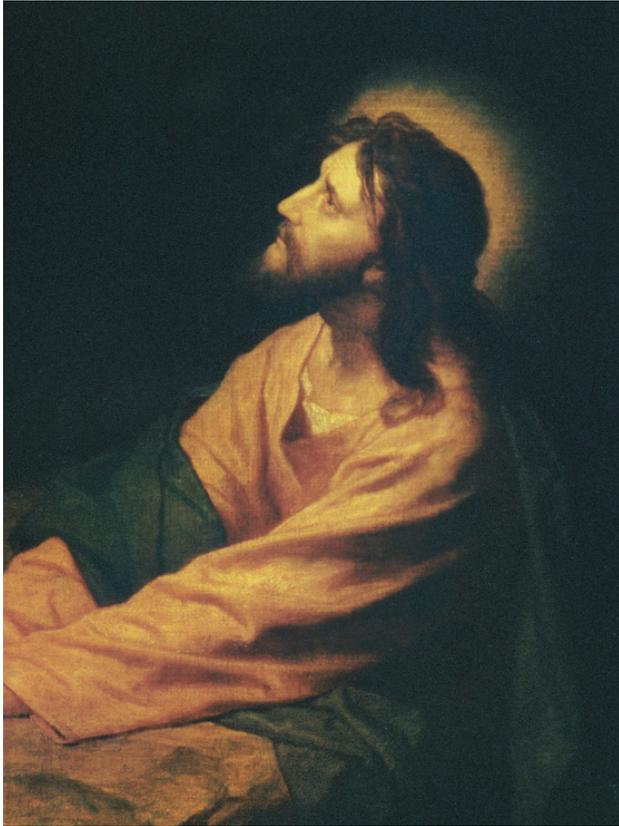
Romans 3:19–20. "By the Law Is the Knowledge of Sin"

Paul's statement that "by the deeds of the law [of Moses] there shall no flesh be justified" (Romans 3:20) might lead some to wonder: If salvation could not come by the law, then why did God give the law? Paul provided part of the answer: "By the law is the knowledge of sin" (see also Romans 3:19; 7:7). The commandments and the law help people become conscious of their own sinfulness and, thus, their need for the Atonement. For more insight on the purposes and limitations of the law of Moses, see the commentaries for Romans 7:5–14; 8:3–4 and for Galatians 3:19–25.

Paul's statement that no person can be justified by the deeds of the law also helps us understand the need for the Savior's Atonement. While theoretically one way to be justified (made guiltless) would be never to do wrong, no one can really attain justification in this way, for everyone has sinned (see Romans 3:9, 23). Only Jesus Christ has perfectly kept God's law (see Romans 3:9–20). It is only through the Atonement of Christ that anyone can be justified (see Romans 3:21–31).

Romans 3:22. "By Faith of Jesus Christ" (see also Galatians 2:16)

In Romans 3:22, the sense of the Greek phrase translated as "by faith of Jesus Christ" is ambiguous; it can mean that we receive salvation "by our faith in Jesus Christ" or "by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ." The latter meaning teaches that because of the Savior's faithfulness in suffering and dying in atonement for our sins, we can place our faith in Him and receive salvation. Both *our faith in Jesus Christ* and *His faithfulness* in atoning for us are essential elements of our salvation.



Christ in Gethsemane, by Heinrich Hofmann

Romans 3:23–24. Justified by Grace through the Redemption

Salvation by grace is a doctrine on which Paul elaborated later in the Epistle to the Romans (see Romans 4:4–16; 5:1–21; 6:1–16; 11:1–6) and in other epistles (see Ephesians 2:8–10; 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 2:11–14; 3:3–8).

Grace is a “divine means of help or strength, given through the bounteous mercy and love of Jesus Christ. It is through the grace of the Lord Jesus, made possible by His atoning sacrifice, that mankind will be raised in immortality, every person receiving his body from the grave in a condition of everlasting life. It is likewise through the grace of the Lord that individuals, through faith in the Atonement of Jesus Christ and repentance of their sins, receive strength and assistance to do good works that they otherwise would not be able to maintain if left to their own means. This grace is an enabling power that allows men and women to lay hold on eternal life and exaltation after they have expended their own best efforts” (Bible Dictionary, “Grace”).

In the Joseph Smith Translation of Romans 3:24, the word *freely* is replaced with the word *only*: “being justified *only* by his grace” (in Romans 3:24, footnote a).

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles testified of the absolute necessity of divine grace in order to be justified:

“Just as death would doom us and render our agency meaningless but for the redemption of Christ, even so, without His grace, our sins and bad choices would leave us forever lost. There would be no way of fully recovering from our mistakes, and being unclean, we could never live again in the presence of the ‘Man of Holiness’ (Moses 6:57; see also 3 Nephi 27:19).

“We cannot look to the law to save us when we have broken the law (see 2 Nephi 2:5). We need a Savior, a Mediator who can overcome the effects of our sins and errors so that they are not necessarily fatal. It is because of the Atonement of Christ that we can recover from bad choices and be justified under the law as if we had not sinned” (“Moral Agency,” *Ensign*, June 2009, 50).

Romans 3:24. Redemption

The Greek word translated as *redemption* means liberation through payment of a ransom. It was a term widely used in the ancient Greco-Roman world to refer to the process of paying for slaves in order to set them free. In the New Testament other forms of this word are often translated *redeem* (see Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18) or *ransom* (see Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45). Through the Atonement, Jesus Christ suffered and gave His life to purchase our freedom from the “slavery” of death and sin.

Romans 3:25. Propitiation

A *propitiation* is an atoning sacrifice, a means of making amends for sins and thus reconciling a broken relationship. Under the law of Moses, individuals who had committed sins offered animal sacrifice to make reparation for their sins and reestablish a right relationship with God. Because of His love for us, God reversed this order in the Atonement of Jesus Christ—instead of the sinners (us) offering a sacrifice to appease the One offended, propitiation was offered by the One who was sinned against. God the Father offered the reconciliation offering—His Son—as an atoning sacrifice for the remission of all our sins, upon the condition of our repentance (see also 1 John 2:2; 4:10).

Romans 3:26. “That [God] Might Be Just”

Paul taught that God provided the way of salvation through Jesus Christ “that [God] might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Romans 3:26). Through the atoning sacrifice of the Savior, our sins can be forgiven without violating justice. The Book of Mormon prophet Alma taught this same truth: “The plan of mercy could not be brought about except an atonement should be made; therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also” (Alma 42:15).

Romans 3:27–31. Justified Not “of Works” but “by the Law of Faith”

In Romans 3 and in Galatians, the word *works* does not appear to refer to righteous deeds or efforts to obey God. Instead, in these passages, *works* refers specifically to performances of the law of Moses (see Romans 3:20, 28; Galatians 2:16). Furthermore, the context of Romans and Galatians indicates that these “deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28) refer not to the law’s universal commandments (like the commandments not to kill or commit adultery), but to distinctively Jewish observances like circumcision, dietary regulations, and special feast days—parts of the law that were not required of Gentile Saints (see Acts 15:1–11, 19–20).

Paul had encountered some Jewish Christians who were teaching the false doctrine that Gentile Christians would not be saved unless they were circumcised (see Acts 15:1–2; Galatians 5:2). Though this ordinance was one of many performances of the law that God gave to ancient Israel, those performances were not the means of obtaining forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness was available only through the Atonement of Christ (see Romans 3:24–25). Thus, the way of salvation for all, both Jew and Gentile, was through faith in Christ and commitment to His gospel (see Romans 3:29–30).

Paul’s use of the phrase “the law of faith” (Romans 3:27) shows that even though salvation does not come by the law of Moses, individuals must follow laws in order to be saved. Faith in Christ is the *law* of faith, a way of life that does not “make void the law,” but rather, through faith, “we establish the law” (Romans 3:31; compare Matthew 5:17; Romans 8:2). Faith leads to repentance and striving to live as Jesus Christ taught. For more information about how faith in Christ includes obedience, see the commentary for Romans 6:1–11.

Points to Ponder

- What have you learned from Paul’s teachings in Romans 1–3 that help you feel you are “not ashamed of the gospel of Christ”? (Romans 1:16).
- How does understanding your own sinfulness, as explained by Paul, affect your understanding of the Atonement of Jesus Christ? How does it affect your appreciation for the Atonement?

Suggested Assignments

- List some of the “outward” things you do as a Latter-day Saint (such as taking the sacrament, doing home teaching or visiting teaching, and studying the scriptures). Ponder Romans 2:25–29 and the quotation from President Dallin H. Oaks in the commentary for Romans 2:25–29. Then write about how you could make each *outward* activity more *inwardly* meaningful.
- Write one or two paragraphs explaining how Romans 1–3 teaches that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the only hope of salvation for all people, Jew or Gentile. You may want to include the following terms in your explanation: *sin, works of the law of Moses, justification, faith, the Atonement of Jesus Christ*.

Romans 4–8

Introduction and Timeline for Romans 4–8

In the first three chapters of Romans, Paul focused on the need to enter into the gospel covenant; in Romans 4–8, Paul taught about life in the covenant—a quality of life that might be called life “in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). Having taught that justification comes by faith in Jesus Christ and not by performances of the law of Moses (see Romans 3:21–31), Paul supported this doctrine by citing the example of Abraham, who lived hundreds of years before the law of Moses was given (see Romans 4). Chapter 5 of Romans represents a turning point in the epistle, for Paul began to teach about life in Christ. In the gospel covenant, “we have peace with God” and “access by faith into this grace wherein we stand” (Romans 5:1–2). Paul clarified that God’s grace does not condone sin, but it empowers us to overcome sin (see Romans 6:1–8:13). Entering the gospel covenant through baptism symbolizes our death to sin and our “newness of life” in Christ (Romans 6:4; see also verses 3–11). When we are faithful in

that covenant relationship, we become “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:16–17).



1. The first members of the Church in Rome were likely former Jews who had been visiting Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and had heard the Apostles preach (see Acts 2:5–10). After accepting Peter’s invitation to be baptized, they returned to

Rome and helped to establish the Church there (see Acts 2:37–41).

2. About A.D. 57, near the end of his third mission, Paul wrote his Epistle to the Roman Saints while staying in Corinth (see Acts 20:2–3).

Commentary for Romans 4–8

Romans 4. The Example of Abraham (see also Galatians 3:6–29)

Since Abraham lived centuries before the law of Moses was given, he was an ideal example of someone who was justified through faith in Jesus Christ and not through the law of Moses (see also Galatians 3:6, 17). Quoting from Genesis, Paul noted that “Abraham believed [had faith in] God, and it was counted unto



Abraham on the Plains of Mamre, by Grant R. Clawson

him for righteousness [justification]” (Romans 4:3; see also Genesis 15:6). Abraham received this assurance *before* he was circumcised (see Romans 4:9–12). Under the law of Moses, circumcision was the rite by which male Israelites “accepted the responsibilities of the covenant” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Circumcision”;

scriptures.lds.org). Thus, Paul was able to show from scripture that individuals were not justified through obedience to the law of Moses—they were justified through faith in God’s promises. Referring to Abraham also allowed Paul to teach what it means to have faith, for Abraham was “strong in faith” (Romans 4:20) and was revered by Jews (those of the circumcision) and believing Gentiles (the uncircumcised) as the “father” of the faithful (see Romans 4:11–12, 16).

Romans 4:2, 4–5. Justification Is a Gift of Grace

The Joseph Smith Translation of Romans 4:2–5 helps clarify that justification is not something we earn but rather is a gift from God:

“For if Abraham were justified by *the law of works*, he hath to glory *in himself*; but not of God.

“For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

“Now to him *who is justified by the law of works*, is the reward reckoned, not of grace, but of debt.

“But to him that *seeketh not to be justified by the law of works*, but believeth on him who justifieth *not* the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (in the Bible appendix).

Paul was teaching that if a man were justified by the works of the law, then he would have reason to glory, for then the reward he received from the Father would be compensation for services rendered and not a gift of grace. But, of course, no man can earn salvation on his own. **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles declared that the blessings of the Atonement, including inheriting eternal life, are manifestations of grace:

“Neither the unconditional nor the conditional blessings of the Atonement are available except through the grace of Christ. Obviously the unconditional blessings of the Atonement are unearned, but the conditional ones are not fully merited either. By living faithfully and keeping the commandments of God, one can receive additional privileges; but they are still given freely, not technically earned. The Book of Mormon declares emphatically that ‘there is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah’ [2 Nephi 2:8]” (“The Atonement of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Mar. 2008, 36).

Romans 4:4, 16; 5:2, 15–21; 6:1–2, 14–15. Grace

In Romans 4–6, Paul repeatedly used the Greek terms *charis* (translated as “grace”) and *charisma* (translated as “the free gift” in Romans 5:15–16) as he expounded on

the doctrine of grace that he had introduced earlier (see Romans 3:24).

“Grace is the help or strength given through the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. Through the grace of God, everyone who has lived will be resurrected—our spirits will be reunited with our bodies, never again to be separated. Through His grace, the Lord also enables those who live His gospel to repent and be forgiven.

“Grace is a gift from Heavenly Father given through His Son, Jesus Christ. The word grace, as used in the scriptures, refers primarily to enabling power and spiritual healing offered through the mercy and love of Jesus Christ. . . .

“. . . To receive this enabling power, we must obey the gospel of Jesus Christ, which includes having faith in Him, repenting of our sins, being baptized, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and trying to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ for the rest of our lives (see Ephesians 2:8–9; James 2:17–22; 2 Nephi 25:23; 31:20).

“The grace of God helps us every day. It strengthens us to do good works we could not do on our own. The Lord promised that if we humble ourselves before Him and have faith in Him, His grace will help us overcome all our personal weaknesses (see Ether 12:27)” (lds.org/topics/grace; for further information on grace, see the commentary for Romans 3:23–24).

Some Teachings about Grace in Romans	
Scripture	Explanation
Joseph Smith Translation, Romans 3:24. “Therefore being justified <i>only</i> by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (in Romans 3:24, footnote a).	It is only by the grace of God—made available to everyone through the Atonement of Jesus Christ—that we may be forgiven of sin. (See the commentary for Romans 3:23–24.)
Joseph Smith Translation, Romans 4:4, 16. “To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. . . . Therefore ye are justified of faith <i>and works, through grace</i> ” (in Romans 4:16, footnote a).	Salvation from sin is not something that God owes us, like a debt, nor is it something we earn solely by our actions (see Romans 3:23; 5:8). Like the promise God gave Abraham, salvation is something that God has graciously offered us. We receive this gift by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. But even after all we do to receive this gift of salvation, it remains a gift from God (see 2 Nephi 25:23).
Romans 5:1–2. “By [Jesus Christ] also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.”	To “stand” can mean to be in a condition or state (our standing) and to remain firm or upright. Thus, when we have placed our faith in Jesus Christ by entering the gospel covenant, we then (1) stand in a state of favor with God and (2) receive strength from God to remain faithful.
Romans 5:20–21. “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”	The Atonement of Jesus Christ, which is the supreme manifestation of God’s grace, completely overcame the effects of the Fall (see Romans 5:14–21) and is more than ample in its power to enable us to overcome sin and be forgiven. The Lord’s grace is “sufficient” for us (see 2 Corinthians 9:8; Ether 12:26–27; Moroni 10:32; D&C 17:8).

Some Teachings about Grace in Romans

Scripture	Explanation
Romans 6:1–2, 14–15. “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. . . . Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.”	God’s grace does not condone sin; it is empowering. It enables us to become “dead to sin” (Romans 6:2).

Romans 4:16. True Faith Leads to Action

The Joseph Smith Translation of Romans 4:16 reads, “Therefore *ye are justified* of faith *and works, through grace*” (in Romans 4:16, footnote *a*). This prevents the misreading that faith is merely a passive belief, resulting in no changes to one’s behavior, loyalty, or character. Paul saw faith as a principle of action. The Greek words Paul used for “faith” (*pistis*) and “to have faith” or “to believe” (*pisteuō*) both imply a deep conviction that results in personal commitment and action. The words have connotations like *trust, confidence, faithfulness, and obedience*. Thus, Paul wrote of “obedience to the faith” or the obedience that comes from faith (Romans 1:5; 16:26), “obey[ing] the gospel” (Romans 10:16), and even “obedience unto righteousness” (Romans 6:16).

In Paul’s thinking, those who have faith in Jesus Christ naturally repent, receive the ordinance of baptism, receive the Holy Ghost, and endure in faith (see Acts 16:30–33; 19:1–6; Romans 6:1–11; 1 Corinthians 6:9–11; 2 Corinthians 10:5). Similarly, **Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin** (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated that without obedience, “all we have is a counterfeit, a weak and watered-down faith” (“Shall He Find Faith on the Earth?” *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 83). For more information on how true faith is manifest in one’s actions, see the commentary for James 2:14–26.

Romans 4:18–22

What phrases in these verses describe Abraham’s faith? What can you learn from these verses about what it means to be strong in faith?

Romans 4:18–22. Abraham’s Faith

Abraham maintained his faith in the Lord’s promise to give him posterity without number, even though by age 100 he had not yet fathered his son Isaac. Abraham “staggered not at the promise of God” (Romans 4:20), but he continued to hope despite his seemingly hopeless circumstances (see Romans 4:18–21). **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** encouraged Church members to be like Abraham in maintaining hope and trusting divine promises:

“To any who may be struggling . . . , I say: Hold on. Keep trying. God loves you. Things will improve. Christ comes to you in His ‘more excellent ministry’ with a future of ‘better promises.’ He is your ‘high priest of good things to come.’

“I think of newly called missionaries leaving family and friends to face, on occasion, some rejection and some discouragement and, at least in the beginning, a moment or two of homesickness and perhaps a little fear.

“I think of young mothers and fathers who are faithfully having their families while still in school—or just newly out—trying to make ends meet even as they hope for a brighter financial future someday. . . .

“I think of those who want to be married and aren’t, those who desire to have children and cannot, those who have acquaintances but very few friends, those who are grieving over the death of a loved one or are themselves ill with disease. I think of those who suffer from sin—their own or someone else’s—who need to know there is a way back and that happiness can be restored. I think of the disconsolate and downtrodden who feel life has passed them by, or now wish that it would pass them by. To all of these and so many more, I say: Cling to your faith. Hold on to your hope. ‘Pray always, and be believing’ [D&C 90:24]. Indeed, as Paul wrote of Abraham, he ‘against [all] hope believed in hope’ and ‘staggered not . . . through unbelief.’ He was ‘strong in faith’ and was ‘fully persuaded that, what [God] had promised, he was able . . . to perform’ [Romans 4:18, 20–21]. . . .

“. . . Some blessings come soon, some come late, and some don’t come until heaven; but for those who embrace the gospel of Jesus Christ, *they come*” (“An High Priest of Good Things to Come,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 36, 38).

Romans 5:1–11

What phrases in these verses describe the blessings that come to those who are justified by placing their faith in Jesus Christ? In what ways have you experienced these blessings in your life?

Romans 5:5. “Hope Maketh Not Ashamed”

Paul’s teaching that “hope maketh not ashamed” (Romans 5:5) means that our hope in God’s promises will not disappoint us. From this verse we also learn that the “love of God” is a gift to us through the Holy Ghost.

Romans 5:6–8. Unmerited Grace: “While We Were Yet Sinners, Christ Died for Us”

The scriptures sometimes describe grace as something we receive from God as a result of what we do. For example, some scriptures teach that our actions can cause us to grow in grace or fall from grace (see John 1:16; Galatians 5:4; 2 Peter 3:18; D&C 93:12–13, 19–20). However, other scriptures describe grace as something we receive from God independent of any action of our own. Romans 5:6–8 is an example of such a scripture. In these verses Paul taught that Jesus Christ died for us “while we were yet sinners,” which is a manifestation of God’s love for us (Romans 5:8; see also John 3:16; 1 John 4:19). The Atonement was not something we earned or deserved but was a “free gift” (Romans 5:15), given “when we were yet without strength” (Romans 5:6), or when we were utterly helpless and powerless. Thus, the gift of God’s Son is an example of grace as the unmerited favor and assistance God is predisposed to give His children.

Romans 5:9–10, 15, 17, 20. “Much More”

In Romans 5, Paul repeatedly used the phrase “much more” to show how the grace and blessings of the Atonement are *more* than sufficient to meet our spiritual needs. Romans 5:6–10 teaches that while “we were enemies”—meaning while we were sinful and powerless to save ourselves—God sent His Son so we could be “reconciled” to God. Now that we are reconciled—meaning that we have accepted the Savior’s Atonement and entered into a covenant relationship with Him—we can be “much more” certain that God will continue to work with us for our salvation. Romans 5:15, 17 teaches that the Fall of Adam brought death into the world and affected all of us, but the Atonement of Jesus Christ brought grace into the world with even *greater* effect.

Romans 5:20 teaches that though our sins may “abound,” the grace of God through the Atonement abounds “*much more*,” and God’s grace is sufficient to help us overcome all our sins and weaknesses (see also Ether 12:27). **President Boyd K. Packer** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles affirmed: “Save for the exception of the very few who defect to perdition, there is no habit, no addiction, no rebellion, no transgression, no apostasy, no crime exempted from the promise of

complete forgiveness. That is the promise of the atonement of Christ” (“The Brilliant Morning of Forgiveness,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 20).

Romans 5:11. The Word *Atonement* in the New Testament

Romans 5:11 is the only verse in the King James Version of the New Testament that uses the word *atonement*; however, a related term, *reconciliation*, is found in other New Testament passages (see Romans 5:10; 11:15; 2 Corinthians 5:18–20; Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:20–21). Both of these words denote a change from hostile to friendly terms, the reestablishment of an interrupted or broken relationship, and the restoration of harmony between two parties. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles defined reconciliation as “the process of ransoming man from his state of sin and spiritual darkness and of restoring him to a state of harmony and unity with Deity” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 2:422). New Testament authors also used other terms, translated as *redemption* or *ransom*, to refer to the Atonement of Jesus Christ (see Mark 10:45; Romans 3:24; 8:23; Ephesians 1:7, 14; Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:12, 15).

President Russell M. Nelson explored the meaning of the word *atonement*:

“Ponder the deep meaning of the word *atonement*. In the English language, the components are *at-one-ment*, suggesting that a person is at one with another. Other languages employ words that connote either *expiation* or *reconciliation*. *Expiation* means ‘to atone for.’ *Reconciliation* comes from Latin roots *re*, meaning ‘again’; *con*, meaning ‘with’; and *sella*, meaning ‘seat.’ *Reconciliation*, therefore, literally means ‘to sit again with.’

“Rich meaning is found in study of the word *atonement* in the Semitic languages of Old Testament times. In Hebrew, the basic word for atonement is *kaphar*, a verb that means ‘to cover’ or ‘to forgive.’ Closely related is the Aramaic and Arabic word *kafat*, meaning ‘a close embrace.’ . . .

“I weep for joy when I contemplate the significance of it all. To be redeemed is to be atoned—received in the close embrace of God, with an expression not only of His forgiveness, but of our oneness of heart and mind” (“The Atonement,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 34).

Romans 5:12–21. The Fall of Adam and the Atonement of Christ

As “the figure of him that was to come,” Adam was a type or foreshadowing of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:14).

In Romans 5:12–21, Paul contrasted the effects of the Fall of Adam and the Atonement of Christ. Paul was the only New Testament writer to expound on how the Atonement overcomes the effects of the Fall (see also 1 Corinthians 15:21–22, 45–49), although several Book of Mormon prophets also taught about this concept (see 2 Nephi 2:25–26; 9:6–7, 21; Alma 42:2–15; Mormon 9:12).



Left: *Adam and Eve*, by Douglas M. Fryer

Right: *Jesus Said to Her, "Mary,"* by William F. Whitaker Jr.

Romans 6:1–11. The Symbolism of Baptism

Paul reminded members of the Church that they had been “baptized into Jesus Christ,” thus entering into a covenant relationship with Christ (see Romans 6:1–4). For Church members to choose to continue in sin was incompatible with that covenant relationship. Further, Paul taught that baptism symbolized being “buried with [Christ]” and becoming “dead . . . unto sin, but alive unto God” (Romans 6:4, 11). Baptism is a rebirth, symbolized by coming up out of the waters of baptism. Just as we were born into the world and became a living soul, so we must be born again and become a member of God’s kingdom—both births involve the common elements of water, blood, and spirit (see Moses 6:59–60).

Elder L. Tom Perry (1922–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained: “According to the Apostle Paul, baptism . . . denotes our descent into a watery grave from which we are raised with ‘newness of life’ (Romans 6:4) in Christ. The ordinance of baptism symbolizes Christ’s death and Resurrection—we die with Him so we can live with Him” (“The Gospel of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 46).

In addition, Paul’s comparison of baptism to burial indicates that baptisms were performed by immersion—the same way Jesus was baptized.



John Baptizing Jesus, by Harry Anderson

Elder Robert D. Hales (1932–2017) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught about the “newness of life” (Romans 6:4) that comes with baptism:

“Many members of the Church do not fully understand what happened when they went into the waters of baptism. It is very important for us to understand the marvelous gift of the remission of sins, but there is much more. Do you understand and do your children understand that when they are baptized they are changed forever? . . .

“When we are baptized, we take upon ourselves the sacred name of Jesus Christ. Taking upon us His name is one of the most significant experiences we have in life. Yet sometimes we pass through that experience without having a full understanding.

“How many of our children—how many of us—really understand that when we were baptized we took upon us not only the name of Christ but also the law of obedience? . . .

“. . . I pray that each of us as members of His kingdom will understand that our baptism and confirmation is the gateway *into* His kingdom. When we enter, we covenant to be *of* His kingdom—forever!” (“The Covenant of Baptism: To Be in the Kingdom and of the Kingdom,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 8–9).

Romans 6:12–23. Servants to Sin or to Righteousness

Frequently in Paul’s writing, the Greek word translated “servant” also means “slave,” and Paul used the imagery of slavery to teach about the spiritual consequences of choosing to sin. Since slavery was a common institution in the Roman Empire, Paul’s audience would have

readily identified with metaphors like yielding to God as servants would yield to their master (see Romans 6:13) and being slaves to sin (see Romans 6:17, 20).



A pair of old handcuffs (a still image by John Luke from the film *Impressions of a Prophet*). Paul used the imagery of slavery to teach about the effects of yielding ourselves to sin or to God.

Slaves in ancient Rome could purchase their freedom or be freed by their masters. Continuing his slavery analogy, Paul taught that the price of freedom from sin was paid by Jesus Christ through His Atonement (Romans 3:24); however, freedom could be realized in the lives of His followers only as they chose to abandon sin and become “servants of righteousness” (Romans 6:18).

Romans 6:12–15. “Let Not Sin . . . Reign in Your Mortal Body”

After baptism our master should be righteousness, not sin. We can be free from the servitude of sin through the emancipating and life-giving powers of the Atonement. Many sins that involve addictive behavior tend to have “dominion over” the sinner (Romans 6:14). For example, while speaking about addictive substances, **President Russell M. Nelson** pointed out how seemingly harmless experimentation can lead to enslaving habits—a pattern that also applies to many other sins:

“From an initial experiment thought to be trivial, a vicious cycle may follow. From trial comes a habit. From habit comes dependence. From dependence comes addiction. Its grasp is so gradual. Enslaving shackles of habit are too small to be sensed until they are too strong to be broken. . . . Addiction surrenders later freedom to choose” (“Addiction or Freedom,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 6–7).

Romans 6:16–23. The Rewards of Sin and of Righteousness

In Romans 6:16–23, Paul described the rewards of both sin and righteousness. Sin leads to spiritual death, but “the gift of God is eternal life” (Romans 6:23). Being “saved in the kingdom of God . . . is the greatest of all the gifts of God; for there is no gift greater than the gift of salvation” (D&C 6:13).

Romans 7:1–4. A Metaphor of Two Marriages: Freed from the Law of Moses, Joined to Christ

Paul used a marriage metaphor to explain that Israel was once bound to the law of Moses, as a wife is bound to her husband. But now that the law is fulfilled, Israel should be bound—or “married”—to Jesus Christ. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained:

“[In Romans 7:1–4, Paul] compares Israel’s allegiance to the law of Moses with that of a wife to her husband. As long as her husband lives, a wife is bound to him, must obey his laws, and if she be with another, she is an adulteress. But when the husband dies, he can no longer direct her actions, and she is free to marry another; she can no longer be subject to him that is dead.

“So with Israel and the law. As long as the law lived, and was therefore in force, Israel was married to it and required to obey its provisions. . . . But now the law is fulfilled; it no longer lives; it has become dead in Christ; and Israel is married to another, even to Christ, whose gospel law must now be obeyed” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:253–54).

Romans 7:5–14; 8:3–4. “What the Law Could Not Do”

Some devout Jews had accused Paul of speaking blasphemously against the law of Moses (see Acts 21:28). In Romans 7–8, Paul clarified his position by explaining that the law of Moses was good, but it had limitations. The law taught what sin was—“for by the law is the knowledge of sin”—and therefore the law was holy (see Romans 3:20; 7:7, 12–13). But the law could not overcome the effects of the Fall, which makes mankind “carnal, sold under sin” (Romans 7:14), and the law alone could not correct the problem of human weakness or provide means for people to be transformed by the Spirit (see Romans 8:3–4; Galatians 3:21). For that, we need the grace made available through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Romans 7:14–27. Clarifications

The Joseph Smith Translation of Romans 7 provides numerous clarifications of these difficult scriptural passages (see the Bible appendix):

14 For we know that the *commandment* is spiritual; but *when I was under the law, I was yet carnal, sold under sin.*

15 *But now I am spiritual; for that which I am commanded to do, I do; and that which I am commanded not to allow, I allow not.*

16 For what I *know is not right, I would not do; for that which is sin, I hate.*

17 If then I do *not* that which I would not *allow*, I consent unto the law, that it is good; *and I am not condemned*.

18 Now then, it is no more I that do *sin*; but I *seek to subdue that sin* which dwelleth in me.

19 For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, *but to perform that which is good I find not, only in Christ*.

20 For the good that I would *have done when under the law, I find not to be good; therefore, I do it not*.

21 But the evil which I would not *do under the law, I find to be good; that, I do*.

22 Now if I do that, *through the assistance of Christ, I would not do under the law, I am not under the law; and it is no more that I seek to do wrong, but to subdue sin that dwelleth in me*.

23 I find then *that under the law, that when I would do good evil was present with me; for I delight in the law of God after the inward man*.

24 *And now I see another law, even the commandment of Christ, and it is imprinted in my mind*.

25 *But my members are warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members*.

26 *And if I subdue not the sin which is in me, but with the flesh serve the law of sin; O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

27 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord, *then, that so with the mind I myself serve the law of God*.

Romans 7:14–8:13. The Conflict between “the Flesh” and “the Inward Man”

In Romans 7–8, Paul wrote about the conflict between “the inward man” and “the flesh” (Romans 7:22, 25; see also Galatians 5:17). Because of the Fall, our mortal bodies sometimes experience feelings and desires which, if followed, lead to acts contrary to the laws of God (see 2 Nephi 2:29; Ether 3:2). Paul used first-person pronouns in this passage—“I,” “my flesh,” “sin dwelleth in me,” and so on—but his teachings describe the inner struggle common to all who strive to live the laws of God. Like other ancient writers, he sometimes wrote in first person rhetorically to discuss conditions that applied to all people (see Romans 3:7; 1 Corinthians 13:1–3).

Paul’s statement, “With the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin” (Romans 7:25), does not mean that Paul yielded to temptations of the

flesh, but it meant that even as he yielded to God, his flesh opposed him. The crucial point for Paul was that he knew the source of deliverance from the weakness of the flesh (compare Isaiah 6:6–8; 2 Nephi 4:19–20).

President Russell M. Nelson spoke of trials related to our physical bodies:

“Not an age in life passes without temptation, trial, or torment experienced through your physical body. But as you prayerfully develop self-mastery, desires of the flesh may be subdued. And when that has been achieved, you may have the strength to submit to your Heavenly Father, as did Jesus, who said, ‘Not my will, but thine, be done.’ (Luke 22:42.)

“When deepening trials come your way, remember this glorious promise of the Savior: ‘To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.’ (Rev. 3:21.)” (“Self-Mastery,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 32).

Romans 8:1–13. “Walk Not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit”

In Romans 8:1–13, Paul referred often to the “Spirit” and to the “flesh.” With the word *Spirit*, he was primarily referring to “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:2), or to the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the gospel of Jesus Christ established after the law of Moses. With the word *flesh*, he was primarily referring to the law of Moses, which was “weak through the flesh” (Romans 8:3).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie said of Romans 8:1–13: “Life and peace come, not through the law of Moses, but through Christ and his saving grace. The Mosaic performances deal with carnal things, the things of the flesh, the things of death. There is not power in them to atone, to ransom, to save, to bring joy and peace here and eternal life hereafter. But Christ deals with spiritual things, the things of the Spirit, the things that bring life. Because of him, ‘he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.’ (D. & C. 59:23.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:259–60).

Romans 8:13. “Mortify[ing] the Deeds of the Body” through the Spirit

Some groups in Christianity and other religious traditions have believed that the only way to overcome desires of the flesh is to abstain completely from physical pleasures. However, many physical pleasures are not sinful, but are good. Paul taught that the companionship

of the Holy Spirit can make it possible for us to use our bodies according to God's purposes for His children. The Spirit can "mortify [put to death or subdue] the deeds of the body" and impart spiritual life (Romans 8:13; see also Galatians 5:16). **Elder Parley P. Pratt** (1807–57) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles similarly taught: "The gift of the Holy Ghost . . . purifies all the natural passions and affections, and adapts them, by the gift of wisdom, to their lawful use" (*Key to the Science of Theology* [1978], 61).

Romans 8:14–16. "We Are the Children of God"

The scriptures speak of us as "children of God" in more than one sense (Romans 8:16). First, every human being is literally a beloved spirit child of Heavenly Father (see Malachi 2:10; Acts 17:29; Hebrews 12:9; "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129). Second, we are "reborn" as children of God through a covenantal relationship when we manifest faith in Jesus Christ, repent, are baptized, and receive the Holy Ghost (see John 1:12; Galatians 3:26–29; Mosiah 5:7; D&C 11:30; Moses 6:65–68).

The context of Romans 8:16 makes clear that Paul was speaking of the second, covenantal meaning when he stated, "We are the children of God." The children of God that Paul spoke of were those who, by virtue of their covenant relationship with Christ, were "led by the Spirit of God" (Romans 8:14). The companionship of the Holy Ghost is God's assurance that we are His covenant children and that if we are faithful we will one day be "glorified together" with Jesus Christ (Romans 8:16–17). The blessings Paul discussed in Romans 8—blessings such as being "heirs of God" (verse 17), the Spirit's intercession on our behalf, and the full manifestations of God's enduring love—are enjoyed by God's covenant children, but not necessarily by all of His spirit children.

Romans 8:15. "The Spirit of Adoption"



Augustus Caesar

Caesar Augustus (see Luke 2:1), who was the ruler of Rome at the time of Christ's birth, was adopted by his predecessor, Julius Caesar. Adoption was common in the Roman world and would have been a familiar concept to Paul's readers. A person who legally adopted someone conferred on that person all the rights and privileges that a natural-born child would have. Therefore, when we

receive "the Spirit of adoption" (Romans 8:15) through entering the gospel covenant, we become the children of God and "joint-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17).

Romans 8:15. "We Cry Abba, Father"

In the Garden of Gethsemane, the Savior addressed God in prayer using the Aramaic term *abba*, which means "father" or "my father" (see Mark 14:36). The Savior instructed His followers that they too were to address God as their Father in Heaven (see Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:2). Paul's statement, "We cry Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15), indicates that early Christians followed the Savior's way of addressing God. They may have felt that "Father" reflected the close, personal relationship they enjoyed with God. Of all the titles that refer to God's greatness, "Father" is the one He has asked His children to use when calling upon Him.

Romans 8:17. "Heirs of God, and Joint-Heirs with Christ"

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained what it means to be "joint-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17): "A joint-heir is one who inherits equally with all other heirs including the Chief Heir who is the Son. Each joint-heir has an equal and an undivided portion of the whole of everything. If one knows all things, so do all others. If one has all power, so do all those who inherit jointly with him" (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 395).

President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency taught that becoming "heirs of God" means that we become like God: "In the theology of the restored church of Jesus Christ, the purpose of mortal life is to prepare us to realize our destiny as sons and daughters of God—to become like Him. . . . The Bible describes mortals as 'the children of God' and as 'heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ' (Rom. 8:16–17). It also declares that 'we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together' (Rom. 8:17) and that 'when he shall appear, we shall be like him' (1 Jn. 3:2). We take these Bible teachings literally. We believe that the purpose of mortal life is to acquire a physical body and, through the atonement of Jesus Christ and by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel, to qualify for the glorified, resurrected celestial state that is called exaltation or eternal life" ("Apostasy and Restoration," *Ensign*, May 1995, 86).

Romans 8:17. "If . . . We Suffer with Him, . . . We May Be Also Glorified Together"

When Paul declared that we must "suffer with Christ," he did not mean that we would suffer what the Savior

did as part of His atoning sacrifice, but rather that we would go through our own suffering with Him (see Matthew 11:28–30). **Elder Keith R. Edwards** of the Seventy explained that approaching suffering in this way allows us to know the Savior better:

“We can learn spiritual lessons if we can approach suffering, sorrow, or grief with a focus on Christ. Anciently Paul wrote that our suffering may give us an opportunity to know the Savior better. Paul wrote to the Romans:

“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” [Romans 8:16–17.]

“Now, lest anyone go looking for hardship and suffering, that is not what is taught. Rather, it is the attitude with which we approach our hardships and trials that allows us to know the Savior better. . . .

“As we are called upon to endure suffering, sometimes inflicted upon us intentionally or negligently, we are put in a unique position—if we choose, we may be allowed to have new awareness of the suffering of the Son of God. . . .

“. . . We can have a greater appreciation for that which He did, and we can feel His spirit succoring us, and we can know the Savior in a very real sense” (“That They Might Know Thee,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 99–101).

Romans 8:26–27. “The Spirit Itself Maketh Intercession for Us”

To intercede is to plead or act on behalf of another person. In Romans 8:26–27, Paul taught that at times “we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.” Speaking of the Spirit’s intercession for us, **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained that the Holy Ghost “gives direction to the faithful, causing them to know and speak the mind and will of the Lord. Perfect prayers are always inspired by the Spirit, and they are always answered, because the Spirit knows beforehand ‘what ye should pray for’” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:266; see also D&C 50:29–30).

Romans 8:28. “All Things Work Together for Good to Them That Love God”

Elder James B. Martino of the Seventy spoke about the meaning of Paul’s words found in Romans 8:28, “All things work together for good to them that love God”:

“The Apostle Paul taught an interesting lesson only a few years before the Saints in Rome were to face some of the most violent persecution of any Christian era. Paul reminded the Saints that ‘all things work together for good to them that love God’ [Romans 8:28]. Our Heavenly Father, who loves us completely and perfectly, permits us to have experiences that will allow us to develop the traits and attributes we need to become more and more Christlike. Our trials come in many forms, but each will allow us to become more like the Savior as we learn to recognize the good that comes from each experience. As we understand this doctrine, we gain greater assurance of our Father’s love. We may never know in this life why we face what we do, but we can feel confident that we can grow from the experience” (“All Things Work Together for Good,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 101).

Romans 8:29. “Conformed to the Image of His Son”

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) spoke of what it means to be conformed to the image of God’s Son: “After God had created the heavens and the earth, he . . . said, ‘Let us make man in our own image.’ In whose image? In the image of the Gods created they them, male and female, innocent, harmless, and spotless, bearing the same character and the same image as the Gods [see Genesis 1:26–27]. And when man fell he did not lose his image, but his character still retained the image of his Maker. Christ, who is the image of man, is also the express image of his Father’s person [see Hebrews 1:3]. . . . Through the atonement of Christ and the resurrection, and obedience to the gospel, we shall again be conformed to the image of his Son, Jesus Christ [see Romans 8:29]; then we shall have attained to the image, glory, and character of God” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 52; see also 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 John 3:2; Alma 5:14).

Romans 8:29. “The Firstborn among Many Brethren”

Paul referred to Jesus Christ as “the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29; see also Hebrews 2:17). Referring to the Savior as our Elder Brother is indeed accurate in a sense, but it may inadvertently minimize the reverence we should give Him as our Savior, as the Creator, and as God the Son. **Elder M. Russell Ballard** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained:

“Some Latter-day Saints have tended to focus on Christ’s Sonship as opposed to His Godhood. As members of earthly families, we can relate to Him as a child, as a Son, and as a Brother because we know how that feels. We can personalize that relationship because we

ourselves are children, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters. For some it may be more difficult to relate to Him as a God. And so in an attempt to draw closer to Christ and to cultivate warm and personal feelings toward Him, some tend to humanize Him, sometimes at the expense of acknowledging His Divinity. So let us be very clear on this point: it is true that Jesus was our Elder Brother in the premortal life, but we believe that in this life it is crucial that we become ‘born again’ as His sons and daughters in the gospel covenant” (“Building Bridges of Understanding,” *Ensign*, June 1998, 67).

Romans 8:29–30. Predestination

In Romans 8:29–30, the Greek term translated as *predestinate* means “to appoint beforehand” and refers to the foreordination some people receive, based on God’s foreknowledge, to follow Jesus Christ and become like Him (see also Ephesians 1:3–4; 1 Peter 1:2). “Foreordination does not guarantee that individuals will receive certain callings or responsibilities. Such opportunities come in this life as a result of the righteous exercise of agency, just as foreordination came as a result of righteousness in the premortal existence” (“Foreordination,” *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* [2004], 69; see also Alma 13:3–4).

Romans 8:31

Paul said in this verse that God is on our side and is working on our behalf. What indications do you see in Romans 8:26–39 that “God [is] for us”?

Romans 8:31–32. “If God Be for Us, Who Can Be against Us?”



The Darkness at the Crucifixion, by Paul Gustave Doré. “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

Paul taught that the Atonement of Christ shows that “God [is] for us” and is committed to us and our eternal well-being. Because God gave even His Only Begotten Son for us, we can be assured that God will continue to work for our salvation and prepare us to be heirs of all He wants to give us. **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** similarly exhorted members of the Church:

“Considering the incomprehensible cost of the Crucifixion and Atonement, I promise you He is not going to turn His back on us now. . . . Brothers and sisters, whatever your distress, *please* don’t give up” (“Broken Things to Mend,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2006, 71).

Romans 8:37. “More Than Conquerors”

In Romans 8:37, the Greek phrase translated as “more than conquerors” means “abundantly victorious” and “winning an overwhelming victory.” This term mirrors Paul’s “much more” passages in Romans 5:9–20, which emphasize that the grace of God made available through the Atonement of Jesus Christ is more powerful than the effects of the Fall.

Points to Ponder

- When have you experienced God’s grace in the form of daily strength and assistance to remain faithful? When have you experienced grace to help you overcome sin?
- What truths in Romans 6:1–11 could you ponder the next time you partake of the sacrament to renew your baptismal covenant?

Suggested Assignments

- Consider the following statements, each of which reflects a lack of understanding about *grace*:
 - “I’ve sinned too much. I can’t hope to be saved in the celestial kingdom. I’ll try the best I can, but I just haven’t lived the gospel well enough to be exalted.”
 - “I’m working so hard and spending so much time serving in my Church calling that the Lord will owe me a big reward in heaven.”
 - “The trials and demands in my life are just too much. I feel like giving up.”
 - “It’s no big deal if I keep committing this sin. God’s grace will cover what I am doing, so why stop?”
- Write a one-page paper that explores the misconceptions about grace that you see in the statements above. Be sure to include truths Paul taught about grace that could help people with misconceptions like these.

Romans 9–16

Introduction and Timeline for Romans 9–16

Having expounded many of the central, saving doctrines of the gospel (see Romans 1–8), Paul then focused on the application of the gospel in Church and civic life (see Romans 9–16). In Romans 9–11, Paul dealt with Israel’s election, rejection of the gospel, and eventual salvation. Though God had made His covenant anciently with Abraham and his posterity, God’s chosen people were determined not primarily by lineage but by faithfulness to the covenant. Church members could prepare the way for those outside the Church to accept the gospel by being faithful, humble, and merciful. In Romans 12–15, Paul counseled Church members to live the gospel in order to foster peace and Church unity. This requires willingness to sacrifice, to trust the Lord, and to subordinate self-interest to the interests of others. Paul closed his epistle with an account of his future plans, a request for the prayers and

assistance of the Saints in Rome, and a plea for those same Saints to continue obeying the gospel.



1. The first members of the Church in Rome were likely former Jews who had been visiting Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and had heard the Apostles preach (see Acts 2:5–10). After accepting Peter’s invitation to be baptized, they returned to

Rome and helped to establish the Church there (see Acts 2:37–41).

2. About A.D. 57, near the end of his third mission, Paul wrote his Epistle to the Roman Saints while staying in Corinth (see Acts 20:2–3).

Commentary for Romans 9–16

Romans 9–11. The Purposes of God for Israel and the Gentiles

In Romans 9–11, Paul used the terms *Israel* and *Israelites* instead of *Jews*. Paul used *Israel* to mean God’s covenant people, the house of Israel, in contrast to the *Jews* of his day, who had largely rejected the Savior. In Old Testament times God had chosen the house of Israel to be His covenant people, and He promised that the Savior would come to them (see Romans 9:4–5). But when Jesus Christ came to earth, most Jews dismissed him and some put him to death, and His followers faced continuing opposition from Jewish leaders, who were members of the house of Israel. One of Paul’s purposes in Romans 9–11 was to address the Jews’ rejection of the Savior and the implications of this rejection.

Why did the gospel of Jesus Christ not result in more conversions among the very people who had been given the promise of the Messiah? Paul maintained that Israel’s refusal of the gospel did not mean that “the word of God hath taken none effect” (Romans 9:6). Just because the Jews in general had rejected Jesus Christ, this did not make the gospel message fruitless or ineffectual. Paul reasoned that not all people who were Israelite by lineage could be considered to be part of

covenant Israel (see Romans 9:6–11); the word of God was taking root among the Gentiles. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained: “Some of [the house of Israel], after such a favored birth, after being numbered with the chosen seed, turn from the course of righteousness and become children of the flesh; that is, they walk after the manner of the world, rejecting the spiritual blessings held in store for Israel” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 2:276). Paul also observed that Israel’s rejection of the gospel and the taking of the gospel to the Gentiles fulfilled prophecy, verifying God’s word rather than discrediting it (see Romans 9:14–29; Ephesians 3:3–6).

Romans 9:6–8. Lineage Does Not Determine Spiritual Status

Paul taught that not all people born into the house of Israel actually receive the promises of the Lord’s covenant with Israel (see Romans 9:6). Paul noted that the Lord’s covenant with Abraham was perpetuated only through the lineage of Isaac and not through that of Ishmael, Abraham’s other son. Paul used this illustration to prepare his readers to be taught that faithful Gentiles may be counted as part of Israel and receive the blessings of the gospel covenant (see Romans 9:8, 24–26; 10:12; Galatians 3:27–29; see also the commentary for Luke 3:8).

Paul's teachings also show that although someone may be born into a favored lineage or a family of great faith, he or she cannot receive the blessings of gospel covenants without being obedient to God's commandments. Similarly, a Latter-day Saint can be saved only through individual faith and obedience. **President Russell M. Nelson** taught: "The development of faith in the Lord is an individual matter. . . . Each of us is born individually; likewise, each of us is 'born again' [John 3:3, 7] individually. Salvation is an individual matter" ("Salvation and Exaltation," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2008, 8).

Romans 9:11; 11:5, 7, 28. "Election"

From the Bible Dictionary we learn that *election* is "a theological term primarily denoting God's choice of the house of Israel to be the covenant people with privileges and responsibilities, that they might become a means of blessing to the whole world. . . ."

"The elect are chosen even 'before the foundation of the world,' yet no one is unconditionally elected to eternal life. Each must, for himself, hearken to the gospel and receive its ordinances and covenants from the hands of the servants of the Lord in order to obtain salvation. If one is elected but does not serve, his election could be said to have been in vain, as Paul expressed in 2 Cor. 6:1.

". . . An 'election of grace' spoken of in D&C 84:98–102 and Rom. 11:1–5 has reference to one's situation in mortality; that is, being born at a time, at a place, and in circumstances where one will come in favorable contact with the gospel. This election took place in the premortal existence. Those who are faithful and diligent in the gospel in mortality receive an even more desirable election in this life and become the elect of God. These receive the promise of a fulness of God's glory in eternity (D&C 84:33–41)" (Bible Dictionary, "Election"; see also Alma 13:3–4).

Latter-day prophets have taught that those born into the house of Israel were foreordained to that lineage in premortality. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained: "The greatest and most important talent or capacity that any of the spirit children of the Father could gain is the talent of spirituality. Most of those who gained this talent were chosen, before they were born, to come to earth as members of the house of Israel. They were foreordained to receive the blessings that the Lord promised to Abraham and to his seed in all their generations. This foreordination is an election" (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [1985], 512).

Romans 9:11–13. "Jacob Have I Loved, but Esau Have I Hated"

Paul's mention of "the children . . . not yet born" (Romans 9:11) refers specifically to the children of Rebekah—Esau and Jacob (see also Genesis 25:21–26). Paul then quoted language from Malachi 1:2–3: "As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Romans 9:13). It seems strange that God should choose one brother to hate and one to love. But while the Greek word used here does mean "hate" in the same sense that we use it, the Hebrew root translated as "hate" carried many shades of meaning, including "rejection," "strong displeasure," or, very commonly, "loving less than."

Elder Bruce R. McConkie gave this explanation of Paul's words found in Romans 9:11–13:

"God chose Jacob over Esau while the two were yet in Rebecca's womb and before either, as far as the works of this life are concerned, had earned any preferential status. Why? It is a pure matter of pre-existence. Jacob was coming into the world with greater spiritual capacity than Esau; he was foreordained to a special work; he was elected to serve in a chosen capacity.

"Then through the lineage of Jacob, God sent those valiant spirits, those noble and great ones, who in his infinite wisdom and foreknowledge he knew would be inclined to serve him. Through Esau came those spirits of lesser valiance and devotion. Hence, in the very nature of things, many of Jacob's seed were righteous in this life, and many of Esau's were wicked, causing Malachi to say in the Lord's name, some fifteen hundred years later, that God loved the house of Jacob and hated the house of Esau. (Mal. 1:2–3.)" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:277).

Romans 9:14–24. "Is There Unrighteousness with God?"

As Paul wrote about the foreordination of the house of Israel, he realized that some Church members might feel that the doctrine of election was unfair. Gentile Saints might have wondered why God restricted His covenant anciently to Abraham and his descendants, while Jewish Christians might have wondered why God would accept Gentiles into the Church and consider them part of the house of Israel. Paul's counsel to his readers was not to dispute against God (see Romans 9:20, footnote *a*; in this verse *repliest* means "contradict" or "dispute").



Brotherhood, by Roger Loveless. Gentile converts who join the Church are counted as part of the house of Israel, fulfilling the scripture, “I will call them my people, which were not my people” (Romans 9:25; see also Hosea 2:23).

Romans 9:17–18, 22–24. Does God Cause People to Be Hard-Hearted?

In Romans 9:17, Paul quoted Exodus 9:16, which states that God raised up Pharaoh in order to show His power. Paul also said, “Whom [God] will he hardeneth” (Romans 9:18). These passages do not mean that God caused Pharaoh or other people to be wicked. Such an interpretation would contradict truths taught elsewhere in the scriptures about how God desires the salvation of all people (see 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9; Moses 1:39) and how God’s gift of agency makes us free to choose to follow Him or reject Him (see 2 Nephi 2:27; 10:23). A key to understanding Paul’s statement is to recognize that he was reasoning from the book of Exodus, which tells of the Pharaoh who opposed God’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt. The Exodus account, which would have been familiar to Paul’s readers, speaks of God hardening Pharaoh’s heart (for example, see Exodus 9:12). The Joseph Smith Translation clarifies that the Lord did not harden Pharaoh’s heart, but that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (see Joseph Smith Translation, Exodus 9:12 [in Exodus 9:12, footnote *a*]).

Paul’s point was that even though Pharaoh fought against God, this did not frustrate the Lord’s work of delivering Israel. Ultimately, Israel’s deliverance in spite of Pharaoh’s stubbornness served to reveal the Lord’s power (see Romans 9:17). Similarly, God did not *cause* Israel to reject the gospel of Jesus Christ, but He *permitted* it. Israel’s rebellion was something God “endured with much long-suffering” (Romans 9:22) so that He could “make known the riches of his glory” to those who accept the gospel, “not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles” (Romans 9:23–24).

Romans 9:20, 25–26, 29. Paul Quoted from the Old Testament

In Romans 9:25–26, Paul quoted from Hosea 1:10; 2:23 (he referred to Hosea as “Osee”), and in Romans 9:29, he quoted from Isaiah 1:9; 29:16 (see also Romans 9:20). By referring to these Old Testament prophets, Paul taught that God’s desire is to save all His children and that many Gentiles, who are not His people by birth, will become His people by being grafted into the gospel covenant.

Romans 9:30–10:3. “Going About to Establish Their Own Righteousness”

Paul wrote that Israel sought righteousness “by the works of the law” (that is, by the rituals and observances of the law of Moses) rather than by faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 9:32). **Elder M. Russell Ballard** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that Latter-day Saints sometimes commit a similar error by placing too much emphasis on works: “No matter how hard we work, no matter how much we obey, no matter how many good things we do in this life, it would not be enough were it not for Jesus Christ and His loving grace. On our own we cannot earn the kingdom of God—no matter what we do. Unfortunately, there are some within the Church who have become so preoccupied with performing good works that they forget that those works—as good as they may be—are hollow unless they are accompanied by a complete dependence on Christ” (“Building Bridges of Understanding,” *Ensign*, June 1998, 65).

Romans 10:1–4. “Christ Is the End of the Law”

Although the Saints in Rome were often rejected by the Jews, we learn that Paul continued to love and respect the Jews and had concern for their salvation (see Romans 10:1–3). He said that many Jews went about “to establish their own righteousness,” which meant that they were zealously striving to establish their own righteousness according to Jewish standards. They did not submit themselves to “the righteousness of God,” which was the gospel of Jesus Christ. They rejected the gospel that could have ultimately led them to true righteousness. The word *end* in Romans 10:4 can mean “conclusion” or “fulfillment,” or it can mean “an ultimate purpose or anticipated object.” The performances of the law of Moses anticipated the Savior and His Atonement, which represent the “end” of the law (see Galatians 3:24–26; Mosiah 13:28–33; 16:13–15; Alma 25:15–16).

Romans 10:4–13. Is Confessing Belief in Christ All One Must Do to Be Saved?

Some Christians have used Paul’s words in Romans 10:9 to claim that all a person must do to be saved is to verbally confess a belief in Jesus Christ. However, in other passages, Paul taught that repentance, baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost, and striving to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ are also essential (see Acts 16:30–33; 19:1–6; Romans 6:1–11; Galatians 3:26–27; 5:13–25).

In Romans 10:4–13, Paul’s purpose was not to give a comprehensive description of the process of salvation.

Instead, Paul was supporting the point that he stated in verse 4: “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” Paul quoted Deuteronomy 30:12–14 to make the point that one need not “ascend into heaven” or “descend into the deep” to find Christ (Romans 10:6–7). Instead, all people—whether Jew or Greek—can find the Savior within their own hearts as they confess that He is the Savior and have faith in Him (see Romans 10:8–12).

President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency affirmed the requirements of salvation:

“Relying upon the totality of Bible teachings and upon clarifications received through modern revelation, we testify that being cleansed from sin through Christ’s Atonement is conditioned upon the individual sinner’s faith, which must be manifested by obedience to the Lord’s command to repent, be baptized, and receive the Holy Ghost (see Acts 2:37–38). ‘Verily, verily, I say unto thee,’ Jesus taught, ‘Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God’ (John 3:5; see also Mark 16:16; Acts 2:37–38). Believers who have had this required rebirth at the hands of those having authority have already been saved from sin *conditionally*, but they will not be saved *finally* until they have completed their mortal probation with the required continuing repentance, faithfulness, service, and enduring to the end” (“Have You Been Saved?” *Ensign*, May 1998, 55).

Romans 10:14–15. “Preach the Gospel of Peace, and Bring Glad Tidings”

Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught how Paul’s words found in Romans 10:14–15 emphasize the importance of sharing the gospel:

“Many wonderful [Church] members are in camouflage to their neighbors and co-workers. They do not let people know who they are and what they believe. We need much more member involvement in sharing the message of the Restoration. Romans 10, verse 14, puts this into perspective:

“‘How then shall they call on him [speaking of the Savior] in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?’

“Verse 15 contains the wonderful message referenced in Isaiah:

“‘How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings’ (see also Isaiah 52:7).

“It has been observed that the members are going to have to move their feet and let their voices be heard if they are to achieve this blessing” (“Live by Faith and Not by Fear,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 72).

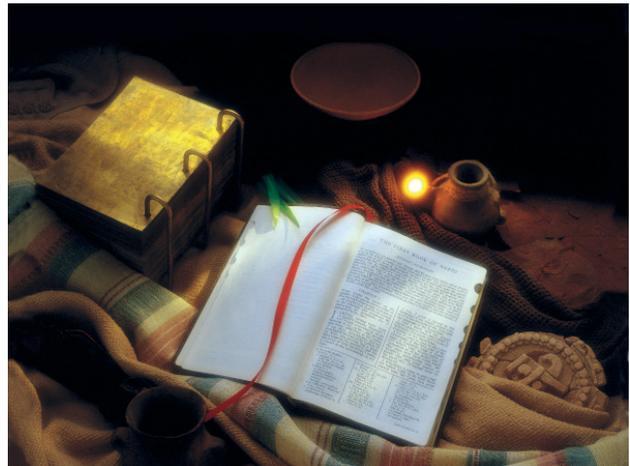
Romans 10:17. “Faith Cometh by Hearing . . . the Word of God”

Paul taught that hearing the word of God is essential to developing faith in Jesus Christ. This teaching helps us understand that attendance at Sabbath day and other Church meetings plays a vital role in the development of faith. **Elder Robert D. Hales** (1932–2017) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “The Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, ‘Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God’ [Romans 10:17]. . . . The first step to finding faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is to let His word—spoken by the mouth of His servants, the prophets—touch your heart. But it is not enough merely to let those words wash over you, as if they alone could transform you. We must do our part. Or as the Savior Himself said, ‘He that hath ears to hear, let him hear’ [Matthew 11:15]. In other words, hearing requires an active effort. . . . It means taking seriously what is taught, considering it carefully, studying it out in our minds. As the prophet Enos learned, it means letting others’ testimonies of the gospel ‘[sink] deep into [our] heart[s]’ [Enos 1:3]” (“Finding Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 72).

Romans 11:1–6. A Remnant of Israel

Even though many Jews did not accept Jesus as their Savior, Paul pointed out that God had not cast away His chosen people. As evidence of this, Paul pointed out that he himself was of the house of Israel (see Romans 11:1). Paul went on to explain that in the time of ancient Israel, some people accepted God while others did not. He quoted an Old Testament account describing Elijah’s despair over the wickedness of Israel’s people, many of whom had turned to worshipping false gods such as Baal. Elijah believed that he was the only righteous Israelite remaining; however, God told him, “I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed to Baal” (1 Kings 19:14–18; Romans 11:2–4).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained: “As in the day of Elijah, so in the day of Paul, a few of Israel, a few of those foreordained and elected to receive the blessings of God in this life, a remnant of a once great nation, had remained faithful and true” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:285). The faithful remnants of Israel in Paul’s day were those Jews who, like him, had accepted Jesus Christ as the long-promised Messiah.



Romans 11:11–32. God’s Plan for the Eventual Salvation of Israel

Paul maintained that Israel had not fallen permanently, and he taught that Israel would experience a future “fulness” of salvation (see Romans 11:11–12) in contrast to the smaller “remnant” of Jewish converts in Paul’s day (see also 2 Corinthians 3:14–16). Many Book of Mormon prophecies also speak of the Lord’s plan for Israel’s eventual salvation. For example, Nephi declared, “Those who are of the house of Israel . . . shall be brought out of obscurity and out of darkness; and they shall know that the Lord is their Savior and their Redeemer, the Mighty One of Israel” (1 Nephi 22:11–12). Jesus taught the Nephites that the Restoration of the Church in the latter days, including the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, was part of the Lord’s plan to gather and redeem Israel; it was to be a sign to the world that the fulfillment of His promises had commenced (see 3 Nephi 21:1–7).

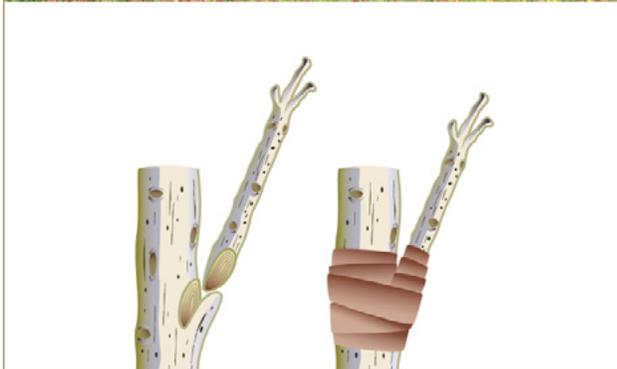
Romans 11:13. “I Magnify Mine Office”

In his special role as “the apostle of the Gentiles,” Paul directed the next part of his discourse to Gentile converts, as he felt a great responsibility to magnify his office (Romans 11:13). **President Thomas S. Monson** (1927–2018) taught: “What does it mean to magnify a calling? It means to build it up in dignity and importance, to make it honorable and commendable in the eyes of all men, to enlarge and strengthen it to let the light of heaven shine through it to the view of other men. And how does one magnify a calling? Simply by performing the service that pertains to it. An elder magnifies the ordained calling of an elder by learning what his duties as an elder are and then by doing them. As with an elder, so with a deacon, a teacher, a priest, a bishop, and each who holds office in the priesthood” (“Priesthood Power,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 51).

Romans 11:16–24. Analogy of the Olive Tree

In Romans 11:16–24, Paul taught about branches that had been “grafted in” to an olive tree, referring to Gentiles who were “adopted in” to the house of Israel (see Romans 11:17, 19, 23–24). The natural olive tree is Israel, while the wild branches are the Gentiles. The Gentiles (the wild branches) were grafted into the house of Israel (the tame tree) and became part of Israel. This analogy from agriculture described a process that was contrary to nature, for in the natural world, grafted branches control the destiny of the tree. A branch from a tame tree that is grafted into a wild tree makes the wild tree become tame. Paul described a process of wild branches being grafted into a tame tree, with the tree remaining tame.

Paul used the analogy in this way not out of ignorance, but to make a point. The conversion of the Gentiles did not change the destiny of the house of Israel, for the house of Israel is of great importance in the kingdom of God. Even though the gospel was being taken to the Gentiles during Paul’s ministry, Israel was still the chosen family and the guardian of the Abrahamic covenant.



Top: An olive tree in Israel

Bottom: A tree branch being grafted into a larger branch

Romans 11:18–21, 30–31. Gentile Christians Were to Be Humble and Merciful to the Jews

Paul warned Gentile members of the Church to “be not highminded.” He admonished them to be humble and faithful and not to think they were better than Jews who had not embraced the gospel (see Romans 11:18–20). Paul explained that by showing mercy and kindness to the Jewish people, Gentile Christians could prepare the way for Jews to eventually embrace the gospel and receive the Lord’s mercy (see Romans 11:30–31). If the Gentile members were prideful, they would suffer the same fate as the unrepentant Jews and be cut off from God’s kingdom. This warning—to not be highminded or prideful—should be heeded by all people who love the Lord and desire to return to God’s presence. History shows that later Gentile Christians largely failed to follow Paul’s counsel and became hostile toward Jews. In later centuries after Christians became a majority with political power, the rise of hateful, anti-Jewish rhetoric among them led to violence against Jews.

The Book of Mormon prophet Nephi wrote: “O ye Gentiles, have ye remembered the Jews, mine ancient covenant people? Nay; but ye have cursed them, and have hated them, and have not sought to recover them. But behold, . . . I the Lord have not forgotten my people. . . . And I will show unto them that fight against my word and against my people, who are of the house of Israel, that I am God, and that I covenanted with Abraham that I would remember his seed forever” (2 Nephi 29:5, 14).

Romans 11:22

Paul spoke of both God’s “goodness” and His “severity.” Why do you think Paul used these contrasting terms to describe God? What does this verse mean for your life?

Romans 11:25. “The Fulness of the Gentiles”

Elder Bruce R. McConkie discussed the meaning of “the fulness of the Gentiles”: “There was a period or time appointed for the Jews to hear the word, and then a period of time for the Gentiles to take precedence. The times of the Gentiles is the period during which the gospel goes to them on a preferential basis, and this will continue until they have had a full opportunity to accept the truth, or in other words until the fulness of the Gentiles. Then the message will go again to the Jews, meaning to the Jews as a nation and as a people” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:290). For more insight on the times of the Gentiles, see the commentary for Luke 21:24.

Romans 12:1–2. “Present Your Bodies a Living Sacrifice”

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “As our body is the instrument of our spirit, it is vital that we care for it as best we can. We should consecrate its powers to serve and further the work of Christ. Said Paul, ‘I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God’ (Romans 12:1)” (“Reflections on a Consecrated Life,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 17).

When Paul spoke of giving our bodies as “a living sacrifice,” he drew a parallel to the Old Testament practice of sacrificing animals. **President Russell M. Nelson** taught: “We are still commanded to sacrifice, but not by shedding blood of animals. Our highest sense of sacrifice is achieved as we make ourselves more sacred or holy. This we do by our obedience to the commandments of God. Thus, the laws of obedience and sacrifice are indelibly intertwined. . . . As we comply with these and other commandments, something wonderful happens to us. We become disciplined! We become disciples! We become more sacred and holy—like our Lord!” (“Lessons from Eve,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 88).

Romans 12:3, 16. “Mind Not High Things, but Condescend to Men of Low Estate”

Paul counseled Church members not to be haughty or think too highly of themselves, but to associate with people of all social ranks (see Romans 12:3, 16). **Sister Ann M. Dibb**, who served as a member of the Young Women general presidency and who is the daughter of President Thomas S. Monson, spoke of how her father exemplifies this ideal:

“My father’s friends come from all walks of life. I’d like to tell you about one of my father’s friends who would have been considered by others to be ‘one of the least of these my brethren.’ His name was Ed Erickson. He was almost twenty years older than my father. Ed was born prematurely and experienced some of the complications that accompanied premature births almost a century ago. Ed couldn’t see very well, and he never had the opportunity to study and learn at a university. . . .

“My father was a loyal friend and actively sought to find ways for Ed to feel valued. Dad frequently hired Ed to help him clean his pigeon coops and do manual chores in our large yard. . . . He was a big man, he looked different, and he didn’t talk very much. Ed just did his work, ate dinner with us, and then Dad would take

him home. This happened several times each year. In later years, when my father would get tickets to take his grandchildren to the circus or to the rodeo, Ed always came, too, sharing our popcorn and drinks. . . .

“Ed passed away three years ago at the age of 96. If you had attended Ed’s funeral, you would have thought it was the funeral for one of the greatest individuals who had ever lived—and actually, it was. It was the funeral for my father’s lifelong friend, Ed Erickson” (“My Father Is a Prophet” [Brigham Young University–Idaho devotional, Feb. 19, 2008], byui.edu).

Romans 12:4–8. We Are “Every One Members One of Another”

For insights on Paul’s teachings about how members of the Church are “many members in one body” (Romans 12:4), see the commentary for 1 Corinthians 12:12–30.

Romans 12:9–21. Paul’s Counsel to Church Members

Much as the Savior did in the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5–7), Paul provided counsel to Church members and taught them many principles about living a Christian life. Romans 12:9–21 contains verse after verse of such teachings. Love “without dissimulation” is love without hypocrisy; it is “love unfeigned” (Romans 12:9; D&C 121:41). Paul’s counsel to “mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate” (Romans 12:16) is reminiscent of the Savior’s exhortation in Matthew 5:46–47 to be kind, even to the publicans (those who were despised). Paul’s words in Romans 12:14–15, 21 have counterparts in Matthew 5:44; Mosiah 18:9; and Doctrine and Covenants 42:45.

Romans 12:18

What counsel did Paul give in this verse? What teachings in Romans 12 would help you follow this counsel?

Romans 13:1–7. “Let Every Soul Be Subject unto the Higher Powers”

The Joseph Smith Translation of Romans 13:1–7 indicates that Paul’s statements in these verses apply to following not only civic authorities but also Church authorities. For example, in Joseph Smith Translation, Romans 13:1, the Prophet Joseph Smith added the words “in the church”: “There is no power *in the church* but of God.” In Joseph Smith Translation, Romans 13:4, “sword” was changed to “rod.” And in Joseph Smith Translation, Romans 13:6, “tribute” (taxes) was changed to “your consecrations.”

These verses also contain some of the clearest New Testament descriptions of a disciple's civic responsibility. There were good reasons for Paul to counsel Christians to be subject to civil authorities. Roman rulers placed a high priority on maintaining peace and quelling social unrest, and revolts were put down swiftly and violently. Earlier in Paul's ministry, unrest in the Jewish community in Rome had led to the expulsion of all Jews from the city for a time (see Acts 18:2).

Paul gave specific instructions about civic duties to help the Church avoid harm in potentially volatile circumstances (see verses 6–10, 13–14). Paul's counsel to "be subject unto the higher powers" (Romans 13:1) reflects the principle of the twelfth article of faith: "We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law." By describing civil authorities as being "ordained of God" and "God's ministers" (Romans 13:1, 6), Paul acknowledged that all who hold positions of power are accountable to God, and they hold power only to the extent that God allows (see John 19:11).



JAMES JEFFERY

Less than a decade after Paul counseled the Saints to be subject to government authorities, Jews in Palestine revolted against Rome, resulting in the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem. The last zealot holdouts retreated to the mountaintop fortress of Masada (shown here) near the Dead Sea and were finally conquered by Roman forces in A.D. 73.

Romans 13:12. "The Armour of Light"

Paul's imagery in Romans 13:12 is similar to that found in Ephesians 6:11–17, where he urged readers to "put on the whole armour of God." In the Romans passage, Paul admonished readers to cast off the works of evil and to arm themselves with the "armour of light," perhaps referring to Jesus Christ, who is the light and life

of the world. **Elder Robert D. Hales** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: "My brothers and sisters, in this, the last great conflict between light and darkness, I am grateful for the opportunity to 'endure hardness, as a [disciple] of Jesus Christ' [2 Timothy 2:3]. With Paul, I declare, 'The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light' [Romans 13:12]. I bear my special witness that Jesus Christ 'is the light and the life of the world; yea, [the] light that is endless, that can never be darkened' [Mosiah 16:9]" ("Out of Darkness into His Marvelous Light," *Ensign*, May 2002, 71).

Romans 13:14. "Make Not Provision for the Flesh, to Fulfil the Lusts Thereof"

Paul's counsel to "make not provision for the flesh" (Romans 13:14) reflects the truth that controlling our thoughts is crucial to withstanding temptations. The Greek word translated as *provision* means "forethought." When people succumb to temptation, it is often because they have allowed themselves to dwell on the temptation and think about committing the sin. **President Boyd K. Packer** suggested one way we can control our thoughts: "When temptation comes, you can invent a delete key in your mind—perhaps the words from a favorite hymn. Your mind is in charge; your body is the instrument of your mind. When some unworthy thought pushes into your mind, replace it with your delete key. Worthy music is powerful and can help you control your thoughts" ("Prayer and Promptings," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2009, 46).

Romans 14:1–15:3. Dealing with "Doubtful Disputations"

Paul pointed out that some Church members chose to "eat all things" while others chose to eat only "herbs," or in other words, vegetables (Romans 14:2, footnote *a*). Those who ate only vegetables were likely Jewish converts, while those who ate other foods were probably Gentile converts. In addition, some Church members chose to follow Jewish customs, practices, and holidays (see Romans 14:5). These differences in personal practices led to divisions among Saints in Rome and other locations (see Romans 14:3; 1 Corinthians 8:1–13; Colossians 2:16).

In response to this problem, Paul taught that many personal choices concerning diet and other practices were not addressed by any specific commandment. Therefore, these were matters to be decided between the individual and the Lord (see Romans 14:6–8). Paul taught that

we should not impose our private interpretations on fellow Church members or pass judgment on those who live differently (see Romans 14:10–15; see also 3 Nephi 11:40). On the other hand, Church members should consider the effect of their personal practices on others and be willing to forgo some actions if they might cause another to stumble spiritually (see Romans 14:13–15, 20–22; 1 Corinthians 8:9–13). Promoting peace and edification in the Church is a higher priority than maintaining personal preferences (see Romans 14:19; 15:1–3). Some actions and priorities simply matter more than others (see Romans 14:17, 19).

Romans 15:1. “Bear the Infirmities of the Weak”

Paul taught that “we then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves” (Romans 15:1). **President Gordon B. Hinckley** (1910–2008) related an example of strong members of the Church bearing the infirmity of one who felt weak:

“Remember, we are not alone. We belong to a great body of friends, thousands upon thousands who are striving to follow the teachings of the Lord. . . .

“I remember interviewing a discouraged missionary. He was having trouble with a language which was not his own. He had lost the spirit of his work and wanted to go home. He was one of 180 missionaries in that mission.

“I told him that if he were to go home he would break faith with his 179 companions. Every one of them was his friend. Every one of them would pray for him, fast for him, and do almost anything else to help him. They would work with him. They would teach him. They would get on their knees with him. They would help him to learn the language and be successful because they loved him.

“I am happy to report that he accepted my assurance that all of the other missionaries were his friends. They rallied around him, not to embarrass him, but to strengthen him. The terrible feeling of loneliness left him. He came to realize that he was part of a winning team. He became successful, a leader, and he has been a leader ever since.

“That’s what each of us must do for one another.

“Paul wrote to the Romans, ‘We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak.’ And then he added these significant words, ‘And not to please ourselves.’ (Rom. 15:1.)” (“Strengthening Each Other,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1985, 3).

Romans 15:4. The Scriptures Are a Source of Learning, Comfort, and Hope

Paul noted that the scriptures were written “for our learning” and to provide comfort and hope (Romans 15:4). To illustrate this truth, Paul then quoted several Old Testament scriptures to reassure the Saints that missionary work to the Gentiles was in accordance with God’s plan, and he encouraged all Church members to accept one another (see Romans 15:9–12, which quotes Psalm 18:49; Deuteronomy 32:43; Psalm 117:1; and Isaiah 11:10).

Romans 15:13

According to this verse, how do we receive hope? What is the relationship between this verse and the statement in Romans 15:4 that the scriptures can give us hope?

Romans 15:24, 28. Did Paul Ever Journey to Spain?

Paul intended ultimately to travel to Spain (see Romans 15:24, 28). Though it is not known for certain whether Paul ever made it to Spain, there is some evidence suggesting that he did fulfill this desire: “Writing about A.D. 96, Clement of Rome said that Paul had reached the ‘boundaries’ or ‘limits of the west,’ a phrase far more appropriate for Spain than for Rome. The early Muratorian Fragment also says that Paul visited Spain, though its source of information is debated” (Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, rev. ed. [2007], 311–12).

Romans 16:1–2. Phebe

At the close of his epistle, Paul highly commended a Church member named Phebe, who was evidently the messenger who carried Paul’s epistle to the Saints in Rome. From Paul’s description of Phebe, we learn that she was “a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea” and that she had been a “succourer” or benefactor of many members of the Church, including Paul (Romans 16:1–2). Phebe is an example of the important and trusted role women have in the Church.

Paul’s written approval of Phebe is an example of the early Christian practice of carrying letters of recommendation when traveling to another Christian congregation (see 2 Corinthians 3:1). This custom is similar to the current Church practices of transferring membership records and carrying temple recommends.

Romans 16:22. Paul's Use of Scribes in Writing His Epistles

At the end of the Epistle to the Romans, the scribe who had written the epistle under Paul's direction inserted his own greeting to the Saints in Rome: "I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord" (Romans 16:22; compare 1 Peter 5:12). Paul may have used scribes to compose many or all of his epistles. Ancient scribes had varying degrees of influence in what they wrote. Some would write a manuscript word for word as dictated by the sender, others would revise and edit a draft written by the sender, and others would compose much of a text themselves, working from notes or instructions provided by the sender. Whichever approach was used, the sender would make sure the final text represented his or her intentions.



A Roman-era scribe is depicted on a tombstone found at Flavia Solva in modern-day Austria.

Some New Testament scholars have debated whether some of the epistles bearing Paul's name were actually written by Paul. Much of this debate deals with subtle differences in style and wording among the epistles. However, many of these differences can be explained by Paul using different scribes on different occasions with varying degrees of personal input.

Points to Ponder

- How does the doctrine of election apply to you? What does it imply about the importance of your personal faithfulness?
- Think of people you care about who are not members of the Church, and ponder Paul's counsel to Gentile Christians regarding those in his day who had not yet accepted the gospel (see the commentary for Romans 11:18–21, 30–31). How could you apply Paul's teachings to bless the lives of those who have not yet accepted the gospel?
- Consider the principles that Paul taught to guide Church members in matters of personal conscience (see Romans 14:1–15:3). How can you apply those principles in your own choices regarding what clothes you wear, what you eat and drink, how you observe the Sabbath, how you use entertainment and technology, and so forth?

Suggested Assignments

- Using passages from Romans and other books of scripture, write a response to a person who uses Romans 10:9–13 to argue that all we must do to be saved is to profess belief in Jesus Christ.
- Select a teaching from Romans 12–14 that you could apply to create more peace and unity in your family, in a friendship, or in your ward or branch. After applying that teaching for a time, report on the results to a teacher, family member, or friend.

1 Corinthians 1–11

Introduction to the First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians

Why study 1 Corinthians?

It can be challenging to live with faith and obedience in our modern world amid strife, skepticism, and immorality. Modern readers of 1 Corinthians can find strength in Paul's words to the Saints in Corinth, who struggled with disunity, false doctrines, and immoral wickedness in the society in which they lived. Paul addressed a variety of gospel topics in this letter, such as how to promote unity in the Church, how to learn the things of God, the role of the physical body as a temple for the Holy Ghost, the nature of spiritual gifts, and the reality of the Resurrection.

Who wrote 1 Corinthians?

The opening verse of the First Epistle to the Corinthians indicates that it was sent by the Apostle Paul and a disciple named Sosthenes, who may have served as Paul's scribe (see 1 Corinthians 1:1). While the details of Sosthenes's role are not known, it is clear that Paul was the author of the epistle's content (see 1 Corinthians 16:21–24). For more information about the use of scribes in ancient letter writing, see the commentary for Romans 16:22.

When and where was 1 Corinthians written?

Early in his third missionary journey, Paul went to Ephesus, where he preached for approximately three years (see Acts 19:10; 20:31). It was during this time—sometime between A.D. 54 and 57 (see 1 Corinthians 16:8)—that Paul wrote letters to the Corinthian branch, including the epistle known as 1 Corinthians. This epistle was likely written earlier than any of the other New Testament books, including the Gospels. If this is true, Paul's brief references to the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ found in 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 and 15:3–4 are the earliest New Testament accounts of these events.

The King James Version of the Bible includes a short explanatory note at the conclusion of each of Paul's epistles, such as the one found after 1 Corinthians 16:24. These notes, called subscriptions, were not part of the original text. While there is very little evidence to determine who wrote these notes and when they were added to New Testament manuscripts, most scholars agree that much of the information contained in them is incorrect.

To whom was 1 Corinthians written and why?

In Paul's day, the city of Corinth was the capital of the Roman province Achaia, which covered most of ancient Greece south of Macedonia. As a wealthy trade center, Corinth attracted people from throughout the Roman Empire, making it one of the most diverse cities in the area. Idol worship dominated Corinthian religious culture, and there were numerous temples and shrines throughout the city. At the time of Paul's ministry, the Corinthians had a reputation of being grossly immoral. For instance, ritual prostitution was reportedly practiced at the temple of Aphrodite.

Paul had established a Christian branch in Corinth during his second missionary journey (see Acts 18:1–18). Paul remained in Corinth for 18 months, proclaiming the gospel and organizing the Church. Later, while Paul was preaching in Ephesus during his third missionary journey, he received communication from Church members in Corinth. He wrote a response to the branch (see 1 Corinthians 5:9), but unfortunately this epistle was lost and is therefore not part of the scriptural canon. Later, Paul received another report from Church members in Corinth concerning problems in the Church there (see 1 Corinthians 1:11). Hence, the epistle known today as 1 Corinthians is actually Paul's second letter to members in Corinth.

The original correspondence that Paul received from the members in Corinth has long since been lost, so readers today must study Paul's response to infer the actual questions and issues that the letter raised. 1 Corinthians makes it clear that Church members lacked unity and that some pagan beliefs and practices had begun to influence their observance of gospel principles and ordinances (see 1 Corinthians 1:11; 6:1–8; 10:20–22; 11:18–22).

Modern readers may find parts of the First Epistle to the Corinthians confusing, such as Paul's advice regarding relationships between men and women (1 Corinthians 11:3, 8–9), hair coverings (1 Corinthians 11:4–7), and the role of women in worship services (1 Corinthians 14:34–35). Remembering that Paul was giving direction to solve specific problems among the Corinthian Saints of that day will help readers recognize the relevant gospel principles that are applicable to all followers of Jesus Christ.

What are some distinctive features of 1 Corinthians?

The New Testament contains more counsel from Paul to the Church members in Corinth than to any other branch. In fact, Paul's two epistles to the Corinthians constitute one-fourth of all of Paul's existing writings. In 1 Corinthians, Paul sought to strengthen the converts in Corinth who struggled with reverting to their past beliefs and practices. Among the many topics that Paul addressed in this letter, he focused on the Atonement of Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 1:17–18, 30; 6:20; 7:23),

the Savior's death (see 1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:2, 8; 8:11; 10:16; 11:26; 15:3), His Resurrection (see 1 Corinthians 6:14; 15:4–8, 12–23, 55–57), and the eventual return of Jesus Christ to earth (see 1 Corinthians 1:7–8; 4:5; 5:5).

While Paul's writings to the Romans and Galatians clearly teach that salvation is not gained through obedience to the law, Paul goes a step further in 1 Corinthians, emphasizing the importance of "the keeping of the commandments of God" (1 Corinthians 7:19) and the law of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 9:21).

Outline

1 Corinthians 1–11 Paul warned against divisions within the congregations of the Church in Corinth. He emphasized the importance of unity among Church members. He warned members against sexual immorality, taught that the body is a temple for the Holy Spirit, and encouraged self-mastery. He addressed specific questions regarding marriage, the ordinance of the sacrament (the Lord's Supper), and whether or not it was permissible to eat meat that had been offered to pagan idols.

1 Corinthians 12–14 Paul taught that we are to "covet earnestly" the gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:31). He highlighted the preeminence of charity among all other spiritual gifts. He reminded the Corinthian Saints of the importance of apostles, prophets, and teachers and the care members should have for one another. He taught that "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace" (1 Corinthians 14:33).

1 Corinthians 15–16 Paul testified that he stood among many others who were witnesses of the resurrected Christ. He taught that everyone will be resurrected and that baptism for the dead affirms the truth of the future Resurrection. Paul explained that resurrected bodies will vary in degrees of glory and that Jesus Christ's victory over the grave removes the sting of death. Paul organized a collection for the poor Saints in Jerusalem.



Temple of Apollo at Corinth, built about 600 B.C. This would have been one of the most imposing structures in Corinth in Paul's day. Temples and shrines housing images of pagan deities were prevalent throughout the Greco-Roman world.

Introduction and Timeline for 1 Corinthians 1–11

During his third missionary journey, Paul was laboring in Ephesus when he learned that problems had arisen in the Corinthian branch. The recently converted members in Corinth resided in a very worldly environment, and some struggled to live correct principles. Paul responded by instructing the Saints in a wide variety of doctrines in order to strengthen their gospel understanding. He reminded these members that they had been “sanctified in Christ Jesus” and “called to be saints” (1 Corinthians 1:2). As such, they were to eliminate divisions among themselves (see 1 Corinthians 1:10–16) and trust in the preaching of the gospel and the power of the Spirit in order to comprehend the things of God (see 1 Corinthians 1:17–2:16). Paul also exhorted them to live a morally clean life (see 1 Corinthians 3:16–17; 6:9–20), to recognize the importance of marriage (see 1 Corinthians 7; 11:11–12),

and to worthily partake of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper (see 1 Corinthians 10:16–17; 11:20–34).



The Apostle Paul was serving in Ephesus on his third missionary journey when

he wrote 1 Corinthians between A.D. 54 and 57.

Commentary for 1 Corinthians 1–11

1 Corinthians 1:1–9. Paul’s Salutation

Paul’s companion Sosthenes, mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:1, was perhaps the onetime ruler of the synagogue at Corinth (see Acts 18:17). Sosthenes was the successor to Crispus, who was converted and baptized by Paul (see Acts 18:17; 1 Corinthians 1:14). Paul’s salutation in this epistle was addressed to the Saints, just as official Church correspondence in our day is addressed to the Saints. Paul’s salutation mentioned God the Father and Jesus Christ as separate and distinct: “Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:3). Paul taught the Saints in Corinth that they were “enriched by” Jesus Christ in every way—in speech and in knowledge (1 Corinthians 1:5).

1 Corinthians 1:10–17. Disputes over Baptism

Paul had received a report from a congregation that met in the house of Chloe, a prominent woman among the Corinthian Saints, concerning problems in the Church at Corinth (see 1 Corinthians 1:11). Church members were dividing into factions, and some of these divisions were based on who had performed their baptisms (see 1 Corinthians 1:12–16). Paul taught that there was no status gained by receiving baptism from a specific individual. Members were to be “perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment,” with Christ at their head (1 Corinthians 1:10; see also D&C 38:27).

Paul later taught the Saints that the disputes and divisions among them occurred because some of them were carnal rather than spiritual (see 1 Corinthians 3:3).

1 Corinthians 1:17–18, 23–24. “The Cross of Christ”



The Atonement included Christ’s suffering both in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross.

Paul’s primary message was “the preaching of the cross,” which he taught was the “power of God” to save those who believed (1 Corinthians 1:18). Paul used the phrase “the cross” as a kind of shorthand reference to the Atonement (see also Ephesians 2:16; Philippians 3:18). The Atonement, however, involved more than Christ’s death on the cross. **Elder C. Scott Grow** of the Seventy taught: “Through His suffering and death, the

Savior atoned for the sins of all men. His Atonement began in Gethsemane and continued on the cross and culminated with the Resurrection" ("The Miracle of the Atonement," *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2011, 108; see also *True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* [2004], 15–17).

1 Corinthians 1:17–2:13. The Wisdom of the World

When Paul spoke against "the wisdom of this world" (1 Corinthians 1:20), he was referring to the flawed philosophical traditions of his day and not to the worthwhile pursuit of learning and education that the Lord encourages (see Matthew 22:37; 2 Nephi 9:29; D&C 88:78–80). Paul used the words *wise* and *wisdom* repeatedly in 1 Corinthians 1:17–2:13 to refer to worldly philosophies and those who supported them. Philosophical ideas were regularly the subject of public debates. Paul contrasted limited human wisdom with the powerful message of God's crucified Son (see 1 Corinthians 1:17–25). Regardless of those who scoffed at the gospel, the Saints' faith should not depend on "the wisdom of men, but . . . the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:5).

The message of a crucified Messiah was difficult for both Jews and Gentiles to accept. In the Roman world, crucifixion was a punishment reserved for criminals or slaves and symbolized shame and defeat. The idea of someone vicariously suffering and dying for others, then subsequently coming back to life, was "foolishness" to the philosophically minded Greeks (1 Corinthians 1:23). For the Jews, whose concept of the Messiah brought the expectation of royalty, power, and victory, the message that the Messiah had died on a cross was a "stumbling-block" and an unacceptable idea (1 Corinthians 1:23).

1 Corinthians 1:18–29. "God Hath Chosen the Weak Things of the World to Confound the Things Which Are Mighty"

While many Jews and Gentiles rejected the gospel message as "foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:18), Paul taught that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Corinthians 1:19–25). God often performs His work through individuals whom the world might consider to be "foolish" or "weak" (see D&C 35:13–14; 124:1). In 1 Corinthians 1:28, the "base things of the world"—those who are lowly and humble—are those whom God chooses to accomplish His work. **President Boyd K. Packer** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained how the Lord uses common members of the Church to further His work:

"The Church has no professional clergy. The call to leadership positions worldwide is drawn from the congregation. We have no seminaries for the training of professional leaders.

"Everything that is done in the Church—the leading, the teaching, the calling, the ordaining, the praying, the singing, the preparation of the sacrament, the counseling, and everything else—is done by ordinary members, the 'weak things of the world'" ("The Weak and the Simple of the Church," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 6–7).

1 Corinthians 2:1–5

What insights in these verses might help you be successful in teaching the gospel? Why is "excellency of speech or of wisdom" not as effective as the Spirit when teaching the gospel?

1 Corinthians 2:2–5. "Not with Enticing Words"

Paul was exceptionally intelligent and well educated (see Acts 22:3; Galatians 1:14). He could have impressed the Corinthians with rhetoric, philosophy, and secular learning, but he deliberately focused on teaching the message of Jesus Christ simply and humbly. **President Brigham Young** (1801–77) explained how his own conversion resulted from a missionary who taught by the power of the Spirit: "If all the talent, tact, wisdom, and refinement of the world had been combined in one individual, and that person had been sent to me with the Book of Mormon, and had declared in the most exalted of earthly eloquence, the truth of it, undertaking to prove it by his learning and worldly wisdom, it would have been to me like the smoke which arises only to vanish. But when I saw a man without eloquence, or talents for public speaking, who could only just say, 'I know by the power of the Holy Ghost that the Book of Mormon is true, that Joseph Smith is a Prophet of the Lord,' the Holy Ghost proceeding from that individual illuminates my understanding, and light, glory, and immortality is before me; I am encircled by it, filled with it, and know for myself that the testimony of the man is true" (*Deseret News Weekly*, Feb. 9, 1854, 24).

1 Corinthians 2:9

How does this verse affect your feelings about what God has in store for you if you are faithful? Why must we love God before we can receive additional revelation and knowledge from Him?

1 Corinthians 2:6–16. The Things of God Are Spiritually Discerned

Paul reminded his readers that a worldly minded person cannot comprehend spiritual truth because “the things of the Spirit of God” must be “spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). Spiritual knowledge can be obtained only through the means that God has prepared, as **Elder Paul V. Johnson** of the Seventy taught:

“In the scientific world the scientific method is used to learn truth and advance knowledge. It has been extremely helpful over the years and has yielded tremendous amounts of scientific knowledge and continues to push back the curtain of ignorance about our physical world. Learning spiritual things, however, requires a different approach than learning scientific things. The scientific method and intellect are very helpful, but they alone will never bring spiritual knowledge.

“Learning spiritual things involves the intellect, but that is not enough. We only learn spiritual things by the Spirit. . . .

“. . . Answers to spiritual questions are given to individuals who don’t harden their hearts; who ask in faith, believing they will receive; and who diligently keep the commandments. Even when we follow this pattern, we don’t control the timing of getting answers. Sometimes our answers come quickly, and sometimes we must place questions on the shelf for a time and rely on our faith that has developed from the answers we do know” (“A Pattern for Learning Spiritual Things” [Seminaries and Institutes of Religion satellite broadcast, Aug. 7, 2012]).

President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency taught: “The Lord’s prescribed methods of acquiring sacred knowledge are very different from the methods used by those who acquire learning exclusively by study. For example, a frequent technique of scholarship is debate or adversarial discussion, a method with which I have had considerable personal experience. But the Lord has instructed us in ancient and modern scriptures that we should not contend over the points of his doctrine. (See 3 Ne. 11:28–30; D&C 10:63.) . . . Gospel truths and testimony are received from the Holy Ghost through reverent personal study and quiet contemplation” (“Alternate Voices,” *Ensign*, May 1989, 29).

1 Corinthians 3:4–7. “God Gave the Increase”

In 1 Corinthians 3:4–7, Paul used the metaphor of planting and harvesting to illustrate that missionaries are instruments in the hands of God, but it is “God

that giveth the increase,” meaning that God causes the changes in people’s hearts and souls that lead to conversion. In the Book of Mormon, Ammon expressed similar sentiments (see Alma 26:11–14).

1 Corinthians 3:13. “The Day Shall Declare It”

The “day” mentioned in 1 Corinthians 3:13 is the Day of Judgment, when all our works will be made manifest.

1 Corinthians 3:16–17. “Ye Are the Temple of God”

Paul taught, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?” (1 Corinthians 3:16). In this verse, Paul used *ye*, a plural pronoun, to refer to the Corinthian Saints collectively as God’s temple. Paul’s point was that the congregations of the Church functioned as temples where the Spirit of God could dwell (see 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:21). This analogy is subtly different from the one that Paul used later in 1 Corinthians 6:19, in which he compared a person’s physical body to a temple (see the commentary for 1 Corinthians 6:19).

1 Corinthians 4:9–10. Death of the Apostles

When Paul taught that the Apostles “were appointed to death” (1 Corinthians 4:9), he hinted that his calling as an Apostle would lead to his death. He also related that many in Corinth viewed themselves as being wise and strong while considering Paul and other Apostles to be foolish, weak, and despised (see 1 Corinthians 4:10). These two factors—the Apostles’ death and Church members’ rejection of apostolic authority—would ultimately contribute to the Great Apostasy. **President Henry B. Eyring** of the First Presidency taught that “if the Saints who heard Paul had possessed a testimony of the value and the power of the keys he held, perhaps the Apostles would not have had to be taken from the earth. . . . Paul wanted the people to feel the value of the chain of priesthood keys reaching from the Lord through His Apostles to them, the members of the Lord’s Church” (“Faith and Keys,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 27).

1 Corinthians 4:20. “Not in Word, but in Power”

To read about the importance of the gospel being taught in power, see the commentary for 1 Thessalonians 1:5.

1 Corinthians 5:1–13. “Put Away from among Yourselves That Wicked Person”

The word *fornication* was translated from the Greek *porneia*, which refers to any sexual relations outside of marriage. *Porneia* is also the root word for *pornography*.

One instance of fornication that Paul had learned of involved a Church member in Corinth who was in a sexual relationship with his stepmother. Such a relationship was forbidden in Old Testament law (see Leviticus 18:8, 29; Deuteronomy 22:30; 27:20) and was viewed as being wrong even among non-Christians (see 1 Corinthians 5:1). Paul reproved the Church in Corinth for failing to take disciplinary measures against the sinning member, and he counseled that the sinner be “put away” or excommunicated from the congregation (1 Corinthians 5:13). Paul reasoned that if the transgressor were left in the Church, the influence of wickedness would spread throughout the Church (1 Corinthians 5:6–8).

As in Paul’s day, Church members today are sometimes excommunicated for sinful behavior. Formal Church councils carry out disciplinary actions, always with the goal of helping and saving the sinner by assisting him or her in the repentance process. **Elder M. Russell Ballard** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:

“In the scriptures, the Lord has given direction concerning Church disciplinary councils. (See D&C 102.) The word *council* brings to mind a helpful proceeding—one of love and concern, with the salvation and blessing of the transgressor being the foremost consideration.

“Members sometimes ask why Church disciplinary councils are held. The purpose is threefold: to save the soul of the transgressor, to protect the innocent, and to safeguard the Church’s purity, integrity, and good name. . . .

“. . . The miracle of the gospel is that we all can repent. Church government calls for Church disciplinary councils. But the Lord’s system also calls for restoration following repentance. Disfellowshipment or excommunication is not the end of the story, unless the member so chooses” (“A Chance to Start Over: Church Disciplinary Councils and the Restoration of Blessings,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1990, 15, 18).

1 Corinthians 5:9–11. Do Not Keep Company with Fornicators

Paul advised the Corinthian Saints “not to company with fornicators” (1 Corinthians 5:9). **Elder Neal A. Maxwell** (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles expounded on this teaching, pointing out that even a good person cannot remain unaffected by unrighteous influences: “Do not company with fornicators—not because you are too good for them but, as C. S. Lewis wrote, because you are not good enough.

Remember that bad situations can wear down even good people. Joseph had both good sense and good legs in fleeing from Potiphar’s wife” (“The Stern but Sweet Seventh Commandment,” in *Morality* [1992], 29).

1 Corinthians 6:1–7. Avoiding Legal Disputes with Fellow Saints

One of the causes for division among Church members in Corinth was that Christians were bringing fellow Church members before civil magistrates over trivial civil disputes. Paul counseled Church members to seek to resolve their differences among themselves rather than entering a lawsuit against a fellow member. Paul’s counsel reflects similar teachings that the Savior gave during His mortal ministry (see Matthew 5:25; 18:15). Modern-day scripture acknowledges that there are times when it may be appropriate for Church members to pursue solutions to legal problems through the law of the land (see D&C 42:78–89).

1 Corinthians 6:9–11. “The Unrighteous Shall Not Inherit the Kingdom of God”

In 1 Corinthians 6:9–10, the Apostle Paul warned that those who persist in sinful behavior will not inherit God’s kingdom (see similar passages in Galatians 5:19–21 and Ephesians 5:5). Note that in verse 9, the Greek phrases translated as “effeminate” and “abusers of themselves with mankind” refer to homosexual relations. All forms of sexual immorality are contrary to God’s law. However, God provides the opportunity for forgiveness to those who truly repent. Paul taught that some who had been guilty of sexual sins had repented and were now washed clean and “justified in the name of the Lord Jesus” (1 Corinthians 6:11). Regarding Paul’s teachings about immoral behavior, it is important to remember that, as **President Gordon B. Hinckley** (1910–2008) stated, “we cannot condone the sin, but we love the sinner” (“The Fabric of Faith and Testimony,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 89). For additional information on the Lord’s teachings about homosexual relations, see the commentary for Romans 1:26–27.

1 Corinthians 6:12–20; 10:23. What Is Meant by “All Things Are Lawful”?

In 1 Corinthians 6:12 and 10:23, Paul seemed to address a false idea in Corinthian society that “all things are lawful,” or that everything is permissible. The Joseph Smith Translation clarifies that Paul refuted the notion that “all things were lawful”: “All *these* things are *not* lawful unto me, *and* all *these* things are not expedient.

All things are *not* lawful for me, *therefore* I will not be brought under the power of any” (Joseph Smith Translation, 1 Corinthians 6:12, footnote *a*; see also Joseph Smith Translation, 1 Corinthians 10:23 [in 1 Corinthians 10:23, footnote *a*]).

1 Corinthians 6:15–18. “Flee Fornication”

Paul taught that those who join the Church become one with Christ as spiritual “members” of His body (1 Corinthians 6:15–18). He explained that sinful behavior, particularly the act of being “joined to an harlot,” was incompatible with a spiritual relationship or oneness with Jesus Christ. Church leaders today continue to emphasize the importance of reserving sexual intimacy for marriage: “Before marriage, do not participate in passionate kissing, lie on top of another person, or touch the private, sacred parts of another person’s body, with or without clothing. Do not do anything else that arouses sexual feelings. Do not arouse those emotions in your own body” (*For the Strength of Youth* [booklet, 2011], 36).

1 Corinthians 6:19. “Your Body Is the Temple of the Holy Ghost Which Is in You”

Many people in ancient Corinth believed that sexual immorality was acceptable. Paul contradicted this belief when he stated that “the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord” (1 Corinthians 6:13). He helped Church members understand that the physical body was to be a “temple of the Holy Ghost” (1 Corinthians 6:19). **Elder D. Todd Christofferson** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles highlighted the importance of respecting our bodies:

“Those who believe that our bodies are nothing more than the result of evolutionary chance will feel no accountability to God or anyone else for what they do with or to their body. We who have a witness of the broader reality of premortal, mortal, and postmortal eternity, however, must acknowledge that we have a duty to God with respect to this crowning achievement of His physical creation. In Paul’s words:

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?”

“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

“Acknowledging these truths . . . , we would certainly not deface our body, as with tattoos; or debilitate it, as

with drugs; or defile it, as with fornication, adultery, or immodesty. As our body is the instrument of our spirit, it is vital that we care for it as best we can. We should consecrate its powers to serve and further the work of Christ. Said Paul, ‘I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God’ (Romans 12:1)” (“Reflections on a Consecrated Life,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 17).

1 Corinthians 6:19–20

Based on these verses, how do you think Paul might respond to someone who says, “It is my body, I can do with it what I want”? How does knowing that “ye are bought with a price” influence your decisions regarding your physical body? For more information, read 1 Peter 1:18–19.

1 Corinthians 6:20. “Ye Are Bought with a Price”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained how we were purchased through the Savior’s merciful sacrifice: “The Savior’s spiritual suffering and the shedding of his innocent blood, so lovingly and freely given, paid the debt for what the scriptures call the ‘original guilt’ of Adam’s transgression (Moses 6:54). Furthermore, Christ suffered for the sins and sorrows and pains of all the rest of the human family, providing remission for all of our sins as well, upon conditions of obedience to the principles and ordinances of the gospel he taught (see 2 Ne. 9:21–23). As the Apostle Paul wrote, we were ‘bought with a price’ (1 Cor. 6:20). What an expensive price and what a merciful purchase!” (“This Do in Remembrance of Me,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 67).

1 Corinthians 7:1–40. Questions about Marriage

While sexual immorality was common in ancient Corinth, some people there held the opposite belief—that it was “good for a man not to touch a woman,” and therefore one should refrain from all sexual relations, even in marriage (1 Corinthians 7:1).

Paul’s words of counsel—“I would that all men were even as I myself” and “It is good for them if they abide even as I” (1 Corinthians 7:7–8)—have led some to mistakenly believe that Paul was unmarried and promoted the celibate lifestyle as being superior to marriage. However, Paul probably was married or had been at some point. Most scholars acknowledge that Paul was either a member of the Jewish ruling body—the Sanhedrin—or a close associate of the group (see Acts

8:3; 9:1–2; 22:5; 26:10). To comply with the Sanhedrin’s membership requirements, Paul would have had to be married. Even if Paul was simply a representative of the Sanhedrin, he would have been expected to be in harmony with all accepted Jewish customs and therefore be married. In addition, Paul clearly taught the importance of marriage and family life (see 1 Corinthians 7:2; 11:11; Ephesians 5:21–6:4; 1 Timothy 3:2).

Many of Paul’s instructions in this chapter were likely meant to help Church members understand that marriage was appropriately delayed for full-time missionary service. The Joseph Smith Translation supports this conclusion:

“But I speak unto you who are called unto the ministry. For this I say, brethren, the time that remaineth is but short, that ye shall be sent forth unto the ministry. Even they who have wives, shall be as though they had none; for ye are called and chosen to do the Lord’s work. . . .

“But I would, brethren, that ye magnify your calling. I would have you without carefulness. For he who is unmarried, careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord; therefore he prevaieth.

“But he who is married, careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife; therefore there is a difference, for he is hindered” (Joseph Smith Translation, 1 Corinthians 7:29, 32–33 [in the Bible appendix]).

1 Corinthians 7:1–5. Intimacy in Marriage

We do not know all of the questions Paul was answering in 1 Corinthians 7:1–5. However, it is evident that some people whom Paul taught thought that celibacy was preferable to marriage (see 1 Corinthians 7:1). It seems that some also believed that complete abstinence should be practiced even by married people. In response, Paul taught that sexual intimacy in marriage is an important way for husbands and wives to show love and affection. This principle is also taught today in the Church: “Physical intimacy between husband and wife is beautiful and sacred. It is ordained of God for the creation of children and for the expression of love between husband and wife. God has commanded that sexual intimacy be reserved for marriage” (*For the Strength of Youth*, 35).

Additionally, Paul encouraged spouses to render “due benevolence” (1 Corinthians 7:3) to one another. “Due benevolence” does not refer to what one spouse may

demand of another in marriage. Rather, it refers to the love, respect, and affection married couples can provide one another. **President Howard W. Hunter** (1907–95) provided the following counsel regarding intimacy in marriage: “Tenderness and respect—never selfishness—must be the guiding principles in the intimate relationship between husband and wife. Each partner must be considerate and sensitive to the other’s needs and desires. Any domineering, indecent, or uncontrolled behavior in the intimate relationship between husband and wife is condemned by the Lord” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Howard W. Hunter* [2015], 216).

1 Corinthians 7:12–19. Unbelieving Spouses

Paul counseled members who were married to unbelievers not to divorce their spouses on the grounds of their unbelief, but to remain married and live as faithful followers of Christ. In doing so, a marriage partner can become the means of sanctifying the unbelieving spouse.

In 1832, as the Prophet Joseph Smith was seeking to better understand 1 Corinthians 7:14, he received the revelation recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 74, which provides important context for the problem Paul was addressing.

1 Corinthians 7:14. Children Are Holy

Paul taught that children are “holy” (1 Corinthians 7:14). In the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord gave a revelation that clarified Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 7:14. The Jews had a tradition that little children were unholy, but the Lord declared, “Little children are holy, being sanctified through the atonement of Jesus Christ,” and He taught that male children need not be circumcised as required by the law of Moses (see D&C 74:4–7).

1 Corinthians 8:1–13; 10:14, 19–33. Paul’s Counsel about Meat Used in Pagan Sacrifices

In Paul’s day, some of the meat sold in the markets of Corinth and other cities had been butchered as offerings or dedications to pagan deities. Faithful Jews would have felt that the law of Moses prohibited them from partaking of this meat; however, from Paul’s words it appears that some Christians did not feel restricted from eating it (see 1 Corinthians 8:1–13; 10:14, 19–33).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles discussed Paul’s response to

this issue: “The Corinthians had asked Paul for counsel about eating meat sacrificed by pagan people to their idols. He replies that in theory it is completely immaterial whether the saints eat such meat or not, because idols are not true gods, and there is actually no religious significance to the pseudo-sacrifices one way or the other. But, he reasons, in practice it may be wise not to eat this meat, since such a course might cause those who are weak in the faith to assume there was virtue and benefit in the sacrifices themselves and therefore to be led astray” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1966–73], 2:348). For Paul, the greater concern was to avoid doing anything that might weaken the faith of others, unintentionally leading them into sin. (For further insights on making choices, see the commentaries for Acts 15:6–31 and for Romans 14:1–15:3.)



A Roman marble relief depicting the preparation of an animal sacrifice; early second century (see 1 Corinthians 8:4).

1 Corinthians 8:5–6. “Lords Many”

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) commented on Paul’s statements in 1 Corinthians 8:5–6:

“I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and that the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit: and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods. . . .

“Some say I do not interpret [Paul’s teachings in 1 Corinthians 8:5] the same as they do. They say it means the heathen’s gods. Paul says there are Gods

many and Lords many; and that makes a plurality of Gods. . . . I have a witness of the Holy Ghost, and a testimony that Paul had no allusion to the heathen gods in the text” (in *History of the Church*, 6:474–75).

1 Corinthians 9:20–23. “I Am Made All Things to All Men”

Paul was committed to sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with all people, regardless of whether they were Jews or Gentiles, and he willingly adapted his behavior in order to minister more effectively to people from various cultural backgrounds. His allegiance was not to any culture or country but to the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Referring to this passage, **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained: “Paul here says he made himself all things to all men in an effort to get them to accept the gospel message; that is, he adapted himself to the conditions and circumstances of all classes of people, as a means of getting them to pay attention to his teachings and testimony. And then, lest any suppose this included the acceptance of their false doctrines or practices, or that it in any way involved a compromise between the gospel and false systems of worship, he hastened to add that he and all men must obey the gospel law to be saved” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:353).

1 Corinthians 9:24–27. “Know Ye Not That . . . One Receiveth the Prize? So Run, That Ye May Obtain”

Greeks and Romans placed great importance on athletic contests. The ancient Olympic games were highly anticipated every four years throughout the Mediterranean area. In Corinth, the Isthmian games were held every two years. Athletes competed for honor and for the winner’s crown made of natural olive, laurel, or pine branches. When Paul pointed out that athletes were “temperate in all things” (1 Corinthians 9:25), he was probably alluding to the strict diets and training regimens that athletes adopted as they trained for competition. Paul suggested that followers of Jesus Christ should strive for victory in a similar manner, working to overcome temptation and achieve spiritual self-mastery. Saints run a race not against others, but against sin and the challenges of mortal life. And the reward is not a “corruptible” or perishable crown, but a crown of eternal life that lasts forever (1 Corinthians 9:25; see also 2 Timothy 4:7–8; Hebrews 12:1–2; Mosiah 4:27).



A gold wreath-crown from Cyprus, third or fourth century B.C. Paul noted that Greco-Roman athletes raced for the prize of a crown that would perish, but followers of Jesus Christ strive for self-mastery to win the crown of eternal life (see 1 Corinthians 9:24–25).

1 Corinthians 10:1–9. Paul Pointed to Ancient Israel as an Example

Paul cited some of the experiences of ancient Israel to teach the Corinthian Saints important lessons of discipleship (see 1 Corinthians 10:1–9). When Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, the Lord blessed them with numerous miracles. Nonetheless, many murmured, lusted after evil things, and committed serious sins. Paul admonished the Corinthian Saints not to follow these poor examples.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie commented on 1 Corinthians 10:1–2 and explained the meaning of the phrase “baptized unto Moses”: “[Paul] is saying that even as Israel, when they passed through the Red Sea, fled from the worldliness of Egypt, so their Christian descendants, through baptism, are to forsake the lusts of the flesh and live godly lives” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:355).

1 Corinthians 10:10–13. God Will “Make a Way to Escape” Temptation

Paul recounted that many of the ancient Israelites gave in to temptation as they wandered in the wilderness, despite the numerous blessings they received from God. Paul urged the Corinthian Saints to “take heed” of the examples of those who fell to temptation (1 Corinthians 10:12). The Joseph Smith Translation makes clear that Paul’s admonition to the Corinthian Saints is also

directed to us: “These things . . . *were* written for our admonition *also*, and for an admonition for those upon whom the *end* of the world *shall* come” (Joseph Smith Translation, 1 Corinthians 10:11 [in 1 Corinthians 10:11, footnote b]). Paul also reassured his readers that if they would rely on the Lord, they would not be tempted beyond their strength to endure (compare 2 Peter 2:9; Alma 13:28). Although God cannot always shield His people from wicked enticements, Paul promised that God will provide them with strength and “a way to escape” temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13). **President Henry B. Eyring** taught that we can pray for help as we face temptation:

“With the help of the Holy Ghost, we can watch over ourselves. We can pray to recognize and reject the first thoughts of sin. . . . And we can, when we must, pray for the humility and the faith to repent.

“There will surely be some who hear my voice who will have this thought come into their minds: ‘But the temptations are too great for me. I have resisted as long as I can. For me, the commandments are too hard. The standard is too high.’

“That is not so. The Savior is our Advocate with the Father. He knows our weaknesses. He knows how to succor those who are tempted” (“As a Child,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2006, 17).

1 Corinthians 10:16–21. The Cup and the Bread of “Communion”

Paul spoke of Church members eating and drinking together as “partakers of that one bread” (1 Corinthians 10:16–17). In the culture of the ancient Near East, dining together at the same table was an expression of unity, peace, and friendship. If there had been problems or disagreements among individuals before they sat down to eat, these were resolved, and all parties were reconciled. Paul reminded the Saints of this idea when he spoke of the sacrament, which he referred to as “communion.” The word translated as “communion” in 1 Corinthians 10:16 denotes close fellowship, partnership, and sharing. Therefore, when members partake of “one bread” (loaf) during the ordinance of the sacrament, they affirm oneness or unity not only with Christ but also with one another (1 Corinthians 10:17). They are “partakers of the Lord’s table” (1 Corinthians 10:21) and have the opportunity to be reconciled with Christ and enjoy greater communion with Him.



This third century A.D. painting from the Priscilla Catacomb in Rome depicts a Christian woman praying according to custom—with her head covered (see 1 Corinthians 11:6) and her arms lifted up (see 1 Kings 8:22; Psalm 28:2; 1 Timothy 2:8; D&C 109:16–19).

1 Corinthians 11:11–12. “Neither Is the Man without the Woman, Neither the Woman without the Man, in the Lord”

Paul affirmed to the Saints in Corinth that men and women are mutually dependent and are meant to work together as they follow the Lord. This truth applies to worshipping and serving together in the Church, and particularly to growing together in marriage relationships. **President Joseph F. Smith** (1838–1918) spoke of how Paul’s teaching applies to marriage: “No man can be saved and exalted in the kingdom of God without the woman, and no woman can reach the perfection and exaltation in the kingdom of God alone. . . . God instituted marriage in the beginning. He made man in his own image and likeness, male and female, and in their creation it was designed that they should be united together in sacred bonds of marriage, and one is not perfect without the other” (*Gospel Doctrine* [1939], 272).

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles further clarified the mutual dependency of men and women: “After the earth was created, Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden. Importantly,

however, God said ‘it was not good that the man should be alone’ (Moses 3:18; see also Genesis 2:18), and Eve became Adam’s wife and helpmeet. The unique combination of spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional capacities of both males and females was needed to enact the plan of happiness. ‘Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord’ (1 Corinthians 11:11). The man and the woman are intended to learn from, strengthen, bless, and complete each other” (“We Believe in Being Chaste,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 41–42).



Marriage between a man and a woman is part of God’s plan (see 1 Corinthians 11:11).

1 Corinthians 11:3. “The Head of the Woman Is the Man”

President Howard W. Hunter taught the following regarding a husband’s presiding role in the family:

“The Lord intended that the wife be a helpmeet for man (*meet* means equal)—that is, a companion equal and necessary in full partnership. Presiding in righteousness necessitates a shared responsibility between husband and wife; together you act with knowledge and participation in all family matters. For a man to operate

independent of or without regard to the feelings and counsel of his wife in governing the family is to exercise unrighteous dominion.

“. . . You are to love your wife as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it (see Eph. 5:25–31)” (“Being a Righteous Husband and Father,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 51). To read more about the presiding role of the husband in the home, see the commentary for Ephesians 5:25.

1 Corinthians 11:17–29. The Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper

The Savior instituted the sacrament during the meal that was eaten at the Last Supper (see Matthew 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25; Luke 22:19–20; 1 Corinthians 11:23–25). Early members of the Church maintained a practice of partaking of a meal together, followed by the administration of the sacrament. The meals were signs of the peace, unity, and fellowship shared by the members of the congregation, and they were also a means of ministering to members’ temporal needs. These meals were, however, sometimes the source of discord when the food was eaten before all members could arrive, causing some to go home hungry and become upset with fellow Saints (see 1 Corinthians 11:17–22). This nullified one of the purposes of coming together—to build fellowship as they partook of “the Lord’s supper” (1 Corinthians 11:17–18, 33–34). Paul taught the Saints to take steps to avoid this kind of contention and maintain harmony—they should wait for everyone to arrive before eating, and if any were still hungry after the meal, they should eat later at home (see 1 Corinthians 11:33–34).

1 Corinthians 11:27–29. Saints Should Partake of the Sacrament Worthily

In 1 Corinthians 11:27–29, Paul emphasized the importance of personal worthiness when partaking of the sacrament. He encouraged his readers to make their sacrament worship a time of personal examination.

Elder Tad R. Callister of the Seventy wrote:

“The sacrament is . . . a time of deep introspection and self-examination. Paul exhorted, ‘Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup’ (1 Corinthians 11:28). The sacrament is a time when we not only remember the Savior, but we match our life against that of the Great Exemplar. It is a time to put aside all self-deception; it is a time of absolute sublime truth. All excuses, all facades must fall by the wayside, allowing our spirit, as it really is, to commune

spirit to Spirit with our Father. At this moment we become our own judge, contemplating what our life really is and what it really should be. David must have felt this way when he pleaded, ‘Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting’ (Psalm 139:23–24). . . .

“. . . [The Savior] knows that in our weakness we need to commit not just once at baptism, but frequently thereafter. Each week, each month, each year as we stretch forth our hand to partake of his emblems we commit with our honor, for whatever it is worth, to serve him, keep his commandments, and put our life in harmony with the divine standard” (*The Infinite Atonement* [2000], 291–92).

Points to Ponder

- How could Paul’s teachings in 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 give hope and encouragement to someone who is struggling to overcome serious sins?
- What principles can you identify in 1 Corinthians 10:16–21 and 11:17–29 that can help make the sacrament a more meaningful experience in your life?

Suggested Assignments

- Choose three of Paul’s teaching methods from 1 Corinthians 1–2 and describe how you might implement them when you have opportunities to teach, such as in your assignment as a home teacher or visiting teacher.
- Study 1 Corinthians 6:15–20 and 9:24–27. Describe in writing what Paul taught about our bodies. Write a short paper discussing how the knowledge that your body is sacred should affect what you take into your body, how you use your body, and how you dress.

1 Corinthians 12–14

Introduction and Timeline for 1 Corinthians 12–14

In 1 Corinthians 12–14 Paul taught that there are diverse spiritual gifts that can be granted to faithful members of the Church. These gifts enable Christ's followers to serve and edify others, thereby creating greater unity in the Church. Paul emphasized the gift of charity, which he characterized as being pure, unselfish love and concern for the well-being of others. He taught that charity should govern the exercise of all other spiritual gifts in the Church. He cautioned that the gift of speaking in tongues, if used improperly, will fail to edify the Church and will distract members from seeking superior spiritual gifts. Paul's counsel in these chapters continued to address the problems that members of the Church in Corinth were having with doctrinal questions and a lack of unity.



The Apostle Paul was serving in Ephesus on his third missionary journey when

he wrote 1 Corinthians between A.D. 54 and 57.

Commentary for 1 Corinthians 12–14

1 Corinthians 12:1–3. “No Man Can Say That Jesus Is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost”

Paul noted that before the Saints in Corinth had converted to the gospel, they were “carried away unto these dumb [voiceless] idols, even as ye were led” (1 Corinthians 12:2). In contrast to powerless and voiceless idols, the Saints could rely on the powerful influence of the Holy Ghost as a source of testimony (see 1 Corinthians 12:3).

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that the word *say* in 1 Corinthians 12:3 should be understood as “know,” thus clarifying that “no man can *know* that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (in *History of the Church*, 4:603). **President M. Russell Ballard** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke of obtaining a testimony through the Holy Ghost:

“A testimony is a witness or confirmation of eternal truth impressed upon individual hearts and souls through the Holy Ghost, whose primary ministry is to testify of truth, particularly as it relates to the Father and the Son. . . .

“Simply stated, testimony—real testimony, born of the Spirit and confirmed by the Holy Ghost—changes lives. It changes how you think and what you do. It changes what you say. It affects every priority you set and every choice you make” (“Pure Testimony,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 40). For more insight

on spiritual discernment, see the commentary for 1 Corinthians 2:6–16.

1 Corinthians 12:3–10

Paul listed some of the gifts of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12. Why might it be significant that he began his list with the gift mentioned in verse 3? Have you been blessed with this spiritual gift?

1 Corinthians 12:3–10. Gifts of the Spirit Defined

The gifts listed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12 are referred to as “spiritual gifts” or “gifts of the Spirit.” **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained, “Spiritual gifts come from God. They are the gifts of God; they originate with him and are special blessings that he bestows upon those who love him and keep his commandments” (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [1985], 270).

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) confirmed that Latter-day Saints “believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, interpretation of tongues, and so forth” (Articles of Faith 1:7). Other books of scripture, including Moroni 10 and Doctrine and Covenants 46, supplement our understanding of spiritual gifts. For example, the Doctrine and Covenants teaches that Heavenly Father gives spiritual gifts to His children through the Holy Ghost for their benefit (see D&C 46:8–10, 26).

Paul explained that the gifts of the Spirit enable disciples to effectively administer and serve in God’s kingdom and meet the needs of others (see 1 Corinthians 12:5–7). By using the terms “the same Spirit,” “the same Lord,” and

“the same God” (1 Corinthians 12:4–6), Paul recognized that spiritual gifts are manifestations of the united work of all three members of the Godhead. The following chart lists the spiritual gifts specifically listed by Paul.

Spiritual Gift (see 1 Corinthians 12:3–10)	Description
Testimony of Jesus Christ (verse 3)	A witness given through the Holy Ghost “that Jesus is the resurrected, living Son of the living God” (Gordon B. Hinckley, “Fear Not to Do Good,” <i>Ensign</i> , May 1983, 80).
Differences of administrations (verse 5)	Leadership or “administrative ability,” which is “used in administering and regulating the church” (Bruce R. McConkie, <i>A New Witness for the Articles of Faith</i> , 271, 278). The ability to discern correctly how the Lord governs His Church through councils, quorums, auxiliaries, and so on.
Diversities of operations (verse 6)	The ability to distinguish between things that are of the devil and those that are of God.
Word of wisdom (verse 8)	Includes sound judgment and the proper application of gospel doctrines and principles, particularly in decision making (see James 1:5; D&C 136:32–33). Paul’s use of <i>word</i> shows that the gift of wisdom includes the ability to teach a message of wisdom by the power of the Holy Ghost.
Word of knowledge (verse 8)	“An endowment of knowledge, not random knowledge, not knowledge in general or as an abstract principle, but gospel knowledge, a knowledge of God and his laws” (Bruce R. McConkie, <i>Doctrinal New Testament Commentary</i> , 3 vols. [1965–73], 2:370; see also D&C 42:61). Again, Paul’s choice of <i>word</i> emphasizes that this gift includes the ability to teach knowledge by the power of the Holy Ghost (see also D&C 25:7; 28:1; 99:1–2).
Faith (verse 9)	Experienced by degrees and increased through righteous living. Not everyone has the same degree of faith. This gift is a prerequisite for both healing and working miracles (see Matthew 17:14–20; see also 1 Nephi 7:12).
Healing (verse 9)	Manifest through priesthood ordinances. To pray with faith sufficient for healing is also a spiritual gift (see James 5:13–14; D&C 42:48).
Working of miracles (verse 10)	Signs of God’s grace, which affirm that divine power is at work. They are a reminder that God assists those who follow the example of the Savior and minister to others (see Mormon 9:7–11, 18–20).
Prophecy (verse 10)	“The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10). Personal revelation is the source of testimony, and testimony enables a person to prophesy or testify of God’s work, including His future works. The gift of prophecy does not necessarily mean predicting specific future events. All members of the Church are to seek for this gift (see Numbers 11:29; 1 Corinthians 14:1, 3, 31, 39). The gift of prophecy should not be confused with the prophetic office of a prophet, seer, and revelator.
Discerning of spirits (verse 10)	Discernment of good and evil (see Moroni 7:12–18; D&C 101:95) and of false spirits from divine spirits (see D&C 46:23). The gift of discernment can make known “the thoughts and intents of the heart” of another person (Hebrews 4:12; D&C 33:1). The gift of discernment “arises largely out of an acute sensitivity to impressions—spiritual impressions, . . . to detect hidden evil, and more importantly to find the good that may be concealed. The highest type of discernment is that which perceives in others and uncovers for them their better natures, the good inherent within them” (Stephen L Richards, in Conference Report, Apr. 1950, 162).
Tongues (verse 10)	“Particularly instituted for the preaching of the Gospel to other nations and languages” (Joseph Smith, <i>Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith</i> [2007], 382–83; see also Acts 2:4–12; D&C 90:11). Since speaking in tongues is one of the most visible and sought after of the spiritual gifts, Paul warned against its misuse (see 1 Corinthians 14:4, 9, 27–28, 40).
Interpretation of tongues (verse 10)	Should be accompanied by an inspired interpretation so that listeners are edified (see 1 Corinthians 14:9, 11, 13, 19, 27–28).

1 Corinthians 12:4. “There Are Diversities of Gifts”

Many spiritual gifts are specifically listed in the scriptures (see 1 Corinthians 12:7–10; Moroni 10:8–17; D&C 46:12–29). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** taught: “Spiritual gifts are endless in number and infinite in variety. Those listed in the revealed word are simply illustrations of the boundless outpouring of divine grace that a gracious God gives those who love and serve him” (*A New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 371).

1 Corinthians 12:7, 11. Spiritual Gifts Are Given to All Who Have the Gift of the Holy Ghost

All followers of Jesus Christ who are baptized, receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and seek to keep the commandments receive one or more spiritual gifts (see D&C 46:11). **Elder Orson Pratt** (1811–81) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained: “Whenever the Holy Ghost takes up its residence in a person, it not only cleanses, sanctifies, and purifies him in proportion as he yields himself to its influence, but also imparts to him some gift, intended for the benefit of himself and others. No one who has been born of the Spirit, and who remains sufficiently faithful, is left destitute of a spiritual gift” (*Masterful Discourses and Writings of Orson Pratt*, comp. N. B. Lundwall [1946], 539). Spiritual gifts are given to both men and women, and according to **Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin** (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, “in the body of the Church, all of the spiritual gifts are present” (“Life’s Lessons Learned,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 47).

1 Corinthians 12:12–30. “Ye Are the Body of Christ”

Paul used the analogy of the human body to show how each individual Church member is essential to the entire body of the Church. Paul noted that the human body operates as one whole but is made up of many parts or members, each of which is important. Paul pointed out that the body would not work properly if the whole body were only the eye or the ear.

When people are baptized, they become members of the body of Christ, meaning Christ’s Church. Because each member is given unique offices, duties, and spiritual gifts, each can play an important role in the Church, just as every member of the body is important. When members perform responsibilities and minister to the needs of others with their gifts and talents, the Church as a whole is blessed.

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) taught that all members of the Church can make valuable contributions in their ward or branch: “Your obligation is as

serious in your sphere of responsibility as is my obligation in my sphere. No calling in this church is small or of little consequence. All of us in the pursuit of our duty touch the lives of others. To each of us in our respective responsibilities the Lord has said: ‘Wherefore, be faithful; stand in the office which I have appointed unto you; succor the weak, lift up the hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble knees’ (D&C 81:5)” (“This Is the Work of the Master,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 71).



Paul told Church members, “Ye are the body of Christ,” as a reminder that they were to be united as one.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the First Presidency similarly taught: “You may feel that there are others who are more capable or more experienced who could fulfill your callings and assignments better than you can, but the Lord gave you your responsibilities for a reason. There may be people and hearts only you can reach and touch. Perhaps no one else could do it in quite the same way” (“Lift Where You Stand,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 56).

1 Corinthians 12:21–22

How might these verses assist someone who is feeling insignificant or overlooked in his or her ward or branch?

1 Corinthians 12:28. The Importance of Teachers

In Paul's list of Church officers, he mentioned teachers immediately after apostles and prophets, which underscores the importance of effective teachers in the Church. **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles encouraged all of us to improve our teaching skills:

"In this Church it is virtually impossible to find anyone who is *not* a guide of one kind or another to his or her fellow members of the flock. Little wonder that Paul would say in his writings, 'God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers.' [1 Corinthians 12:28.] . . .

". . . We must revitalize and reenthroned superior teaching in the Church—at home, from the pulpit, in our administrative meetings, and surely in the classroom. Inspired teaching must never become a lost art in the Church, and we must make certain our quest for it does not become a lost tradition" ("A Teacher Come from God," *Ensign*, May 1998, 25).

1 Corinthians 12:26. "Whether One Member Suffer, All the Members Suffer with It"

Paul taught the Saints in Corinth that "there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it" (1 Corinthians 12:25–26). **Bishop Richard C. Edgley** of the Presiding Bishopric taught about the unity that is expressed as Church members care for one another:

"We can each be more compassionate and caring because we have each had our own personal trials and experiences to draw from. We can endure together.

"I rejoice in belonging to such a loving and caring organization. No one knows better how to bear one another's burdens, mourn with those who mourn, and comfort those who stand in need of comfort. I choose to call it 'enduring together.' What happens to one happens to all. We endure together" ("Enduring Together," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 11).

1 Corinthians 12:31. Seek Earnestly the Best Gifts

Paul recommended that Church members "covet [seek] earnestly the best gifts" (1 Corinthians 12:31). An important first step to obtaining additional spiritual gifts is to identify the gifts we already have, as **Elder Robert D. Hales** (1932–2017) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained:

"A prerequisite for seeking after the gifts may require that we find out which gifts we have been given. The scriptures further record:

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

"'For all have not every gift given unto them; for there are many gifts, and to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God' (D&C 46:10–11).

"To find the gifts we have been given, we must pray and fast. Often patriarchal blessings tell us the gifts we have received and declare the promise of gifts we can receive if we seek after them. I urge you each to discover your gifts and to seek after those that will bring direction to your life's work and that will further the work of heaven.



Patriarchal blessings can help us recognize the spiritual gifts we have received.

"During our time here on earth, we have been charged to develop the natural gifts and capabilities Heavenly Father has blessed us with. Then it will be our opportunity to use these gifts to become teachers and leaders of God's children wherever they may be found on earth" ("Gifts of the Spirit," *Ensign*, Feb. 2002, 16).

1 Corinthians 12:31; 13:1–8

According to these verses, why is charity such an important attribute to obtain? What can you do to be filled with charity more completely? (see also Moroni 7:48).

1 Corinthians 12:31; 13:1–13. Charity

In his discussion of spiritual gifts, Paul emphasized the importance of charity and taught how it can influence the use of all spiritual gifts. The scriptures often speak of charity and of the need for the followers of Jesus Christ to obtain it (see 1 Timothy 1:5; 1 Peter 4:8; Ether 12:33–34; Moroni 7:45–48).

The word *charity* is a translation of the Greek noun *agapē*, which can also mean simply "love." *Agapē* is used in other New Testament passages to describe the deep and abiding love between the Father and the Son, the

divine love that God has for man, and the love we are to have for our fellowman (see John 13:34–35; 15:10; 17:26; Romans 8:35, 39).

1 Corinthians 12:31; 13:1–8. Charity—“A More Excellent Way”

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin explained why Paul called the gift of charity “a more excellent way” (1 Corinthians 12:31) and why love should be at the center of every disciple’s life:

“Paul’s message to [the Corinthian Saints] was simple and direct: Nothing you do makes much of a difference if you do not have charity. You can speak with tongues, have the gift of prophecy, understand all mysteries, and possess all knowledge; even if you have the faith to move mountains, without charity it won’t profit you at all [see 1 Corinthians 13:1–2].

“‘Charity is the pure love of Christ’ [Moroni 7:47]. The Savior exemplified that love and taught it even as He was tormented by those who despised and hated Him. . . .

“In 1840 the Prophet Joseph sent an epistle to the Twelve wherein he taught that ‘love is one of the chief characteristics of Deity, and ought to be manifested by those who aspire to be the sons of God. A man filled with the love of God, is not content with blessing his family alone, but ranges through the whole world, anxious to bless the whole human race’ [Teachings: Joseph Smith, 426]. . . .”

“Love is the beginning, the middle, and the end of the pathway of discipleship” (“The Great Commandment,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 28–29). For more information on the importance of developing love for others, see the commentary for John 13:34–35.

1 Corinthians 13:4–5, 12. “Charity Suffereth Long, and Is Kind”

Paul pointed out that “charity suffereth long, and is kind” (1 Corinthians 13:4). When we have charity, we patiently endure offense or hardship. We also act in patience and kindness to everyone, even those who offend us. **President Henry B. Eyring** of the First Presidency taught: “We do not know the hearts of those who offend us. Nor do we know all the sources of our own anger and hurt. The Apostle Paul was telling us how to love in a world of imperfect people, including ourselves, when he said, ‘Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is

not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil’ (1 Cor. 13:4–5). And then he gave solemn warning against reacting to the fault of others and forgetting our own when he wrote, ‘For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I am known’ (1 Cor. 13:12)” (“That We May Be One,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 68).

1 Corinthians 13:8. “Charity Never Faileth”



Healing of the Blind Man, by Harry Anderson. True charity is shown in the Savior’s unfailing love for us.

Like the Apostle Paul, the prophet Mormon also taught that charity would never fail, and he gave a simple definition of this gift: “Charity is the pure love of Christ” (Moroni 7:46–47). **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** spoke of true charity as Christ’s pure love, which will never fail:

“The greater definition of ‘the pure love of Christ,’ however, is not what we as Christians try but largely fail to demonstrate toward others but rather what Christ totally succeeded in demonstrating toward us. *True* charity has been known only once. It is shown perfectly

and purely in Christ's unailing, ultimate, and atoning love for us. It is Christ's love for us that 'suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not.' It is his love for us that is not 'puffed up . . . , not easily provoked, thinketh no evil.' It is Christ's love for us that 'beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.' It is as demonstrated in Christ that 'charity never faileth.' It is that charity—his pure love for us—without which we would be nothing, hopeless, of all men and women most miserable. Truly, those found possessed of the blessings of his love at the last day—the Atonement, the Resurrection, eternal life, eternal promise—surely it shall be well with them. . . .

"Life has its share of fears and failures. Sometimes things fall short. Sometimes people fail us, or economies or businesses or governments fail us. But one thing in time or eternity does *not* fail us—the pure love of Christ" (*Christ and the New Covenant* [1997], 336–37; see also Romans 8:35–39).

1 Corinthians 13:8–13. Charity Compared to Other Gifts and Virtues

One way of understanding Paul's statement that "charity never faileth" (1 Corinthians 13:8) is that charity never ends; thus, it stands in contrast to even the wonderful gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge, which Paul said would end (see 1 Corinthians 13:8–10).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie further explored this idea: "Shall the gifts of the Spirit cease? Is there to be a day when the saints shall no longer possess the gifts of prophecy and tongues? Or the gift of knowledge? Yes, in the sense that these shall be swallowed up in something greater, and shall no longer be needed in the perfect day. When the saints know all tongues, none will be able to speak in an unknown tongue. When the saints become as God and know all things—past, present, and future—there will be no need or occasion to prophesy of the future" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:380).

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) explained why charity is described as being "the greatest" of the virtues (1 Corinthians 13:13): "Charity encompasses all other godly virtues. It distinguishes both the beginning and the end of the plan of salvation. When all else fails, charity—Christ's love—will *not* fail. It is the greatest of all divine attributes" ("A More Excellent Way," *Ensign*, May 1992, 61).

1 Corinthians 13:9–13. "Through a Glass, Darkly"

Paul observed that the knowledge available in this life is incomplete as compared with the perfect knowledge we will enjoy in eternity (see 1 Corinthians 13:12; 2 Nephi 9:13–14). He compared our current, imperfect knowledge to viewing a person's image in the imperfect reflection of a metal mirror. He then compared perfect eternal knowledge to the clarity of seeing that same person "face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12).



A Roman Celtic mirror. Polished metal mirrors were used in the ancient world.

1 Corinthians 13:13. Faith, Hope, and Charity

Paul referred to faith, hope, and charity as three principles that "abideth," meaning they endure or last forever.

Elder M. Russell Ballard explained the relationship among these principles:

"The Apostle Paul taught that three divine principles form a foundation upon which we can build the structure of our lives. They are faith, hope, and charity. (See 1 Cor. 13:13.) Together they give us a base of support like the legs of a three-legged stool. Each principle is significant within itself, but each also plays an important supporting role. Each is incomplete without the others. Hope helps faith develop. Likewise, true faith gives birth to hope. When we begin to lose hope, we are faltering also in our measure of faith. The principles of faith and hope working together must be accompanied by charity, which is the greatest of all. According to Mormon, 'charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever.' (Moro. 7:47.) It is the perfect manifestation of our faith and hope.

"Working together, these three eternal principles will help give us the broad eternal perspective we need to face life's toughest challenges, including the prophesied ordeals of the last days. Real faith fosters hope for the future; it allows us to look beyond ourselves and our present cares. Fortified by hope, we are moved to demonstrate the pure love of Christ through daily acts of obedience and Christian service" ("The Joy of Hope Fulfilled," *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 33).

1 Corinthians 14:1–6. The Gift of Prophecy

Although some people might assume that the gift of prophecy is reserved only for Church leaders, many scriptures teach that the gift is available to all faithful followers of Christ, including both men and women (see Numbers 11:24–29; 1 Nephi 10:17–19). **President Dallin H. Oaks** of the First Presidency explained the difference between the gift of prophecy and the prophetic office:

“The nouns *prophecy* and *prophet* and their variations, such as the adjective *prophetic* and the verb *prophesy*, are used in several different senses.

“When we hear the word *prophet* in our day, we are accustomed to thinking of *the* prophet. These words signify him who holds the prophetic *office* and is sustained as *the* prophet, seer, and revelator. The priesthood offices and powers exercised by the President of the Church are unique. . . .

“The spiritual gift of prophecy is quite different. As we read in the Book of Revelation, ‘The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’ (Rev. 19:10.) The Prophet Joseph Smith relied on this scripture in teaching that ‘every other man who has the testimony of Jesus’ is a prophet [in *History of the Church*, 3:28]. Similarly, the Apostle Paul states that ‘he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.’ (1 Cor. 14:3.) Thus, in the sense used in speaking of spiritual gifts, a prophet is one who testifies of Jesus Christ, teaches God’s word, and exhorts God’s people. In its scriptural sense, to prophesy means much more than to predict the future.

“. . . In our day, Elder Joseph Fielding Smith declared that ‘all members of the Church should seek for the gift of prophecy, for their own guidance, which is the spirit by which the word of the Lord is understood and his purpose made known.’ (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 3 vols., Salt Lake City, Deseret Book Co., 1953, 1:201.)

“It is important for us to understand the distinction between a prophet, who has the *spiritual gift of prophecy*, and *the* prophet, who has the *prophetic office*” (“Spiritual Gifts,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1986, 71).

1 Corinthians 14:2–22. The Gift of Tongues

The Apostles and others spoke with “other tongues” on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4–8). On this occasion, the gift of tongues was manifest through God’s servants teaching the gospel in languages that were known to the listeners but unknown to the speakers (see the commentary for Acts 2:5–11). Another manifestation of the gift of tongues occurs when a person is moved by the Spirit to speak in a language that is unknown to either the speaker or the hearers (see Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:383). This second manifestation of the gift of tongues seems to have been highly sought after by some members of the Church in Corinth as supposed evidence of a person’s spirituality. Paul corrected this misunderstanding as he explained that this form of the gift of tongues provided unbelievers with evidence of God’s power but did not teach or edify the Saints (see 1 Corinthians 14:19, 22, 26).



Sister missionaries in Japan. Elder Robert D. Hales taught, “The gift of tongues is used by missionaries to teach the gospel to the nations of the world.”

In the early years of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, some individuals were influenced by false spirits and engaged in unusual behaviors during worship, including attempting to speak in unknown tongues and claiming it was done by divine power. For a time, some members were deceived into believing that this was a manifestation of the Holy Ghost. The Prophet Joseph Smith received inspired direction to help correct this misunderstanding (see D&C 50; 52). **Elder Robert D. Hales** reviewed some important cautions regarding the purpose and use of the gift of tongues:

“We are told by prophets in this dispensation that revelation for the direction of the Church will not be given through the gift of tongues. The reason for this is that it is very easy for Lucifer to falsely duplicate the gift of tongues and confuse the members of the Church.

“Satan has the power to trick us as it pertains to some of the gifts of the Spirit. One in which he is the most deceptive is the gift of tongues. Joseph Smith and Brigham Young (1801–77) explained the need to be cautious when considering the gift of tongues.

“You may speak in tongues for your own comfort, but I lay this down for a rule, that if anything is taught by the gift of tongues, it is not to be received for doctrine’ [Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith (2007), 384].

“‘Speak not in the gift of tongues without understanding it, or without interpretation. The devil can speak in tongues’ [Teachings: Joseph Smith, 384].

“‘The gift of tongues is not . . . empowered to dictate . . . the Church. All gifts and endowments given of the Lord to members of his Church are not given to control the Church; but they are under the control and guidance of the Priesthood, and are judged of by it’ (Discourses of Brigham Young, comp. John A. Widtsoe [1941], 343).

“The gift of tongues is used by missionaries to teach the gospel to the nations of the world” (“Gifts of the Spirit,” *Ensign*, Feb. 2002, 14–15).



A shofar, or ram’s horn trumpet. The loud, clear signal of such trumpets was used in ancient Israel to call people to gather for battle or for important religious occasions. Paul drew upon this image as he counseled the Corinthian Saints about the ineffectiveness of speaking in unknown tongues and the importance of clear teaching in the Church (see 1 Corinthians 14:8–9).

1 Corinthians 14:3–26. “Let All Things Be Done unto Edifying”

Paul said, “Let all things be done unto edifying” (1 Corinthians 14:26). Paul repeatedly used forms of the word *edify* in 1 Corinthians 14 (see verses 3–5, 12, 17, 26) to describe the purpose of spiritual gifts. The word *edifying* is a translation of the Greek *oikodomēn*, which literally means the process of building a house. Paul said that the members of the Church were God’s “building” (*oikodomē*; see 1 Corinthians 3:9). Therefore, one reason we should seek for spiritual gifts is to build up or strengthen the Church of God (see also D&C 46:11–12).

1 Corinthians 14:34–35. Should Women Keep Silent in Church?

It is difficult to know the intent of Paul’s counsel in 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 without knowing the actual question or circumstances that prompted it. From Paul’s teachings earlier in this same epistle, it is clear that he did not forbid women from speaking in church meetings (see 1 Corinthians 11:5). Paul also reminded both men and women to be silent during meetings when others were speaking (see 1 Corinthians 14:28, 30).

Perhaps we can best understand this passage when we see that the Joseph Smith Translation for 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 replaces the word *speak* with *rule* in both verses (see 1 Corinthians 14:34, footnote *b*; 14:35, footnote *a*). This word change suggests the possibility that Paul was trying to correct a situation in which some Corinthian women were either being disorderly during worship services or seeking to take the lead from priesthood leaders. In The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, women are called upon to teach, testify, exhort, and serve, but they should not usurp the authority given to priesthood leaders (see D&C 25:5–7; *History of the Church*, 4:579). The same can also be said of all male Church members who are not called to preside.

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught the following regarding men’s and women’s roles in the Church:

“Let me repeat something I stated in the April 2013 general conference:

“‘In our Heavenly Father’s great priesthood-endowed plan, men have the unique responsibility to administer the priesthood, but they are not the priesthood. Men and women have different but equally valued roles. Just as a woman cannot conceive a child without a man, so

a man cannot fully exercise the power of the priesthood to establish an eternal family without a woman. . . .

In the eternal perspective, both the procreative power and the priesthood power are shared by husband and wife.' ("This Is My Work and Glory," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 19.)

"Why are men ordained to priesthood offices and not women? President Gordon B. Hinckley explained that it was the Lord, not man, 'who designated that men in His Church should hold the priesthood' and that it was also the Lord who endowed women with 'capabilities to round out this great and marvelous organization, which is the Church and kingdom of God' ("Women of the Church," *Ensign*, November 1996, 70). When all is said and done, the Lord has not revealed why He has organized His Church as He has.

"When thinking about those things we do not fully understand, I am reminded of these words by my deceased friend and Apostle, Elder Neal A. Maxwell, who said, 'What we already know about God teaches us to trust him for what we do not know fully' (*Deposition of a Disciple* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976], 56).

"And Elder Jeffrey R. Holland stated in this last April general conference, 'In this Church, what we know will always trump what we do not know' ("Lord, I Believe," *Ensign*, May 2013, 94).

"Brothers and sisters, this matter, like many others, comes down to our faith. Do we believe that this is the Lord's Church? Do we believe that He has organized it according to His purposes and wisdom? Do we believe that His wisdom far exceeds ours? Do we believe that He has organized His Church in a manner that would be the greatest possible blessing to *all* of His children, both His sons and His daughters?

". . . Women are integral to the governance and work of the Church through service as leaders in Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary; through their service as teachers, full-time missionaries, and temple ordinance workers; and in the home, where the most important teaching in the Church occurs" ("Let Us Think Straight" [Brigham Young University campus education week devotional, Aug. 20, 2013], 4–5; speeches.byu.edu).

Points to Ponder

- Study the analogy found in 1 Corinthians 12:12–27, where Paul compared the human body to the Church of Jesus Christ. As a member of the Church, what can you do to contribute to your ward or branch?
- Read 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 and consider what you can do to more fully develop the gift of charity in your personal life. How would your relationships with family, Church members, or others be improved by an increased measure of charity?

Suggested Assignments

- Continue your study of spiritual gifts by reading Moroni 10:8–24 and Doctrine and Covenants 46:8–33. Then write answers to the following questions: What do these passages suggest a person can do to receive spiritual gifts? What are some of the gifts that God has given to you?
- Search your patriarchal blessing for indications of the spiritual gifts that Heavenly Father has given to you. Outline a brief plan for how you could strive to strengthen the gifts you have and develop other spiritual gifts you desire.

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1 Corinthians 15–16

Introduction and Timeline for 1 Corinthians 15–16

It had been reported to Paul that some individuals in Corinth were teaching that there was no Resurrection of the dead (see 1 Corinthians 15:12). As one of the many eyewitnesses of the risen Lord, the Apostle Paul clearly and powerfully taught the Corinthian branch about the reality of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and of all mankind. Since the epistles to the Corinthians were likely written before any of the Gospel narratives, Paul's references to the final events of the Savior's life and to His Resurrection (as found in 1 Corinthians 11:23–26; 15:3–8) are probably the earliest accounts of these events recorded in the New Testament.

Paul explained that the practice of baptism for the dead would have little meaning if there were no Resurrection (see 1 Corinthians 15:29, 55–57). Paul also taught that there are three kingdoms of glory, which he compared to the sun, moon, and stars (see 1 Corinthians 15:40–41). As Paul concluded this epistle, he encouraged the members in Corinth to collect a generous donation to send

to the poor Saints in Jerusalem (see 1 Corinthians 16:1). He also encouraged the spiritually faltering Corinthian Saints to “stand fast in the faith” (1 Corinthians 16:13).



The Apostle Paul was serving in Ephesus on his third missionary journey when

he wrote 1 Corinthians between A.D. 54 and 57.

Commentary for 1 Corinthians 15–16

1 Corinthians 15:1–11. “I Delivered unto You . . . That Which I Also Received”

Following the death of Jesus Christ and before the Gospel narratives were written, the followers of Christ gathered to share stories and discuss what Jesus had taught and done during His earthly ministry. Sharing these oral accounts helped disciples remember the words and deeds of Jesus, and these accounts would have been retold often before eventually being recorded and preserved. Paul may have been referring to such information when he wrote to the Corinthian Saints, “I delivered unto you . . . that which I also received,” which illustrates his effort to transmit and preserve the gospel knowledge he had acquired (1 Corinthians 15:3, 11; see also Acts 20:35; 1 Corinthians 11:23).

Paul's brief summary of the things he had received and delivered includes the doctrines that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried and then rose again on the third day, and that He was seen by many eyewitnesses (see 1 Corinthians 15:3–8). The **Prophet Joseph Smith**

(1805–44) similarly identified these teachings as being the core of the gospel: “The fundamental principles of our religion are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 49).

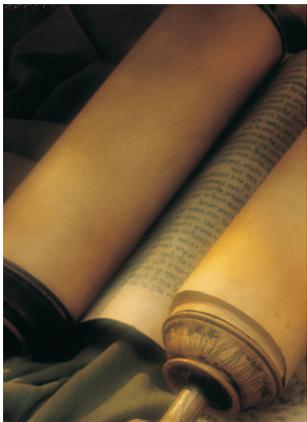
1 Corinthians 15:3–4. Jesus Died and Rose Again “According to the Scriptures”

We do not know which specific scriptures Paul had in mind when he stated that “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3); however, he elsewhere quoted from Deuteronomy 21:23 as he taught about the Crucifixion (see the commentary for Galatians 3:13), and he used phrases found in Isaiah 25:8 and Hosea 13:14 as he taught about the Resurrection (see 1 Corinthians 15:54–55). Paul's statement that Jesus's Resurrection on the third day was also “according to the scriptures” may allude to Hosea 6:2 and Jonah 1:17 (see Matthew 12:39–40). Another prophecy of the redeeming

mission of Jesus Christ recognized by the early Saints was Isaiah 53 (see Matthew 8:17; Mark 15:28; Acts 8:27–35; 1 Peter 2:21–25).

For a list of additional Old Testament prophecies about Jesus Christ, see “Jesus Christ, Prophecies about,” and “Jesus Christ, Types of, in Anticipation” in the Topical Guide. For a list of Old Testament passages quoted in the New Testament, see “Quotations from the Old Testament in the New Testament” in the Bible Dictionary.

1 Corinthians 15:3–8, 12. Many Witnesses of the Resurrection



A Torah scroll. The death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ were foretold by Old Testament prophets.

Much of 1 Corinthians 15 is Paul’s response to those in Corinth who said that “there is no resurrection of the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:12). Those who refused to believe in the Resurrection may have been influenced by the prevalent Greek philosophy that accepted the immortality of the spirit but rejected the resurrection of the body. To counter this false teaching, Paul listed an impressive number of people who had witnessed

the resurrected Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 15:5–8; see also the chart found in the commentary for John 20:29–31). The resurrected Savior’s appearance to His half-brother James is recorded only in 1 Corinthians 15:7. **President Thomas S. Monson** (1927–2018) spoke about the power of both ancient and modern eyewitness testimonies of the risen Lord:

“Against the doubting in today’s world concerning Christ’s divinity, we seek a point of reference, an unimpeachable source, even a testimony of eyewitnesses. Stephen, from biblical times, doomed to the cruel death of a martyr, looked up to heaven and cried, ‘I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God’ [Acts 7:56].

“Who can help but be convinced by the stirring testimony of Paul to the Corinthians? He declared ‘that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: and . . . was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: . . . And,’ said Paul, ‘last of all he was seen of me’ [1 Corinthians 15:3–5, 8].

“In our dispensation, this same testimony was spoken boldly by the Prophet Joseph Smith, as he and Sidney Rigdon testified, ‘And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!’ [D&C 76:22].

“This is the knowledge that sustains. This is the truth that comforts. This is the assurance that guides those who are bowed down with grief—out of the shadows and into the light” (“I Know That My Redeemer Lives!” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 23–24).

1 Corinthians 15:12–19. The Importance of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ was the crowning event of the Atonement, signaling the Savior’s victory over death and sin. Therefore, to those in Corinth who claimed there was no Resurrection of the dead, Paul responded by explaining that if Christ had not been raised from the dead, there could be no forgiveness of sin and no hope for eternal life. **President Howard W. Hunter** (1907–95) spoke of the profound significance of the Resurrection: “Even with the logic of nature’s regeneration and even with the testimony of that empty garden tomb, there are still those who feel the grave is a final destination. But the doctrine of the Resurrection is the single most fundamental and crucial doctrine in the Christian religion” (“An Apostle’s Witness of the Resurrection,” *Ensign*, May 1986, 16).

Paul also taught that if there were no Resurrection, then “we are of all men most miserable” (1 Corinthians 15:19). On the other hand, when we understand the reality of the Resurrection, we find greater joy, perspective, and purpose, as **President Dallin H. Oaks** of the First Presidency taught:

“When we understand the vital position of the resurrection in the ‘plan of redemption’ that governs our eternal journey (Alma 12:25), we see why the Apostle Paul taught, ‘If there be no resurrection of the dead, then . . . is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain’ (1 Cor. 15:13–14). We also see why the Apostle Peter referred to the fact that God the Father, in His abundant mercy, ‘hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead’ (1 Pet. 1:3; see also 1 Thes. 4:13–18).

“The ‘lively hope’ we are given by the resurrection is our conviction that death is not the conclusion of our identity but merely a necessary step in the destined transition from mortality to immortality. This hope changes the whole perspective of mortal life. The assurance of

resurrection and immortality affects how we look on the physical challenges of mortality, how we live our mortal lives, and how we relate to those around us.

“The assurance of resurrection gives us the strength and perspective to endure the mortal challenges faced by each of us and by those we love, such things as the physical, mental, or emotional deficiencies we bring with us at birth or acquire during mortal life. Because of the resurrection, we know that these mortal deficiencies are only temporary!”

“The assurance of resurrection also gives us a powerful incentive to keep the commandments of God during our mortal lives” (“Resurrection,” *Ensign*, May 2000, 15). To read more about the prominent role of the Resurrection in the gospel of Jesus Christ, see the commentaries for Mark 16:1–7 and for Matthew 28:6.

1 Corinthians 15:13–17, 32

According to Paul, what would be the consequences if there were no Resurrection? How has your faith in the Resurrection affected how you live and the decisions you make?

1 Corinthians 15:20, 23. Jesus Christ Is “the Firstfruits of Them That Slept”

The law of Moses dictated that when the yearly crop harvest began, each farmer was to dedicate his first sheaf of grain as an offering to the Lord in acknowledgment that He is the source of all blessings (see Leviticus 23:9–14; Deuteronomy 26:1–11). Paul drew upon the image of “the first of the firstfruits of thy land” (Exodus 23:19) as he described the resurrected Savior as “the firstfruits” of the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23; see also 2 Nephi 2:8–9). Just as farmers’ firstfruits were the earliest of many crops to be harvested, Jesus Christ was the first of all beings to be resurrected, thereby opening the way for all of the inhabitants of the world to similarly be raised from the dead. **Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin** (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles confirmed Paul’s glorious teaching that everyone will be resurrected:

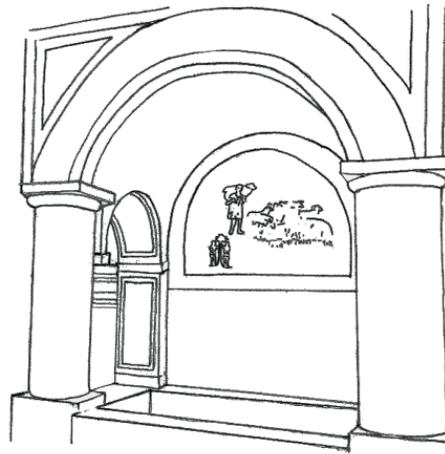
“When the Savior rose from the tomb, He did something no one had ever done. He did something no one else could do. He broke the bonds of death, not only for Himself but for all who have ever lived—the just and the unjust [see John 5:28–29].

“When Christ rose from the grave, becoming the firstfruits of the Resurrection, He made that gift available to all. And with that sublime act, He softened the

devastating, consuming sorrow that gnaws at the souls of those who have lost precious loved ones” (“Sunday Will Come,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 29).

1 Corinthians 15:21–22. “In Christ Shall All Be Made Alive”

We are all subject to physical death because of the Fall of Adam. Nevertheless, through the Atonement and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, we will all be made alive again (see 1 Corinthians 15:22; John 5:28–29; 2 Nephi 9:21–22; Alma 11:42–44; D&C 29:26–27). **Elder Neal A. Maxwell** (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that the Resurrection is a universal blessing granted to everyone on earth: “The Atonement was accomplished, bringing a universal resurrection to billions and billions, lifting all from the grave—regardless of how and when we got there! Therefore, on a clear night, though we see stars of incomprehensible longevity, they are not immortal. But, thankfully, we are!” (“Encircled in the Arms of His Love,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 16).



Drawing of the earliest Christian baptismal font ever discovered, constructed about A.D. 240 in a house-church in Dura-Europos, Syria. Above the font was a painting of a shepherd carrying a sheep on his shoulders to join a flock of sheep at pasture. Also above the font was a small depiction of Adam and Eve taking the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The art suggests that for these early Christians, baptism represented being rescued by the Good Shepherd and brought into the fold of the Church. The art also preserves the memory of Paul’s teachings that Jesus Christ overcomes the effects of the Fall of Adam (see 1 Corinthians 15:21–22, 45–49; Romans 5:12–21).

President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) taught that the universal nature of the Resurrection is a manifestation of God’s justice: “No person who has lived and died on this earth will be denied the resurrection.

Reason teaches this, and it is a simple matter of justice. Adam alone was responsible for death, and therefore the Lord does not lay this to the charge of any other person. Justice demands that no person who was not responsible for death shall be held responsible for it, and therefore, as Paul declared, ‘As in Adam *all* die, even so in Christ shall *all* be made alive’” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 2:274).

To read more about the universal Resurrection, see the commentary for Matthew 27:52–53.

1 Corinthians 15:23. There Is an Order in the Resurrection

Paul explained that the Resurrection follows an established order or sequence (see 1 Corinthians 15:23). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles summarized the sequence in which the Resurrection occurs: “Order in the resurrection is determined by obedience to gospel law. The most righteous man was first, the most wicked shall be the last; Christ was first, the sons of perdition shall be last” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 2:394).

Jesus Christ was the first to be resurrected. Immediately following His Resurrection, there were righteous Saints who rose from the grave (see Matthew 27:52–53). At the Second Coming, the Resurrection will continue with the coming forth of other righteous Saints, who “are Christ’s at his coming” (1 Corinthians 15:23). Through latter-day revelation, we learn that these people will inherit the celestial kingdom (see D&C 76:50–70; 88:97–98). Then will come the resurrection of those who will receive terrestrial glory (see D&C 76:71–79; D&C 88:99). They will be followed at the end of the Millennium by those who will inherit telestial glory (see D&C 76:81–86; 88:100–101). Finally, the Resurrection will be concluded with the raising of those who are “filthy still”—the “sons of perdition” who will receive no degree of glory but will “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” (D&C 76:31–39, 43–44; 88:28–32, 35, 101–2).

1 Corinthians 15:29. Baptism for the Dead

No baptisms for the dead were performed *before* the Savior visited the spirit world and bridged the gulf between paradise and the spirit prison. Vicarious baptisms were performed only *after* Jesus was resurrected. The only Bible passage that mentions vicarious baptism for the dead is 1 Corinthians 15:29, although other ancient texts attest that baptism for the dead was

practiced by early Christians. **President Howard W. Hunter** explained that without the Resurrection, baptisms for the dead would be meaningless:

“‘Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?’ (1 Cor. 15:29.)

“This is a challenging question. Why are you performing vicarious baptisms for those who are dead if there is no resurrection? History bears out the facts of the practice of baptizing for those who had died without the benefit of this ordinance. It would seem certain, from the question that was asked by Paul, that this vicarious practice was followed in the branch of the church in Corinth. His query is well taken. There would be no sense in such ordinances except there be a resurrection. Nothing matters if there is not a resurrection; everything would end in the darkness of death” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1969, 137).

Jesus Christ taught that baptism is necessary to obtain eternal life (see John 3:5). Paul himself was baptized and taught that through this important ordinance we could “walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4; see also Acts 9:18). Yet millions of Heavenly Father’s children have died without gaining a knowledge of Jesus Christ or receiving the essential ordinance of baptism. Paul’s reference to baptism for the dead suggests that early Church members knew of God’s plan to redeem the dead (see also John 5:25, 28; 1 Peter 3:18–19; 4:6).



Temple baptismal font at the Oquirrh Mountain Utah Temple

Knowledge of God’s plan for the redemption of the dead and the ordinance of vicarious baptism has been restored in our day (see D&C 124:29–33; 128:12–18, 22). **President James E. Faust** (1920–2007) of the First Presidency pointed out the critical importance of vicarious work for the dead: “Because baptism by water and of the Spirit is essential for full salvation, in the eternal nature of things all of God’s children should have this opportunity, including those who have lived in centuries past. . . . Doing something so vital for those who cannot do it for themselves is truly Christlike. By laying down His life to atone for the sins of all mankind, Jesus did that for us which we cannot do for ourselves. The prophet Malachi referenced this concept when he spoke of the coming of the prophet Elijah, who would ‘turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest [the Lord] come and smite the earth with a curse’ [Malachi 4:6]. This is accomplished in large measure through vicarious work for the dead” (“Born Again,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 58).

Regarding vicarious baptisms for the dead, **Elder David A. Bednar** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles offered the following invitation and promise to the young people of the Church:

“I encourage you to study, to search out your ancestors, and to prepare yourselves to perform proxy baptisms in the house of the Lord for *your* kindred dead (see D&C 124:28–36). And I urge you to help other people identify their family histories.

“As you respond in faith to this invitation, your hearts shall turn to the fathers. The promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be implanted in your hearts. Your patriarchal blessing, with its declaration of lineage, will link you to these fathers and be more meaningful to you. Your love and gratitude for your ancestors will increase. Your testimony of and conversion to the Savior will become deep and abiding. And I promise you will be protected against the intensifying influence of the adversary. As you participate in and love this holy work, you will be safeguarded in your youth and throughout your lives” (“The Hearts of the Children Shall Turn,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 26–27).

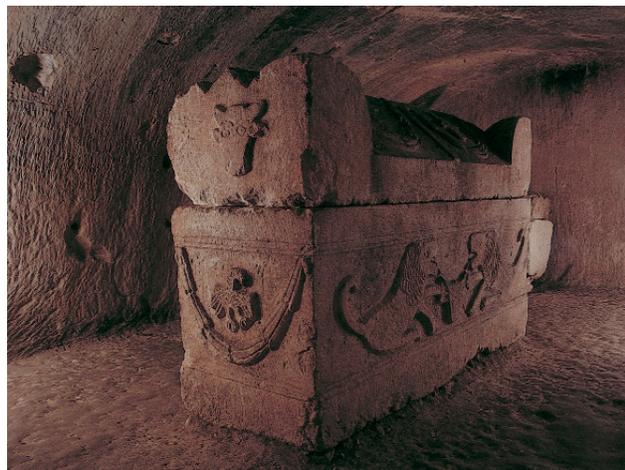
President Howard W. Hunter taught of the blessings that come from both researching family names and then performing the temple work for those individuals:

“Doing work for others is accomplished in two steps: first, by family history research to ascertain our progenitors; and second, by performing the temple ordinances

to give them the same opportunities afforded to the living.

“Yet there are many members of the Church who have only limited access to the temples. They do the best they can. They pursue family history research and have the temple ordinance work done by others. Conversely, there are some members who engage in temple work but fail to do family history research on their own family lines. Although they perform a divine service in assisting others, they lose a blessing by not seeking their own kindred dead as divinely directed by latter-day prophets. . . .

“I have learned that those who engage in family history research and then perform the temple ordinance work for those whose names they have found will know the additional joy of receiving both halves of the blessing” (“A Temple-Motivated People,” *Ensign*, Feb. 1995, 4–5; see also Elder Richard G. Scott, “The Joy of Redeeming the Dead,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 93).



RICHARD L. W. CLEAVE

Sarcophagi (stone coffins) like this one from Beth She’arim, Israel, were common in the ancient Greco-Roman world.

1 Corinthians 15:35–38, 44. Questions and Answers regarding the Resurrected Body

In the ancient Greco-Roman world, families frequently visited the graves of their deceased relatives, including on the anniversaries of their loved ones’ deaths. With such frequent reminders of human mortality, the Saints in Corinth may have understandably wondered how the deceased could be restored to life and what resurrected bodies would be like.

In response to the questions, “How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?” (1 Corinthians

15:35), Paul taught that the resurrected body differs in glory and quality from the mortal body. To illustrate this point, he spoke of planting “bare grain” and eventually harvesting a whole plant or “body” (1 Corinthians 15:37–38). The planted seed typifies the mortal body, which, after death and burial, will come forth in the Resurrection as a glorified, immortal body. The Savior taught a similar analogy in John 12:23–24. Paul highlighted this distinction in another way when he referred to the “natural body” that is buried at death and the “spiritual body” that is raised up in the Resurrection (see 1 Corinthians 15:42–44).

For perhaps the clearest scriptural definitions of the Resurrection, see Alma 11:43–44 and Alma 40:23.

1 Corinthians 15:39–44. Different Degrees of Resurrected Glory

Concerning the nature of resurrected bodies, Paul noted that there are differences between “celestial” bodies and “terrestrial” bodies, just as there are contrasts between the bodies of human beings and those of various kinds of animals. He also explained that in their glory and splendor, heavenly bodies differ from earthly bodies just as the sun, moon, and stars differ in glory.

In February 1832 the Prophet Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon received a vision in which they saw those who receive each of the three degrees of glory, beginning with those who receive a celestial reward:

“These are they whose bodies are celestial, whose glory is that of the sun, even the glory of God, the highest of all. . . .

“And again, we saw the terrestrial world, and behold and lo, these are they who are of the terrestrial, whose glory differs from that of the church of the Firstborn who have received the fulness of the Father, even as that of the moon differs from the sun. . . .

“And again, we saw the glory of the telestial, which glory is that of the lesser, even as the glory of the stars differs from that of the glory of the moon” (D&C 76:50, 70–71, 81).

After he received this vision, the Prophet Joseph Smith was inspired to modify 1 Corinthians 15:40 in this way: “Also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial, *and bodies telestial*; but the glory of the celestial, one; and the terrestrial, another; *and the telestial, another*” (Joseph Smith Translation, 1 Corinthians 15:40 [in 1 Corinthians 15:40, footnote a]).

President Joseph Fielding Smith explained that there will be great differences in the glory found among resurrected bodies:

“In the resurrection there will be different kinds of bodies; they will not all be alike. The body a man receives will determine his place hereafter. There will be celestial bodies, terrestrial bodies, and telestial bodies, and these bodies will differ as distinctly as do bodies here. . . .

“. . . *Some will gain celestial bodies with all the powers of exaltation and eternal increase.* These bodies will shine like the sun as our Savior’s does, as described by John [see Revelation 1:12–18]. Those who enter the terrestrial kingdom will have terrestrial bodies, and they will not shine like the sun, but they will be more glorious than the bodies of those who receive the telestial glory” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:286–87).

For more teachings about what kind of people will receive celestial glory in the Resurrection, see Doctrine and Covenants 76:50–70, 92–96; 88:22, 28–29.



1 Corinthians 15:42–44, 46, 50. “A Spiritual Body”

Paul contrasted the “natural body” that is buried at death and the “spiritual body” that is raised up in the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:44). He used the words

corruption, dishonor, and weakness to describe “natural” or mortal bodies and the words *incorruption, glory, and power* to describe “spiritual” or resurrected bodies.

President Howard W. Hunter clarified that when Paul referred to a “spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:44), he was speaking of a resurrected body and not a spirit:

“There is a separation of the spirit and the body at the time of death. The resurrection will again unite the spirit with the body, and the body becomes a spiritual body, one of flesh and bones but quickened by the spirit instead of blood. Thus, our bodies after the resurrection, quickened by the spirit, shall become immortal and never die. This is the meaning of the statements of Paul that ‘there is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body’ and ‘that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.’ The natural body is flesh and blood, but quickened by the spirit instead of blood, it can and will enter the kingdom” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1969, 137–38).

For more of Paul’s description of the resurrected body, see Philippians 3:20–21.

1 Corinthians 15:45, 49–53. “The First Man Adam” and “the Last Adam”

Adam, “the first man” (1 Corinthians 15:45; D&C 84:16), was the first to receive a physical body. Jesus Christ, “the last Adam” or “second man” (1 Corinthians 15:45, 47), was the first to be quickened (resurrected) and receive a glorified body (see John 5:21; D&C 88:17). The actions of Adam (with the Fall) and Jesus Christ (with the Atonement and Resurrection) were both necessary for our salvation (see the commentary for Romans 5:12–21).

President Russell M. Nelson taught: “An infinite atonement was required to redeem Adam, Eve, and all of their posterity. That atonement must enable our physical bodies to be resurrected and changed [see 1 Corinthians 15:51–53; 3 Nephi 28:8] to a bloodless form, no longer liable to disease, deterioration, or death” (“Constancy amid Change,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 34).

The phrase “flesh and blood” in 1 Corinthians 15:50 refers to the mortal body, which is subject to aging and corruption. Since the mortal body will not live forever, it “cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” The immortal body of flesh and bones received in the Resurrection will be glorified and will not deteriorate.

1 Corinthians 15:54–57. “Death Is Swallowed Up in Victory”

Paul taught that death loses its sting for all of us because Christ won the victory over physical death and sin (see 1 Corinthians 15:54–57). Through Christ’s victory, we can repent and avoid the pain and sorrow caused by sin.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the First Presidency taught:

“One day we will take that unavoidable step and cross from this mortal sphere into the next estate. One day we will look back at our lives and wonder if we could have been better, made better decisions, or used our time more wisely. . . .



“It is my testimony that many of the deepest regrets of tomorrow can be prevented by following the Savior today. If we have sinned or made mistakes—if we have made choices that we now regret—there is the precious gift of Christ’s Atonement, through

which we can be forgiven. We cannot go back in time and change the past, but we can repent. The Savior can wipe away our tears of regret [see Revelation 7:17] and remove the burden of our sins [see Matthew 11:28–30]. His Atonement allows us to leave the past behind and move forward with clean hands, a pure heart [see Psalms 24:4], and a determination to do better and especially to become better.

“Yes, this life is passing swiftly; our days seem to fade quickly; and death appears frightening at times. Nevertheless, our spirit will continue to live and will one day be united with our resurrected body to receive immortal glory. I bear solemn witness that because of the merciful Christ, we will all live again and forever. Because of our Savior and Redeemer, one day we will truly understand and rejoice in the meaning of the words ‘the sting of death is swallowed up in Christ’ [Mosiah 16:8; see also 1 Corinthians 15:54]” (“Of Regrets and Resolutions,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 24).

Jesus Christ can also remove the sting of death for those who lose loved ones, as **President Russell M. Nelson** explained: “When death comes, we can move toward the celestial glory that Heavenly Father has prepared for His faithful children. Meanwhile, for sorrowing loved

ones left behind . . . the sting of death is soothed by a steadfast faith in Christ, a perfect brightness of hope, a love of God and of all men, and a deep desire to serve them [see 2 Nephi 31:20]. That faith, that hope, that love will qualify us to come into God's holy presence and, with our eternal companions and families, dwell with Him forever" ("Now Is the Time to Prepare," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2005, 18).

For additional insight on finding peace during a time of loss, see the commentary for Matthew 28:8.

1 Corinthians 15:58

After teaching powerfully on the reality and importance of the Resurrection, what did Paul exhort the Corinthian Saints to do? What does this counsel mean for you as one who believes in the Resurrection?

1 Corinthians 16:1–3. Temporal Assistance for the Church in Jerusalem

Paul instructed the Saints in Corinth that when they met each Sunday they should collect donations to be sent to the Church in Jerusalem (see 1 Corinthians 16:1–3; see also Acts 20:7). We learn from Romans 15:25–28 that the Saints in Achaia—a region that included Corinth—gladly made donations out of gratitude for the spiritual strength they received from the Church in Jerusalem. By asking for their donations, Paul encouraged the Gentile Saints to assist and identify with their fellow Jewish Saints. This is another example of Paul's continuing efforts to build unity between the Jewish and Gentile members of the Church.

1 Corinthians 16:21–24. Paul's Closing Words

Paul concluded his epistle to the Saints in Corinth with a customary farewell, which he himself wrote rather than his scribe (see 1 Corinthians 16:21; see also Colossians 4:18; 2 Thessalonians 3:17; Philemon 1:19). Paul's farewell here is unusual because before he gave his customary blessing and farewell, he pronounced a curse on those who do not love the Lord (see 1 Corinthians 16:22). Perhaps Paul's warning and curse were directed at the Saints in Corinth who were creating problems and dissension in the Church (see 1 Corinthians 1:11). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained the phrase "Anathema Maran-atha" (1 Corinthians 16:22):

"*Anathema* is a Greek word meaning *accursed*. Hence, a person or thing cursed by God or his authority, as for instance one who has been excommunicated, is anathema. (Rom. 9:3.) 'Wo unto them who are cut off from my church, for the same are overcome of the world.' (D. & C. 50:8.)

"Paul's statement, 'If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be *Anathema Maranatha*' (1 Cor. 16:22), probably means, ' . . . let him be accursed until the Lord comes.' *Maranatha*, an Aramaic word meaning, *O our Lord, come*, appears to have been used by the primitive saints as a watchword or salutation by which they reminded each other of the promised Second Coming" (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 33–34).

For information regarding the short explanatory note located at the conclusion of 1 Corinthians 16:24, called a subscription, see "When and where was 1 Corinthians written?" in chapter 38.

Points to Ponder

- In what ways does your belief in the doctrine of the Resurrection strengthen your faith in Christ?
- Why would our preaching and faith be in vain if Christ had not risen from the dead? (see 1 Corinthians 15:12–18). How can your knowledge of the Resurrection motivate you to make righteous decisions?
- How has the doctrine of physical and spiritual redemption through the Atonement blessed you and your family?

Suggested Assignments

- Consider the false doctrine Paul identified in 1 Corinthians 15:12. Then turn to 2 Nephi 9:6–9 and make a list of what would happen to all humankind if there were no Resurrection. Using phrases from 1 Corinthians 15:54–57 and 2 Nephi 9:10–13, write a brief paragraph that expresses your feelings about the Resurrection. You may want to keep your written statement in a journal or other location where you can refer to it later in a time of need.
- Prepare and teach a family home evening lesson on the doctrine of the Resurrection, using 1 Corinthians 15 as your primary source.

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2 Corinthians 1–5

Introduction to the Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians

Why study 2 Corinthians?

Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians stands out for its themes of comfort in the midst of affliction, strength in the midst of weakness (as exemplified by Paul himself), and the discerning of true teachers from false ones. Paul's example and teachings recorded in 2 Corinthians serve as a call for all Saints to remain true and faithful to the eternal covenants they have made with God, the Eternal Father, no matter the circumstances or the consequences.

Who wrote 2 Corinthians?

Even though the Second Epistle to the Corinthians states that it was written by the Apostle Paul and Timothy (see 2 Corinthians 1:1), it is likely that Paul wrote this epistle on behalf of himself and Timothy. The numerous references Paul makes to his own experiences suggest that he alone is the author of this book (see 2 Corinthians 11:16–33; 12:1–14; 13:1).

When and where was 2 Corinthians written?

Shortly after Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, a riot developed in Ephesus in opposition to his teachings (see Acts 19:23–41), and he departed to Macedonia (see Acts 20:1; 2 Corinthians 2:13; 7:5). It appears that while he was there he wrote 2 Corinthians, likely about A.D. 57. In addition to 1 Corinthians, it is believed that Paul wrote two other letters before writing 2 Corinthians. We know about these letters because Paul mentioned them (see 1 Corinthians 5:9; 2 Corinthians 2:3–4, 9; 7:8–12).

To whom was 2 Corinthians written and why?

While Paul was in Macedonia, Titus brought him news from Corinth that an earlier letter he had sent had been well received by the Saints there (see 2 Corinthians 7:6, 13). The Corinthian branch was making progress, but Paul also learned of false teachers there who were corrupting the pure doctrines of Christ. Sometime after Paul's initial visit to Corinth and a probable second visit, when Paul seems to have chastised some of the Saints (see 2 Corinthians 2:1; 12:21), preachers from the Jerusalem area came to Corinth and began teaching the Saints that they must adopt Jewish practices, contrary to Paul's teachings. Much of 2 Corinthians addresses the problems caused by these unwelcome teachers.

Paul referred to them as "false apostles" and "deceitful workers," who were "transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:13). Some of these men accused Paul of dishonest actions and even challenged his authority as an Apostle.

Paul's letter addressed both those who desired more of his words (see 2 Corinthians 1–9) and those who had neither the desire to repent nor the inclination to accept his counsel (most obvious in 2 Corinthians 10–13). In general, the text of 2 Corinthians reveals several purposes of this letter: (1) to express gratitude to and strengthen those Saints who responded favorably to his previous letter; (2) to warn of false teachers who corrupted the pure doctrines of Christ; (3) to defend his personal character and authority as an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ (see 2 Corinthians 10–13); and (4) to encourage a generous financial offering from the Corinthian Saints to the impoverished Saints of Jerusalem (see 2 Corinthians 8–9).

What are some distinctive features of 2 Corinthians?

In response to critics who questioned his apostolic authority and his doctrine, Paul shared autobiographical details of his life and wrote of his "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7).

While many of Paul's letters focus on doctrine, much of this letter emphasizes Paul's relationship with the Corinthian Saints and his love and concern for them. Though Paul was firm in his opposition to critics, throughout 2 Corinthians we see him as a tender priesthood leader caring for the happiness and well-being of the Saints.

In this letter Paul referred to what may have been the most sacred moment in his life. In 2 Corinthians 12:2–4, Paul described himself as "a man in Christ," who was "caught up to the third heaven," where he saw and heard unspeakable things. This vision, taken together with his previous doctrinal statement concerning the degrees of glory in the resurrection (see 1 Corinthians 15:35–44), can be seen as a biblical parallel to Joseph Smith's vision recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 76.

The book of 2 Corinthians may be a collection of several letters Paul wrote to the Corinthian Saints.

Outline

2 Corinthians 1-5 Paul testified that God comforts His children in all their tribulations. He challenged the Saints to love and forgive one another. The gospel and the workings of the Spirit of the Lord are more glorious than the letter of the law of Moses. Paul encouraged his readers in their moments of adversity and reminded them of the temporary nature of mortal adversities compared with the eternal nature of God's love and reward. He helped

readers understand their need to be reconciled to God through the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 6-13 In the face of criticism and opposition from false teachers, Paul defended his sincerity as a servant of the Lord and invited his readers to be separate from the world. He taught about "godly sorrow" (see 2 Corinthians 7:10). Paul thanked the Corinthian Saints for their contributions to the

poor in Jerusalem and encouraged them to continue to give generously, for "God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). He spoke strongly against "false apostles" (2 Corinthians 11:13). Paul gloried in the Lord and shared biographical details of his tribulations and faith in Jesus Christ. He recorded his vision of the third heaven. Paul invited the Saints to examine themselves and to prove themselves faithful.



Ruins in Corinth, Greece

Introduction and Timeline for 2 Corinthians 1–5

In the Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians we see evidence of a growing rift between some of the Corinthian Saints and Paul. A small group of Church members in Corinth opposed Paul and wanted him to have less influence among them. Some of the criticism directed at Paul was because he had canceled an earlier promised trip to Corinth; thus, some people felt he was not trustworthy (see 2 Corinthians 1:15–19). Paul defended his conduct and ministry (see 2 Corinthians 2:12–17; 3:1–6; 4:1–5; 5:19–20), and he expressed affection for the Corinthians and taught them of the peace that comes from loving and forgiving their fellowmen. He taught them how they could be reconciled to their Heavenly Father through the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Paul's writings can help the reader become a

living example of his words: “Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men” (2 Corinthians 3:2).



The Apostle Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, probably in Macedonia about A.D. 57.

Commentary for 2 Corinthians 1–5

2 Corinthians 1:3–10. Heavenly Father Is a God of Comfort

As Paul wrote about the tribulations suffered by the Saints, as recorded in 2 Corinthians 1:3–10, he repeatedly used the words “comfort,” “consolation,” and “delivered.” God’s comfort is a dominant theme throughout the first few chapters of 2 Corinthians. Paul related with strong and heartfelt language a severe trial he and his companions had suffered in Asia (see 2 Corinthians 1:8–10) to teach that the Lord does not leave His followers to suffer alone. By relying on the Lord rather than just on himself, Paul was able to endure this time of deep despair.

President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) taught: “In order to be tested, we must sometimes face challenges and difficulties. At times there appears to be no light at the tunnel’s end—no dawn to break the night’s darkness. We feel surrounded by the pain of broken hearts, the disappointment of shattered dreams, and the despair of vanished hopes. We join in uttering the biblical plea ‘Is there no balm in Gilead?’ [Jeremiah 8:22.] We are inclined to view our own personal misfortunes through the distorted prism of pessimism. We feel abandoned, heartbroken, alone. If you find yourself in such a situation, I plead with you to turn to our Heavenly Father in faith. He will lift you and guide you. He will not always take your afflictions from you, but He will comfort and lead you with love through whatever storm you face” (“Looking Back and Moving Forward,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 90).

2 Corinthians 1:3–5, 9–10

What did Paul highlight in these verses that Heavenly Father does for Saints who experience tribulation? Which verses would you most likely share with a family member or friend who was in need of divine comfort?

2 Corinthians 1:4. “That We May Be Able to Comfort Them”

In 2 Corinthians 1:4, Paul taught that those who have received God’s comfort in their tribulations are then able to comfort others who have tribulations. The commitment to comfort others is a hallmark of our Christian discipleship and a requirement for baptism (see Mosiah 18:8–10). **Elder Orson F. Whitney** (1855–1931) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:

“To whom do we look, in days of grief and disaster, for help and consolation? . . . [We look to] men and women who have suffered, and out of their experience in suffering they bring forth the riches of their sympathy and condolences as a blessing to those now in need. Could they do this had they not suffered themselves?”

“. . . Is not this God’s purpose in causing his children to suffer? He wants them to become more like himself. God has suffered far more than man ever did or ever will, and is therefore the great source of sympathy and consolation” (“A Lesson from the Book of Job,” *Improvement Era*, Nov. 1918, 7; see also James E. Faust, “Refined in Our Trials,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Feb. 2006, 5).



2 Corinthians 1:11. Church Leaders Are Strengthened by Our Prayers

The Corinthian Saints brought comfort to the Apostle Paul through their prayers in his behalf, and he expressed his gratitude for this support (see 2 Corinthians 1:11). **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles also expressed to Church members, on behalf of all the General Authorities of the Church, his gratitude for their continual prayers and sustaining support: “Not one of us could serve without your prayers and without your support. Your loyalty and your love mean more to us than we can ever possibly say” (“Because of Your Faith,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 6).

2 Corinthians 1:15–20. “Yea and Nay”

The difficult passage in 2 Corinthians 1:15–20 appears to be Paul’s response to an accusation that he had shown levity or light-mindedness (see 2 Corinthians 1:17, footnote *a*) in promising to visit Corinth but then changing his travel plans. Some said he could not be trusted—one day he said “yea” (yes, I am coming), but the next day he said “nay” (no, I am not coming). Paul’s critics seemed to imply, “If we cannot trust Paul, how can we trust what he taught us about God?” In response to this allegation, Paul declared that the message he and his companions taught was true and that God and Jesus are trustworthy and do not vary. Jesus is always “yea”—the fulfillment or “amen” to all God’s promises.

2 Corinthians 1:21–22. Anointing and Sealing

Paul stated that he and his missionary companions had been “anointed” and “sealed” by God (2 Corinthians 1:21–22). The anointing could have referred to an

anointing with oil, similar to that received by kings, priests, and prophets in the Old Testament, setting them apart for their divinely ordained work (see Exodus 29:7; 1 Kings 1:34, 39; 19:15–16). But the word may simply mean that God had given Paul the Holy Spirit, with the abundant blessings that accompany that gift. That meaning seems to fit Paul’s reference to the Spirit in 2 Corinthians 1:22. The Greek word Paul used to indicate being “sealed” by God means that God had placed His stamp of ownership upon him.



Ancient seal in a signet ring. Such rings were used to place an imprint on clay or wax, leaving a seal of ownership upon documents or other objects. Paul wrote that God “hath also sealed us” (2 Corinthians 1:22).

2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5. “The Earnest of the Spirit”

According to the Bible Dictionary, the word *earnest* means “a pledge or security. The word thus translated is a commercial term denoting the deposit paid by a buyer on entering into an agreement for the purchase of anything. As used by Paul (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14) it means that the Lord gives us His Holy Spirit in this life as a foretaste of the joy of eternal life. The Spirit is also the Lord’s surety that He will fulfill His promise to give eternal life to the faithful” (Bible Dictionary, “Earnest”; see also 1 John 4:13; D&C 88:3–5; the commentaries for Romans 8:14–16 and for Ephesians 1:13–14). When we feel the Spirit of the Lord, we can know that we are accepted of the Lord and that His promises are in effect in our lives.

2 Corinthians 2:1–4. Leaders Chasten Church Members Out of Love

In 2 Corinthians 2:1–4, Paul acknowledged that some of his writings in a previous epistle could have seemed harsh because he was chastening the members. Prophets

of all ages have carried the responsibility to teach, warn, and correct God's children (see Jacob 2:2). **President Brigham Young** (1801–77) taught about why Church



CHARLES R. SAVAGE

President Brigham Young

leaders may sometimes appear to be harsh in their counsel: "At times I may to many of the brethren appear to be severe. I sometimes chasten them; but it is because I wish them to live so that the power of God, like a flame of fire, will dwell within them and be around about them" (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1954], 115).

2 Corinthians 2:5–11. The Importance of Forgiving Others

We gain an insight into Paul's love and compassion from 2 Corinthians 2:5–11. We do not know whether the transgressor Paul referred to is the one mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5:1 or another offender—perhaps one of the false teachers in Corinth who had opposed Paul and his teachings. Paul encouraged Church members to forgive the man and comfort him so that he would not be "swallowed up with overmuch sorrow" (2 Corinthians 2:7).

Elder C. Max Caldwell (1933–2012) of the Seventy and Leann G. Otten discussed the dangers of withholding forgiveness from others: "When we take the position of withholding forgiveness from our fellow men, we are attempting to block his progress towards salvation. This position is . . . not Christlike. We are endeavoring to impede the progress of a living soul and deny him the forgiving blessings of the atonement. This philosophy is saturated with impure motives that are designed to destroy the soul" (*Sacred Truths of the Doctrine and Covenants*, 2 vols. [1993], 1:314; see also D&C 64:9–11).

2 Corinthians 2:11. "We Are Not Ignorant of [Satan's] Devices"

Paul knew that if the Corinthian Saints failed to forgive the man who had received Church disciplinary action, there would be increased discord among them (see 2 Corinthians 2:11). Satan had gained one victory when the man sinned. If the Saints failed to forgive the repentant man, Satan would have another victory. Paul was teaching the Saints how to avoid allowing Satan to "get an advantage of us" (2 Corinthians 2:11).

One of the ways we receive strength to overcome Satan is to understand the ways he seeks to mislead the children of men. **President Dallin H. Oaks** of the First Presidency said: "Satan's most strenuous opposition is directed at whatever is most important to the Father's plan. Satan seeks to discredit the Savior and divine authority, to nullify the effects of the Atonement, to counterfeit revelation, to lead people away from the truth, to contradict individual accountability, to confuse gender, to undermine marriage, and to discourage childbearing (especially by parents who will raise children in righteousness)" ("The Great Plan of Happiness," *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 72).

2 Corinthians 2:14–17. "For We Are unto God a Sweet Savour of Christ"

After teaching that Saints should love and forgive each other, Paul taught more about the characteristics of disciples of Jesus Christ. He declared that God would always support His Saints, causing them "to triumph in Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:14). He then drew upon the imagery of sacrifices and incense burned in the temple when he said that the Saints are "unto God a sweet savour of Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:15). The smoke of temple offerings was described as a sweet savor to God (see Exodus 29:18; Leviticus 1:9, 13, 17; Numbers 15:7). Similarly, the lives of righteous Saints represented an offering that was pleasing to God, for they were becoming like Christ (2 Corinthians 2:15).

Verse 16 describes the effects that the Saints and the gospel of Jesus Christ had upon listeners. To Christ's enemies, the sweet fragrance of the Saints and their witness of Christ was like the savor of death, but to those who accepted the Apostles and their teachings, it was the savor of life.

When Paul asked, "And who is sufficient for these things?" he recognized that no person is sufficient to represent the Savior unless he has the Savior's grace to help him. And he declared that he and the other disciples did not "corrupt the word of God," but with sincerity "in the sight of God speak we in Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:16–17).

The word *corrupt*, as used in 2 Corinthians 2:17, is taken from the Greek word for a peddler; it referred specifically to persons who sold impure or adulterated goods. As an Apostle of Jesus Christ, Paul did not preach the gospel for money nor adulterate its message as some were doing in Corinth at that time.

2 Corinthians 3:1–2. Some Judge the Church by Its Members' Examples

In response to those who opposed him and tried to discredit him in Corinth, Paul asked rhetorically, “Do I really need letters of commendation proving that I am a legitimate Apostle?” (see 2 Corinthians 3:1). In this question, Paul referred to the ancient practice of carrying letters of commendation when visiting a new community (see also Acts 18:27; Romans 16:1–2). Such letters usually introduced people, testified of their character, and witnessed that they were not intruders or impostors. Paul then declared that the transformed lives of the Saints in Corinth already constituted the best kind of “letter of commendation,” verifying that Paul had proper authority, for the Saints’ changed lives were like an epistle from Christ Himself (see 2 Corinthians 3:2–3; see also 1 Corinthians 9:2).



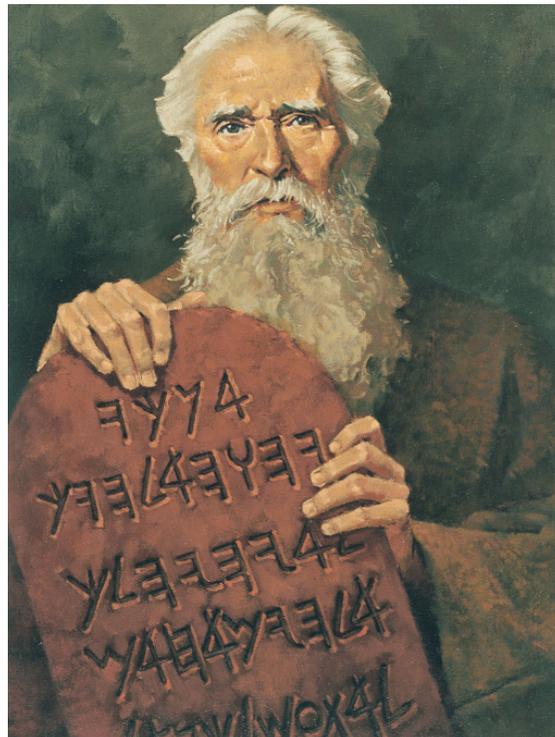
Many people throughout the world have kind feelings toward the Church because of the acts of kindness and service they see manifest in the lives of Church members (see 2 Corinthians 3:2).

Paul’s declaration that members of the Church are like epistles, “read of all men,” suggests that the personal conduct of Church members is the way many will first come to know the Church and judge its truthfulness. Just as a shopkeeper is judged by the goods he sells, so the Church—and sometimes even Jesus Christ—is judged by the lives we live. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) taught, “In the ultimate sense, the gospel is not written on tablets of stone or in books of scripture,

but in the bodies of faithful and obedient persons; the saints are, thus, living epistles of the truth, the books of whose lives are open for all to read” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 2:414).

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) added: “The only things that can ever embarrass this work are acts of disobedience to its doctrine and standards by those of its membership. That places upon each of us a tremendous responsibility. This work will be judged by what the world sees of our behavior. God give us the will to walk with faith, the discipline to do what is right at all times and in all circumstances, the resolution to make of our lives a declaration of this cause before all who see us” (“This Thing Was Not Done in a Corner,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 51).

2 Corinthians 3:3. “Fleshy Tables of the Heart”



Moses the Lawgiver, by Ted Henninger. The commandments had once been written on stone tablets, but “the Spirit of the living God” can write them in the “fleshy tables of the heart” (2 Corinthians 3:3).

Paul taught that while the commandments of the law of Moses had been written on stone tablets, “the Spirit of the living God” can write the gospel in the “fleshy tables of the heart” (2 Corinthians 3:3). **President Russell M. Nelson** explained that when doctrines of the gospel are written in the fleshy tables of our hearts,

“they become an integral part of our nature” (“Living by Scriptural Guidance,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 17). This process of internalizing gospel doctrines occurs through the power of the Holy Ghost.

2 Corinthians 3:6. “The Letter Killeth, but the Spirit Giveth Life”

Paul declared to the Corinthian Saints that he was a minister of the “new testament,” meaning the new covenant of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He referred to the old covenant, which was the law of Moses, as the “letter” and the new covenant as “the spirit.”

Elder Quentin L. Cook of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles applied Paul’s words to our need to understand the “spirit” or “why” of God’s commandments:

“Doctrine usually answers the question ‘why?’ Principles usually answer the question ‘what?’ Whenever we emphasize *how* to do something without reference to *why* we do it or *what* we do, we risk looking beyond the mark. At the very least, we fall into the trap Paul described to the Corinthians: ‘For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life’ (2 Corinthians 3:6).

“Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has used the example of teaching our Aaronic Priesthood deacons the doctrines and principles of sacrament meeting so they will understand that the rules they follow (such as dressing appropriately and passing the sacrament in a nondistracting way) support what the Lord would have us accomplish in sacrament meeting (renewing our covenants and remembering the Atonement in a reverent manner) [see “The Aaronic Priesthood and the Sacrament,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 37–40]. In many areas we are guided only by doctrines and principles rather than rules. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught, ‘I teach them correct principles, and they govern themselves’ [*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 284]. We are responsible to the Lord for how we respond in such situations” (“Looking beyond the Mark,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2003, 44).

2 Corinthians 3:6–17. Jeremiah’s Prophecy of the New Covenant Fulfilled

The Greek word *diathēkēs*, translated in 2 Corinthians 3:6 and 14 as “testament,” carries the primary meaning of “covenant.” Thus, when Paul used this word, he was not referring specifically to the New Testament but to the new covenant of the gospel of Jesus Christ. When Paul referred to “the reading of the old testament” (2 Corinthians 3:14), he was referring to the old

covenant—the Mosaic law contained in the pages of what Christians call the Old Testament.

When Paul taught that the new covenant would be written on people’s hearts (see 2 Corinthians 3:3), he was pointing to the fulfillment of a prophecy of Jeremiah: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel. . . . I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jeremiah 31:31, 33). Paul also drew upon Old Testament imagery when discussing a “veil” over Moses’s face and a “veil” over the hearts of the people when they read from the scriptures (2 Corinthians 3:13–16; see also Exodus 34:29–35). Paul was teaching that in his day, Israel was “blinded” in its understanding of the law of Moses (2 Corinthians 3:14; see also Romans 11:7, 25).

Joseph Smith Translation, 2 Corinthians 3:16 states that when the “heart [of the children of Israel] shall turn to the Lord, the veil [of misunderstanding] shall be taken away.” This is true of everyone whose heart turns to the Lord, for the Spirit enables them to understand the scriptures and the gospel in fulness (see 2 Corinthians 3:16–17; Joseph Smith—History 1:73–74).

2 Corinthians 3:12. Having Such Hope

To read about the doctrine of hope, see the commentary for Hebrews 6:11, 18–19.

2 Corinthians 3:17–18

According to Paul, what transformations can the Spirit of the Lord bring about in our lives? What changes has the Spirit of the Lord caused in your life?

2 Corinthians 3:17. The Spirit of the Lord Brings Liberty

Paul taught that when the veil of blindness is taken away from our hearts, the Spirit of the Lord brings liberty into our lives (see 2 Corinthians 3:17). Those who obey the gospel of Jesus Christ are freed from the captivity of the adversary. **President Gordon B. Hinckley** testified: “The gospel is not a philosophy of repression, as so many regard it. It is a plan of freedom that gives discipline to appetite and direction to behavior. Its fruits are sweet and its rewards are liberal” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1965, 78; see also the commentary for John 8:30–32).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught that it is Satan, not God, who seeks to destroy agency and liberty: “It is an eternal principle that has existed with God from all eternity that man should be free. God ordained the law of agency in [the premortal life] so that his spirit children could either follow him or rebel against his laws and go to perdition with Lucifer. Then in this mortal probation man again was given freedom of choice, freedom to gain salvation by obedience or to be damned through disobedience. Since Satan always seeks to destroy the agency of man, he influences churches and governments to deny freedom of worship and to force man to perform acts contrary to the divine will. Governments and churches which curtail or deny man the power to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience, are not of God; they are not directed by the power of his Spirit” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:415–16).

2 Corinthians 3:18. “Changed into the Same Image”



The Apostle Paul wrote that as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we “are changed into the same image” as the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:18) and we grow closer to Him. The word “changed” (*metamorphōō*) in 2 Corinthians 3:18 is the same word translated as “transfigured” in Matthew 17:2 and Mark 9:2 and as “transformed” in Romans 12:2. It indicates a dramatic,

fundamental transformation—a metamorphosis. The Spirit is the means by which God gradually transforms us into glorious beings like Him. Alma similarly taught that when we are spiritually born of God, we receive His image in our countenances (see Alma 5:14; the commentary for Romans 8:29).

The phrase “glory to glory” could also be translated “with increasing glory” or “to higher degrees of glory,” thus suggesting man’s potential to gradually become like Heavenly Father.

Furthermore, when we become the children of Christ we begin to take on the image, countenance, and characteristics of our spiritual Father, Jesus Christ (see Mosiah 5:7).

2 Corinthians 4:3–4. “The God of This World”

The “god of this world” is Satan, who blinds people’s eyes and hides the gospel from those who are spiritually lost. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** helped us understand Paul’s reference: “This world is the sensual, carnal, and devilish society of men who live on the face of the earth; it is a world that shall continue to exist until Christ comes and the wicked are destroyed, which destruction is, ‘the end of the world’ [Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:4]” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:417).

2 Corinthians 4:5–10. “Troubled on Every Side, Yet Not Distressed”

Paul compared himself and his fellow ministers of the gospel to ordinary-looking clay jars that contain the “treasure” of “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God” (2 Corinthians 4:6–7). Paul stated that the contrast between humble, unimpressive missionaries and the light they bear—the gospel of Jesus Christ—reveals a divine purpose: “That the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (2 Corinthians 4:7).

2 Corinthians 4:8–10; 6:4–10; 11:23–33 contain Paul’s account of many of the perils he experienced as a missionary and Apostle of Jesus Christ. Though many of these perils were extreme, Paul testified that because he was always supported by God, he was able to continue to be of service to God and the Saints. **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** explained that Paul’s description of his trials, found in 2 Corinthians 4:8–10, can also be used to describe the Savior’s great sufferings: “On some days we will have cause to remember the unkind treatment [the Savior] received, the rejection he experienced, and the injustice—oh, the injustice—he endured. When we, too, then face some of that in life, we can remember that Christ was also troubled on every side, but not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted,

but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed (see 2 Cor. 4:8–9)” (“This Do in Remembrance of Me,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 69).

President George A. Smith (1817–75) of the First Presidency received counsel in the spirit of Paul’s inspiring words from his cousin the Prophet Joseph Smith at a time of great difficulty: “He told me I should never get discouraged, whatever difficulties might surround me. If I was sunk in the lowest pit of Nova Scotia and all the Rocky Mountains piled on top of me, I ought not to be discouraged but hang on, exercise faith, and keep up good courage and I should come out on the top of the heap at last” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 235).



“Earthen vessels” in modern-day Israel (2 Corinthians 4:7). Paul compared himself and his fellow ministers of the gospel to ordinary-looking clay jars that contain the “treasure” of “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God” (2 Corinthians 4:6–7). Paul stated that the contrast between humble, unimpressive missionaries and the light they bear—the gospel of Jesus Christ—reveals a divine purpose: “That the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (2 Corinthians 4:7).

2 Corinthians 4:17. Keeping Our Mortal Afflictions in Perspective

Elder Paul V. Johnson of the Seventy used Paul’s words to help us put our mortal afflictions into an eternal perspective: “The Apostle Paul taught, ‘For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory’ [2 Corinthians 4:17]. It is interesting that Paul uses the term ‘light affliction.’ This comes from a person who was beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, imprisoned, and who experienced many other trials [see 2 Corinthians 11:23–28]. I doubt many of us would label our afflictions light. Yet in comparison to the blessings and growth

we ultimately receive, both in this life and in eternity, our afflictions truly are light” (“More Than Conquerors through Him That Loved Us,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2011, 79; see also the commentary for Romans 8:17).

President Brigham Young taught: “All intelligent beings who are crowned with crowns of glory, immortality, and eternal lives must pass through every ordeal appointed for intelligent beings to pass through, to gain their glory and exaltation. . . . If we obtain the glory that Abraham obtained, we must do so by the same means that he did. If we are ever prepared to enjoy the society of Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or of their faithful children, and of the faithful Prophets and Apostles, we must pass through the same experience, and gain the knowledge, intelligence, and endowments that will prepare us to enter into the celestial kingdom of our Father and God. . . . Every trial and experience you have passed through is necessary for your salvation” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* [1997], 261–62).

2 Corinthians 5:1–4. “Desiring to Be Clothed Upon” with a Resurrected Body

In both ancient and modern times, some people have mistakenly believed that the physical body is a negative thing and that a disembodied state—living as a spirit only—is preferable. When writing to the Corinthians, Paul expressed his desire not to be rid of a mortal body, but to be “clothed upon” with an immortal, resurrected body (2 Corinthians 5:1–4; see also 1 Corinthians 15:53).



Sister Susan W. Tanner, while serving as Young Women general president, spoke of her newly born granddaughter and of the feelings of holiness she felt in “the presence of a celestial spirit newly united with a pure physical body”: “Our bodies are our temples. We are not less but *more* like Heavenly Father because we are embodied. I testify that we are His children, made

in His image, with the potential to become like Him. Let us treat this divine gift of the body with great care. Someday, if we are worthy, we shall receive a perfected, glorious body—pure and clean like my new little granddaughter, only inseparably bound to the spirit. And we shall shout for joy (see Job 38:7) to receive this gift again for which we have longed (see D&C 138:50) (“The Sanctity of the Body,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 13, 15).

2 Corinthians 5:6–7. “We Walk by Faith, Not by Sight”

Paul taught that while we are in our mortal bodies, “we are absent from the Lord,” meaning that in mortality we are not in the personal presence of God. While we are on earth, we must “walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:6–7). Part of God’s plan is that when we were born, a veil was placed over our minds to cover the memory of our premortal heavenly home. Without the memory of our premortal life, we seek to learn and live by faith. If we follow the path our Savior exemplified, our Heavenly Father’s richest blessings will be ours, as **President Wilford Woodruff** (1807–98) testified:

“When we get to the other side of the veil, we shall know something. We now work by faith. We have the evidence of things not seen. The resurrection, the eternal judgment, the celestial kingdom, and the great blessings that God has given in the holy anointings and endowment in the temples, are all for the future, and they will be fulfilled, for they are eternal truths. We will never while in the flesh, with this veil over us, fully comprehend that which lies before us in the world to come. It will pay any man to serve God and to keep His commandments the few days he lives upon the earth” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff* [2004], 154).

2 Corinthians 5:10–11. We Will Appear before Christ to Be Judged

After teaching that we must walk by faith in this life, that we should seek to obtain an immortal, resurrected body, and that we should labor to be accepted by Jesus Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:1–8), Paul taught that we will all stand before Christ to be judged for the things we have done in mortality, whether good or bad (see 2 Corinthians 5:10). Paul taught, “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Corinthians 5:11), meaning that because Paul and his companions feared, or revered, the Lord and knew they were accountable to Him, they labored to persuade others to prepare for that great Day of Judgment. **Elder Bruce R.**

McConkie wrote about the Savior’s role at the Day of Judgment:

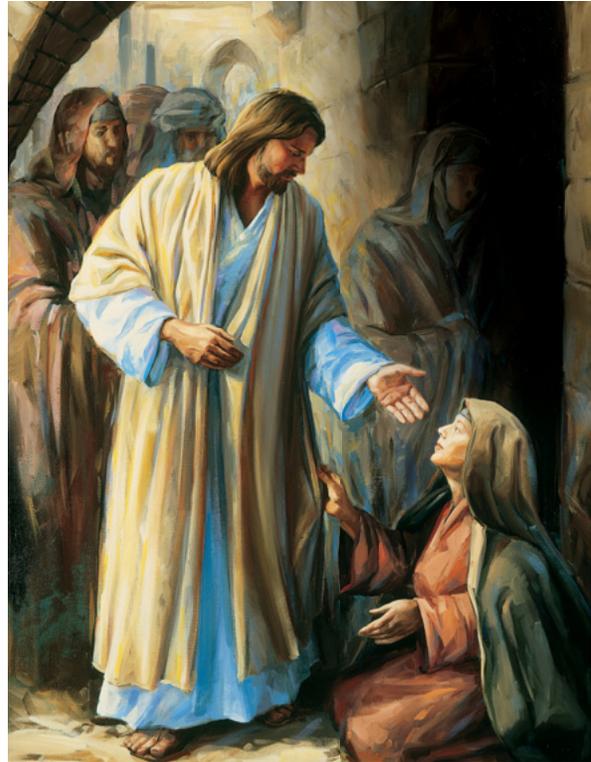
“The Son, not the Father, is the Judge of the whole earth, but his judgment is made in accordance with the will of the Father and therefore is just [see John 5:22, 30]. . . .

“Because Jesus is the Son of Man of Holiness he has been given the power to execute judgment, to sit in judgment at the great and last day, to call all men forth in immortality to stand before his bar [see John 5:27]” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 1:192, 195; see also the commentary for John 5:22, 27, 30).

2 Corinthians 5:14–17. New Creatures in Christ

Paul taught that if there were no Atonement of Jesus Christ, “then were all dead” spiritually. The Atonement changes everyone who accepts it; those who choose to follow Jesus Christ no longer “live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.” They become a “new creature” (2 Corinthians 5:14–15, 17).

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught what it means to be a “new creature” in Christ:



Woman Touching the Hem of the Savior's Garment, by Judith Mehr. The Savior's Atonement has the power to change everyone who accepts it, just as the woman with an “issue of blood” was made “whole” through the Savior's power (Luke 8:43–48).

“The essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ entails a fundamental and permanent change in our very nature made possible through the Savior’s Atonement. True conversion brings a change in one’s beliefs, heart, and life to accept and conform to the will of God (see Acts 3:19; 3 Nephi 9:20) and includes a conscious commitment to become a disciple of Christ.

“. . . As we honor the ordinances and covenants of salvation and exaltation (see D&C 20:25), ‘press forward with a steadfastness in Christ’ (2 Nephi 31:20), and endure in faith to the end (see D&C 14:7), we become new creatures in Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:17)” (“Converted unto the Lord,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 107).

2 Corinthians 5:18–21. “Be Ye Reconciled to God”

After teaching that all people are accountable for their actions and will one day stand before Jesus Christ to be judged (see 2 Corinthians 5:9–11), Paul pleaded with the Corinthian Saints to be reconciled to God through the Atonement of Christ. There are only a few biblical verses that explicitly state that Jesus Christ was completely without sin; 2 Corinthians 5:21 is one of them (see also Hebrews 4:14–15; 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5). Verse 21 is also one of the clearest scriptural statements on the purpose of the Atonement and the way we are reconciled to God. Paul taught, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). In other words, as a result of His Atonement, Jesus Christ can say to us, “I will take your sins and I will give you my righteousness.” Jesus Christ became a vicarious sacrifice for our sins, meaning that all of our sins were laid upon Him and He bore them, even though He had never sinned. Because of this great sacrifice, upon condition of our repentance, we can share in the Savior’s righteousness.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie provided this explanation of Paul’s teachings about reconciliation: “Reconciliation is the process of ransoming man from his state of sin and spiritual darkness and of restoring him to a state of harmony and unity with Deity. Through it God and man are no longer enemies. Man, who was once carnal and evil, who lived after the manner of the flesh, becomes a new creature of the Holy Ghost; he is born again; and, even as a little child, he is alive in Christ” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:422–23; see also the commentary for Romans 5:11).

Points to Ponder

- Consider 2 Corinthians 4:8–10, 17. How are the afflictions you have experienced or are experiencing preparing you for an “eternal weight of glory”?
- Paul promised the Corinthian Saints, who were in difficult circumstances, that they would have peace and comfort as they continued to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. How has the gospel of Jesus Christ brought peace and comfort to your life during difficult times?
- What does it mean to have a commandment or gospel doctrine written in your heart? (see 2 Corinthians 3:3). What must happen for the Holy Ghost to write it there?
- Paul helped the Corinthian Saints understand what it means to be “reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20–21). How would you describe to a friend or loved one what that phrase means?
- What thoughts do you have as you consider that Jesus became a sacrifice for all of our sins, taking upon Himself all of our sins and suffering for them?

Suggested Assignments

- List five verses from 2 Corinthians 1–5 that may have helped the Corinthian Saints feel God’s love and peace during times of adversity. Choose a favorite verse and write a short paragraph about how that verse might assist you during your difficult times.
- Paul reminded the Corinthian Saints, “Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men” (2 Corinthians 3:2). Write in your journal about ways you can be an effective example of the gospel of Jesus Christ to others.

2 Corinthians 6–13

Introduction and Timeline for 2 Corinthians 6–13

Second Corinthians 6–13 can be divided into three main sections. In 2 Corinthians 6–7, Paul continued to explain his conduct during his ministry. He expressed joy at having received word that the Saints in Corinth had accepted his counsel in an earlier epistle and had repented (see 2 Corinthians 7:4–8). This provided an occasion for Paul to write what have become timeless teachings on “godly sorrow.” In chapters 8–9, Paul continued his ongoing exhortation of the Saints to give donations to members of the Church in Jerusalem, emphasizing the principle of caring for the poor. In chapters 10–13, Paul defended his apostolic authority against some in Corinth who opposed him. Paul contrasted his own actions and teachings with those of men he labeled “false apostles,” and he encouraged the Saints in Corinth to prepare themselves for his upcoming visit so they could discern between true servants of God like himself and false teachers. In all of Paul’s

counsel, we see his love for the Saints and his earnest desire for them to act righteously.



The Apostle Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, probably in Macedonia about A.D. 57.

Commentary for 2 Corinthians 6–13

2 Corinthians 6:1–2. “Now Is the Day of Salvation”

After describing how all mankind may be reconciled with God through Jesus Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:17–21), Paul exhorted the Corinthian Saints to be faithful, teaching that “now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2). The Book of Mormon contains similar teachings about the importance of repenting and remaining true to gospel covenants in this life (see 2 Nephi 2:21; Alma 34:31–33; 42:4). Individuals who do not honor their gospel covenants in this life should not assume that they will have a second chance in the life to come (see D&C 76:79; 88:20–24).

2 Corinthians 6:3–10. Ministers of God

In 2 Corinthians 6:3–10 Paul described the way he and his missionary companions endeavored to serve as ministers of God and alluded to many of the hardships they had faced. Paul’s description of his ministry can be seen as a list of attributes of effective ministers that we can strive to emulate in our own service—attributes that are best exemplified by the Lord Jesus Christ. Similar lists are found in Doctrine and Covenants 4:5–6 and 121:41–44.

2 Corinthians 6:12. “Ye Are Straited in Your Own Bowels”

As used in scripture, the word *bowels* often refers to the inner source of pity, love, and kindness, because when we feel love or compassion we often experience strong internal feelings. In 2 Corinthians 6:12, the idea of straitening (narrowing) one’s bowels means to restrict or withhold love. When Paul said, “Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels,” he was telling the Corinthian Saints that there was no lack of love on his part, despite the fact that some of the Saints were apparently withholding their love from him. Similar uses of the word *bowels* in the New Testament are found in Philippians 1:8; 2:1; Colossians 3:12; and 1 John 3:17.

2 Corinthians 6:14. “Be Ye Not Unequally Yoked Together with Unbelievers”

Paul used the image of animals yoked together as he discouraged Church members from being “yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Corinthians 6:14). The law of Moses forbade the yoking of an ox and an ass together (see Deuteronomy 22:10) so that the weaker animal would not hold the stronger one back and the stronger animal would not inflict pain or discomfort on the weaker one.

Latter-day prophets have applied Paul’s teaching to be “not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” as a guiding principle in forming relationships with others, including deciding whom to marry. For example, **President Spencer W. Kimball** (1895–1985) discussed why it is important for Latter-day Saints to marry within their faith:

“You are taking a desperate chance if you say, ‘Well, maybe he will join after we are married. We will go ahead and try it and see.’ It is a pretty serious thing to take a chance on. . . .

“Over the years many times women have come to me in tears. How they would love to train their children in the Church, in the gospel of Jesus Christ! But they were unable to do so. How they would like to accept positions of responsibility in the Church! How they would like to pay their tithing! How they would love to go to the temple and do the work for the dead, to do work for themselves, to be sealed for eternity, and to have their own flesh and blood, their children, sealed to them for eternity! . . .

“No implication is here made that all members of the Church are worthy and that all nonmembers are unworthy, but eternal marriage cannot be had outside of the temple, and nonmembers are not permitted to go into the temple. . . .

“Paul said: ‘Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?’ (2 Cor. 6:14). Perhaps Paul wanted them to see that religious differences are fundamental differences” (“The Importance of Celestial Marriage,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1979, 3–4).



A yoke is used to join two draft animals. Paul used the imagery of yoked animals in his counsel regarding personal relationships (see 2 Corinthians 6:14–18).

Church leaders have also applied 2 Corinthians 6:14 to preparing for marriage by developing ourselves in such areas as education, employment, and spirituality in order to bring strength rather than weakness to the “yoked” relationship of marriage.

2 Corinthians 6:14–18. “Be Ye Separate, . . . and Touch Not the Unclean Thing”

Paul compared the Corinthian Saints to “the temple of the living God” (2 Corinthians 6:16). He then discouraged them from entering into relationships with idol worshippers or participating in their “unclean” practices (see Isaiah 52:11). With these teachings, Paul reiterated a promise made to God’s people of old—that if they would “come out from among” the wicked, God would dwell among them and be their God (2 Corinthians 6:17; see also Exodus 25:8; Leviticus 26:11–12; Jeremiah 32:38; and Ezekiel 11:19–20).

2 Corinthians 6:17–18; 7:1

How does 2 Corinthians 6:17–18 help you understand the “promises” to those who “come out from among” the wicked (2 Corinthians 6:17–18; 7:1)? How might remembering these promises motivate a person to become or remain spiritually clean?

2 Corinthians 7:2–7. Paul Had “Wronged No Man”

In 2 Corinthians 7:2–7, Paul continued his defense against those who sought to discredit him. He assured the Corinthian Saints that he had not wronged or defrauded anyone. He pointed out that news of their well-being had brought him such joy that he was able to endure serious trials in Macedonia (northern Greece). For more information on Paul’s detractors, see the commentary for 2 Corinthians 10:7–18.

2 Corinthians 7:8–11. “Godly Sorrow Worketh Repentance”

One of Paul’s purposes in writing earlier epistles to the Saints in Corinth was to call certain individuals to repentance. It is evident from 2 Corinthians 7:8–13 that his correspondence had been well received, because according to Paul, the Saints had “sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner” (2 Corinthians 7:9). For more scriptural teachings on godly sorrow, see 2 Nephi 2:7; Mosiah 4:1–3; and Alma 42:29–30.

President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) taught: “Godly sorrow is a gift of the Spirit. It is a deep realization that our actions have offended our Father and

our God. It is the sharp and keen awareness that our behavior caused the Savior, He who knew no sin, even the greatest of all, to endure agony and suffering. Our sins caused Him to bleed at every pore. This very real mental and spiritual anguish is what the scriptures refer to as having ‘a broken heart and a contrite spirit.’ (See 3 Ne. 9:20; Moro. 6:2; D&C 20:37; 59:8; Ps. 34:18; 51:17; Isa. 57:15.) Such a spirit is the absolute prerequisite for true repentance” (“A Mighty Change of Heart,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1989, 4).



Godly sorrow is different from worldly sorrow because it includes the workings of the Spirit in our hearts and causes real and lasting change. Worldly sorrow is a feeling of regret over being caught in a misdeed or having to face unpleasant consequences (see Mormon 2:12–14). **Elder Neal A. Maxwell** (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles pointed out: “Pride prefers cheap repentance, paid for with shallow sorrow. Unsurprisingly, seekers after cheap repentance also search for superficial forgiveness instead of real reconciliation. Thus, real repentance goes far beyond simply saying, ‘I’m sorry’” (“Repentance,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 31).

2 Corinthians 8–9. Welfare Efforts in the Early Church

One of Paul’s ongoing efforts during his missions was to gather a collection for the poor in Jerusalem (see Acts 24:17; Romans 15:25–32; 1 Corinthians 16:1–4). Paul wrote about this collection in 2 Corinthians 8–9. The churches in Macedonia had given generously to the cause, and Paul encouraged the Saints in Corinth to do likewise (see 2 Corinthians 8:1–7). Paul later wrote that the Corinthians had responded favorably to his request (see Romans 15:26).

Paul explained in 2 Corinthians 8:12 that the willingness to give what one can is more important than being able to give in great abundance (see also Mosiah 4:24).

In 2 Corinthians 8:14, Paul may have implied that the Corinthian Saints enjoyed great temporal abundance, which they should have been willing to donate in gratitude for the generous spiritual supply they received from Jerusalem (see Romans 15:27). When Paul spoke of “equality” among the Saints (2 Corinthians 8:14) he was not speaking of complete sameness. Latter-day revelation clarifies that in matters of temporal welfare, equality is determined in consideration of each person’s needs, wants, and circumstances (see D&C 51:3; 82:17).

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the First Presidency taught about the obligation that Church members have to assist the poor:

“In the Lord’s plan, our commitment to welfare principles should be at the very root of our faith and devotion to Him.

“Since the beginning of time, our Heavenly Father has spoken with great clarity on this subject: from the gentle plea, ‘If thou lovest me . . . thou wilt remember the poor, and consecrate of thy properties for their support’ [D&C 42:29–30]; to the direct command, ‘Remember in all things the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted, for he that doeth not these things, the same is not my disciple’ [D&C 52:40]; to the forceful warning, ‘If any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment’ [D&C 104:18]. . . .

“. . . While it is important to have our thoughts inclined toward heaven, we miss the essence of our religion if our hands are not also inclined toward our fellowman. . . .

“. . . Our spiritual progress is inseparably bound together with the temporal service we give to others. . . .

“This very hour there are many members of the Church who are suffering. They are hungry, stretched financially, and struggling with all manner of physical, emotional, and spiritual distress. They pray with all the energy of their souls for succor, for relief.

“. . . Please do not think that this is someone else’s responsibility. It is mine, and it is yours. We are all enlisted. . . . In the Lord’s plan, there is something everyone can contribute” (“Providing in the Lord’s Way,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 53–54).

2 Corinthians 8:9

What word did Paul use to describe the Savior's premortal status? What did Paul mean when he said that Jesus Christ became poor for our sakes? How might these verses encourage us to assist people in need?

2 Corinthians 8:16–24. Paul Sent Brethren to Collect Donations for the Poor in Jerusalem

In 2 Corinthians 8:16–24, Paul spoke to the Corinthian Saints about the brethren who were being sent to collect charitable contributions for the Saints in Jerusalem. He mentioned Titus (verses 16–17) and two other brethren (verses 18 and 22). While speaking of one of these brethren, Paul spoke of his confidence in the Corinthian Saints. Joseph Smith Translation, 2 Corinthians 8:22–23 clarifies this confidence: “And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent. *Therefore we send him unto you, in consequence of the great confidence which we have in you, that you will receive the things concerning you, to the glory of Christ.*”

2 Corinthians 9:6–13. “He Which Soweth Bountifully Shall Reap Also Bountifully”

Paul noted that those who sowed (donated to the needy) bountifully would also reap (receive) bountifully from the Lord. On the other hand, “he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly” (2 Corinthians 9:6).

In 2 Corinthians 9:9, Paul quoted Psalm 112:9, referring to “a good man” who “hath given to the poor” (Psalm 112:5, 9). In verse 10, Paul referred to God’s abundant blessings to those who give generously. In verses 12–13, Paul said that two good things would result from the Corinthians’ unselfish giving—the needs of the Jerusalem Saints would be met, and those Saints would in turn give generous thanks to God.



In modern times, one way members of the Church make donations for the poor is through fast offerings. **President Marion G. Romney** (1897–1988) of the First Presidency taught about the blessings that accompany generous fast offering donations: “I am a firm believer that you cannot give to the Church and to the building

up of the kingdom of God and be any poorer financially. I remember . . . when Brother [Melvin J.] Ballard laid his hands on my head and set me apart to go on a mission. He said in that prayer of blessing that a person could not give a crust to the Lord without receiving a loaf in return. That’s been my experience. If the members of the Church would double their fast-offering contributions, the spirituality in the Church would double. We need to keep that in mind and be liberal in our contributions.” (Welfare Agricultural Meeting, 3 Apr. 1971, p. 1.)” (in L. Tom Perry, “The Law of the Fast,” *Ensign*, May 1986, 32).

2 Corinthians 9:6–13

What phrases did Paul use to describe the blessings that come to individuals who give generously and help relieve the suffering of the poor? Which of these blessings have you experienced in your life?

2 Corinthians 9:6–7. “God Loveth a Cheerful Giver”

Paul taught that individuals who give cheerfully will receive greater blessings than those who give grudgingly. The Book of Mormon prophet Mormon understood this: “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. For behold, it is not counted unto him for righteousness” (Moroni 7:6–7).

2 Corinthians 10:3–6. “For the Weapons of Our Warfare Are Not Carnal”

In 2 Corinthians 10:4, Paul taught that though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. In our spiritual war against Satan, we do not use “carnal” weapons, meaning the weapons used in worldly battles, but rather we use spiritual weapons. Paul taught that in this spiritual warfare, we must be careful of what and how we think (see verses 5–6).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “Thoughts are the material from which belief is built, and to be saved men must believe and therefore think the right things. We are, therefore, expected to govern our thoughts. ‘Let thy thoughts be directed unto the Lord.’ (Alma 37:36.) ‘Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly.’ (D. & C. 121:45.) ‘Our thoughts will also condemn us.’ (Alma 12:14.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 2:438).

To read about the “weapons” of spiritual warfare that Paul referred to in 2 Corinthians 10:4, see Ephesians 6:11–17 and the commentary for Ephesians 6:14–18.



Statue of the Apostle Paul, by Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen. Paul is depicted holding a sword, which symbolizes his martyrdom. In scripture, the sword also symbolizes the word of God (see Ephesians 6:17; Revelation 1:16; D&C 6:2).

2 Corinthians 10:7–18. Paul Defended His Physical Weaknesses

In 2 Corinthians 10, Paul defended himself against those who opposed him. Some of the criticisms leveled against Paul were personal in nature and were related to his physical appearance and his speaking ability (see 2 Corinthians 10:10). Such attacks on Paul’s physical shortcomings demonstrate the weakness of his detractors’ character. The scriptures contain many examples of the Lord using individuals with perceived physical weaknesses to accomplish His work. For example, both Enoch and Moses struggled with physical challenges (see Exodus 4:10; Moses 6:31). The Lord stated that “the weak things of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones” (D&C 1:19; see also 1 Corinthians 1:25–27).

Elder Marvin J. Ashton (1915–94) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke of the mistake of judging people by the wrong criteria:

“We also tend to evaluate others on the basis of physical, outward appearance: their ‘good looks,’ their social status, their family pedigrees, their degrees, or their economic situations. . . .

“When the Lord measures an individual, He does not take a tape measure around the person’s head to determine his mental capacity, nor his chest to determine his manliness, but He measures the heart as an indicator of the person’s capacity and potential to bless others” (“The Measure of Our Hearts,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 15).

2 Corinthians 10:8, 13–17; 11:16–18. Paul’s Use of the Word *Boast*

As Paul defended his position as an Apostle, he acknowledged that it may have seemed to some like he was boasting of his authority. The word *boast* in 2 Corinthians 10:8 means “to glory or exult” (see also 2 Corinthians 10:13–17; 11:16–18). Paul’s “boasting” when speaking of his missionary service should not be understood as being prideful; instead it may be seen as similar to Ammon’s expression in the Book of Mormon: “I know that I am nothing; as to my strength I am weak; therefore I will not boast of myself, but I will boast of my God, for in his strength I can do all things. . . . Who can glory too much in the Lord? Yea, who can say too much of his great power, and of his mercy, and of his long-suffering towards the children of men?” (Alma 26:12, 16).

2 Corinthians 10:10–13, 18. “Comparing Themselves among Themselves”

Paul wrote that he might be physically weak compared to some other people; however, he pointed out that it is not wise for people to measure themselves through comparisons to others. Rather, we should measure ourselves “according to the rule [standard] which God hath [given] to us” (2 Corinthians 10:10–13). The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) encouraged Church members to measure themselves through a comparison to God: “Search your hearts, and see if you are like God. I have searched mine, and feel to repent of all my sins” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 72).

Sister Patricia T. Holland, former member of the Young Women general presidency and wife of Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, shared her personal insights about the importance of not comparing ourselves with others:

“My greatest misery comes when I feel I have to fit what others are doing, or what I think others expect of me. I am most happy when I am comfortable being me and trying to do what my Father in Heaven and I expect me to be.

“For many years I tried to measure the oft-times quiet, reflective, thoughtful Pat Holland against the robust, bubbly, talkative, and energetic Jeff Holland and others with like qualities. I have learned through several fatiguing failures that you can’t have joy in being bubbly if you are not a bubbly person. It is a contradiction in terms. I have given up seeing myself as a flawed person because my energy level is lower than Jeff’s, and I don’t talk as much as he does, nor as fast. Giving this up has freed me to embrace and rejoice in my own manner and personality in the measure of *my* creation” (Jeffrey R. Holland and Patricia T. Holland, *On Earth as It Is in Heaven* [1989], 69–70).



Paul taught that those who “compare themselves among themselves are not wise” and should instead seek the Lord’s commendation (see 2 Corinthians 10:12, 18).

2 Corinthians 10:12, 18. “Some That Commend Themselves”

Paul said of his detractors that they “commend themselves” and are therefore “not wise” (2 Corinthians 10:12). Paul suggested that we should not praise ourselves but should instead seek the Lord’s approval. **President Dieter F. Uchtdorf** of the First Presidency taught about the pride that is related to self-commendation:

“At its core, pride is a sin of comparison, for though it usually begins with ‘Look how wonderful I am and what great things I have done,’ it always seems to end with ‘Therefore, I am better than you.’

“When our hearts are filled with pride, we commit a grave sin, for we violate the two great commandments [see Matthew 22:36–40]. Instead of worshipping God and loving our neighbor, we reveal the real object of our worship and love—the image we see in the mirror.

“Pride is the great sin of self-elevation. . . .

“This sin has many faces. It leads some to revel in their own perceived self-worth, accomplishments, talents, wealth, or position. They count these blessings as evidence of being ‘chosen,’ ‘superior,’ or ‘more righteous’ than others. This is the sin of ‘Thank God I am more special than you.’ At its core is the desire to be admired or envied. It is the sin of self-glorification” (“Pride and the Priesthood,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 56).

2 Corinthians 11:1–5, 13–15; 12:11–12. Warnings against False Apostles

In 2 Corinthians 11–12 Paul issued a warning about false teachers among the Corinthian Saints who were not the righteous ministers they appeared to be. He used strong terms as he compared them to the “serpent” who “beguiled Eve through his subtilty” (2 Corinthians 11:3). Paul reasoned that just as Satan himself can appear as an angel of light (see 2 Nephi 9:9; Alma 30:53; D&C 129:8; Moses 5:13, 28–30), the “false apostles” in Corinth had the appearance of “ministers of righteousness” (2 Corinthians 11:13, 15). These individuals preached “another” Christ. Although it is unclear what specific doctrines these false apostles were teaching about Jesus Christ, we know that on another occasion Paul had to refute claims in Corinth that Christ had not risen from the dead (see 1 Corinthians 15:13–19).

In contrast to the false apostles in Corinth, Paul testified that he was an authentic Apostle, who was in no way inferior to “the very chiefest apostles” (2 Corinthians 11:5; 12:11). In 2 Corinthians 12:12, Paul invited the Corinthian members to consider if his works among them were signs of a true Apostle that authenticated his ministry (see also Mark 16:17–18).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie described some differences between true and false apostles in our day: “In the general sense, a true apostle is an especial witness of the Lord’s name, one who knows by revelation that Jesus is the Lord. A false apostle is one who pretends to be a teacher and witness of true doctrine without having the requisite personal revelation. In the specific sense, a true apostle is one who has been ordained to that office in the Melchizedek Priesthood and who normally serves as a member of the Council of the Twelve, and who therefore has power and authority to govern the Church. A false apostle is one who professes to have power to govern the affairs of the Church on earth, but does not in fact have the requisite endowment of divine authority” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:440).

2 Corinthians 11:7–9; 12:13–17. What Did Paul Mean by Not Being “Burdenome” to the Saints?

While ministering in Corinth, Paul relied somewhat on contributions from Church members in Macedonia (see Acts 18:3), but he also labored to support himself financially. He did not want his own temporal needs to be burdensome to the Church (see also Mosiah 2:11–15).

2 Corinthians 11:23–33. Paul’s Trials Are Evidence of His Commitment to Declare the Truth of Jesus Christ

In 2 Corinthians 11:23–33, Paul listed many of the sufferings he passed through as he ministered as a loyal disciple of Jesus Christ. Paul’s ministry covered three decades, during which time he traveled well over 10,000 miles (16,093 kilometers), much of it on foot. As a disciple of Jesus Christ, Paul willingly endured a remarkable number of hardships, many of which are recorded in Acts (see Acts 14:19; 16:22–40; 21:31; 27:13–44). The five beatings of “forty stripes save one” (see 2 Corinthians 11:24–28) that Paul received from Jewish authorities were the severest form of whipping Paul could have received under Jewish law (see Deuteronomy 25:1–3).

Despite the repeated beatings, Paul continued to visit synagogues to proclaim the gospel to his fellow Jews as well as to Gentiles (see Romans 1:16; 9:1–5). The combination of these trials is staggering to contemplate. Without apostolic authority and a deep commitment to Jesus Christ, it is unlikely that Paul could have endured such extreme difficulties. In contrast to those whom Paul labeled as “false apostles” (2 Corinthians 11:13), Paul had proper authority (see 2 Corinthians 11:5, 22–23), and his ministry was evidence of his sincere, devoted discipleship.

2 Corinthians 12:2–4. Who Was the Man “Caught Up to the Third Heaven”?

Employing a common rhetorical device of his day, Paul was referring to himself in the third person when he spoke of “a man” who was once “caught up to the third heaven” (2 Corinthians 12:2–4), which is the celestial kingdom. The **Prophet Joseph Smith** received revelations giving further understanding of “the third heaven” (see D&C 76:50–112; 88:22–31), and he explained: “Paul ascended into the third heavens, and he could understand the three principal rounds of Jacob’s ladder—the telestial, the terrestrial, and the celestial glories or kingdoms, where Paul saw and heard things which were not lawful for him to utter” (in *History of the Church*, 5:402; see also the commentary for 1 Corinthians 15:39–44). By sharing this experience—one that neither his detractors nor the “false apostles” in Corinth could match—Paul reinforced his authority as an Apostle of Jesus Christ.



The third heaven, or celestial kingdom, is symbolized in scripture by the sun (see 1 Corinthians 15:40–41).

2 Corinthians 12:4

What details did Paul give about his vision of the “third heaven”? What did he say that shows he was being cautious about relating this experience? How should we be similarly cautious in sharing our spiritual experiences with others?

2 Corinthians 12:4. “Not Lawful for a Man to Utter”

Just as Paul heard “unspeakable words” that were “not lawful for a man to utter” when he was caught up to the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2, 4), we too may have spiritual experiences that we should share only when directed to do so by the Spirit. **President Boyd K. Packer** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:

“I have come to believe . . . that it is not wise to continually talk of unusual spiritual experiences. They are to be guarded with care and shared only when the Spirit itself prompts you to use them to the blessing of others. I am ever mindful of Alma’s words:

“‘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.’ (Alma 12:9.)

“I heard President Marion G. Romney once counsel . . . , ‘I do not tell all I know; I have never told my wife all I know, for I found out that if I talked too lightly of sacred things, thereafter the Lord would not trust me.’

“We are, I believe, to keep these things and ponder them in our hearts, as Luke said Mary did of the supernatural events that surrounded the birth of Jesus. (See Luke 2:19.)” (“The Candle of the Lord,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 53).

2 Corinthians 12:7–9. “A Thorn in the Flesh”

The Greek word translated as *thorn* in 2 Corinthians 12:7 originally referred to anything pointed, such as a sharpened stake, a surgical instrument, or a fishhook. By Paul’s day it came to denote a thorn or splinter that causes significant irritation. The term “a thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7) is a metaphor suggesting an infirmity that was troublesome to Paul. Many commentators have speculated on what Paul’s infirmity might have been, proposing that perhaps it was epilepsy, a serious visual impairment (see Galatians 4:13–15), or malaria. It appears that one of the positive results of this affliction was that it helped Paul avoid becoming proud (see 2 Corinthians 12:7). Weakness can lead to humble reliance upon the Lord (see Jacob 4:7; Ether 12:27, 37).



Thorns measuring about 2 inches (5 centimeters) on the branch of a tree in Israel

Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles commented on what we might learn from these teachings of Paul: “Recognize that some challenges in life will not be resolved here on earth. Paul pled thrice that ‘a thorn in the flesh’ be removed. The Lord simply answered, ‘My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness’ [2 Corinthians 12:7–9]. He gave Paul strength to compensate so he could live a most meaningful life. He wants you to learn how to be cured when that is His will and how to obtain strength to live with your challenge when He intends it to be an instrument for growth. In either case the Redeemer will support you” (“To Be Healed,” *Ensign*, May 1994, 7).

2 Corinthians 12:8. Healings Are Subject to the Will of God

One lesson we can learn from Paul’s repeated petition that the Lord remove his “thorn in the flesh” is that

faith is not the only requirement for healings to take place. **President Dallin H. Oaks** of the First Presidency explained: “Although the Savior could heal all whom He would heal, this is not true of those who hold His priesthood authority. Mortal exercises of that authority are limited by the will of Him whose priesthood it is. Consequently, we are told that some whom the elders bless are not healed because they are ‘appointed unto death’ (D&C 42:48). Similarly, when the Apostle Paul sought to be healed from the ‘thorn in the flesh’ that buffeted him (2 Corinthians 12:7), the Lord declined to heal him” (“He Heals the Heavy Laden,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 7).

2 Corinthians 12:8–10. Taking Pleasure in Infirmities

As he spoke about his physical weakness or thorn in the flesh, Paul stated that he could “take pleasure in infirmities” because his reliance upon the Lord allowed “the power of Christ” to rest upon him (2 Corinthians 12:8, 10). **Elder Robert D. Hales** (1932–2017) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained some of the blessings he received while experiencing an extended period of poor health:

“In the past two years, I have waited upon the Lord for mortal lessons to be taught me through periods of physical pain, mental anguish, and pondering. I learned that constant, intense pain is a great consecrating purifier that humbles us and draws us closer to God’s Spirit. If we listen and obey, we will be guided by His Spirit and do His will in our daily endeavors.

“There were times when I have asked a few direct questions in my prayers, such as, ‘What lessons dost Thou want me to learn from these experiences?’

“As I studied the scriptures during this critical period of my life, the veil was thin and answers were given to me as they were recorded in lives of others who had gone through even more severe trials.

“‘My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

“‘And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high’ (D&C 121:7–8).

“Dark moments of depression were quickly dispelled by the light of the gospel as the Spirit brought peace and comfort with assurances that all would be well.

“On a few occasions, I told the Lord that I had surely learned the lessons to be taught and that it wouldn’t be necessary for me to endure any more suffering. Such entreaties seemed to be of no avail, for it was made clear to me that this purifying process of testing was to be

endured in the Lord’s time and in the Lord’s own way. It is one thing to teach, ‘Thy will be done’ (Matt. 26:42). It is another to live it. I also learned that I would not be left alone to meet these trials and tribulations but that guardian angels would attend me. . . .

“The experiences of the last two years have made me stronger in spirit and have given me courage to testify more boldly to the world the deep feelings of my heart” (“The Covenant of Baptism: To Be in the Kingdom and of the Kingdom,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 6).

2 Corinthians 12:12. “Signs of an Apostle”

Paul taught the Corinthian Saints that they should recognize his apostolic authority because he wrought the works of an Apostle. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** taught that the signs of an Apostle “are healing the sick, casting out devils, raising the dead; they are preaching and teaching and suffering in the Cause of Christ; they are walking uprightly before all men and being adopted into the family of God as his sons, becoming thus joint-heirs with his natural Son. They are precisely the same divine endowments which should rest upon all the elders of the kingdom, upon every person who has received the right to the constant companionship of the Holy Spirit” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:450).



Ruins of ancient Corinth

2 Corinthians 13:5. “Examine Yourselves, Whether Ye Be in the Faith”

President Dallin H. Oaks taught:

“Jesus issued the challenge ‘What think ye of Christ?’ (Matthew 22:42). The Apostle Paul challenged the Corinthians to ‘examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith’ (2 Corinthians 13:5). All of us should answer

these challenges for ourselves. Where is our ultimate loyalty? Are we like the Christians in Elder Neal A. Maxwell’s memorable description who have moved their residence to Zion but still try to keep a second residence in Babylon? [see *A Wonderful Flood of Light* (1990), 47].

“There is no middle ground. We are followers of Jesus Christ. Our citizenship is in His Church and His gospel, and we should not use a visa to visit Babylon or act like one of its citizens. We should honor His name, keep His commandments, and ‘seek not the things of this world but seek . . . first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness’ (Matthew 6:33, footnote *a*; from Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38)” (“Teachings of Jesus,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 93).

2 Corinthians 13:12. Greet One Another

Joseph Smith Translation, 2 Corinthians 13:12 replaces the word “kiss” with “salutation” (in 2 Corinthians 13:12, footnote *a*).

Points to Ponder

- What is the difference between “godly sorrow” and “sorrow of the world”? (2 Corinthians 7:10).
- Have you ever been falsely accused and had to defend your own character? What can you learn from Paul about how to deal with false accusations? (see 2 Corinthians 10–12).
- What are some personal “thorns in the flesh” that might lead you to turn to the Lord for relief or strength to endure? How might the Lord use these to bless you? (see 2 Corinthians 12:7–10).

Suggested Assignments

- Read 2 Corinthians 8:12–14; 9:6–7; and Mosiah 4:24–27. Write a brief explanation of how the principles of caring for the poor found in these passages apply in our modern world.
- From 2 Corinthians 10–12, make a list of Paul’s apostolic qualifications.

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Galatians

Introduction to the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians

Why study Galatians?

The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians was written to Christians who were straying from the Lord by embracing false teachings. In correcting this problem, the Apostle Paul illuminated the difference between the burdensome “yoke” of the law of Moses, which led to spiritual bondage, and the gospel of Jesus Christ, which leads to spiritual freedom. Studying this epistle can help the reader better appreciate the Spirit-driven life and the liberty offered by the gospel of Jesus Christ. Though Paul’s reasoning is sophisticated, he addresses basic questions: What is the gospel? How does one receive it? What can happen when one applies it in daily life? What is the relationship between justification and faith?

Who wrote Galatians?

The Epistle to the Galatians opens with the Apostle Paul’s statement that he wrote it (see Galatians 1:1), and his authorship is accepted in Christian tradition and New Testament scholarship. As with other epistles, Paul appears to have been assisted by a scribe in writing Galatians. Near the end of the letter, Paul added his own handwritten postscript, “Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand” (Galatians 6:11; for more information about Paul’s use of scribes, see the commentary for Romans 16:22).

When and where was Galatians written?

Paul visited the Galatian churches on his second and third missionary journeys (see Acts 16:6; 18:23). Paul likely wrote his Epistle to the Galatians while traveling through Macedonia during his third missionary journey, about A.D. 57. The book of Romans was also written during Paul’s third missionary journey, and similarities between the content, organization, and style of Galatians and Romans have led scholars to believe that the two epistles were written during the same time period. There are some commentators, however, who believe that the events recorded in Galatians 2:1–10 happened before the Jerusalem conference (held in A.D. 49; see Acts 15); they propose that Galatians may have been written as early as A.D. 48 or 49.

To whom was Galatians written and why?

Galatia was a region in north-central Asia Minor, whose population had immigrated from western Europe (modern France), where they had been known as Gauls. Paul visited cities in Galatia on his second and third missionary journeys. While some scholars think that Galatians was addressed to Saints in the cities Paul visited on these journeys, other scholars think Paul may have been writing to Saints in the cities he visited on his first missionary journey—cities such as Lystra, Iconium, Derbe, and Antioch (in Pisidia). These cities, with the exception of Iconium, were part of the Roman province of Galatia but were popularly regarded as being part of Pisidia or Lycaonia (see Bible Dictionary, “Galatia”).

Paul wrote to the Saints in Galatia, deeply concerned that they were straying from the Lord by following the teachings of some who sought to “pervert the gospel” (see Galatians 1:6–7). Details in the letter make clear that these people were Jewish Christians—sometimes referred to as *Judaizers* by New Testament commentators—who were teaching Gentile Christians the false doctrine that they had to be circumcised and observe the ritual requirements of the law of Moses in order to be saved (see Galatians 6:12; see also Acts 15:1; the commentaries for Acts 15:1–5 and for Acts 15:1, 5, 24). Some Galatian Saints had embraced the teachings of these people (see Galatians 4:10).

Paul’s main purposes in writing the Epistle to the Galatians included (1) defending himself against the accusations of the false teachers who opposed him; (2) teaching that all people, whether Jew or Gentile, are saved by the Atonement of Jesus Christ by placing their faith in Jesus Christ, not by performing the works of the law of Moses; (3) clarifying the role of the law of Moses in God’s plan; (4) distinguishing between the old covenant God made through Moses and the new covenant in Christ; and (5) calling upon the Saints to live by the Spirit.

What are some distinctive features of Galatians?

The book of Galatians stands out as Paul’s most impassioned letter, delivering a sharp rebuke to both the Church members who were straying and the false teachers who were leading them astray. To persuade

the Galatians to return to the true gospel, Paul related his own conversion story, appealed to the example of Abraham, and cited other support from the Old Testament. Galatians contains Paul's earliest written presentation of the doctrine of justification—we are not

justified by the works of the law of Moses but by faith in Jesus Christ. Paul used the verb *justified*—which can be translated as “declared righteous”—more than 20 times in this letter. The epistle compares “the works of the flesh” to “the fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16–25).

Outline

Galatians 1–2 Paul stated that he was writing to the Galatian Saints because they had strayed from the Lord and embraced false teachings. He defended his calling as an Apostle by recounting his initial opposition to the Church and his conversion, by emphasizing that he received revelation directly from God, and by clarifying that his ministry to the Gentiles had been approved by the Apostles. He stated that he had once disagreed with Peter concerning the Gentile Saints. He taught that people are justified not by the works of the

law of Moses but “by the faith of Jesus Christ.”

Galatians 3–4 Paul defended the gospel message. He taught that Abraham was an example of a person who was justified by faith and not by the works of the law of Moses. Through the Atonement, Jesus Christ redeemed mankind from the curse of the law. The purpose of the law of Moses was to be a “schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.” Through faith and baptism Saints receive the blessings of the Atonement, enter the gospel

covenant, become heirs of God through Christ, and are no longer servants but children of God.

Galatians 5–6 Paul called upon the Saints to live in the liberty and spirit of the gospel covenant: “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). Paul set forth the characteristics of one who lives a carnal, or fleshly, existence as opposed to the attributes of one who possesses the Holy Ghost. Saints should bear one another's burdens and not be weary in well doing. We reap what we sow.



Ruins of Antioch (in Pisidia), one of the locations Paul may have referred to when he wrote to “the churches of Galatia” (Galatians 1:2).

Introduction and Timeline for Galatians

Paul reproved the Saints in Galatia for embracing the falsehood that Gentile Saints had to observe the rituals of the law of Moses (see Galatians 1:6–7; 3:1–3; 5:2–4; 6:12; see also Acts 15:1–31). He defended his calling as an Apostle by declaring that he taught the true gospel of Jesus Christ, that he had received revelation from God, and that his ministry to the Gentiles had been approved by the Apostles in Jerusalem (see Galatians 1:1, 11–24; 2:1–9). Followers of Jesus Christ, both Jews and Gentiles, are justified not by the works and rituals of the law of Moses “but by the faith of Jesus Christ” (Galatians 2:16). Paul supported this doctrine by citing the example of Abraham (see Galatians 3:6–18), teaching of the redemption made possible through the death of Jesus Christ (see Galatians 3:13), and explaining that the law of Moses had been given as a “schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ” (Galatians 3:24). Those who have faith in Jesus Christ and are baptized become Abraham’s seed (see Galatians

3:26–4:7). Paul called upon the Saints to live by the Spirit and to stand fast in the liberty of the gospel (see Galatians 4:21–6:18).



Paul wrote his Epistle to the Galatians about A.D. 57, and perhaps as early as A.D. 48 or 49.

Commentary for Galatians

Galatians 1:1–7. “Ye Are So Soon Removed . . . unto Another Gospel”

Paul typically began his epistles with words of gratitude and praise for the Saints he was addressing, even when they were in need of correction (see 1 Corinthians 1:4–13). His Epistle to the Galatians lacks any expressions of thanksgiving or praise; rather, Paul immediately confronted the Galatian Saints with the charge of following false teachers (see Galatians 1:6–7; 4:9). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described the circumstances in Galatia:

“[Paul’s epistles are] written to answer the questions and solve the problems of specific groups of saints. And in the case of the Galatians, the problem is apostasy. These Galatians are Gentile converts. They are now being contaminated by Jewish-Christians who tell them they must also be circumcised and live the law of Moses to be saved. Paul’s purpose is to call them back to Christ and his gospel.

“Galatians is thus written to people who are losing the true faith, who are adopting false doctrines and ordinances, who are being overcome by the world, who are commingling the dead law of Moses with the living word which is in Christ” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 2:455).

President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) quoted Paul’s warnings to the Galatian Saints, found in Galatians 1:6–12, and then declared:

“Today those warnings are just as applicable as they were in that day in which they were given.

“There are some as wolves among us. By that, I mean some who profess membership in this church who are not sparing the flock. And among our own membership, men are arising speaking perverse things. Now *perverse* means diverting from the right or correct, and being obstinate in the wrong, willfully, in order to draw the weak and unwary members of the Church away after them.

“And as the apostle Paul said, it is likewise a marvel to us today, as it was in that day, that some members are so soon removed from those who taught them the gospel and are removed from the true teachings of the gospel of Christ” (“Admonitions for the Priesthood of God,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1973, 105).

Galatians 1:8–10. “An Angel from Heaven”

Paul’s teachings recorded in Galatians 1:8–10 are sometimes used erroneously to argue against visions and angels and preaching a restored gospel. The true gospel is preached by authorized Apostles, as Paul was; it is grounded in “the grace of Christ” (Galatians 1:6; compare 2 Nephi 2:8; 10:24); it is grounded in personal

testimony; it encompasses all of Paul's teachings. If an angel comes to divert people away from this gospel (see Alma 30:53), then that angel should be ignored. But scripture shows that several angels came to restore the fulness of the gospel, as is the case with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (see Revelation 14:6).

Galatians 1:11–2:10. Paul's Conversion

Paul's account of his conversion emphasized that his calling and his teachings were "not of men" but by "the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:1, 11–12) and that he acted under the approval of the presiding Church leaders (see Galatians 2:2, 9). Some of what is recorded in Galatians 1:11–2:10 is found only in Galatians (Paul's sojourn in Arabia, his return to Damascus, his journey to Jerusalem after three years, and the Apostles he met there). For more details on the events from Paul's life, see the chart "Chronology of Events in Paul's Life and Ministry" in the commentary for Acts 9:23–26.

Galatians 2:1–5. Judaizers Desire to Continue Circumcision

Galatians 2:1 records a journey Paul took to Jerusalem to meet with Church leaders, and Titus traveled with him. Titus, who was a Greek, did not have to be circumcised, although some Judaizers wanted all Gentiles to be circumcised in order to continue to obey the rituals of the law of Moses. The Joseph Smith Translation clarifies: "*There were some brought in by false brethren unawares, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage*" (Joseph Smith Translation, Galatians 2:4 [in Galatians 2:4, footnote a]). These spies who were brought in by false brethren desired to force Christians such as Titus to give up their "liberty" in the gospel and return to the "bondage" of the law of Moses.

Galatians 2:11–16. Paul's Confrontation with Peter

In order to emphasize to the Gentile converts in Galatia that they did not need to be circumcised, Paul recounted a confrontation with Peter, the chief Apostle. After a meeting in Jerusalem (see Galatians 2:1), Peter visited the Saints in Antioch (in Pisidia), where Paul was staying. While there, Peter began to dine with the Gentile Saints, but he stopped doing so when a group of Jewish Christians arrived from Jerusalem. He feared that the visitors would find his association with the Gentile Saints offensive (see Galatians 2:12). In many cultures of the ancient world, including the Jewish culture, dining with others affirmed a bond of fellowship

and loyalty (see Mark 2:15–16; Acts 10:28). To some Jewish Christians, the cultural tradition of maintaining separation from Gentiles was more important than the Christian bond they shared with Gentile Saints. This was unacceptable to Paul. He taught that among the followers of Christ, there was to be "neither Jew nor Greek, . . . for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). Paul felt that Peter's withdrawal from the Gentile Saints implied that they could not enjoy fellowship with Church members like Peter unless they lived "as do the Jews" (Galatians 2:14).

It is important to remember that we have only Paul's account of this confrontation and that Paul acknowledged that Peter's ministry was primarily to the Jews (see Galatians 2:7–8).

"In defense of the chief Apostle, however, one should recall that Peter was the leader of a relatively small church that was composed of two emotionally fragile factions; the situation was delicate. The Jewish Christians, on the one hand, did not appreciate the reluctance of some Gentiles to submit to the regulations of the Mosaic law, especially circumcision. Paul and his followers, on the other hand, were not worried about offending the feelings of the Jewish Christians who still held fast to the traditions of the law of Moses. Peter the prophet, naturally, loved and was concerned about both Jewish and Gentile members of the Church.

"It was a no-win situation for Peter. If he continued eating with the Gentiles, he would offend the visiting group of Jewish Christians. If he departed, he would offend Paul and the Gentile Christians in Antioch. No compromise was possible. Either way, he was going to hurt some feelings. Maybe Peter felt that an offended Paul would still remain true, while an offended group of Jewish Christians would potentially influence many others to dissent or leave the young church" (Frank F. Judd Jr., "The Jerusalem Conference: The First Council of the Christian Church," *Religious Educator*, vol. 12, no. 1 [2011], 67; rsc.byu.edu).

Conspicuously absent from Galatians 2 is any reference to the Jerusalem conference held in A.D. 49 (see Acts 15). Paul was a participant in that conference, and he later shared the decision of that conference with those to whom he ministered (see Acts 15:30; 16:4). Since Paul made no mention of the conference or the letters describing the decision to take the gospel to the Gentiles, some experts believe that the experience described in Galatians 2:11–21 occurred prior to the Jerusalem conference.

Galatians 2:15–16. Justified “by the Faith of Jesus Christ”

Paul identified the essential truth that made clear why the Gentile Saints should not be excluded from dining with Jewish Saints. Both groups were justified (pardoned from punishment for sin) by placing their faith in Jesus Christ, not by performing the works of the law of Moses. Peter himself expressed a similar view at the Jerusalem council (see Acts 15:7–11). For more information about justification, see the commentary for Romans 1:16–17, and for insight on the phrase “by the faith of Jesus Christ,” see the commentary for Romans 3:22.

Often when we speak of justification we also speak about sanctification. **Elder D. Todd Christofferson** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained how these doctrines are related but also separate:

“We may appropriately speak of one who is justified as pardoned, without sin, or guiltless. For example, ‘Whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold *guiltless* before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world’ (3 Ne. 27:16; emphasis added). Yet glorious as the remission of sins is, the Atonement accomplishes even more. That ‘more’ is expressed by Moroni:

“‘And again, if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye *sanctified* in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot’ (Moro. 10:33; emphasis added).

“To be sanctified through the blood of Christ is to become clean, pure, and holy. If justification removes the punishment for past sin, then sanctification removes the stain or effects of sin” (“Justification and Sanctification,” *Ensign*, June 2001, 20, 22; see also Moses 6:59–60).

Galatians 2:16 has sometimes been misunderstood to mean that salvation results only from our faith in Jesus Christ and that works of righteousness are not necessary for salvation. It is important to understand this verse in context. Here, and in most places in Paul’s writings, the word *works* does not refer generally to good deeds or efforts to live the gospel—our obedience. Each time the word *works* appears in Paul’s discussion in Galatians 2–3, it is part of the phrase “works of the law,” meaning the observances of the law of Moses, such as the rite of circumcision, dietary restrictions, or holy days (see the commentary for Romans 3:27–31). So Paul’s meaning is that the works of the law of Moses are not necessary for our salvation.

Nevertheless, it is also true that our “works”—understood as our efforts to live the commandments of the gospel—do not justify us or earn us salvation. We are ultimately saved by the grace of Jesus Christ (see Ephesians 2:8–9; 2 Nephi 25:23). **President Dallin H. Oaks** of the First Presidency referred to another one of Paul’s statements in order to correct the inaccurate perception that we can be saved by our works alone:

“The Apostle Paul wrote that we should ‘work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling.’ (Phil. 2:12.) Could that familiar expression mean that the sum total of our own righteousness will win us salvation and exaltation? Could some of us believe that our heavenly parentage and our divine destiny allow us to pass through mortality and attain eternal life solely on our own merits?

“On the basis of what I have heard, I believe that some of us, some of the time, say things that can create that impression. We can forget that keeping the commandments, which is necessary, is not sufficient. As Nephi said, we must labor diligently to persuade everyone ‘to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.’ (2 Ne. 25:23.) . . .

“. . . After all our obedience and good works, we cannot be saved from the effect of our sins without the grace extended by the atonement of Jesus Christ” (“What Think Ye of Christ?” *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 66–67).

Galatians 2:18–20; 3:10–11, 22. “I Am Crucified with Christ: Nevertheless I Live”

Paul’s statement, “If I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor” (Galatians 2:18), refers to the prospect of turning back to his former life, which was based on observing the law of Moses, and leaving his new life based on faith in the Savior. If Paul had done this, he would have made himself a transgressor because it is not possible to do perfectly “all things which are written in the book of the law” (Galatians 3:10). He knew that no man can be justified by the law alone (see Galatians 3:10–11, 22). Though Paul apparently still followed certain practices of the law of Moses (see Acts 16:1–3; 18:18; 21:26), it was no longer the basis for his relationship with God, and its practices were not required for exaltation. His faith in Jesus Christ had transformed his life so completely that he described his old life as dead and declared that he was living a new life in Christ (see Galatians 2:18–20).

Elder Robert L. Backman of the Seventy explained that it is through total surrender to the Savior that we find the new life He has for us:

“What Christ desires from each of us is surrender, complete and total—a voluntary gift of trust, faith, and love. C. S. Lewis captured the spirit of this surrender:

“‘Christ says, “Give me All. I don’t want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work: I want You. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half-measures are any good. I don’t want to cut off a branch here and a branch there, I want to have the whole tree down. . . . Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires which you think innocent as well as the ones you think wicked—the whole outfit. I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you Myself: my own will shall become yours.”’ (*Mere Christianity*, New York: Collier Books, 1960, p. 167)” (“Jesus the Christ,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 10).

For help understanding Paul’s reference to Abraham as an example of justification by faith, see the commentaries for Romans 4 and for Romans 4:18–22.

Galatians 3:7–9, 16–19, 29. “Abraham’s Seed, and Heirs According to the Promise”

To help the Gentile Christians in Galatia understand that they did not need to follow the practices of the law of Moses to inherit God’s blessings, Paul taught that “they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham” (Galatians 3:7; see also verses 8–9, 16–19, 29).

The Bible Dictionary teaches that “those of non-Israelite lineage, commonly known as Gentiles, are adopted into the house of Israel and become heirs of the covenant and the seed of Abraham through the ordinances of the gospel (Gal. 3:26–29)” (Bible Dictionary, “Abraham, covenant of”). All of Abraham’s seed are promised exaltation if they are faithful. **President James E. Faust** (1920–2007) of the First Presidency explained:

“What does it mean to be the seed of Abraham? Scripturally it has a deeper meaning than being his literal descendants. The Lord made a covenant with Abraham, the great patriarch, that all nations would be blessed through him [see Genesis 18:18]. Any man or woman can claim the blessings of Abraham. They become his seed and heirs to the promised blessings by accepting the gospel, being baptized, entering into temple marriage, being faithful in keeping their covenants, and helping to carry the gospel to all the nations of the earth.

“. . . As Paul said, ‘And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise’ [Galatians 3:29]” (“The Key of the Knowledge of God,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 54–55).

Galatians 3:8. Did Saints before Christ Have the Gospel Preached to Them?

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) taught that the fulness of the gospel was indeed taught to Abraham, as it was to all the righteous Saints who lived before the time of the Savior:

“All that were ever saved, were saved through the power of this great plan of redemption, as much before the coming of Christ as since. . . . Abraham offered sacrifice, and notwithstanding this, had the Gospel preached to him [see Galatians 3:8]. That the offering of sacrifice was only to point the mind forward to Christ, we infer from these remarkable words of Jesus to the Jews: ‘Your Father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad’ [John 8:56]. . . . We conclude that whenever the Lord revealed Himself to men in ancient days, and commanded them to offer sacrifice to Him, that it was done that they might look forward in faith to the time of His coming, and rely upon the power of that atonement for a remission of their sins” (in *History of the Church*, 2:16–17).

Adam and Eve are another example of ancient Saints who offered up animal sacrifices to the Lord while also being taught the gospel of Jesus Christ (see Moses 5:5–8; 6:50–66).

Galatians 3:10–11

In verses 10 and 11, Paul taught why no one can be justified by the law. Why is the word *all* in verse 10 important in teaching this concept? How does this word help explain the first statement in verse 11? What do verses 10–11 teach about our need for the Savior, Jesus Christ?

Galatians 3:13. Christ Was “Made a Curse for Us”

Some Jews believed that Jesus could not be the Messiah because he had been crucified or, in other words, hung on a tree (see Galatians 3:13; Acts 5:30; 10:39; 1 Peter 2:24). They referred to a passage in Deuteronomy stating that a criminal who was put to death by being hung on a tree was “accursed of God” (Deuteronomy 21:22–23). According to this way of thinking, Jesus had to be regarded as cursed by God. But Paul showed another way of looking at the concept of being “cursed”



"The People, Beholding the Things That Were Done, Smote Their Breasts,"
by James Tissot (see Luke 23:48)

as applied to the Savior. He explained that Jesus willingly took our sins upon Himself in order to perform the work of redemption, thus becoming "cursed" in our place: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, *being made a curse for us*: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Galatians 3:13; italics added).

Galatians 3:14–16. The Blessings of Abraham Come through Jesus Christ

The blessings of Abraham were first offered to his literal posterity—the house of Israel. In New Testament times and today, the blessings of Abraham are also offered to the Gentiles (see 3 Nephi 20:25–27). Because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, all who accept His gospel are entitled to the blessings of Abraham (see Romans 9:6–8; Galatians 3:27–29; 2 Nephi 30:2; D&C 84:33–34). These blessings can be summarized as receiving a land of inheritance (see Genesis 13:14–15; Abraham 2:6), having posterity as numerous as the dust of the earth (see Genesis 13:16; 15:5), receiving the priesthood and the gospel (see Abraham 2:11), and ultimately receiving eternal life (see Abraham 2:11). The fulness of these blessings can be received only in the eternities to come as we receive an eternal inheritance in the celestial kingdom.

Galatians 3:19–25. "Wherefore Then Serveth the Law?"

After teaching that the performances of the law of Moses do not justify us before God, Paul explained why God gave the law of Moses to Israel (see Galatians 3:19–25). The law was a temporary measure given to Israel by God because of Israel's transgression. It was a "schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ" and would last only until Christ came (Galatians 3:24). One way the law of Moses would have prepared Israel to receive Christ was to cause people to realize that they could not keep the law perfectly and therefore needed a Savior (see Romans 3:20, 23–24; Galatians 3:22). The Book of Mormon prophet Abinadi gave a very clear explanation of the purpose of the law of Moses, found in Mosiah 13:29–30.

The Joseph Smith Translation provides insight into why the law of Moses was given and explains that Jesus Christ is the "mediator of life":

"Wherefore then, the law was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made in the law given to Moses, who was ordained by the hand of angels to be a mediator of this first covenant, (the law.)"

"Now this mediator was not a mediator of the new covenant; but there is one mediator of the new covenant, who is Christ, as it is written in the law concerning the promises made to Abraham and his seed. Now Christ is the mediator of life; for this is the promise which God made unto Abraham" (Joseph Smith Translation, Galatians 3:19–20 [in the Bible appendix]).

Galatians 3:24–25. "We Are No Longer under a Schoolmaster"

Elder Paul V. Johnson of the Seventy taught that the problem Paul addressed in Galatians teaches us about the importance of accepting changes the Lord makes in His kingdom:

"Our willingness to accept change in the kingdom helps the Lord hasten His work (see D&C 88:73). Resistance to inspired change hinders progress of the kingdom. For example, in the last half of the New Testament a major challenge the Church faced was the issue of gentile converts being assimilated as Christians. This issue surfaces in the book of Acts and is a theme in many of Paul's epistles. The problem stemmed from the fact that many Jewish Christians felt that gentile converts should be required to adhere to the ceremonial law of Moses. Even Peter's dramatic revelation in the case of Cornelius, that the gospel should be taught to the Gentiles (see Acts 10–11), did not wipe the slate clean. And even after a special council in Jerusalem decided that the gentile converts need not be subject to the law and an epistle was written explaining this decision, the issue remained a source of contention and division (see Acts 15). This was a major change for the Church, and many members struggled with it.

"... Many Jews, and even Jewish Christians, ... had lost sight of the intent and proper position of the law. One reason for this was the unauthorized addition of requirements and traditions around the law that helped obscure its real intent. These additions and traditions were no longer a 'schoolmaster ... unto Christ' (Galatians 3:24), 'pointing our souls to him' (Jacob 4:5), but rather were so burdensome and consuming that many Jews looked 'beyond the mark' (Jacob 4:14)

and put the perverted law in place of the Lawgiver Himself. . . .

“. . . I hope when we face change in the kingdom we can be like Paul and help foster that change rather than reacting like those who fought the change and hindered the progress of the work” (“Responding Appropriately to Change” [address to CES religious educators, Feb. 8, 2013], 1).

Galatians 3:26–27. Faith and Baptism

Paul’s words found in Galatians 3:26–27 show that faith in Jesus Christ is linked to baptism. “The children of God” that Paul mentioned are those who have entered into a covenant relationship with God by being baptized. For further information on being “children of God,” see the commentary for Romans 8:14–16.

In the phrase “put on Christ,” the verb translated as “put on” comes from the Greek word *enduō*, which means “to endow.” The Greek word means to clothe oneself and in this phrase means to symbolically “put on” the attributes and enabling power of Jesus Christ (see also Ephesians 4:22, 24; 6:11; Colossians 3:9–12). Similarly, when faithful members of the Church receive their temple “endowment,” they covenant to take upon themselves the attributes of a Christlike life.

Galatians 3:28–29. “One in Christ Jesus”



Christ in the Midst, by Judith A. Mehr. Depicts the Savior surrounded by people of various races and nationalities.

Paul taught that the cultural separations that existed between Jews and Gentiles, slaves and masters, or men and women should no longer divide people in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Each member’s covenant relationship with Jesus Christ creates unity among all members (see Galatians 3:28 and the commentary for Ephesians 2:12–14, 18–19). Through baptism into Jesus Christ’s Church, we become part of “Abraham’s seed” and “heirs according to the promise”

given to the ancient patriarch (Galatians 3:29), as the Lord declared in modern revelation through the Prophet Joseph Smith (see D&C 86:9; Abraham 2:6–11).

President Dallin H. Oaks explained how the Church today, like the New Testament Church, extends the invitation to all to come unto Christ:

“Jesus and His Apostles did not attempt to make Gentiles into Jews (see Romans 2:11; Galatians 2:11–16; 3:1–29; 5:1–6; 6:15). They taught Gentiles and Jews, attempting to make each of them into followers of Christ.

“Similarly, the present-day servants of the Lord do not attempt to make Filipinos or Asians or Africans into Americans. The Savior invites all to come unto Him (see 2 Nephi 26:33; D&C 43:20), and His servants seek to persuade all [people] to become Latter-day Saints” (“Repentance and Change,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2003, 39).

President James E. Faust explained how there can be both diversity and unity in the Church:

“As we move into more and more countries in the world, we find a rich cultural diversity in the Church. Yet everywhere there can be a ‘unity of the faith’ [Ephesians 4:13]. Each group brings special gifts and talents to the table of the Lord. We can all learn much of value from each other. But each of us should also voluntarily seek to enjoy all of the unifying and saving covenants, ordinances, and doctrines of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. . . .

“We do not lose our identity in becoming members of this church. We become heirs to the kingdom of God, having joined the body of Christ and spiritually set aside some of our personal differences to unite in a greater spiritual cause. We say to all who have joined the Church, keep all that is noble, good, and uplifting in your culture and personal identity. However, under the authority and power of the keys of the priesthood, all differences yield as we seek to become heirs to the kingdom of God, unite in following those who have the keys of the priesthood, and seek the divinity within us” (“Heirs to the Kingdom of God,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 62).

Galatians 4:1–9. “Thou Art No More a Servant, but a Son”

There are some ways in which our covenant relationship with God is like the relationship of a *servant* to his *master* (see Luke 17:7–10; Mosiah 2:17, 21; 5:13). But Paul taught the Galatians that our relationship with God is better understood as that of a *child* to a *father* (see Galatians 4:6–9). He declared to the Galatians that being a “son” in the gospel covenant was far better than being a servant to the false gods they had worshipped before they accepted the truth. In the parable of the prodigal son, the Savior taught that our Father in Heaven wants us to be His children in the gospel covenant. The parable teaches that the wayward son believed he had become

permanently unworthy to be called his father's son and asked to be his *servant*, but the father accepted him back as his *son* (see Luke 15:17–24).

Galatians 4:6–7. "Abba, Father" and "an Heir of God through Christ"

For insight on the phrase "Abba, Father," see the commentary for Romans 8:15, and for insight on the phrase "heirs of God," see the commentary for Romans 8:17.

Galatians 4:9–15. Loss of Joy

Paul reminded the Galatian Saints of how well they had received him earlier (see Galatians 4:13–15). The question at the beginning of verse 15 could be paraphrased in this way: "What has happened to the joy you once spoke of?" They had once received Paul and his teachings with great happiness, as if he were an angel, but that happiness was now gone. The Jewish-Christian teachers who had led the Galatian Saints astray had opposed Paul and imposed the burdens of the Mosaic law upon the people, leading to a loss of happiness. The gospel of Jesus Christ, on the other hand, is meant to bring lasting joy (see John 15:11; Galatians 5:22).

The Joseph Smith Translation helps explain the meaning of Galatians 4:12: "Brethren, I beseech you *to be perfect as I am perfect; for I am persuaded as ye have a knowledge of me, ye have not injured me at all by your sayings*" (Joseph Smith Translation, Galatians 4:12). Paul asked the Galatian Saints to follow his example of someone who had lived the gospel and been greatly blessed.

Galatians 4:21–31. The Allegory of the Two Wives and Sons of Abraham

As recorded in Galatians 4:21–31, Paul drew a comparison between Abraham's two wives and two sons. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained this comparison:

"Paul here uses the life of Abraham as an allegory to dramatize the superiority of the gospel over the law of Moses—a mode of teaching designed to drive his doctrine home anew each time his hearers think of Abraham and his life.

"Hagar, the bondwoman, bore Ishmael; and Sarah, the freewoman, brought forth Isaac. Ishmael was born after the flesh, while Isaac, as a child of promise, came forth after the Spirit. Hagar is thus made to represent the old covenant, the law of Moses, the covenant under which men were subject to the bondage of sin; while Sarah symbolizes the new covenant, the gospel, the covenant under which men are made free, free from bondage and sin through Christ.

"Mt. Sinai, from whence the law came, and Jerusalem, from whence it is now administered, symbolize the law, and their children are in bondage. But the spiritual Jerusalem, the heavenly city of which the saints shall be citizens, is symbolized by Sarah, and she is the mother of freemen. Sarah, who was so long barren, as our spiritual mother, has now made us all, like Isaac, heirs of promise.

"But it is now, as it was then, those born after the flesh war against those born of the Spirit. And as God rejected Ishmael and accepted Isaac, so does he now reject those who cleave to the law of Moses and accept those who turn to Christ" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:477–78).

Paul's teachings about the two covenants provided a foundation for his teachings, found in Galatians 5, that being part of the new covenant means being led to do good by the Spirit, not by the law. Paul's contrasting images of bondage and freedom in the allegory of the two covenants also laid the groundwork for his teachings about liberty, found in Galatians 5:1, 13.

Abraham's Two Wives and Sons: Symbols of the Old and New Covenants	
Hagar (Agar) and Ishmael	Sarah and Isaac
Hagar, a bondwoman (servant), bore a son, Ishmael, naturally—described by Paul as "after the flesh" (Galatians 4:22–23).	Sarah, a freewoman, bore a son, Isaac, miraculously—a son of "promise" (Galatians 4:22–23).
Paul used Hagar and Ishmael as symbols for the law of Moses, which was received on Mount Sinai, and for the earthly city of Jerusalem. The law of Moses led to bondage, and Jerusalem was in bondage to the Romans (see Galatians 4:24–25).	Paul used Sarah and Isaac as symbols for the freedom of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the heavenly city of Jerusalem, which is free from bondage (see Galatians 4:24–26).
Jews under the old covenant—the law of Moses—are children of bondage. They continually persecute the Christians, just as Hagar and Ishmael persecuted Sarah and Isaac (see Galatians 4:24, 29).	Christians who embrace the new covenant—the gospel of Jesus Christ—are freed from the bondage of Mosaic rituals and are heirs to the promises made to Abraham (see Galatians 4:24, 30–31).

Galatians 5:1, 13. "Christ Hath Made Us Free"

In Galatians 5:1 Paul described the old covenant—the law of Moses—as a “yoke of bondage.” Elsewhere in the scriptures, *bondage* usually described the captivity of sin, but Paul used the word to describe the limitations and burdens of the law of Moses. By contrast, the Savior taught that His yoke was “easy”—a “light” burden—and that those who took His yoke upon them would “find rest unto [their] souls” (Matthew 11:28–30). Paul taught that the liberty of Christ meant that disciples were free to be led by the Spirit and were not constrained by the law (see Galatians 5:22–23).

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) explained that when our religious observance is not done “mechanically” but “because of our love for the Lord, in complete freedom and faith, we narrow our distance from him and our relationship to him becomes intimate. We are released from the bondage of legalism, and we are touched by the spirit and feel a oneness with God” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1964, 36).

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) explained how the gospel of Jesus Christ makes us spiritually free: “True freedom lies in obedience to the counsels of God. . . . The gospel is not a philosophy of repression, as so many regard it. It is a plan of freedom that gives discipline to appetite and direction to behavior. Its fruits are sweet and its rewards are liberal” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1965, 78).

Paul admonished the Galatian Saints not to become “entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Galatians 5:1). While today we do not worry about becoming entangled with the law of Moses, we “sometimes either consciously or unwittingly bind ourselves to the things of the world. As we do so, we place ourselves in a comparable position to Paul’s opponents in Galatia. . . . Christian liberty does not come from an absence of law; it comes from willingly yoking ourselves to Christ. The difficulty comes when we refuse to give up our other yokes, as did Paul’s opponents in Galatia. The yoke that they clung to was the law of Moses.

“In our day, our yoke, our law of Moses, is anything that prevents or impedes our total commitment to Christ and His gospel” (Gaye Strathearn, “Law and Liberty in Galatians 5–6,” in *Go Ye into All the World: Messages of the New Testament Apostles* [2002], 70–71; rsc.byu.edu).

Galatians 5:2–4. The Galatian Saints Could Not Be Justified by the Law of Moses

Paul explained to the Galatian Saints the error of relying on the law of Moses for salvation and dismissing faith in Jesus Christ. If they did this, Christ’s Atonement would profit them nothing and would be of no effect (see Galatians 5:2–5). When Paul addressed “whosoever of you are justified by the law” (Galatians 5:4), he probably spoke with irony, since he had already made clear that no one can be justified by the law (see Galatians 3:11). The sense of Paul’s words might be, “You who *think you can be* justified by the law.” For such people, Paul taught, “Christ is become of no effect” (Galatians 5:4). Paul’s statement “Ye are fallen from grace” (Galatians 5:4) means that if people try to obtain salvation only by observing the law of Moses, they have fallen from divine favor.

Galatians 5:16–25. “Walk in the Spirit”

Paul taught that we should “walk in the Spirit” and that if we do, we will overcome “the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16). Paul’s words warned against participating in “works of the flesh” (see Galatians 5:19–21). These sins fall into four general categories. (1) Sexual sins. “Fornication” refers to any immoral sexual relationship; “lasciviousness” refers to unbridled or excessive lust. (2) Sins from the religious realm, such as idolatry and witchcraft. (3) Sins against other persons. “Variance” can be interpreted as discord and is an outgrowth of “hatred”; “emulations” are actions carried out in order to equal or be superior to another, often out of jealousy. (4) Sins associated with alcohol: “drunkenness” and “revellings.” Paul warned that those who habitually participate in these sins “shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:21).

For insight on Paul’s teachings about how the Spirit enables us to overcome the flesh, see the commentaries for Romans 7:14–8:13 and for Romans 8:1–13.

Galatians 5:22–23

When have you felt the Spirit working within you to help you develop the qualities described in these verses? What could you do to invite the Spirit to help you further develop these qualities?

Galatians 5:22–25. “The Fruit of the Spirit”

Paul gave the Galatians several examples of the “fruit of the Spirit” (see Galatians 5:22–25). **Elder Dennis E. Simmons** of the Seventy gave further examples of the “fruit of the Spirit” and identified where these blessings are described in the scriptures:

“Paul described the fruit of the Spirit; that is, what the Spirit produces, ‘The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness,’ and he observed, ‘Against such there is no law’ (Gal. 5:22–23). In other words, the Spirit can penetrate anything. No law can be passed which will preclude the Spirit from doing His work with an obedient follower of Christ. The scriptures teach us that the Spirit:

- “Enlightens the mind (see D&C 6:15);
- “‘Leadeth to do good— . . . to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously’ (D&C 11:12);
- “Fills the soul with joy (see D&C 11:13; Mosiah 4:20);
- “Reveals the ‘truth of all things’ (Moro. 10:5);
- “Bears record of Father and Son (see D&C 20:27);
- “Knows all things (see D&C 42:17);
- “Convinces (see D&C 100:8);
- “Gives knowledge (see D&C 121:26);
- “Speaks in a ‘still small voice’ (1 Ne. 17:45);
- “Teaches a man to pray (see 2 Ne. 32:8);
- “Brings about mighty change (see Mosiah 5:2);
- “Gives assurances (see Alma 58:11);
- “Fills with ‘hope and perfect love’ (Moro. 8:26);
- “Gives liberty (see 2 Cor. 3:17);
- “Comforts (see John 14:16);
- “Speaks peace (Alma 58:11);
- “Is available (see D&C 6:14)” (“His Peace,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 32).

Galatians 6:7–9. “Whatsoever a Man Soweth, That Shall He Also Reap”

Paul taught that God cannot be mocked, for the law of the harvest applies to spiritual things as well as physical (see Galatians 6:7–9). He admonished that we “not be weary in well doing” (Galatians 6:9), for we will reap the blessings of our righteous actions, as well

as the spiritually destructive results of sinful choices (see Mosiah 7:30–31; D&C 6:33). **Elder L. Tom Perry** (1922–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke of the blessings assured by the law of the harvest: “[The Lord] is bound by his divine law to bless us for our righteousness. . . . [Galatians 6:7–9 is quoted.] May God bless us that we may sow to the Spirit in order that our harvest will be life everlasting” (“As a Man Soweth,” *Ensign*, May 1976, 65).

In an address focused on helping us avoid being deceived by Satan, **President Dallin H. Oaks** explained that the consequences of sin mentioned by Paul reflect divine justice: “If we indulge in drugs or pornography or other evils that the Apostle [Paul] called sowing to the flesh, eternal law dictates that we harvest corruption rather than life eternal. That is the justice of God, and mercy cannot rob justice. If an eternal law is broken, the punishment affixed to that law must be suffered. Some of this can be satisfied by the Savior’s Atonement, but the merciful cleansing of a soiled sinner comes only after repentance (see Alma 42:22–25), which for some sins is a prolonged and painful process” (“Be Not Deceived,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 45).

Points to Ponder

- What are the specific “yokes of bondage” that you think the Lord would want you to avoid? (see Galatians 5:1).
- Think about your private prayers, scripture study, church attendance, service to others, and other religious practices. What does it mean for you to be led by the Spirit in these practices rather than having your actions dictated by laws? (see Galatians 3:2–5).

Suggested Assignments

- Ponder Galatians 2:20. Write a short paper about the ways you have experienced the meaning of Paul’s words in your life. Or write about how you can more fully experience this message in your life.
- Paul taught that cultural differences should not divide followers of Jesus Christ. Write a list of ways you could help prevent divisions in your ward, branch, institute class, or family. Review the Epistle of Galatians, looking for passages about how to avoid divisions among people in these settings. Act on the impressions you receive from the Spirit about how to apply Paul’s teachings.

Ephesians

44

Introduction to the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians

Why study Ephesians?

“Ephesians is an epistle for all the world, for Jew and Gentile, for husband and wife, for parent and child, for master and servant. It was the mind and will of God in Paul’s day; it is the voice of inspiration in our day; it is an epistle of universal appeal and application.

“. . . It contains some of Paul’s best writing, and is a document that deals with fundamentals, with the gospel of God in all its saving glory” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 2:489). The Epistle to the Ephesians reflects great depth in its teachings. Paul’s main theme in this epistle can perhaps best be summarized as the setting aside of the things of this world in order to grow in spiritual knowledge and partake of the unity and fellowship of the Church. In the pages of Ephesians, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints will find many familiar teachings and practices that characterize the Lord’s true Church in every age.

Who wrote Ephesians?

The Epistle to the Ephesians states that its author was the Apostle Paul (see Ephesians 1:1), and Paul’s authorship was accepted by many early Christians.

When and where was Ephesians written?

Paul stated that he was a prisoner at the time he wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians (see Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; 6:20), so Ephesians may have been written during Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome, around A.D. 61 to 63, and perhaps at the same time he wrote the Epistle to Philemon and the Epistle to the Colossians (which bear many similarities to Ephesians). During this time Paul was being held under house arrest, but he had the freedom to receive visitors and teach the gospel (see Acts 28:16–31).

To whom was Ephesians written and why?

In the King James Version, Ephesians 1:1 states that the Epistle to the Ephesians is addressed “to the saints which are at Ephesus”; however, the earliest manuscripts

of Ephesians do not contain the words “which are at Ephesus.” This means that Paul may not have written the epistle specifically to the Ephesians but to several congregations of Saints, including those in Ephesus. Ephesus served as Paul’s headquarters during his third missionary journey (see Acts 19:9–10; 20:31), and he had great affection for these people (see Acts 20:17, 34–38).

In his letter Paul addressed Gentile members of the Church (see Ephesians 2:11) who were perhaps recent converts (see Ephesians 1:15). He wrote to expand the spiritual horizons of those who were already members. His main purposes were to help these converts grow in their spiritual knowledge of God and the Church (see Ephesians 1:15–18; 3:14–19); to promote unity, particularly between Gentile and Jewish Saints (see Ephesians 2:11–22; 4:1–16; 5:19–6:9); and to encourage the Saints to withstand the powers of evil (see Ephesians 4:17–5:18; 6:10–18). Many Saints in Ephesus were living righteously enough to be sealed up to eternal life (see Ephesians 1:13).

Following Peter’s death, John the Revelator became the presiding authority of the Church, and when John moved from Jerusalem to Ephesus, the headquarters of the Church also moved to Ephesus. According to Christian tradition, Mary, the mother of Jesus, spent the remaining years of her life at Ephesus under John’s care (see John 19:27). Ephesus was the first of the seven cities that John wrote to in the book of Revelation (see Revelation 2:1–7).

What are some distinctive features of Ephesians?

Ephesians contains many teachings and ideas that are familiar to Latter-day Saints, including foreordination, the dispensation of the fulness of times, the Holy Spirit of Promise, the importance of prophets and apostles, the idea of one true and unified Church, and the various callings and functions within the organization of the Church. This letter also contains some of the most sublime teachings on the family that are found anywhere in scripture.

Outline

Ephesians 1:1–4:16 Paul wrote of the Saints' foreordination to receive the gospel, sealing by the Holy Spirit of Promise, salvation by grace, the unifying of Gentile and Jewish Saints in the Church, the purpose of the Church, and the Church's organization upon a foundation of prophets

and apostles, with Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone. God will gather all things together in Christ in the dispensation of the fulness of times.

Ephesians 4:17–6:24 Paul encouraged the Saints to apply true doctrine in their daily lives. He encouraged

them to put off the old man (their former sins) and put on Christ. He gave counsel to wives, husbands, children, parents, servants, masters, and congregations. He encouraged Saints to "put on the whole armour of God" (Ephesians 6:11).



Ruins at Ephesus in Turkey

Introduction and Timeline for Ephesians

Paul wanted the Saints to understand the greatness of God's power and to attain the fulness of the blessings that God had in store for them (see Ephesians 1:15–19; 3:16–19). He helped Church members understand that in the premortal world they had been foreordained to accept the gospel and to “be holy” (see Ephesians 1:4–6, 11–12). Paul taught that through Christ's grace, Gentile converts were “no more strangers and foreigners” but Saints in “the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19). In Ephesians, Paul described some of the great purposes for the organization of the Church: apostles, prophets, and others who serve in the Church help perfect the Saints, strengthen the Saints' faith in Jesus Christ, and bring unity to the Church (see Ephesians 4:11–12). Paul taught that following the example of the Savior can bring unity and harmony to our relationships with family members and

others. In Ephesians 6:11, Paul exhorted his readers to be more diligent and obedient, counseling them to “put on the whole armour of God.”



Paul apparently wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians about A.D. 61 to 63 while he was imprisoned in Rome.

Commentary for Ephesians

Ephesians 1:1. “To the Saints”

In his Epistle to the Ephesians, Paul frequently referred to Church members as “saints.” According to the Bible Dictionary, “*saint* is a translation of a Greek word also rendered ‘holy,’ the fundamental idea being that of consecration or separation for a sacred purpose” (Bible Dictionary, “Saint”). By referring to members of the Church as Saints, Paul was teaching that every follower of Jesus Christ is made holy—set apart from the world—through the Atonement and should therefore strive to be a holy person.



Ephesians 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10. “Heavenly Places”

Ephesians contains the only passages in the New Testament that use the phrase translated as “heavenly places” to refer to multiple realms in heaven (see Ephesians 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10). In the latter days, the Lord revealed that heaven consists of three realms (see D&C 76:50–112; 88:14–47). Elsewhere Paul wrote about varying degrees of resurrected glory (see 1 Corinthians 15:40–42) and about his experience of being “caught up to the third heaven” (2 Corinthians 12:2).

Ephesians 1:4–5, 11. “He Hath Chosen Us . . . before the Foundation of the World”

In Ephesians 1:4–5, 11, Paul taught that before the world was created, members of the Church were chosen by God to receive the gospel on earth. This and other New Testament passages support the doctrine of premortal existence (see John 9:2; Romans 8:29; 1 Peter 1:2). The word *predestinated* (Ephesians 1:5, 11) means “appointed beforehand” or “foreordained.” Foreordained blessings are not unconditionally guaranteed but are dependent upon the righteous exercise of agency in this life (see Alma 13:2–3; the commentary for Romans 8:29–30).

Paul taught that those who attain exaltation were predestinated to do so by being “adopted” by God (see Ephesians 1:5), thereby becoming His heirs and receiving an “inheritance” of eternal life (Ephesians 1:11). Jesus Christ is God's only rightful heir. Therefore, to receive



Fulness of Times, by Greg Olsen. During the dispensation of the fulness of times, the Lord will gather together in one all of the keys of previous gospel dispensations (see Ephesians 1:10).

eternal life, we must be adopted through the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ in order to become “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17).

Ephesians 1:6–8. “Redemption through His Blood”

Paul taught that grace, the enabling power to be exalted, is extended by God the Father through His Beloved Son, and it is only through the blood of Jesus Christ that redemption comes.

Ephesians 1:9–10; 3:3–6. What Is Meant by the Term “Mystery of His Will”?

The term “mystery of his will” refers to God’s plans that a person can discover and understand only as they are revealed by God Himself. Paul was apparently speaking of the plan of salvation, a mystery to the world during times of apostasy. Paul indicated that the “mystery of Christ” (Ephesians 3:4) is that the “Gentiles should be fellowheirs” and equal partakers of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:6), an important part of the plan of salvation.

Ephesians 1:9–11. The Dispensation of the Fulness of Times

Paul taught that God would “gather together in one all things in Christ” during the dispensation of the fulness of times (Ephesians 1:10). The Bible Dictionary teaches: “A dispensation of the gospel is a period of time in which the Lord has at least one authorized servant on the earth who bears the holy priesthood and the keys, and who has a divine commission to dispense the gospel to the inhabitants of the earth. When this occurs, the gospel is revealed anew so that people of that dispensation do not have to depend basically on past

dispensations for knowledge of the plan of salvation. There have been many gospel dispensations since the beginning. The Bible suggests at least one dispensation identified with Adam, another with Enoch, another with Noah, and so on with Abraham, Moses, and Jesus with His Apostles in the meridian of time” (Bible Dictionary, “Dispensations”; see also D&C 112:30; 128:18, 20).

The dispensation of the fulness of times is a period of restoration and fulfillment of all the plans, purposes, and promises that God has revealed since the world began. It “will bring to light the things that have been revealed in all former dispensations; also other things that have not been before revealed. He shall send Elijah, the Prophet, etc., and restore all things in Christ” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 510–11).



A still image from the film *The First Vision*. With the appearance of God the Father and Jesus Christ to the boy Joseph Smith, the dispensation of the fulness of times was opened.

According to the Doctrine and Covenants, “it is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fulness of times, which dispensation is now beginning to usher in, that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time” (D&C 128:18). The dispensation of the fulness of times is the

final dispensation, which will prepare the earth for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Elder B. H. Roberts (1857–1933) of the Seventy taught: “This is the dispensation of the fullness of times, and we see running into it, as mighty streams rush into the ocean, all the former dispensations, putting us in touch with them, putting them in touch with us; and we see that God has had but one great purpose in view from the beginning, and that has been the salvation of His children. And now has come the final day, the final dispensation, when truth and light and righteousness must flood the earth” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1904, 73; see also D&C 27:13; 121:26–27; 124:41; 128:18–21).

Ephesians 1:13; 4:30. “Sealed with That Holy Spirit of Promise”

The Holy Spirit of Promise is another name for the Holy Ghost. It is used in reference to the sealing and ratifying power of the Holy Ghost (see D&C 76:53; 132:7).

“The Holy Spirit of Promise . . . confirms as acceptable to God the righteous acts, ordinances, and covenants of men. The Holy Spirit of Promise witnesses to the Father that the saving ordinances have been performed properly and that the covenants associated with them have been kept.

“They who are sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise receive all that the Father has [see Eph. 1:13–14; D&C 76:51–60].

“All covenants and performances must be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise to have force after this life [see D&C 132:7, 18–19, 26]” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Holy Spirit of Promise”; scriptures.lds.org).

When Paul wrote that the Saints had been “sealed with that holy spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1:13), he meant that they had been promised eternal life even though they were still living in mortality. When people are sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise, the Holy Ghost ratifies them as celestial inheritors even though they are mortal. This doctrine is sometimes referred to as having one’s calling and election made sure or receiving the Second Comforter (see 2 Peter 1:4–19; D&C 132:6–7; Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:493–95; *History of the Church*, 3:379–80).

Ephesians 1:13–14. “The Earnest of Our Inheritance”

Paul taught that the gift of the Holy Ghost is “the earnest of our inheritance” (Ephesians 1:14). The word *earnest* here means “a token of what is to come” (see the commentary for 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5). In other

words, “this gift [of the Holy Ghost] is a foretaste of eternal joy and a promise of eternal life” (*Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* [2004], 65). The gifts of the Spirit also act as a foretaste of the eternal rewards that await the faithful in the next life.

We are the “purchased possession” that is bought by the atoning blood of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:14; see also 1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Peter 1:18–19). Just as someone buying a piece of property often makes a token payment (sometimes called earnest money in the financial world) to indicate that he or she is acting in good faith and intends to complete the purchase, God gives us the gift of the Holy Ghost and its attendant peace to assure us that He will ultimately reward us with redemption and exaltation as we live faithfully. Our obedience to God’s commandments and ordinances is the way we show God that we desire to receive the blessings of exaltation that He offers to us.

Ephesians 1:19–23

What do you learn from these verses about the glory and status of Jesus Christ? According to verse 22, what is Jesus Christ’s role in the Church?

Ephesians 2:8–10. “For by Grace Are Ye Saved through Faith . . . unto Good Works”

In Ephesians 2:8–10, Paul discussed the relationship between grace, faith, and good works. Ultimately, salvation comes through the merits of Jesus Christ’s work, not on our own. Paul called followers of Jesus Christ “[God’s] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Ephesians 2:10). This places emphasis on the Lord’s work rather than on our own and teaches that our ability to perform good works stems from the change that the grace of Jesus Christ causes to take place within us when we turn to Him in faith (see also 1 Corinthians 15:10 and Philippians 2:13). Paul taught that we are not saved by either faith or works alone, as both are critical to salvation. Faith and works empower us to receive the merciful blessings of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. For more information on the subject of grace, see the commentary for Romans 3:23–24 and for Romans 4:4, 16; 5:2, 15–21; 6:1–2, 14–15.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained:

“Salvation in all its forms, kinds, and degrees comes by the grace of God. That is, because of his love, mercy, and condescension, God our Father ordained the plan and system of salvation which would ‘bring to pass

the immortality and eternal life of man.’ (Moses 1:39.) Pursuant to this plan he sent his Only Begotten Son into the world to work out the infinite and eternal atoning sacrifice. . . .

“Men are thus saved by grace alone, in the sense of being resurrected; they are saved by grace coupled with obedience, in the sense of gaining eternal life. The gospel plan is to save men in the celestial kingdom, and hence Paul teaches salvation by grace through faith, through obedience, through accepting Christ, through keeping the commandments. Thus Nephi writes, ‘Be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do’ (2 Ne. 25:23), and Moroni records, ‘Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ.’ (Moro. 10:32.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:498–99).

Ephesians 2:11–13. Uncircumcision and Circumcision

The term “uncircumcision” refers to the Gentiles, and “circumcision” refers to the Jews. In Ephesians 2:12–13, Paul emphasized the separation that had existed between the Gentiles and God prior to the time of Jesus Christ. The Gentiles had been “without Christ” and were “aliens” and “strangers,” meaning they were not part of Israel and had not entered into covenants with God. But now that they had entered into the gospel covenant with Jesus Christ, Gentiles who were once “far off” were “made nigh by the blood of Christ.”

Ephesians 2:12–14, 18–19. “The Middle Wall of Partition”

The temple in Jerusalem contained several courts or areas, and only certain types of people could enter each court. Gentiles were permitted to ascend the temple mount and enter the outer court, called the court of the Gentiles. The inner courts of the temple, however, were shielded from Gentile access by a special partition or wall that stood about one meter high. If a Gentile passed beyond this wall, he could be put to death. Archaeologists have discovered two of the marble blocks that made up this barrier, and they contain inscriptions in Greek and Latin that read: “No foreigner is to pass beyond the barriers surrounding the sanctuary. Whoever is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his death which will follow” (Richard Neitzel Holzapfel, Eric D. Huntsman, Thomas A. Wayment, *Jesus Christ and the World of the New Testament* [2006], 160).

Following Paul’s third missionary journey, some Jews in Jerusalem accused Paul of bringing Gentiles beyond the barrier, leading to a riot and ultimately to Paul’s arrest (see Acts 21:27–29; Numbers 1:51).



At the temple in Jerusalem, a partition wall was set up to prevent Gentiles from entering the courts that were forbidden to them.

In Ephesians 2:12–19, Paul spoke about the “wall of partition,” meaning the spiritual barrier that separated Jews from Gentiles and also separated Gentiles from God. These and all other barriers were removed by the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Gentiles who accepted the gospel were no longer to be regarded as aliens, strangers, and foreigners—they were now of “the household of God,” part of God’s covenant people. By accepting the gospel of Jesus Christ through faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, both Jewish and Gentile members of the Church had access to God (see Ephesians 2:18).

In modern times, we enjoy the same blessings when we are baptized and live worthily. The “walls” between us and the Lord are removed, and we gain full access to God’s blessings. We also become members of “the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19).

Ephesians 2:19

What does this verse imply about the responsibility of members of the Church in our day toward those who are new converts or who move into our wards and branches?

Ephesians 2:19–20; 4:11–15. The Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets

Paul compared the members of the Church to a building. Just as a building needs a strong foundation for strength and stability, the Church was “built upon the

foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Ephesians 2:20).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles discussed why a foundation of apostles and prophets is critical to the Church: "The apostolic and prophetic foundation of the Church was to bless in all times, but *especially* in times of adversity or danger, times when we might feel like children, confused or disoriented, perhaps a little fearful, times in which the devious hand of men or the maliciousness of the devil would attempt to unsettle or mislead. . . . In New Testament times, in Book of Mormon times, and in modern times these officers form the foundation stones of the true Church, positioned around and gaining their



"Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Ephesians 2:20).

strength from the chief cornerstone, 'the rock of our Redeemer, who is [Jesus] Christ, the Son of God' [Helaman 5:12]. . . . Such a foundation in Christ was and is always to be a protection in days 'when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you'" ("Prophets, Seers, and Revelators," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 7).

Ephesians 2:20–21. Jesus Christ Is the Chief Cornerstone

The Savior referred to Himself as the stone which the builders had rejected, which had become the "head of the corner" (Matthew 21:42), or in the words of Paul, the "chief corner stone." A cornerstone is a massive stone that is laid at the corner of a foundation to give strength and stability to the entire structure. A cornerstone can also be used to connect two adjoining walls to form a corner. Paul used this imagery to explain that Jesus Christ provides strength and stability to the whole Church and that through Jesus Christ, Jewish and Gentile members of the Church are bound together (see Jacob 4:15–16; Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 28:16). All members become united, "fitly framed together [growing] unto an holy temple in the Lord." All of this is made possible

through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, who is the "chief corner stone" (Ephesians 2:20–21).

Ephesians 3:1–21. "The Mystery of Christ"

Paul wrote about "the mystery of Christ" that had been revealed to him (Ephesians 3:4). Here *mystery* refers to a sacred truth made known by revelation. The mystery Paul wrote about is that both Jews and Gentiles can become heirs of the gospel covenant through Christ. This was a doctrine that "in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men" (see Ephesians 3:3–6). Paul taught that all those who follow Christ take upon themselves His name and become His seed and "heirs of the kingdom of God," just as the Book of Mormon teaches (Mosiah 15:11; see also Mosiah 27:25; Ephesians 3:15; the commentary for Ephesians 1:9–10; 3:3–6). These teachings are evidence of Paul's sincerity and humility (see Ephesians 3:8). His prayer for the Ephesian Saints was that Christ would "dwell in [their] hearts by faith" and that they would come to know the love of Christ (Ephesians 3:17).

Ephesians 3:11–12. Through Jesus Christ We Have Access to God

In Ephesians 3:11–12, Paul taught that through Jesus Christ and our faith in Him, we can "have boldness and access [to God] with confidence" (see also Ephesians 2:18). The word "boldness" can be understood as confidence in the presence of God. Because of the Savior, in this life we can freely approach God the Father through prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, and in the next life we can enter God's presence with confidence (see Hebrews 4:16).

Ephesians 3:19–20

What do these verses teach about God's power? How does this truth affect your willingness to trust in Him?

Ephesians 4:1–6. "One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism"

The word "one" appears seven times in Ephesians 4:4–6. Oneness and unity are important themes in Ephesians and in Paul's other writings. Paul constantly preached about unity and prayed for unity among Church members (see Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 2 Corinthians 13:11). In modern times, the Lord revealed to Joseph Smith that unity is a key law of the celestial kingdom (see D&C 105:3–5). There is only one true Lord, one true faith, one true baptism, and one true Father of all.

Elder Delbert L. Stapley (1896–1978) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke of the critical role Apostles played in maintaining unity and pure doctrine:

“After Jesus put his apostles in charge of the Church anciently, they preached the same unity of doctrine and practiced the same ordinances which Jesus had given them. . . .

“. . . As long as they remained on the earth, functioning under the authority Jesus gave them, unity of doctrine and uniformity of the ordinances prevailed. The gospel message, which they were commanded to take to all the world, was the same to everyone everywhere. People were not taught different gospels and then given a choice. There was only one plan for all.

“Because of the universality of these requirements for salvation, the apostle Paul wrote: ‘There is . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism.’ (Eph. 4:4–5.) . . .

“One church, one authorized ministry, one orthodox gospel doctrine, and one Holy Ghost characterized the church of Jesus Christ in His time. ‘For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.’ (1 Cor. 14:33.) Thus God’s revelation to leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ was reasonable, consistent, and unified.

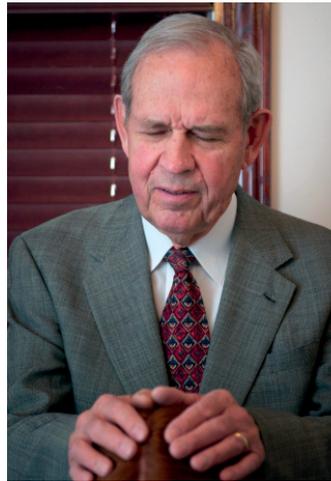
“It was only after the death of Christ’s apostles that revelation ceased. The pure doctrines Christ taught became diluted with the philosophy of the world, and profane innovations appeared in the ordinances of the church. Eventually, that which had once been clear and understandable became mythical and confusing” (“What Constitutes the True Church,” *Ensign*, May 1977, 22).

Ephesians 4:8. “Jesus Led Captivity Captive”

Paul said that when Jesus Christ ascended to heaven, “he led captivity captive” (Ephesians 4:8). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained the meaning of this phrase: “[Jesus Christ] overcame death; all men were the captives of death until Christ captured the captivator and made death subject to him, or, as the Psalm from which Paul is quoting continues to say, ‘He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.’ (Ps. 68:20.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:509).

Ephesians 4:11. What Are Evangelists and Pastors?

Paul listed the offices of evangelist and pastor as part of the organizational structure of the Church (see



Ephesians 4:11). An evangelist is “one who bears or proclaims the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Evangelist”; scriptures.lds.org). In latter-day revelation, patriarchs are described as being “evangelical ministers” (D&C 107:39–41). The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) taught, “An evangelist is a Patriarch. . . . Wherever

the Church of Christ is established in the earth, there should be a Patriarch for the benefit of the posterity of the Saints, as it was with Jacob in giving his patriarchal blessing unto his sons” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 140). A pastor is a shepherd or one who leads a flock—a fitting description of modern-day bishops, branch presidents, and stake and district presidents (see 1 Peter 5:2–4).

Ephesians 4:11–16. Apostles Promote “the Unity of the Faith”

From Ephesians 4:11–16 we learn some of the purposes of the priesthood and its offices. Paul recognized that a “unity of the faith” cannot be reached without the presiding leadership of living Apostles and others.

President Russell M. Nelson quoted Paul’s teachings on the unity of the faith and then explained: “The ministry of the Apostles—the First Presidency and the Twelve—is to bring about that unity of the faith and to proclaim our knowledge of the Master. Our ministry is to bless the lives of all who will learn and follow the ‘more excellent way’ of the Lord [1 Corinthians 12:31; Ether 12:11]. And we are to help people prepare for their potential salvation and exaltation” (“Salvation and Exaltation,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2008, 7–8).

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles similarly provided insight into the unifying role of Apostles: “In the Church today, just as anciently, establishing the doctrine of Christ or correcting doctrinal deviations is a matter of divine revelation to those the Lord endows with apostolic authority” (“The Doctrine of Christ,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2012, 86).

Ephesians 4:21–5:4

Search these verses and identify the ways a disciple of Jesus Christ can “put off . . . the old man” and “put on the new man.” In what areas of your life do you feel you can more fully put off the old man and put on the new man?

Ephesians 4:22–24. “Put Off Concerning the Former Conversation”

Paul’s counsel to “put off concerning the former conversation the old man” and to “put on the new man” (Ephesians 4:22, 24) used the imagery of setting aside old clothing and clothing oneself in righteousness. Paul devoted much of the rest of Ephesians to describing the Saints’ “former conversation,” meaning the unrighteous practices the Saints should abandon, and defining the higher, more saintly manner of living they should adopt.

Ephesians 4:26–27, 31–32. “Can Ye Be Angry, and Not Sin?”

The Joseph Smith Translation of Ephesians 4:26 changes the confusing instruction “Be ye angry, and sin not” to the question “*Can ye be angry, and not sin?*” (in Ephesians 4:26, footnote *a*). This change brings this verse into harmony with Paul’s other teachings about anger, such as his counsel to “let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger . . . be put away from you” (Ephesians 4:31).

When Paul wrote, “Let not the sun go down upon your wrath” (Ephesians 4:26), he was teaching the Saints that they should not retire for the evening until they had overcome their angry thoughts. The Savior similarly taught about anger, as recorded in Matthew 5:22 and 3 Nephi 12:22. **Elder Lynn G. Robbins** of the Seventy taught:

“A cunning part of [Satan’s] strategy is to dissociate anger from agency, making us believe that we are victims of an emotion that we cannot control. We hear, ‘I lost my temper.’ Losing one’s temper is an interesting choice of words that has become a widely used idiom. To ‘lose something’ implies ‘not meaning to,’ ‘accidental,’ ‘involuntary,’ ‘not responsible’—careless perhaps but ‘not responsible.’

“‘He made me mad.’ This is another phrase we hear, also implying lack of control or agency. This is a myth that must be debunked. No one makes us mad. Others don’t make us angry. There is no force involved. Becoming angry is a conscious choice, a decision; therefore, we can make the choice not to become angry. *We choose!*” (“Agency and Anger,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 80).

Ephesians 4:29. “No Corrupt Communication”

Paul encouraged the Saints to avoid “corrupt communication,” which includes all forms of inappropriate speech: lying, deceit, vulgar or profane expressions, gossip, irreverent or disrespectful speech, and offensive, corrupt, degrading, belittling, or profane language, among others.

Ephesians 5:2. “A Sweetsmelling Savour”

Paul taught about how Christ had offered Himself as an offering and a sacrifice, thereby becoming a “sweetsmelling savour” (Ephesians 5:2). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** taught: “Even as each sacrifice offered anciently, as it prefigured the coming sacrifice of the Lamb of God, was ‘a sweet savour . . . unto the Lord’ (Ex. 29:18), so was Christ’s offering of himself a pleasing thing to God. The sweet smell of the burning sacrifices in Israel symbolized the pleasing blessings flowing from our Lord’s personal offering” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:516).

Ephesians 5:17–6:9. Instructions to Congregations and Families

Ephesians 5:17–6:9 contains one of several New Testament “household codes,” which are sets of instructions to wives, husbands, children, parents, servants, and masters (see Colossians 3:16–4:2; Titus 2:1–10; 1 Peter 2:18–3:8; and the commentary for Colossians 3:18–4:2). The codes recorded in Ephesians and Colossians are both given in connection with instructions on congregational worship. Since the early congregations of the Church met to worship and partake of the sacrament in Church members’ homes, the congregations Paul addressed would have included all members of a typical Greco-Roman household—fathers and husbands, mothers and wives, children, slaves, and masters. In the household setting, the well-being of house-church congregations was inseparable from the well-being of Christian families.

Ephesians 5:21–6:9. Unity in Christ

In the household code found in Ephesians 5:21–6:9, interpersonal relationships are defined in terms of each person’s relationship with Christ. Paul said that wives should submit to their husbands “as unto the Lord” (5:22). Husbands are to love their wives “as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (5:25). Children should obey their parents “in the Lord” (6:1). Parents are instructed to raise their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (6:4). Slaves should serve their masters “as unto Christ” (6:5) and “as to the

Lord" (6:7). Masters are to deal with their servants while remembering their "Master also is in heaven" (6:9). Paul's words remind us that our relationship with Christ should guide and define our relationships with all others (see the commentary for Galatians 3:28–29).

Ephesians 5:21–25. Paul's Counsel to Wives and Husbands

Paul taught that all members of the Church should submit themselves to one another, or in other words, place others ahead of themselves (see Ephesians 5:21). He then explained how the principle of submitting oneself applied in family and household relationships, starting with wives and husbands. For wives, this means submitting themselves to their husbands as they would to the Lord; for husbands, this means loving their wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it (see Ephesians 5:22, 25). If couples are truly united, then any sacrifice made on behalf of one's spouse inevitably brings blessings to oneself; thus, "he that loveth his wife loveth himself" (Ephesians 5:28).

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) stated: "Happiness in marriage is not so much a matter of romance as it is an anxious concern for the comfort and well-being of one's companion. Any man who will make his wife's comfort his first concern will stay in love with her throughout their lives and through the eternity yet to come" (Anchorage, Alaska, regional conference, 18 June 1995)" ("Speaking Today: Excerpts from Recent Addresses of President Gordon B. Hinckley," *Ensign*, Apr. 1996, 72).

Paul's counsel that wives should submit to their husbands (see Ephesians 5:22) does not justify male dominion. People in Greco-Roman society regarded the father as being the head of the extended family and the absolute authority over the entire household. Therefore, Paul's teachings represented a dramatic change to these traditional ideas because he defined husbands' and fathers' roles in terms of Christ's love and sacrifice for the Church.



Ephesians 5:25. "Husbands, Love Your Wives, Even as Christ Also Loved the Church"

Paul declared that the manner in which Jesus Christ loved and sacrificed for the Church was the ultimate example of how a husband should love and sacrifice for his wife. In our day, Church leaders have taught that men are not to dominate family relationships, but "by divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness" ("The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129). **President Spencer W. Kimball** (1895–1985) explained:

"A woman need have no fear of being imposed upon or of any dictatorial measures or of any improper demands when the husband is self-sacrificing and worthy. . . .

"Husbands are commanded: ' . . . love your wives, even as Christ also loveth the church, and gave himself for it.' (Eph. 5:25.)

"Christ loved the church and its people so much that he voluntarily endured persecution for them, suffered humiliating indignities for them, stoically withstood pain and physical abuse for them, and finally gave his precious life for them.

"When the husband is ready to treat his household in that manner, not only the wife but all the family will respond to his leadership" ("Home: The Place to Save Society," *Ensign*, Jan. 1975, 5).

President Gordon B. Hinckley taught priesthood holders:

"The wife you choose will be your equal. Paul declared, 'Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord' (1 Cor. 11:11).

"In the marriage companionship there is neither inferiority nor superiority. The woman does not walk ahead of the man; neither does the man walk ahead of the woman. They walk side by side as a son and daughter of God on an eternal journey.

"She is not your servant, your chattel, nor anything of the kind. . . .

"I am confident that when we stand before the bar of God, there will be little mention of how much wealth we accumulated in life or of any honors which we may have achieved. But there will be searching questions concerning our domestic relations. And I am convinced that only those who have walked through life with love and respect and appreciation for their companions and

children will receive from our eternal judge the words, ‘Well done, thou good and faithful servant: . . . enter thou into the joy of thy lord’ (Matt. 25:21)” (“Personal Worthiness to Exercise the Priesthood,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 53–54).

Ephesians 6:1–3. “Honour Thy Father and Mother”

As part of his counsel on family relationships, Paul reiterated the commandment that children should honor their parents (see Ephesians 6:1–3). In *For the Strength of Youth*, Church leaders identified some ways children can do this: “Honor your parents by showing love and respect for them. Obey them as they lead you in righteousness. Willingly help in your home. Participate in wholesome family activities and traditions. Join your family in family prayer, family scripture study, and family home evenings. Keeping these commandments strengthens and unifies families” (*For the Strength of Youth* [booklet, 2011], 14–15).

Ephesians 6:4. “Bring Them Up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord”

Paul admonished parents to bring up their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). Modern scripture provides specific instructions about the responsibilities parents have to raise their children up to the Lord, including helping children develop faith (see D&C 68:25–28; 93:40; Moses 6:57–60). **Elder Kevin W. Pearson** of the Seventy taught why parents should help children develop faith in Jesus Christ:

“As parents, we have been commanded to teach our children ‘to understand the doctrine of . . . faith in Christ the Son of the living God’ (D&C 68:25). . . .



“There is no other thing in which we can have absolute assurance. There is no other foundation in life that can bring the same peace, joy, and hope. In uncertain and difficult times, faith is truly a spiritual

gift worthy of our utmost efforts. We can give our children education, lessons, athletics, the arts, and material possessions, but if we do not give them faith in Christ, we have given little” (“Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 38).

Ephesians 6:5–8. Servants and Masters

In New Testament times, slavery was a very common institution throughout the Roman Empire. Undoubtedly many Church members were either servants or had servants as part of their households. People became slaves by being captured in war, being sold to pay debts, or being kidnapped. Paul’s counsel about how servants should act (see Ephesians 6:5–8) does not imply that he approved of the institution of slavery, but it teaches members of the Church living in a culture with servants and masters how those relationships should be guided by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

President Spencer W. Kimball has shown that Paul’s advice still has application today, even though slavery is much less common:

“Paul speaks of ‘unholy masters’ and surely has reference to those who would defraud servants or employees and would not properly compensate for labors done or goods furnished. He likely has in mind men who are unkind, demanding and inconsiderate of their subordinates. . . .

“. . . Paul likewise enjoined a lofty standard upon employees: [Ephesians 6:5–7 cited.]

“We may take this to mean, in modern terms, that the servant and employee should consistently give honest service, full and complete, and do for his employer what he would want an employee to do for him if he himself were the employer” (*The Miracle of Forgiveness* [1969], 51).

Ephesians 6:14–18. The Weapons of Righteousness



As he taught his readers how to defend themselves against spiritual wickedness, Paul drew upon the image of a soldier wearing armor (see also Romans 13:12; 2 Corinthians 10:3–7; 1 Thessalonians 5:8). Paul listed the parts of a soldier’s gear in the order a soldier would put them on or take them in hand. Symbolically this showed how the gospel

protects a person’s overall spiritual soundness, including one’s thoughts, intellect, feelings, and moral purity. The following chart lists the pieces of armor that Paul identified and what they might represent today.

Ephesians 6	Armor	What the armor represents	Protected body part	What the protected body part may represent
Verse 14	Belt, girt (tied around waist)	Truth (see Psalm 18:32, 39; Isaiah 11:5)	Loins	Our chastity, moral purity (see Proverbs 6:32)
Verse 14	Breastplate (made of bronze or chain)	Righteousness, uprightness with God (see Isaiah 59:17)	Heart	Our affections, emotions, loyalty (see Deuteronomy 6:5)
Verse 15	Boots (rugged shoes studded with nails for traction)	Preparation of the gospel of peace (see Isaiah 52:7)	Feet	Our course in life, actions, places we go, goals (see Proverbs 1:15–16)
Verse 16	Shield (large oval made of two layers of wood, held together with iron and leather)	Faith (see Psalm 18:30, 35)	Entire body	Our whole soul
Verse 17	Helmet (made of bronze with leather straps)	Salvation (see Isaiah 59:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:8)	Head	Our thoughts, intellect
Verse 17	Sword (weapon made of steel—only weapon listed)	The Spirit, which is the word of God (see Hebrews 4:12)	Entire body	Our whole soul

Elder Robert C. Oaks of the Seventy observed that these weapons are used in the battle for souls:

“The weapons of eternal worth reflecting the whole armor of God are *truth, righteousness, faith, prayer*, and the *word of God* (see Eph. 6:13–18). These weapons are wielded in our minds, mouths, and movements. Every righteous thought, word, and deed is a victory for the Lord. . . .

“The stakes are extremely high. The prizes are the very souls of the sons and daughters of God, their eternal salvation. And these souls will be won or lost on the basis of virtue and cleanliness, on the basis of charity and service, and on the basis of faith and hope” (“Who’s on the Lord’s Side? Who?” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2005, 49–50).

Ephesians 6:16. The Shield of Faith

Paul taught that the shield of faith can deflect attacks by the adversary and “quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (Ephesians 6:16). **President Boyd K. Packer** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught about the importance of the family in forging a shield of faith:

“The shield of faith is to be made and fitted in the family. No two can be exactly alike. Each must be handcrafted to individual specifications.

“The plan designed by the Father contemplates that man and woman, husband and wife, working together, fit each child individually with a shield of faith made to buckle on so firmly that it can neither be pulled off nor penetrated by those fiery darts.

“It takes the steady strength of a father to hammer out the metal of it and the tender hands of a mother to polish and fit it on. Sometimes one parent is left to do it alone. It is difficult, but it can be done.

“In the Church we can teach about the materials from which a shield of faith is made: reverence, courage, chastity, repentance, forgiveness, compassion. In church we can learn how to assemble and fit them together. But the actual making of and fitting on of the shield of faith belongs in the family circle” (“The Shield of Faith,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 8).

Points to Ponder

- What have you seen Church leaders do to help accomplish the important purposes of the Church as detailed in Ephesians 4:12–16? In what ways have you been blessed by the service of Church leaders and teachers?
- As you consider the different pieces of the armor of God (see Ephesians 6:14–18), which piece do you feel is most critical for your life right now? What could you do to make sure that you are spiritually protected so you can “withstand in the evil day”? (Ephesians 6:13).

Suggested Assignments

- Read Paul’s teachings in Ephesians 5:22–6:4 and make three lists: the responsibilities of a husband and father, the responsibilities of a wife and mother, and the responsibilities of children. How can the fulfillment of these responsibilities lead to unity in the home?

Philippians and Colossians

45

Introduction and Timeline for Philippians and Colossians

Philippians and Colossians were probably both written while Paul was under arrest in Rome, but remarkably it was during this difficult time that Paul wrote of “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding” (Philippians 4:7). These two epistles are consistently positive and optimistic, and they contain some of Paul’s clearest and most earnest teachings about Jesus Christ. Paul taught that if we live in faith and gratitude, the Lord can further the gospel cause through us—no matter what circumstances we might be in—and that by building upon the foundation of Jesus Christ we can avoid being led astray by worldly philosophies and traditions.



1. Paul wrote Philippians while imprisoned, probably in Rome about A.D. 60 to 62.
2. Paul wrote Colossians while imprisoned, probably in Rome about A.D. 60 to 62.

Introduction to the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians

Why study Philippians?

In his Epistle to the Philippians, Paul gave the Saints in Philippi encouragement and exhorted them to stand fast in the faith. Paul also exhorted the Saints to claim the unifying and exalting blessings that would come from humbling themselves (see Philippians 2:3). Perhaps one of the most important principles Paul taught in Philippians is that trusting in the Lord brings “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding” (Philippians 4:7). Paul’s messages of encouragement in this epistle can help motivate modern readers in their personal efforts to endure faithfully. As members of the Church strive to follow Christ, they too can gain confidence and like Paul declare, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13).

Who wrote Philippians?

Although Timothy is mentioned along with Paul in the epistle’s greeting (see Philippians 1:1), Paul is almost universally accepted as the sole author of the Epistle to the Philippians. This view is supported by the use of the singular pronoun “I” throughout the letter and the reference to Timothy in Philippians 2:19. Timothy may have acted as Paul’s scribe, writing the letter under Paul’s direction. Regarding the subscription found at the conclusion of the epistle in the King James Version of the Bible, see “When and where was 1 Corinthians written?” in chapter 38.

When and where was Philippians written?

Philippians is often called a prison Epistle, along with Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon. It is traditionally thought that Paul wrote Philippians while he was imprisoned in Rome from A.D. 60 to 62 (see Philippians 1:7, 13, 17; see also Acts 28:16–31). Paul had previously been imprisoned in Caesarea (see Acts 23:33–26:32) and Ephesus (see 2 Corinthians 1:8–10; 11:23).

To whom was Philippians written and why?

Philippi was the first place in Europe where Paul formally preached the gospel and established a branch of the Church (see Acts 16:11–40). One purpose for Paul writing this letter was to express gratitude for the affection and financial assistance the Saints in Philippi had extended to him during his second missionary journey (see Philippians 1:3–11; 4:10–19).

Paul also praised the members in Philippi for their faith in Christ and gave them counsel based on information about the city that he had received from a Philippian disciple named Epaphroditus (see Philippians 4:18). Paul’s counsel included encouragement to be humble and united (see Philippians 2:1–18; 4:2–3). Paul also warned the Philippians to beware of corrupt Christians, such as those who taught that circumcision was necessary for conversion. Such individuals were known as Judaizers, who falsely claimed that new converts had to submit to the former Old Testament law of circumcision before becoming Christian (see Philippians 3:2–3).

What are some distinctive features of Philippians?

“This Epistle is a letter of friendship, full of affection, confidence, good counsel and good cheer. It is the happiest of St. Paul’s writings, for the Philippians were the dearest of his children in the faith. . . .

“ . . . It is a classic of spiritual autobiography. . . . While 2 Corinthians displays the agitations which rent the Apostle’s heart in the crucial conflict of his ministry, Philippians reveals the spring of his inward peace and strength. It admits us to St. Paul’s prison meditations and communings with his Master” (J. R. Dummelow, ed., *A Commentary on the Holy Bible* [1909], 969).

The Lord Jesus Christ is mentioned by name over 50 times in the four chapters of Philippians. Paul poetically depicted the Savior’s condescension from premortal divinity to mortal life, where He suffered “death of the cross” (Philippians 2:3–8). Having fulfilled His divine mission, Jesus Christ now stands exalted, and the day will come when “every knee should bow” before Him and “every tongue . . . confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Philippians 2:10–11).

Latter-day Saint readers will recognize Philippians 4:8 as part of the framework for the thirteenth article of faith, which was penned by the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Outline

Philippians 1:1–26 Paul greeted the Saints, bishops, and deacons in Philippi; expressed gratitude for them; and prayed for them. He informed them of his circumstances while in prison.

Philippians 1:27–4:9 Paul exhorted the Philippians to stand united in one spirit and one mind

by following the unselfish example of Jesus Christ, and he encouraged them to work out their own salvation as God worked in them. Paul warned of false teachings, encouraged the Saints to stand fast in the Lord, and admonished them to think about things that are virtuous and praiseworthy.

Philippians 4:10–23 Paul thanked the Philippians for their financial support during his second missionary journey. Paul told the Saints that Christ is the source of confidence and that through Him they could accomplish all things. He then closed with words of testimony, reassurance, and blessing.

Commentary for Philippians

Philippians 1:1–14. Paul’s Imprisonment Resulted in “the Furtherance of the Gospel”

Paul opened his epistle with a tender and loving greeting to the Philippian Saints (see Philippians 1:1–11). He then pointed out some positive consequences that had come from his imprisonment—specifically the “furtherance of the gospel” (Philippians 1:12). The Greek term translated as “furtherance” can refer to an army’s cutting away of undergrowth or removing other barriers that impede their progress (see Philippians 1:25). Apparently Paul’s situation removed impediments to the spreading of the gospel as his “bonds in Christ” became known in the “palace” or military headquarters (Philippians 1:13). In addition, other Church members drew courage from Paul’s example and became “much more bold to speak the word” (Philippians 1:14).

Philippians 1:15–20. Two Ways of Preaching

Paul identified two ways of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. One way is to preach with “strife” and

“contention,” without sincerity (Philippians 1:15–16). The second, better way is to preach with “good will” and “love” (Philippians 1:15, 17).

Philippians 1:21–25. “I Am in a Strait betwixt Two”

While he was detained in prison, Paul was caught between two competing desires: a desire for death, which would allow him to be with the Savior, and the desire to live and continue to serve Him. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles observed: “Paul did not fear death. As with others who have fought the good fight and overcome the world, he desired to be relieved of the burdens of mortality and rest in the paradise of God; yet his sense of duty caused him to know his ministry here was not over, that though his own salvation was assured, he must remain in the flesh and work further for the salvation of his fellow saints” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 2:529). The Book of Mormon prophet Mormon similarly expressed to his son Moroni a duty to preach the gospel while he remained alive “in this tabernacle of clay” (Moroni 9:6).

Philippians 2:1–7. “Esteem Other Better Than Themselves”

Developing unity among Church members was a common theme in Paul’s epistles (see Philippians 1:27; 2:2; see also 1 Corinthians 1:10; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 4:13), as it is elsewhere in scripture (see Mosiah 18:21; D&C 38:24–27; Moses 7:18). Paul taught that for the Philippian Saints to achieve unity, they must set aside selfishness and humbly consider the needs of others. Paul then pointed to Jesus Christ, who set a perfect example of esteeming the needs of others as He “took upon him the form of a servant” (Philippians 2:7). **Elder H. Burke Peterson** (1923–2013) of the Seventy described the qualities of a selfless person:

“There are those among us today who are completely *selfless*—as was [Jesus Christ]. A selfless person is one who is more concerned about the happiness and well-being of another than about his or her own convenience or comfort, one who is willing to serve another when it is neither sought for nor appreciated, or one who is willing to serve even those whom he or she dislikes.

“A selfless person displays a willingness to sacrifice, a willingness to purge from his or her mind and heart personal wants, and needs, and feelings. Instead of reaching for and requiring praise and recognition for himself, or gratification of his or her own wants, the selfless person will meet these very human needs for others” (“Selflessness: A Pattern for Happiness,” *Ensign*, May 1985, 66).



Philippians 2:5–8. The Savior “Made Himself of No Reputation”

Paul taught that when the Savior was born into mortality, He “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant” (Philippians 2:7). Jesus Christ gave up His premortal status “in the form of God”

and was born into mortality “in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:6–7). In the Book of Mormon, the idea of Christ descending below all things is called “the condescension of God” (1 Nephi 11:16; see also verses 17–33; Psalm 22:14; Isaiah 53:12).



For unto Us a Child Is Born, by Lynne Millman Weidinger

According to **Elder Tad R. Callister** of the Seventy, “God the Son traded his heavenly home with all its celestial adornments for a mortal abode with all its primitive trappings. He, ‘the King of heaven’ (Alma 5:50), ‘the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth’ (Mosiah 3:5), left a throne to inherit a manger. He exchanged the dominion of a god for the dependence of a babe. He gave up wealth, power, dominion, and the fullness of his glory—for what?—for taunting, mocking, humiliation, and subjection. It was a trade of unparalleled dimension, a condescension of incredible proportions, a descent of incalculable depth” (*The Infinite Atonement* [2000], 64).

Philippians 2:9–11

At some future time, what will all of earth’s inhabitants do when they hear the name of Jesus Christ? When have you felt to do this same thing in your life?

Philippians 2:12–13. “Work Out Your Own Salvation . . . for It Is God Which Worketh in You”

Paul told the Philippian Saints, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). Some people incorrectly use this verse to support the idea that we are saved by our own efforts and not by the grace of Jesus Christ. However, Paul was not telling the Saints to work in order to *earn* salvation. Instead, as Paul pointed out, the Saints should live the gospel so that the saving work God was already doing within them would be manifest in all they did (see Philippians 1:6; 2:13). Our efforts to work out our salvation are possible only because of the Lord’s grace within us.

When Paul said to act “with fear and trembling,” he did not mean that we should be afraid or worried (see Matthew 6:25–34; 2 Timothy 1:7). Instead, he meant that we should serve the Lord with awe and reverence and that we should tremble with eagerness to work out our salvation. **President Dallin H. Oaks** of the First Presidency expounded on this statement:

“The Apostle Paul wrote that we should ‘work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling.’ (Phil. 2:12.) Could that familiar expression mean that the sum total of our own righteousness will win us salvation and exaltation . . . solely on our own merits?”

“On the basis of what I have heard, I believe that some of us, some of the time, say things that can create that impression. We can forget that keeping the commandments, which is necessary, is not sufficient. As Nephi said, we must labor diligently to persuade everyone ‘to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know that it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do.’ (2 Ne. 25:23.) . . .

“Man unquestionably has impressive powers and can bring to pass great things by tireless efforts and indomitable will. But after all our obedience and good works, we cannot be saved from the effect of our sins without the grace extended by the atonement of Jesus Christ” (“What Think Ye of Christ?” *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 66–67).

Philippians 3:2–3. Paul Warned of “Dogs” and “Circision”

The term *dog* is usually one of derision in the Bible, meaning an unworthy person. The “dogs” Paul spoke of in Philippians 3:2 were Judaizers—people who taught that converts to Christianity must follow certain Jewish customs, including circumcision (see the commentaries for Acts 15:1–5; for Acts 15:1, 5, 24; and for Galatians 1:1–7). In sarcasm Paul referred to Judaizers as “the

circision,” a term that implies mutilation. On the other hand, Paul used “the *circumcision*” (a term he often used to refer to Jews) to instead refer to God’s covenant people—Christians. Thus, those who worship God and rejoice in Christ are the real “circumcision,” or covenant people (Philippians 3:3; see also Romans 2:25–29; Colossians 2:10–13).

Philippians 3:4–8. Sacrificing for Christ’s Sake

Having warned against the teachings of Judaizers, Paul then listed some of his credentials as a devout Jew (see Philippians 3:4–8). He pointed out that he had given up many things when he became a follower of Jesus Christ, including his former prestigious position as a Jewish Pharisee (see Philippians 3:4–7). Yet Paul considered those losses insignificant when compared with “the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:8; see also verses 10–11; Matthew 19:29).

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) taught of the blessings that come from sacrifice: “We must lay on the altar and sacrifice whatever is required by the Lord. We begin by offering a ‘broken heart and a contrite spirit.’ We follow this by giving our best effort in our assigned fields of labor and callings. We learn our duty and execute it fully. Finally we consecrate our time, talents, and means as called upon by our file leaders and as prompted by the whisperings of the Spirit. . . . And as we give, we find that ‘sacrifice brings forth the blessings of heaven!’ (*Hymns*, no. [27].) And in the end, we learn it was no sacrifice at all” (“Becoming the Pure in Heart,” *Ensign*, May 1978, 81).

Philippians 3:8–14, 20–21

What doctrines made it easier for Paul to leave his past behind and look toward the future? How might these doctrines help a person to have faith in what lies ahead?

Philippians 3:12–14. “I Press toward the Mark”

Paul said that he followed “after,” meaning he pressed “forward” (Philippians 3:12, footnote *b*) so that he might “apprehend,” meaning take hold of or obtain, eternal life (Philippians 3:12; see also 2 Nephi 31:19–20). Paul also spoke of “reaching forth unto those things which are before” (Philippians 3:13) and pressing “toward the mark for the prize” (Philippians 3:14). Some of the imagery in these verses reflects the idea of a race, where runners continuously press on while always focusing on the finish line. Paul declared that although he had not yet reached his final goal, he had left his past behind and was pressing forward toward the mark—the prize of

salvation offered by Jesus Christ. Regarding this attitude, **President Thomas S. Monson** (1927–2018) counseled: “There is no going back, but only forward. Rather than dwelling on the past, we should make the most of today, of the here and now, doing all we can” (“Finding Joy in the Journey,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 85).



Philippians 4:3. “Women Which Laboured with Me”

Paul expressed tender feelings toward certain women who assisted him in the Lord’s work. He exhorted the Philippian Saints, “Help those women which laboured with me in the gospel” (Philippians 4:3). **President J. Reuben Clark Jr.** (1871–1961) of the First Presidency expressed similar feelings regarding the sacrifices of women in the latter-day Church: “From [New Testament times] until now woman has comforted and nursed the Church. She has borne more than half the burdens, she has made more than half the sacrifices, she has suffered the most of the heartaches and sorrows” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1940, 21).

Philippians 4:3. The Book of Life

To read about the book of life, see the commentary for Revelation 13:8.

Philippians 4:6–7. Trusting in God Can Lead to Unsurpassed Peace

The Greek phrase translated as “be careful for nothing” (Philippians 4:6) means not to be unduly anxious, fretful, or concerned (see the commentary for Matthew 6:25–34). Paul taught that the antidotes for anxiety were prayer and trust in the Lord. They bring “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding” (Philippians 4:7), and they help guard our hearts and minds against fear. While serving as a member of the Seventy, **Elder Jay E. Jensen** shared an experience in which he and his family received peace during a time of sorrow:

“Our grandson Quinton was born with multiple birth defects and lived three weeks short of a year, during which time he was in and out of the hospital. Sister Jensen and I were living in Argentina at that time. We truly wanted to be there with our children to comfort them and be comforted by them. This was our grandchild whom we loved and wanted to be near. We could only pray, and we did so fervently!

“Sister Jensen and I were on a mission tour when we received word Quinton had died. We stood in the hallway of a meetinghouse and hugged and comforted each other. I witness to you that assurances came to us from the Holy Ghost, a peace which passes all understanding and continues to this day (see Philippians 4:7). We also witnessed the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost in the lives of our son and daughter-in-law and their children, who to this day speak of that time with such faith, peace, and comfort” (“The Holy Ghost and Revelation,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 78).

Philippians 4:8. The Admonition of Paul

Paul admonished the Saints to “think on” (to give careful, continuing thought to) things that are true, just, pure, lovely, and of good report (Philippians 4:8). When the **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) cited this “admonition of Paul” in the thirteenth article of faith, he changed “think on these things” to the more active “seek after these things” (Articles of Faith 1:13; italics added). **Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin** (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles discussed the admonition to “seek after these things”:

“The word *seek* means to go in search of, try to discover, try to acquire. It requires an active, assertive approach to life. . . . It is the opposite of passively waiting for something good to come to us, with no effort on our part.

“We can fill our lives with good, leaving no room for anything else. We have so much good from which to choose that we need never partake of evil. . . .

“If we seek things that are virtuous and lovely, we surely will find them. Conversely, if we seek for evil, we will find that also” (“Seeking the Good,” *Ensign*, May 1992, 86).

Philippians 4:13. “I Can Do All Things through Christ”

As Paul drew his epistle to a close, he thanked the Philippian Saints for the support and care they had offered him personally during his trials (see Philippians 4:10). Paul had endured severe challenges, but his faith in Jesus Christ sustained him. He said, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13). **Elder Paul V. Johnson** of the Seventy taught that the trials we face can help us to grow and progress:

“We don’t seek out tests, trials, and tribulations. Our personal journey through life will provide just the right amount for our needs. Many trials are just a natural part of our mortal existence, but they play such an important role in our progress. . . .

“Sometimes we want to have growth without challenges and to develop strength without any struggle. But growth cannot come by taking the easy way. We clearly understand that an athlete who resists rigorous training will never become a world-class athlete. We must be careful that we don’t resent the very things that help us put on the divine nature.

“Not one of the trials and tribulations we face is beyond our limits, because we have access to help from the Lord. We can do all things through Christ, who strengthens us [see Philippians 4:13]” (“More Than Conquerors through Him That Loved Us,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 79–80).

Introduction to the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Colossians

Why study Colossians?

When Paul wrote his Epistle to the Colossians, false teachings and practices in Colossae were influencing the Saints there and threatening their faith. Similar cultural pressures pose challenges for Church members today. Part of this epistle’s great value lies in how it identifies and exposes falsehoods while emphasizing Jesus Christ’s divinity and saving work. As modern readers deepen their conversion to the Savior—like the Saints in Colossae did—they are more fully protected from deception and sin.

Who wrote Colossians?

According to its opening lines, the Epistle to the Colossians was sent by Paul and Timothy (see Colossians 1:1, 23; 4:18). Paul apparently handwrote his own salutation at the close of the epistle (see Colossians 4:18), indicating that a scribe, perhaps Timothy, had assisted him in writing the body of the letter. Regarding the short explanatory note found at the end of the epistle in the King James Version of the Bible, see “When and where was 1 Corinthians written?” in chapter 38.

When and where was Colossians written?

Since Paul stated he was a prisoner during the time he wrote Colossians (see Colossians 4:3, 10, 18), the epistle may date to between A.D. 60 and 62, while he was imprisoned in Rome. Paul likely wrote the Epistle to the Colossians around the same time he wrote Philippians,

Philemon, and Ephesians; all of these epistles bear similarities to one another.

To whom was Colossians written and why?

This epistle was written to the faithful Saints in Colossae, a site in modern-day Turkey. Paul instructed the Colossian Saints to share the letter with the members of the Church in nearby Laodicea (see Colossians 4:16). Details in the Epistle to the Colossians suggest that in the region of Colossae, heretical beliefs and worship practices had developed, blending Christian, Jewish, and pagan ideas. These heresies minimized or denied the divine role of Jesus Christ. Such false ideas threatened the Church but had not yet won over the many Colossian Saints who remained “faithful brethren in Christ” (see Colossians 1:2; 2:4, 8, 20). In writing this epistle, Paul hoped to communicate his personal concern for the Saints, to counteract the false teachings and practices that threatened their faith, to testify of the divinity and preeminence of Christ, and to exhort the Saints to deepen their conversion to the Savior.

What are some distinctive features of Colossians?

In this Epistle to the Colossians, Paul countered the heretical teachings in Colossae by emphasizing the preeminence of Jesus Christ. He presented an especially complete picture of the divinity and saving mission of Jesus Christ (see Colossians 1:15–23). He taught that Christ is the very image of God the Father—an embodied member of the Godhead, the Creator, the Head of the

Church, the first to be resurrected, the Redeemer, and the “hope of the gospel, which ye have heard” (Colossians 1:23). He is “the head of all principality and power” (Colossians 2:10), and He fulfills His divine mission under the direction of the Father (see Colossians 1:19; 3:1).

Paul warned against those who taught that true spirituality was gained through special rituals, festivals, and diets (see Colossians 2:16–17, 20, 23). He taught that spiritual maturity and knowledge of God is not

properly manifest through such customs and practices but instead is manifest through setting “our affections” on “things which are above” (Colossians 3:1–2), eliminating unrighteous acts (see Colossians 3:5–9), and developing Christlike attributes (see Colossians 3:12–17). Paul counseled his readers to become “grounded and settled” as well as “rooted and built up in [Jesus Christ], and stablished in the faith” (Colossians 1:23; 2:7).

Outline

Colossians 1:1–23 Paul greeted the Saints in Colossae and declared that Jesus Christ is the Redeemer, the Firstborn among all creation, the Creator, and the Lord of all divine perfection in whom is the reconciliation of the universe. Paul exhorted the Saints to establish their faith in Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:24–2:23 Paul warned against believing any false philosophy or tradition of men, including the worship of angels and the practice of denying oneself basic physical needs as a form of spiritual discipline.

Colossians 3:1–4:18 Paul exhorted the Saints to set their hearts on things which are above,

to abandon the sins of their former life, and to be merciful to one another. He gave instruction about how Saints should worship, then gave counsel to wives, husbands, children, parents, servants, and masters. He closed the Epistle to the Colossians with commendations, greetings, and final instructions and blessings.

Commentary for Colossians

Colossians 1:1–3. Separate Beings

Following the pattern of his other epistles, in his opening greeting to the Saints in Colossae, Paul referred to two separate and distinct beings in the Godhead: “God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Colossians 1:2; see also 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2–3; Galatians 1:1).

Colossians 1:7. Epaphras

Epaphras was a missionary who spread the gospel message at Colossae (see Colossians 1:7; 4:12–13).

Colossians 1:14. “Redemption through His Blood”

False beliefs and forms of worship in the area of Colossae minimized the eternal role and divinity of Jesus Christ. In Colossians 1:14, the Apostle Paul began an argument to support the superiority of Jesus Christ over all other things the Colossian Saints might be tempted to worship (see Colossians 1:14–20). Paul began by stating that through the shedding of Christ’s blood, we can obtain forgiveness of sins. **President Dallin H. Oaks** pointed out:

“Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten Son of God the Eternal Father. He is our Creator. He is our Teacher. He is our Savior. His atonement paid for the sin of Adam and won victory over death, assuring resurrection and immortality for all men.

“He is all of these, but he is more. Jesus Christ is the Savior, whose atoning sacrifice opens the door for us to be cleansed of our personal sins so that we can be readmitted to the presence of God. He is our Redeemer.

“The Messiah’s atoning sacrifice is the central message of the prophets of all ages” (“What Think Ye of Christ?” *Ensign*, Nov. 1988, 65).

Colossians 1:15. “The Image of the Invisible God, the Firstborn of Every Creature”

Paul said Jesus Christ is “the image [meaning the likeness or manifestation] of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15). By describing God as invisible, Paul meant that He is “unseen” but not necessarily “unseeable” or “incapable of being seen.” The Apostle’s point was that although God is presently unseen by our human eyes, Jesus Christ’s appearance and character demonstrate what the Father is like (see the commentary for John 14:7–11; 16:25). This is true of the Father’s spiritual nature and His physical nature, as we learn through latter-day revelation and the Prophet Joseph Smith’s eyewitness account of the Father’s physical body (see Joseph Smith—History 1:17; D&C 130:22).

Paul also taught that Jesus Christ was “the firstborn of every creature” (Colossians 1:15). “Jesus was the firstborn of the spirit children of our Heavenly Father, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh, and the first

to rise from the dead in the resurrection (Col. 1:13–18)” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Firstborn”; scriptures.lds.org).

Colossians 1:16–17. Through Jesus Christ “Were All Things Created”

Jesus Christ is the Creator, and He has governing power over all His creations. **President Dallin H. Oaks** explained:

“Under the direction and according to the plan of God the Father, Jesus Christ is the Creator, the source of the light and life of all things. Through modern revelation we have the testimony of John, who bore record that Jesus Christ is ‘the light and the Redeemer of the world, the Spirit of truth, who came into the world, because the world was made by him, and in him was the life of men and the light of men.

“The worlds were made by him; men were made by him; all things were made by him, and through him, and of him’ (D&C 93:9–10)” (“The Light and Life of the World,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1987, 63; see also John 1:1–3; Hebrews 1:2; D&C 76:24; Moses 1:33).



By Jesus Christ “were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible” (Colossians 1:16).

Paul said that by Christ “all things consist,” meaning that Christ’s power holds together all His creations (Colossians 1:17). For more detail about how Jesus Christ governs all created things, see Doctrine and Covenants 88:6–13.

Colossians 1:18. Christ Is the Head of the Church

Paul’s teachings that Jesus Christ stands as the head of the Church (see Colossians 1:18) are a reminder to people who would put angels or anyone or anything else ahead of Him (see Colossians 2:18). At the time

he was sustained as the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, **President Thomas S. Monson** said: “I testify . . . that our Savior Jesus Christ is at the head of this Church, which bears His name. I know that the sweetest experience in all this life is to feel His promptings as He directs us in the furtherance of His work” (“Looking Back and Moving Forward,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 88).

Colossians 1:19. How Does “All Fulness” Dwell in the Son?

According to Paul, “all fulness dwell[s]” in Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:19). The Greek term for “fulness” suggests a totality of divine power. Paul therefore declared that Jesus Christ and His gospel are superior to all other philosophies and religions. God the Father vested in His Beloved Son a fulness of power, both “in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18), set Him at His right hand (see Acts 7:55; Hebrews 1:3), and made Him perfect even as He is perfect (see Ephesians 1:23; Colossians 2:9; 3 Nephi 12:48).

Colossians 1:23; 2:6–10. Philosophy, Traditions, and Rudiments of the World

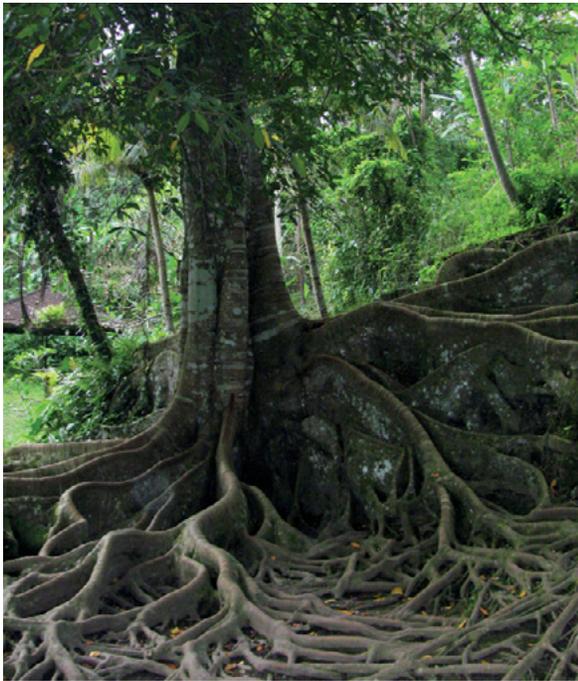
In Colossians 1:23; 2:6–7, Paul used the imagery of a tree and a building to describe the stability that comes through faith in Jesus Christ. Continuing his case that the Colossian Saints should stay true to Jesus Christ, Paul encouraged the Saints to “continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved” (Colossians 1:23). Later, in Colossians 2:8, Paul warned the Saints to “beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit.” In this verse, the word *spoil* refers to a conqueror taking a person captive in a war. “Philosophy and vain deceit” refers to any manmade system of belief and worship. According to Paul, because Jesus Christ “is the head of all principality and power” (Colossians 2:10), adopting any beliefs or religious practices other than the true gospel will have eternal consequences.

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the First Presidency contrasted the world’s theories and philosophies with the gospel of Jesus Christ:

“The world is not bashful in offering numerous new answers to every problem we face. People run from one new idea to the next, hoping to find something that will answer the burning questions of their souls. They attend seminars and buy books . . . and other products. They get caught up in the excitement of looking for something new. But inevitably, the flame of each new theory fades, only to be replaced by another ‘new and improved’ solution that promises to do what the others before could not.

“It’s not that these worldly options don’t contain elements of truth—many of them do. Nevertheless, they all fall short of the lasting change we seek in our lives. After the excitement wears off, the hollowness remains as we look for the next new idea to unlock the secrets of happiness.

“In contrast, the gospel of Jesus Christ has the answers to all of our problems. The gospel is not a secret. It is not complicated or hidden. It can unlock the door to true happiness. It is not someone’s theory or proposition. It does not come from man at all. It springs from the pure and everlasting waters of the Creator of the universe, who knows truths we cannot even begin to comprehend” (“The Way of the Disciple,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 75).



Much like roots help a tree to remain stable against heavy winds, a testimony of Jesus Christ and our faithful actions help us to stay firmly “rooted” in Christ and strengthened against worldly philosophy (see Colossians 2:6–8; see also Matthew 13:20–21; Helaman 5:12).

Colossians 1:26–29; 2:2; 4:3. “The Mystery Which Hath Been Hid”

Paul referred to the gospel of Jesus Christ as a “mystery” (Colossians 1:26–27). “Mysteries of God are spiritual truths known only by revelation. God reveals his mysteries to those who are obedient to the gospel” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Mysteries of God”; scriptures.lds.org). Therefore, Jesus Christ remains a mystery to all who are unbelieving and unrepentant. The truths of the gospel can be understood only through the Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 2:14).

Colossians 2:12–14. The Symbolism of Baptism by Immersion

To read about the symbolism of baptism by immersion, see the commentary for Romans 6:1–11.

Colossians 2:13–15. “Nailing It to His Cross”

Prior to these verses in Colossians 2, Paul reminded the Saints in Colossae that God had forgiven them (see Colossians 1:14, 20, 22). The imagery that Paul used in Colossians 2:14–15 emphasizes how Christ’s Atonement makes it possible for our sins to be forgiven. In Paul’s day it was customary for Romans to write on a placard the crimes committed by a condemned person. When the wrongdoer was crucified, the placard was also nailed to the cross for all passersby to see (see John 19:19–22). Paul used this imagery in verses 13–15 to teach the Colossians that they had been forgiven. It was as though a list of all of the spiritual charges and accusations against the Colossian Saints, including their sins and infractions against the ordinances of the law of Moses, were placed on a placard and nailed to the cross. Through the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ, these were erased or blotted out.

Through His Atonement and Resurrection, Jesus Christ triumphed over all earthly powers and authorities (see Colossians 2:15).

Colossians 2:18–19. “Worshipping of Angels”

Paul warned the Colossian Saints not to be deceived by those who promoted the worship of angels (see Colossians 2:18). Although angels hold a position of honor in God’s kingdom, they are not to be worshipped (see Revelation 19:10). The worshipping of angels is evidence that some teachings of Gnosticism were making their way into the Church, since Gnostic philosophy held that God communicated with mortals through angels and that the physical body was evil. Paul denounced this false religious system. To read more about Gnosticism, see “To whom was 1 John written and why?” in chapter 52.

Colossians 2:20–23. “Will Worship”

Paul asked the Saints why some of them were participating in worldly “ordinances” and following “doctrines of men” even though they had accepted Christ (Colossians 2:20, 22). He referred to such doctrines of men as “will worship” (Colossians 2:23), which refers to manmade worship—religious rules and practices devised by the will, or mind, of man. One form of “will worship” that Paul mentioned was the “neglecting of

the body,” which refers to the practice of asceticism. People who practiced asceticism abstained completely from physical pleasures in an effort to overcome desires of the flesh. They often adopted extreme dietary restrictions and renounced sexual relations even within the bonds of marriage (see also 1 Corinthians 7:1–5; 1 Timothy 4:1–3). Such excessive practices are not in harmony with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Joseph Smith Translation helps clarify the meaning of Colossians 2:21–22: “Why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, *which are after the doctrines and commandments of men, who teach you to touch not, taste not, handle not; all those things which are to perish with the using? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting the body as to the satisfying the flesh, not in any honor to God*” (Joseph Smith Translation, Colossians 2:21–22 [in the Bible appendix]).

Colossians 3:1–2

What encouragement did Paul give to individuals who consider themselves “risen with Christ”? What are you doing to follow this counsel?

Colossians 3:1–2. “Seek Those Things Which Are Above”

Having refuted false teachings in Colossians 2, Paul next exhorted his readers to set their affections on “things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2).

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin similarly counseled Latter-day Saints to avoid becoming so busy with things of the world that they lose their focus on eternal priorities:

“We can spend a lifetime whirling about at a feverish pace, checking off list after list of things that in the end really don’t matter.

“That we do a lot may not be so important. That we focus the energy of our minds, our hearts, and our souls on those things of eternal significance—that is essential.

“As the clatter and clamor of life bustle about us, we hear shouting to ‘come here’ and to ‘go there.’ In the midst of the noise and seductive voices that compete for our time and interest, a solitary figure stands on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, calling quietly to us, ‘Follow me’” (“Follow Me,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 16).



Christ Calling Peter and Andrew, by James Taylor Harwood. The Savior calls each of us to follow Him and “seek those things which are above” (Colossians 3:1).

Colossians 3:3–12. The New Life “Hid with Christ in God”

Paul taught, “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3). Though the Saints were not physically dead, Paul wanted them to understand that their former sinful selves had passed away as they “put off the old man” (Colossians 3:9) and that they were to live a new life in Christ. Paul said that this new life was “hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3), suggesting that the life of a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ is secure in the Savior’s care in both an earthly and eternal sense. Such faithful Saints will appear with Jesus Christ “in glory” at His Second Coming (Colossians 3:4). Paul further counseled Church members, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth,” meaning they should deaden (get rid of) and control the desires and motives that belong to their earthly nature (Colossians 3:5).

An experience from the life of the **Prophet Joseph Smith** helps illustrate the meaning of the phrase, “Your life is hid with Christ in God.” On one occasion, Joseph Smith put his hand on the knee of his friend William Clayton and said: “Your life is hid with Christ in God, and so are many others. Nothing but the unpardonable sin can prevent you from inheriting eternal life for you are sealed up by the power of the Priesthood unto eternal life” (in *History of the Church*, 5:391). To have your life “hid with Christ in God” is to have your calling and election made sure.

Colossians 3:10–11. Barbarians and Scythians

Paul taught that Christ’s Atonement made all people equal, including Greeks, Jews, Barbarians, and Scythians (see Colossians 3:11). Barbarians were any group of people whom the Romans saw as lacking civility and culture. Scythians were people from the northern coast of the Black Sea (in modern-day Ukraine), whom Greeks viewed as being violent and uneducated.

Colossians 3:12–17. “Put on . . . Bowels of Mercies”

Paul’s counsel to be filled with kindness, forgiveness, mercy, and charity toward others was written while he was imprisoned. While in Liberty Jail, the Prophet Joseph Smith wrote similar counsel to the Saints, declaring, “Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men” (see D&C 121:41–45). This is timeless counsel for the Lord’s servants who are imprisoned unjustly, as well as for their followers. In such undeserved circumstances, bitterness must be removed from disciples’ souls so that the Spirit of the Lord can have influence in their lives.

Colossians 3:18–4:2. A Household Code

Colossians 3:18–4:1 compose what some call a “household code,” consisting of principles and rules for the various members of a household (similar passages are found in Ephesians 5:19–6:9; Titus 2:1–10; 1 Peter 2:18–3:8). Rather than espouse the common cultural household expectations of his day, Paul admonished the



Remains of a Roman-era house in Ephesus. In New Testament times, congregations of the Church met in the homes of members and would have included all members of the household—parents, children, and servants (see Colossians 3:16–4:2).

Saints to evaluate their households and relationships according to the Lord's standards (see phrases such as "in the Lord" or "unto the Lord"), thus bringing greater unity and peace to Christian families and congregations alike. To read more about Paul's teachings on households and marital harmony, see the commentaries for Ephesians 5:17–6:9; for Ephesians 5:21–6:9; for Ephesians 5:21–25; and for Ephesians 5:25.

Colossians 3:18–19. Counsel to Spouses

At the heart of Paul's counsel to households is the idea that loving relationships should exist between husbands and wives. Regarding such relationships, **President Spencer W. Kimball** taught:

"The spouse [should be] preeminent in the life of the husband or wife, and neither social life nor occupational life nor political life nor any other interest nor person nor thing shall ever take precedence over the companion spouse. . . .

"Marriage presupposes total allegiance and total fidelity. Each spouse takes the partner with the understanding that he or she gives self totally to the spouse: all the heart, strength, loyalty, honor, and affection with all dignity. Any divergence is sin—any sharing the heart is transgression. As we should have 'an eye single to the glory of God' [D&C 4:5; 82:19] so should we have an eye, an ear, a heart single to the marriage and the spouse and family" (in Conference Report, Oct. 1962, 57).

Colossians 4:5–6. Let Speech Be "Seasoned with Salt"

Paul recommended that Saints "walk in wisdom toward them that are without" (Colossians 4:5). The phrase "them that are without" referred to people who were not members of the Church. Paul then said, "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6). In ancient times, salt was used in the offering of temple offerings and thus became a symbol of gospel covenants (see Leviticus 2:13). Salt was also used as a purifying agent. Therefore, Paul's teachings about speech being seasoned with salt reminded Church members that all their communication, even with non-Christians, should be pure and in harmony with the covenants they had made with the Lord.

Colossians 4:7–14

In Colossians 4:7–14, Paul mentioned several individuals who served either Paul himself or the Church members in Colossae. What did they do specifically to serve others? How might you follow their example in serving those around you?

Colossians 4:16. A Lost Epistle

This verse suggests that Paul sent a letter to the Saints in Laodicea. This letter no longer exists today.

Points to Ponder

- Ponder the phrase "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). When has the Savior helped you to accomplish difficult tasks? In what ways have you been strengthened by the Spirit?
- Consider Paul's warning in Colossians 2:8. Think of some philosophies or traditions of the world that are contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now think of specific gospel doctrines that might be threatened by worldly ideas. How are worldly philosophies destructive to faith and righteous living?

Suggested Assignments

- Philippians is sometimes described as being Paul's happiest epistle. Make a list of teachings found in Philippians that relate to the joy or consolation that comes from the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Study the poetic, hymnlike passages in Philippians 2:6–11 and in Colossians 1:15–20, which praise Jesus Christ and proclaim truths about Him. Write a paper comparing these passages to the words found in modern hymns about the Savior.
- Read Philippians 3:5–8 and then make a list of actions, habits, or activities that you have given up or that you avoid because of your belief in Jesus Christ and His teachings. What actions do you feel you still need to give up? Write a paragraph explaining why the gospel is of more worth to you than the things you have given up.

1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians

46

Introduction and Timeline for 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians

Paul and his missionary companions found success preaching to the people in Thessalonica but were ultimately forced out of the city by detractors. Sometime after they left, Paul learned that the Thessalonian Saints had remained faithful and were sharing the gospel message with others. In his first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul reiterated his sincere devotion to God and to teaching the gospel. He also responded to the Thessalonian Saints' concerns regarding the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Paul later wrote a second letter to the Thessalonian Saints when he learned that false ideas about the coming of Jesus Christ were continuing to cause concern.



The Apostle Paul was probably in Corinth when he wrote both Epistles to the

Thessalonians, likely near the end of A.D. 52.

Introduction to the First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians

Why study 1 Thessalonians?

First Thessalonians is believed to be the earliest of Paul's existing epistles—in fact, it is probably the oldest book in the New Testament, having been written more than a decade before any of the Gospels. Paul's teachings in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians are primarily focused on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, including the hardships that followers of Jesus Christ will face before Christ's return (see 1 Thessalonians 3:3), the resurrection of Christians at the Second Coming (see 1 Thessalonians 4:13–14), and the timing of Christ's coming (see 1 Thessalonians 5:1–2). Paul mentioned the Second Coming in every chapter of 1 Thessalonians. These teachings are especially valuable to Latter-day Saints, who live in the dispensation in which the Lord has said, "The time of my coming . . . is nigh at hand" (D&C 35:15).

Who wrote 1 Thessalonians?

The greeting in 1 Thessalonians 1:1 states that the epistle was sent by Paul, Silvanus (Silas), and Timotheus (Timothy). All three of these men had labored together in Thessalonica, in modern-day Greece, during Paul's second missionary journey. Although Silas and Timothy may have contributed to the writing of this Epistle to the Thessalonians, the use of "I" in several verses suggests that Paul was personally responsible for the content (see 1 Thessalonians 2:18; 3:5; 4:13; 5:27).

When and where was 1 Thessalonians written?

During his second missionary journey (about A.D. 51), Paul had labored with Silas and Timothy in Thessalonica. The three men were forced out of the city by Jewish leaders (see Acts 17:5–15). Paul later sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to give support and encouragement to Church members there. Later, Timothy reported to Paul, at Corinth, that the Thessalonian Saints had remained faithful despite persecution and that their righteous influence was spreading (see Acts 18:5; 1 Thessalonians 1:7–8; 3:6–8). It is likely that Paul wrote his First Epistle to the Thessalonians shortly after he received this news in about A.D. 52.

The short explanatory endnote (known as a subscription) that is found at the conclusion of 1 Thessalonians in some versions of the Bible incorrectly states that the epistle was written from Athens. In reality, evidence suggests that 1 Thessalonians was written from Corinth. Since both Silas and Timothy contributed to the writing of these epistles (see 1 Thessalonians 1:1), this letter could only have been written after Silas and Timothy had joined Paul in Corinth (see Acts 18:1, 5). For more information on the subscriptions found in Paul's epistles, see "When and where was 1 Corinthians written?" in chapter 38.

To whom was 1 Thessalonians written and why?

During Paul's second missionary journey, the Spirit directed Paul and his companions—Silas, Timothy, and perhaps Luke (see Acts 16:11–12)—to travel across the Aegean Sea into Macedonia. This divinely guided change in their itinerary initiated the preaching of the gospel in Europe (see Acts 16:6–11). After preaching in Philippi (see Acts 16:12–40), Paul and Silas traveled to Thessalonica. Thessalonica was the most populous and prosperous city in the ancient Greek kingdom of Macedonia because of two important features. The city was built on the best natural harbor in the Aegean Sea, and it was located on the major highway that connected Rome and modern-day Turkey. Paul commenced preaching the message of Jesus Christ at the city's Jewish synagogue, and many Jews and God-fearing Gentiles accepted the gospel (see Acts 17:1–4; 1 Thessalonians 1:9). The three men were thereafter forced out of the city by Jewish leaders (see Acts 17:5–15; see also 1 Thessalonians 2:17).

The Thessalonian converts were some of the first Europeans to embrace the gospel, and they faced

persecution as a result. They also had many questions about the Second Coming, perhaps because they were looking forward to a better time with less persecution. Therefore, in his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul wrote words of encouragement and strength, and he addressed their questions about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

What are some distinctive features of 1 Thessalonians?

One of Paul's main themes in his First Epistle to the Thessalonians is the Second Coming. He focused not on the destruction of the wicked but on the participation of the righteous at Jesus Christ's coming, especially those Saints who had died previously (see 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13–17; 5:1–10, 23). Paul illustrated the nature of the Godhead in various passages that refer to God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost (see 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 5–6; 3:11; 4:8; 5:19). Also, unlike many of Paul's other epistles, 1 Thessalonians does not contain any major rebukes or corrections but instead offers praise and commendation for the Thessalonian Saints.

Outline

1 Thessalonians 1–3 Paul expressed great appreciation for the Saints in Thessalonica and commended them for their efforts to spread the gospel. He reminded his readers of his kindly ministry among them and expressed joy for their faithfulness. He reminded the Saints

to grow in love toward one another and toward all men.

1 Thessalonians 4–5 Paul told the Saints to be holy and to sanctify themselves. He explained that when the Lord comes again, Saints who were faithful in their testimony of

Christ will be resurrected and appear with the Savior at the time of His Second Coming, and the righteous living on earth at that day will meet the Lord and the risen Saints. Paul reminded Church members to prepare and watch for the day of Christ's coming.

Commentary for 1 Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians 1:5. The Gospel Is Taught in Word and in Power

After he greeted the Thessalonian Saints (see 1 Thessalonians 1:1–4), Paul reminded them that during his mission among them he had preached the gospel “not . . . in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost” (1 Thessalonians 1:5). Concerning the significance of the gospel being taught in both word and power, **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:

“The true gospel consists of two things: The Word, and The Power. Anyone can have the word; the books in

which it is written are universally available. But the power must come from God; it is and must be dispensed according to his mind and his will to those who abide the law entitling them to receive it. The word of the gospel is the spoken or written account of what men must do to be saved. . . .

“But actual salvation comes only when the power of God is received and used; and this power is the power of the priesthood and the power of the Holy Ghost. These must operate in the lives of men; otherwise their souls cannot be cleansed; they cannot be born again; they cannot become new creatures of the Holy Ghost; they cannot put off the natural man and become saints; they cannot be sanctified by the Spirit” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 3:42–43).

1 Thessalonians 1:5–9. Those Who Are Converted Share the Gospel

Paul wrote that the converted Thessalonian Saints had become examples to nonbelievers around them (1 Thessalonians 1:7). He commended their efforts to spread the gospel, saying, “In every place your faith . . . is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing” (1 Thessalonians 1:8). The Thessalonian members were such effective missionaries that Paul and his companions did not feel a need to return to preach in the area.

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles used 1 Thessalonians 1:5–6 to explain the connection between one’s personal conversion and one’s desire to share the gospel: “Paul rejoiced in the fact that what he had told the Thessalonians was not meaningless words to them, for they had listened with great interest, and what was taught them produced a powerful desire for righteousness in their lives. . . . Paul was pleased that the gospel message had been received with such joy and happiness, despite many hardships. Finally, he noted what must have been their crowning achievement—that they were inspiring examples to all their neighbors and that from them the word of the Lord had extended to others everywhere, far beyond their boundaries. Paul paid tribute to them when he told them that wherever he traveled, he found people telling him about their remarkable good works and faith in God” (“There Am I in the Midst of Them,” *Ensign*, May 1976, 56–57).



Those who are converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ desire to share it with others, as did the Thessalonian Saints (see 1 Thessalonians 1:5–9).

1 Thessalonians 1:5–10; 2:13

What caused so many Thessalonians to become converted when Paul and his companions taught the gospel message to them? What evidence in these verses suggests that they were truly converted to the gospel?

1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:16–18; 5:23. The Second Coming of Jesus Christ

Timothy apparently took word to Paul that the Thessalonian Saints had questions about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, for Paul mentioned the Second Coming in each chapter of 1 Thessalonians. Paul sought to help the Saints recognize that the Lord’s return would be a time of deliverance, hope, and rejoicing for the righteous Saints, both living and dead. The Second Coming will also be accompanied by the destruction of the wicked—the “wrath to come,” from which the righteous will be delivered (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:4 indicates that when the Savior comes again, it will be “the end of the world, or the destruction of the wicked.” To read more specific teachings on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, see the commentary for 1 Thessalonians 4:14–5:6.

1 Thessalonians 2:1–12. Preach the Gospel with Sincere Love

In 1 Thessalonians 2:1–12, Paul spoke about his earlier ministry in Thessalonica. Paul’s language in these verses might suggest that detractors in Thessalonica were questioning Paul’s sincerity and motivations during his ministry in the city. Paul defended himself by describing the sincere and earnest manner in which he and his companions had taught and served the Saints. Paul’s words are reminiscent of those found in Doctrine and Covenants 12:8: “No one can assist in this work except he shall be humble and full of love, having faith, hope, and charity.”

President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency related a personal experience that helped him learn the importance of love as we serve and minister to others:

“The most effective missionaries, member and full-time, always act out of love. I learned this lesson as a young man. I was assigned to visit a less-active member, a successful professional many years older than I. Looking back on my actions, I realize that I had very little loving concern for the man I visited. I acted out of duty, with a

desire to report 100 percent on my home teaching. One evening, close to the end of a month, I phoned to ask if my companion and I could come right over and visit him. His chastening reply taught me an unforgettable lesson.

“No, I don’t believe I want you to come over this evening,” he said. “I’m tired. I’ve already dressed for bed. I am reading, and I am just not willing to be interrupted so that you can report 100 percent on your home teaching this month.” That reply still stings me because I knew he had sensed my selfish motivation.

“I hope no person we approach with an invitation to hear the message of the restored gospel feels that we are acting out of any reason other than a genuine love for them and an unselfish desire to share something we know to be precious” (“Sharing the Gospel,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 8).

1 Thessalonians 2:2. Speaking “with Much Contention”

Paul wrote that he and his missionary companions had preached the gospel to the Thessalonians “with much contention” (1 Thessalonians 2:2). This phrase does not mean that Paul was contentious or argumentative in his preaching; instead, it implies that he taught the gospel in the face of contention and opposition. In Thessalonica, resistance to the gospel message came from both antagonistic Jews and Gentiles (see Acts 17:5–10). Missionaries today inevitably face similar trials, but those who continue to preach despite opposition find, as did Paul, that their work is “not in vain” (1 Thessalonians 2:1).

1 Thessalonians 2:17–18. Satan Seeks to Hinder the Work

Paul had not been back to Thessalonica after he was driven out during his second missionary journey (see Acts 17:10). He said he had been unable to return because he was “hindered” by Satan from doing so (1 Thessalonians 2:18). He did not give any details about how Satan hindered him from returning to Thessalonica, but it is clear that persecution from Jews had already forced Paul to take many detours in his journey (see Acts 17:13–15). Concerning opposition to the Lord’s servants, **President Howard W. Hunter** (1907–95) noted: “Satan is always present and will do everything he can to hinder and block and defeat” (*The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, ed. Clyde J. Williams [1997], 252).

1 Thessalonians 3:10, 12; 4:1–10. Abound in Faith

Paul was very pleased with Timothy’s report of “good tidings of . . . faith and charity” among Church members in Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 3:6). Nevertheless, Paul reminded the Saints that discipleship required consistent growth and improvement. He encouraged them to “increase and abound in love one toward another,” to “abound more and more” in their efforts to please God, and to “increase more and more” in love (1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:1, 10).

A similar principle was taught by **Elder Neal A. Maxwell** (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles when he stated that “discipleship is to be lived *in crescendo*” (“Premortality, a Glorious Reality,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1985, 15). **President Henry B. Eyring** of the First Presidency spoke about the increased need for continuous spiritual growth in the latter days: “As the forces around us increase in intensity, whatever spiritual strength was once sufficient will not be enough. And whatever growth in spiritual strength we once thought was possible, greater growth will be made available to us. Both the need for spiritual strength and the opportunity to acquire it will increase at rates which we underestimate at our peril” (“Always,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1999, 9).

1 Thessalonians 4:3–5. The Law of Chastity

In Paul’s day, sexual relations outside of marriage were tolerated and accepted by many Gentiles. Since most of the new members of the Church in Thessalonica were Gentile converts who had “turned to God from idols” (1 Thessalonians 1:9), Paul felt the need to strengthen their understanding of gospel principles regarding chastity. In 1 Thessalonians 4:3–5, Paul helped these members understand that, as members of Christ’s Church, they should “abstain from fornication,” “possess [their] vessel” (control their bodies), and choose not to give in to “lust of concupiscence” (lustful passions).

Concerning the Lord’s standard of sexual purity, **Elder David A. Bednar** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated: “The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has a single, undeviating standard of sexual morality: intimate relations are proper only between a man and a woman in the marriage relationship prescribed in God’s plan. Such relations are not merely a curiosity to be explored, an appetite to be satisfied, or a type of recreation or entertainment to be pursued selfishly. They are not a conquest to be achieved or simply an act to be performed. Rather, they are in mortality one of the ultimate expressions of our divine nature and potential and a way of strengthening emotional

and spiritual bonds between husband and wife. We are agents blessed with moral agency and are defined by our divine heritage as children of God—and not by sexual behaviors, contemporary attitudes, or secular philosophies” (“We Believe in Being Chaste,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 42).

1 Thessalonians 4:7–8. Saints “Called . . . unto Holiness”

Paul told the Thessalonian Saints, “God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness” (1 Thessalonians 4:7). Since the time of the Old Testament, God’s people have been commanded to separate themselves from unholy and unclean things (see Leviticus 20:24–26). **President James E. Faust** (1920–2007) of the First Presidency explained that personal holiness comes through a combination of our efforts and God’s work of purifying our hearts: “Holiness . . . comes by faith and through obedience to God’s laws and ordinances. God then purifies the heart by faith, and the heart becomes purged from that which is profane and unworthy” (“Standing in Holy Places,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2005, 62).



1 Thessalonians 4:9–12. Increasing in Holiness

In 1 Thessalonians 4:10, Paul counseled the Saints to “increase more and more” in their love toward one another. He encouraged them to endeavor to lead a quiet life, to not meddle in the affairs of others, to work

with their own hands and avoid dependency on others, and to be honest (1 Thessalonians 4:11–12). Concerning the idea of living a quiet life, **Elder Bruce D. Porter** of the Seventy taught: “Personal prayer, study, and pondering are vital to the building up of the kingdom within our own souls. It is in quiet moments of contemplation and communion with the Almighty that we come to know and love Him as our Father” (“Building the Kingdom,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 81).

1 Thessalonians 4:11

How would Paul’s counsel in this verse help you invite the Holy Ghost more into your life? When do you build quiet time into your busy life? What benefits do you find in quiet, reflective times?

1 Thessalonians 4:14–5:6. The Second Coming of Jesus Christ

The Thessalonian Christians were apparently concerned about the fate of deceased Church members. They wondered when the righteous dead would be resurrected and whether they would have part in the Second Coming. Paul told the Saints to “sorrow not” for the dead, as do “others which have no hope” (1 Thessalonians 4:13; see also Alma 46:41). He assured the Thessalonians that the righteous Saints “which sleep in Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 4:14) will take part in the Second Coming along with the living (see 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17; see also D&C 42:45–47). These “will God bring with him” at His Second Coming (1 Thessalonians 4:14).

Elsewhere in his epistles to the Thessalonians, Paul used the Greek word *parousia* to refer to the Second Coming. *Parousia* could refer to the arrival of any person, but it was often used to describe the arrival of a ruler or emperor. In the Greco-Roman world, the arrival or visit of the emperor to a community was anticipated with extensive preparation. Paul’s use of this word helped him stress the importance of proper preparation for Jesus Christ’s return to earth.

Paul’s portrayal of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is confirmed in modern revelation (see D&C 88:96–98). **President Dallin H. Oaks** summed up latter-day teachings about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ: “Four matters are indisputable to Latter-day Saints: (1) The Savior will return to the earth in power and great glory to reign personally during a millennium of righteousness and peace. (2) At the time of His coming there will be a destruction of the wicked and a resurrection of the

righteous. (3) No one knows the time of His coming, but (4) the faithful are taught to study the signs of it and to be prepared for it” (“Preparation for the Second Coming,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2004, 7).

1 Thessalonians 4:17. “Caught Up Together”

The Joseph Smith Translation of 1 Thessalonians 4:17 reads: “Then *they who* are alive, shall be caught up together *into* the clouds *with them who remain*, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we be ever with the Lord” (in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, footnote *a*). Many Christians use the word *rapture* (from a Latin term meaning “caught up”) when referring to the time when the righteous will be caught up to meet the Savior at His coming.



The Second Coming, by Harry Anderson

1 Thessalonians 5:1–8. Jesus Christ Will Not Come to the Saints as a Thief

Paul next compared the Second Coming of Christ to the unexpected arrival of a thief (see 1 Thessalonians 5:2), a comparison earlier used by Jesus Christ (see Matthew 24:43; Luke 12:39). Paul taught that because the followers of Jesus Christ “are not in darkness”

they will not be caught off guard by the Lord’s return (1 Thessalonians 5:4–5). Paul compared the disciples of Jesus Christ to a “sober” person who is awake and alert (1 Thessalonians 5:6–8). These disciples are unimpaired by the drunkenness of worldly living that prevents the wicked from recognizing the nearness of the Lord’s coming. In modern-day scripture, the Lord has taught: “And again, verily I say unto you, the coming of the Lord draweth nigh, and it overtaketh the world as a thief in the night—therefore, gird up your loins, that you may be the children of light, and that day shall not overtake you as a thief” (D&C 106:4–5).

Concerning the timing of the Second Coming, **President Joseph Fielding Smith** (1876–1972) stated: “I do not know when he is going to come. No man knows. Even the angels of heaven are in the dark in regard to that great truth [see Matthew 24:36–37]. But this I know, that *the signs that have been pointed out are here*. The earth is full of calamity, of trouble. The hearts of men are failing them. We see the signs as we see the fig tree putting forth her leaves; and knowing this time is near, it behooves me and it behooves you, and all men upon the face of the earth, to pay heed to the words of Christ, to his apostles and watch, for we know not the day nor the hour. But I tell you this, it shall come as a thief in the night, when many of us will not be ready for it” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 3:52–53).

To read more about the importance of not waiting to prepare for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, see the commentary for Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:46–54; Matthew 24:42–51.

1 Thessalonians 5:12–13. Esteem for Church Leaders

In 1 Thessalonians 5:12–13, Paul encouraged the Saints to “know” and “esteem” those who were “over [them] in the Lord.” Although in these verses Paul did not mention specific offices as he did in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, these teachings suggest that even at this early date (around A.D. 52) there was some sort of a structure of Church leadership. Some modern scholars suggest that the early Church did not have any leadership hierarchy and that leadership structures developed much later, perhaps in the second century. It is possible, however, that the early branches of the Church had a less formal leadership structure than the bishops, elders, and deacons described later in Paul’s writings. This would parallel the early days of the Restoration, when Church leadership started with only a first and second elder, with the First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and so on developing later.

1 Thessalonians 5:19. “Quench Not the Spirit”

Toward the end of 1 Thessalonians, Paul gave several items of practical counsel on how to prepare for the Lord’s coming (see 1 Thessalonians 5:6–23). As part of his counsel, Paul asked the Saints to “quench not the Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 5:19). To quench the Spirit means to extinguish or stifle the influence of the Holy Ghost in one’s own life (see also Ephesians 4:30–31).

Elder David A. Bednar pointed out that to fully enjoy the companionship of the Spirit, we must avoid activities that will drive the Spirit from us:

“If something we think, see, hear, or do distances us from the Holy Ghost, then we should stop thinking, seeing, hearing, or doing that thing. If that which is intended to entertain, for example, alienates us from the Holy Spirit, then certainly that type of entertainment is not for us. Because the Spirit cannot abide that which is vulgar, crude, or immodest, then clearly such things are not for us. Because we estrange the Spirit of the Lord when we engage in activities we know we should shun, then such things definitely are not for us.

“. . . As we become ever more immersed in the Spirit of the Lord, we should strive to recognize impressions when they come and the influences or events that cause us to withdraw ourselves from the Holy Ghost” (“That We May Always Have His Spirit to Be with Us,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2006, 30).

1 Thessalonians 5:21. “Hold Fast That Which Is Good”

Paul invited the Thessalonian Saints to test or “prove all things”—meaning to distinguish between good and evil—and to “hold fast that which is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Teaching about what it means to “hold fast that which is good,” **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** stated:

“This exhortation was written by the Apostle Paul specifically to members of the Church. . . . He was speaking to people who had gained citizenship in the kingdom of God, who had come out of darkness into the marvelous light of Christ—people such as we are supposed to be. He is not speaking to people of the world, but to the Saints. . . .

“. . . It seems evident to me that the Apostle Paul was directing the members of the Church to hold fast to the faith. He was saying: ‘Cleave unto that which is good. Hold fast to the iron rod. Be valiant in testimony. Work out your salvation.’ That is, ‘Now that you are members of the Church, that you have come in at the gate of repentance and baptism, press forward to the end and do the things that will enable you to be saved in the everlasting kingdom of the Father’” (*Doctrines of the Restoration: Sermons and Writings of Bruce R. McConkie*, ed. Mark L. McConkie [1989], 347).

1 Thessalonians 5:22. “Abstain from All Appearance of Evil”

Paul taught the Saints to abstain from all “appearance” of evil, or in other words, from all “kinds” of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22, footnote *b*). Church officials have also used 1 Thessalonians 5:22 to teach that we should avoid appearing as though we are doing something evil. For example, **President James E. Faust** taught: “I strongly urge you that if there is any question in your minds or hearts about whether your personal conduct is right or wrong, don’t do it. It is the responsibility of the prophets of God to teach the word of God, not to spell out every jot and tittle of human conduct. If we are conscientiously trying to avoid not only evil but the very appearance of evil, we will act for ourselves and not be acted upon” (“The Devil’s Throat,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2003, 51). Paul offered similar counsel in 1 Corinthians 8:9–13.

Introduction to the Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Thessalonians

Why study 2 Thessalonians?

In his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul wrote words of counsel and clarification to members of the Church who misunderstood certain aspects of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. His teachings help modern readers understand the nature of the Apostasy and how to prepare appropriately for the Lord’s return.

Who wrote 2 Thessalonians?

As in 1 Thessalonians, the greeting in this epistle comes from Paul, Silvanus (Silas), and Timotheus (Timothy) (see 2 Thessalonians 1:1), although the use of “I” throughout the letter suggests that Paul was the primary author (see 2 Thessalonians 2:5; 3:17). Some modern scholars have questioned whether Paul actually wrote both 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians, pointing out perceived differences between the teachings in the two

epistles. However, these differences may simply reflect the fact that 2 Thessalonians was written to respond to new erroneous claims being made in Thessalonica (see 2 Thessalonians 2:2) and to present additional insights not included in 1 Thessalonians (see 2 Thessalonians 2:3–12).

When and where was 2 Thessalonians written?

This letter was probably written near the end of A.D. 52, soon after Paul wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians. Most scholars believe that Paul and his companions wrote both 1 and 2 Thessalonians while the men were together in Corinth, since the scriptures do not have any record of Paul, Silas, and Timothy being together after they each left Corinth (see Acts 18:1, 5). The subscription note found immediately after 2 Thessalonians 3:18 in some versions of the Bible was added to the text by copyists long after Paul's day, and it incorrectly states that the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians was written from Athens.

To whom was 2 Thessalonians written and why?

The themes of 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians are similar, suggesting that Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians to clarify and expand on the first epistle. It is possible that his first letter did not resolve all the questions the Thessalonian Saints had about the Second Coming. In

addition, it appears that the Thessalonians had received a fraudulent letter that claimed to be from Paul, and this letter had caused some to believe that the Second Coming had already occurred (see 2 Thessalonians 2:2). At the time Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians, he had also learned that the Thessalonian Church members were experiencing increased persecution (see 2 Thessalonians 1:4–7). Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians in order to strengthen the faith of these members and to correct doctrinal misunderstandings.

What are some distinctive features of 2 Thessalonians?

The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians provides significant details about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ that are not found in other biblical prophecies. Some examples include the ideas that the Lord will return in “flaming fire” and that the wicked will be punished with “everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord” (2 Thessalonians 1:8–9). In this epistle Paul also prophesied of the Great Apostasy, teaching that the Church would undergo a “falling away” prior to the Second Coming of the Lord (see 2 Thessalonians 2:3–12). Paul's teachings about the Apostasy remind modern Church members why the latter-day Restoration of the gospel was necessary.

Outline

2 Thessalonians 1–3 Paul corrected the false idea that the Second Coming had already

occurred. He taught that there would be an apostasy prior to the Lord's return. He counseled Church

members to work to provide for their temporal needs and not to be weary in well-doing.

Commentary for 2 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians 1:4–9. Judgment against the Wicked

Since the contents of 2 Thessalonians are similar to 1 Thessalonians, it is likely that Paul received word that his first letter did not resolve all the questions the Saints had regarding the Second Coming. Some of Paul's remarks at the beginning of this epistle also suggest that the Thessalonian Saints were facing continued persecution (see 2 Thessalonians 1:4–9). Paul spoke strongly against the Church's persecutors, saying that they would “be punished with everlasting destruction” (2 Thessalonians 1:9). The Joseph Smith Translation changes the placement of the word “everlasting” in verse 9: “Who shall be punished with destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his *everlasting* power” (Joseph Smith Translation, 2 Thessalonians 1:9).

Speaking of wicked people who seek to destroy the tender testimonies of others, the Lord warned that it would be better for them to have a millstone (a large stone used to grind wheat) hung around their neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea than to face Christ at the Day of Judgment (see Matthew 18:5–6; D&C 121:19–23).

2 Thessalonians 2:1–2, 9–15. “Be Not Soon Shaken”

Paul's words in 2 Thessalonians 2:2 suggest that some of the believers in Paul's day were alarmed or fearful that the Lord's Second Coming had already taken place. Their concerns may have resulted from doctrinal misunderstanding, or they may have been deceived by false teachings in a forged letter purportedly written by Paul (see 2 Thessalonians 2:2). Paul cautioned the Saints not to embrace information that Church leaders had not previously taught (see 2 Thessalonians 2:15).

President Boyd K. Packer (1924–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke of the continuing threat of deception in our day:

“There are some among us now who have *not* been regularly ordained by the heads of the Church [see D&C 42:11] who tell of impending political and economic chaos, the end of the world. . . . They are misleading members. . . .

“Those deceivers say that the Brethren do not know what is going on in the world or that the Brethren approve of their teaching but do not wish to speak of it over the pulpit. Neither is true. The Brethren, by virtue of traveling constantly everywhere on earth, certainly know what is going on, and by virtue of prophetic insight are able to read the signs of the times. . . .

“. . . Follow your leaders who have been duly ordained and have been publicly sustained, and you will not be led astray” (“To Be Learned Is Good If . . .,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, 73).



One of the ways to avoid being deceived in our day is to heed the counsel of authorized Church authorities.

2 Thessalonians 2:3. Apostasy Preceding the Second Coming

In order to calm the Saints’ concern that the Lord had already returned, Paul explained that before the Second Coming there would be a “falling away first” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). “Falling away” is a translation of the Greek word *apostasía*, a word that is closer in meaning to “rebellion” or “mutiny.” Paul was therefore speaking of an intentional fight against the gospel of Jesus Christ rather than a gradual movement away from it. In the Book of Mormon, Nephi’s vision of the future taught him that “the house of Israel” joined with those in the great and spacious building “to fight against the

twelve apostles of the Lamb” (1 Nephi 11:35). Apostasy is often not simply a passive letting go of truth but an active rebellion that originates within the covenant community.



New Testament Era Apostasy, by Robert T. Barrett. New Testament Apostles prophesied of the Great Apostasy, which would precede the Restoration of the gospel and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

President James E. Faust spoke about how the Apostasy was clearly foretold by New Testament Apostles:

“Some of the early Apostles knew that an apostasy would occur before the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. To the Thessalonians, Paul wrote concerning this event, ‘Let no man deceive you by any means: *for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first*’ [2 Thessalonians 2:3; italics added].

“With this falling away, priesthood keys were lost, and some precious doctrines of the Church organized by the Savior were changed. Among these were baptism by immersion; receiving the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands; the nature of the Godhead—that They are three distinct personages; all mankind will be resurrected through the Atonement of Christ, ‘both . . . the just and the unjust’ [Acts 24:15]; continuous revelation—that the heavens are not closed; and temple work for the living and the dead.

“The period that followed came to be known as the Dark Ages. This falling away was foreseen by the Apostle Peter, who declared that ‘heaven must receive [Jesus Christ] until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began’ [Acts 3:20–21]. Restitution would only be necessary if these precious things had been lost” (“The Restoration of All Things,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2006, 61–62).

The rapid process of apostasy commenced during the Apostles' lifetimes. **Elder Neal A. Maxwell** taught:

"New Testament epistles clearly indicate that serious and widespread apostasy—not just sporadic dissent—began soon. James decried 'wars and fightings among' the Church (James 4:1). Paul lamented 'divisions' in the Church and how 'grievous wolves' would not spare 'the flock' (1 Cor. 11:18; Acts 20:29–31). He knew an apostasy was coming and wrote to the Thessalonians that Jesus' second coming would not occur 'except there come a falling away first'; further advising that 'iniquity doth already work' (2 Thes. 2:3, 7).

"Near the end, Paul acknowledged how very extensive the falling away was: 'All they which are in Asia be turned away from me' (2 Tim. 1:15). . . .

"Widespread fornication and idolatry brought apostolic alarm (see 1 Cor. 5:9; Eph. 5:3; Jude 1:7). John and Paul both bemoaned the rise of false Apostles (see 2 Cor. 11:13; Rev. 2:2). The Church was clearly under siege. Some not only fell away but then openly opposed. In one circumstance, Paul stood alone and lamented that 'all men forsook me' (2 Tim. 4:16). He also decried those who 'subvert[ed] whole houses' (Titus 1:11).

"Some local leaders rebelled, as when one, who loved his preeminence, refused to receive the brethren (see 3 Jn. 1:9–10).

"No wonder President Brigham Young observed: 'It is said the Priesthood was taken from the Church, but it is not so, the Church went from the Priesthood' (in *Journal of Discourses*, 12:69).

"The concerns expressed by Peter, John, Paul, and James over the falling away were not paranoia but prophetic warnings about 'Apostasia'" ("From the Beginning," *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 18–19).

2 Thessalonians 2:3–9. "Man of Sin" and "Son of Perdition"

In addition to the "falling away" that would take place, Paul explained that the "man of sin" or "son of perdition" would be revealed prior to the Lord's Second Coming (2 Thessalonians 2:3). The word *perdition* is derived from the Latin *perditionem*, meaning "ruin" or "destruction," and it is a title given to Lucifer when he was cast out of God's presence during the premortal life (see D&C 76:26). All those who rebelled with Satan against God during the premortal existence became sons of perdition when they were cast out of God's

presence. Paul also described the "man of sin"—one who "opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4). The Joseph Smith Translation makes clear that in 2 Thessalonians 2:7–9 Paul was referring to Satan:

"For the mystery of iniquity doth already work, *and he it is who now worketh, and Christ suffereth him to work, until the time is fulfilled that he shall be taken out of the way.*

"And then shall that wicked *one* be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

"*Yea, the Lord, even Jesus, whose coming is not until after there cometh a falling away, by the working of Satan with all power, and signs and lying wonders*" (in the Bible appendix).

With the Restoration of the gospel and modern scriptures, an accurate understanding of the adversary has been restored.



Paul the Apostle, by Jeff Ward. Paul wrote that prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, Satan and his evil works would be revealed.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:7, Paul said that "the mystery of iniquity doth already work." In the New Testament, the word *mystery* refers to those things that were hidden

but have been or will be revealed (see Colossians 1:26). The hidden efforts of Satan to oppose and tear down the Church of God, therefore, will be exposed by God's servants.

2 Thessalonians 2:10–12. "Love of the Truth"

In connection with his teachings about the deceptions of Satan, Paul taught that those who refuse to accept truth will eventually lose the opportunity to receive it. Concerning those who "received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved," Paul said that "God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." This means that God will permit unbelievers to accept false doctrines and thereby forfeit their salvation (2 Thessalonians 2:10–12; see also Jacob 4:14; Alma 12:10–11).

2 Thessalonians 3:6, 11–15. "From Every Brother That Walketh Disorderly"

Paul taught that a Church member who "walketh disorderly" (2 Thessalonians 3:6, 11) was not to enjoy full association with the Church. Paul was specifically speaking about people who refused to work and support themselves (see 2 Thessalonians 3:10–12). In our day Church members are encouraged not to associate with "disorderly" people who oppose the truth. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained: "Enemies from within, traitors to the Cause, cultists who pervert the doctrines and practices which lead to salvation, often draw others away with them, and added souls lose their anticipated inheritance in the heavenly kingdom. When cultists and enemies become fixed in their opposition to the Church, and when they seek to convert others to their divisive positions, the course of wisdom is to avoid them, as Paul here directs, and to leave them in the Lord's hands" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:66; see also the commentary for Matthew 5:29–30).

Points to Ponder

- How can a proper understanding of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ bring greater peace, hope, and joy to our daily living?
- Paul referred to members of the Church as "children of light, and the children of the day" (1 Thessalonians 5:5). What can you do to invite greater spiritual light into your life?

Suggested Assignments

- After reading 1 Thessalonians 3:10, 12; 4:1–10, select someone you think has "increased more and more" in the gospel. Then interview that person to learn what they have done to grow spiritually. Make personal goals that will help you to grow spiritually yourself.
- Review 1 Thessalonians 5:6–22 and identify things you can do to be more spiritually prepared for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.
- Study 2 Thessalonians 2:1–3 along with Amos 8:11–12; Matthew 24:9–12, 24; and 1 Timothy 4:1–3. Then prepare an outline that you could use to teach someone about the reality of the Apostasy and why the Restoration of the gospel was needed.

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1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon

Introduction and Timeline for 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon

The books of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus are known as the pastoral Epistles because they contain instruction to help leaders regulate the Church. In these epistles Paul described the qualifications of bishops, who are to be examples of practical gospel living. He warned Church leaders of perilous times to come and counseled them to protect the Saints from the destructive influence of false teachings. He taught that the holy scriptures are the source of sound doctrine and instruction. Knowing that his ministry was coming to a close and that his life was nearly over, Paul acknowledged that he had endured to the end and had received the spiritual assurance that he would receive eternal life.

Paul's letter to Philemon provides readers with a poignant illustration of how seeing fellow Saints as our brothers and sisters can increase our willingness to forgive them when needed.



1. Paul wrote his letter to Philemon presumably during his house arrest in Rome, about A.D. 61 or 62.
2. Paul wrote his First Epistle to Timothy probably sometime between A.D. 62 and 66.
3. Paul wrote his Epistle to Titus between the time he wrote 1 and 2 Timothy, perhaps in A.D. 63 or 64.
4. Paul wrote 2 Timothy shortly before his death, no later than A.D. 67 or 68.

Introduction to the First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to Timothy

Why study 1 Timothy?

Paul's letters known as 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus are often called pastoral Epistles because they contain Paul's counsel to pastors or leaders in the Church (*pastor* comes from the Latin word for "shepherd"). In 1 Timothy, Paul counseled Timothy, a Church leader in Ephesus, to ensure that sound doctrine was taught and not to allow popular untruths to distract from Christ's teachings. He taught Timothy about the offices of bishop and deacon and discussed the qualifications of those who serve in these offices. Though this counsel pertains to specific offices in the early Church, much of it is applicable to all men and women who serve in the Church today. Paul also recounted his deep gratitude for the mercy he received from Jesus Christ when he was converted, and he pointed out that all believers could receive forgiveness of sins and a call to serve the Lord.

Who wrote 1 Timothy?

The salutation in 1 Timothy 1:1 identifies Paul as the author, and his authorship was widely accepted in the early Church. The vocabulary, style, and content of 1 and 2 Timothy and the other pastoral epistle, Titus, differ somewhat from Paul's other letters; however, these

differences may be the result of the fact that Paul was addressing single individuals and not entire congregations, and he probably used a scribe to compose the letters. For additional information on the use of scribes, see the commentary for Romans 16:22.

When and where was 1 Timothy written?

In about A.D. 62 or 63, Paul was released from his two-year imprisonment (house arrest) in Rome (see Acts 28:16–31). It is unknown where Paul went after leaving Rome; however, he likely traveled widely, visiting regions where he had previously established branches of the Church as well as new fields of labor. Paul's First Epistle to Timothy seems to have been written sometime between A.D. 62 and 66, while Paul was in Macedonia (see 1 Timothy 1:3).

To whom was 1 Timothy written and why?

Paul wrote this epistle to Timothy, who had served with him during his second missionary journey (see Acts 16:3). Following this mission, Timothy continued to be a faithful missionary and Church leader (see Acts 19:22; Philippians 2:19) and one of Paul's most trusted associates (see 1 Corinthians 4:17). Paul referred to Timothy

as his “own son in the faith” (1 Timothy 1:2). Timothy’s father was a Greek Gentile. Timothy had a righteous Jewish mother and grandmother who helped him learn the scriptures (see Acts 16:1; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15). Timothy is mentioned in seven of Paul’s epistles.

At the time this epistle was written, Timothy was serving as a Church leader in Ephesus (see 1 Timothy 1:3). Paul hinted that some members doubted Timothy’s leadership abilities because he was young (see 1 Timothy 4:12). Paul intended to visit Timothy in person, but he was unsure whether he would be able to do so (see 1 Timothy 3:14; 4:13). Therefore, Paul chose to write to Timothy to help the young Church leader better understand his duties.

What are some distinctive features of 1 Timothy?

Paul suggested guidelines to help Timothy identify worthy candidates to serve as bishops or deacons (see 1 Timothy 3). These guidelines helped highlight the responsibility of Church leaders to provide for members’ temporal and spiritual needs (see 1 Timothy 5). Paul also addressed the common apostate idea of asceticism—the belief that greater spirituality could be attained through strict self-denial. For example, in 1 Timothy 4:1, Paul warned that some Church members would apostatize (translated as “depart” in the King James Version of the Bible) and promote the ascetic belief that marriage should be forbidden (see 1 Timothy 4:3). To counteract this and other heretical influences, Paul gave instructions to Timothy to teach sound doctrine (see 1 Timothy 1:3–4, 10; 4:1–6, 13, 16).

Outline

1 Timothy 1 Paul cautioned against false teachings that do not edify. He gloried in the Lord Jesus Christ, who extended great mercy to save him. Paul referred to himself as the “chief” or worst of sinners, alluding to the persecution he committed against Christians before his conversion (1 Timothy 1:15). Paul reassured others that Christ’s mercy will also help them.

1 Timothy 2–3 Paul taught about the need for prayer and proper worship. He taught that Jesus

Christ is the ransom for all and is our Mediator with the Father. He instructed men and women how to conduct themselves during worship and outlined the qualifications for bishops and deacons. Paul also explained the mystery of godliness as being the condescension of Jesus Christ, His perfect life on earth, and His ascension to glory.

1 Timothy 4 Paul warned Timothy that some people will be deceived by false teachings regarding marriage and dietary practices. He spoke about

the importance of marriage and of receiving God’s creations with thankfulness. Paul taught Timothy how to deal with the false teachings of his day and those that would soon come.

1 Timothy 5–6 Paul gave Timothy guidelines to help him minister to the needs of the elderly, young people, widows, elders, and slaves. Paul described false teachers to Timothy. He also warned that “the love of money is the root of all evil” and instructed Timothy of how Saints can obtain eternal life (1 Timothy 6:10).

Commentary for 1 Timothy

1 Timothy 1:1–7; 4:6. “Teach No Other Doctrine”

Paul introduced this first letter to Timothy by proclaiming his credentials—“an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God”—thus addressing those who questioned his apostolic calling. Timothy had traveled extensively with Paul during his second and third missionary journeys. Paul loved Timothy as if he were his own faithful son and gave him many important assignments (see 1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Thessalonians 3:1–2; 2 Timothy 4:9–13). However, when Paul left Ephesus during his third missionary journey, he asked Timothy to remain behind to help lead the Church there (see Acts 20:1). In 1 Timothy 1:3, Paul again exhorted Timothy to stay in Ephesus and protect the Church from false

teachings, making sure the Saints taught “no other doctrine.” In 1 Timothy 1:3–7, Paul referred to false teachers who had once known the truth but had “swerved” and “turned aside” from what they once knew to be true. In 1 Timothy 1:19–20, Paul specifically mentioned Hymenaeus and Alexander as two who had left the faith, explaining that he had “delivered [them] unto Satan,” meaning he had excommunicated them.

An important role of any priesthood leader is to ensure that correct doctrines are taught. **President Gordon B. Hinckley** (1910–2008) stated: “I have spoken before about the importance of keeping the doctrine of the Church pure, and seeing that it is taught in all of our meetings. . . . Small aberrations in doctrinal teaching can lead to large and evil falsehoods” (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley* [1997], 620).

1 Timothy 1:4–6; 6:3–5, 20; Titus 3:9. Teaching That Does Not Lead to Edification

In 1 Timothy 1:4, Paul asked Timothy to teach Church members not to “give heed to fables and endless genealogies.” In this verse Paul was not condemning the proper practice of collecting and preserving family records. The recording of genealogy has long been practiced by God’s people (see Matthew 1:1–16; Luke 3:23–38), and elsewhere Paul made references to his own genealogy (see Romans 11:1; Philippians 3:5). In this case, Paul wrote to Timothy about “fables and endless genealogies” as examples of false ideas that simply “minister questions” and do not edify (1 Timothy 1:4) and as a rebuke to those who sought out their ancestry to prove they were “chosen,” or superior to other people. Paul wrote that “the end of the commandment [the summary or capstone of all doctrine] is charity” (1 Timothy 1:5). The Book of Mormon prophet Mormon similarly taught that “charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth forever” (Moroni 7:47).

In connection with false teachings that do not edify, Paul also wrote about “vain jangling,” which refers to fruitless discussion or intellectualizing (1 Timothy 1:6); “questions and strifes of words” (1 Timothy 6:4); and “profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called” (1 Timothy 6:20; see the commentary for 1 Timothy 6:20). Paul warned that these activities distract believers from the truth and generate strife and contention (see 1 Timothy 4:7; 6:20; Titus 3:9). In these latter days, **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that the Church is to teach God’s truths:

“In God’s Church, the only approved doctrine is God’s doctrine.

“The Church is not a debating society; it is not searching for a system of salvation; it is not a forum for social or political philosophies. It is, rather, the Lord’s kingdom with a commission to teach his truths for the salvation of men” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 3:71).

1 Timothy 1:13–16. Sinning in Ignorance

In 1 Timothy 1:13–16, Paul referred to the sins he had committed before his conversion, and he taught that he had obtained mercy from Jesus Christ because he had acted in ignorance. One of the gospel’s great eternal truths is that the Lord will not hold anyone accountable for sins committed in ignorance (see John 9:39–41; 2 Nephi 9:25–26; Mosiah 3:11; D&C 45:54). Paul taught

that he was “a pattern,” or example, to others of the power of the Savior’s grace (1 Timothy 1:16). Mercy and grace are gifts the Lord gives to those who, in their weakness, are striving to be holy (see Ether 12:27; D&C 38:14; 50:16; 101:9). As in Paul’s case, mercy allows us to repent, which in turn brings more mercy to us (see D&C 3:10; 61:2).

1 Timothy 2:5–6. Jesus Christ Is Our Mediator

Paul declared in 1 Timothy 2:5–6 that Jesus Christ is our Mediator with God. A mediator is one who intervenes between two parties, usually to restore peace and friendship. The Joseph Smith Translation provides the insight that Jesus Christ was “*ordained to be a Mediator between God and man*” (Joseph Smith Translation, 1 Timothy 2:4 [in the Bible appendix]). Because He took our sins upon Himself, Jesus Christ can redeem us and reconcile our relationship with the Father, allowing us to return to His presence. Restored scripture attests that Jesus is the Mediator of the new covenant. He justifies men and women and then perfects them (see 2 Nephi 2:9; D&C 76:69). To read more about Jesus Christ’s role as our Mediator, see the commentary for Hebrews 8:1–13.

1 Timothy 2:9–10. “Modest Apparel”

Paul encouraged women to “adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety” (1 Timothy 2:9), meaning with humility and reverence; he also taught that women should avoid costly clothing and jewelry and ornate grooming. Similar teachings are found in 1 Nephi 13:7–8; 4 Nephi 1:24; Mormon 8:36–39; and Doctrine and Covenants 42:40. Paul indicated that women should dress as those “professing godliness.” The principle of wearing modest clothing applies to both male and female members of the Church today:

“Through your dress and appearance, you can show that . . . you are a disciple of Jesus Christ and that you love Him.

“Prophets of God have continually counseled His children to dress modestly. When you are well groomed and modestly dressed, you invite the companionship of the Spirit and you can be a good influence on others” (*For the Strength of Youth* [booklet, 2011], 6).

1 Timothy 2:11–15. Women in the Church

In 1 Timothy 2:11–12, Paul said, “Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach.” Some people have taken these verses to mean that women were not allowed to speak in church in

Paul's day. However, his recommendation that women "learn in silence" may have been an effort to correct a specific problem where some women were usurping the authority of Church leaders (1 Timothy 2:11). For more information on women keeping silent in church, see the commentary for 1 Corinthians 14:34–35.



Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught about the valuable roles that women have in the Church: "Every sister in this Church who has made covenants with the Lord has a divine mandate to help save souls, to lead the women of the world, to strengthen the homes of Zion, and to build the kingdom of God. Sister Eliza R. Snow (1804–87), the second general president of the Relief Society, said that 'every sister in this church should be a preacher of righteousness . . . because we have greater and higher privileges than any other females upon the face of the earth' ('Great Indignation Meeting,' *Deseret Evening News*, 15 Jan. 1870, 2)" ("Women of Righteousness," *Ensign*, Apr. 2002, 70).

1 Timothy 2:14. Eve's Role in the Fall of Adam

In his discussion of the role of women in 1 Timothy 2:9–15, Paul wrote that Eve transgressed because she was deceived (see verse 14). This was a reference to the fact that Eve was the first to partake of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden (see Genesis 3:6). Rather than being criticized, Eve should be honored for her bold willingness to initiate mortality for all humankind. The Greek text of 1 Timothy 2:14 suggests that Paul believed Eve's transgression consisted in her overstepping her bounds by usurping authority to make a decision that affected both herself and Adam. The Greek word *parabasis*, translated in this verse as "transgression," means literally "to overstep."

President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency discussed Eve's decision to eat the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden: "It was Eve who first transgressed the limits of Eden in order to initiate the conditions of mortality. Her act, whatever its nature, was formally a transgression but eternally a glorious necessity to open the doorway toward eternal life. Adam showed his wisdom by doing the same. And thus Eve and 'Adam fell that men might be' [2 Nephi 2:25].

"Some Christians condemn Eve for her act, concluding that she and her daughters are somehow flawed by it. Not the Latter-day Saints! Informed by revelation, we celebrate Eve's act and honor her wisdom and courage in the great episode called the Fall. . . . Joseph Smith taught that it was not a 'sin,' because God had decreed it (see *The Words of Joseph Smith*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook [1980], p. 63). . . .

"Modern revelation shows that our first parents understood the necessity of the Fall. Adam declared, 'Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God' (Moses 5:10).

"Note the different perspective and the special wisdom of Eve, who focused on the purpose and effect of the great plan of happiness: 'Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient' (v. 11). In his vision of the redemption of the dead, President Joseph F. Smith saw 'the great and mighty ones' assembled to meet the Son of God, and among them was 'our glorious Mother Eve' (D&C 138:38–39)" ("The Great Plan of Happiness," *Ensign*, Nov. 1993, 73).

1 Timothy 3:1–7. Qualifications for Bishops (see also Titus 1:7–9)

The title "bishop" is derived from the Greek word *episcopos*—*epi*, which means "over" (as in the *epi* center of an earthquake, or the spot over which the quake centers), and *scopos*, meaning "look" or "watch." Therefore, an *episcopos*, or bishop, is one who watches over the flock as an overseer or supervisor. In 1 Timothy 3:1–7, Paul listed several qualifications for men who were called as bishops. The attributes specified by Paul—including vigilance, sobriety, generosity, and patience—are valuable for all disciples of Jesus Christ, regardless of their calling. Speaking to bishops, **President Gordon B. Hinckley** identified similar qualifications needed for priesthood leaders in our day:

“You must be men of integrity. You must stand as examples to the congregations over which you preside. You must stand on higher ground so that you can lift others. You must be absolutely honest, for you handle the funds of the Lord. . . .

“Your goodness must be as an ensign to your people. Your morals must be impeccable. The wiles of the adversary may be held before you because he knows that if he can destroy you, he can injure an entire ward. You must exercise wisdom in all of your relationships lest someone read into your observed actions some taint of moral sin. You cannot succumb to the temptation to read pornographic literature or even in the secrecy of your own chamber to view pornographic films. Your moral strength must be such that if ever you are called upon to sit in judgment on the questionable morals of others, you may do so without personal compromise or embarrassment” (“The Shepherds of Israel,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2003, 60–61).

1 Timothy 3:8–13. Deacons in the Early Church

The word *deacon* comes from a Greek word meaning “servant” or “minister.” The office of deacon seems to have been a preparatory one since Paul did not prohibit “a novice” (a recent convert) from being called as a deacon but did prohibit a novice from being called as a bishop (see 1 Timothy 3:6). Other requirements for deacons were similar to those for bishops, including the requirement that “deacons be the husbands of one wife” (1 Timothy 3:12; compare verse 2).

President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) explained the different marital requirements for deacons of the early Church and for deacons today: “It was the judgment of Paul that a deacon in that day should be a married man. That does not apply to our day. Conditions were different in the days of Paul. In that day a minister was not considered qualified to take part in the ministry until he was thirty years of age. Under those conditions deacons, teachers, and priests were mature men. This is not the requirement today” (*Answers to Gospel Questions*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith, 5 vols. [1957–66], 1:129). To read about the office of deacon in today’s Church, see Doctrine and Covenants 20:57–60; 84:26–27, 30, 111; 107:85.

1 Timothy 4:1–5. “Forbidding to Marry”

In Paul’s day, extreme asceticism—the practice of abstaining from physical pleasures in an effort to overcome desires of the flesh—was a threat to the Church (see 1 Corinthians 7:1–5 and the commentary for Colossians 2:20–23). Although Paul did not expound

on the doctrine of marriage in this particular passage, other verses in the pastoral Epistles reflect Paul’s consistent message that marriage and family are ordained of God. For example, Paul taught that bishops and deacons should be married and serve as good fathers (see 1 Timothy 3:2, 4, 12; Titus 1:6–7), that capable adults should provide for the temporal needs of their family (see 1 Timothy 5:8), that married women should love their husbands and children and care for their household (see 1 Timothy 5:14; Titus 2:4–5), and that the last days would be characterized by disobedience to parents (see 2 Timothy 3:2).



Elder M. Russell Ballard spoke of modern influences that threaten marriage and the family today: “False prophets and false teachers . . . attempt to change the God-given and scripturally based doctrines that protect the sanctity of marriage, the divine nature of the family, and the essential doctrine of personal morality. They advocate a redefinition of morality to justify fornication, adultery, and homosexual relationships. Some openly champion the legalization of so-called same-gender marriages. To justify their rejection of God’s immutable laws that protect the family, these false prophets and false teachers even attack the inspired proclamation on the family issued to the world in 1995 by the First Presidency and the Twelve Apostles” (“Beware of False Prophets and False Teachers,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 64; see also D&C 49:15).

1 Timothy 4:7–8. Physical Exercise

Paul urged Timothy to “exercise thyself . . . unto godliness.” Paul then pointed out that physical exercise “profiteth little” (meaning that its positive effects were only temporary), whereas “godliness is profitable unto all things” (1 Timothy 4:7–8). This contrast would have been particularly poignant to Paul’s audience, since an athletic, fit body was highly valued in the Roman culture, and athletes trained and exercised in gymnasiums throughout the empire. Paul rejected the overvaluation of physical fitness and taught that reading, exhortation, doctrine, and cultivating gifts of the Spirit should take higher priority (see 1 Timothy 4:13–15).

Caring for our physical bodies is still important: “Your body is a temple, a gift from God. You will be blessed as you care for your body. . . . To care for your body, eat nutritious food, exercise regularly, and get enough sleep. Practice balance and moderation in all aspects of your physical health” (*For the Strength of Youth* [2011], 25).

1 Timothy 5:1–16. Caring for Others’ Temporal Needs

In 1 Timothy 5:1–16, Paul taught true principles about welfare assistance. Respect and concern for the elderly and widows is a godly principle, and although Paul’s instructions in these verses applied specifically to widows, many of the principles can be applied more broadly in our day to caring for family members and others in need. For example, Paul taught that a widow could qualify for welfare assistance only if she was righteous and did not have children or other relatives who could care for her (see 1 Timothy 5:4, 10). If family members would assist widows, the Church could avoid becoming “burdened down” (1 Timothy 5:16, footnote *b*). The reference in 1 Timothy 5:9 to widows being “taken into the number” may mean that certain widows were numbered among those receiving welfare assistance from the Church.

Paul then wrote that “if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith” (1 Timothy 5:8). The role of fathers to provide temporally for their families was important in Paul’s day, as it is today. **President Gordon B. Hinckley** said: “From the early days of this Church, husbands have been considered the breadwinners of the family. I believe that no man can be considered a member in good standing who refuses to work to support his family if he is physically able to do so” (“The Need for Greater Kindness,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2006, 58). Although fathers are considered responsible to provide for their families, modern prophets have also taught that families’ individual “circumstances may necessitate

individual adaptation” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129).

1 Timothy 5:22. “Lay Hands Suddenly on No Man”

Paul counseled Timothy, “Lay hands suddenly on no man” (1 Timothy 5:22). This meant that men were not to be ordained without proper preparation. That preparation included ensuring that the one to be ordained was spiritually mature and worthy (see the commentary for 1 Timothy 3:1–7) and seeking the Lord’s guidance (see Acts 1:24–26). **Elder Richard J. Maynes** of the Presidency of the Seventy explained: “When Paul instructed Timothy, he said, ‘Lay hands suddenly on no man’ (1 Timothy 5:22). He knew that prayer, pondering, and inspiration must precede the giving of callings” (“Words of the Early Apostles: Building Up the Church,” *Ensign*, Sept. 2003, 45; see also Articles of Faith 1:5).



1 Timothy 6:6–19. Counsel Concerning Wealth

In 1 Timothy 6:6–19, Paul warned Timothy of the destructive influence that riches can have on those whose hearts are set on the things of the world. Paul’s warnings can be summarized by his statement that “the love of money is the root of all evil” (1 Timothy 6:10). Paul also spoke about people who had “coveted after” money and as a result had “erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:10).

Elder Robert D. Hales (1932–2017) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke about how a love of money and possessions can affect our spirituality:

“Our world is fraught with feelings of entitlement. Some of us feel embarrassed, ashamed, less worthwhile if our family does not have everything the neighbors have. As a result, we go into debt to buy things we can’t

afford—and things we do not really need. Whenever we do this, we become poor temporally *and* spiritually. We give away some of our precious, priceless agency and put ourselves in self-imposed servitude. Money we could have used to care for ourselves and others must now be used to pay our debts. What remains is often only enough to meet our most basic physical needs. Living at the subsistence level, we become depressed, our self-worth is affected, and our relationships with family, friends, neighbors, and the Lord are weakened. We do not have the time, energy, or interest to seek spiritual things. . . .

“. . . When faced with the choice to buy, consume, or engage in worldly things and activities, we all need to learn to say to one another, ‘We *can’t* afford it, even though we want it!’ or ‘We can afford it, but we don’t *need* it—and we really don’t even want it!’ . . .

“Whenever we want to experience or possess something that will impact us and our resources, we may want to ask ourselves, ‘Is the benefit temporary, or will it have eternal value and significance?’ Truthfully answering these questions may help us avoid excessive debt and other addictive behavior” (“Becoming Provident Providers Temporally and Spiritually,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 8–10).

1 Timothy 6:9–10, 17–19

What are some of the potential consequences Paul mentioned if “the love of money” becomes a priority? What did Paul encourage wealthy people to do with their money? What should your attitude be toward seeking riches and using wealth?

1 Timothy 6:15–16. Can Man Approach God?

Paul said that “no man hath seen, nor can see [God]” (1 Timothy 6:16). However, the Joseph Smith Translation of 1 Timothy 6:15–16 makes clear that a person *can* see God if he or she is clean and worthy:

“Which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, to whom be honor and power everlasting;

“Whom no man hath seen, nor can see, unto whom no man can approach, only he who hath the light and the hope of immortality dwelling in him” (in the Bible appendix).

Elsewhere in the New Testament we learn that man may see and approach God (see Acts 7:55–56; Revelation 3:21; 22:3–4; and the commentary for John 1:18).

1 Timothy 6:20. Science

Paul told Timothy to avoid “profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science” (1 Timothy 6:20). In this verse, “science” is a translation of the Greek term *gnōseōs*, which means “knowledge,” and the term was probably referring specifically to the Gnostic movement that was then finding its way into early Christianity. Gnostics believed that salvation was obtained by being instructed in secret knowledge (called *gnosis*). Gnosticism was a major source of controversy in second-century Christianity. To read more about this movement, see “To whom was 1 John written and why?” in chapter 52.

Introduction to the Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to Timothy

Why study 2 Timothy?

Chronologically, 2 Timothy appears to be Paul’s final letter in the New Testament, having been written shortly before his death (see 2 Timothy 4:6). It contains the reason why Paul labored so diligently in his ministry: his conviction that he had been called by Jesus Christ, who had “abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10). Having witnessed the difficulties that false teachers can cause for Church members, Paul encouraged Timothy to trust in the scriptures and in Church leaders (see 2 Timothy 3:14–17) and to rely on true doctrine (see 2 Timothy 4:2). Modern readers can easily see the accuracy of Paul’s prophetic description of the

“perilous times” that would exist in the last days (see 2 Timothy 3:1–7). The Second Epistle to Timothy emphasizes the power that comes from having a testimony of Jesus Christ (see 2 Timothy 1:7–8).

Who wrote 2 Timothy?

The epistle states that it was written by the Apostle Paul (see 2 Timothy 1:1). This letter is one of the pastoral Epistles, along with 1 Timothy and Titus.

When and where was 2 Timothy written?

Paul wrote of being imprisoned frequently (see 2 Corinthians 11:23), and the scriptural record specifically mentions imprisonments in Philippi, Jerusalem,

Caesarea, and Rome. In 2 Timothy, however, Paul alludes to another imprisonment in Rome, which was apparently a separate incident from when he was under house arrest there earlier (see Acts 28:30–31). In the imprisonment spoken of in 2 Timothy, Paul was in chains (see 2 Timothy 1:16; 2:9), he was held in a cold cell or dungeon (see 2 Timothy 4:13, 21), and his friends struggled to locate him (see 2 Timothy 1:17). Luke was apparently his only contact (see 2 Timothy 4:11), and Paul expected that his life was coming to an end (see 2 Timothy 4:6–8). According to early Christian traditions, Paul was executed during the persecutions of the Roman Emperor Nero. Since Nero died in A.D. 68, the Second Epistle to Timothy may have been written about A.D. 67 or 68, just prior to Paul’s martyrdom.

To whom was 2 Timothy written and why?

In this letter, Paul encouraged Timothy and offered strength to help him carry on after Paul’s impending death. Paul instructed Timothy on how to serve effectively in strengthening the faith of others (see 2 Timothy 2:15–17, 22–26; 4:1–2, 5).

death. Paul was aware that his time was short and he desired to see Timothy, whom Paul figuratively called “my dearly beloved son” (2 Timothy 1:1; see also 1 Timothy 1:2). At the end of his letter, Paul requested that Timothy and Mark visit him and bring him a few items that he had left behind (see 2 Timothy 4:9–13).

What are some distinctive features of 2 Timothy?

While writing this epistle, Paul was expecting to be put to death shortly (see 2 Timothy 4:6–8). This letter contains his reflections about the blessings and difficulties of serving as “a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles” (2 Timothy 1:11). Paul declared, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness” (2 Timothy 4:7–8), indicating that he had a personal assurance that he would inherit eternal life. As one who had ministered for Jesus Christ for over 30 years, Paul was in an excellent position to instruct strong and alive in his life. **Elder David A. Bednar** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles pointed out: “These four words—‘Receive the Holy Ghost’—are not a pas-

Outline

2 Timothy 1 Paul spoke of the gift and power of God that is received through priesthood ordination. He taught that the “spirit of fear” does not come from God and that we should not be ashamed of our testimony of Jesus Christ (see 2 Timothy 1:7–8). Paul testified that he was called by Jesus Christ to be “a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles” (2 Timothy 1:11).

2 Timothy 2 Paul used the imagery of a good soldier, a victorious athlete, and a hardworking farmer to illustrate the need for endurance to receive eternal glory. He contrasted true and false teachers, as well as honorable and dishonorable vessels. He warned Timothy to avoid controversies and to patiently teach those who need repentance.

2 Timothy 3–4 Paul described the evil conditions of the last days and encouraged Timothy to use the scriptures in his role as a priesthood leader. He wrote of his impending death and declared, “I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7). Paul testified that the Lord would deliver him to the “heavenly kingdom” (2 Timothy 4:18).

Commentary for 2 Timothy

2 Timothy 1:5

According to this verse, who passed on his or her faith to Timothy? What can you do to help your family members develop true faith?

2 Timothy 1:6, 14. “Stir Up the Gift of God”

In the opening of his Second Epistle to Timothy, Paul encouraged Timothy to “stir up the gift of God, which is in thee” (2 Timothy 1:6); this was an admonition to Timothy to revive the gift of the Holy Ghost and keep it

sive pronouncement; rather, they constitute a priesthood injunction—an authoritative admonition to act and not simply to be acted upon (see 2 Nephi 2:26). The Holy Ghost does not become operative in our lives merely because hands are placed upon our heads and those four important words are spoken. As we receive this ordinance, each of us accepts a sacred and ongoing responsibility to desire, to seek, to work, and to so live that we indeed ‘receive the Holy Ghost’ and its attendant spiritual gifts” (“Receive the Holy Ghost,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 95).

2 Timothy 1:7–8. “God Hath Not Given Us the Spirit of Fear”

Paul had been imprisoned and endured severe persecution himself, so he knew firsthand how persecution could cause followers of Christ to fear. **President Thomas S. Monson** (1927–2018) quoted 2 Timothy 1:7 as he encouraged members of the Church not to become fearful about the future:



Paul dictating the Epistle to the Ephesians. Paul was imprisoned on several occasions, and even when in prison, he offered words of encouragement.

“It would be easy to become discouraged and cynical about the future—or even fearful of what might come—if we allowed ourselves to dwell only on that which is wrong in the world and in our lives. Today, however, I’d like us to turn our thoughts and our attitudes away from the troubles around us and to focus instead on our blessings as members of the Church. The Apostle Paul declared, ‘God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind’ [2 Timothy 1:7]. . . .

“The history of the Church in this, the dispensation of the fulness of times, is replete with the experiences of those who have struggled and yet who have remained steadfast and of good cheer as they have made the gospel of Jesus Christ the center of their lives. This attitude is what will pull us through whatever comes our way. It will not remove our troubles from us but rather will enable us to face our challenges, to meet them head on, and to emerge victorious” (“Be of Good Cheer,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 89).

2 Timothy 1:8–13; 2:1–14. “Be Not . . . Ashamed of the Testimony of Our Lord”

Paul reflected on his life of discipleship and encouraged Timothy, “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord” (2 Timothy 1:8). Paul himself was not ashamed of his faith, for he knew in whom he had believed (see 2 Timothy 1:12). He counseled Timothy to “hold fast” to the doctrines once he had learned them (2 Timothy 1:13), and this counsel certainly applies to us today. Paul anticipated that he would soon be put to death by the Romans, yet he knew that Jesus Christ had “abolished death” (2 Timothy 1:10).

Recognizing that Timothy too would be a “partaker of the afflictions of the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:8), Paul exhorted Timothy to faithfulness by using the metaphors of a good soldier who dutifully endures hardships and sets aside other affairs to please his superior (see 2 Timothy 2:3–4), an athlete who can be victorious only if he acts according to the established rules (see verse 5), and a hardworking farmer who must toil to harvest the fruits of his labors (see verse 6). At the heart of Paul’s encouragement to Timothy was an understanding that a disciple must be willing to endure hardships in order to help others obtain salvation through Jesus Christ (see verse 10).

2 Timothy 2:15–16, 19, 22–25

In these verses, Paul counseled Timothy to do several things. How might this counsel to Timothy benefit someone who is called to serve in the Church today? How might it benefit any person who wants to live righteously?

2 Timothy 2:22. Fleeing “Youthful Lusts”

Paul encouraged Timothy to “flee also youthful lusts” and to sincerely seek after “righteousness, faith, charity, peace” with a pure heart (2 Timothy 2:22). Concerning youthful lusts, **President Gordon B. Hinckley** taught: “We cannot say it frequently enough. Turn away from youthful lusts. Stay away from drugs. They can absolutely destroy you. Avoid them as you would a terrible disease, for that is what they become. Avoid foul and filthy talk. It can lead to destruction. Be absolutely honest. Dishonesty can corrupt and destroy. Observe the Word of Wisdom. You cannot smoke; you must not smoke. You must not chew tobacco. You cannot drink liquor. . . . You must rise above these things which beckon with a seductive call” (“Converts and Young Men,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 49).

2 Timothy 3:1–7. “Perilous Times”

In 2 Timothy 3:1–7, Paul prophesied about the terrible difficulties and wickedness that will cover the earth during the “perilous times” leading up to the Second Coming (2 Timothy 3:1). (Note that the footnotes for verses 1–7 are helpful in understanding the terms used in the verses.) **President Boyd K. Packer** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke about the key to gaining spiritual safety in the last days: “We live in those ‘perilous times’ which the Apostle Paul prophesied would come in the last days. If we are to be safe individually, as families, and secure as a church, it will be through ‘obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel’ [Articles of Faith 1:3]” (“The Test,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 88).



2 Timothy 3:8. Who Are “Jannes and Jambres”?

According to a Jewish tradition, Jannes and Jambres were the names of the two magicians in Pharaoh’s court who opposed Moses and Aaron (see Exodus 7:10–12).

2 Timothy 3:14–17. The Scriptures Provide “Instruction in Righteousness”

According to Paul, “the holy scriptures . . . are able to make thee wise unto salvation” and “all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:15–16). These admonitions help us understand the importance of teaching the scriptures to our children. **Elder David A. Bednar** spoke about how scripture study brings divine direction and protection: “The scriptures contain the words of Christ and are a reservoir of living water to which we have ready access and from which we can drink deeply and long. You and I must look to and come unto Christ,

who is ‘the fountain of living waters’ (1 Nephi 11:25; compare Ether 8:26; 12:28), by reading (see Mosiah 1:5), studying (see D&C 26:1), searching (see John 5:39; Alma 17:2), and feasting (see 2 Nephi 32:3) upon the words of Christ as contained in the holy scriptures. By so doing, we can receive both spiritual direction and protection during our mortal journey” (“A Reservoir of Living Water” [Church Educational System fireside for young adults, Feb. 4, 2007], 1).

2 Timothy 4:1–5. False Teachers

Paul’s words in 2 Timothy 4:1–4 foreshadow the coming of the Great Apostasy, when people would “not endure sound doctrine” but instead would seek after false teachers who would say what their listeners’ “itching ears” wanted to hear. The reference to “itching ears” might be more easily understood as describing those who choose to listen only to those things that they wish to hear.

2 Timothy 4:6–8. “I Have Fought a Good Fight”

Knowing that the end of his life was approaching, Paul wrote that he was “ready to be offered,” implying that he was ready to give up his life as a sacrifice to the Lord (2 Timothy 4:6). He then used the metaphor of a victorious athlete to describe the completion of his mission: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course” (2 Timothy 4:7). **Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin** (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught about how Church members can faithfully finish their course: “Enduring to the end means that we have planted our lives firmly on gospel soil, staying in the mainstream of the Church, humbly serving our fellow men, living Christlike lives, and keeping our covenants. Those who endure are balanced, consistent, humble, constantly improving, and without guile. Their testimony is not based on worldly reasons—it is based on truth, knowledge, experience, and the Spirit” (“Press On,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 101).

2 Timothy 4:8. “Crown of Righteousness”

Continuing with his metaphor comparing himself to a triumphant athlete, Paul spoke about the “crown of righteousness” that was “laid up” for him (2 Timothy 4:8), a reference to the crowns of olive branches that were given to the victors in ancient Greek athletic contests. Paul then pointed out that an eternal crown will be given to all Saints who righteously endure to the end and prepare for the Second Coming of the Lord. Paul testified that throughout his persecution, “the Lord stood with [him], and strengthened” him as he preached the gospel (2 Timothy 4:17).

Introduction to the Epistle of Paul to Titus

Why study Titus?

Paul's letter to Titus, like his letters to Timothy, contains timeless counsel from the Apostle Paul to a local Church leader. Paul wrote that the "hope of eternal life" was first promised by God in the pre-earth life "before the world began" (Titus 1:2). He taught that the Saints should look forward to "that blessed hope" of exaltation and to the Second Coming (Titus 2:13). Paul also wrote to Titus about the "washing of regeneration" and the "renewing of the Holy Ghost," alluding to the ordinance of baptism and the purifying effect of receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, both of which are preparatory to being "made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:5, 7). Paul's inspired counsel reminds modern Christians that the doctrines and ordinances of the gospel bring hope for eternal life.

Who wrote Titus?

Titus 1:1 states that the epistle was written by the Apostle Paul. This letter is one of the pastoral Epistles, along with 1 and 2 Timothy (see "Who wrote 1 Timothy?" in chapter 47).

When and where was Titus written?

Very few details are known about Paul's ministry and travels after he was released from his first Roman imprisonment in A.D. 62 or 63 (see Acts 28). It is likely

that Paul wrote the Epistle to Titus between his writing of 1 and 2 Timothy, perhaps in A.D. 63 or 64. Paul did not specify his location when he wrote the Epistle to Titus.

To whom was Titus written and why?

This epistle was written by Paul "to Titus, mine own son after the common faith" (Titus 1:4). Titus was born to Greek parents (Galatians 2:3) and had been converted to the gospel by Paul himself. After his conversion, Titus labored with Paul to spread the gospel and organize the Church. He helped gather donations for the poor in Jerusalem (see 2 Corinthians 8:6, 16–23) and accompanied Paul to the Jerusalem council (see Galatians 2:1). Titus was personally entrusted to bring greater unity to the branches in Corinth (see 2 Corinthians 7:5–15). Paul wrote to Titus to strengthen him in his assignment to lead and care for the branch of the Church in Crete in spite of opposition (see Titus 1:10–11; 2:15; 3:10).

What are some distinctive features of Titus?

The Epistle of Titus provides the earliest evidence that the Church had been established on the Greek island of Crete in the Mediterranean Sea. Titus had the responsibility of calling new bishops on the island. Paul listed some of the spiritual qualifications for bishops (see Titus 1:6–9). In addition, Paul gave specific advice to men, women, and servants on proper behavior for Saints (see Titus 2:2–10).

Outline

Titus 1 Paul instructed Titus to ordain Church leaders; then he listed some qualifications for bishops. He instructed Titus to correct heresies and to rebuke false teachers who "profess that they know God; but in works they deny him" (Titus 1:16).

Titus 2 Paul encouraged Titus to instruct elderly Church members to set examples for the younger Saints. He also asked Titus to teach servants to submit to their masters. Paul explained the manner in which disciples should live as they prepare for the Lord's return. He described

the redemption brought about through Jesus Christ.

Titus 3 Paul taught that Church members are to be good citizens and righteous followers of Jesus Christ after baptism. Through baptism, we may receive eternal life through the Lord's grace.

Commentary for Titus

Titus 1:2. Premortality

In Titus 1:2, Paul spoke of "eternal life, which God . . . promised before the world began." This verse, along with other passages in the Bible, attests that we lived

before we were born into mortality (see Job 38:7; Jeremiah 1:5; Romans 8:29; Ephesians 1:4; Hebrews 12:9; Revelation 12:7).

Titus 1:7–9. Qualifications for Bishops

Titus presided over the branch of the Church on the Greek island of Crete and thus had authority to call

bishops to oversee Church members. In Titus 1:7–9, Paul outlined a list of qualifications for bishops. To read more about these qualifications, see the commentary for 1 Timothy 3:1–7.

Titus 1:10–11. “Teaching . . . for Filthy Lucre’s Sake”

Paul warned Titus about “unruly and vain talkers and deceivers” who sought after “filthy lucre” (Titus 1:10–11). “Filthy lucre” refers to money obtained through dishonest means. Dishonest people often teach “things which they ought not” (Titus 1:11) for money and the praise of the world. The Book of Mormon refers to this activity as “priestcraft” (2 Nephi 26:29).

Titus 1:12. The Character of “the Cretians”

As Paul warned about false and greedy teachers among Titus’s own people, he pointed out that the people of Crete—“Cretians”—had a reputation for being “liars, evil beasts,” and “slow bellies” (Titus 1:12). Ancient writers such as Cicero, Livy, Plutarch, and Polybius similarly reported that the people of Crete were greedy. Historically, the word *Cretan* came to be synonymous with dishonesty. The term “slow bellies” in this verse is better translated as “idle bellies” and carries the idea of lazy gluttony.

Titus 1:14–15. “Unto the Pure All Things Are Pure”

Church members in Crete had apparently been influenced by Jewish teachings that some things were either ritually pure or impure. In Titus 1:15, Paul taught that “unto the pure all things are pure,” meaning that purity is an inner spiritual condition that cannot be affected by touching or partaking of something that had been declared to be ritually unclean. The Joseph Smith Translation of Titus 1:15 reads, “Unto the pure, *let* all things *be* pure” (in Titus 1:15, footnote *a*).

Titus 2:1–12. The Effect of “Sound Doctrine”

Because false teachings were creeping in among the Saints on the Isle of Crete, Paul urged Titus to teach “sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1). Paul then gave several examples of how true doctrine will guide the behavior of men and women, old and young, and servants.

President Dallin H. Oaks stressed the value of teaching the doctrine of the gospel: “Well-taught doctrines and principles have a more powerful influence on behavior than rules. When we teach gospel doctrine and principles, we can qualify for the witness and guidance

of the Spirit to reinforce our teaching” (“Gospel Teaching,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 79).

President Boyd K. Packer also taught:

“True doctrine, understood, changes attitudes and behavior.

“The study of the doctrines of the gospel will improve behavior quicker than a study of behavior will improve behavior. Preoccupation with unworthy behavior can lead to unworthy behavior. That is why we stress so forcefully the study of the doctrines of the gospel” (“Little Children,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 17).

Titus 2:14. “Peculiar People”

Paul told Titus that Christ “gave himself for us” so that we could become “a peculiar people” (Titus 2:14). To read about the meaning of the word *peculiar*, see the commentary for 1 Peter 2:9–10.

Titus 3:5. “The Washing of Regeneration, and Renewing of the Holy Ghost”

In Titus 3:5, Paul wrote that we are saved through Christ’s mercy “by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” The “washing of regeneration” is baptism; the Greek word translated as “regeneration” suggests the idea of re-creation. At baptism a person enters into a covenant relationship with Christ and is created anew in a sinless state, becoming “a new creature” (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15). Just as a newborn is given a name, those who are baptized take upon themselves a new name—the name of Jesus Christ—and covenant to strive to live like Him.

Elder Christoffel Golden Jr. of the Seventy spoke about the sanctifying effect of the Holy Ghost: “Only the Atonement can rid man of sin, making one justified in the sight of God. Afterward comes the gift of sanctification—being made clean, pure, and spotless—which can only be dispensed through the power of the Holy Ghost on conditions of obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“Paul himself testified that he had been baptized for a remission of sins (see Acts 22:12–16) and reminded Titus that we would be saved ‘not by works of righteousness which we have done, but . . . by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost’ (Titus 3:5)” (“Words of the Early Apostles: Grace,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2003, 51).

Introduction to the Epistle of Paul to Philemon

Why study Philemon?

Philemon is perhaps the most personal of all Paul's letters, and it clearly illustrates the fact that when people join the Church of Jesus Christ, they become brothers and sisters in the gospel. One principle that Paul taught Philemon was that when a person is offended or hurt by another, it is the injured person's duty to forgive the wrongdoer (see Philemon 1:15–17; see also Matthew 18:21–35; D&C 64:9).

Who wrote Philemon?

The Epistle to Philemon was sent by the Apostle Paul and Timothy (see Philemon 1:1).

When and where was Philemon written?

The Epistle to Philemon was prepared by Paul while the Apostle was in prison, presumably during his house arrest in Rome about A.D. 61 or 62 (see Philemon 1:1, 9; see also Acts 28:14–31). It was probably written around the same time as Colossians and perhaps Ephesians (compare Philemon 1:23–24 to Colossians 4:10–11, 14).

To whom was Philemon written and why?

Paul wrote this Epistle to Philemon, a Greek convert who probably lived in Colossae (see Colossians 4:9). He allowed a Church congregation to meet in his home (see Philemon 1:2, 5). Philemon owned a slave named Onesimus, who had run away from Philemon and then sought help from Paul. Onesimus subsequently converted to the gospel (see Philemon 1:10–12). Paul wrote

to Philemon to encourage him to receive Onesimus back without the severe punishments that would usually be inflicted on runaway slaves (see Philemon 1:17). Paul said that Onesimus had changed from being “unprofitable” to “profitable” for both Paul and Philemon and that Philemon should “therefore receive him” (Philemon 1:10–12). More significantly, Paul suggested that Onesimus was now “a brother beloved” since he had come unto the Lord (Philemon 1:16). Paul even offered to make up any financial loss suffered by Philemon because of Onesimus being “unprofitable” (see Philemon 1:18–19).

In this letter, Paul neither approved of nor opposed the institution of slavery (in the New Testament Judeo-Christian culture, slavery, or servitude, was an accepted part of society), but instead he emphasized how Philemon's identity as a Christian ought to dictate the way he treated his servant. For more information on slavery in New Testament times, see the commentary for Romans 6:12–23.

What are some distinctive features of Philemon?

Philemon is the shortest of Paul's epistles. It is a letter addressed to a private individual; as such, it does not include much doctrinal content. Nevertheless, Paul's plea for Philemon to reconcile with the slave Onesimus illustrates how the doctrines of the gospel apply to daily life—in this case, showing that our relationship with Jesus Christ brings us into a familial relationship with all other followers of Christ and highlighting the importance of mercy and forgiveness in Christian living.

Outline

Philemon 1 Paul greeted Philemon and the Church members who were	meeting in Philemon's house. Paul encouraged Philemon to receive back	the runaway slave Onesimus as he would receive Paul himself.
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Commentary for Philemon

Philemon 1:7, 12, 20. “Refresh My Bowels in the Lord”

In Philemon 1:7, 12, and 20, the original Greek word translated as “bowels” referred to one's “inner parts,” meaning one's feelings and affections. Some modern Bible translators have chosen to translate this word as “heart” rather than “bowels.” When Paul spoke of the

Saints' bowels and his own bowels being refreshed (see Philemon 1:7, 20), he was referring to their hearts being comforted and their emotions heightened by others.

Philemon 1:8–9, 18. Paul's Appeal to Philemon

Onesimus was a runaway slave who belonged to Philemon. Onesimus had fled to where Paul was imprisoned and was subsequently converted to the

gospel. Paul then wrote to Philemon to admonish him to receive Onesimus back as “a brother beloved” (Philemon 1:16).

Paul explained that he had chosen not to use his authority as an Apostle of Jesus Christ to demand that Philemon do “that which is convenient”—to receive Onesimus back (Philemon 1:8). Instead, Paul simply requested that Philemon honor his wishes because of Paul’s advanced age and his suffering as a prisoner (see Philemon 1:9).

It may seem strange that Paul would suggest that Philemon might accept Onesimus back because it was “convenient” (Philemon 1:8). However, at the time the King James Version of the Bible was produced, *convenient* could mean “suitable” or “fitting.” The original Greek word translated as “convenient” is formed from a verb meaning “to come up to,” and the term carries the idea of measuring up to a certain mark or standard. Paul’s use of the word hints that Philemon should forgive Onesimus because it was the most fitting or becoming thing for a true follower of Christ “to come up to.” Paul then set an example of Christian charity when he offered to personally compensate Philemon for any financial loss that resulted from Onesimus’s actions (see Philemon 1:18).

Philemon 1:16. Roman Slavery

Under Roman practices of the time, slaves were at the mercy of their owners. Runaway slaves who were recovered were sometimes branded on the forehead, severely beaten, sent away to perform hard menial tasks, thrown into amphitheaters with dangerous beasts, and in extreme cases, killed. When Paul requested that Philemon receive Onesimus back not as a servant but as a beloved brother, he was asking Philemon not to inflict on Onesimus the customary punishment of a runaway slave (see Philemon 1:10, 16).

Points to Ponder

- Paul listed qualifications for bishops in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:7–9. Why might these qualities be helpful for all Saints to study and develop? Which of these attributes do you desire to obtain?
- Consider Paul’s counsel to be “an example of the believers” (1 Timothy 4:12). What are some of your behaviors that set a righteous example for others? What might be some areas where you could improve?

Suggested Assignments

- Compare 2 Timothy 3:1–7 to 2 Nephi 28:3–9 and Doctrine and Covenants 1:15–16. Write a paragraph pointing out evidence that we are living in “perilous times” in our day (1 Timothy 3:1). Then write about what you will do to protect yourself from the evils that the scriptures speak about.
- Study 2 Timothy 3:15–17 and make a list of how the holy scriptures have blessed your life. Consider sharing on some form of social media how the scriptures have made an impact on your life.

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Hebrews 1–6

Introduction to the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews

Why study Hebrews?

All followers of Jesus Christ will experience trials of their faith, and they may at times wonder if they should abandon their faith. The Epistle to the Hebrews was written to encourage a group of Christians to keep believing and not to return to their former ways. Hebrews also shows the significance of many symbols found in the law of Moses and their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. For this reason, the book of Hebrews is an excellent scriptural guide to understanding Old Testament teachings and practices. While the scriptures are replete with references to Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice, His Resurrection, and His Ascension into heaven, Hebrews emphasizes the ongoing work of the Redeemer in the lives of all who turn to Him in obedience and faith.

Who wrote Hebrews?

In some of his sermons and writings, the Prophet Joseph Smith attributed statements from Hebrews to the Apostle Paul (see *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 104–5; *History of the Church*, 2:16–17; 4:209). A Christian tradition dating to the second century A.D. holds that Paul was the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In the fourth century A.D. Jerome added Paul's name to the title of Hebrews in his Latin translation of the Bible.

Most Latter-day Saints accept Paul as the author of Hebrews; however, some scholars have questioned the tradition of Paul's authorship, noting that unlike other epistles, Hebrews does not name its author in the book itself. The earliest manuscripts give the title of the book as simply "To the Hebrews." Because early Christians were uncertain about the authorship of Hebrews, it became customary to place Hebrews after Paul's epistles in the order of New Testament books. Moreover, the style, language, and ideas of Hebrews are different from Paul's other epistles. For the purposes of this manual, we accept Paul as the author.

When and where was Hebrews written?

Since the book of Hebrews makes no mention of the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem, which occurred in A.D. 70, and it always refers to the temple in the present tense, we assume that this letter was written before that time, perhaps between A.D. 65 and 68. The location where Hebrews was written is unknown. A partial clue might be found in the phrase, "They of Italy salute you" (Hebrews 13:24). This may mean that Paul was in Italy, sending greetings from his Italian acquaintances, or that he was in some other portion of the empire, sending greetings to Italy from Italian acquaintances.

To whom was Hebrews written and why?

Because the Epistle to the Hebrews draws heavily on Old Testament themes and practices, it is likely that the intended audience was Jewish (Hebrew) Christians. These converts apparently wrestled with several questions: If we accept that the rituals of the law of Moses are not required of Gentile Christians, what is the true value of the Old Testament? If the gospel of Jesus Christ is the right way, why are we being persecuted so much for being His followers? If Jesus was the Messiah, why is Israel still in bondage to the Romans?

Under the pressure of various afflictions, many of these Jewish Christians were withdrawing from the Church and returning to the relative safety of Jewish worship at the synagogue (see Hebrews 10:25, 38–39). One reason that the book of Hebrews was written was to encourage Jewish converts to remain faithful to Jesus Christ and not revert to their former way of life (see Hebrews 10:32–38). The book's structure can be seen as three main sections of teachings that build to a concluding exhortation: (1) the preeminence of Jesus Christ as the Son of God (see Hebrews 1:1–4:13); (2) the superiority of Christ's priesthood (see Hebrews 4:14–7:28); and (3) the superiority of His atoning sacrifice and ministry (see Hebrews 8:1–10:18). They all build to an exhortation to endure in faith (see Hebrews 10:19–13:25).

What are some distinctive features of Hebrews?

Rather than being strictly an epistle, Hebrews is more of a *homily*—an extended sermon that makes its points by repeated appeals to Israel’s scriptures and practices. It is the longest sermon in scripture on why and how Jesus Christ is superior to all things. Hebrews teaches that Jesus Christ is greater than the law because He gave the law, that the prophets received power through faith in Him, that He was the great High Priest in whom the sacrifices of Old Testament times were fulfilled, and that He has precedence over the angels.

The book of Hebrews is one of the few places in the Bible where we can read about the prophet Melchizedek (see Hebrews 5). Hebrews teaches that the priesthood named after Melchizedek is greater

than the Aaronic Priesthood, and it shows that salvation is found not in the law of Moses or in the ordinances administered by Levitical priests but in Jesus Christ and the ordinances of the Melchizedek Priesthood. For example, the high priest of old entered the tabernacle and offered the blood of a lamb as a sacrifice for Israel’s sins. Jesus Christ, the greatest High Priest and the true Lamb of God, offered His own blood to atone for sin, entered the heavenly sanctuary, and thereby made possible the salvation of all mankind. Hebrews accentuates this greater excellence of Christ’s sacrifice: it is through His atoning sacrifice that we may receive a remission of sins. Hebrews 11:1–12:4 provides a distinct discourse on faith and teaches how individuals can trust in Jesus Christ.

Outline

Hebrews 1–6 Jesus Christ is in the express image of the Father. He is greater than angels and all the prophets who preceded Him, including Moses. Those of ancient Israel who were brought out of Egypt failed to enter the Lord’s rest because they hardened their hearts against

Jesus Christ and His servant Moses. As a High Priest, Jesus is superior to all the Mosaic high priests. Through His suffering, Christ was perfected. We can enter the Lord’s rest and “go on unto perfection” through obedience to God’s word (Hebrews 6:1).

Hebrews 7–13 The Melchizedek Priesthood administers the gospel

and is greater than the Aaronic Priesthood. The tabernacle and the Mosaic ordinances prefigured Christ’s ministry. Jesus Christ fulfilled the law of Moses through the shedding of His blood, through which we may obtain salvation and a remission of our sins. By faith, the prophets and other men and women performed righteous works and miracles.



Hebrews emphasizes Jesus Christ’s role as the Great High Priest.

Introduction and Timeline for Hebrews 1–6

Hebrews 1:2–3 states that Jesus Christ is God’s Son, the “heir of all things.” He is the Creator of “the worlds” and is seated at the right hand of God. This introduces a major theme that runs throughout the book of Hebrews—the preeminence of Jesus Christ. Paul taught the Hebrew Saints that because of the Savior’s preeminence, it was important for Church members to give heed to His word over the word of angels or prophets, including Moses (see Hebrews 1:4; 2:1–3; 3:3). The Savior’s preeminence includes His ability to “succour them that are tempted” (Hebrews 2:18) because He was “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Hebrews 4:15). With that knowledge of the

perfect empathy that Jesus Christ gained through the Atonement and His preeminent position in our Father’s kingdom, Paul exhorted, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16).

The Epistle to the Hebrews encourages followers of Jesus Christ not to repeat the mistake of the first generation of Israelites during the Exodus, who could not enter into the promised land because their unbelief and sin had hardened their hearts (see Hebrews 3–4).

The Epistle to the Hebrews was likely written before A.D. 68.

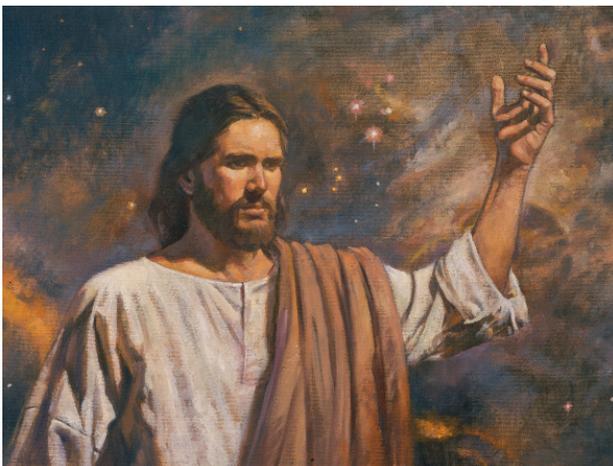
Commentary for Hebrews 1–6

Hebrews 1:1–4. The Preeminence of Jesus Christ

The epistle’s Jewish-Christian audience was struggling with whether to return to their former Jewish ways. Therefore, it was important for them to hear testimony that Jesus Christ is “better than the angels” because He is the Son of God, the “heir of all things,” and the Creator of the worlds (see Hebrews 1:1–4).

Hebrews 1:1–14

What are some ways in which Jesus Christ’s supremacy over angels is taught in this chapter?



Christ and the Creation, by Robert T. Barrett

Hebrews 1:1–2. Jesus Christ Created Worlds under the Direction of His Father

To read about Jesus Christ as the Creator of many worlds, see the commentary for John 1:3, 10 (see also Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2; Moses 1:27–33).

Hebrews 1:3. Jesus Christ Is in the Express Image of His Father

The term “express image” (Hebrews 1:3) comes from the Greek word *charaktēr*, which refers to a representation or reproduction of something else, such as the impression a signet ring leaves on soft wax. This phrase in Hebrews 1:3 indicates that Jesus Christ is a representation of Heavenly Father and shares His divine character. In like manner, the Doctrine and Covenants indicates that Seth was “the express likeness” of his father, Adam (D&C 107:43).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that Jesus being in the express image of His Father is a witness to both the ancient and modern world of what God the Father is like:

“Of course the centuries-long drift away from belief in such a perfect and caring Father hasn’t been helped any by the man-made creeds of erring generations which describe God variously as unknown and unknowable—formless, passionless, elusive, ethereal, simultaneously everywhere and nowhere at all. Certainly that does not describe the Being we behold through the eyes of these prophets. Nor does it match the living, breathing, embodied Jesus of Nazareth who was and is in ‘the brightness of his glory, and the express image of

his [Father]' [Hebrews 1:3; see also 2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15].

"In that sense Jesus did not come to improve God's view of man nearly so much as He came to improve man's view of God" ("The Grandeur of God," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2003, 72). For additional prophetic statements about how Jesus Christ came to help mankind understand His Father, see the commentary for John 14:7–11; 16:25.

Hebrews 1:5–13; 2:6–8. Quotations from the Old Testament

Several verses in Hebrews teach the importance of Jesus Christ in God's plan by drawing upon the following Old Testament references: Psalm 2:7 (see Hebrews 1:5); Psalm 8:4–6 (see Hebrews 2:6–8); Psalm 45:6–7 (see Hebrews 1:8–9); Psalm 102:25–27 (see Hebrews 1:10–12); Psalm 104:4 (see Hebrews 1:7); and Psalm 110:1 (see Hebrews 1:13). Using Old Testament quotations in this epistle to Jewish Christians would have added authority to its reasoning and doctrinal teachings.

Hebrews 1:6, 14. "All the Angels of God Worship Him"

The angels of God who worship Jesus Christ are spirit children of our Heavenly Father. Joseph Smith Translation, Hebrews 1:7 indicates that "*angels are ministering spirits*" (in Hebrews 1:6, footnote *b*). Hebrews 1:14 teaches that in our Father's plan one of the purposes of these angels, or ministering spirits, is to minister to His children on the earth (see also Moroni 7:29–31). **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** stated: "I believe we need to speak of and believe in and bear testimony to the ministry of angels more than we sometimes do. They constitute one of God's great methods of witnessing through the veil" ("A Standard unto My People" [address delivered at the Church Educational System Symposium on the Book of Mormon, Aug. 9, 1994], 11).

Bruce C. Hafen, who later became a member of the Seventy, pointed out that angelic ministrations can be either seen or unseen:

"Some of these personal visits were dramatic and powerful. Think of the angels who ministered to the Nephite children in the account of 3 Nephi 17, or the angel who chastised Alma and Mosiah's sons in answer to a father's prayer. (See Mosiah 27.)

"Other personal manifestations have been so quiet that those who received them were unaware of the angelic

presence. The ministry of these *unseen* angels is among the most sublime forms of interaction between heaven and earth, powerfully expressing God's concern for us and bestowing tangible assurance and spiritual sustenance upon those in great need" ("When Do the Angels Come?" *Ensign*, Apr. 1992, 12).



The Angel Appears to the Shepherds, by Walter Rane

Hebrews 2:6–9. "A Little Lower than the Angels"

Paul drew upon a messianic prophecy from Psalm 8:4–6 when he stated in Hebrews 2:9 that Jesus "was made a little lower than the angels." Christ condescended from His premortal throne and came to earth so that He could experience mortality with its physical restrictions (see also Philippians 2:7–9; 1 Nephi 11:16, 26–32).

Hebrews 2:10, 14–18. "He Is Able to Succour Them That Are Tempted" (see also Hebrews 4:15–16)

These verses in Hebrews 2 explain that because Jesus Christ lived as a mortal and experienced the trials and temptations of mortality, He is able to help us as we face our own trials and temptations. **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** described why Jesus is able to succor those who are tempted:

“When Christ bids [us] to yield, to submit, to obey the Father, He knows how to help us do that. He has walked that way, asking [us] to do what He has done. He has made it safer. He has made it very much easier for [our] travel. . . . He knows where the sharp stones and the stumbling blocks lie and where the thorns and the thistles are the most severe. He knows where the path is perilous, and He knows which way to go when the road forks and nightfall comes. He knows this because He has suffered ‘pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind . . . that he may know . . . how to succor his people according to their infirmities’ (Alma 7:11–12). To *succor* means ‘to run to.’ . . . Christ will run to [us], and is running even now, if [we] will but receive the extended arm of His mercy.

“To those who stagger or stumble, He is there to steady and strengthen us. In the end He is there to save us, and for all this He gave His life. However dim our days . . . may seem, they have been a lot darker for the Savior of the world” (“Therefore, What?” [Church Educational System Conference on the New Testament, Aug. 8, 2000], 9).



Wherever He Leads Me, by Greg K. Olsen. Christ is able to succor us.

On another occasion, **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** wrote of Christ’s compassion and ability to help us: “Christ walked the path every mortal is called to walk so that he would know how to succor and strengthen us in our most difficult times. He knows the deepest and most personal burdens we carry. He knows the most public and poignant pains we bear. He descended below all such grief in order that he might lift us above it. There is no anguish or sorrow or sadness in life that he has not suffered in our behalf and borne away upon his own valiant and compassionate shoulders” (*Christ and the New Covenant* [1997], 223–24).

Hebrews 2:11

What does Jesus Christ call those who are sanctified? Considering all the different ways that Hebrews 1–2 demonstrates the supreme nature of Jesus, what thoughts and feelings do you have when you consider that Jesus is not ashamed to refer to faithful Saints by this term?

Hebrews 2:16. “The Seed of Abraham”

“The seed of Abraham” refers not only to literal blood-lineage descendants of Abraham but also to all those who enter the gospel covenant (Hebrews 2:16). Those who are wholly of Gentile lineage, when they are converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ and are baptized, are adopted into the lineage of Abraham (see Galatians 3:7, 29; 2 Nephi 30:2; Abraham 2:10). Doctrine and Covenants 132:31–32 explains that the promises made to Abraham extend to his seed today.

Hebrews 2:17; 3:1. Jesus Christ as the Great High Priest

Hebrews is the only New Testament book to depict Jesus as a high priest. To read more about Jesus Christ as the Great High Priest, see Hebrews 9 and the commentary for Hebrews 9:11–15, 23–28; 10:1.

Hebrews 3:1–6. Jesus Christ Is Greater than Moses

For the Jews, Moses was the most highly revered prophet, the one who received God’s law at Sinai. The Jewish Christians being addressed in Hebrews were contemplating abandoning their faith in Christ and returning to Judaism in an attempt to remain loyal to the law of Moses. They did not understand (or believe deeply enough) that Christ was preeminent to Moses. Having shown in Hebrews 1–2 that Jesus Christ is greater than the angels, Paul next explained that as “the Apostle and High Priest of our profession,” Jesus is greater than Moses (Hebrews 3:1).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles pointed out one reason that Christ was “counted worthy of more glory than Moses” (Hebrews 3:3): “Christ is the chief minister of salvation for men on earth, in that through his atoning sacrifice salvation itself comes” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1966–73], 3:147). Hebrews 3:3–6 teaches further about Jesus Christ’s superiority to Moses, stating that Moses was a servant in God’s house, but Christ built and rules over the house as God’s Son.

Hebrews 3:7–15. The Importance of Hearing Christ’s Voice Today

Quoting from Psalm 95:7–11, Paul encouraged the Saints in Hebrews 3:7–15 to act in faith immediately (“to day”) by listening to the Lord’s voice, by exhorting one another, by avoiding unbelief and sin, and by not being hard in heart. Becoming hardened and unable to enter the Lord’s rest stems from disobeying the Lord.

Elder Donald L. Hallstrom of the Presidency of the Seventy spoke of the danger of procrastinating spiritual matters: “Many of us place ourselves in circumstances far more consequential than embarrassment because of our procrastination to become fully converted to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We know what is right, but we delay full spiritual involvement because of laziness, fear, rationalization, or lack of faith. We convince ourselves that ‘someday I’m going to do it.’ However, for many ‘someday’ never comes, and even for others who eventually do make a change, there is an irretrievable loss of progress and surely regression” (“Do It Now,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 49–50).

Hebrews 3:8, 12, 15, 19

According to these verses, why was ancient Israel not allowed to enter into the Lord’s rest? How does this emphasize the importance of softening our hearts?

Hebrews 3:8–17; 4:1–11. Entering into God’s Rest

The people of ancient Israel provoked the Lord to anger and were therefore not allowed to enter into the Lord’s rest, which was symbolically represented by the land of Canaan (see Exodus 19:3–25; 20:18–21; Numbers 14; Jacob 1:7–8; Alma 12:33–37; 13:6, 12–13, 28–29).



Jebel Musa, traditionally regarded as Mount Sinai. During ancient Israel’s wilderness journeys near Mount Sinai, Israel provoked the Lord to anger.

In latter-day revelation, the Lord defined His rest as “the fulness of his glory” (D&C 84:24; see also verse 23). **President Joseph F. Smith** (1838–1918) taught that there is also a sense in which we might enter the Lord’s rest while in mortality: “The ancient prophets speak of ‘entering into God’s rest’; what does it mean? To my mind, it means entering into the knowledge and love of God, having faith in his purpose and in his plan, to such an extent that we know we are right, and that we are not hunting for something else, we are not disturbed by every wind of doctrine, or by the cunning and craftiness of men who lie in wait to deceive. . . . The man who has reached that degree of faith in God that all doubt and fear have been cast from him, he has entered into ‘God’s rest.’ . . . I pray that we may all enter into God’s rest—rest from doubt, from fear, from apprehension of danger, rest from the religious turmoil of the world” (*Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. [1939], 58).

The Joseph Smith Translation adds some clarification to Hebrews 4:5: “And in this place again, If they *harden not their hearts they shall enter into my rest*” (in Hebrews 4:5, footnote *a*).

Hebrews 4:2, 6, 10–16

What do these verses teach about what to do to enter into God’s rest?

Hebrews 4:2–3. Combining the Word of God with Faith

One reason the first generation of Israelites in the wilderness failed to enter the promised land is that they “hardened their hearts” (D&C 84:24). The Joseph Smith Translation of Hebrews 4:3 highlights what will happen if we do *not* harden our hearts: “If they *harden their hearts they shall not enter into my rest; also, I have sworn, If they will not harden their hearts, they shall enter into my rest*” (in the Bible appendix). Another reason they failed to enter the promised land was that they failed to combine *hearing the word* with *faith*; they did not live the teachings. **Brother A. Roger Merrill**, while serving as general president of the Sunday School, explained one process that might describe what it means to join the word of God with faith:

“In our Church meetings, in our personal and family scripture study, and even . . . as we listen to the Lord’s prophets and apostles, some of us will receive more than others. Why? I am learning that those who truly receive do at least three things that others may not do.

“First, they *seek*. We live in an entertainment world, a spectator world. Without realizing it, we can find

ourselves coming to conference or going to church with the attitude, ‘Here I am; now inspire me.’ We become spiritually passive.

“When we focus instead on seeking and receiving the Spirit, we become less concerned about a teacher or speaker holding our attention and more concerned about giving our attention to the Spirit. Remember, *receive* is a verb. It is a principle of action. It is a fundamental expression of faith.

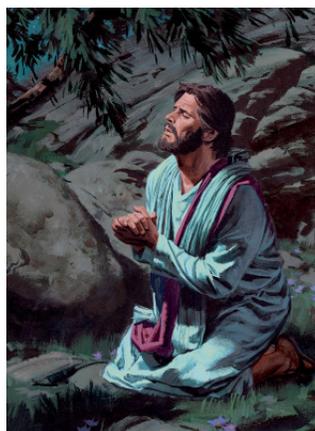
“Second, those who receive, *feel*. While revelation comes to the mind and heart, it is most often felt. Until we learn to pay attention to these spiritual feelings, we usually do not even recognize the Spirit. . . .

“Third, those who receive by the Spirit *intend to act*. As the prophet Moroni instructed, to receive a witness of the Book of Mormon, we must ask ‘with real intent’ (Moroni 10:4). The Spirit teaches when we honestly intend to do something about what we learn” (“Receiving by the Spirit,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 93–94).

Hebrews 4:15. Jesus Christ Was “in All Points Tempted Like As We Are, Yet without Sin”

We learn in Hebrews 4:15 that even though Jesus Christ is the Son of God, He was not shielded from the temptations of Satan (see also Mosiah 15:5; D&C 20:22).

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught concerning the Savior’s mortal experiences: “There is no physical pain, no anguish of soul, no suffering of spirit, no infirmity or weakness that you or I ever experience during our mortal journey that the Savior did not experience first. You and I in a moment of weakness may cry out, ‘No one understands. No one knows.’ No human being, perhaps, knows. But the Son of God perfectly knows and understands, for He felt and bore our burdens before we ever did. And because



Christ in Gethsemane,
by Paul Mann

He paid the ultimate price and bore that burden, He has perfect empathy and can extend to us His arm of mercy in so many phases of our life. He can reach out, touch, and succor—literally run to us—and strengthen us to be more than we could ever be and help us to do that which we could never do through relying only upon our own power” (“In the Strength of the Lord”

[Brigham Young University devotional, Oct. 23, 2001], 7–8; speeches.byu.edu).

President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) taught, “It is important to remember that Jesus was capable of sinning, that he could have succumbed, that the plan of life and salvation could have been foiled, but that he remained true. Had there been no possibility of his yielding to the enticement of Satan, there would have been no real test, no genuine victory in the result. If he had been stripped of the faculty to sin, he would have been stripped of his very agency. It was he who had come to safeguard and ensure the agency of man. He had to retain the capacity and ability to sin had he willed so to do. As Paul wrote, ‘Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered’ (Heb. 5:8); and he ‘was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin’ (Heb. 4:15). He was perfect and sinless, not because he had to be, but rather because he clearly and determinedly wanted to be” (“The Temptations of Christ,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1976, 19). To read more about the Savior living a sinless life, see the commentary for Hebrews 7:26.

Hebrews 4:15–16. The Savior Knows Our Infirmities and Can Help in Time of Need

While serving in the Presidency of the Seventy, **Elder Merrill J. Bateman** taught that the Atonement was an intimate, personal experience through which Jesus Christ came to know perfectly how to help each of us:

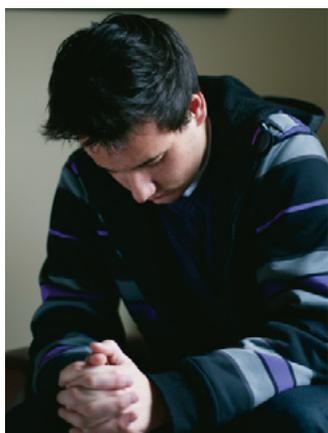
“For many years I thought of the Savior’s experience in the garden and on the cross as places where a large mass of sin was heaped upon Him. Through the words of Alma, Abinadi, Isaiah, and other prophets, however, my view has changed. Instead of an impersonal mass of sin, there was a long line of people, as Jesus felt ‘our infirmities’ (Hebrews 4:15), ‘[bore] our griefs, . . . carried our sorrows . . . [and] was bruised for our iniquities’ (Isaiah 53:4–5). . . .

“The Pearl of Great Price teaches that Moses was shown all the inhabitants of the earth, which were ‘numberless as the sand upon the sea shore’ (Moses 1:28). If Moses beheld every soul, then it seems reasonable that the Creator of the universe has the power to become intimately acquainted with each of us. He learned about your weaknesses and mine. He experienced your pains and sufferings. He experienced mine. I testify that He knows us. He understands the way in which we deal with temptations. He knows our weaknesses. But more than that, more than just knowing us, He knows how to help us if we come to Him in faith” (“A Pattern for All,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 75–76).

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles concluded that “we can turn to Him . . . because He understands. He understands the struggle, and He also understands how to win the struggle. . . .

“Most importantly, we may look to Jesus to help restore the inner unity of our soul when we have succumbed to sin and destroyed our peace” (“That They May Be One in Us,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 71).

Hebrews 4:16. “Let Us Therefore Come Boldly unto the Throne of Grace”



“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace” (Hebrews 4:16).

In many ancient cultures, to approach a king’s throne uninvited was to risk one’s life, but at the king’s invitation, one could approach and speak with assurance. To approach God “boldly” means having confidence that God wants us to approach His throne and that we will receive His help. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained, “It is pleasing to that God whose we are when we fast and pray and seek his blessings; when we plead with all the energy of our souls for those things we so much desire; when, as Paul says, we ‘come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.’ (Heb. 4:16.)” (“Patterns of Prayer,” *Ensign*, May 1984, 32).

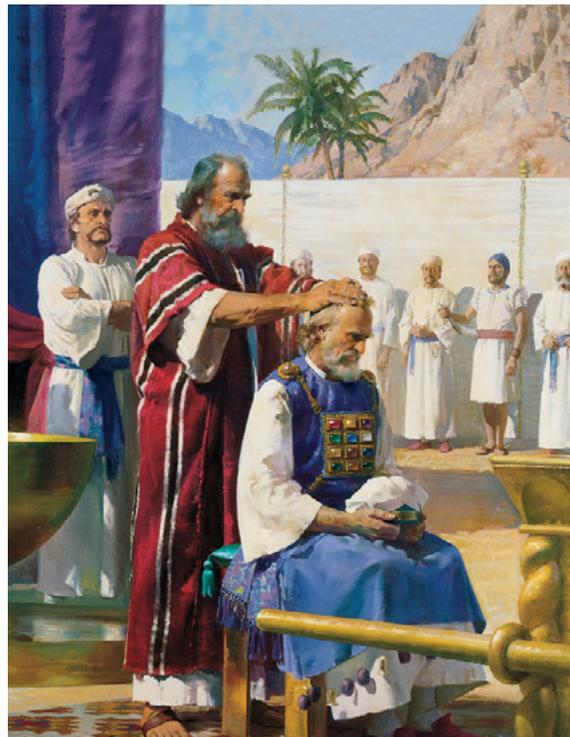
Hebrews 5:1–6, 10. “Called of God, as Was Aaron”

In Hebrews 5:4–6, 10, Paul noted that Jesus received His authority from God the Father, just as Aaron and other ancient high priests were called of God and received their priesthood by proper authority, rather than taking the honor of the calling upon themselves. Articles of Faith 1:5 states: “We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.”

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) taught: “We believe that no man can administer salvation through the gospel, to the souls of men, in the name of Jesus Christ, except he is authorized from God, by revelation, or by being ordained by some one whom God hath sent by revelation. . . . Hebrews 5:4 [states], ‘And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of

God, as was Aaron.’—And I would ask, how was Aaron called, but by revelation?” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 110; see also D&C 42:11).

Aaron was called of God by revelation to serve as the high priest, who represented the people before God in sacred matters and presided over other priesthood holders (the Levites). His calling came from God through a revelation to Moses: “And take thou thee Aaron thy brother . . . that he may minister unto me in the priest’s office” (Exodus 28:1). After the time of Aaron, the high priest was selected from among the priestly families descended from Aaron and his sons. In ancient Israel, the office of high priest was an office in the Aaronic Priesthood and was comparable to the office of Presiding Bishop of the Church in our day. Aaron’s sons and other Levites performed many tasks, including serving in the tabernacle, conducting the morning and evening sacrifices in the tabernacle and later in the Jerusalem temple, keeping watch over the fire of the sacred altar, and teaching the people of Israel the commandments.



Moses Calls Aaron to the Ministry, by Harry Anderson. Aaron was called by God, through Moses the prophet, and was ordained by the laying on of hands to be the high priest over the children of Israel (see Exodus 28:1; 40:12–16).

Both the Old and New Testaments show that priesthood holders received the priesthood through being ordained by an authorized holder of the priesthood. This practice

continues in the Church today. **President Boyd K. Packer** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “The priesthood cannot be conferred like a diploma. It cannot be handed to you as a certificate. It cannot be delivered to you as a message or sent to you in a letter. It comes only by proper ordination. An authorized holder of the priesthood has to be there. He must place his hands upon your head and ordain you” (“The Aaronic Priesthood,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1981, 32).

Hebrews 5:5–6. “Thou Art My Son”

In Hebrews 5:5–6, Paul was quoting from Psalm 2:7 and Psalm 110:4.

Hebrews 5:7–8. Christ Learned Obedience

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained that Hebrews 5:7–8 pertains to both Jesus Christ and to Melchizedek: “[Hebrews 5,] verses 7 and 8 apply to both Melchizedek and to Christ, because Melchizedek was a prototype of Christ and that prophet’s ministry typified and foreshadowed that of our Lord in the same sense that the ministry of Moses did. (Deut. 18:15–19; Acts 3:22–23; 3 Ne. 20:23; [Joseph Smith—History] 2:40.) Thus, though the words of these verses, and particularly those in the 7th verse, had original application to Melchizedek, they apply with equal and perhaps even greater force to the life and ministry of him through whom all the promises made to Melchizedek were fulfilled” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:157).

President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency taught that Jesus Christ is the perfect example of obedience and identified a key attitude that will help us learn to be obedient: “As in all things, the Savior is our pattern. The Apostle Paul wrote, ‘Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience’ [Hebrews 5:8]. In our own finite way, we too can learn obedience even as Christ did. . . . When obedience becomes our goal, it is no longer an irritation; instead of a stumbling block, it becomes a building block” (“Obedience: The Path to Freedom,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 46–47).

Hebrews 5:8–9. Learning through Suffering

President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) taught that the Savior’s suffering prepared Him to be the “author of eternal salvation” (Hebrews 5:8–9) and that we are refined by the things we suffer: “There is a refining process that comes through suffering, I think, that we can’t experience any other way than by suffering. . . . We draw closer to Him who gave His life that man might be. We feel a kinship that we have never felt before. . . . He suffered more than we can ever imagine. But to the extent

that we have suffered, somehow it seems to have the effect of drawing us closer to the divine, helps to purify our souls, and helps to purge out the things that are not pleasing in the sight of the Lord” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* [2000], 207).

President Lee further taught that suffering has a necessary purpose: “A young mother went through the trying experience of having a little child who was killed in an accident, and she came and sought a blessing for comfort. She asked through her tears, ‘Must there always be pain in this life?’ I thought a few minutes and then said, ‘The Apostle Paul said of the Master, the Lord and Savior, ‘Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.’ (Heb. 5:8.) I suppose that the answer is yes; there must always be pain in this life of travail and sorrow, and there is a purpose in it all’” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1964, 25).

Hebrews 6:1–3. What Is Meant by “Leaving the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ”?

The Joseph Smith Translation of Hebrews 6:1 prevents a possible misconception when it states, “Therefore *not* leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ” (in Hebrews 6:1, footnote *a*). This change supports the original Greek text of the phrase, which translates as “having left behind the beginning of the doctrine.” The Saints addressed in Hebrews had already received the first principles, ordinances, and doctrines of the gospel (including faith, repentance, baptism, and the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost; see Hebrews 6:1–2). They were not to abandon those principles but were to continue growing toward spiritual maturity from that beginning point (compare 2 Nephi 31:15–21).

The Joseph Smith Translation of Hebrews 6:3 also contains a significant addition: “And *we will go on unto perfection* if God permit” (in the Bible appendix).

Hebrews 6:4–6. Crucifying the Son of God Afresh (see also Hebrews 10:26–31)

Hebrews 6 contains a warning to those who might abandon their faith in Jesus Christ and fall into personal apostasy. Hebrews 10:26–31 also hints at the consequences that await such actions (see also 2 Peter 2:20–21; Alma 24:30). The writer of Hebrews used the phrase “crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh” (Hebrews 6:6) to describe the actions of those who will not be forgiven because they turn from knowledge of the truth and will not repent.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained: “Commission of the unpardonable sin consists in crucifying unto oneself

the Son of God afresh and putting him to open shame. (Heb. 6:4–8; D. & C. 76:34–35.) To commit this unpardonable crime a man must receive the gospel, gain from the Holy Ghost by revelation the absolute knowledge of the divinity of Christ, and then deny ‘the new and everlasting covenant by which he was sanctified, calling it an unholy thing, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace.’ [*History of the Church*, 3:232.] He thereby commits murder by assenting unto the Lord’s death, that is, having a perfect knowledge of the truth he comes out in open rebellion and places himself in a position wherein he would have crucified Christ knowing perfectly the while that he was the Son of God. Christ is thus crucified afresh and put to open shame. (D. & C. 132:27.) (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:161). To read further about what is meant by the “unpardonable sin,” see the commentary for Matthew 12:31–32, 43–45.

Hebrews 6:7–8. “Thorns and Briers”

An abundance of thistles and thorns grew in the Holy Land, and they did not escape the figurative eye of Jesus and His Apostles. Thistles and thorns served only to afflict and annoy. The parable of the four kinds of soil has seeds falling among thorns, which sprang up and choked the seeds (see Matthew 13:7; Mark 4:7; Luke 8:7). Those thorns represented the cares and pleasures of this world and the “deceitfulness of riches” (see Matthew 13:22; Mark 4:18–19; Luke 8:14). Thorns do not symbolize anything good or positive in the scriptures. Rather, “that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned” (Hebrews 6:8).

Hebrews 6:11, 18–19. “Which Hope We Have as an Anchor of the Soul”

Paul wanted his readers to have hope.

“When we have hope, we trust God’s promises. We have a quiet assurance that if we do ‘the works of righteousness,’ we ‘shall receive [our] reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come’ (D&C 59:23). . . .

“The principle of hope extends into the eternities, but it also can sustain you through the everyday challenges of life” (*True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference* [2004], 85–86).

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the First Presidency drew upon numerous scripture passages to teach about hope: “Hope is a gift of the Spirit. It is a hope that through the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the power of His Resurrection, we shall be raised unto life eternal and this because of our faith in the Savior. This kind of hope is both a principle of promise as well as a commandment, and, as with all commandments, we have the responsibility to make it an active part of our lives

and overcome the temptation to lose hope. Hope in our Heavenly Father’s merciful plan of happiness leads to peace, mercy, rejoicing, and gladness. The hope of salvation is like a protective helmet; it is the foundation of our faith and an anchor to our souls” (“The Infinite Power of Hope,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2008, 21–22).

Hebrews 6:13–20. After Patiently Enduring, Abraham Obtained the Promise

Paul declared that when God made great promises to Abraham, He “swore by himself” (Hebrews 6:13). In ancient times, swearing with an oath was a formal part of the religious life of the people (see Genesis 24; Numbers 30; 1 Nephi 4:32–33).

“Veil” in Hebrews 6:19 is a reference to the veil of the temple. The high priest entered through the veil into the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, to symbolically cleanse Israel. In the same way, Jesus, the great High Priest, entered through the veil into heaven to prepare the way for us to return to heaven (see the commentary for Hebrews 9:1–7 and for Hebrews 9:11–15, 23–28; 10:1).

To read more about the faith of Abraham, see the commentary for Romans 4:18–22. To study about ancient prophets waiting to receive promised blessings from the Lord, see the commentary for Hebrews 11:8–16.

Points to Ponder

- How does knowing that Jesus Christ suffered and overcame all temptations influence the way you perceive Him as your Savior? (see Hebrews 2:18; 4:15).
- Hebrews 5:8 indicates that Melchizedek (and Jesus Christ) learned obedience by the things he suffered. How have the things that you have suffered taught you obedience and trust in the Lord?

Suggested Assignments

- In Hebrews 2:1; 4:1; and 6:1, the word “therefore” is used much in the same way that the prophet Mormon used the phrase “and thus we see” in the Book of Mormon to draw our attention to what he felt we should learn. Explain in writing what you think Paul wanted his readers to learn from what he wrote just prior to each of these verses.
- Hebrews 2:10 refers to Jesus Christ as the “captain of [our] salvation.” As you study Hebrews, chapters 1–6, make a list of what is taught about Jesus Christ that qualifies Him to be the captain of our salvation.

49

Hebrews 7–13

Introduction and Timeline for Hebrews 7–13

In Hebrews 7–13, the Apostle Paul continued to emphasize the preeminent role of Jesus Christ in the plan of salvation, focusing particularly on the superiority of the Savior's priesthood, atoning sacrifice, and ministry. Paul taught his readers that the ancient tabernacle and its Mosaic ordinances prefigured Christ's sacrifice and that only through the shedding of His blood can we obtain remission of

our sins and gain access to God's presence. The Epistle to the Hebrews concludes with an eloquent exhortation for the Saints to remain faithful (see Hebrews 10:19–13:25), including a discourse that presents scriptural examples of men and women who demonstrated extraordinary faith (see Hebrews 11). Such examples can inspire us to live our own lives more faithfully.

Commentary for Hebrews 7–13

Hebrews 7:1–2. Melchizedek

Melchizedek was “a great Old Testament high priest, prophet, and leader who lived after the flood and during the time of Abraham. He was called the king of Salem (Jerusalem), king of peace, king of righteousness (which is the Hebrew meaning of Melchizedek), and priest of the most high God” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Melchizedek”; scriptures.lds.org). Other scriptures relate that Melchizedek conferred the priesthood upon Abraham, received tithes from Abraham, and was unsurpassed in his greatness (see D&C 84:14; Hebrews 7:4; Genesis 14:18–20; Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 14:25–40 [in the Bible appendix]; Alma 13:19). In the Epistle to the Hebrews, Melchizedek stands as a prototype of the Son of God (see Hebrews 7:15–16).



Melchizedek Blesses Abram, by Walter Rane

Hebrews 7:3. “Without Father, without Mother”

The Joseph Smith Translation of Hebrews 7:3 clarifies that it was the priesthood that was “without father, without mother”: “For this Melchizedek was ordained a

priest after the order of the Son of God, which order was without father, without mother” (in the Bible appendix). This phrasing indicates that, unlike the Levitical or Aaronic order in ancient times, the Melchizedek Priesthood is not conferred based on lineage alone.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles further explained: “The right to this higher priesthood was not inherited in the same way as was the case with the Levites and sons of Aaron. Righteousness was an absolute requisite for the conferral of the higher priesthood” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 478).

Hebrews 7:3, 11–19. The Melchizedek Priesthood Moves Us Closer to God and Leads to Exaltation

One of Paul's purposes in Hebrews 7 was to show the Melchizedek Priesthood's superiority over the Levitical or Aaronic Priesthood and its accompanying ordinances. If perfection and exaltation were attainable through the Levitical Priesthood, why was there a need for a change to the higher priesthood? Paul taught that perfection, or being “made like unto the Son of God” (Hebrews 7:3), does not come by the Levitical Priesthood but through Jesus Christ and His order of the priesthood. Jesus Christ “sprang out of Juda,” not Levi, so Paul taught that His right to the priesthood would be based not on ancestry but on “the power of an endless life” (see Hebrews 7:14–16). As the premortal Jehovah, He had created the earth and governed the events of the Old Testament with the same priesthood power He would hold during His mortal ministry. “The priesthood held by Melchizedek is the very priesthood promised [to] the Son of God during his mortal sojourn, which is to say that Christ was to be like unto Melchizedek” (Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah* [1981], 450). The Melchizedek Priesthood is the power of endless lives

because it administers the ordinances that bring endless posterity (see D&C 132:19–24).

Elder Craig A. Cardon of the Seventy discussed the refining influence of the Melchizedek Priesthood: “The priesthood also has the power to change our very natures. As Paul wrote, ‘All those who are ordained unto this priesthood are made like unto the Son of God’ [Joseph Smith Translation, Hebrews 7:3; see also Moses 1:6]. This likeness is not only in ordination and ordinance but also in the perfecting of individual hearts, something that occurs ‘in process of time’ [Moses 7:21] as we [yield] to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and [put] off the natural man’ [Mosiah 3:19]. When a man is ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood, he enters into an ‘order’ [Alma 13:2, 16; D&C 107:3] by which he may be refined through service to others” (“Moving Closer to Him,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 95).

President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency taught that though the priesthood is conferred upon male members of the Church, both men and women are blessed by the perfecting power of the priesthood and its ordinances: “The blessings of the priesthood, such as baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost, the temple endowment, and eternal marriage, are available to men and women alike” (“Priesthood Authority in the Family and the Church,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 26).

Hebrews 7:20–21. The Melchizedek Priesthood Is Received with an Oath

Paul pointed out that in ancient Israel the priests of the Levitical or Aaronic Priesthood did not receive their priesthood with an oath but because of their lineage. The oath mentioned in Hebrews 7:21 refers to Psalm 110:4: “The Lord hath sworn, . . . Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.” In the latter days, the Lord revealed that “all those who receive the [Melchizedek] priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father” (D&C 84:40) and that the eternal blessings conferred upon faithful priesthood holders come “according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood” (D&C 84:39; see also verses 33–42).

Hebrews 7:22. Jesus Christ Was “Made a Surety of a Better Testament”

The word “surety” in Hebrews 7:22 refers to one who guarantees another person’s financial debt. “Better testament” refers to the superior gospel covenant established by Christ. Through taking upon Himself our sins and giving His life, Christ paid our spiritual

debt, guaranteeing salvation and the promises of the covenant for all who would come unto Him. He is the ultimate assurance of our covenant relationship with God the Father.

Hebrews 7:25. He Is Able “to Save Them to the Uttermost That Come unto God”

The Greek word translated as “uttermost” means “completely” and “eternally.” Thus, as recorded in Hebrews 7:25, Christ is able to save us completely and for all eternity. **Elder J. Devn Cornish** of the Seventy explained that the real question we should ask ourselves is not whether Jesus Christ can save us but whether we are willing to place our faith in Christ and come unto God:

“Some have a difficult time accepting in their hearts that when the Lord says [He atoned for] ‘all’ He means them too. They seem to say to themselves, ‘I believe that



LESLIE NILSSON

Christus, by Bertel Thorvaldsen

Jesus Christ died for the sins of mankind, but what I have done is so terrible or so repeated that I don’t think the Atonement will work for me.’ Some who are faithful members of the Church actually seem to believe that they will never make it back to Heavenly Father’s presence. It is the idea that Christ can save all mankind, but He may not be able to save me. . . .

“Others can sense that this idea is false and that Christ can save them, but they are not sure He will. The Book of Mormon prophet Jacob taught, ‘He cometh into the world that he may save all men if they will hearken to his voice; for behold, he suffereth . . . the pains of every living creature, both men, women, and children’ (2 Ne. 9:21). The question is not whether we are perfect or whether we are worth forgiving, but whether we are willing to admit when we do wrong, feel sorry, confess as appropriate, do all we can to set things right, and ask the Lord to forgive us” (“Learning How the Atonement Can Change You,” *Ensign*, Apr. 2002, 22).

Hebrews 7:26. Jesus Christ Lived a “Holy, Harmless, undefiled” Life

Paul explained that Jesus Christ can save us because He lived a perfect life. **Elder Bruce D. Porter** of the Seventy explained how the undefiled and perfect life of Jesus Christ was crucial to His Atonement: “The trial of

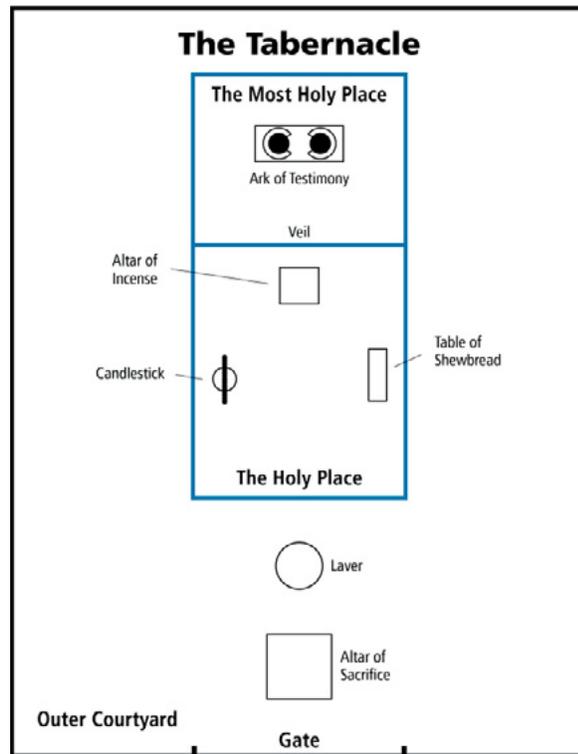
Jesus in Gethsemane would not have been possible and could not have occurred had it not been preceded by a lifetime of sinless virtue. . . . From his temptation in the wilderness to his rejection in Nazareth to the illegal trial before the Sanhedrin, Christ paid the price of a perfect life, walking in holy sinlessness despite adversity, physical suffering, deep sorrows, and the snares of ruthless and determined adversaries, both seen and unseen. 'He suffered temptations but gave no heed unto them' (D&C 20:22). All this he did with the knowledge that one misstep would mean creation's doom! For had he sinned even in the smallest point or slightest negligence of thought, the Atonement would have become impossible and the whole purpose of creation frustrated. The burden of the whole world weighed upon him through every moment of his life" (*The King of Kings* [2000], 92).

Hebrews 8:1–13. Jesus Christ Is "the Mediator of a Better Covenant"

In Hebrews 8, Paul summarized the ideas of the previous chapter and explained that because Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice was superior in every way to the temple offerings made by Levitical priests, He became "the mediator of a better covenant" (Hebrews 8:6). The Greek term translated as "mediator" in Hebrews 8:6 refers to a third party who stands between two others to resolve their differences and to bring them together. Jesus Christ is the Mediator through whom the gospel covenant is established between Heavenly Father and us. Paul also called this "better covenant" a "new covenant," quoting from Jeremiah 31:31–34 to show his Jewish-Christian readers that the Lord had revealed to Old Testament prophets that He would someday make a new covenant with Israel that would supersede the old (see Hebrews 8:8–12).

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) noted that although Jews in New Testament times generally rejected this new covenant, it would again be offered to them at a later time: "Christ, in the days of His flesh, proposed to make a covenant with them, but they rejected Him and His proposals, and in consequence thereof, they were broken off, and no covenant was made with them at that time. But their unbelief has not rendered the promise of God of none effect: no, for there was another day limited in David, which was the day of His power; and then His people, Israel, should be a willing people;—and He would write His law in their hearts, and print it in their thoughts; their sins and their iniquities He would remember no more" (in *History of the Church*, 1:313).

Hebrews 9:1–7. Once Every Year



Paul continued his comparison between the Levitical high priest and Jesus Christ by discussing the work of the high priest on the Day of Atonement. Once a year on the Jewish holy day called the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), the high priest was permitted to enter into the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle or, later, the Jerusalem temple. (The Holy of Holies is referred to as the second tabernacle in Hebrews 9:3–5, 7.) On that day, "the high priest, clothed in white linen, took a bullock as a sin offering and a ram as a burnt offering for himself and his house; and two he-goats as a sin offering. . . . He then cast lots upon the two goats. One was to be for the Lord for a sin offering. The other was . . . to be sent away alive into the wilderness [a scapegoat]. . . . He then killed the bullock, his own sin offering, and, taking a censer full of live coals from off the brazen altar with two handfuls of incense into the Holy of Holies, cast the incense on the coals there so that the cloud of smoke might cover the mercy seat and, as it were, hide him from God. He then took of the blood of the bullock and sprinkled it once on the east part of the mercy seat (as an atonement for the priesthood) and seven times before the mercy seat (as an atonement for the Holy of Holies itself). Then he killed the goat, the congregation's sin offering, and sprinkled its blood in the same manner, with corresponding objects. . . . Over [the scapegoat] the

high priest confessed all the sins of the people of Israel, after which it was sent by the hand of a man into the wilderness to bear away their iniquities into a solitary land. This ceremony signified the sending away of the sins of the people” (Bible Dictionary, “Fasts”; see also Leviticus 16:22).

Hebrews 9:6–16

In what ways is the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the “great high priest” (Hebrews 4:14), superior to all the offerings and sacrifices made by priests in the Old Testament? In other words, what does the Atonement of Jesus Christ accomplish that the law of Moses did not? What insights do you gain from the footnotes to these verses?

Hebrews 9:11–15, 23–28; 10:1. Jesus Christ as High Priest and Mediator

The ordinances performed by ancient Levitical priests foreshadowed the Atonement made by the Son of God (see Hebrews 10:1). Ancient priests offered up goats or lambs from Israel’s flocks; the Lamb of God voluntarily offered up Himself (see Hebrews 9:12–14). The high priest offered sacrifices in this manner every year on the



A figure displaying what the clothing of a high priest in ancient Israel may have looked like (based on the description in Exodus 28)

Day of Atonement; Christ offered His sacrifice “once for all” (Hebrews 10:10; see also 9:25–28). As the ancient high priest entered into the Holy of Holies on earth and sprinkled the goat’s blood upon the mercy seat for the sins of Israel, so Jesus Christ our Mediator entered the sanctuary of heaven itself, there to intercede by virtue of His own spilt blood before the Father in behalf of those who would repent (see Hebrews 9:15, 23–25).

Thus, Jesus was not only the High Priest for us in making the offering; *He was also the very offering Himself*. Jesus came “to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Hebrews 9:26; see also Joseph Smith Translation, Hebrews 8:4 [in Hebrews 8:4, footnote a]).

Hebrews 9:11. Jesus Christ Is Our “High Priest of Good Things to Come”

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles drew upon Paul’s description of Jesus as the “high priest of good things to come” (Hebrews 9:11) in

order to provide encouragement to those struggling in despair:

“Every one of us has times when we need to know things will get better. Moroni spoke of it in the Book of Mormon as ‘hope for a better world’ [Ether 12:4]. For emotional health and spiritual stamina, everyone needs to be able to look forward to some respite, to something pleasant and renewing and hopeful, whether that blessing be near at hand or still some distance ahead. It is enough just to know we can get there, that however measured or far away, there is the promise of ‘good things to come.’

“My declaration is that this is precisely what the gospel of Jesus Christ offers us, especially in times of need. There *is* help. There *is* happiness. There really *is* light at the end of the tunnel. It is the Light of the World, the Bright and Morning Star, the ‘light that is endless, that can never be darkened’ [Mosiah 16:9; see also John 8:12; Revelation 22:16]. . . . To any who may be struggling to see that light and find that hope, I say: Hold on. Keep trying. God loves you. Things will improve. Christ comes to you in His ‘more excellent ministry’ with a future of ‘better promises.’ He is your ‘high priest of good things to come’ [Hebrews 8:6; 9:11]” (“An High Priest of Good Things to Come,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 36; see also the commentary for Romans 4:18–22).

Hebrews 9:15–17. “Death of the Testator”

Paul wrote that “where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator” (Hebrews 9:16).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained the meaning of Paul’s language:

“In legal usage, a *testator* is one who leaves a valid will or testament at his death. The will or testament is the written document wherein the testator provides for the disposition of his property. As used in the gospel sense, a *testament* is a covenant. Jesus is the Mediator of the new covenant or testament, that is of the gospel which came to replace the law of Moses. . . .

“Paul mixed these legal and gospel definitions to teach a basic doctrine. . . . Christ had to die to bring salvation. The testament or covenant of salvation came in force because of the atonement worked out in connection with that death. *Christ is the Testator*. His gift, as would be true of any testator, cannot be inherited until his death. Christ died that salvation might come” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 784–85).

It should be noted that the Joseph Smith Translation uses *covenant* in place of *testament* in every instance in Hebrews 9:15–20.

Hebrews 9:18–28; 10:1–4, 10–12, 17. “Without Shedding of Blood Is No Remission”

As Paul taught that both the old covenant and the new covenant required the blood of a sacrifice, he observed that “without shedding of blood is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22). Blood is symbolic of life. Sin offerings under the law of Moses required the shedding of an animal’s blood. In setting forth the laws respecting sacrificial ordinances in ancient Israel, the Lord explained: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Leviticus 17:11). The blood of animals ratified the old covenant, foreshadowing the shedding of Jesus Christ’s blood that ratified the new covenant and made the remission of sins possible (see Hebrews 10:4; Mosiah 3:14–15).

The blood of goats had been shed for centuries to ritually cleanse and sanctify the people (see Hebrews 9:13). Paul, however, taught that “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4). The Savior “was once offered to bear the sins of many,” and this was the only true sacrifice (Hebrews 9:28; see also the commentary for Matthew 27:15–21).

Hebrews 9:23–24; 10:1, 3. “A Shadow of Good Things to Come”

Paul used certain words to show how the sacrifices and practices of the law of Moses served as types or similitudes of things to come: “patterns” (Hebrews 9:23), “figures” (Hebrews 9:24), “shadow” and “image” (Hebrews 10:1), and “remembrance” (Hebrews 10:3). The Old Testament priestly duties and temple sacrifices pointed to Jesus Christ’s great atoning sacrifice.

Hebrews 10:10. Jesus Christ Was Offered “Once for All”



Adam and Eve Offering Sacrifices,
by Del Parson

The Epistle to the Hebrews repeatedly emphasizes the difference between sacrifices under the law of Moses, which had to be offered over and over again, and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which was made “once for all” (Hebrews 10:10; see also 7:26–27; 9:25–28; 10:10–12). **President Russell M. Nelson** explained how the Savior’s one-time offering

was infinite in its scope: “[Jesus Christ’s] Atonement is infinite—without an end. It was also infinite in that all humankind would be saved from never-ending death. It was infinite in terms of His immense suffering. It was infinite in time, putting an end to the preceding prototype of animal sacrifice. It was infinite in scope—it was to be done once for all” (“The Atonement,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 35).

Hebrews 10:19–20. The Veil of His Flesh

Having established the image of Jesus Christ as High Priest entering into the Holy of Holies, or the presence of God, to intercede for us through His blood, Paul then exhorted his readers to follow Christ into God’s presence “by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh” (Hebrews 10:20). Just as the veil of the ancient tabernacle or temple provided access to the Holy of Holies, in Paul’s metaphor, the flesh of Jesus Christ, offered as a sacrifice for sin and raised to resurrected glory, enables us to enter into God’s presence (see John 6:51; Hebrews 10:10). In each case, this was the only means provided to enter (see Acts 4:10–12; Mosiah 3:17; Alma 38:9). For more information on “the veil,” see the commentary for Matthew 27:51.

Hebrews 10:22–24, 32–39. “Cast Not Away Therefore Your Confidence”

It should be remembered that Hebrews was written to Church members who were wondering whether it would be better to return to the Jewish faith. **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** spoke of the challenges faced by the Hebrew Saints and likened the message of Hebrews to us:

“Paul says to those who thought a new testimony, a personal conversion, a spiritual baptismal experience would put them beyond trouble—to these he says, ‘Call to remembrance the former days, in which, *after ye were illuminated*, ye endured a great fight of afflictions.’ Then this tremendous counsel, which is at the heart of my counsel to you: ‘*Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward . . .*’ [Hebrews 10:32, 35; italics added].

“That is the way it has always been, Paul says, but don’t draw back. Don’t panic and retreat. Don’t lose your confidence. Don’t forget how you once felt. Don’t distrust the experience you had. . . .

“This opposition turns up almost any place something good has happened. It can happen when you are trying to get an education. It can hit you after your first month in your new mission field. It certainly happens in

matters of love and marriage. It can occur in situations related to your family, Church callings, or career.

“With any major decision there are cautions and considerations to make, but once there has been illumination, beware the temptation to retreat from a good thing. If it was right when you prayed about it and trusted it and lived for it, it is right now. Don’t give up when the pressure mounts. Certainly don’t give in to that being who is bent on the destruction of your happiness. Face your doubts. Master your fears. ‘Cast not away therefore your confidence.’ Stay the course and see the beauty of life unfold for you” (“Cast Not Away Therefore Your Confidence,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2000, 8–9).

Hebrews 10:26, 29. Sinning Willfully After Knowing the Truth

Paul taught that those who “sin willfully,” knowing their actions are wrong, will experience “much sorer punishment” because they disrespect the sacrifice of the Son of God (Hebrews 10:26). In the pamphlet *For the Strength of Youth*, we read: “Some people knowingly break God’s commandments, planning to repent later, such as before they go to the temple or serve a mission. Such deliberate sin mocks the Savior’s Atonement” (*For the Strength of Youth* [booklet, 2011], 29).

Hebrews 10:36; 12:1. “For Ye Have Need of Patience”

Knowing the struggles the Hebrew Saints were facing (see “To whom was Hebrews written and why?” in chapter 48), Paul exhorted his readers to be patient. The word *patience* in Hebrews 10 and 12 is translated from a Greek word meaning endurance or perseverance.

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles discussed patience and the part it plays in enduring to the end: “Paul wrote of how, even after faithful disciples had ‘done the will of God,’ they ‘[had] need of patience.’ (Heb. 10:36.) How many times have good individuals done the right thing initially only to break under subsequent stress? Sustaining correct conduct for a difficult moment under extraordinary stress is very commendable, but so is coping with sustained stress subtly present in seeming routineness. Either way, however, we are to ‘run with patience the race that is set before us’ (Heb. 12:1), and it is a marathon, not a dash” (“Endure It Well,” *Ensign*, May 1990, 34).

Hebrews 11:1. “Faith Is the Substance of Things Hoped for, the Evidence of Things Not Seen”

Hebrews 11 recalls examples of faithful individuals in the past and the righteous deeds they performed through

their faith in order to give readers assurance and confidence to endure in faith and to obtain promised blessings. Joseph Smith Translation, Hebrews 11:1 replaces the word *evidence* with *assurance* (in Hebrews 11:1, footnote *b*). **Elder David A. Bednar** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles drew upon these images to explain that faith leads us to remember past assurances, face the future, and take action in the present:

“The Apostle Paul defined faith as ‘the substance of things hoped for, [and] the evidence of things not seen’ (Hebrews 11:1). Alma declared that faith is not a perfect knowledge; rather, if we have faith, we ‘hope for things which are not seen, [but] are true’ (Alma 32:21). Additionally, we learn in the *Lectures on Faith* that faith is ‘the first principle in revealed religion, and the foundation of all righteousness’ and that it is also ‘the principle of action in all intelligent beings’ [*Lectures on Faith* (1985), 1].

“These teachings of Paul and of Alma and from the *Lectures on Faith* highlight three basic elements of faith: (1) faith as the *assurance* of things hoped for which are true, (2) faith as the *evidence* of things not seen, and (3) faith as the principle of *action* in all intelligent beings. I describe these three components of faith in the Savior as simultaneously facing the future, looking to the past, and initiating action in the present.

“Faith as the assurance of things hoped for looks to the future. . . .

“Faith in Christ is inextricably tied to and results in hope in Christ for our redemption and exaltation. And assurance and hope make it possible for us to walk to the edge of the light and take a few steps into the darkness—expecting and trusting the light to move and illuminate the way (see Boyd K. Packer, “The Candle of the Lord,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1983, 54). The combination of assurance and hope initiates action in the present.

“Faith as the evidence of things not seen looks to the past and confirms our trust in God and our confidence in the truthfulness of things not seen. We stepped into the darkness with assurance and hope, and we received evidence and confirmation as the light in fact moved and provided the illumination we needed. The witness we obtained after the trial of our faith (see Ether 12:6) is evidence that enlarges and strengthens our assurance.

“Assurance, action, and evidence influence each other in an ongoing process” (“Seek Learning by Faith” [evening with Elder David A. Bednar, Feb. 3, 2006], 1–2).

Hebrews 11:3. “Through Faith . . . Worlds Were Framed”

As Paul began to recount scriptural examples of great works done through faith, he started with the Creation of the world itself: “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God” (Hebrews 11:3). The *Lectures on Faith* discuss how the worlds were framed by faith:

“The principle of power which existed in the bosom of God, by which the worlds were framed, was faith; and that it is by reason of this principle of power existing in the Deity, that all created things exist; so that all things in heaven, on earth, or under the earth, exist by reason of faith as it existed in Him.

“Had it not been for the principle of faith the worlds would never have been framed, neither would man have been formed of the dust. It is the principle by which Jehovah works, and through which he exercises power over all temporal as well as eternal things” (*Lectures on Faith* [1985], 3).

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that faith is a principle of power:

“Truly understood and properly practiced, faith is one of the grand and glorious powers of eternity. It is a force powerful beyond our comprehension. ‘Through faith . . . the worlds were framed by the word of God’ [Hebrews 11:3]. Through faith, waters are parted, the sick healed, the wicked silenced, and salvation made possible.

“Our faith is the foundation upon which all our spiritual lives rest. It should be the most important resource of our lives” (“Shall He Find Faith on the Earth?” *Ensign*, Nov. 2002, 84).

Hebrews 11:4. “Abel Offered unto God a More Excellent Sacrifice”

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** explained why Abel’s offering was acceptable to God and Cain’s offering was not: “By faith in this atonement or plan of redemption, Abel offered to God a sacrifice that was accepted, which was the firstlings of the flock. Cain offered of the fruit of the ground, and was not accepted, because he could not do it in faith; he could have no faith, or could not exercise faith contrary to the plan of heaven. It must be shedding the blood of the Only Begotten to atone for man, for this was the plan of redemption, and without the shedding of blood was no remission. And as the sacrifice was instituted for a type by which man was to discern the great Sacrifice which God had prepared, to offer a

sacrifice contrary to that, no faith could be exercised, because redemption was not purchased in that way, nor the power of atonement instituted after that order; consequently Cain could have no faith” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 48).

Hebrews 11:6. “He That Cometh to God Must Believe That He Is”

Paul taught that if we are to come to God, we must “believe that he is” (Hebrews 11:6). In the *Lectures on Faith*, we read that “three things are necessary in order that any rational and intelligent being may exercise faith in God unto life and salvation. First, the idea that he actually exists. Secondly, a *correct* idea of his character, perfections, and attributes. Thirdly, an actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing is according to his will” (*Lectures on Faith* [1985], 38).

Hebrews 11:7–12, 29–35. Faith Precedes Miracles

Many of the righteous accomplishments recorded in Hebrews 11 may be regarded as miracles. **President Thomas S. Monson** (1927–2018) taught that tests of faith come before miracles happen: “Faith precedes the miracle. It has ever been so and shall ever be. It was not raining when Noah was commanded to build an ark. There was no visible ram in the thicket when Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac. Two heavenly personages were not yet seen when Joseph knelt and prayed. First came the test of faith—and then the miracle” (“The Call to Serve,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2000, 48–49).



The Lord Fulfilleth All His Words, by Clark Kelley Price

Hebrews 11:8–16. “These All Died in Faith, Not Having Received the Promises”

Paul wrote that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Sarah died with faith in the Lord’s promises to them of innumerable posterity and a land of promise, even though these

promises were not fulfilled in their lifetimes. Abraham had left his homeland in the land of Ur with faith, not knowing where the Lord was taking him and his family. He, his son, and his grandson had lived out their lives in a “strange country.” But Abraham knew that he was ultimately seeking to join a city “whose builder and maker is God”—the celestial city of Zion, also called the city of Enoch or the city of God. The prophet Melchizedek had also gone to this city with his people. (See Hebrews 11:8–9, 13, 16; Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 14:34 [in the Bible appendix]; D&C 45:11–14.)

Many of the Lord’s choicest blessings must wait until after physical death to be received, as **Elder Spencer J. Condie** explained, while serving as a member of the Seventy: “Important components of faith are patience, long-suffering, and enduring to the end. The Apostle Paul recounts the faith of . . . Abraham, and Sara, concluding that ‘these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth’ (see Hebrews 11:4–13). These faithful Saints knew that this earth life was a journey, not their final destination” (“Claim the Exceeding Great and Precious Promises,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 17).

Hebrews 11:17–19. By Faith Abraham, When He Was Tried, Offered Up Isaac

The supreme example Paul gave of Abraham’s faith was his willingness to obey the Lord’s command to sacrifice Isaac, the birthright son through whom the Lord had covenanted to give Abraham an innumerable posterity. Even though obeying the Lord’s command would seem to make this promise impossible, Abraham had faith that the Lord would yet fulfill all His words. Paul’s description of Isaac as Abraham’s “only begotten son” helps us understand that when Abraham offered up his son Isaac, it was “a similitude” of the Father and the Son. The Book of Mormon records, “It was accounted unto Abraham in the wilderness to be obedient unto the commands of God in offering up his son Isaac, which is a similitude of God and his *Only Begotten Son*” (Jacob 4:5; italics added; see also Genesis 22:2).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie discussed Abraham’s test of faith and suggested why it serves as an example of faith to all of us:

“Who can conceive of a more severe test of faith than the heaven-sent order to sacrifice the heir of promise, the heir whom God must then raise from the dead that his promises concerning Isaac might be fulfilled. (Gen.

21:12.) Is it any wonder that in all succeeding generations the seed of Abraham have looked back with awe and reverence upon a scene which tested mortal man almost beyond mortal power to obey?

“Why did Deity devise such a test? Certainly it was for Abraham’s blessing and benefit. There can be no question that the harder the test, the higher the reward for passing it. And here Abraham laid his all on the altar, thus proving himself worthy of that exaltation which he has now received. (D. & C. 132:29.) And immediately following his conformity to the divine will, he received a heavenly manifestation of the glory and honor reserved for him and his seed. (Gen. 22:15–18.)

“Certainly, also, Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice Isaac was intended to be an example forever of that perfect obedience which the Lord expects of all the heirs of promise” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 3:206–7).

Hebrews 11:23–26. “The Pleasures of Sin for a Season”

Though raised in Pharaoh’s royal household, Moses chose “rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt” (Hebrews 11:25–26). **President Dallin H. Oaks** spoke of how serving God, not transitory pleasure or wealth, leads to true peace and happiness:

“Those who yield to the enticing of Satan may, as the scripture says, ‘enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season’ (Heb. 11:25), but that kind of pleasure can never lead to lasting happiness or eternal joy. . . .

“Brothers and sisters, old and young, I plead with each of you to remember that wickedness never was happiness and that sin leads to misery [see Alma 41:10]. Young people, do not seek happiness in the glittering but shallow things of the world. We cannot achieve lasting happiness by pursuing the wrong things” (“Joy and Mercy,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1991, 75).

Hebrews 11:33–39. Persons in Scriptural History

Hebrews 11:33–39 describes various persons throughout scriptural history, including Daniel (see Hebrews 11:33; Daniel 6:16–22); Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (see Hebrews 11:34; Daniel 3:21–27); Enoch (see Hebrews 11:34; Moses 7:13–15); the widow of Zarephath (see Hebrews 11:35; 1 Kings 17:17–23); and Isaiah (see Hebrews 11:37; the traditional belief is that Isaiah was “sawn asunder”).

Hebrews 11:40; 12:1. “So Great a Cloud of Witnesses”

In Hebrews 11 Paul provided a list of men and women who, through their sufferings and faith in the Lord, accomplished many great things and moved toward perfection. Joseph Smith Translation, Hebrews 11:40 clarifies the role of their sufferings: “God having provided some better *things* for *them* through their sufferings, for without sufferings they could not be made perfect” (in Hebrews 11:40, footnote *a*). With these examples as a backdrop, Paul exhorted his readers to greater faithfulness: “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1).

Paul referred to these men and women of the previous chapter as a “cloud of witnesses.” They can be looked to as witnesses because their lives bear witness to the power of faith in enabling us to perform righteous works. Paul may have also intended the phrase “cloud of witnesses” to introduce the metaphor of running a race, in which the faithful Saints of old are figuratively seen as the crowd of onlookers cheering on the runners. Both meanings convey that the powerful examples of the ancient Saints can give us strength and confidence to “run . . . the race that is set before us.”

Hebrews 12:2. “The Author and Finisher of Our Faith”

The phrase “author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2) can also be rendered as “the Leader and Perfecter of our faith” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:222). **President Thomas S. Monson** spoke of how the exhortation to endure by “looking unto Jesus” (Hebrews 12:2) applies to us:

“Remember that we do not run alone in this great race of life; we are entitled to the help of the Lord. To the Hebrews the Apostle Paul urged:

“Lay aside . . . sin . . . , and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

“Looking [for an example] unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith” [Hebrews 12:1–2] (“Great Expectations” [Brigham Young University devotional, Jan. 11, 2009], 6; speeches.byu.edu).

Hebrews 12:2. “For the Joy That Was Set before Him”

Crucifixion was intended in the Greco-Roman world to publicly shame, humiliate, and torture its victim (see the

commentary for 1 Corinthians 1:17–2:13). Paul recorded that the Savior “endured the cross” and despised “the shame” of it (Hebrews 12:2). He looked past the pain and public shame of His Crucifixion and endured it, knowing that it would eventually bring joy for Him and for His followers. Although nonbelievers saw crucifixion as an ignominious way to die, the early Saints saw obedience, humility, love, and power in the Lord’s Crucifixion.



The Crucifixion of Christ

Hebrews 12:6–11. The Lord’s Chastening

Scripture attests to numerous purposes for the Lord’s chastening. In Hebrews 12:10, Paul taught that the Lord corrects us “for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.” His correction “yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Hebrews 12:11). The Lord’s correction can take many forms, and it always helps to teach individuals as well as provide necessary correction. Chastening helps people remember the Lord, repent, receive forgiveness and deliverance, learn obedience, and become refined as gold (see Helaman 12:3; D&C 1:27; 95:1; 105:6; Job 23:10).

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said of the Lord’s chastening: “Correction is vital if we would conform our lives ‘unto a perfect man, [that is,] unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ’ (Ephesians 4:13). Paul said of divine correction or chastening, ‘For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth’ (Hebrews 12:6). Though it is often difficult to endure, truly we ought to rejoice that God considers us worth the time and trouble to correct” (“As Many as I Love, I Rebuke and Chasten,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2011, 97–98).

Elder Orson F. Whitney (1855–1931) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught: “No pain that we suffer, no trial that we experience is wasted. It ministers to our education, to the development of such qualities as patience, faith, fortitude and humility. All that we suffer and all that we endure, especially when we endure it patiently, builds up our characters, purifies our hearts, expands our souls, and makes us more tender and charitable” (in Spencer W. Kimball, *Faith Precedes the Miracle* [1972], 98).

Hebrews 12:9. “The Father of Spirits”

In Hebrews 12:9, Paul affirmed the doctrine that all people are spirit children of God the Father. **President Dallin H. Oaks** taught regarding the importance of understanding this doctrine: “Consider the power of the idea taught in our beloved song ‘I Am a Child of God’ (*Hymns*, 1985, no. 301). . . . Here is the answer to one of life’s great questions, ‘Who am I?’ I am a child of God with a spirit lineage to heavenly parents. That parentage defines our eternal potential. That powerful idea is a potent antidepressant. It can strengthen each of us to make righteous choices and to seek the best that is within us. Establish in the mind of a young person the powerful idea that he or she is a child of God and you have given self-respect and motivation to move against the problems of life” (“Powerful Ideas,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 25).

Hebrews 12:16–17. Esau

Paul included a strongly worded characterization of Esau to teach that the Saints should not be immoral or profane (see Hebrews 12:16–17). A profane person is one who treats holy things with carelessness or contempt, as when Esau sold his birthright to Isaac for a little food (see Genesis 25:28–34). The word “it” in the final line of verse 17 refers to the “blessing,” or birthright, that Esau sought after trading it away (see Genesis 27:34–38).

Hebrews 12:22. “An Innumerable Company of Angels”

Paul spoke of an “innumerable company of angels,” suggesting that our Heavenly Father’s children who receive exaltation will be innumerable (see also Daniel 7:10; Revelation 5:11).

Hebrews 12:23. “Church of the Firstborn”

Paul’s teaching that redeemed Saints join the “church of the firstborn” (Hebrews 12:23) is the only biblical occurrence of this phrase. In latter-day revelations, the Prophet Joseph Smith learned that the Church of the Firstborn refers to Christ’s heavenly Church, which comprises faithful, exalted Saints in the celestial kingdom (see D&C 76:54; 88:4–5). “Jesus was the firstborn of the spirit children of our Heavenly Father, the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh, and the first to rise from the dead in the resurrection (Col. 1:13–18). Faithful Saints become members of the Church of the Firstborn in eternity (D&C 93:21–22)” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Firstborn”; scriptures.lds.org).

Hebrews 12:29. “Our God Is a Consuming Fire”

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** commented on the imagery of God being a “consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:29): “God Almighty Himself dwells in eternal fire; flesh and blood cannot go there, for all corruption is devoured by the fire. ‘Our God is a consuming fire.’ When our flesh is quickened by the Spirit, there will be no blood in this tabernacle. Some dwell in higher glory than others” (in *History of the Church*, 6:366).

Hebrews 13:7, 17–18

According to these verses, what are some ways Church members can sustain their ecclesiastical leaders? How could you better sustain your leaders?

Hebrews 13:9. “Be Not Carried About”

To learn more about remaining steadfast and avoiding strange doctrines, see Ephesians 4:11–14 and the commentary for Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:11.

Hebrews 13:12. Jesus “Suffered without the Gate”

To read about Jesus Christ suffering outside the walls of Jerusalem, see the commentary for Matthew 27:33.

Points to Ponder

- How is it a blessing to receive correction or chastisement from Heavenly Father or one of His authorized servants? How has the Lord’s chastening brought about “peaceable fruit” (Hebrews 12:11) in your life?

Suggested Assignments

- The Epistle to the Hebrews depicts Jesus Christ as the Great High Priest. Study Hebrews 2:17; 3:1; 4:15; 5:1; 7:26; 8:1–3. Write a brief paragraph about how, as the Great High Priest, Jesus Christ serves as an example for priesthood holders in the modern Church.
- Hebrews 11 lists a “cloud of witnesses,” men and women who had demonstrated extraordinary faith in the Lord. Make a list of men and women you know who have demonstrated faith in Jesus Christ. Write a sentence for each person on your list describing how each has demonstrated great faith. Write a paragraph explaining how remembering these “witnesses” in your life can help you be spiritually confident and not “draw back” (see Hebrews 10:35–38).

Introduction to the General Epistle of James

Why study James?

The Epistle of James is well known among members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for the significant passage that led young Joseph Smith to seek for truth from God (see James 1:5). Unlike the Apostle Paul, James did not expound much in detail upon doctrines of the gospel. Rather, this epistle provides teachings of Christian wisdom and examples of how disciples of Jesus Christ should live their lives as expressions of their faith in Jesus Christ—we are to be “doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22). Much of the counsel found in this epistle is like short sermons that emphasize righteous actions above the verbal profession of belief. James taught that true faith is manifest in one’s “works,” or actions (see James 2:14–26). This letter will help readers see how to live in order to receive a “crown of life” (James 1:12).

Who wrote James?

The epistle states that it was authored by “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (James 1:1). Christian tradition has held that this James, like Jude, is one of the sons of Joseph and Mary and hence half-brother of Jesus of Nazareth (see Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3; Galatians 1:19). The fact that James is mentioned first in the list of Jesus’s brothers in Matthew 13:55 may indicate that he was the oldest of the half-brothers. Like the Lord’s other half-brothers, James did not initially become a disciple of Jesus (see John 7:3–5). However, after Jesus was resurrected, James was one of those special individuals to whom Christ appeared as a resurrected Being (see 1 Corinthians 15:7). Later James became an Apostle and, according to early Christian writers, the first bishop of the Church in Jerusalem (see Acts 12:17; 21:18; Galatians 1:18–19; 2:9). As a leader in the Church, he played a prominent role in the council held in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13). His influence in the Church was no doubt strengthened by his kinship to Jesus, yet he showed humility in introducing himself not as the *brother* of Jesus but as a *servant* of the Lord (see James 1:1). For further information on James, see the commentary for Acts 15:13–29.

When and where was James written?

It is difficult to determine when this epistle was written. The Jewish historian Josephus wrote that James the brother of Jesus was killed in A.D. 62 after the Sanhedrin ordered that he be stoned to death (see Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, trans. L. H. Feldman, Loeb Classical Library 456 [1965], 106–9). Based on that information, scholars believe that James wrote this letter sometime between A.D. 45 and 60. This would make the Epistle of James one of the earliest documents in the New Testament. Since James lived in Jerusalem and watched over the affairs of the Church there, he likely wrote his epistle from that area.

To whom was James written and why?

James is the first of the seven “general Epistles” included in the New Testament—the others being 1 and 2 Peter; 1, 2, and 3 John; and Jude. They are labeled as general Epistles because their authors intended them for a broader audience than a single congregation or area. James addressed his letter “to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (James 1:1). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles said the following about James’s audience: “Paul wrote to the saints of his own day, and if his doctrine and counsel blesses us of later years, so much the better. But James addressed himself to those of the twelve scattered tribes of Israel who belonged to the Church; that is, to a people yet to be gathered, yet to receive the gospel, yet to come into the fold of Christ; and if his words had import to the small cluster of saints of Judah and Benjamin who joined the Church in the meridian of time, so much the better” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1966–73], 3:243).

What are some distinctive features of James?

The Epistle of James has sometimes been classified as wisdom literature similar to the Old Testament book of Proverbs. The variety of topics mentioned may be evidence that portions of several sermons were combined to create this epistle. The text of the letter consists of short explanations of principles for Christian living. Because many of these explanations emphasize the role of righteous deeds in the justification of the believer, some people, like Martin Luther, believed that this letter

contains little about the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. However, careful readers can recognize that James illustrated the need to live gospel principles in order to express one's faith in Jesus Christ.

There are close parallels between the Savior's Sermon on the Mount recorded in Matthew 5–7 and the words of James. Because James was the half-brother of Jesus Christ, one would expect to find in his writings some familiarity with the teachings of the Savior. Some similar

themes include enduring persecutions (see James 1:2–3, 12; Matthew 5:10–12); becoming "perfect," or spiritually mature (see James 1:4; 2:22; Matthew 5:48); asking God (see James 1:5; Matthew 7:7–8); doing the will of God (see James 1:22; Matthew 7:21–24); loving others (see James 2:8; Matthew 5:43–44; 7:12); knowing good and evil by their fruits (see James 3:11–12; Matthew 7:16–20); being a peacemaker (see James 3:18; Matthew 5:9); and not swearing at all (see James 5:12; Matthew 5:34–37).

Outline

James 1–2 James greeted his readers and introduced some major themes of his epistle, including enduring trials, seeking wisdom, and living consistent with one's professed faith. Hearers of God's word are also to be doers of the word. James defined "pure religion" as caring for the fatherless and widows and seeking to live free from sin (see James 1:27). Saints are to love their

neighbors and to manifest their faith through their works.

James 3–4 James illustrated the destructive nature of uncontrolled speech and contrasted it with the fruit of righteousness of those who make peace. He cautioned his readers not to become friends with the world but to resist the devil and draw close to God.

James 5 James warned the wanton rich. He concluded his epistle with brief items of counsel about the Saints' responsibilities toward other members of the Church. They are to patiently endure until the coming of the Lord and refrain from oaths. James encouraged the sick to call on the elders to anoint them with oil.



Let Him Ask of God, by Jon McNaughton. Joseph Smith recorded that when he read James 1:5, "never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again" (Joseph Smith—History 1:12).

Introduction and Timeline for James

The Epistle of James emphasizes practical gospel living, counseling readers to demonstrate their faith through the works of righteous day-to-day actions. For example, James warned that an uncontrolled tongue is destructive (see James 1:26; 3:2–10). He declared that caring for the poor and needy, especially the fatherless and the widows, is the essence of “pure religion” (James 1:27). James also taught that being “a friend of the world” makes a person “the enemy of God” (James 4:4).

The Epistle of James holds a prominent place in the minds of Latter-day Saints for its role in prompting young Joseph Smith to seek for greater wisdom from God (see James 1:5; Joseph Smith—History 1:11–13).



James probably wrote this epistle while in Jerusalem, sometime between A.D. 45 and 60.

Commentary for James

James 1:2–4. Joy in Afflictions

The practical nature of this epistle is evident in the opening verses. James wrote that when faith is tested or tried through difficulties, patience is produced (see James 1:2–4). This patience, which leads to sanctification and spiritual development, is a necessary attribute for all who seek eternal life (see D&C 54:10; 67:13; 101:4–5). Joseph Smith Translation, James 1:2 changes the phrase “divers temptations” to “many afflictions” (in James 1:2, footnote a).

James 1:5. “If Any of You Lack Wisdom”

Every member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has been blessed by the declaration that James made: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God” (James 1:5). This simple but inspired passage motivated young Joseph Smith to turn to God for a heavenly answer (see Joseph Smith—History 1:11–13). James 1:5 teaches that the heavens are not sealed, that God will reveal answers to those of any generation who ask Him in faith, including us today (see also D&C 6:11; 42:61). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described the unique significance of this passage for Latter-day Saints:

“This single verse of scripture has had a greater impact and a more far reaching effect upon mankind than any other single sentence ever recorded by any prophet in any age. It might well be said that the crowning act of the ministry of James was not his martyrdom for the testimony of Jesus, but his recitation, as guided by the

Holy Ghost, of these simple words which led to the opening of the heavens in modern times.

“And it might well be added that every investigator of revealed truth stands, at some time in the course of his search, in the place where Joseph Smith stood. He must turn to the Almighty and gain wisdom from God by revelation if he is to gain a place on that strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:246–47).

James 1:5–7. What Does It Mean to “Ask in Faith”?

James emphasized the importance of faith when asking God for answers (see also 1 Nephi 15:11; Moroni 10:4). **Elder David A. Bednar** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained what it means to “ask in faith” (James 1:6):

“Notice the requirement to ask in faith, which I understand to mean the necessity to not only express but to do, the dual obligation to both plead and to perform, the requirement to communicate and to act.

“. . . Note the questions that guided Joseph’s thinking and supplicating. . . .

“‘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’ (Joseph Smith—History 1:10, 18).

“Joseph’s questions focused not just on what he needed to know but also on what was to be *done!* His prayer was not simply, ‘Which church is right?’ His question was, ‘Which church should I join?’ Joseph went to the grove to ask in faith, and he was determined to act.

“True faith is focused in and on the Lord Jesus Christ and always leads to righteous action. . . .

“ . . . We press forward and persevere in the consecrated work of prayer, after we say ‘amen,’ by acting upon the things we have expressed to Heavenly Father.

“Asking in faith requires honesty, effort, commitment, and persistence” (“Ask in Faith,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 94–95).



James 1:6–7

According to these verses, what effect does doubt have when we need answers from the Lord? What can a person do to strengthen his or her faith and overcome doubt?

James 1:8. “A Double Minded Man”

Double-mindedness refers to fickleness, being non-committal, and wavering in one’s loyalty. Here in the Epistle of James it means to vacillate in one’s commitment to the Lord (see also 1 Kings 18:21; Matthew 6:24; 1 Corinthians 10:21).

James 1:12–16; 4:7. “Drawn Away of His Own Lust, and Enticed”

While God is known to test the faith of His children (see Genesis 22:1; D&C 101:3–5; Abraham 3:25), He is not the source of temptation. James taught that temptations do not come from God but from the devil, who attempts to draw us away from righteousness by enticing us to do evil. The Greek verbs from which “drawn away” and “enticed” are translated refer to the traps and bait used when hunting and

fishing (James 1:14). **Elder M. Russell Ballard** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:

“The use of artificial lures to fool and catch a fish is an example of the way Lucifer often tempts, deceives, and tries to ensnare us.

“Like the fly fisherman who knows that trout are driven by hunger, Lucifer knows our ‘hunger,’ or weaknesses, and tempts us with counterfeit lures which, if taken, can cause us to be yanked from the stream of life into his unmerciful influence” (“O That Cunning Plan of the Evil One,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 108).

Joseph Smith Translation, James 1:12 teaches, “Blessed is the man that *resisteth* temptation” (in James 1:12, footnote *b*; see also James 4:7).

James 1:17. “No Variableness” with God

James wrote that there is “no variableness” with God. Moroni similarly wrote that “God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and in him there is no variableness neither shadow of changing” (Mormon 9:9; see also Moroni 8:18; D&C 20:12). God’s power is constant, as is His love for His children. This attribute of unchangeableness permits us to place our faith in Him.

James 1:19–20. Be “Slow to Wrath”

James counseled, “Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (James 1:19). Wrath is intense, vengeful anger, a characteristic that Paul described as one of the “works of the flesh” (Galatians 5:19–20), or one of the characteristics of the fallen, natural man. Wrath does not allow the Spirit of the Lord to flourish, and, as James taught, does not achieve God’s righteous purposes: “For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God” (James 1:20).

James 1:21. “Superfluity of Naughtiness”

As part of his teaching that “the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God” (James 1:20), James exhorted his readers to “lay apart all . . . superfluity of naughtiness” (James 1:21). “Naughtiness” has come to connote petty or mischievous acts, such as the pranks of children, but this is a very inadequate translation of the Greek word James used, which is *kakias*. This Greek word not only meant evil in the general sense but, specifically, hatred or bitterness toward another. Thus “malice” probably comes closest to the truest meaning. The Greek word translated “superfluity” is used in many other places in the New Testament. Typically it is translated as “abundance,” which gives the true sense of James’s phrase: “abundance of malice.”

James 1:22–25. “Be Ye Doers of the Word, and Not Hearers Only”

In his oft-quoted passage “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22), James taught readers that it is not sufficient to hear the word of God; the Lord expects us to act upon gospel truths (see Matthew 7:21–23; Mosiah 4:10; D&C 78:7). The Epistle of James focuses largely on helping readers to become doers of the word. **President Dallin H. Oaks** of the First Presidency explained: “It is not enough to know that God lives, that Jesus Christ is our Savior, and that the gospel is true. We must take the high road by acting upon that knowledge” (“Be Not Deceived,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2004, 46).

James 1:23. “A Man Beholding His Natural Face in a Glass”

In James 1:23 the word “glass” refers to a polished metal surface that was used as a mirror (see commentary for 1 Corinthians 13:9–13). James compared those who deceive themselves by hearing God’s word but neglecting to act in righteousness to those who see



their own reflection in a mirror and then forget how they looked. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** added this insight: “To hear and not do—to seek salvation solely through the good works of Christ, without personal conformity to his laws—is to see a glimpse of what salvation is in a mirror without ever receiving the real thing” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:252).

James 1:26–27

According to these verses, in what ways should a person put her or his religion into practice? Why is it not enough to merely hear the gospel or to have inner spiritual feelings without acting upon them?

James 1:26. Bridle Your Tongue

To read about the importance of guarding our words as followers of Christ, see the commentary for James 3:1–10.

James 1:27. Pure Religion

James observed that caring for others, particularly widows and the fatherless, is a manifestation of “pure religion” (James 1:27). Anciently, widows and orphans were among the most underprivileged members of society and had few rights or opportunities; thus, the Lord repeatedly commanded His people to care for them and for others in great need (see Exodus 22:22; Isaiah 1:17; Acts 6:1; D&C 83:6). While serving in the Presidency of the Seventy, **Elder Earl C. Tingey** pleaded with Church members to care for the widows around them:

“The term *widows* is used 34 times in the scriptures. In 23 of these passages, the term refers to widows and the fatherless. I believe the Lord has a tender feeling toward widows and the fatherless, or orphans. He knows that they may have to rely more completely on Him than on others. . . .

“To the family and friends of widows, God knows of your service and He may judge your works by how well you assist the widow. . . .

“. . . I know that the leaders of the Church are concerned about the welfare of widows. We members should care for and assist the widows within our family, home, ward, and neighborhood” (“The Widows of Zion,” *Ensign*, May 2000, 62–63).

Joseph Smith Translation, James 1:27 changes the end of the verse to read, “and to keep himself unspotted from *the vices of the world*” (in James 1:27, footnote g).



“Pure religion” requires us to care for the widows and elderly.

James 2:1–10. “With Respect of Persons”

To have “respect of persons” means to show partiality or favoritism toward individuals (James 2:1). The Joseph Smith Translation of James 2:1 clarifies: “My brethren, *ye cannot* have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, *and yet have* respect to persons” (in James 2:1, footnote *a*). James condemned such biased treatment of others, specifically discrimination against the poor in favor of the rich (see James 2:2–6). Other scriptures teach that followers of Christ should not discriminate on the basis of skin color, social standing, gender, or nationality (see 2 Nephi 26:33); education or economic standing (see 3 Nephi 6:10–12, 15; Proverbs 22:22); clothing (see Jacob 2:13); or health, age, or religious affiliation (see Alma 1:30). By living in this way, we become more like our Heavenly Father, who “is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11; D&C 1:34–35).

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) stated: “We must never forget that we live in a world of great diversity. The people of the earth are all our Father’s children and are of many and varied religious persuasions. We must cultivate tolerance and appreciation and respect one another. We have differences of doctrine. This need not bring about animosity or any kind of holier-than-thou attitude” (“The Work Moves Forward,” *Ensign*, May 1999, 5).

To exhort his readers to treat all people, both rich and poor, with charity, James quoted from Leviticus 19:18, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” labeling it “the royal law” (James 2:8). “Royal” means “belonging to a king.” This teaching parallels Jesus’s command to “love the Lord thy God” and to “love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:37, 39). Those who keep “the royal law” love everyone and avoid showing favoritism.

James 2:13. “He Shall Have Judgment without Mercy, That Hath Shewed No Mercy”

See the commentary for Matthew 5:7 to read about the heavenly rewards given to those who extend mercy to others.

James 2:14–26. “Faith without Works Is Dead”

James responded to reports of people who were speaking simplistically of faith as something separate from one’s actions, or “works” (see James 2:14–26). It may be that the Apostle Paul’s teachings were being distorted as they circulated orally among members of the Church (see Acts 21:21; 2 Peter 3:15–16). Paul had emphasized that salvation came through faith in Jesus Christ and not

through works or ceremonial performances of the law of Moses (see the commentaries for Romans 3:27–31 and for Galatians 2:15–16).

James used the term *works* in a different manner than Paul, referring to righteous deeds as the natural expression of belief. In response to those who suggested one could have faith “and have not works,” James asked, “Can faith save him?” (James 2:14). The Greek text of this phrase contains an article before *faith*; James meant, “Can [that kind of] faith save him?” James was not teaching that faith has no saving power; he was teaching that a passive belief that resulted in no action was not true, saving faith. When James challenged his readers to “shew me thy faith without thy works” (James 2:18), he was pointing out that it is not possible to show one’s faith except through one’s actions—true faith cannot exist apart from righteous works.

In *Lectures on Faith* we read that “faith is not only the principle of action, but of power also, in all intelligent beings, whether in heaven or on earth” ([1985], 3). Commenting on this statement, **Elder David A. Bednar** taught, “Thus, faith in Christ leads to righteous action, which increases our spiritual capacity and power. Understanding that faith is a principle of action and of power inspires us to exercise our moral agency in compliance with gospel truth, invites the redeeming and strengthening *powers* of the Savior’s Atonement into our lives, and enlarges the *power* within us whereby we are agents unto ourselves (see D&C 58:28)” (“Ask in Faith,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 95).

James 2:21–25. The Works of Abraham and Rahab

Both James and Paul cited the Old Testament prophet Abraham as an important example of faith and good works (see James 2:21–25; Romans 4; Galatians 3:6–19). Abraham’s willingness to carry out the command to offer up Isaac was a validation of his faith in God (see Genesis 15:6; 22:1–14; Hebrews 11:17–19).

Like Abraham, the harlot Rahab also demonstrated her faith through her actions (see Hebrews 11:31). She was an inhabitant of Jericho at the time the armies of Israel, under Joshua’s leadership, approached the promised land (see Joshua 2). Joshua sent two men into Jericho to spy out the strength of the city. Rahab took the spies in, even hiding them when the king sought for them. Then she helped them to escape safely from the city. For her actions, she and her family were spared when the rest of Jericho was destroyed, and she dwelt in Israel for the remainder of her life (see Joshua 6:22–25).

James 3:1–10. “The Tongue Is a Fire”

James warned the Saints of the potential ruin that unkind words, inappropriate language, or the loss of one’s temper can cause. To help readers recognize the importance of speaking with care, he compared the mouth and the tongue to a horse’s bit, a ship’s rudder, fire, and poison.



The strength of a horse is directed by a small bit placed in its mouth. James counseled readers to carefully watch their words to become a “perfect man” (see James 3:2–3).

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles quoted from James 3:2–10 and then expressed the following about harsh or hurtful speech:

“Obviously James doesn’t mean our tongues are *always* iniquitous, nor that *everything* we say is ‘full of deadly poison.’ But he clearly means that at least some things we say can be destructive, even venomous—and that is a chilling indictment for a Latter-day Saint! The voice that bears profound testimony, utters fervent prayer, and sings the hymns of Zion *can be* the same voice that berates and criticizes, embarrasses and demeans, inflicts pain and destroys the spirit of oneself and of others in the process. . . .

“Husbands, you have been entrusted with the most sacred gift God can give you—a wife, a daughter of God, the mother of your children who has voluntarily given herself to you for love and joyful companionship. Think of the kind things you said when you were courting, think of the blessings you have given with hands placed lovingly upon her head, . . . and then reflect on other moments characterized by cold, caustic, unbridled words. . . . A husband who would never dream of striking his wife physically can break, if not her bones, then certainly her heart by the brutality of thoughtless or unkind speech. . . .

“. . . Wives, what of the unbridled tongue in *your* mouth, of the power for good or ill in *your* words? How is it that such a lovely voice . . . could ever in a turn be so shrill, so biting, so acrid and untamed? A woman’s words can be more piercing than any dagger ever forged, and they can drive the people they love to retreat beyond a barrier more distant than anyone in the beginning of that exchange could ever have imagined” (“The Tongue of Angels,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 16–17). To read more about the need to control what we say, see Matthew 12:34–37; Alma 12:14; and Doctrine and Covenants 42:27.

James 3:9–13. “These Things Ought Not So to Be”

James admonished those who use their mouths to bless *and* to curse that “these things ought not so to be” (James 3:10). The language we use reveals what is in our hearts (see James 3:11–13). In *For the Strength of Youth*, Church leaders have offered guidelines to help us avoid destructive speech:

“How you communicate should reflect who you are as a son or daughter of God. Clean and intelligent language is evidence of a bright and wholesome mind. . . .

“Always use the names of God and Jesus Christ with reverence and respect. Misusing the names of Deity is a sin. . . .

“Do not use profane, vulgar, or crude language or gestures, and do not tell jokes or stories about immoral actions. These are offensive to God and to others. . . .

“If you have developed the habit of using language that is not in keeping with these standards—such as swearing, mocking, gossiping, or speaking in anger to others—you can change. Pray for help. Ask your family and friends to support you in your desire to use good language” (*For the Strength of Youth* [booklet, 2011], 20–21).

James 3:13–18

How can these verses influence the way we speak to others?
In what ways could you improve in this area?

James 4:1–3. “Because Ye Ask Amiss”

James observed that prayers are inappropriate if one’s intent is just to satisfy improper desires. **Elder Neal A. Maxwell** (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that we must seek the guidance of the Holy Ghost in order to avoid asking “amiss”: “God sees

things as they really are and as they will become. We don't! In order to tap that precious perspective during our prayers, we must rely upon the promptings of the Holy Ghost. With access to that kind of knowledge, we would then pray for what we and others should have—*really* have. With the Spirit prompting us, we will not ask 'amiss'" ("What Should We Pray For?" in *Prayer* [2005], 23). See also Doctrine and Covenants 46:30.

James 4:11–12. "Speak Not Evil One of Another"

As suggested in James 4:11, to speak evil of or to slander another person is a violation of God's law to "love thy neighbour" (Leviticus 19:18; see also Matthew 25:40; Mosiah 27:4). While serving as a member of the Seventy, **Elder Cree-L Kofford** spoke of the need to speak well of others:

"What a blessing it would be if . . . each of our names truly could be safe in the home of others. Have you noticed how easy it is to . . . find fault with other people? All too often we seek to be excused from the very behavior we condemn in others. Mercy for me, justice for everyone else is a much too common addiction. When we deal with the name and reputation of another, we deal with something sacred in the sight of the Lord.

"There are those among us who would recoil in horror at the thought of stealing another person's money or property but who don't give a second thought to stealing another person's good name or reputation. . . .

"James, a servant of the Lord in the meridian of time, repeated this eternal truth when he said: 'Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law. . . .

"'. . . Who art thou that judgest another?' (James 4:11–12)" ("Your Name Is Safe in Our Home," *Ensign*, May 1999, 82).

James 4:17. "Knoweth to Do Good, and Doeth It Not"

James recorded that it is a sin when we fail to do the good things we have been taught to do (see James 4:17). These sins are often termed "sins of omission." **President James E. Faust** (1920–2007) of the First Presidency explained:

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Love your neighbor as yourself. When smitten, turn the other cheek. When asked for a coat, give your cloak also.

Forgive, not just once but seventy times seven. This was the essence of the new gospel [Jesus taught]. There was more emphasis on *do* than *do not*. . . .

"I fear that some of our greatest sins are sins of omission. . . . These are the thoughtful, caring deeds we fail to do and feel so guilty for having neglected them" ("The Weightier Matters of the Law: Judgment, Mercy, and Faith," *Ensign*, Nov. 1997, 53, 59).

James 5:1–6. Warning to the Rich

Prophets have warned repeatedly against pride and the evils that often accompany wealth (see Jeremiah 9:23; Amos 2:6–7; 4:1; Matthew 13:22; 1 Timothy 6:7–10; 2 Nephi 9:30; D&C 56:16). James specifically identified three areas of concern: (1) hoarding wealth (see James 5:2–3), meaning accumulating so much material wealth that it sits unused and decaying; (2) failing to pay wages to employees (see verse 4); (3) living a luxurious and self-indulgent lifestyle (see verse 5). The "day of slaughter" (verse 5) may refer to the coming Day of Judgment—much like cattle are fattened prior to their slaughter, so the wicked rich have fattened their hearts, unaware of the coming judgment against them.

In verse 4, James wrote that the cries of those defrauded by their deceitful employers "are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth." *Sabaoth* is a Hebrew word meaning "hosts"; thus, "Lord of sabaoth" means "Lord of Hosts."

James 5:7–8. Early and Latter Rains

Farmers in ancient Israel waited patiently for the "early" rain of the planting season, which helped a seed to sprout and to grow, and for the "latter rain," which helped plants to mature prior to harvesting. James used this imagery to teach that, like the farmer who must patiently tend the field and wait for the rains and eventual harvest, the righteous are to patiently preach the gospel and nurture one another, knowing that salvation will eventually come. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** provided an additional insight concerning the early and latter rains:

"Our Lord's return is like the planting and harvesting of crops by an husbandman. The seeds are sown at his first coming and are watered by the early rains so that they sprout and take root. Then after a long wait, attended by much patience and endurance on the part of the saints, amid the latter rains, the rains that ripen the harvest, he comes again to pluck the fruit of his vineyard and to reign on earth a thousand years with those who have kept the faith.

“. . . The early rain fell at sowing time; the latter rain came to mature the crop for harvest. Thus, the heavens rained righteousness when our Lord ministered among mortal men in time’s meridian; and also there shall be a great day of revelation, refreshment, and restoration when ‘Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven’ (Psalm 85:11), incident to the Second Coming” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:270–71).

James 5:10–11. The Prophets Are Examples of How to Endure Afflictions

James cited Israel’s prophets as an example of the patient endurance that all Saints must have as they await the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. In our day, **Elder Robert D. Hales** (1932–2017) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles specifically identified the Prophet Joseph Smith as an example of being patient in times of affliction:

“In our dispensation, the Prophet Joseph Smith endured all manner of opposition and hardship to bring to pass the desire of our Heavenly Father—the restoration of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Joseph was harassed and hunted by angry mobs. He patiently endured poverty, humiliating charges, and unkind acts. His people were forcibly driven from town to town, from state to state. He was tarred and feathered. He was falsely charged and jailed. . . .

“Joseph knew that if he were to stop going forward with this great work, his earthly trials would probably ease. But he could not stop, because he knew who he was, he knew for what purpose he was placed on the earth, and he had the desire to do God’s will” (“Behold, We Count Them Happy Which Endure,” *Ensign*, May 1998, 75).

James 5:13–16. Administering to the Sick

James 5:13–16 provides evidence that anointing the sick with oil so that they might be healed was practiced by authorized servants of the Lord in the early Christian Church (see also Mark 6:13). **President Dallin H. Oaks** explained the modern practice of anointing the sick with oil:

“When someone has been anointed by the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood, the anointing is sealed by that same authority. To seal something means to affirm it, to make it binding for its intended purpose. When elders anoint a sick person and seal the anointing, they open the windows of heaven for the Lord to pour forth the blessing He wills for the person afflicted.

“President Brigham Young taught: ‘When I lay hands on the sick, I expect the healing power and influence of God to pass through me to the patient, and the disease to give way. . . . When we are prepared, when we are holy vessels before the Lord, a stream of power from the Almighty can pass through the tabernacle of the administrator to the system of the patient, and the sick are made whole’ [*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 252]. . . .

“Faith is essential for healing by the powers of heaven. The Book of Mormon even teaches that ‘if there be no faith among the children of men God can do no miracle among them’ (Ether 12:12). In a notable talk on administering to the sick, President Spencer W. Kimball said: ‘The need of faith is often underestimated. The ill one and the family often seem to depend wholly on the power of the priesthood and the gift of healing that they hope the administering brethren may have, whereas the greater responsibility is with him who is blessed. . . . The major element is the faith of the individual when that person is conscious and accountable. “Thy faith hath made thee whole” [Matthew 9:22] was repeated so often by the Master that it almost became a chorus’ [‘President Kimball Speaks Out on Administration to the Sick,’ *Tambuli*, Aug. 1982, 36–37; *New Era*, Oct. 1981, 47]. . . .



“. . . As we exercise the undoubted power of the priesthood of God and as we treasure His promise that He will hear and answer the prayer of faith, we must always remember that faith and the healing power of the priesthood cannot produce a result contrary to the will of Him whose priesthood it is” (“Healing the Sick,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 48–50).

James also made a connection between the healing of the sick and forgiveness of sins (see James 5:15). This statement may be based on the principle that the humility and faith required for a person to be healed are the same required for that person to receive forgiveness.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie stated that “the person who by faith, devotion, righteousness, and personal worthiness, is in a position to be healed, is also in a position to have the justifying approval of the Spirit for his course of life, and his sins are forgiven him, as witnessed by the fact that he receives the companionship of the Spirit, which he could not have if he were unworthy” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 297–98).

James 5:20. “He Which Converteth the Sinner”

In James we read, “He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (James 5:20). James taught that when a sinner is converted and receives the ordinances of salvation, his sins are “hidden”—covered or forgiven—through the Atonement of Jesus Christ and he is saved from spiritual death. Latter-day revelation provides the additional insight that the person who assisted in bringing about the conversion can also receive a remission of sins (see D&C 62:3).

President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) affirmed this truth: “The Lord has told us that our sins will be forgiven more readily as we bring souls unto Christ and remain steadfast in bearing testimony to the world, and surely every one of us is looking for additional help in being forgiven of our sins. (See D&C 84:61.) In one of the greatest of missionary scriptures, section 4 of the Doctrine and Covenants, we are told that if we serve the Lord in missionary service ‘with all [our] heart, might, mind and strength,’ then we may ‘stand blameless before God at the last day.’ (Verse 2)” (“It Becometh Every Man,” *Ensign*, Oct. 1977, 5).

Points to Ponder

- Much of this epistle’s message focuses on becoming “doers of the word” (James 1:22). Think of someone who is an example of being a “doer of the word.” What stands out to you about the life of that person?
- James pointed out that faith is required for physical healing as well as for forgiveness of sins (James 5:15). What can you do to show your faith as you seek forgiveness of sins?

Suggested Assignments

- Study the following passages of scripture and make a list of ways we can offend God or others with our words: James 1:19, 26; 3:2–10; 4:11. After reading these verses, ponder what you feel impressed to do to more fully apply James’s counsel in your life.
- James 5:19–20 relates to missionary work and the blessings promised to those who help others become converted. Think of people you know who are not members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Ask Heavenly Father to help you make a plan to invite a friend to learn about the gospel. Exercise your faith by putting your plan into action.

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1 Peter and 2 Peter

Introduction and Timeline for 1 Peter and 2 Peter

The Apostle Peter was the preeminent witness of Jesus Christ in the early Christian Church. His two epistles were written at a time of great persecution and apostasy. Peter sought to help Church members understand that if they endured persecution well, they would receive salvation and eternal glory (see 1 Peter 1:6–9; 3:12–14; 4:12–14; 5:7–10). He reminded the Saints that they were “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood” (1 Peter 2:9), and as such, they were to be holy even as Jesus Christ is holy (see 1 Peter 1:15–16). In his first epistle, Peter wrote about Jesus Christ’s ministry to the spirit world following His Crucifixion (see 1 Peter 3:18–20; 4:6).

In his second epistle, Peter encouraged disciples of Jesus Christ to seek after the traits that would enable them to obtain a divine nature like the Savior. By so doing, their knowledge of God would grow and they could make

their calling and election sure (see 2 Peter 1:2–10). To help the Saints avoid being deceived, Peter also warned of “false prophets” and “false teachers” (2 Peter 2:1).



1. The First Epistle of Peter was written about A.D. 62 or 64.

2. The Second Epistle of Peter was written sometime between A.D. 64 and 68.

Introduction to the First Epistle General of Peter

Why study 1 Peter?

A theme found throughout the First Epistle of Peter is that through the Atonement, disciples of Jesus Christ can faithfully endure suffering and persecution. Every chapter of 1 Peter speaks of trials or suffering, and Peter taught that patiently enduring trials was “more precious than . . . gold” and would help believers gain perfection and “the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:7, 9). Peter reminded the Saints of their identity and destiny as “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people” (1 Peter 2:9). Modern readers will find hope, encouragement, and strength in Peter’s timeless counsel.

Who wrote 1 Peter?

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,” is the author of this epistle (1 Peter 1:1). As the chief Apostle who held the priesthood keys of the kingdom, Peter held a position similar to that of the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in our day. Near the conclusion of this letter, Peter mentioned that Silvanus had served as a scribe (see 1 Peter 5:12). Silvanus, also known as Silas, had previously served as both a scribe and a mission companion to Paul (see Acts 15:22, 32–34, 40; 1 Thessalonians 1:1).

When and where was 1 Peter written?

Peter wrote the First Epistle of Peter from “Babylon” (1 Peter 5:13), which may have been a symbolic reference to Rome (see Revelation 14:8; 17:5). It is generally accepted that Peter’s death occurred sometime during the reign of the Roman emperor Nero—probably after A.D. 64, when Nero began a widespread persecution of Christians. Therefore, the epistle was likely written between A.D. 62 and 64.

To whom was 1 Peter written and why?

Peter addressed this epistle to Church members “scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia”—the five Roman provinces in Asia Minor, located in modern-day Turkey (1 Peter 1:1). Peter considered his readers to be the “elect” of God (1 Peter 1:2). Peter wrote to strengthen and encourage the Saints in the “trial of [their] faith” (1 Peter 1:7) and to prepare them for a future “fiery trial” (1 Peter 4:12). Peter’s message also taught them how to decrease persecution through their righteous actions (see 1 Peter 2:20–23; 3:14–15).

Peter's counsel was very timely because Church members were about to enter a period of heightened persecution. Until A.D. 64, about the time when Peter wrote this epistle, the Roman government displayed a general tolerance for Christianity. In July of that year a fire destroyed much of Rome. It was rumored that Emperor Nero himself ordered the fire to be started. In an effort to divert blame for the disaster, Nero accused the Christians of starting the fire. This led to the intense persecution of Christians throughout the Roman Empire. Some of the mistreatment experienced by Christians came from their former friends and neighbors. Peter indicated that when the Saints "suffer as a Christian" (1 Peter 4:16), they can feel joy knowing that they are following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ (see 1 Peter 2:19–23; 3:15–18; 4:12–19).

What are some distinctive features of 1 Peter?

Peter knew that the Saints could strengthen each other as they faced increasing persecution. To help alleviate

their suffering, Peter exhorted his readers to turn to one another in love and tenderness (see 1 Peter 1:22; 3:8). Furthermore, in 1 Peter 5, Peter specifically explained how congregations and Church leaders could strengthen one another.

Peter's words contain perhaps the clearest biblical references to the spirit world and what takes place there. Peter briefly mentioned that Jesus Christ visited the spirit world to preach to the disobedient spirits who had lived in Noah's day (see 1 Peter 3:18–20). He added that the gospel was preached to the dead to allow deceased individuals a chance to be judged equitably (see 1 Peter 4:5–6). Peter's writings demonstrate his growth from a simple fisherman to a mighty Apostle.

In our dispensation, President Joseph F. Smith was pondering the meaning of 1 Peter 3:18–20 and 1 Peter 4:6 when he received a revelation clarifying doctrines regarding the spirit world (see D&C 138).

Outline

1 Peter 1:1–2:10 Peter wrote of the need for the Saints to grow spiritually in order to receive eternal rewards. The promise of salvation is made possible through the precious blood of Jesus Christ. God's people obtain His mercy and are to become part of His house.

1 Peter 2:11–3:12 Disciples of Jesus Christ seek to honor all men

and submit to civil authorities and laws. Peter addressed specific groups of Saints: free citizens, servants, wives, and husbands.

1 Peter 3:13–5:14 When persecution causes the Saints to suffer, they are to remember the patient example of Jesus Christ, who suffered and then gained exaltation (see 1 Peter 3:22). Jesus Christ preached the gospel to

the dead so that they might receive a fair judgment. Those who are called to minister follow the example of "the chief Shepherd" in caring for the flock of God (1 Peter 5:4). The sustaining grace of the Lord comes when we humble ourselves and cast all of our cares upon Him.

Commentary for 1 Peter

1 Peter 1:1–2. "Elect According to the Foreknowledge of God"

Peter greeted his readers by calling them the "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1 Peter 1:2). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that being elect in the premortal world is not enough to receive God's greatest blessings, for we must also be elect in mortality: "If the full blessings of salvation are to follow, the doctrine of election must operate *twice*. First, righteous spirits are elected or chosen to come to mortality as heirs of special blessings. Then, they must be called and elected again in this life, an occurrence which takes

place when they join the true Church. (D. & C. 53:1.) Finally, in order to reap eternal salvation, they must press forward in obedient devotion to the truth until they make their 'calling and election sure' (2 Pet. 1), that is, are 'sealed up unto eternal life.' (D. & C. 131:5.)" (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 216–17). For help understanding what it means to have one's calling and election made sure, see the commentary for 2 Peter 1:10–11.

1 Peter 1:3–4. "Lively Hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ"

Peter wrote that the "lively hope" that comes from Jesus Christ's Resurrection is one of the choice blessings experienced by faithful followers of Jesus Christ

(1 Peter 1:3). To read more about how knowledge of the Resurrection gives us a “lively hope,” see the commentary for 1 Corinthians 15:12–19.



The Resurrected Christ, by Walter Rane

1 Peter 1:6–8; 4:12. “The Trial of Your Faith”

Peter knew that Church members were facing ridicule for their beliefs; however, he wrote that trials of faith are “more precious than . . . gold” (1 Peter 1:7). Like gold, our faith in Jesus Christ is refined when we faithfully endure fiery trials. Jesus is our Exemplar in all things—His crown of thorns came first and then His crown of glory. There is an eternal principle associated with suffering. After affliction and tribulation—which bring sorrow and the need to be long-suffering—come joy, blessings, and exaltation (see 1 Peter 4:12–16; Alma 7:5; 26:27; D&C 58:4; 122:7). **Elder Neil L. Andersen** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:

“The Apostle Peter identified something he called a ‘trial of your faith’ [1 Peter 1:7]. He had experienced it. Remember Jesus’s words:

“‘Simon, . . . Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

“‘But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not’ [Luke 22:31–32].

“Peter later encouraged others: ‘Think it *not* strange,’ he said, ‘concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you’ [1 Peter 4:12; italics added].

“These fiery trials are designed to make you stronger, but they have the potential to diminish or even destroy your trust in the Son of God and to weaken your resolve to keep your promises to Him. . . .

“How do you remain ‘steadfast and immovable’ [Alma 1:25] during a trial of faith? You immerse yourself in the very things that helped build your core of faith: you exercise faith in Christ, you pray, you ponder the scriptures, you repent, you keep the commandments, and you serve others.

“When faced with a trial of faith—whatever you do, you don’t step away from the Church! Distancing yourself from the kingdom of God during a trial of faith is like leaving the safety of a secure storm cellar just as the tornado comes into view” (“Trial of Your Faith,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2012, 39–40).

1 Peter 1:8–10. “The End of Your Faith”

Peter told the Saints, “Ye rejoice with joy unspeakable . . . : receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:8–9). “The end” in this passage can also be translated as “outcome” or “goal” (1 Peter 1:9, footnote *a*); therefore, Peter’s point was that Saints who endure adversity can receive their ultimate goal of salvation through Jesus Christ. For some Christians in Peter’s day, enduring in faith did not mean enduring mortal difficulties such as illness. For them, enduring in faith resulted in their deaths. Peter’s testimony was intended to strengthen all the Saints of his time, including those whose faith would cost them their lives.

1 Peter 1:13–16. “Be Ye Holy; for I Am Holy”

Peter reminded the Saints that they had been called by Jesus Christ to be holy, as He is (see 1 Peter 1:15–16). **President Russell M. Nelson** spoke of our potential to become holy like Jesus Christ:

“[The scriptures] hold the promise that we shall, if faithful in all things, become like Deity. . . .

“ . . . Encouragement comes as we follow the example of Jesus, who taught, ‘Be ye holy; for I am holy’ [1 Peter 1:16]. His hope for us is crystal clear! He declared:

‘What manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am’ [3 Nephi 27:27]. Thus, our adoration of Jesus is best expressed by our emulation of Jesus. . . .

“This divine entreaty is consistent with the fact that, as begotten children of heavenly parents, we are endowed with the potential to become like them, just as mortal children may become like their mortal parents” (“Perfection Pending,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 87–88).

1 Peter 1:17–20. Jesus Christ Was Foreordained to Redeem Us

The word “redeem” means to purchase back, to ransom, or to rescue from captivity (1 Peter 1:18). Peter taught his Gentile Christian readers that their spiritual ransom had been paid not with silver or gold but “with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:19). He also taught that Christ’s role as our Redeemer was “foreordained” before the earth was created (1 Peter 1:20; see also Revelation 5:5–10; Moses 4:1–4; Abraham 3:22–26).

President Russell M. Nelson taught:

“Before the foundation of the earth, the plan of salvation was prepared. It included the glorious possibility of a divine inheritance in the kingdom of God.

“Central to that plan was the Atonement of Jesus Christ. In premortal councils, He was foreordained by His Father to atone for our sins and break the bands of physical and spiritual death. Jesus declared: ‘I . . . was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. . . . In me shall all mankind have life, and that eternally, even they who shall believe on my name’ [Ether 3:14]” (“How Firm Our Foundation,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 75).

1 Peter 1:23–25. “All Flesh Is as Grass”

The phrase “all flesh is as grass” comes from Isaiah 40:6–8, which compares man’s frailties to the withering of vegetation in the hot desert wind (see also Psalm 103:15–16). Unlike the withering grass, the word of the Lord “abideth for ever” (1 Peter 1:23); it gives life and strength to all who embrace it and are born again.

1 Peter 2:1–8. Living Stone, Chief Cornerstone, and Stone of Stumbling

The term “laying aside” in 1 Peter 2:1 means that believers should lay aside past sins. Peter taught that when the Saints come unto Jesus Christ, who is the “living stone,” they become a “lively stone” that is

added to the building of God’s spiritual house (1 Peter 2:4–5). Peter also called Christ the “chief corner stone,” emphasizing that the house is built upon the resurrected Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:6; see also Isaiah 28:16; Acts 4:10–12; Ephesians 2:20–21; Helaman 5:12). In contrast to Christ’s role as the chief cornerstone, Peter also called Jesus Christ “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence” (1 Peter 2:8), emphasizing that the Savior would be a barrier in the path of those who wish to be disobedient (see Isaiah 8:14–15).

1 Peter 2:9–10. “A Peculiar People”

Peter called the Saints “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people” (1 Peter 2:9). Peter’s message was that by embracing the gospel, gentile converts had become part of God’s chosen people, the new Israel. They were the chosen nation (see Isaiah 43:20), a royal “kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Exodus 19:6). Concerning the term “peculiar people,” **President Russell M. Nelson** taught:



“Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people” (1 Peter 2:9).

“In the Old Testament, the Hebrew term from which *peculiar* was translated is *segullah*, which means ‘valued property,’ or ‘treasure.’ In the New Testament, the Greek term from which *peculiar* was translated is *peripotesis*, which means ‘possession,’ or ‘an obtaining.’

“Thus, we see that the scriptural term *peculiar* signifies ‘valued treasure,’ ‘made’ or ‘selected by God.’ For us to be identified by servants of the Lord as his *peculiar* people is a compliment of the highest order” (“Children of the Covenant,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 34).

1 Peter 2:13–21

In what way did Peter recommend the Saints act during this time when they were facing persecution? Why should we submit to civil governments? How could following Peter's counsel help you draw nearer to Jesus Christ during difficult times?

1 Peter 2:18–25; 3:14. Jesus Christ Was an Example of How to Endure Suffering

In 1 Peter 2:18–25, Peter specifically addressed household servants, who in the Roman Empire were almost always slaves and were often mistreated by their masters. He taught about the difference between suffering for one's faults and enduring undeserved punishment (see 1 Peter 2:20). Peter encouraged servants to learn from the example of Jesus Christ, who was falsely accused before Jewish and Roman leaders and yet did not retaliate (see 1 Peter 2:23). The Greek word Peter used that was translated as *buffeted* (1 Peter 2:20) literally means "to be struck with fists" and is the term used by both Matthew and Mark to describe the treatment of the Master (see Matthew 26:67; Mark 14:65). Peter hinted at the contemptuous scorn of the Jewish leaders and Christ's silent acceptance of it (see 1 Peter 2:23). Peter mentioned the stripes the Lord received, using the word which means "bruise" or the "bloody welt which results from lashing with a whip," which is exactly the result of a Roman scourging (see Isaiah 53:5–12).



Jesus Christ's betrayal. Jesus Christ showed us the way to patiently endure sufferings.

While serving as a member of the Seventy, **Elder Alexander B. Morrison** taught: "Peter, the great

apostle, who himself suffered a martyr's death (see John 21:18–19), recognized that divine merit is associated with patient suffering for Christ's sake but that little glory accrues to us if we suffer for our own sins. [1 Peter 2:19–20.] As we endure undeserved suffering, we develop Christlike attributes that perfect our souls and bring us closer to Him" (*Feed My Sheep: Leadership Ideas for Latter-day Shepherds* [1992], 166).

1 Peter 3:1–7. "Heirs Together of the Grace of Life"

Much of Peter's counsel in 1 Peter 2–3 is similar to Paul's household codes found in Colossians 3–4 and Ephesians 5–6 (see the commentary for Colossians 3:18–4:2).

In 1 Peter 3:1–6, Peter encouraged Christian wives to be "in subjection" to their nonbelieving husbands who "obey not the word" in order to win them over for Christ by their righteous conduct (1 Peter 3:1). The use of the word *subjection* should not be understood as a passive or docile obedience. Rather, the words *subjection* and *submissive* are used in the scriptures to mean selflessness, humility, and love within relationships (see Hebrews 12:9; Alma 7:23). The teachings of the Restoration make clear that both the husband and the wife should be humble, submissive, and selfless in their interactions with one another (see the commentary for Ephesians 5:21–25). Peter taught that female Saints who show devotion to God follow in the tradition of holy women, such as Sarah the wife of Abraham (see 1 Peter 3:5–6; for additional insights, see the commentary for 1 Timothy 2:9–10).

When Peter described women as the "weaker vessel" (1 Peter 3:7), he could have simply meant that in most cases women have less physical strength than men. Peter did not imply that women are any less worthy than men; in fact, he went on to say that women are "heirs together [with men] of the grace of life" (1 Peter 3:7; see also the commentary for Ephesians 5:21–25).

Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles spoke of Heavenly Father's plan to exalt His sons and His daughters: "Surely we must agree that our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ know best which opportunities the sons and daughters of God need to best prepare the human family for eternal life" ("Let Us Think Straight" [Brigham Young University campus education week devotional, Aug. 20, 2013], 3; speeches.byu.edu).

On another occasion, **Elder Ballard** spoke of the equality of women and men in God's eyes: "In our Heavenly Father's great priesthood-endowed plan, men have

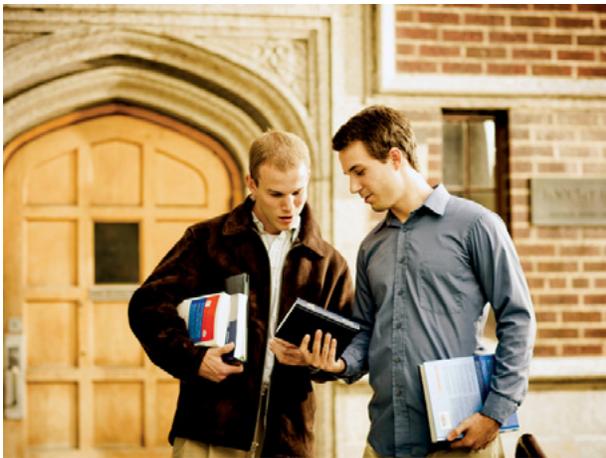
the unique responsibility to administer the priesthood, but they are not the priesthood. Men and women have different but equally valued roles. Just as a woman cannot conceive a child without a man, so a man cannot fully exercise the power of the priesthood to establish an eternal family without a woman. In other words, in the eternal perspective, both the procreative power and the priesthood power are shared by husband and wife" ("This Is My Work and Glory," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2013, 19).

1 Peter 3:8–22. Counsel to All

After addressing husbands and wives specifically, Peter next gave counsel to all members of the congregations on how to be more holy (see 1 Peter 3:8–22). This counsel centered on becoming one in mind through their actions and the words they spoke.

1 Peter 3:15. "Be Ready Always to Give an Answer"

Peter counseled his readers to "be ready always to give . . . a reason of the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15). The gospel of Jesus Christ gives believers a hope of receiving the promised blessings of righteousness, and Peter reminded his readers that by bearing their testimonies, they would help others learn about this source of hope. In the phrase "be ready always to give an answer" (1 Peter 3:15), the word "answer" is translated from the Greek word *apologia*, which can also be translated as "defense" (see 1 Peter 3:15, footnote *b*). This Greek word is the root of *apologetics*, a term used to describe the defense of religious beliefs. **Elder Neal A. Maxwell** (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that the Saints have a responsibility to defend truth:



Peter taught that we should always be ready to share our beliefs with others (see 1 Peter 3:15).

"Articulate advocacy is surely needed now to respond to some of the secular sophistry we see and hear in the world. . . .

"Austin Farrer warned, "Though argument does not create conviction, the lack of it destroys belief. What seems to be proved may not be embraced; but what no one shows the ability to defend is quickly abandoned." [*Light on C. S. Lewis* (1965), 26.] Peter said, 'Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.' (1 Peter 3:15.)" (*Notwithstanding My Weakness* [1981], 90).

President Russell M. Nelson explained how best to share our religious beliefs with others:

"Each member can be an example of the believers. . . . Your good works will be evident to others. The light of the Lord can beam from your eyes. With that radiance, you had better prepare for questions. . . .

"Let your response be warm and joyful. And let your response be relevant to that individual. Remember, he or she is also a child of God, that very God who dearly wants that person to qualify for eternal life and return to Him one day. You may be the very one to open the door to his or her salvation and understanding of the doctrine of Christ" ("Be Thou an Example of the Believers," *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 48).

1 Peter 3:18–20; 4:6. Jesus Christ Preached to the Spirits in Prison

While the Gospels do not mention details about Jesus Christ's experiences between the time of His Crucifixion and His Resurrection, Peter provided the insight that Jesus "went and preached unto the spirits in prison; *some of whom* were disobedient *in the days of Noah, while the long-suffering of God waited*" (Joseph Smith Translation, 1 Peter 3:19–20 [in 1 Peter 3:19–20, footnote 20a]).

President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) was pondering the meaning of 1 Peter 3:18–20; 4:6 when he received a vision, now recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 138. In this vision he learned that following the Savior's death, the Lord ministered in the spirit world, preparing the way for the gospel to be preached to the spirits of the wicked. **President Joseph Fielding Smith** (1876–1972) taught of the work that is taking place in the spirit world:

"In the justice of the Father, he is going to give to every man the privilege of hearing the gospel. Not one soul shall be overlooked or forgotten. This being true, what

about the countless thousands who have died and never heard of Christ, never had an opportunity of repentance and remission of their sins, never met an elder of the Church holding the authority? . . .

“The Lord has so arranged his plan of redemption that all who have died without this opportunity shall be given it in the spirit world. . . . All those who did not have an opportunity here to receive it, who there repent and receive the gospel, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God. The Savior inaugurated this great work when he went and preached to the spirits held in prison, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh (or in other words, according to the principles of the gospel) and then live according to God in the spirit, through their repentance and acceptance of the mission of Jesus Christ who died for them” (*Doctrines of Salvation*, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954–56], 2:132–33).



The City Eternal, by D. Keith Larson. Jesus Christ preaching in the world of spirits.

Regarding this work in the spirit world, **President Lorenzo Snow** (1814–1901) shared his thoughts: “When the Gospel is preached to the spirits in prison, the success attending that preaching will be far greater than that attending the preaching of our Elders in this life. I believe there will be very few indeed of those spirits who will not gladly receive the Gospel when it is carried to them. The circumstances there will be a thousand times more favorable” (“Discourse by President Lorenzo Snow,” *Millennial Star*, Jan. 22, 1894, 50).

1 Peter 4:1–2. “Arm Yourselves Likewise with the Same Mind”

In speaking about Christ’s suffering, Peter taught his readers that they should arm themselves with the same attitude He had and be ready to suffer as well. When Peter said, “Arm yourselves likewise with the same mind” (1 Peter 4:1), he was encouraging the Saints to think and act the way the Savior did as they faced opposition (see 1 Corinthians 2:16). The Joseph Smith Translation of 1 Peter 4:1–2 emphasizes that our suffering should cause us to forsake our sinful lives: “For *you who have* suffered in the flesh *should cease* from sin, that *you* no longer *the rest of your time in the flesh*, should live to the lusts of men, but to the will of God” (in 1 Peter 4:1, footnote *b*).

1 Peter 4:6. Christ Preached in the Spirit World

The Savior’s preaching to the spirits in prison is an example of God’s fairness and justice. This doctrine of salvation for the dead makes it possible for all mankind to accept the gospel even though they may never have heard it in mortality. The doctrine of salvation for the dead is unique to Latter-day Saints.

1 Peter 4:8. Charity Prevents a Multitude of Sins

In the King James Version, Peter’s words are translated as “charity shall cover the multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8). The Joseph Smith Translation modifies this verse to read, “And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity *preventeth* a multitude of sins” (in 1 Peter 4:8, footnote *a*).

1 Peter 4:12–14. Fiery Trials

Peter encouraged his readers to “think it not strange” when they are faced with a “fiery trial” (1 Peter 4:12). Peter’s advice is relevant to any persecution that Christians suffer in behalf of their beliefs, and he reminded his readers that they ought to rejoice that they are counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ (see 1 Peter 4:13–14).

Elder Robert D. Hales (1932–2017) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained how our suffering can bring us closer to God: “Suffering is universal; how we react to suffering is individual. Suffering can take us one of two ways. It can be a strengthening and purifying experience combined with faith, or it can be a destructive force in our lives if we do not have the faith

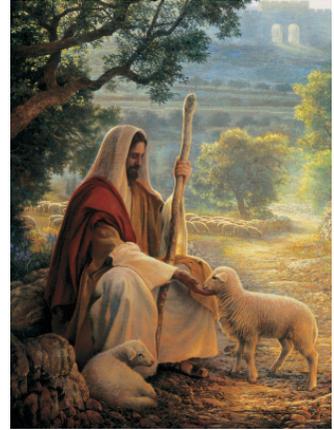
in the Lord's atoning sacrifice. The purpose of suffering, however, is to build and strengthen us" ("Your Sorrow Shall Be Turned to Joy," *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 66).

Elder Neal A. Maxwell noted the value of trials when he said: "Spiritual refinement is not only to make the gross more pure but to further refine the already fine!" ("Lest Ye Be Wearied and Faint in Your Minds," *Ensign*, May 1991, 90).

1 Peter 5:1–4. "The Chief Shepherd"

Writing specifically to the elders of the Church, Peter taught that those called to lead and direct the Saints act as undershepherds who "feed the flock of God"

(1 Peter 5:2). Church leaders are to follow the example of Jesus Christ, "the chief Shepherd," in their efforts to care for the flock; those who do so will receive "a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 5:4). To read more about how modern shepherds feed the flock of God, see the commentary for John 21:15–17.



Lost No More, by Greg K. Olsen

Introduction to the Second Epistle General of Peter

Why study 2 Peter?

Peter may have written his second epistle shortly before his death in Rome; if so, this Second Epistle of Peter is one of his last testimonies. As an eyewitness of Jesus Christ's transfiguration (see 2 Peter 1:16–18), Peter exhorted his readers to grow in their knowledge of Jesus Christ and to seek to obtain divine attributes so they can partake of the "divine nature" (see 2 Peter 1:4–7). Peter assured his readers, both then and now, that this spiritual growth would lead to having their "calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10). Modern readers will also be strengthened as they study Peter's description of latter-day scoffers who would doubt the reality of the Second Coming (see 2 Peter 3).

President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) said: "I consider the Epistles of Peter among the finest writings we have in the New Testament. When I am wanting to pick up something that would give me some inspiring thoughts I have gone back to one of the Epistles of Peter" ([address given at the regional representatives' seminar, Apr. 5, 1973], 2).

Who wrote 2 Peter?

The Second Epistle of Peter states that it was written by "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:1). Church members and leaders have traditionally accepted Peter as the author. Some modern scholars, however, have questioned whether the epistle was truly written by Peter because the style and language differ from 1 Peter, which was written with the scribal aid of Silvanus (Silas). It may be that 2 Peter was written with the help of a different scribe, or that

the epistle was put into its current form by others but contains authentic material from Peter himself.

When and where was 2 Peter written?

The text of 2 Peter does not identify where the epistle was written, but it is commonly assumed that Peter wrote it in Rome. Peter mentioned Paul's epistles (see 2 Peter 3:15–16), so it is likely that 2 Peter was written after many of Paul's letters had been gathered together. This suggests that 2 Peter could not have been written earlier than A.D. 60. Scholars believe that it was written sometime between A.D. 64 and 68.

To whom was 2 Peter written and why?

Peter stated that he was writing "to them that have obtained like precious faith with us" (2 Peter 1:1). This may indicate that Peter was writing to the same Gentile Christians who received his First Epistle (see 2 Peter 3:1). The content of 2 Peter 1:12–15 shows that Peter meant this letter to be a farewell message to his readers. Unlike the First Epistle of Peter, which helped the Saints deal with external persecution, Peter's Second Epistle addressed the internal apostasy that threatened the future of the Church. False prophets and teachers were spreading "damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them" (2 Peter 2:1). Peter wrote the letter to encourage the Saints to grow in their knowledge of the Lord and to make their "calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10).

What are some distinctive features of 2 Peter?

A dominant theme in 2 Peter is the importance of gaining knowledge of Jesus Christ. Peter promised his

readers that if they would seek godly attributes and develop a divine nature, they would “neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” and they would have their “calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:8, 10). In chapter 2, Peter contrasted the true knowledge of Jesus Christ with the false knowledge and heresies perpetrated by apostates, writing that one can escape “the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 2:20). At the close of this epistle, Peter gave a final admonition for the Saints to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

The language of 2 Peter 2 and the Epistle of Jude are similar, suggesting that perhaps one author borrowed language and ideas from the other; indeed, some modern scholars believe that Peter borrowed from Jude.

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) said, “Peter penned the most sublime language of any of the apostles” (in *History of the Church*, 5:392). *Sublime* means exalted in thought, of outstanding worth, and tending to inspire.

Outline

2 Peter 1 Peter explained that God’s promises allow the Saints to become “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). He encouraged them to make their “calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10). Peter recalled his experience on the Mount of Transfiguration, when he witnessed the glorified Christ, heard the voice of the Father, and received

“a more sure word of prophecy” (2 Peter 1:19).

2 Peter 2 Peter warned Church members of false prophets and false teachers who would come among them and seek to lead the Saints astray. These wicked teachers would deny the Lord and speak evil of the “way of truth” (2 Peter 2:2). Peter taught that it was better not

to accept the gospel than to make covenants and not live up to them.

2 Peter 3 Peter affirmed the certainty that Christ will come in His own time, cleanse the earth by fire, destroy the wicked, and save the diligent and faithful. Peter encouraged the Saints to grow in grace and in knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Commentary for 2 Peter

2 Peter 1:1–3. “The Knowledge of God”

Throughout his second epistle, Peter emphasized the significance of having a knowledge of God (see 2 Peter 1:2–3, 5, 8; 2:20; 3:18). At the opening of this epistle, Peter taught that as God’s followers receive increased knowledge of Him, “grace and peace [will] be multiplied” in their lives and “all things that pertain unto life and godliness” will be provided (2 Peter 1:2–3).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught about the importance of coming to know God: “It is one thing to know about God and another to know him. We know about him when we learn that he is a personal being in whose image man is created; when we learn that the Son is in the express image of his Father’s person; when we learn that both the Father and the Son possess certain specified attributes and powers. But we know them, in the sense of gaining eternal life, when we enjoy and experience the same things they do. To know God is to think what he thinks, to feel what he feels, to have the power he possesses, to comprehend the truths he

understands, and to do what he does. Those who know God become like him, and have his kind of life, which is eternal life” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 1:762).



Text written on papyrus. The oldest known source of Peter’s Second Epistle.

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** explained the importance of gaining knowledge: “The principle of knowledge is the principle of salvation. This principle can be comprehended by the faithful and diligent; and every one that

does not obtain knowledge sufficient to be saved will be condemned. The principle of salvation is given us through the knowledge of Jesus Christ" (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 212).

2 Peter 1:4–7. "Exceeding Great and Precious Promises"

Peter said that God's "exceeding great and precious promises" allow us to partake of the divine nature as we escape "the corruption that is in the world" (2 Peter 1:4). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** taught that "exceeding great and precious promises" refer to "promises of eternal life, which is 'the greatest of all the gifts of God.' (D. & C. 14:7.)" Elder McConkie also taught that to be "partakers of the divine nature" means to "become as God is, enjoying to the full every characteristic, perfection, and attribute which he possesses and which dwell in him independently" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:352).

While serving as a member of the Seventy, **Elder Spencer J. Condie** listed some of God's promises that help us become more like our Heavenly Father:

"The Lord's countless exceeding great and precious promises include forgiveness of our sins when we 'confess them and forsake them' (D&C 58:43; see also D&C 1:32). Opening the windows of heaven is a promise claimed by those who pay a faithful tithe (see Malachi 3:10), and finding 'great treasures of knowledge' accrues to those who observe the Word of Wisdom (D&C 89:19).

"Becoming unspotted from the world is a promise to those who keep the Sabbath holy (see D&C 59:9; Exodus 31:13). Divine guidance and inspiration are promised to those who 'feast upon the words of Christ' (2 Nephi 32:3) and who 'liken all scriptures' unto themselves (1 Nephi 19:23).

"The Lord also promised that 'whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you' (3 Nephi 18:20). We are promised that the Holy Ghost will be our constant companion when we 'let virtue garnish [our] thoughts unceasingly' (see D&C 121:45–46). We can claim the spiritually liberating promise of fasting, which will 'loose the bands of wickedness,' undo our 'heavy burdens,' and 'break every yoke' (Isaiah 58:6).

"Those who are sealed in holy temples and who faithfully keep their covenants will receive God's glory, which 'shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever' (D&C 132:19)" ("Claim the Exceeding

Great and Precious Promises," *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 16–17).

Speaking of the "divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4) that we can obtain through God's promises, **President Ezra Taft Benson** (1899–1994) explained:

"The Apostle Peter spoke of the process by which a person can be made a 'partaker of the divine nature' (2 Peter 1:4). This is important, for if we truly become partakers of the divine nature, we shall become like [the Savior]. . . .

"The virtues outlined by Peter [in 2 Peter 1:5–7] are part of the divine nature, or the Savior's character. These are the virtues we are to emulate if we would be more like Him" ("Godly Characteristics of the Master," *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 45).

Furthermore, by attaining these attributes, we grow in our knowledge of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:8–12. "These Things"

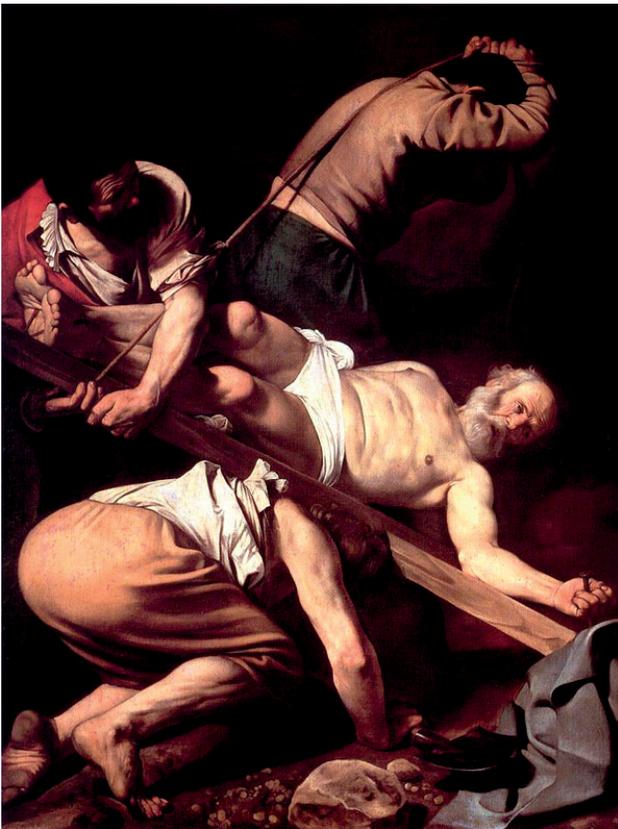
Peter said that if the Saints seek virtue, knowledge, patience, and the other virtues listed in 2 Peter 1:5–7, they will gain "the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:8). The term "these things" in verses 8–10 and 12 refers to the attributes listed in verses 5–7. Peter explained that when these attributes "abound" in a person, they will not be "barren nor unfruitful," they can see things that are "afar off," and their "calling and election" can be made sure (verses 8–10). Because the process of gaining knowledge and godlike attributes is so important, Peter declared, "I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things" (verse 12).

2 Peter 1:10–11. "Make Your Calling and Election Sure"

Peter exhorted the Saints to "make your calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10). He promised that those who do so "shall never fall" and will receive "an entrance . . . into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord" (2 Peter 1:10–11). Teaching on this subject, **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained: "To have one's calling and election made sure is to be sealed up unto eternal life; it is to have the unconditional guarantee of exaltation in the highest heaven of the celestial world; it is to receive the assurance of godhood; it is, in effect, to have the day of judgment advanced, so that an inheritance of all the glory and honor of the Father's kingdom is assured prior to the day when the faithful actually enter into the divine presence to sit with Christ in his throne,

even as he is ‘set down’ with his ‘Father in his throne.’ (Rev. 3:21.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:330–31).

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** further explained: “After a person has faith in Christ, repents of his sins, and is baptized for the remission of his sins and receives the Holy Ghost, (by the laying on of hands), which is the first Comforter, then let him continue to humble himself before God, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and living by every word of God, and the Lord will soon say unto him, Son, thou shalt be exalted. When the Lord has thoroughly proved him, and finds that the man is determined to serve Him at all hazards, then the man will find his calling and his election made sure, then it will be his privilege to receive the other Comforter, which the Lord hath promised the Saints, as is recorded in the testimony of St. John, in the 14th chapter” (in *History of the Church*, 3:380; see also John 14:16–18, 21, 23).



Crucifixion of St. Peter, by Caravaggio. When writing his Second Epistle, Peter knew that he would soon be put to death. This painting depicts the manner in which Peter is traditionally believed to have been killed—by being crucified upside down (see 2 Peter 1:14–15; see also John 21:18–19).

2 Peter 1:16–18. “Eyewitnesses of His Majesty”

Peter’s witness of Jesus Christ was not based on myths or “cunningly devised fables” (2 Peter 1:16) but rather on his firsthand experiences with Jesus Christ, including his witness of the Savior’s Transfiguration (see 2 Peter 1:17–18). To read more about the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ, see the various commentaries for Matthew 17:1–13.

2 Peter 1:19–21. The “More Sure Word of Prophecy”

Peter taught that he had received what he called “a more sure word of prophecy” (2 Peter 1:19). The Prophet Joseph Smith defined what this term means: “The more sure word of prophecy means a man’s knowing that he is sealed up unto eternal life, by revelation and the spirit of prophecy, through the power of the Holy Priesthood” (D&C 131:5). On another occasion, the **Prophet Joseph Smith** instructed further: “I would exhort you to go on and continue to call upon God until you make your calling and election sure for yourselves, by obtaining this more sure word of prophecy, and wait patiently for the promise until you obtain it” (in *History of the Church*, 5:389).

The Joseph Smith Translation of 2 Peter 1:19 states: “We have *therefore* a more sure *knowledge* of the word of prophecy, to *which* word of prophecy ye do well that ye take heed” (in 2 Peter 1:19, footnote a).

2 Peter 1:20–21. Source of Scripture

The Joseph Smith Translation of 2 Peter 1:20 clarifies that “no prophecy of the *scriptures* is *given* of any private *will* of man” (in 2 Peter 1:20, footnote a). Scripture is given by God to men through the Holy Ghost; thus, true interpretations of scripture must come through the Holy Ghost.

2 Peter 2:1–22. “False Teachers”

Peter pointed out that false prophets had plagued ancient Israel, and then he prophesied that false teachers would come into the fledgling Church (see 2 Peter 2:1). These false prophets and false teachers would bring “damnable heresies” among God’s people, and many followers of Christ would be deceived (2 Peter 2:1). Peter described false teachers as “wells without water” and as “clouds that are carried with a tempest” (2 Peter 2:17). Further, he said that these false teachers would meet the same destruction that came upon the wicked in ancient times (see 2 Peter 2:4–7). To read

more about false teachers in our day, see the commentary for Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:5–6, 9, 22; Matthew 24:4–5, 11, 24.

2 Peter 2:10–12. “They Are Not Afraid to Speak Evil of Dignities”

Peter condemned false prophets and false teachers who speak evil of leaders in God’s Church. **President Spencer W. Kimball** (1895–1985) warned that the actions of Church members who criticize authorities of the Church stem from the spirit of apostasy: “They ‘speak evil of dignities’ and ‘of the things that they understand not,’ says Peter. (2 Pet. 2:10, 12.) They complain of the programs, belittle the constituted authorities, and generally set themselves up as judges. After a while they absent themselves from Church meetings for imagined offenses, and fail to pay their tithes and meet their other Church obligations. In a word, they have the spirit of apostasy, which is almost always the harvest of the seeds of criticism. . . . As Peter puts it, they ‘perish in their own corruption’ [2 Peter 2:12]” (*The Miracle of Forgiveness* [1969], 42–43).

2 Peter 2:13. “Pleasure to Riot in the Day Time”

Peter spoke about people who “count it pleasure to riot in the day time” (2 Peter 2:13). Excessive drinking and eating were generally looked down upon in Peter’s day; therefore, many chose to participate in such behavior at night in order to avoid the shame and embarrassment of being discovered. In contrast, Peter pointed out that false teachers and their followers were not ashamed to do their evil work in public, for all to see.

2 Peter 2:15. Balaam

To read about Balaam, see the commentary for Revelation 2:14.

2 Peter 2:20–22. Better to Have Never Known the Way of Righteousness

Speaking of those who had “escaped the pollutions of the world” through Christ and then become “again entangled therein,” Peter said, “It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:20–21). Doctrine and Covenants 82:3 similarly states: “For of him unto whom much is given much is required; and he who sins against the greater light shall receive the greater condemnation.” In other words, we are more accountable to God after we accept the gospel of Jesus Christ (see Alma 24:30).

2 Peter 3:1–8. “Where Is the Promise of His Coming?”

Some of Peter’s readers may have been concerned by a perceived delay in the arrival of the Second Coming. To illustrate the folly of becoming impatient while waiting for the Second Coming, Peter pointed out that “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (2 Peter 3:8; see also Psalm 90:4). In the Book of Mormon, Alma similarly stated that “all is as one day with God, and time only is measured unto men” (Alma 40:8). **Elder Neal A. Maxwell** provided the insight that “God lives in an eternal now where the past, present, and future are constantly before Him (see D&C 130:7). His divine determinations are guaranteed, since whatever He takes in His heart to do, He will surely do it (see Abraham 3:17). He knows the end from the beginning! (see Abraham 2:8)” (“Care for the Life of the Soul,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2003, 70).

2 Peter 3:10–13. “New Heavens and a New Earth”

To read about the “new heavens and a new earth” (2 Peter 3:13), see the commentary for Revelation 21:1.

Points to Ponder

- Peter invited his readers to consider important changes they could make as they underwent the process of sanctification and acquiring the divine nature (see 1 Peter 1:14–16, 22–23; 2:9–11; 2 Peter 1:4–7). What are some changes you could make to grow spiritually in your life right now?
- Peter’s epistles were written to a group of people who were suffering because of temptations and afflictions (see 1 Peter 1:6–9; 4:12–19; 5:6–10; 2 Peter 2:9). Which of Peter’s teachings could help bring you comfort when you are suffering or tempted? How could you use Peter’s words to help you exercise greater faith in God when you are being tested?

Suggested Assignments

- Read 2 Peter 1:2–11 and write down the qualities of a divine nature. Next, list the steps you will take to help continue the process of developing a divine nature. Write down what you could do so that one or more of these attributes might “abound” more fully in you (2 Peter 1:8).

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1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude

Introduction and Timeline for 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude

John and Jude wrote their epistles at a time when apostasy was threatening the Church. Even though it had been only a few decades since the death of Jesus Christ, false teachers were teaching a “doctrine” different from that taught by the Apostles (see 2 John 1:9–10). Some claimed that Jesus Christ had not come in the flesh (see 1 John 4:1–3). Diotrephes, a local Church leader, refused to recognize John’s authority (see 3 John 1:9–10). John bluntly labeled those who taught false doctrine as being “antichrist” (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3), and he encouraged Church members to shun falsehoods and remain with him in fellowship “with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). Jude warned the Saints of “ungodly men” who had “crept in unawares” (Jude 1:4; see also verse 15). As eyewitnesses of the resurrected Savior, John and Jude counseled the faithful on how they might resist false doctrines.



1. The Epistles of 1, 2, and 3 John were probably written between A.D. 70 and 100, perhaps in the last few years of the first century.
2. The Epistle of Jude was probably written between A.D. 40 and 80.

Introduction to the First Epistle General of John

Why study 1 John?

The Epistle of 1 John was written at a time when apostasy was spreading in the Church. In this epistle John addressed the dangerous spread of apostate influences in the Church and gave an apostolic warning to the Saints to have no fellowship with darkness but to stay in the safety of gospel light. Although some of the false teachings that John refuted in this epistle are different from those prevalent in the world today, studying 1 John can help modern Church members become more discerning of false teachings about Jesus Christ, and following John’s counsel can help them maintain close fellowship with the Lord as they abide in the truth.

Who wrote 1 John?

The author of 1 John did not identify himself in the epistle; however, as early as the second century, Christian scholars have identified the author as the Apostle John, one of the original Twelve. Some commentators have noted similarities between 1–3 John and the Gospel of John, suggesting that they had a common author. In addition, the author of the Epistles of John was an eyewitness of the resurrected Savior, which was certainly true of John the Apostle (see 1 John 1:1–4; 4:14). For more information on John, see “Who wrote John?” in chapter 21.

When and where was 1 John written?

Although John spent a major portion of his life in Palestine, the area was hostile to Christians and Jews following the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in A.D. 70. Tradition states that John left Palestine to live in Ephesus during his later years; therefore, 1–3 John could have been written from Ephesus. New Testament commentators generally believe that 1 John was written between A.D. 70 and 100, perhaps in the last few years of the first century.

To whom was 1 John written and why?

The audience of 1 John is not explicitly stated. In form, 1 John is more of a doctrinal essay or treatise than an epistle to a specific Christian congregation. John wrote to believers (see 1 John 1:3–4; 2:12–14), perhaps those in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), where historical sources say John lived and ministered in the late first century A.D. False teachers had created a schism, or division, among the Saints in the region (see 1 John 2:18–19, 22, 26; 4:1).

A particular philosophy that was gaining popularity at the time was Docetism. Docetism was part of a larger movement known as Gnosticism. A core teaching in many forms of Gnosticism was that the spirit was

wholly good and that matter, including the physical body, was wholly evil. Followers of Gnosticism believed that salvation was not achieved by being freed from sin but rather by freeing the spirit from matter, meaning the physical body. They also believed that salvation was achieved through special knowledge (*gnosis*) rather than through faith in Jesus Christ.

Followers of Docetism overemphasized Jesus's spiritual nature to the point that they rejected the idea that He came to earth in actual bodily form. They believed that God was invisible, immortal, all-knowing, and immaterial, and they considered the physical world and the physical body to be base and evil. Therefore, they believed that since Jesus was the divine Son of God, He could not have experienced the limitations of being human. In their view, Jesus Christ was not literally born in the flesh, and He did not inhabit a tangible body, bleed, suffer, die, or rise with a physical resurrected body—He only *seemed* to do these things. *Docetism* comes from the Greek *dokeo*, meaning “to seem” or “to appear.”

John refuted these false teachings by bearing witness of the Savior's physical existence (see 1 John 1:1–2; 4:2–3, 14; 5:6). He declared that Jesus Christ indeed came to earth in the flesh, that His suffering and death

made up His redeeming act, and that God sent His Son because of His great love for us.

What are some distinctive features of 1 John?

As one of Jesus Christ's original Apostles, John was a special witness of the resurrected Savior. John began this letter by declaring that he had personally seen, heard, and touched the resurrected Jesus Christ. Expanding on this personal witness, John invited his readers to have “fellowship” not only with John and those who ministered with him, but also “with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). Love is a central theme of John's First Epistle. Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles summarized 1 John's theme of divine love as follows:

“That God is love;

“That love is the foundation upon which all personal righteousness rests;

“That all the purposes and plans of Deity are based on his infinite and eternal love; and

“That if men will personify that love in their lives, they will become like the Lord himself and have eternal life with him” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 3:371).

Outline

1 John 1–5 John affirmed his personal witness of Jesus Christ and invited his readers to experience a similar joy and fellowship with the Father and the Son. The blood of Christ cleanses us from sin. Jesus

Christ is our Advocate with the Father. John warned of antichrists and false prophets. When Christ comes again, the righteous will be like Him. We show our love for God by loving others and by our obedience to the

commandments. John taught that God is love; that perfect love casts out fear; and that water, blood, and spirit testify of Christ.

Commentary for 1 John

1 John 1:1–3. Apostolic Witness “from the Beginning”

John spoke about how he and others had personally seen, heard, and touched the resurrected Jesus Christ (see 1 John 1:1–3). John apparently wanted his readers to understand that he was writing this letter as his personal witness of the resurrected Christ (see Luke 24:36–39; Acts 1:3). John's testimony of Jesus Christ and His role in our salvation powerfully refuted the false teachings that were then entering into the Church.



From the play *Savior of the World*. John declared that he had heard, seen, and felt the resurrected Jesus Christ (see 1 John 1:1).

1 John 1:3. “That Ye Also May Have Fellowship with Us”

John wrote that one purpose of his letter was to help his readers have fellowship with those who had seen and heard Jesus Christ, and then in turn enjoy fellowship “with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (John 1:3). *Fellowship* includes the ideas of communion, partnership, and sharing a common life. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** taught, “To have fellowship with the Lord in this life is to enjoy the companionship of his Holy Spirit, . . . and to have fellowship with him in eternity is to be like him, having that eternal life of which he is the possessor and originator” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 3:374).

John taught that in order to have fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, we must become like Them. Therefore we should walk in the light, apply the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, confess and repent of our sins, keep the commandments, and love one another (see 1 John 1:5–10; 2:3–11).

1 John 1:5–10. Walking in Light Instead of Darkness

John wrote that “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (John 1:5). The idea that God is light is found elsewhere in John’s writings and other scripture (see John 1:4–9; 8:12; 9:1–5; 2 Corinthians 4:6; D&C 50:23–24; 88:49–50, 67–68). Those who seek fellowship with God must leave the darkness of sin in order to walk in the light of Jesus Christ. We deceive ourselves when we ignore our sins or say that we have no sin.

1 John 2:1. “My Little Children”

John sometimes referred to Church members in the areas in which he ministered as his “little children” (1 John 2:1, 12, 18, 28; 3:7; 4:4; 5:21). This term can be seen as one of endearment, much like when Paul referred to Timothy as his son (see 1 Timothy 1:2, 18; 2 Timothy 1:2). Note that in 1 John 2:13, “little children” appears to refer to actual children who were members of the Church. The phrase “little children” is used similarly in John 13:33 and Doctrine and Covenants 78:17.

1 John 2:1–2; 4:10. Our Advocate and Propitiation

John called the Savior our “advocate with the Father” and “the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 2:1–2). An advocate is a person who supports or pleads the cause of another person. Because Jesus Christ was perfectly righteous and satisfied the demands of justice for the sins of others, He is qualified to plead on our behalf before the Father (see Hebrews 7:25–26; 2 Nephi 2:9; D&C 29:5; 45:3–5).

A propitiation is a sacrifice made to regain God’s favor or goodwill (see 1 John 2:2; 4:10). Jesus Christ is the sacrifice that allows us to regain God’s favor. The Savior endured the suffering due for the accumulated sins of the whole world; however, only those who truly repent will receive the full benefits of the Savior’s Atonement (see D&C 18:10–12; 19:16–19). To read more about Jesus Christ as our propitiation, see the commentary for Romans 3:25.

1 John 2:3–6. Keeping God’s Commandments

Obedience to God’s commandments is an important theme in John’s writings, as expressed in 1 John 2:3–6. In his Gospel, John recorded Jesus’s teaching that those who love the Savior keep His commandments: “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love” (John 15:10).

1 John 2:8–11. Light Dispels Darkness

In this epistle, John repeatedly contrasted light with darkness and encouraged readers to abide in the light. John associated light with love and darkness with hate (see 1 John 2:9–11). When we love others, we invite the light of Christ to illuminate our lives. **Elder Robert D. Hales** (1932–2017) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught how we might dispel darkness from our life and walk in the light:

“As children, we learned how to keep darkness away by turning on a light. Sometimes, when our parents went away for the evening, we would turn on every light in the house! We understood the physical law that is also a spiritual law: light and darkness cannot occupy the same space at the same time.

“Light dispels darkness. When light is present, darkness is vanquished and must depart. More importantly, darkness cannot conquer light unless the light is diminished or departs. When the spiritual light of the Holy Ghost is present, the darkness of Satan departs.

“. . . We are engaged in a battle between the forces of light and darkness. If it were not for the Light of Jesus Christ and His gospel, we would be doomed to the destruction of darkness” (“Out of Darkness into His Marvelous Light,” *Ensign*, May 2002, 70; see D&C 93:39).

1 John 2:18–19, 22, 26; 4:3. Antichrists

Speaking of false teachers among the Saints, John warned that “even now are there many antichrists” (1 John 2:18). An antichrist is “anyone or anything that counterfeits the true gospel plan of salvation and

that openly or secretly opposes Christ” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Antichrist”; scriptures.lds.org). Prior to His death, the Savior had warned His disciples about the coming of “false Christs” (Matthew 24:24).

1 John 2:20, 27. “An Unction from the Holy One”

Even as John pointed out how antichrists were at work within the Church, he assured the Saints that “an unction from the Holy One” would allow them to “know all things” as they sought to resist false ideas (1 John 2:20). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained the meaning of “unction” in this verse: “Literally, an *unction* is the act of anointing, as with oil for medicinal purposes; figuratively, it is an anointing from on high, meaning that those so endowed receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Thus John said of the saints, ‘Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things’ (1 John 2:20), that is, they had received the Holy Ghost so that the spirit of revelation and knowledge rested with them” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 812–13).

1 John 3:1–3. “The Sons of God” Have the Potential to Become like Him

John called the Saints “the sons of God” and said that “when he shall appear, we shall be like him” (1 John 3:1–2). This is one of many biblical passages that teach about man’s potential to become like God and His Son, Jesus Christ (see Matthew 5:48; John 10:34; Romans 8:17; Revelation 3:21). For more information on becoming heirs of God, see the commentary for Romans 8:17.

President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency explained that the purpose of mortal life is to become like God through the Atonement of Jesus Christ:

“In the theology of the restored church of Jesus Christ, the purpose of mortal life is to prepare us to realize our destiny as sons and daughters of God—to become like Him. . . . The Bible describes mortals as ‘the children of God’ and as ‘heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ’ (Rom. 8:16–17). It also declares that ‘we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together’ (Rom. 8:17) and that ‘when he shall appear, we shall be like him’ (1 Jn. 3:2). We take these Bible teachings literally. We believe that the purpose of mortal life is to acquire a physical body and, through the atonement of Jesus Christ and by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel, to qualify for the glorified, resurrected celestial state that is called exaltation or eternal life. . . .

“ . . . (This destiny of eternal life or God’s life should be familiar to all who have studied the ancient Christian doctrine of and belief in deification or apotheosis). . . .

“ . . . Our theology begins with heavenly parents. Our highest aspiration is to be like them. Under the merciful plan of the Father, all of this is possible through the atonement of the Only Begotten of the Father, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ” (“Apostasy and Restoration,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 86–87).

President Oaks referred to the early Christian doctrine of deification—the idea that human beings can become like God. This doctrine continued to be taught by many Christian writers after the deaths of the Apostles. For example, the bishop Cyprian (about A.D. 200–258) wrote: “What man is, Christ was willing to be, that man also may be what Christ is. . . . What Christ is, we Christians shall be, if we imitate Christ” (“The Treatises of Cyprian,” 6.11, 15, in Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds., *The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325: Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 10 vols. [1994], 5:468–69).



The Second Coming of Jesus Christ, by Grant R. Clawson.
“When [Jesus] shall appear, we shall be like him” (1 John 3:2).

1 John 3:2; 4:3

What do these verses teach about the body of Jesus Christ?
What difference does it make for you to know that Jesus Christ possesses a glorified physical body?

1 John 3:4. Definition of Sin

John provided a concise definition of sin: “Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4).

1 John 3:6–9. Do Not Continue in Sin

The King James Version of 1 John 3:6 reads, “Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him [Christ], neither known him.” The Joseph Smith Translation of 1 John 3:6, 8–9 clarifies the difference between one who sins and one who *continues in sin*:

“Whosoever *continueth in sin* hath not seen him, neither known him. . . .

“He that *continueth in sin* is of the devil. . . .

“Whosoever is born of God doth not *continue in sin*; for the *Spirit of God* remaineth in him; and he cannot *continue in sin*, because he is born of God, *having received that holy Spirit of promise*” (in 1 John 3:6, footnote *b*; 3:8, footnote *a*; 3:9, footnote *b*).

John also contrasted those who choose to continue in sin with those who “abide in” Christ (see John 15:1–11).

1 John 3:11. “Love One Another”

“We should love one another” is one of John’s central messages (1 John 3:11). He heard this principle taught by the Savior, who is the source of enduring love. Love has been taught “from the beginning,” and on the last night of the Savior’s mortal ministry, He taught it again: “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12).

1 John 3:13–18. “If the World Hate You”

John acknowledged the hostility that Church members were facing, encouraging his readers to “marvel not . . . if the world hate you” (1 John 3:13). He then taught that disciples of Jesus Christ have an obligation to love their brethren. **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated: “If you haven’t already, you will one day find yourself called upon to defend your faith or perhaps even endure some personal abuse simply because you are a member of The Church of

Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Such moments will require both courage and courtesy on your part” (“The Cost—and Blessings—of Discipleship,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 6).

President Dallin H. Oaks similarly taught: “As the ‘salt of the earth,’ we are also the ‘light of the world,’ and our light must not be hidden (see Matthew 5:13–16). The Apostle John warned that this will cause the world to hate us (see 1 John 3:13). That is why those who have made the covenant to change have a sacred duty to love and help one another. That encouragement must be extended to every soul who struggles to come out of the culture of the world and into the culture of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Apostle John concluded, ‘Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth’ (1 John 3:18)” (“Repentance and Change,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2003, 40).

1 John 3:17–18; 4:10–11, 18–21

In these verses, what does John encourage us to do in order to show our love for God? Why is following this counsel an important way to show our love for God? How are you doing in this area?

1 John 3:22. Receiving What We Pray For

To receive “whatsoever we ask” of God, we must “keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight” (1 John 3:22). The Bible Dictionary states: “The object of prayer is not to change the will of God but to secure for ourselves and for others blessings that God is already willing to grant but that are made conditional on our asking for them. Blessings require some work or effort on our part before we can obtain them” (“Prayer”). To learn more about receiving answers to our prayers, see 1 Nephi 15:8–11; Alma 26:22; 3 Nephi 18:20; Doctrine and Covenants 46:30; 50:29–30; 88:63–64.

1 John 4:1–3; 2 John 1:7. “Believe Not Every Spirit”

Some individuals in the Church were teaching that Jesus Christ did not have a physical body. John referred to these people as “spirits” who possessed the “spirit of antichrist” (see 1 John 4:1–3). Their opinion was that Jesus Christ only “seemed” to have a physical body and to suffer and die on the cross. John exhorted his readers to “believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God” (1 John 4:1). In this case the test that

determined true teachers was whether they taught “that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh” (1 John 4:2). The existence of similar false teachings is also evident in Paul’s writings (see Colossians 2:8–9).

1 John 4:7–11. “God Is Love”

Forms of the word *love* appear more than 20 times in 1 John 4. John taught that “love is of God,” that “God is love,” and that God’s love was manifest in the gift of His Only Begotten Son (1 John 4:7–9; see also John 3:16–17). **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** similarly expressed that Christ came to demonstrate the great love God has for His children:

“Feeding the hungry, healing the sick, rebuking hypocrisy, pleading for faith—this was Christ showing us the way of the Father, He who is ‘merciful and gracious, slow to anger, long-suffering and full of goodness’ [*Lectures on Faith*, 42]. In His life and especially in His death, Christ was declaring, ‘This is God’s compassion I am showing you, as well as that of my own.’ . . .

“. . . And in the spirit of the holy apostleship, I say as did one who held this office anciently: ‘Herein [then] is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another’ [1 John 4:10–11]—and to love Him forever, I pray” (“The Grandeur of God,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2003, 72–73; see also the commentary for John 3:14–17).



Arise and Walk, by Simon Dewey. Through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, we can see a manifestation of Heavenly Father’s great love for us.

1 John 4:12. Seeing God

The King James Version of 1 John 4:12 reads, “No man hath seen God at any time.” The Joseph Smith Translation of this verse clarifies the misconception that mortals are unable to see God: “No man hath seen God at any time, *except them who believe*” (in 1 John 4:12, footnote *a*). John continued by teaching: “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:12). John himself had seen God the Father (see Revelation 5:1; D&C 67:11). To read more about mortals being able to see God, see John 14:23; Acts 7:56; Doctrine and Covenants 93:1; Joseph Smith—History 1:16–17; and the commentary for John 1:18.

1 John 4:18. “Perfect Love Casteth Out Fear”

For the Church members John addressed, fear would have been a natural response to the hostilities they faced. However, John wrote that “perfect love casteth out fear” (1 John 4:18). **Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin** (1917–2008) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles related an experience from the life of Elder James E. Talmage that illustrates how Christlike love casts out fear:

“Elder James E. Talmage, a man who is remembered for his doctrinal teachings, showed great kindness to a neighbor family in distress. They were complete strangers to him. Before he was an Apostle, as a young father, he became aware of great suffering at a neighbor’s home whose large family was stricken with the dreaded diphtheria. He did not care that they were not members of the Church; his kindness and charity moved him to act. The Relief Society was desperately trying to find people to help, but no one would because of the contagious nature of the disease.

“When he arrived, James found one toddler already dead and two others who were in agony from the disease. He immediately went to work, cleaning the untidy house, preparing the young body for burial, cleaning and providing for the other sick children, spending the entire day doing so. He came back the next morning to find that one more of the children had died during the night. A third child was still suffering terribly. He wrote in his journal: ‘She clung to my neck, oftentimes coughing [germs] on my face and clothing, . . . yet I could not put her from me. During the half hour immediately preceding her death, I walked the floor with the little creature in my arms. She died in agony

at 10 a.m.’ The three children had all departed within the space of 24 hours. He then assisted the family with the burial arrangements and spoke at their graveside services. This he did all for a family of strangers. What a great example of Christlike kindness!” (“The Virtue of Kindness,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2005, 28).

1 John 5:2
According to John, how can we demonstrate that we love the children of God?

1 John 5:2–3. The Commandments of God “Are Not Grievous”

As an extension of his teachings on love in 1 John 4, John reminded his readers that we demonstrate our love for God by keeping His commandments, which “are not grievous” (1 John 5:2–3). **Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin** taught that when we obey the commandments out of love, obedience ceases to be grievous:

“Do you love the Lord?

“Spend time with Him. Meditate on His words. Take His yoke upon you. Seek to understand and obey, because ‘this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments’ [1 John 5:3]. When we love the Lord, obedience ceases to be a burden. Obedience becomes a delight” (“The Great Commandment,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 30).

1 John 5:4–5. “He That Overcometh the World”

John pointed out that our faith in Jesus Christ allows us to overcome the world (see 1 John 5:4–5). To read about the blessings that come to those who overcome the world, see Revelation 2:11, 17, 26–28; 3:5, 12, 21.

1 John 5:6–8. “Three That Bear Witness in Earth”

Certain phrases may have been added to 1 John 5:7–8 as late as the fourth century A.D. The apparent addition is the words “in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth.”



Water, blood, and spirit are associated with both our physical and spiritual births (see 1 John 5:6–8).

Whether these words reflect John’s original writing or were later added by an unknown person is debated. What is important is that these verses emphasize the blood of Christ. The blood of Christ was part of the Atonement and Jesus Christ’s real suffering. This truth refuted the docetic heresy that Jesus Christ did not have a mortal body (see 1 John 1:7; 5:6). Water, blood, and the Spirit are related to mortal birth, spiritual rebirth, and the Savior’s atoning sacrifice, as the following chart illustrates (see Moses 6:59–60):

	Mortal Birth	Spiritual Rebirth	Christ’s Atoning Sacrifice
Water	The child is surrounded by water in the womb.	Baptism is performed by immersion in water.	While on the cross, water flowed from Christ’s pierced side.
Blood	The life of the physical body is in the blood. The mother’s blood is shed during childbirth.	Christ’s atoning blood allows us to be born again.	Christ shed His blood for all humankind.
Spirit	Each person born in mortality is literally the offspring of heavenly parents, having received a spirit body in the premortal world.	The Holy Ghost has cleansing power.	Through Jesus Christ’s atoning sacrifice and perfect spirituality, we are able to be born again and receive spiritual sanctification.

Introduction to the Second Epistle of John

Why study 2 John?

In this epistle, John expressed concern over apostate influences in the Church. At the same time, he also expressed joy for Church members who had remained strong and loyal (see 2 John 1:1). This rejoicing illustrates the joy and gratitude that Church leaders, both ancient and modern, feel for those who remain faithful to the Lord. John reminded his readers that in spite of antichrists who try to deceive, they must not lose the spiritual progress they have made (see 2 John 1:8).

Who wrote 2 John?

The author identified himself as “the elder” (2 John 1:1) and is traditionally understood to be the Apostle John. The vocabulary, writing style, and themes closely match 1 John and 3 John, leading most commentators to conclude that the epistles had the same author.

When and where was 2 John written?

New Testament scholars believe that 2 John was written between A.D. 70 and 100, probably in the last years of the first century. We do not know the location of its composition.

To whom was 2 John written and why?

The Second Epistle of John was written to “the elect lady and her children” (2 John 1:1). Since the epistle addresses a group of people, many commentators conclude that “the elect lady” actually refers to a Christian congregation (see 2 John 1:13). The Greek term for *church* is feminine, and it was common to personify the Church as a woman (see Ephesians 5:25–27, 32; Revelation 12:1–4, 17; 19:7–8). Another possibility is that “the elect lady and her children” were John’s wife and family.

John apparently wrote this epistle for the same purposes as 1 John. Responding to docetic teachings, he testified that Jesus Christ literally came to earth in the flesh, labeling those who taught otherwise as “antichrist” (2 John 1:7). He explained that members who taught that Christ did not have a physical body should be cast out of the congregation (see 2 John 1:10).

What are some distinctive features of 2 John?

In this epistle John warned about false teachers who had entered into the Church. John warned Church members not to heed or befriend these individuals.

Outline

2 John John rejoiced because “the elect lady and her children” were true and faithful (2 John 1:1). He warned of antichrists.

Commentary for 2 John

2 John 1:1–5. “The Elect Lady”

John described himself as “the elder”; “the elect lady” he was writing to (see 2 John 1:1) is either a figurative reference to a branch of the Church or a literal reference to a female member, perhaps even his wife. In our dispensation, Emma Smith, wife of the Prophet Joseph Smith, was called “an elect lady” (D&C 25:3). John rejoiced that he found the children of the elect lady walking in truth and following the gospel of Jesus Christ.

2 John 1:7–10. “Many Deceivers Are Entered into the World”

John warned his readers that “many deceivers are entered into the world” (2 John 1:7). John advised the Saints that if they encountered a false teacher, they

should “receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed” (2 John 1:10). John was not suggesting that the Saints should fail to extend common courtesy to those who taught contrary doctrines. However, since early Christian congregations gathered to worship in the homes of Church members, traditional customs of hospitality could inadvertently enable heretical teachers to infiltrate congregations. **Elder M. Russell Ballard** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles warned modern Church members not to associate with deceivers and antichrists operating in our day:

“Let us beware of false prophets and false teachers, both men and women, who are self-appointed declarers of the doctrines of the Church and who seek to spread their false gospel and attract followers by sponsoring symposia, books, and journals whose contents challenge fundamental doctrines of the Church. Beware of those who speak and publish in opposition to God’s

true prophets and who actively proselyte others with reckless disregard for the eternal well-being of those whom they seduce. . . .

“Perhaps most damningly, they deny Christ’s Resurrection and Atonement, arguing that no God can

save us. They reject the need for a Savior. In short, these detractors attempt to reinterpret the doctrines of the Church to fit their own preconceived views, and in the process deny Christ and His messianic role” (“Beware of False Prophets and False Teachers,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1999, 63).

Introduction to the Third Epistle of John

Why study 3 John?

In this brief epistle, John praised Gaius, a Church member who was loyal during a time of rebellion against Church leaders. John’s teachings provide insights on apostasy in the New Testament Church and can inspire modern-day Saints who remain faithful to Church leaders despite opposition.

Who wrote 3 John?

As in 2 John, the author identified himself as “the elder” (3 John 1:1) and is traditionally understood to be the Apostle John. The vocabulary and style closely match 1 John and 2 John, leading most commentators to conclude that the epistles had the same author.

When and where was 3 John written?

New Testament scholars believe that 3 John was written between A.D. 70 and 100, probably in the last years of the first century. We do not know the location of its composition.

To whom was 3 John written and why?

The epistle of 3 John was written to Gaius, a faithful member of the Church whom John praised for showing unselfish devotion to the cause of Christ by providing accommodations for God’s traveling servants (see 3 John 1:5–8). John also warned Gaius about one Diotrephes, who may have held a local leadership position in the Church or perhaps was the host of a local house-church congregation. Diotrephes openly opposed John and other Church officials and even prevented local Church members who wished to receive the Church officials from attending or speaking in Church meetings (see 3 John 1:9–10). John encouraged Gaius to continue in goodness and informed him that he would soon visit him (see 3 John 1:11–13).

What are some distinctive features of 3 John?

In 3 John we see John’s concern about apostate influences in the Church. We also see John’s love for others and the joy he felt for those who were choosing a life of obedience (see 3 John 1:4).

Outline

3 John John praised Gaius, who was charitable to men who spoke the truth. John expressed joy	because his “children walk in truth” (3 John 1:4). He warned Gaius about Diotrephes, who sought for power	and refused to take in Church leaders when they visited.
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Commentary for 3 John

3 John 1:9–10. Diotrephes Rejected the Authority of John

Diotrephes was apparently either a leader in a local branch or the host of a house-church. John noted that because Diotrephes loved to have “preeminence” among the Saints, he rejected the authority of John and other Church leaders. Concerning people like Diotrephes, the **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) wrote, “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” (D&C 121:39; see also 2 Nephi 26:29).

President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency cautioned: “There is a certain arrogance in thinking that any of us may be more spiritually intelligent, more learned, or more righteous than the councils called to preside over us. Those councils are more in tune with the Lord than any individual person they preside over” (*Finding Light in a Dark World* [1995], 121).

Introduction to the General Epistle of Jude

Why study Jude?

This epistle allows readers to understand Jude's earnest concern about the forces of apostasy that were at work in the Church near the end of the first century A.D.

Who wrote Jude?

The author identifies himself as "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James" (Jude 1:1). Traditionally the author has been understood to be Jude the half-brother of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3). Jude was evidently an active Church member of high esteem in Jerusalem, and he had traveled as a missionary (see Acts 1:13–14; 1 Corinthians 9:5). Though Jude does not appear to have held a prominent leadership position in the early Church, early Christians held his epistle in sufficient esteem to include it in the New Testament canon.

When and where was Jude written?

If this letter was indeed authored by Jude the brother of Jesus, it was probably written between A.D. 40 and 80. The location of its composition is unknown.

To whom was Jude written and why?

Jude is a general epistle addressed to faithful Christians—"to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ" (Jude 1:1). Jude's stated purpose was to encourage his readers to "earnestly contend for the faith" against ungodly teachers who had entered the Church, promoting

immoral behavior and false teachings that denied the Lord Jesus Christ (Jude 1:3).

What are some distinctive features of Jude?

Some commentators have noted similarities between Jude and 2 Peter and suggested that one writer may have used the other as a source or that both drew from a common source. Jude 1:4–9 is indeed similar in wording to 2 Peter 2; however, Peter was prophesying of future apostasy whereas Jude spoke of an apostasy that was currently taking place (see 2 Peter 2:1; Jude 1:4).

Jude's words are sharp and incisive against those who opposed God and His servants. Jude cited scripture and Jewish apocryphal accounts to show how God had dealt in times past with individuals who openly opposed His work.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie noted several unique characteristics of Jude:

"In the whole Bible, it is Jude only who preserves for us the concept that pre-existence was our first estate and that certain angels failed to pass its tests.

"It is to him that we turn for our meager knowledge of the disputation between Michael and Lucifer about the body of Moses.

"He alone records Enoch's glorious prophecy about the Second Coming of the Son of Man" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1965–73], 3:415).

Outline

Jude Jude encouraged his readers to defend the faith. He warned that "certain men crept in unawares" and

were spreading works of apostasy (Jude 1:4). He taught of the "first estate" and explained what awaits

those who rebel against God and His work (Jude 1:6).

Commentary for Jude

Jude 1:1. Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ Are Separate Beings

Jude's language in Jude 1:1 conveys his belief that God the Father and Jesus Christ are separate Beings.

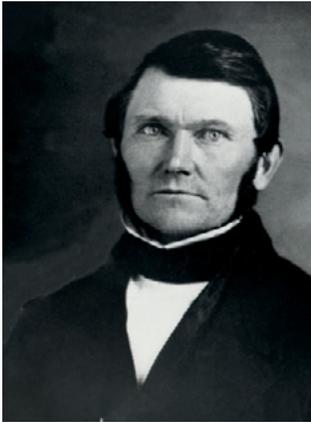
Jude 1:3. "The Faith Which Was Once Delivered unto the Saints"

According to Jude, he had originally intended to write about "the common salvation" (Jude 1:3), meaning the idea that "salvation is available to all men, not just a select few" (Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:416). However, Jude instead found it needful to exhort his readers to "earnestly contend for

the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3). Here Jude was referring to the faith that was taught originally by Christ Himself and then by His Apostles. The same faith that we read about in the New Testament has been restored in our day and is found in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

President Wilford Woodruff (1807–98) related how as a young man he had sought after the faith that had been taught by Jesus Christ and the Apostles:

“I read the New Testament. I learned verse after verse and chapter after chapter. . . . It taught me the Gospel of life and salvation; it taught me a Gospel of power before the heavens and on the earth. It taught me that the organization of the Church consisted of Prophets, Apostles, Pastors and Teachers. . . .



The young Apostle Elder Wilford Woodruff

“These are the things which I learned, and they made an impression upon me. I believed in them; yet I had never heard them taught by any clergyman or divine upon the earth. . . . On one occasion I attended one of those great meetings which were sometimes held in Connecticut, at which forty or fifty ministers of various denominations were gathered together. . . . At

this meeting permission was given for anybody to make remarks. I was quite young then. I arose and stepped into the aisle, and I said to that body of ministers: ‘My friends, will you tell me why you don’t contend for the faith once delivered to the Saints? Will you tell me why you don’t contend for that Gospel that Jesus Christ taught, and that His Apostles taught? Why do you not contend for that religion that gives unto you power before God, power to heal the sick, to make the blind to see, the lame to walk, and that gives you the Holy Ghost and those gifts and graces that have been manifest from the creation of the world? . . .’

“The presiding elder said: ‘My dear young man, you would be a very smart man, and a very useful man in the earth, if you did not believe all those foolish things’” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff* [2004], 35–36).

Wilford Woodruff finally heard the gospel preached by an authorized servant of God—Elder Zera Pulsipher—and recognized it as what he had been searching for. He was baptized just a few days later.

Jude 1:4–8. Sinners in the Past

Jude acknowledged the ongoing apostasy in the ancient Church as he described ungodly men who entered the ranks of the Church without the awareness of the members and then taught false doctrines (see Jude 1:4). Jude compared these rebellious individuals to people in Old Testament times who were destroyed for their disobedience—the Israelites who were led out of Egypt and later failed to forsake their sins, and the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. Jude also gave the example of the angels in the premortal world who chose to rebel against God and follow Satan (see verses 5–8). Jude used these examples to put his readers “in remembrance” of what awaits those who rebel against proper authority and fail to repent (verse 5).

Jude 1:6. “The Angels Which Kept Not Their First Estate”

Jude wrote about the spirits who rebelled against God in the premortal world and followed Lucifer, calling them “angels which kept not their first estate” (Jude 1:6; see also Abraham 3:26, 28). Here, “estate” refers to a person’s rank or position. Because these spirits rebelled against the Father, they lost their standing before God and did not qualify for the privilege of coming to mortality—our second estate.

While serving as a member of the Seventy, **Elder L. Lionel Kendrick** discussed the premortal events that led to the casting out of Satan and his followers: “Lucifer used his divine gift of agency to make a decision that would lead to his eternal damnation. In bold opposition, he rebelled against God and ‘kept not his first estate’ [Abraham 3:28]. ‘A third part of the hosts of heaven turned he away from me [the Lord God] *because of their agency*’ [D&C 29:36; italics added]. Even with the possibility of their eternal damnation, Heavenly Father would not take their agency from them. To do so would be counter to eternal law. As a result of their rebelliousness, Lucifer and his followers were cast out of heaven and forfeited the blessings of eternal life” (“Our Moral Agency,” *Ensign*, Mar. 1996, 30–31).

Jude 1:7. The Sins of Sodom and Gomorrah

Sodom and Gomorrah were ancient neighboring cities located somewhere near the Dead Sea, probably at

its southern end. Jude said that these two cities were destroyed because their people indulged in the sins of “fornication, and going after strange flesh” (Jude 1:7; see also Genesis 19:27–29). The phrase “going after strange flesh” refers to engaging in homosexual acts. To read more about the Church’s teachings regarding homosexual acts, see the commentary for Romans 1:26–27.

Jude 1:9. Michael Contending with the Devil for the Body of Moses

Jude 1:9 says that Michael the archangel disputed with the devil over the body of Moses. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** gave insight about this verse: “Commentators assume . . . that Jude had before him and was quoting from a then current apocryphal book, ‘The Assumption of Moses,’ which has been preserved to us in fragmentary form only. This non-canonical work presents the doctrine that Moses was translated and

taken up into heaven without tasting death. It appears to deal ‘with certain revelations made by Moses,’ and ‘with his disappearance in a cloud, so that his death was hid from human sight. . . . Michael was commissioned to bury Moses. Satan opposed the burial. . . . Finally, all opposition having been overcome, the assumption took place in the presence of Joshua and Caleb’ (R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, pp. 407–413.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:421).

From the Book of Mormon we learn that Moses was translated and taken into heaven without tasting death (see Alma 45:19). This was necessary so that Moses could appear on the Mount of Transfiguration two thousand years later with his physical body and lay his hands on the heads of Peter, James, and John to give them priesthood keys (see *History of the Church*, 3:387).



Painting of an early Christian meal from the catacomb of Saints Marcellinus and Peter in Rome. Jude wrote that there were “spots” or blemishes in the Saints’ shared meals, called “feasts of charity” (Jude 1:12). Jude’s message was that the Saints’ worship and social practices were becoming corrupted by inappropriate behavior (see also 1 Corinthians 11:18–34; 1 Peter 4:3; 2 Peter 2:13).

Apocryphal books like the Assumption of Moses are not included in the Bible because of their dubious authenticity or validity. Even though these works often have some value, they are not felt to be correct in every particular. See Doctrine and Covenants 91 for what the Lord revealed to Joseph Smith about apocryphal works.

To read more about Michael the archangel, see Doctrine and Covenants 27:11; 29:26; 88:112–15; 107:54; 128:20–21.

Jude 1:11. Cain, Balaam, and Core

Jude compared false teachers to the rebellious Cain, Balaam, and Core (or Korah, as it is spelled in the Old Testament), each of whom sinned grievously in the eyes of the Lord (see Jude 1:11). Cain murdered his brother Abel in order to gain his brother's flocks (see Genesis 4:8; Moses 5:32–33). Balaam used his God-given gift of prophecy to seek after riches and honor (see Numbers 22:5; 25:1–8). And Korah rebelled against Moses because he was excluded from priesthood office (see Numbers 16:1–3, 31–35). In each instance the Lord cursed these men for their wicked actions. Jude's epistle would have helped his readers discern evil people of his day. His epistle can help us avoid similar apostate teachings in our own time.

Jude 1:14–16. Enoch's Prophecy

Jude alone recorded a prophecy of Enoch about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Jude may have quoted from the apocryphal book of Enoch, which is not in our present canon of scripture. The book of Moses, however, confirms that Enoch was given knowledge of the last days and of the Savior's Second Coming (see Moses 7:62–66). On one occasion, the Prophet Joseph Smith wrote that Enoch appeared to Jude (see *History of the Church*, 4:209).

Jude 1:17. "Remember Ye the Words Which Were Spoken Before of the Apostles"

Jude urged his readers to remember "the words which were spoken [by] the Apostles" (Jude 1:17; see also 3 Nephi 12:1–2). Safety is found in following apostolic direction, as **Elder M. Russell Ballard** expressed:

"These are difficult times, and the world's cultural and sociological landmarks of propriety, honesty, integrity, and political correctness are constantly shifting. . . . At such times, we might well ask, 'Is there one clear, unpolluted, unbiased voice that we can always count on? Is there a voice that will always give us clear directions to find our way in today's troubled world?'

The answer is *yes*. That voice is the voice of the living prophet and apostles. . . .

"Today I make you a promise. It's a simple one, but it is true. If you will listen to the living prophet and the apostles and heed our counsel, you will not go astray" ("His Word Ye Shall Receive," *Ensign*, May 2001, 65–66).

Jude 1:18–19. Mockers in the Last Days

Jude's reference to mockers in Jude 1:18–19 probably refers to those who mocked Christians in his day, and it applies to conditions in the world today. Those who most aggressively mock the Church and its standards are those who "walk after their own ungodly lusts" and who "separate themselves" from the believers because they do not have the Spirit (Jude 1:18–19; see also 2 Peter 3:3).

Points to Ponder

- How have apostolic witnesses of Jesus Christ strengthened your faith in the Savior? (see 1 John 1:1–5). Why do you think it is important to rely on the words of prophets and apostles rather than the teachings of the world?
- What does it mean to gain fellowship with God? How might having God's fellowship help you discern truth from error?
- In what ways do the writings of John and Jude contribute to your understanding of the Apostasy?

Suggested Assignments

- Study 1 John 1:5–10; 2:4–11, 20–21, 27; 3:4–22. Make a list of ways you can come to know God better. Choose one of those things and create a plan to implement it in your life. Act on your plan, and record your experience in your journal. Share an insight you gained with someone you think would benefit from it.
- Mark in your scriptures each occurrence of the word *love* in 1 John 4:7–21. Write a few sentences that explain what John taught about love in these verses. How could you do better at showing love toward your family, friends, or even strangers?

Revelation 1–3

Introduction to the Revelation of St. John the Divine

Why study Revelation?

The book of Revelation encourages followers of Jesus Christ to remain faithful in the midst of persecution and trials. This book is also known as the Apocalypse, which in Greek means a revelation, uncovering, or unveiling of that which is hidden. As “the Revelation of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:1), this book is both an unveiling of the Lord Jesus Christ and an uncovering of Jesus Christ’s authority and power and His role in the Father’s plan of salvation. The book also reveals much important information about the events leading up to the Second Coming and the Millennium. Prayerful study of this book can bring you a deeper understanding of the resurrected and glorified Son of God and His dealings with God’s children throughout the ages of earth’s history, particularly in the last days.

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) said: “The book of Revelation is one of the plainest books God ever caused to be written” (in *History of the Church*, 5:342). Though it is rich with imagery and symbols that are not always easy for readers in modern times to understand, the themes of the book are simple and inspiring. “The message of Revelation is the same as that of all scripture: there will be an eventual triumph on this earth of God over the devil; a permanent victory of good over evil, of the Saints over their persecutors, of the kingdom of God over the kingdoms of men and of Satan” (Bible Dictionary, “Revelation of John”). Thus, the book of Revelation extends a message of hope to all the faithful.

Who wrote Revelation?

The book’s author identifies himself as John (see Revelation 1:1, 4, 9; 22:8), understood to be the son of Zebedee and the beloved disciple of Jesus Christ (see Matthew 4:21–22). Latter-day revelation affirms that John the Beloved is the author (see 1 Nephi 14:18–27; Ether 4:16; D&C 77:1–2; Bible Dictionary, “John”).

When and where was Revelation written?

Revelation was written at a time when Christians were facing false teachings, apathy, and severe persecution (see Revelation 1:9; 2:4, 10, 14–15; 3:16; 6:9). Most likely this persecution came at the hands of Roman officials in the later years of the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81–96).

Domitian revived the practice of emperor worship and exiled or executed those who did not worship gods approved by the state. Ancient sources indicate that Christians and Jews were persecuted under his reign. John wrote from the island of Patmos, where according to tradition, he had been exiled by Roman officials “for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 1:9).

To whom was Revelation written and why?

John wrote a message of hope and encouragement to those in his day who still adhered to the teachings of Jesus Christ (see Revelation 1:4, 11). The first three chapters of the book of Revelation were specifically addressed to seven branches of the Church in Asia Minor (see Revelation 1:4, 11; 2–3). It is unclear why these particular churches were singled out. While other branches of the Church had been established in Asia (such as at Pisidian Antioch), these seven may represent the Church as a whole (the number seven being symbolic of completeness). Historical sources indicate that John lived at Ephesus near the close of the first century, so he would have had close connections with the seven churches before his exile to Patmos, and he would have visited them as he ministered in Asia Minor. They may also have been among only a few branches that were still faithful and had not succumbed to apostasy and persecution.

The faithful members of the Church lived in times of intense persecution, with all the Apostles gone except John, who was now in exile, and with many factions and problems in the Church. As a result, the Saints were in great need of the encouraging message found in Revelation. John reassured them that God was in control, Jesus Christ’s ultimate triumph over evil would be complete, and the hopes of all Christians would ultimately be realized.

What are some distinctive features of Revelation?

The structure of the book is suggested in Revelation 1:19. John wrote about the things he had seen—the vision of Jesus Christ (see Revelation 1), “the things which are” (conditions in the Church of his day; see Revelation 2–3), and “the things which shall be hereafter” (see Revelation 4–22). The book of Revelation, understood with the aid of latter-day revelation, presents an inspired

overview of the history of the world, concentrating particularly on the time preceding the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the great millennial era of peace.

The book contains promises to faithful Saints who overcome evil (see Revelation 2–3). It contains numerous symbolic images, including dragons and beasts. It contains one of the few scriptural passages describing the premortal war in heaven (see Revelation 12:7–11). Its major themes include Jesus Christ’s role in carrying out God’s plan, the hand of God in earth’s history, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the destruction of evil, the spiritual protection promised to

the righteous in the last days, the Millennium, and the promise that the earth will eventually become celestial.

In 1 Nephi 14:24–29, we learn that about 600 years before John’s birth, the prophet Nephi saw a vision similar to John’s and learned John’s name. The Lord instructed both Nephi and John to write only a portion of their visions—Nephi wrote of the first coming of Christ and some of the events of the last days, and John wrote of Christ’s Second Coming, the Millennium, and the completion of God’s work on the earth. Other prophets have also seen similar events in vision (see Ether 3:25–28; Moses 7:59–67).

Outline

Revelation 1–3 John saw a vision of Jesus Christ. He wrote individual messages to the seven churches in Asia; these messages included praise, admonitions, and promises to the faithful Saints in each branch.

Revelation 4–11 John saw a vision of God enthroned in the celestial kingdom, the Lamb of God, and a book sealed with seven seals. John saw visions in connection with the opening of each of the seven seals. Those who will receive God’s protection in the last days are those who

have the seal of God in their foreheads. John saw wars, plagues, and many other latter-day events that will precede the Lord’s Second Coming.

Revelation 12–16 John saw a vision of the premortal war in heaven and the war’s continuation on the earth. He taught that evil forces seek to destroy God’s kingdom on earth. The gospel will be restored in the last days by angelic ministry. The righteous will be gathered out from Babylon, which represents the wickedness of the world, and

preparations will be made for the battle of Armageddon.

Revelation 17–22 Spiritual Babylon will be spread throughout the earth. After the righteous Saints are gathered, Babylon will fall and be mourned by her supporters. The righteous will be invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb of God. Satan will be bound, the Millennium will begin, and Christ will reign personally on the earth. The dead will be judged. The earth will attain its celestial glory.



The Greek letters Alpha and Omega (see Revelation 1:8, 11) appear on either side of this painting of Jesus Christ from the catacomb of Commodilla in Rome. The painting was created in the fourth century A.D.

Introduction and Timeline for Revelation 1–3

A short distance off the coast of present-day Turkey lies a tiny island called Patmos, where just over 1,900 years ago, the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to John the Beloved and instructed him to write an account of the visions and revelations he was about to be given (see Revelation 1:10–16, 19). In Revelation 1–3 John introduced themes that run throughout the book. Revelation 1 describes a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ, unveiling aspects of the Savior’s power and eternal mission, including the reassuring truth that the Lord labors among and with His faithful servants. In Revelation 2–3, John’s letters to seven branches of the Church convey counsel and correction from the Lord to help His followers receive the blessings of exaltation. The messages in these chapters showed the Saints in John’s day that Christ will help His followers

overcome even as He overcame, and these messages teach the same thing to us today.



John received a revelation from Jesus Christ while banished to the island of

Patmos, probably before A.D. 96.

Commentary for Revelation 1–3

Revelation 1:1. The Book of Revelation Is an Unveiling

The Joseph Smith Translation changes Revelation 1:1 to clarify that the book was indeed a revelation given to John by the Savior, Jesus Christ: “The Revelation of John, a servant of God, which was given unto him of Jesus Christ” (in the Bible appendix).

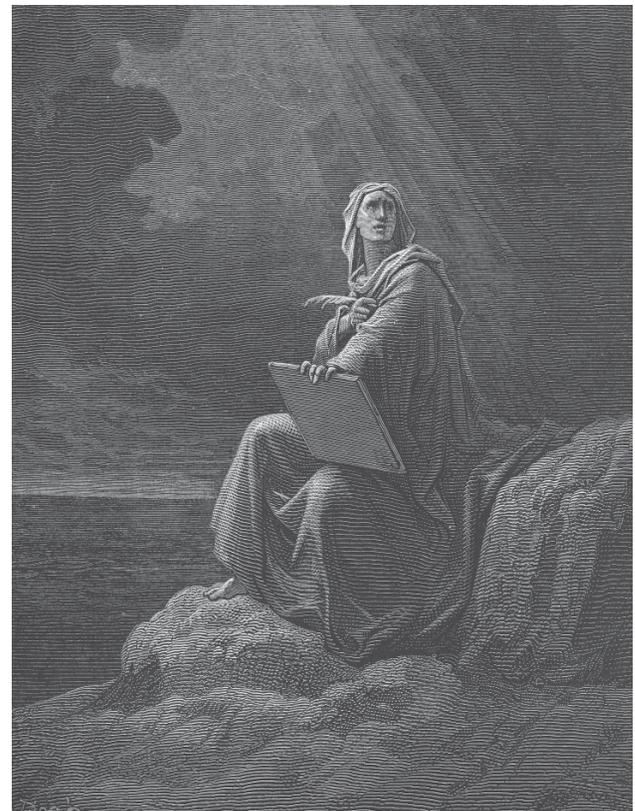
Gerald N. Lund, who later became a member of the Seventy, explained that the book of Revelation unveils many truths:

“The title of the book in Greek is *Apokalypsis*, from which we get its other common name, the Apocalypse. *Apokalypsis* is formed from two Greek words—*apo*, a preposition denoting separation or removal, and *kalypto*, a verb meaning to cover, hide, or veil. *Apokalypsis*, then, literally means removal of the veil or covering. Hence its title in English, the book of Revelation (or the uncovering or unveiling).

“While many might find the title to be ironic, arguing that few books are more hidden or veiled, it is an appropriate one, for it truly reveals many things. Elder Bruce R. McConkie, in response to the question ‘Are we expected to understand the book of Revelation?’ answered:

“‘Certainly. Why else did the Lord reveal it? The common notion that it deals with beasts and plagues and mysterious symbolisms that cannot be understood

is just not true. . . . If we apply ourselves with full purpose of heart, we can catch the vision of what the ancient Revelator recorded.’ (*Ensign*, Sept. 1975, 87.) . . .



St. John at Patmos, by Paul Gustave Doré

“If we diligently use the keys that the Lord has given us to interpret the book of Revelation, it can truly become a book of revelation for us” (“Seeing the Book of Revelation as a Book of Revelation,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1987, 46, 52).

Revelation 1:1 states that the revelation from God was “signified” by an angel unto “his servant John.” The word “signified” is the English translation of the Greek word *eseemanen*, which can mean to indicate something by a sign, mark, or token.

Revelation 1:3. “Blessed Is He That”

The book of Revelation contains several “blessed is” statements (see Revelation 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). These are similar to the Beatitudes found in Matthew 5:3–11. The progression of actions described in Revelation 1:3—read, hear, and keep—shows that besides reading or hearing the book of Revelation (or any other book of scripture), we must also “keep those things which are written therein.” By doing all of these things, we receive the promised blessings. The Joseph Smith Translation of verse 3 adds the word *understand* to this sequence, showing the importance of understanding the teachings of this book (see the Bible appendix).

Revelation 1:3 includes the phrase “for the time is at hand.” The Joseph Smith Translation of verse 3 clarifies this concept: “For the time *of the coming of the Lord draweth nigh*” (in the Bible appendix). When John said that he was shown “things which must shortly come to pass” (Revelation 1:1), the Second Coming was one of the things he referred to. As with all things, the Second Coming will occur in accordance with the Lord’s timetable (see 2 Peter 3:8).

Revelation 1:4–20. Symbols

Symbols are powerful teaching tools because they can communicate to people in different generations and cultures. They can communicate multiple messages. God often uses symbols to teach eternal truths, including truths about His Beloved Son. To understand symbols, the following guidelines may be helpful: (1) study the scriptures to determine if other passages provide an interpretation or insight, (2) examine the context in which the symbols are used, (3) consider the nature and characteristics of the symbols, (4) use the study aids in the scriptures, and (5) most important, seek personal revelation from God. The following chart summarizes prominent symbols found in Revelation 1 and some possible interpretations:

Symbolism in Revelation 1			
Verse	Symbol	Possible Interpretation	References
4	Seven spirits	Servants or leaders over the seven churches in Asia	Joseph Smith Translation, Revelation 1:4 (in the Bible appendix)
6	Kings and priests	Those who receive exaltation in the celestial kingdom	D&C 76:50, 56–57
8	Alpha and Omega	First and last letters of the Greek alphabet, representing Christ’s eternal role in God’s work	Revelation 1:4; Bible Dictionary, “Alpha”
12	Seven candlesticks	The seven churches that are to hold up the light of the gospel (see Revelation 2–3)	Revelation 1:20; 3 Nephi 18:24
16–17	Right hand	Covenant hand and symbol of power; Christ holds the seven churches in His right hand	Psalm 110:1; Mark 16:19; Acts 7:55
16	Seven stars	Another image representing the servants or leaders over the seven churches	Revelation 1:20; Joseph Smith Translation, Revelation 1:20 (in footnote b)
16	Sharp, two-edged sword	The word of God, pronouncing judgment on the wicked and freeing the innocent	Hebrews 4:12; D&C 6:2
18	Keys of hell and of death	Keys that unlock the doors of (overcome) spiritual and physical death	2 Nephi 9:10–13

Revelation 1:5–6. “Kings and Priests unto God”

Revelation 1:5–6 shows that the blessing of being made “kings and priests unto God” comes through applying the Atonement of Jesus Christ in our lives.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught the following about the phrase “washed us from our sins in his own blood” (Revelation 1:5): “The blood of Christ alone cleanseth repentant souls from sin. ‘No unclean thing can enter’ into the kingdom of God, are the words of Christ, the first begotten from the dead; and none shall gain an inheritance there, ‘save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their faith, and the repentance of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end.’ (3 Ne. 27:19.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1966–73], 3:436).

President Joseph F. Smith (1838–1918) taught: “The object of our earthly existence is that we may have a fulness of joy, and that we may become the sons and daughters of God, in the fullest sense of the word, being heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ [see Romans 8:14–17], to be kings and priests unto God, to inherit glory, dominion, exaltation, thrones and every power and attribute developed and possessed by our Heavenly Father. This is the object of our being on this earth. In order to attain unto this exalted position, it is necessary that we go through this mortal experience, or probation, by which we may prove ourselves worthy, through the aid of our elder brother Jesus” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph F. Smith* [1998], 150; see Exodus 19:5–6; 1 Peter 2:9).

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** quoted Revelation 1:6 and focused on the phrase “hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father,” giving this explanation of its meaning: “God the Father of Jesus Christ had a Father. . . . Paul says that which is earthly is in the likeness of that which is heavenly. Hence if Jesus had a Father, can we not believe that *He* had a Father also?” (in *History of the Church*, 6:476). The Prophet Joseph had earlier taught, “God Himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens!” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 40; see *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:436–37).

Revelation 1:5–8

Of the words and phrases used in these verses to describe Jesus Christ, which ones are the most meaningful to you? How do these verses work together to reveal the Savior’s identity, character, and eternal mission?

Revelation 1:5–7. Jesus Christ Will Come “with Ten Thousands of His Saints”

The message of Joseph Smith Translation, Revelation 1:5–7 conveys comfort and hope. These verses describe the Savior’s Second Coming: “Therefore, I, John, the faithful witness *bear record of the things which were delivered me of the angel*, and from Jesus Christ, the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. For behold, he cometh in the clouds *with ten thousands of his saints in the kingdom, clothed with the glory of his Father*. And every eye shall see him; and they *who* pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen” (in the Bible appendix). These teachings help us understand that the many faithful Saints who died at the hands of persecutors did not die in vain and will be rewarded for their righteousness (see 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17; D&C 88:96–98; 101:15).

Revelation 1:8, 11. Alpha and Omega

Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, while serving as a dean at Brigham Young University, explained the meaning of Alpha and Omega as name-titles of the Savior:

“Nothing is so pervasive in our lives, nothing so encompassing and enfolding and upholding, as the Savior of this world and the Redeemer of all men. Alpha, the first letter of the Greek alphabet, suggests commencement and inception. ‘. . . I was in the beginning with the Father, . . .’ he reveals (D&C 93:21), and, as the Firstborn, he stood at the right hand of the Father in the councils of heaven and in the work of creation. It was by our unity with him (as he was one with the Father) that we survived a great conflict between good and evil before this world was created. By the ‘blood of the Lamb, and by the word of [our] testimony,’ we overcame the opposition of Satan, ‘that old serpent, called the Devil’ (see Rev. 12:7–11). . . .

“As he was in the beginning, so will he be when this world ends. As Omega, a name taken from the last letter of the Greek alphabet, Christ is the terminus, the end cause as well as the end result of mortal experience. . . .

“These letters from the Greek suggest the universal role of Jesus from the beginning of the world to its end. But he ought to be Alpha and Omega in the particular as well—*our* personal beginning and *our* individual end” (“Whom Say Ye That I Am?” *Ensign*, Sept. 1974, 6–7).

Revelation 1:8. “The Almighty”

The title “Almighty” is the English translation of the Greek word *Pantokrator*, which suggests one who rules and regulates all things. One theme of the book of Revelation is that even though God’s people in all ages face persecution and trouble, God does indeed govern all things and will one day put an end to all evil. Several images from the first chapters of Revelation reinforce the Savior’s role as “the Almighty” (Revelation 1:8): His word is represented as “a sharp twoedged sword” (Revelation 1:16), He holds “the keys of hell and of death” (Revelation 1:18), and He knows people’s works (see Revelation 2:2, 9, 13, 19).

Revelation 1:12, 20. What Is the Symbolism of the Seven Candlesticks?

The imagery of the “seven golden candlesticks” (Revelation 1:12, 20) recalls the seven-branched menorah found in the Jerusalem temple. These candlesticks represented the seven churches. They were established to give light to the world, just as the Savior had commanded His disciples to do (see Matthew 5:15–16).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie noted: “Candlesticks carry light; they do not create it. Their function is to make it available, not to bring it into being. So by using seven candlesticks to portray the seven churches to whom John is now to give counsel, the Lord is showing that his congregations on earth are to carry his light to the world. Christ is the Light of the world. (John 8:12.) ‘Hold up your light that it may shine unto the world. Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up—that which ye have seen me do.’ (3 Ne. 18:24; Matt. 5:14–16.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:442).

Revelation 1:13–18

What do the symbolic descriptions of Jesus Christ in these verses teach about His attributes and His work? Which of these descriptions are most meaningful to you?

Revelation 1:13. The Savior Is in Our Midst

In John’s vision, he saw Jesus Christ “in the midst of the seven candlesticks,” showing symbolically that He was with or among the seven ancient churches (Revelation 1:13). During His mortal ministry, Jesus promised, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20).

The assurance that Jesus Christ is with His Saints and watches over them is also found in modern scripture, such as in Doctrine and Covenants 38:7: “Verily, verily, I say unto you that mine eyes are upon you. I am in your midst and ye cannot see me.” Such assurances have also been reiterated by modern prophets and apostles. **President Henry B. Eyring** of the First Presidency testified that the Lord “watches with us. He who sees all things, whose love is endless, and who never sleeps—He watches with us” (“Watch with Me,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 39).



Christ in the midst of candlesticks with seven stars in His hand

Revelation 1:16, 20. Who Were the Seven Angels of the Seven Churches?

The Joseph Smith Translation changes the word “angels” to “servants” in Revelation 1:20 (see footnote *b*) and in the opening verse of each of the seven letters to the churches in Asia (see Revelation 2:1, footnote *a*; 3:1, footnote *a*). Thus, the seven stars represent the presiding officers who were then leading the seven churches.

Revelation 2–3. A Pattern in the Letters to the Seven Churches

The following chart gives an overview of the pattern used to address the seven churches. (See the map at the beginning of this chapter for the location of the churches.) Each letter first addresses the leader of the

church in the area and uses symbolic terms to identify Jesus Christ. It next conveys the Lord’s words of praise and commendation and His words of correction and warning. Then, promises are given to those who overcome through faith in Jesus Christ. These promises are related to exaltation and eternal life, and they contain rich temple symbolism.

Revelation 2–3. The Lord’s Instructions to the Seven Churches				
Church	Description of Jesus Christ	Praise and Commendation	Correction and Counsel	Promise to Those Who Overcome
Ephesus (Revelation 2:1–7) Largest city in Asia Minor. Famous for its magnificent temple of Artemis—one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.	“He that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.”	“I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil . . . and hast not fainted. . . . Thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans.”	“Thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will . . . remove thy candlestick.”	“I [will] give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”
Smyrna (Revelation 2:8–11) Early center of emperor worship. Major shipping port and trade center. Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, was martyred there.	“The first and the last, which was dead, and is alive.”	“I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art [spiritually] rich).”	“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: . . . be thou faithful unto death.”	“I will give thee a crown of life. . . . He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”
Pergamos (Revelation 2:12–17) Provincial center for emperor worship. Three temples dedicated to emperor worship. Library housed over 200,000 scrolls.	“He which hath the sharp sword with two edges.”	“I know thy works, . . . and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr.”	“Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, . . . to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. . . . So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. . . . Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly.”	“I [will] give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written.”
Thyatira (Revelation 2:18–29) Famous for wool dyeing. A military city. Principal deity was Tyrinnas (sun god), who was often portrayed with military prowess.	“The Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass.”	“I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last [works] to be more than the first.”	“Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel . . . to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. . . . Them that commit adultery with her [I will cast] into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.”	“I [will] give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron. . . . And I will give him the morning star.”

Revelation 2–3. The Lord’s Instructions to the Seven Churches				
Church	Description of Jesus Christ	Praise and Commendation	Correction and Counsel	Promise to Those Who Overcome
Sardis (Revelation 3:1–6) Crossroads of five major highways. Reputation for great wealth and low moral standards.	“He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.”	“Thou hast a few [people who] have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.”	“Thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God. . . . Hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief.”	“Shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.”
Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7–13) Called the “gateway to the East.” Famous for wine production. Center for worship of Bacchus, god of wine. Relatively unimportant city in its day.	“He that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.”	“Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.”	None	“I [will] make [him] a pillar in the temple of my God, and . . . I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, . . . and I will write upon him my new name.”
Laodicea (Revelation 3:14–21) Wealthy commercial and banking center. Hot springs at Hierapolis sent warm water flowing to Laodicea. Medical school produced an eye salve.	“The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.”	None	“Thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot. . . . Buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; . . . anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.”	“I [will] grant [him] to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”

Revelation 2:2. “Them Which Say They Are Apostles, and Are Not”

To read more about false apostles who were teaching in Ephesus, see Acts 20:17–18, 28–30. Paul described these false apostles and others like them as “grievous wolves” (Acts 20:29) and as men who would arise from among the Saints and speak “perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:30; see also 2 Corinthians 11:13–14, 26; 1 John 4:1–3).

Revelation 2:6, 15. “The Doctrine of the Nicolaitans”

The Nicolaitans were “an Antinomian sect in Asia Minor that claimed license for sensual sin” (Bible Dictionary, “Nicolaitans”). Antinomians were permissive Christians who claimed that the grace of God freed them from having to obey commandments. The Lord

commended some Saints for rejecting the deeds of the Nicolaitans, while chastising other Saints for holding to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans (see Revelation 2:6, 15). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained that the Nicolaitans referred to in the book of Revelation were “members of the Church who were trying to maintain their church standing while continuing to live after the manner of the world” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:446).

Revelation 2:7. “To Eat of the Tree of Life”

The tree of life was planted in the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve walked and talked with God. After the Fall they were separated from the tree of life (see Genesis 3:22–24). Because of the Atonement of Jesus Christ, the effects of the Fall will be overcome. All people will be resurrected, thereby overcoming



Depiction of the tree of life, by Jerry Thompson. The Lord told the church in Ephesus: “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (Revelation 2:7; see also 1 Nephi 8:10–12; Alma 5:34; 32:39–42).

death, and the faithful will inherit eternal life. The angel described the reward of the faithful in this way: “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life” (Revelation 2:7). The term “overcometh” comes from the Greek verb *nikaō*, meaning “to be victorious.” In a vision similar to John’s, the prophet Nephi also saw the tree of life (see 1 Nephi 11:8–9, 21–23). To read more about partaking of the tree of life, see Revelation 22:2 and the commentary for Revelation 21:2–27; 22:1–5.

Revelation 2:10. “Be Thou Faithful unto Death”

The Lord told the Saints in Smyrna that some of them would be imprisoned and would have temptations and trials, but they should not fear. If they were “faithful unto death,” He would give them “a crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).

A fulfillment of the Lord’s words can be seen in the life of Polycarp, a bishop of the church in Smyrna, who lived from A.D. 69 to 155. Polycarp was a disciple of John and one of the last surviving Church leaders who had personally heard the teachings of an Apostle and eyewitness of Jesus Christ. Because he would

not renounce his faith, he was burned at the stake as a martyr. When he was told that he could avoid martyrdom by worshipping the Roman emperor and cursing Christ, Polycarp replied: “For eighty and six years have I been [Christ’s] servant, and he has done me no wrong, and how can I blaspheme my King



This statue depicts Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, who suffered martyrdom in A.D. 155.

that saved me?” (*The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 2, trans. Kirsopp Lake, Loeb Classical Library [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913], 325). Later Christians remembered Polycarp for the courage and faith he showed in the face of great adversity. For more information on “holding fast” to the name of Christ, see the commentary for Revelation 2:13.

Revelation 2:11. “The Second Death”

Revelation 2:11 teaches that the faithful “shall not be hurt of the second death.” The wicked, however, “shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8). While serving in the Presidency of the Seventy, **Elder Earl C. Tingey** explained that “the second death is spiritual. It is separation from God’s presence” (“The Great Plan of Happiness,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2006, 73).

In one sense, we all experienced a spiritual death when we left God’s presence to come to earth. This initial separation, however, is not the “second death” mentioned in Revelation 2:11. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, all of God’s children will overcome this initial spiritual death and be brought back to God’s presence to be judged (see Helaman 14:16–17), after which most people will inherit a kingdom of glory. A second spiritual death will be pronounced at the Day of Judgment upon those who refuse to repent of their sins and who willfully rebel against the light and truth of the gospel, as Satan did (see D&C 29:44–45; Guide to the Scriptures, “Death, Spiritual”; scriptures.lds.org). They will be forever separated from God and will be sons of perdition (see D&C 76:30–37, 44).

Revelation 2:12–13. What Was “Satan’s Seat”?

John recorded that “Satan’s seat” was in Pergamos and commended the Saints in Pergamos for not denying the faith even though much wickedness surrounded them (see Revelation 2:12–13). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** defined “Satan’s seat”:

“Pergamos was the center of the state religion of Rome, a religion in which the emperor was worshipped, and to which Christians must adhere or suffer death. It was a religion imposed upon them by the sword. Here Christ announces that he—out of whose mouth goeth ‘a sharp twoedged sword’ (Rev. 1:16)—has eternal power, power beyond the life and death dominion of Rome, power which will pierce and slay the wicked as with a sword. See Heb. 4:12–13. . . .

“‘Under Augustus a temple was built at Pergamum [Pergamos], probably 29 B.C., and dedicated to Rome and Augustus, and Pergamum became the center of the imperial worship and “Satan’s throne” [seat].’ [J. R. Dummelow, ed., *The One Volume Bible Commentary* (1936), 1075.]” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:449–50).



Model of an ancient altar at Pergamos dedicated to the god Zeus, from Pergamon Museum in Berlin, Germany. The Lord told the Saints at Pergamos, “I know . . . where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is” (Revelation 2:13). Many scholars believe that “Satan’s seat” referred to the altar at Pergamos.

Revelation 2:13. “Thou Holdest Fast My Name”

Christians who were sentenced by Roman officials to prison or death could sometimes save themselves by cursing Christ and worshipping the emperor instead. John recorded the Lord’s praise for the Saints in Pergamos for “holding fast” His name, even under threat of death (Revelation 2:13; see also Revelation 2:25; 3:3, 11). A recurring phrase in Revelation 2–3 is the admonition to “hold fast” to the truth (see Revelation 2:13, 25; 3:3, 11). **Elder M. Russell Ballard** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that to “hold fast” to the truth, found in the word of God, means to “hearken to it, follow the principles taught therein, and cling to those principles as though our very lives depended on it—which, if we are speaking of spiritual life, is literally true” (“Be Strong in the Lord,” *Ensign*, July 2004, 10).

Revelation 2:14. “The Doctrine of Balaam”

Balaam was an Old Testament prophet, whose actions are recorded in Numbers 22–24; 31:16. He appeared at first to be true to the Lord and His people, repeatedly refusing Balak’s request to curse Israel. Nevertheless, Balaam eventually succumbed to Balak’s offer of riches and taught Balak how to cause the army of Israel to weaken themselves through sexual sin and idolatry (see Numbers 25:1–5; 31:13–16). The plan included having Moabite women seduce the men of Israel and persuade them to offer sacrifices to heathen gods, thus destroying them spiritually.



The Angel Appearing to Balaam, by Paul Gustave Doré. The doctrine of Balaam mentioned in Revelation 2:14 refers to the account of Balaam and the children of Israel found in the book of Numbers.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie defined the doctrine of Balaam as being willing “to divine [prophesy] for hire; to give counsel contrary to the divine will; to pervert the right way of the Lord—all with a view to gaining wealth and the honors of men. In effect, to preach for money, or to gain personal power and influence. In the very nature of things such a course is a perversion of the right way of the Lord. See 2 Pet. 2:10–22” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:450).

Revelation 2:17. “Hidden Manna” and “a White Stone”

The Lord provided life-sustaining manna for the children of Israel to eat during their 40-year sojourn in the wilderness (see Exodus 16:15, 35). Just as the manna sustained physical life, Jesus Christ is the “bread of life” that sustains spiritual life (John 6:35, 48). The “hidden manna” mentioned in Revelation 2:17 refers to Jesus Christ. Jesus is “hidden” from the wicked. But, as He taught in John 6, those who symbolically partake of His flesh will receive everlasting life (see John 6:47–58).

Revelation 2:17 states this instruction to the churches: “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name.” For revealed insight into the meaning of the white stone, see *Doctrine and Covenants* 130:8–11.

Revelation 2:23. “Searcheth the Reins and Hearts”

The word “reins” literally means “kidneys.” To the Hebrews, the word signified strength and vigor. In Greek the word implies desires and thoughts. The phrase “searcheth the reins and hearts” is an idiom, meaning that the Lord knows all things about the inner man. It is because of this perfect understanding that the Lord is able to “give unto every one of you according to your works” (Revelation 2:23; see also D&C 137:9).

Revelation 2:28. “I Will Give Him the Morning Star”

“The morning star” is a symbol of Jesus Christ (Revelation 2:28; 22:16). The promise of “the morning star” is given to him “that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end” (Revelation 2:26). It may be the promise of the Second Comforter, of which the **Prophet Joseph Smith** taught, “When any man obtains this [Second] Comforter, he will have the personage of Jesus Christ to attend him, or appear unto him from time to time, and even He will manifest the Father unto him, and they will take up their abode with him, and the visions of the heavens will be opened unto him, and the Lord will teach him face to face” (in *History of the Church*, 3:381).

Revelation 3:7. “The Key of David”

Revelation 3:7 contains a quotation from the prophet Isaiah: “And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open” (Isaiah 22:22). Isaiah was speaking about one of King David’s chief ministers, Eliakim, who was given the keys to open locked doors of the holy temple. These keys can be seen as a symbol of power and governing authority. In Revelation 3:7, Jesus referred to Himself as the one who holds “the key of David,” meaning that He holds the key to the heavenly temple and ultimately to life in the presence of God.

Revelation 3:12. “I Will Write upon Him the Name of My God”

The Lord declared that He will write “the name of my God” upon those who overcome (Revelation 3:12). A name can suggest many ideas about a person, including the person’s identity, reputation, family, associations, attributes, role, and abilities. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** wrote about one of the meanings of this statement: “God’s name is God. To have his name written on a person is to identify that person as a god. . . . Those who gain eternal life become gods! [see D&C 132:19–20]” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:458). To read more about what it means to have the name of God written on us, see the commentaries for Revelation 14:1–5 and for Revelation 22:4.

Revelation 3:14. “The Amen”

In Hebrew and Greek the word “amen” means truly, certainly, or faithfully. In Revelation 3:14, Christ’s faithfulness and truthfulness as the great “Amen” are presented as a contrast to the lukewarm attitudes of the Laodiceans (see also Revelation 3:15–16). When uttered at the conclusion of a prayer or a discourse, “amen” is a way of solemnly affirming what has been said or expressing agreement with it. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** taught that the Savior’s title “Amen” also shows “that it is in and through him that the seal of divine affirmation is placed on all the promises of the Father” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. [1966], 32).

Revelation 3:15–16. “I Would Thou Wert Cold or Hot”

Hot springs at Hierapolis, a short distance north of Laodicea, sent steaming waters into the streams that flowed southward. Those waters were still lukewarm when they reached Laodicea (see Revelation 3:15–16). Jesus Christ, who is “the faithful and true witness” (Revelation 3:14), described Church members in Laodicea as lukewarm. Lukewarm Saints can be described as “not valiant in the testimony of Jesus” (D&C 76:79). **President Gordon B. Hinckley** (1910–2008) taught that since the Church is either true or it is false, one cannot logically adopt a “lukewarm” position toward it:

“The book of Revelation declares: ‘I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

“‘So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth’ (Revelation 3:15–16). . . .

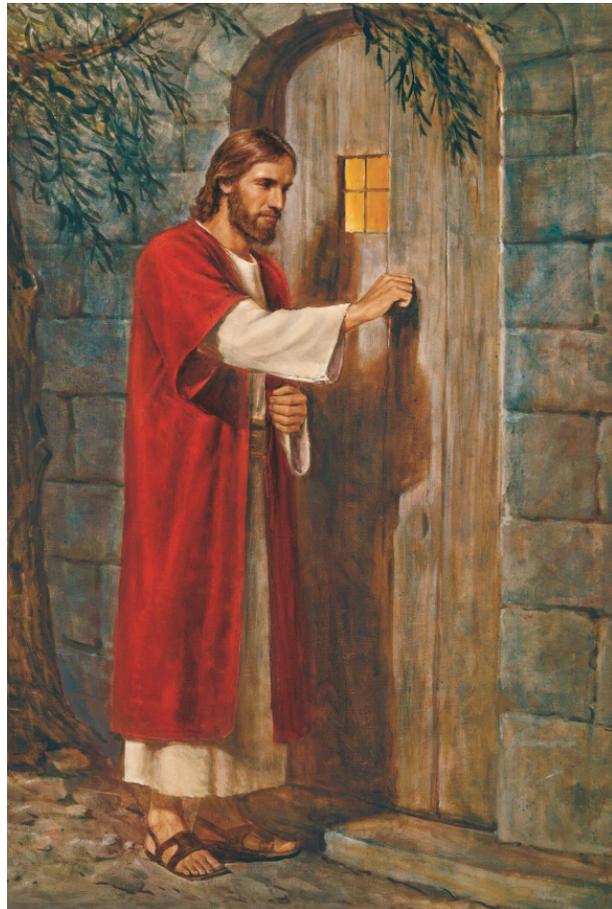
“Each of us has to face the matter—either the Church is true, or it is a fraud. There is no middle ground. It is the Church and kingdom of God, or it is nothing” (“Loyalty,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2003, 60).

Revelation 3:19–20

Who stands at the door? And who knocks? What does this imply about who must open the door? What does verse 19 imply one must do to answer the door? When have you felt the Lord spiritually knocking at your door?

Revelation 3:20. “I Stand at the Door, and Knock”

The imagery in Revelation 3:20 suggests that we are the ones who must open the door to the Savior. **President Thomas S. Monson** (1927–2018) encouraged members of the Church to open the door and allow the Savior into their lives:



Jesus Knocking at the Door, by Del Parson

“With all the strength of my soul I testify that our Heavenly Father loves each one of us. He hears the prayers of humble hearts; He hears our cries for help. . . . His Son, our Savior and Redeemer, speaks to each of us today: ‘Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him’ [Revelation 3:20].

“Will we listen for that knock? Will we hear that voice? Will we open that door to the Lord, that we may receive the help He is so ready to provide? I pray that we will” (“Mrs. Patton—the Story Continues,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2007, 24).

Revelation 3:21. “To Sit with Me in My Throne”

Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained that sitting with the Lord on His throne means receiving the blessings of exaltation: “Through [the Atonement of Jesus Christ], all who believe and obey the glorious gospel of God, all who are true and faithful and overcome the world, all who suffer for Christ and his word, all who are chastened and scourged in the Cause of him whose we are—all shall become as their Maker and sit with him on his throne and reign with him forever in everlasting glory” (“The Purifying Power of Gethsemane,” *Ensign*, May 1985, 9).

Points to Ponder

- The book of Revelation begins by focusing the reader on Jesus Christ (see Revelation 1:5–18). How would you summarize what is revealed about Christ in Revelation 1–3?
- The words directed to the church in Ephesus, “Thou hast left thy first love” (Revelation 2:4), compare the Saints’ covenant relationship with the Lord to the covenant of marriage. How can viewing your relationship with the Savior like a marriage help you be more faithful to Him?

Suggested Assignments

- Imagine the Lord saying to you, “I know thy works” (Revelation 2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15). What parts of your life are you glad He sees, and what parts might you wish He did not see? Conduct a personal inventory of your “works.” Write a personal journal entry listing which of your actions are helping you to come unto Christ, and which actions you need to overcome.
- Make a list of all the blessings promised to those who overcome (see Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26–28; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7). Pick one or two blessings that are most meaningful to you and study the scriptures on those topics. Then share with someone what you have learned.

Overview of the Book of Revelation

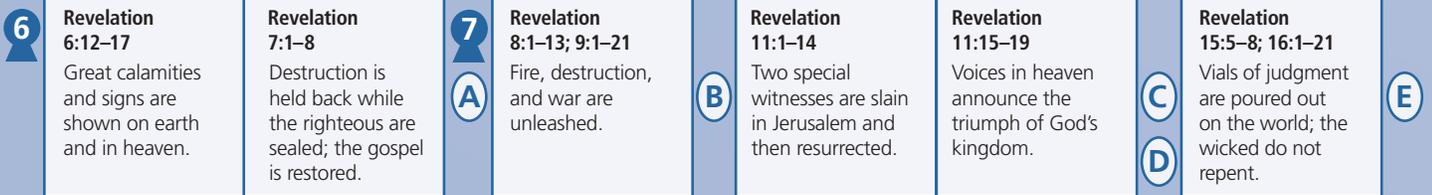
The Seven Seals (Seven 1,000-Year Periods of the Earth’s Temporal Existence)



First Five Seals—from the Creation to John’s Time

The first five seals described in the book of Revelation are dealt with in 11 verses (see Revelation 6:1–11; only 3 percent of the total verses in the book), while 281 verses (70 percent) deal with the sixth and seventh seals and the final glory of the earth. The Prophet Joseph Smith described this focus of the book of Revelation: “The things which John saw had no allusion to the scenes of the days of Adam, Enoch, Abraham or Jesus, only so far as is plainly represented by John. . . . John saw that only which was lying in futurity and which was shortly to come to pass” (in *History of the Church*, 5:341–42).

Chronology of the Events in the Last Two Seals, Including Teaching Interludes



A John Sees Those Saved in God’s Kingdom

Revelation 7:9–17

Just before the sounding of the seven trumpets of judgment, John is shown the multitude of those who have achieved salvation praising God and the Lamb in the celestial kingdom.

B The “Little Book” Interlude

Revelation 10:1–11

Between the sounding of the sixth trumpet and the vision of the two special witnesses in Jerusalem, an angel delivers a book to John and commands him to eat it. We know from latter-day revelation that this symbolized a special mission given to John to participate in the gathering of Israel (see D&C 77:14). Thus John is shown in vision his part in the great events of the future.

C The Triumph of the Kingdom of God over Satan

John sees in vision representations of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Though Satan’s kingdom will make war against God’s kingdom, the kingdom of God will ultimately triumph, and Satan and his followers will be overthrown.

Revelation 12:1–17 (The Kingdom of God)

- The Church (the ecclesiastical aspect of the kingdom) brings forth the kingdom over which Christ reigns as King (the political aspect of the kingdom).
- The Church and kingdom of God are opposed by the great dragon (Satan).
- The opposition actually began in the premortal existence and led to the War in Heaven.
- The Church of John’s time would not bring forth the kingdom but would be driven into the wilderness (apostasy) by the dragon.



6

Renaissance and Reformation

Industrial Revolution

Joseph Smith's ministry

Restored Church becomes global

Saints prepare for Christ

Great calamities

Zion established

7

Destruction of the wicked

Christ comes to reign as King of kings

Earth receives paradisiacal glory

Satan is bound

Millennial era of peace and love

Earth celestialized following Millennium

FINAL JUDGMENT

EARTH'S DAY OF PROBATION ENDS

ALL PEOPLE RECEIVE THEIR ETERNAL REWARD

ETERNITIES FUTURE



Last Two Seals—the Kingdom of God's Triumphant Destiny

It does not seem to have been the Lord's purpose to arrange every aspect of the book of Revelation in strict chronological order. Like a master teacher who digresses from his presentation with brief interludes to further clarify or expand what he teaches, even so the Lord appears to have included in Revelation several such interludes that interrupt the order of the presentation. These teaching interludes, labeled A–E in the chronology below, are discussed in the corresponding sections.

<p>Revelation 19:1–10</p> <p>Voices in heaven praise God and announce the marriage supper of the Lamb.</p>	<p>Revelation 19:11–21</p> <p>Christ comes as King of kings; the wicked are destroyed.</p>	<p>Revelation 20:1–3</p> <p>Satan is bound at the beginning of the Millennium.</p>	<p>Revelation 20:4–6</p> <p>The righteous are resurrected and reign with Christ during the Millennium.</p>	<p>Revelation 20:7–10</p> <p>Satan is loosed after the Millennium and wages a final battle; he is defeated and cast out.</p>	<p>Revelation 20:11–15</p> <p>The Great and Last Judgment takes place.</p>	<p>Revelation 21:1–27; 22:1–5</p> <p>There is a new heaven and new earth; the world is celestialized.</p>
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Revelation 13:1–18 (Satan's Kingdom)

- John sees the beast from the sea and is shown that Satan has power over the political aspects of his kingdom.
- John sees the beast from the earth spreading his evil influence through performing miracles.
- The followers of the beast are sealed in their foreheads to mark their allegiance.

Revelation 14:1–20 (Final Outcome)

- John sees the Lamb on Mount Zion with those who have been sealed in their foreheads by God (the 144,000).
- John sees heavenly messengers sent to restore the gospel, signaling the beginning of the end of Satan's dominion.
- John sees the great harvest.

D

John Sees Those Saved in God's Kingdom

Revelation 15:1–4

Just before the pouring out of the seven vials of judgment, John is shown the multitude of those who overcame the beast; these are praising God and the Lamb in the celestial kingdom.

E

The Destruction of Satan's Kingdom

Revelation 17:1–18; 18:1–24

After the seven vials of judgment have been poured out, an angel explains the symbolism of the great whore and the beast. John is then shown the overthrow of the whore (symbolic representation of Satan's kingdom and the counterpart to the true Church—the bride of Christ). The world laments in great sorrow the fall of Satan's empire.

Introduction and Timeline for Revelation 4–11

Following his vision of the Savior and his letters to the seven churches (see Revelation 1–3), John wrote about his visions concerning “things which must be hereafter” (Revelation 4:1). In the first of John’s visions that are recorded in Revelation 4–11, he saw God the Father enthroned in heaven, exalted beings who worship Him, and a book sealed with seven seals. John saw that the One who could open the book was Jesus Christ. John saw visions associated with the opening of the first six seals of the book, which symbolize the earth’s first six thousand years of temporal existence.

In spite of the plagues and judgments that would come upon the earth’s inhabitants in the last days, John saw that those who were washed clean through the blood of the Lamb would be spared many of the destructions. John also recorded that prior to Christ’s Second Coming, two prophets would be slain in Jerusalem and then

resurrected after three and a half days. Doctrine and Covenants 77 records the Lord’s answers to 15 key questions that help unlock some of the symbolism in chapters 4–11 of Revelation.



John received a revelation from Jesus Christ while banished to the island of

Patmos, probably before A.D. 96.

Commentary for Revelation 4–11

Revelation 4:1. “Things Which Must Be Hereafter”

Gerald N. Lund, who later served as a member of the Seventy, gave an overview of John’s visions in Revelation 4–22 and explained some of their basic meanings:

“The basic structure of the vision is chronological. After seeing the Father and the Son in heaven (Rev. 4–5), the vision of the history and destiny of the world begin to unfold for John. He sees the first five seals (or first five thousand years of history) in rapid-fire, in encapsulated form. Then he sees the opening of the sixth seal, which includes the restoration of the gospel. (See Rev. 6:12–7:17.)

“After that, John sees the seventh period of a thousand years, with great judgments poured out upon the earth, including Armageddon (see Rev. 8–9, 11, 16), which eventually lead to the utter overthrow of Babylon (see 17–18) and make way for the second coming of him who is King of kings and Lord of lords (see 19). Immediately following that, John sees Satan bound and Christ reigning for a thousand years (see 20:1–6), a last great battle between the forces of righteousness and evil (see 20:7–10), and the final judgment (see 20:11–15).

Finally, a new heaven and a new earth are brought forth. (See 21:1–22:5.)” (“Seeing the Book of Revelation as a Book of Revelation,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1987, 52).

Revelation 4:4. “Four and Twenty Elders Sitting”

In Revelation 4, John saw a vision of God the Father sitting on His heavenly throne, with 24 elders surrounding the throne. Modern scripture explains that these 24 elders were “elders who had been faithful in the work of the ministry and were dead; who belonged to the seven churches, and were then in the paradise of God” (D&C 77:5). This vision confirms the promises made to those who overcome evil as recorded in Revelation 2–3.

Revelation 4:5. “Seven Lamps of Fire Burning before the Throne”

The Joseph Smith Translation of Revelation 4:5 clarifies that the “seven lamps” are “the seven *servants* of God” (in Revelation 4:5, footnote *a*).

Revelation 4:6. “Sea of Glass”

The “sea of glass” mentioned in Revelation 4:6 represents “the earth, in its sanctified, immortal, and eternal state” (D&C 77:1; see also D&C 130:6–9).

Revelation 4:6–9. “Four Beasts”

In John’s vision of the heavenly throne, he saw four beasts praising God. These four winged creatures described in Revelation 4:6–8 are similar to the heavenly beings described in Isaiah 6:1–3 and Ezekiel 1:5–14. Latter-day revelation explains the meaning of these beasts, as recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 77:2–4. In addition, the **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) taught: “The four beasts were four of the most noble animals that had filled the measure of their creation, and had been saved from other worlds, because they were perfect: they were like angels in their sphere. We are not told where they came from” (in *History of the Church*, 5:343–44).

Revelation 4:8–11. “Worship Him That Liveth for Ever and Ever”

The various heavenly beings that John saw were all worshipping the Father. One of the truths taught in Revelation 4 is that exalted beings will continue to worship Heavenly Father in the eternities to come; He will always be our God (see D&C 76:21, 92–93). **Elder Neal A. Maxwell** (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated: “We will go on praising [the Lord] for ever and ever! . . . We will never need to be coaxed” (“From Whom All Blessings Flow,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 12).

Revelation 5:1. The Book with Seven Seals



A modern replica of an ancient papyrus scroll sealed with multiple clay seals. Sealing an ancient document identified its owner and his authority, made the document legally binding, and protected it from unauthorized disclosure. Jesus Christ’s role as the only person worthy to open and read the sealed book highlights His authority as the executor of God’s plan of salvation.

As John’s vision continued, he saw “a book written within on the backside, sealed with seven seals” (Revelation 5:1). Doctrine and Covenants 77:6–7 contains an explanation of the book with seven seals:

“The first seal contains the things of the first thousand years, and the second also of the second thousand years, and so on until the seventh” (D&C 77:7).

Revelation 5:5. Lion of Judah and Root of David

The One worthy to open the book with seven seals was called “the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David.” Both of these phrases are titles of Jesus Christ. “Lion of the tribe of Juda” is a fitting title because a lion is majestic and powerful and because the Savior was born through the lineage of Judah (see Genesis 49:8–10; Matthew 1:3; Hebrews 7:14). The title Lion of Judah is a stark contrast to the meek and sacrificial “Lamb” mentioned in verse 6. These two images convey that Christ possesses both majesty and meekness.

Jesus is also called the “Root of David.” The Gospel writers frequently emphasized that Jesus was a descendant of King David (see Matthew 1:1; Mark 10:47; Luke 1:32; John 7:42). Later in John’s revelation, Christ Himself declared, “I am the root and the offspring of David” (Revelation 22:16). A root provides lifesaving water and nourishment to a plant—such was the mission of Jesus Christ to all who accept Him as their Savior and Redeemer (see John 15:1–8; see also Isaiah 11:1; 53:2).

Revelation 5:6–12. “Worthy Is the Lamb”

A central message of Revelation 5 is that Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, is the only One worthy to fulfill the work of God, which is represented by the book sealed with seven seals (see verses 1–4, 9, 12–13). Revelation 5 depicts several groups worshipping Christ, declaring His worthiness in song (see verses 8–14). For further explanation of Jesus Christ’s worthiness, see the commentaries for John 5:22, 27, 30 and for Hebrews 7:26.

Revelation 5:6–14. The Lamb of God

Lamb of God is a title of Jesus Christ. The Lamb that John saw bore the marks of one who “had been slain” (Revelation 5:6), evoking images of Christ’s sacrificial death by crucifixion (see Isaiah 53:7; 1 Peter 1:18–19; Revelation 13:8). The book of Revelation refers to Christ as a “Lamb” nearly 30 times. **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained the significance of this name-title: “From Adam to the atonement of Christ, men were commanded to offer the firstlings of their flocks, that purest lamb without spot or blemish, as a similitude of the sacrifice that God the Father would make of his Firstborn, his Only Begotten Son who lived with perfection in the midst of imperfection” (“Whom Say Ye That I Am?” *Ensign*, Sept. 1974, 9).



Left: *Sacrificial Offering*, by Ted Henninger. Right: *The Crucifixion*, by Harry Anderson. The book of Revelation refers to Christ as a lamb nearly 30 times.

Revelation 5:6. “Seven Horns and Seven Eyes”

John described the Lamb in his vision as having many horns and eyes. In the scriptures, horns are often a symbol of power (see 1 Samuel 2:10; Psalm 75:10). Eyes often symbolize light and knowledge (see D&C 77:4). The Joseph Smith Translation of Revelation 5:6 indicates that the Lamb had “*twelve horns and twelve eyes, which are the twelve servants of God*” (in Revelation 5:6, footnote *b*). Since the Lord’s people in ancient Israel were numbered as twelve tribes and the Lord organized His Church with Twelve Apostles, the number twelve can symbolize divine government and organization, or the priesthood. This verse may suggest that all priesthood power and knowledge is centered in the Lamb of God.

Revelation 5:9–10. “Kings and Priests”

Revelation 5:9–10 declares that through the worthiness and redeeming blood of Jesus Christ, all people may be redeemed and crowned with glory to reign on the glorified earth as kings and priests. After quoting these verses, **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained that temple ordinances anticipate the fulfillment of these blessings: “Before the time when Christ shall reign personally upon the earth, the elect of God among every kindred, . . . having first believed the restored gospel, will go to the temples of God and receive the ordinances of exaltation whereby they qualify to become kings and priests” (in Conference Report, Apr. 1969, 144). For more information on kings and priests, see the commentary for Revelation 1:5–6.

Revelation 5:13. “Every Creature Which Is in Heaven”

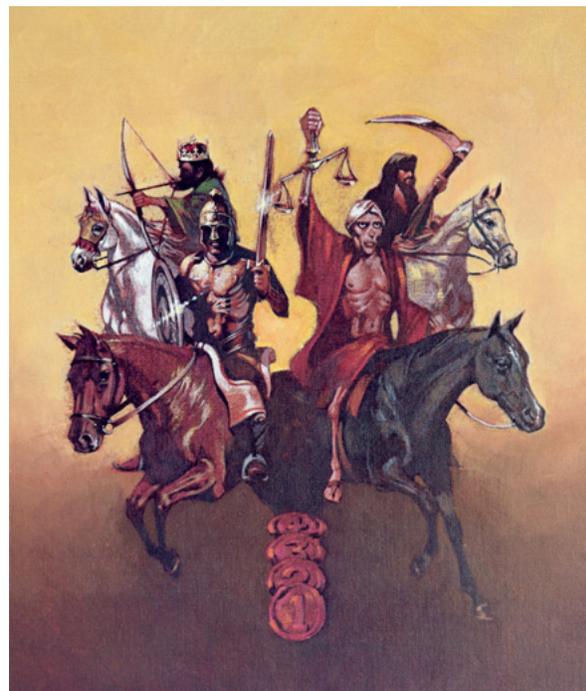
In addition to the teachings in Doctrine and Covenants 77:3, the **Prophet Joseph Smith** taught the following about the destiny of all God’s creatures:

“I suppose John saw beings there of a thousand forms, that had been saved from ten thousand times ten thousand earths like this,—strange beasts of which we have no conception: all might be seen in heaven. . . . John learned that God glorified Himself by saving all that His hands had made, whether beasts, fowls, fishes or men; and He will glorify Himself with them.

“Says one, ‘I cannot believe in the salvation of beasts.’ Any man who would tell you that this could not be, would tell you that the revelations are not true. John heard the words of the beasts giving glory to God, and understood them” (in *History of the Church*, 5:343).

Revelation 6. The First Six Seals

As each of the seven seals of the book was opened, John saw visions concerning a thousand-year period of earth’s history (see D&C 77:7). Thus, the first seal related to the first thousand years of earth’s revealed temporal history (from about 4000 to 3000 B.C.), and so forth. The following chart identifies the first six thousand-year periods and offers possible interpretations of the symbols John used to describe his visions.



An artistic representation of the four horsemen described in Revelation 6:1–8

Revelation 6: The First Six Seals	
Seal and Approximate Dates	Possible Interpretations
First seal (verse 2) About 4000 to 3000 B.C.	White horse = Victory Bow = Warfare Crown = Conqueror Commenting on Revelation 6:1–2, Elder Bruce R. McConkie said, “The most transcendent happenings” referred to in these verses “involved Enoch and his ministry. And it is interesting to note that what John saw was not the establishment of Zion and its removal to heavenly spheres, but the unparalleled wars in which Enoch, as a general over the armies of the saints, ‘went forth conquering and to conquer’ [Revelation 6:2; see also Moses 7:13–18]” (<i>Doctrinal New Testament Commentary</i> , 3 vols. [1966–73], 3:477).
Second seal (verses 3–4) About 3000 to 2000 B.C.	Red horse = Bloodshed Sword = War and destruction As recorded in the scriptures, widespread wickedness and violence characterized this time period, which included the Great Flood during the days of Noah (see Genesis 6–11; Moses 7:24–43; 8:1–30). The rider of the red horse had power to “take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another” (Revelation 6:4). “Who rode the red horse, the red horse of war and bloodshed and a sword, during the second seal? Perhaps it was the devil himself, for surely that was the great day of his power, a day of such gross wickedness that every living soul (save eight only) was found worthy of death by drowning. . . . “Or if it was not Lucifer, perhaps it was a man of blood, or a person representing many murdering warriors, of whom we have no record. Suffice it to say that the era from 3000 B.C. to 2000 B.C., was one of war and destruction” (Bruce R. McConkie, <i>Doctrinal New Testament Commentary</i> , 3:478).
Third seal (verses 5–6) About 2000 to 1000 B.C.	Black horse = Famine Balances = High prices for food “A measure of wheat” would feed an adult for a day and cost a penny under these famine conditions. “Penny” is translated from the Greek word <i>dēnaron</i> , which referred to a Roman coin that some estimate was worth the typical daily wage of a laborer. A person could purchase only enough food to live on with a whole day’s wages, indicating extreme famine prices. In contrast, barley was less expensive and was thus eaten by the poor. As recorded in the scriptures, famines are characteristic of this time period (see Genesis 41–42; Abraham 1:30; 2:1, 17, 21).
Fourth seal (verses 7–8) About 1000 B.C. to the birth of Christ	Pale horse = Death Death and hell = Destruction of the wicked and their reception into spirit prison (see Isaiah 5:14) As recorded in the scriptures, great warring empires characterized this era: Assyria, Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. Having rejected the warnings of prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Amos, the kingdoms of Israel and Judah often found themselves victims of these conquering empires. Israel and Judah also fought against one another.
Fifth seal (verses 9–11) About the birth of Christ to A.D. 1000	Altar = Sacrifice Souls = Martyrs, Christians killed for their beliefs Many early Christians, including nearly all of the original Apostles, gave their lives as martyrs. John saw the Christian martyrs “under the altar,” suggesting that their lives were given in sacrifice to God’s service, much like the sacrificial animals offered upon the altar of the temple. Because they gave up their lives “for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held,” they were given “white robes,” symbolic of purity (see Revelation 7:13–14; 3 Nephi 27:19).

Revelation 6: The First Six Seals	
Seal and Approximate Dates	Possible Interpretations
Sixth seal (verses 12–17) About A.D. 1000 to 2000	This thousand-year period will continue until just before Jesus Christ returns in glory and reigns personally on the earth. John noted seven signs that will accompany this time period: an earthquake, the darkened sun, the moon becoming as blood, stars falling, the heavens opening as a scroll (see Joseph Smith Translation, Revelation 6:14 [in Revelation 6:14, footnote a]), mountains and islands moving out of their places, and men seeking to hide themselves. Similar signs of the times are recorded elsewhere in scripture (see Joel 2:10, 30–31; Haggai 2:6–7; D&C 29:14; 43:25; 88:87–91). Seven groups of men are also identified in these verses: kings, great men, rich men, chief captains, mighty men, bondmen, and free men. The number seven suggests completeness or wholeness: no enemies of God will escape His wrath in the last days.

Revelation 6:17; 7:13–14

How does Revelation 7:3, 13–17 answer the question posed in Revelation 6:17? What do you need to do so that the description of the righteous in Revelation 7:14 can apply to you?

Revelation 7:1–2. The Angels

The Lord gave Joseph Smith understanding concerning the angels mentioned in Revelation 7:1–2 (see D&C 77:8–9; see also D&C 38:12). Revelation 7:1 refers to four angels, the four corners of the earth, and the four winds of the earth. The number four in the scriptures often suggests a geographical fulness, as in the four directions on a compass.

Regarding the angels of destruction, **President Wilford Woodruff** (1807–98) taught: “God has held the angels of destruction for many years, lest they should reap down the wheat with the tares. But I want to tell you now, that those angels have left the portals of heaven . . . and are hovering over the earth waiting to pour out the judgments. And from this very day they shall be poured out. Calamities and troubles are increasing in the earth, and there is a meaning to these things. Remember this, and reflect upon these matters. If you do your duty, and I do my duty, we’ll have protection, and shall pass through the afflictions in peace and in safety” (*The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff*, sel. G. Homer Durham [1946], 230).

Revelation 7:3; 9:4. “The Seal of God in Their Foreheads”

The sealing or marking of “the servants of our God in their foreheads” is a metaphor of their devotion, service, and belonging to God (Revelation 7:3; see also Revelation 9:4; 14:1). “Seal” is the same term used earlier in the New Testament to describe faithful, baptized Saints who had received the Holy Spirit of

Promise (see 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30). Bearing this seal protects the faithful from divine judgments upon the wicked (see Revelation 9:4; 16:2). In this sense, the seal of God in the forehead symbolizes a protection much like the lamb’s blood that ancient Israelites in Egypt placed on their door frames to protect them from the destroying angel (see Exodus 12:13).

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** taught that the sealing of the faithful in their foreheads “signifies sealing the blessing upon their heads, meaning the everlasting covenant, thereby making their calling and election sure” (in *History of the Church*, 5:530). For more information on God’s name written in the forehead of the righteous, see the commentary for Revelation 22:4.

Revelation 7:4–8. The Hundred and Forty-Four Thousand

In Doctrine and Covenants 77:11 the Lord explained to Joseph Smith that the number 144,000 mentioned in Revelation 7:4–8 is the number of representatives out of the twelve tribes of Israel who will be ordained to assist others in their quest for exaltation (see the commentary for Revelation 14:1–5). It is not, as some people believe, the total number of people who will be exalted. “The church of the Firstborn” refers to those who will be exalted and become joint-heirs with Jesus Christ (D&C 77:11). Members of the Lord’s earthly Church—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—who live righteously and receive the ordinances of exaltation will become members of the Lord’s heavenly Church—the Church of the Firstborn (see D&C 93:20–22).

Revelation 7:9, 13–14. “What Are These . . . in White Robes?”

John saw that the multitude of exalted people clothed in white robes was too large to count and came from all nations of the earth. The image of the righteous

with palm branches in their hands recalls the Savior’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem (see Matthew 21:1–9; John 12:12–15). Palm branches can symbolize victory and joy (see D&C 109:76). The image of robes washed and made “white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:14) refers to our being purified through the Atonement of Jesus Christ (see Alma 5:21; 13:11–12; 3 Nephi 27:19).

While serving as a member of the Seventy, **Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen** taught: “The Savior stands at the door and knocks; He is ready to receive us immediately [see Revelation 3:20]. Our responsibility is to do the work of repentance. We must abandon our sins so the cleansing can begin. The promise of the Lord is that He will cleanse our garments with His blood [see Revelation 7:14]. He gave His life and suffered for all our sins. He can redeem us from our personal fall. Through the Atonement of the Savior, giving Himself as the ransom for our sins, He authorizes the Holy Ghost to cleanse us in a baptism of fire” (“The Atonement, Repentance, and Dirty Linen,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2003, 12).

Revelation 7:15–17

According to these verses, what blessings will be enjoyed by those whose robes are washed “white in the blood of the Lamb”? (Revelation 7:14). Which of these blessings means the most to you?

Revelation 8. Desolation Poured Out

John beheld a short period of silence when the seventh seal was opened—a time when the angels of heaven are awaiting the command to execute the Lord’s justice (see Revelation 8:1; D&C 38:11–12; 88:95). Zephaniah described a similar period of silence that preceded the ancient destruction of Judah (see Zephaniah 1:7–18). The Lord’s judgment and intervention are described as times when the Lord does not keep silent (see Psalm 50:3–4; Isaiah 65:6). Following this period of silence, John saw fire and desolation poured out during the seventh seal and preceding the Second Coming of Christ. Because the number seven often symbolizes completion, the destructions of the seventh seal may be seen as preparing for the completion of God’s work on earth (see D&C 77:12). These destructions are described in Revelation 8:6–9:21; 11:1–19.

Revelation 8–11. Seven Angels

The structure of Revelation 8–11 focuses on seven angels, whose blasts on their trumpets bring calamitous judgments upon the earth. Doctrine and Covenants 77:12 states that “the sounding of the trumpets of the seven angels are the preparing and finishing of [Christ’s] work, in the beginning of the seventh thousand years—the preparing of the way before the time of his coming.” The following chart summarizes the calamities that John saw in these chapters.

Angel	What Is Destroyed or Harmed	Destroying Agent and Possible Interpretation
First angel (Revelation 8:7)	Third part of trees and all green grass are burnt up.	“Hail and fire mingled with blood . . . were cast upon the earth” (Revelation 8:7). “Speculatively, most of the plagues and destructions here announced could be brought to pass by men themselves as they use the weapons and armaments they have created” (Bruce R. McConkie, <i>The Millennial Messiah</i> [1982], 382).
Second angel (Revelation 8:8–9)	Third part of the sea becomes blood; third part of living creatures of the sea die; third part of ships are destroyed.	“A great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea” (Revelation 8:8). “Perhaps the turning of the waters of Egypt to blood was in similitude of this great latter-day plague. (Ex. 7:19–25.)” (Bruce R. McConkie, <i>Doctrinal New Testament Commentary</i> , 3:499).
Third angel (Revelation 8:10–11)	Third part of rivers and waters are made bitter; many men die.	“There fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp” (Revelation 8:10). “Could this result from atomic fallout or pollutions from the factories of the world? Or will it be brought to pass by some law of nature beyond our control?” (Bruce R. McConkie, <i>Millennial Messiah</i> , 383).
Fourth angel (Revelation 8:12)	Third part of the sun, moon, and stars are smitten and darkened.	No destroying agent mentioned. “Perhaps a merciful God withholds from us the ways and the means whereby the very luminaries of heaven will cease to serve their ordained purposes” (Bruce R. McConkie, <i>Millennial Messiah</i> , 383).

Angel	What Is Destroyed or Harmed	Destroying Agent and Possible Interpretation
Fifth angel (Revelation 9:1–12)	The sun and air are darkened; those without the seal of God are tormented for five months.	“There arose a smoke out of the pit. . . . And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth” (Revelation 9:2–3). “Lucifer opens the doors of hell, and every vile influence ascends from its evil depths as does smoke from a great furnace. So dark is the smoke and so widespread is the evil that the sun and the air are darkened” (Bruce R. McConkie, <i>Millennial Messiah</i> , 384).
Sixth angel (Revelation 9:13–21)	Third part of men are killed.	Four angels who are prepared to slay one-third of men. “Four angels of the devil, demons from the depths of hell, are given free reign to lead the armies of men in destroying a third of the population of the earth” (Bruce R. McConkie, <i>Millennial Messiah</i> , 386).
Seventh angel (Revelation 11:15–19)	Those who destroy (corrupt, waste, pervert) the earth are destroyed.	The Lord Himself. “Lo, the Great Millennium cometh! And Christ reigneth! ‘And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.’ (Zech. 14:9.) In that day he shall make ‘a full end of all nations’ (D. & C. 87:6), as he said: ‘I will be your ruler when I come’ (D. & C. 41:4); and, ‘Ye shall have no laws but my laws when I come, for I am your lawgiver.’ (D. & C. 38:22.)” (Bruce R. McConkie, <i>Doctrinal New Testament Commentary</i> , 3:512).

Revelation 8:5. “Fire of the Altar” Cast into the Earth

After the seventh seal was opened, John saw an angel take “fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth” (Revelation 8:5). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** stated that “the hot coals, taken from the altar and cast down to earth, symbolize the judgments of God to be rained down upon the wicked during the opening part of the seventh seal” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:499).

Revelation 8:11. “Wormwood”

When the third angel sounded the trumpet, “there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp”; John identified this star as “Wormwood” (Revelation 8:11). Wormwood was a plant with an extremely bitter taste. The star named Wormwood that fell from heaven may symbolize the bitterness and awfulness that comes to all who follow the devil.

Revelation 8:13; 9:12; 11:14. The Three Woes

Elder Bruce R. McConkie discussed the meaning of the three woes: “After showing John the woes that would befall mankind before the Second Coming (Rev. 6:9–17; 7; 8:1–13), the Lord by an angelic ministrant promised three more woes, which were to attend and usher in the reign of the Great King. (Rev. 8:13.) The first of these was the unbelievably destructive series of wars leading up to the final great holocaust. (Rev. 9:1–12.) The second was the final great war itself in which one-third of the hosts of men should be slain. (Rev. 9:12–21; 10; 11:1–14.) And now the third woe is

to be the destruction of the remainder of the wicked when the vineyard is burned by divine power and the earth changes from its telestial to its terrestrial state” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:511).

Revelation 9:1. A Star Fell from Heaven and “Was Given the Key of the Bottomless Pit”

Revelation 9:1 symbolically describes the final efforts of Satan and his followers prior to the final destructions of the wicked. Satan is depicted as a star fallen from heaven (see also Isaiah 14:12–17; Revelation 12:9). The Joseph Smith Translation clarifies that the key was given not to Satan but “to the angel” (in Revelation 9:1, footnote *a*), who then opened the bottomless pit. This reading emphasizes that God has ultimate control and that Satan has power only as God allows. At the beginning of the Millennium, God will bind Satan and his followers (see Revelation 20:1–3; D&C 43:29–31).

Revelation 9:2–3. Smoke Arose Out of the Bottomless Pit

The smoke in Revelation 9:2–3 is reminiscent of the mists of darkness in Lehi’s vision of the tree of life (see 1 Nephi 8:23; 12:17). The smoke that emerges from the bottomless pit darkens the skies, similar to how the mists of darkness in Lehi’s vision obscured view of the tree of life. The smoke may allude to all of Satan’s false philosophies, temptations, deceptions, and attempts in the last days to destroy righteousness upon the earth (see D&C 93:39).

Revelation 9:4. The Righteous Will Be Protected

The descriptions of judgments upon the wicked in Revelation 8 continue in Revelation 9. The Apostle John saw that certain calamities preceding the Second Coming would not affect all the earth or its inhabitants, “but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads” (Revelation 9:4). This corresponds with other scriptural promises that in the last days, those who are faithful will ultimately be protected (see 1 Nephi 22:17–19; D&C 115:5–6). **President Gordon B. Hinckley** (1910–2008) emphasized that spiritual preparation should be our first priority when seeking protection from the calamities of the last days:

“Someone has said it was not raining when Noah built the ark. But he built it, and the rains came.

“The Lord has said, ‘If ye are prepared ye shall not fear’ (D&C 38:30).

“The primary preparation is also set forth in the Doctrine and Covenants, wherein it says, ‘Wherefore, stand ye in holy places, and be not moved, until the day of the Lord come’ (D&C 87:8). . . .

“We can so live that we can call upon the Lord for His protection and guidance. This is a first priority. We cannot expect His help if we are unwilling to keep His commandments” (“If Ye Are Prepared Ye Shall Not Fear,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2005, 62).

Though the Lord promises protection to the righteous in the last days, the **Prophet Joseph Smith** clarified that some who are righteous may lose their lives in the trials and calamities of the last days: “[I] explained concerning the coming of the Son of Man; also that it is a false idea that the Saints will escape all the judgments, whilst the wicked suffer; for all flesh is subject to suffer, and ‘the righteous shall hardly escape’ [see D&C 63:34]; still many of the Saints will escape, for the just shall live by faith [see Habakkuk 2:4]; yet many of the righteous shall fall a prey to disease, to pestilence, etc., by reason of the weakness of the flesh, and yet be saved in the Kingdom of God” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 253).

Revelation 9:4–10. A Time of Great Warfare

John used images familiar to him to describe war and destruction in the last days. Locusts and scorpions are often associated in the scriptures with torment and destruction (see Exodus 10:14–15; 1 Kings 12:11). Iron,

horses, and chariots are images of warfare (see Joshua 17:16; Ezekiel 39:20; Daniel 11:40). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** discussed possible meanings of the warfare described in Revelation 9:

“John here seeks to describe a war fought with weapons and under circumstances entirely foreign to any experience of his own or of the people of that day. Joel, subject to the same limitations of descriptive ability, attempted to portray the same scenes in [the words found in Joel 2:1–11].

“It is not improbable that these ancient prophets were seeing such things as men wearing or protected by strong armor; as troops of cavalry and companies of tanks and flame throwers; as airplanes and airborne missiles which explode, fire shells and drop bombs; and even other weapons yet to be devised in an age when warfare is the desire and love of wicked men” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:502–3).

Revelation 9:11. Who Is Abaddon, or Apollyon?

John stated that “Abaddon” and “Apollyon” are names (in Hebrew and Greek, respectively) for the angel of the bottomless pit, or leader of the evil forces described in Revelation 9:3–10. Both names come from terms meaning “destruction.”

Revelation 9:15–16. “Two Hundred Thousand Thousand”

John recorded in Revelation 9:15–16 that terrible destruction will be unleashed by God’s messengers during the last days before the Savior’s Second Coming. John declared that “two hundred thousand thousand” (200,000,000) men of war will fight in the battle of Armageddon (verse 16). We do not know whether that number is symbolic or literal. John also recorded that “the third part of men” will be slain (verse 15). Of this prophecy, **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** stated, “The slain will be a third of the inhabitants of the earth itself, however many billions of people that may turn out to be” (*Millennial Messiah*, 453).

Revelation 9:20–21

What are some of the sins John said would be prevalent during the period of the seventh seal, prior to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ? What are you doing to distance yourself from these sins or “anything like unto” them? (D&C 59:6). What more could you do to “stand in holy places”? (D&C 45:32).

Revelation 9:20–21. Modern Idolatry

As described at the conclusion of Revelation 9, the evil men who are not killed by the war and destruction described in earlier verses will still refuse to repent of their evil practices, including idol worship. While serving as a member of the Seventy, **Elder David R. Stone** taught that a prevalent form of modern idolatry is adopting the tastes and attitudes of the worldly culture that surrounds us:

“Our culture tends to determine what foods we like, how we dress, what constitutes polite behavior, what sports we should follow, what our taste in music should be, the importance of education, and our attitudes toward honesty. It also influences men as to the importance of recreation or religion, influences women about the priority of career or childbearing, and has a powerful effect on how we approach procreation and moral issues. All too often, we are like puppets on a string, as our culture determines what is ‘cool.’ . . .

“Seduced by our culture, we often hardly recognize our idolatry, as our strings are pulled by that which is popular in the Babylonian world” (“Zion in the Midst of Babylon,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2006, 91–92).

Revelation 9:21. Sorceries

Among the sins that the wicked in the last days will not repent of will be sorcery. **President James E. Faust** (1920–2007) of the First Presidency counseled Latter-day Saints to avoid becoming involved in sorcery or other satanic practices: “It is not good practice to become intrigued by Satan and his mysteries. No good can come from getting close to evil. Like playing with fire, it is too easy to get burned: ‘The knowledge of sin tempteth to its commission’ [Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, 5th ed. (1939), 373]. The only safe course is to keep well distanced from him and any of his wicked activities or nefarious practices. The mischief of devil worship, sorcery, witchcraft, voodooism, casting spells, black magic, and all other forms of demonism should always be avoided” (“The Forces That Will Save Us,” *Ensign*, Jan. 2007, 5).

Revelation 10:1–2, 9–10. “Little Book”

A “mighty angel” delivered “a little book” to John, and he “ate it up” (Revelation 10:1–2, 10), symbolizing his mission to help “gather the tribes of Israel” as part of the Restoration (D&C 77:14; see also D&C 7:1–3). Eating the book may suggest that John accepted his mission: it became a part of his being. That the book was “sweet as honey” in John’s mouth but “bitter” in

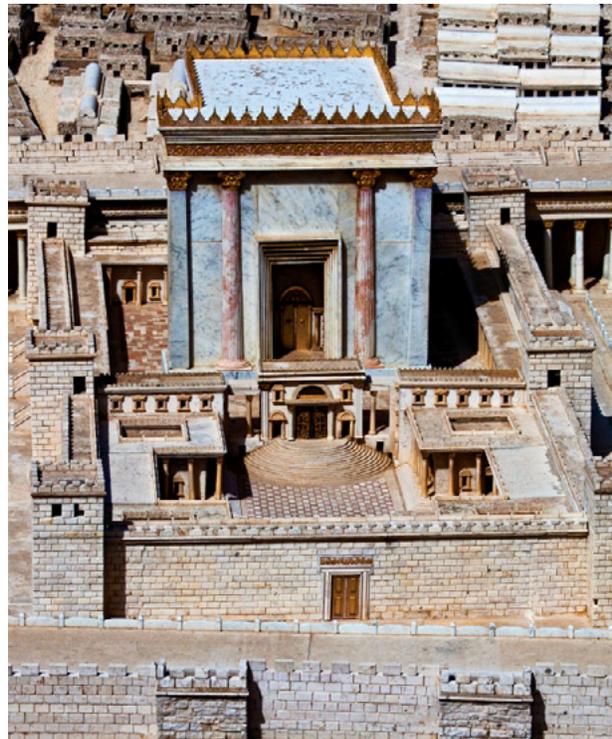
his belly (Revelation 10:10) may suggest that his mission would involve many sweet and joyous experiences but also rejection and painful experiences (see also Psalm 119:103). Ezekiel also ate, or internalized, a book (see Ezekiel 2:6–3:3).

According to John Whitmer’s account of a conference of the Church in June 1831, “the Spirit of the Lord fell upon Joseph in an unusual manner, and he prophesied that John the Revelator was then among the Ten Tribes of Israel who had been led away by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, to prepare them for their return from their long dispersion, to again possess the land of their fathers” (in *History of the Church*, 1:176).

Revelation 10:3–4. “Seven Thunders”

Elder Bruce R. McConkie described what the “seven thunders” mentioned in Revelation 10:3–4 might represent: “The seven thunders which here utter their voices are the seven angels reciting in some detail that which is to be in each of the thousand year periods of the earth’s temporal continuance” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:505).

Revelation 11:2–3, 9–11. Forty-Two Months



Close-up of a model of the Jerusalem temple. In Revelation 11:1–2, John was commanded to “measure” the temple, the altar, and the worshippers. This command can indicate that the temple and the worshippers are under God’s protection.

The angel told John that Jerusalem would be trodden “under foot forty and two months” (Revelation 11:2). Forty-two months is the equivalent of three and a half years. Likewise, the two witnesses mentioned in verse 3 would prophesy and testify of Jesus Christ for 1,260 days, or approximately three and a half years. They would be slain, and their bodies would lie in the street for three and a half days (see verses 8–11). In the scriptures, particularly in Revelation, the number three and a half often describes a limited period of tribulation during which evil forces are allowed to do their work (see Daniel 7:24–25; 12:7; Luke 4:25; Revelation 11:2–3, 9–11; 12:14; 13:5). Since three and a half is half of seven (which symbolizes perfection and completion), it may represent imperfection and apostasy. It may also suggest that God will not allow evil to go on unchecked: evil’s time is bounded and its limits are set.

Revelation 11:3–12. Two Witnesses

The events in Revelation 11 will transpire prior to the Savior’s coming to the Mount of Olives to deliver the Jews from destruction (see Zechariah 14:4–7; D&C 45:47–53). The “two witnesses” (Revelation 11:3) are “two prophets that are to be raised up to the Jewish nation in the last days, at the time of the restoration, and to prophesy to the Jews after they are gathered and have built the city of Jerusalem in the land of their fathers” (D&C 77:15; see also Isaiah 51:19–20; Zechariah 4:3, 11–14). These two prophets appear to possess the sealing power of the priesthood, with which they (like prophets before them) are able to control the skies and smite the earth with plagues (see 1 Kings 17:1; Helaman 10:6–11; Moses 7:13–17; Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 14:30–31 [in the Bible appendix]).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie stated, “No doubt they will be members of the Council of the Twelve or the First Presidency of the Church” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:509).

Points to Ponder

- In Revelation 5:9–13, the heavenly hosts sang a song of praise to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. If you were to choose a hymn to praise the Lord, which hymn would you choose? What attributes of Jesus Christ inspire you to sing praises to Him? If you were to compose a hymn of praise about Jesus Christ, what would the lyrics emphasize?
- Though there is much in these chapters in Revelation that may cause some to feel anxiety, what in these chapters gives you hope and confidence for the future? What did you learn about qualifying for the protection of the Lord?

Suggested Assignment

- Revelation 7:14 suggests that those who will be in the celestial kingdom will have passed through “great tribulation” in their lives. Write a paragraph or two describing how tribulation has brought you nearer to God. Then read 1 Nephi 12:10–11; 3 Nephi 27:19; and Alma 13:12. Discuss what disciples of Jesus Christ need to do in order to “[wash] their robes, and [make] them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:14).

Introduction and Timeline for Revelation 12–16

In Revelation 12–16, John described in some detail the war that Satan wages against God and His faithful Saints, which began in the premortal world and continues in mortality. In spite of the fearful events described in these chapters, there are great reasons to hope and rejoice. John the Revelator assured his readers that although Satan makes war with the Saints of God, they can be victorious. We can overcome Satan by relying on the Atonement of Jesus Christ, living so that our names are written in the Lamb's book of life, and keeping the covenants we make with God. As we are faithful in these ways, we will also receive protection from the plagues to be poured out upon the earth. We also learn in these chapters that God restored the gospel of Jesus Christ to the earth in order to help His children withstand and overcome these tribulations in the last days.



John received revelation from Jesus Christ while on

the island of Patmos, probably before A.D. 96.

Commentary for Revelation 12–16

Revelation 12–14. “Interludes” in the Book of Revelation

Many of the events described in Revelation 6–11 seem to be chronological in order. This can lead the reader to expect this pattern to continue. However, **Gerald N. Lund**, who later became a member of the Seventy, explained that there are several “interludes,” during which the book of Revelation briefly diverts from its chronological sequence:

“As one studies the book, it becomes clear that there are places in the chronological flow where the Lord pauses to teach us important information before moving on. A teacher may do this as he moves through a lecture, pausing in his logical development to say, ‘Now, before we go further, I need to make sure you understand something.’ Such teaching interludes seem to apply to John’s vision. For example:

1. “The joy of those who are saved. (Rev. 7:9–17.) Before launching into a grim description of the judgments, John sees an innumerable company of the righteous—a powerful reminder that not all on earth will be wicked and will suffer God’s judgments.
2. “The ‘little book’ interlude. (Rev. 10:1–11.) In the midst of a vivid description of the great battle of

Armageddon, there is another pause. An angel gives John a little book to eat, which we learn is a symbol of John’s ministry. (See D&C 77:14.) Since the Apostle was translated and was to live through all the events he saw, the Lord seems to pause to show him what part he will have in all of it.

3. “The ‘kingdoms’ interlude. (Rev. 12–14.) This is the longest and perhaps the most difficult interlude to understand. The three chapters seem to comprise an overview of mankind’s history from the premortal existence to the Second Coming, as it pertains to the kingdoms of the Lamb (Jesus Christ) and the dragon (Satan). When John hears that the kingdoms of the world are to become the kingdoms of Christ (see 11:15), it is as though the Lord stops to teach more about these two different classes of kingdoms. . . .
4. “Another interlude that recounts the joy of those who are saved, similar to the first. (Rev. 15.)” (“Seeing the Book of Revelation as a Book of Revelation,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1987, 52).

Revelation 12:1–2, 5, 7. The Woman “Brought Forth a Man Child”

In Revelation 12:1–2, 5, 7, John saw in vision a woman who gave birth to a child. The Joseph Smith Translation reads as follows (note that verse 5 becomes verse 3 in the Joseph Smith Translation):

“And there appeared a great *sign* in heaven, *in the likeness of things on the earth*; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.

“And *the woman* being with child, cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

“And *she* brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up unto God and his throne. . . .

“And *the dragon* prevailed not against Michael, neither the child, nor the woman which was the church of God, who had been delivered of her pains, and brought forth the kingdom of our God and his Christ” (Joseph Smith Translation, Revelation 12:1–3, 7 [in the Bible appendix]).



Dragon with woman, child, and stars

These clarifications confirm that Satan will not prevail in his war against God’s kingdom on earth. They also teach that the woman represents the “church of God” and that the child she gives birth to is the “*kingdom of our God and his Christ*” (Joseph Smith Translation, Revelation 12:7 [in the Bible appendix]). The Church of God is at this time an ecclesiastical organization only, but when the Savior comes again and makes “a full

end of all nations” (D&C 87:6), the kingdom of God will also have political jurisdiction over all people on the earth. “The purpose of the Church is to prepare its members to live forever in the celestial kingdom or kingdom of heaven. . . . During the Millennium, the kingdom of God will be both political and ecclesiastical” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Kingdom of God or Kingdom of Heaven”; scriptures.lds.org).

Revelation 12:1. The Sun, the Moon, and Twelve Stars

We learn from latter-day scripture that those who inherit the celestial kingdom will receive glory like unto that of the sun (see D&C 76:70). The image of “a woman clothed with the sun” may symbolize the Church’s role in preparing its members for the future glory of the celestial kingdom (Revelation 12:1). The “crown of twelve stars” upon the head of the woman likely refers to the Twelve Apostles who preside over the affairs of the Church under Jesus Christ’s direction (Revelation 12:1).

John also saw “the moon under [the woman’s] feet” (Revelation 12:1). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained a possible meaning of this image: “As the moon shines by reflected light, so do all earthly churches and kingdoms. They are under, beneath and lower than the true Church. The highest eternal reward they can offer is the terrestrial kingdom, whose glory is like the moon. (1 Cor. 15:40–41.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1966–73], 3:517).

Revelation 12:3–4, 7–10. War in Heaven

These verses in Revelation 12 are a parenthetical reference to the War in Heaven. The dragon is a representation of Satan, who with his followers waged the War in Heaven against Heavenly Father and His faithful children (see D&C 29:36–38; Moses 4:1–4). “The third part of the stars of heaven” (Revelation 12:4) are that portion of the hosts of heaven who followed Satan in the premortal war in heaven and were cast out (see Isaiah 14:12–17; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6; D&C 29:37; Abraham 3:27–28). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** described the conflict that occurred in heaven: “What kind of war? The same kind that prevails on earth; the only kind Satan and spirit beings can wage—a war of words, a tumult of opinions, a conflict of ideologies; a war between truth and error, between light and darkness. . . . And the battle lines are still drawn. It is now on earth as it was then in heaven; every man must choose which general he will follow” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:518).

President Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles elaborated on how we can find protection during this spiritual war:

“[Satan] is determined to disrupt our Heavenly Father’s plan and seeks to control the minds and actions of all. This influence is spiritual, and he ‘is abroad in the land’ [D&C 52:14].

“But despite the opposition, trials, and temptations, you need not fail or fear. . . .

“ . . . Youth today are being raised in enemy territory with a declining standard of morality. But as a servant of the Lord, I promise that you will be protected and shielded from the attacks of the adversary *if* you will heed the promptings that come from the Holy Spirit” (“Counsel to Youth,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 16, 18).

Revelation 12:6, 14. What Is the Meaning of the Woman Going into the Wilderness?

The woman fleeing into the wilderness is symbolic of Satan driving the ancient Church into the period of



John saw the Church being delivered from the serpent by flying into the wilderness with eagle’s wings (see Revelation 12:14). In Israel’s history, eagles’ wings are a symbol of divine deliverance (see Exodus 19:4; Deuteronomy 32:11–12; Isaiah 40:31).

the Great Apostasy, when the authority of the priesthood was taken from the earth following the deaths of Jesus Christ and His Apostles (see D&C 86:1–3). The Joseph Smith Translation of Revelation 12:6 changes the term “days” to “years” (Joseph Smith Translation, Revelation 12:5 [in the Bible appendix]). For insight on the three and a half “times” the Church remains in the wilderness (see Revelation 12:14), see the commentary for Revelation 11:2–3, 9–11.

Revelation 12:8–10. Satan Accuses Day and Night

Joseph Smith Translation, Revelation 12:8 reads: “Neither was there place found in heaven for the great dragon *who* was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and *also* called Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he *who* was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”

The name-title “Satan” comes from a Hebrew verb meaning “to accuse,” “to slander,” or “to be an adversary.” Thus, the title “accuser” (Revelation 12:10) reflects Satan’s efforts as the adversary of the human family, charging people with sin. On the other hand, Jesus Christ is our advocate, pleading to God on behalf of those who believe in Him (see D&C 45:3–5). **Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles discussed Satan’s title of “accuser”: “The scriptures call him the ‘accuser’ because he wants us to feel that we are beyond forgiveness (see Revelation 12:10). Satan wants us to think that when we have sinned we have gone past a ‘point of no return’—that it is too late to change our course” (“Point of Safe Return,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2007, 99). The phrase “day and night” (Revelation 12:10) reinforces that Satan does not cease his effort to destroy the disciples of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 12:11

What details in this verse can give you hope as you defend yourself against evil? What can you do so the statement in verse 11 could describe your victory over Satan?

Revelation 12:11; 13:8. By Blood and Testimony

In Revelation 12:11, an angel declared that Christ’s followers overcame Satan and his followers “by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.” One truth we learn from the scriptures is that the saving power of the Atonement was already in place in the premortal world, for Christ is “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8; see also 1 Peter 1:18–20; Mosiah 3:13; 4:7; D&C 93:38). Because we are here on earth, we know that in the premortal world we trusted in Heavenly Father’s plan for our redemption and drew upon the blessings of the Atonement and our testimonies to overcome Satan.

In mortality we continue to overcome Satan in the same manner—by the atoning blood of Jesus Christ and by the word of our testimonies. **Elder Richard G. Scott** (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described the power of testimony:

“A strong testimony gives peace, comfort, and assurance. It generates the conviction that as the teachings of the Savior are consistently obeyed, life will be beautiful, the future secure, and there will be capacity to overcome the challenges that cross our path. A testimony grows from understanding truth, distilled from prayer and the pondering of scriptural doctrine. It is nurtured by living those truths in faith and the secure confidence that the promised results will be obtained. . . .



The effects of the Atonement were in place “from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8). Even at the foundation of the world, it was a certainty that Jesus Christ would perform the Atonement; thus, the effects of the Atonement began in the premortal world.

“. . . Your personal security and happiness depend upon the strength of your testimony, for it will guide your actions in times of trial and uncertainty” (“The Power of a Strong Testimony,” *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 87).

Revelation 12:11–12. They “Kept the Testimony Even unto Death”

The Joseph Smith Translation adds several words to Revelation 12:11: “They loved not their own lives, *but kept the testimony even unto death*” (in the Bible appendix). This addition suggests that Christ’s followers valued and loved their testimonies of the Lord and His gospel more than their own lives. There are multiple references in the book of Revelation to individuals who were tested and tried in the war against evil, even unto death (see Revelation 2:10, 13; 6:9–11; 11:7; 16:6; 17:6; 20:4).

The “loud voice” from heaven continued to speak to John by declaring that the heavens and “ye that dwell in them” should rejoice because of the righteousness of the Saints (Revelation 12:10, 12). The Joseph Smith Translation then adds these further insights:

“And after these things I heard another voice saying, Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, yea, and they who dwell upon the islands of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath” (Joseph Smith Translation, Revelation 12:12 [in the Bible appendix]).

The phrase “after these things” may indicate that the righteous had a period of rejoicing after the war in heaven, for good had triumphed over evil. However, after this period, there came a time of woe on the earth because Satan and his followers came down to earth with “great wrath.”

Revelation 12:17. “The Remnant of Her Seed”

As recorded in Revelation 12:17, the remnant of the woman’s seed that Satan and his followers war against includes the latter-day Church restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith (see Revelation 13:7; 1 Nephi 14:12–14; D&C 76:28–29). Satan wages his fiercest battles against the Saints of the true and living Church.

Revelation 13:1–7. John “Saw a Beast Rise Out of the Sea”

After seeing that Satan went to make war against the remnant of the seed of the woman, John saw a beast rise out of the sea (see Revelation 13:1). The Joseph Smith Translation indicates that the beast is “*in the likeness of the kingdoms of the earth*” (in Revelation 13:1, footnote *a*). The beast’s many heads, crowns, and horns suggest many different kingdoms and rulers with great power. The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) taught: “When God made use of the figure of a beast in visions to the prophets He did it to represent those kingdoms which had degenerated and become corrupt, savage and beast-like in their dispositions, even the degenerate kingdoms of the wicked world” (in *History of the Church*, 5:341).

Rather than attempting to specify an exact identity of the beast, it may be more profitable to note the following general characteristics about the beast: It had power over many nations (see Revelation 13:1, 7); it opposed God and blasphemed against Him (see verses 5–6); the power it wielded was like the power that predatory animals have over their prey (see verse 2); Satan gave it power (see verses 2, 4); people of the world worshipped or followed the beast (see verse 4); and it was able to overpower many, including the Saints (see verse 7). It could be said that any kingdom or government that exhibits these characteristics manifests the spirit of the beast. Revelation 17:8–12 contains additional information about the beast, including its ultimate destruction.

Revelation 13:7. “War with the Saints”

John recorded that it was given to the beast from the sea to “make war with the saints, and to overcome them” (Revelation 13:7). Though the intended meaning of much of the symbolism in Revelation 13 is uncertain, one message seems clear: Satan and those who uphold his work will be at war against the Saints of God (see also 1 Nephi 14:12–14). **President Ezra Taft Benson** (1899–1994) taught: “Satan is waging war against the members of the Church who have testimonies and are trying to keep the commandments. And while many of our members are remaining faithful and strong, some are wavering. Some are falling. Some are fulfilling John’s prophecy that in the war with Satan, some Saints would be overcome. (See Rev. 13:7.)” (“The Power of the Word,” *Ensign*, May 1986, 79).

Revelation 13:8. “The Book of Life”

John saw that the beast would be worshipped by those “whose names are not written in the book of life of the

Lamb” (Revelation 13:8). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained that “the book of life, or Lamb’s book of Life, is the record kept in heaven which contains the names of the faithful and an account of their righteous covenants and deeds. (D. & C. 128:6–7; Ps. 69:28; Rev. 3:5; 21:27.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:455). **President Joseph Fielding Smith** (1876–1972) taught: “We are not going to be saved in the kingdom of God just because our names are on the records of the Church. It will require more than that. We will have to have our names written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, and if they are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life then it is an evidence we have kept the commandments. Every soul who will not keep those commandments shall have his name blotted out of that book” (in Conference Report, Oct. 1950, 10; see also Alma 5:57–58).

Revelation 13:10; 14:12. “The Patience and the Faith of the Saints”

The righteous will need patience and faith in Jesus Christ in order to withstand the evil that will prevail in the last days. **President Dieter F. Uchtdorf** explained:

“Patience is not passive resignation, nor is it failing to act because of our fears. Patience means active waiting and enduring. It means staying with something and doing all that we can—working, hoping, and exercising faith; bearing hardship with fortitude, even when the desires of our hearts are delayed. Patience is not simply enduring; it is enduring well! . . .

“Patience is a godly attribute that can heal souls, unlock treasures of knowledge and understanding, and transform ordinary men and women into saints and angels. Patience is truly a fruit of the Spirit.

“Patience means . . . delaying immediate gratification for future blessings. It means reigning in anger and holding back the unkind word. It means resisting evil, even when it appears to be making others rich.

“Patience means accepting that which cannot be changed and facing it with courage, grace, and faith. It means being ‘willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [us], even as a child doth submit to his father’ [Mosiah 3:19]. Ultimately, patience means being ‘firm and steadfast, and immovable in keeping the commandments of the Lord’ [1 Nephi 2:10] every hour of every day, even when it is hard to do so. In the words of John the Revelator, ‘Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and . . . faith [in] Jesus’ [Revelation 14:12]” (“Continue in Patience,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 57–59).

Revelation 13:11–17. A Second Beast “Spake as a Dragon”

Revelation 13:11 tells of a second beast that John saw; he later identified this beast as “the false prophet” (Revelation 19:20). This second beast “had two horns like a lamb” but “spake as a dragon” (Revelation 13:11). This description suggests that the second beast will seek to appear to represent Christ while actually teaching the false doctrines of Satan. The description of the second beast is also reminiscent of the Savior’s warning to “beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matthew 7:15).

President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency noted: “Satan is the greatest imitator, the master deceiver, the arch counterfeiter, and the greatest forger ever in the history of the world. He comes into our lives as a thief in the night. His disguise is so perfect that it is hard to recognize him or his methods” (“The Devil’s Throat,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2003, 51). “One of the major techniques of the devil is to cause human beings to think they are following God’s ways, when in reality they are deceived by the devil to follow other paths” (Bible Dictionary, “Devil”).

Revelation 13:16–17. The Mark of the Beast

In contrast to the righteous, who keep their covenants with God and receive His protecting seal on their foreheads (see Revelation 7:2–3; 14:1; 22:4; the commentary for Revelation 7:3; 9:4), the wicked who worship the beast “receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads” (Revelation 13:16). This may symbolize that the wicked show by their actions (hands) and beliefs (heads) that they do the will of the beast and accept his ideology. However, the precise meaning of “the mark” has not been revealed.

Revelation 13:17–18. “Six Hundred Threescore and Six”

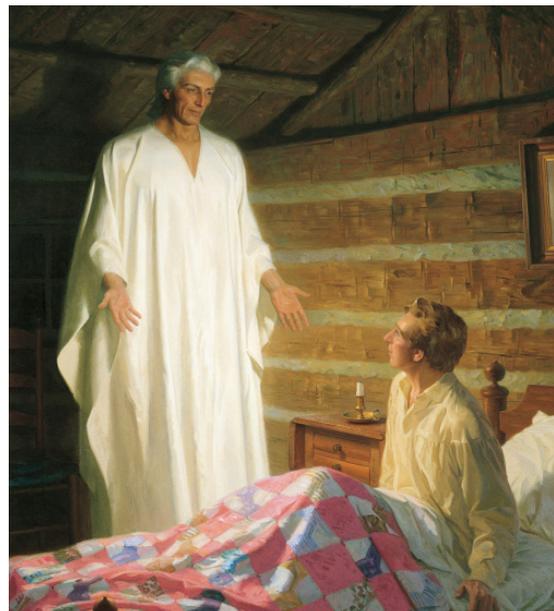
John wrote that “the number of the beast . . . is Six hundred threescore and six” (Revelation 13:18). Over the centuries, the number of the beast, 666, has intrigued countless individuals and led to many speculative interpretations. The Lord has not revealed the meaning of this symbolic number. Some commentators have noted that since 6 is one less than 7 (a number representing divine perfection and completeness), 666 may emphasize the imperfect and counterfeit character of Satan and his followers.

Revelation 14:1–5. The Hundred and Forty-Four Thousand

In contrast to the depictions of Satan’s widespread influence and power recorded in Revelation 13, chapter 14 offers hope. The opening verses of Revelation 14 describe a group who have the “Father’s name written in their foreheads” (verse 1); they are clean and chaste, “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,” and are redeemed from among men (verse 4); and they are honest and “without fault” before God (verse 5).

Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord revealed that the 144,000 “are high priests, ordained unto the holy order of God, to administer the everlasting gospel; for they are they who are ordained out of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, by the angels to whom is given power over the nations of the earth, to bring as many as will come to the church of the Firstborn” (D&C 77:11). The song that is sung by the 144,000 (see Revelation 14:3) may be the same song that is recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 84:98–102. For more information about the 144,000, see Doctrine and Covenants 133:17–18; for information on God’s name written in the foreheads of the righteous, see the commentary for Revelation 3:12.

Revelation 14:6–12. Three Angels



The Angel Moroni Appears to Joseph Smith, by Tom Lovell

John saw three angels, each proclaiming a message to the earth’s inhabitants. The first angel brought “the everlasting gospel” to the nations of the earth (Revelation 14:6). Many latter-day prophets have taught that the

angel represents Moroni (see D&C 27:5; 133:36–39). The angel may also represent a composite of the many heavenly messengers, including Moroni, who have assisted in the latter-day Restoration of the gospel. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** pointed out: “The angel Moroni brought the message, that is, the word; but other angels brought the keys and priesthood, the power” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:530).

In addition to bringing the everlasting gospel to the earth, the first angel announced that “the hour of his judgment is come”—a fitting message for a world that has been worshipping the beast (Revelation 14:7). This message prepares the reader for the second angel, whose message is that “Babylon is fallen,” which means that wickedness will end (Revelation 14:8). Babylon’s sin is described as “fornication,” meaning that the wicked of the world have been unfaithful in their relationship with God, placing their affections and loyalties on false gods (Revelation 14:8) and inducing others to follow this manner of living. To “drink of the wine” of this sin implies internalizing Babylon’s evil ways (Revelation 14:8). Because of the impending fall of Babylon in the last days, the Lord has warned the Latter-day Saints to “go ye out from Babylon” (D&C 133:5), meaning that we must flee the wickedness of the world (see D&C 133:14). The third angel described the judgments to come upon those who worship the beast and receive his mark (see Revelation 14:9). They will receive God’s punishing anger, described as drinking “the wrath of God . . . without mixture,” or without dilution (Revelation 14:10). Other scriptures teach that God’s wrath is poured out only when all other efforts fail to persuade men to repent (see D&C 43:25–26; 88:88–90).

Revelation 14:13. “The Dead Which Die in the Lord”

John heard a voice saying, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord” (Revelation 14:13). This suggests that although the Lord’s people generally will be protected from many of the judgments to come (see Revelation 9:4; 1 Nephi 22:17–19), some righteous individuals will die in the calamities and tribulations of the last days. Nevertheless, to those who are righteous, death is associated with peace and joy—they “rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Revelation 14:13; see also Alma 40:11–12; 46:39, 41; D&C 42:46).

Revelation 14:14–20. Two Harvests

John described two harvests in Revelation 14:14–20, which are reminiscent of those described in the parable of the wheat and the tares (see Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43; D&C 86:1–7). The first harvest gathers out the

righteous from the wicked (see Revelation 14:14–16; D&C 33:2–6). This gathering began when the gospel was restored in the latter days and will continue into the Millennium.

The second gathering (see Revelation 14:17–20) represents God’s judgments upon the wicked and the destruction that will come upon them when they, like grapes on the vine, are fully ripe in iniquity and are trodden in the “winepress of the wrath of God” (Revelation 14:19; see also Isaiah 63:3–4; D&C 88:106; 133:46–51).



Winepress, by Ted Henninger. Men crushing grapes with their feet in a winepress during Old Testament times

Revelation 15–16. Seven Plagues

Revelation 15 appears to describe what the righteous—gathered in the first harvest—will experience, whereas Revelation 16 seems to describe what the wicked—gathered in the second harvest—will experience.

Chapters 15 and 16 work together. In Revelation 15:1, 7 John learned of seven destructive plagues that are to be poured out upon the wicked. Revelation 16 describes these seven plagues. The repeated use of the number seven may suggest that the plagues represent the completion of God’s judgment against the wicked in the last days: “For in [the seven last plagues] is filled up the wrath of God” (Revelation 15:1).

Revelation 15:2. “A Sea of Glass”

John saw that the righteous would stand upon “a sea of glass mingled with fire” (Revelation 15:2). The sea of

glass represents the celestialized earth, where the righteous will reside in the presence of God (see Revelation 4:6; D&C 77:1; 130:6–9).

Revelation 15:2–4. “Victory over the Beast”

John saw that the righteous would gain “victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name”—in short, over all of Satan’s evils and deceptions (Revelation 15:2). Revelation 15:2–4 illustrates a major theme in the book of Revelation:

“There will be an eventual triumph on this earth of God over the devil; a permanent victory of good over evil, of the Saints over their persecutors, of the kingdom of God over the kingdoms of men and of Satan. . . .

“Such is the theme of the Revelation. . . . If we fail to catch a glimpse of the theme, we fail in our comprehension [of the book], no matter how many details we are able to understand” (Bible Dictionary, “Revelation of John”).

Revelation 15:3. “The Song of Moses”

“The song of Moses” was sung by the children of Israel following their deliverance from Egyptian bondage (see Exodus 15:1–18). Revelation 15:3 tells us that the song of Moses will be sung again by those who inherit the celestial kingdom in celebration of the Lamb of God delivering them from the bondage of sin.

Revelation 16:1. “The Vials of the Wrath of God” Are Poured Out

In Revelation 16, John described the scourges and plagues that will be poured out in the final days prior to the Second Coming of Christ (see also Revelation 15:1, 7). These plagues are summarized in the following chart.

Revelation 16	Description of the Plague
Verse 2	First, “a noisome and grievous sore” comes upon the wicked. (Similar plagues are described in Exodus 9:8–12 and Zechariah 14:12.)
Verse 3	Second, the waters of the sea turn to blood, and all creatures in the waters die (see also Exodus 7:19–21).
Verse 4	Third, the rivers and fountains of water turn to blood (see also Exodus 7:19–21).
Verses 8–9	Fourth, the sun scorches the wicked with fire and great heat.
Verses 10–11	Fifth, darkness spreads across the kingdom of the devil, and the wicked suffer pains and sores.
Verses 12–16	Sixth, the waters of the Euphrates River dry up to prepare for the gathering of the kings of the world at Armageddon (see also Zechariah 12:11).
Verses 17–21	Seventh, there are voices, thunders, lightnings, and a great earthquake; the cities of the nations fall; Babylon receives the cup of God’s wrath; and great hail falls upon men.



Darkness before Christ’s Coming, by Paul Mann

Revelation 16:6. “They Have Shed the Blood of Saints and Prophets”

After John saw that the rivers and fountains of waters were turned to blood, he heard an angel proclaiming the justice of God in pouring out such a fitting judgment: “For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink” (Revelation 16:6). The angel’s words of condemnation here are reminiscent of those found in 2 Nephi 26:3 and 3 Nephi 9:5–11 (see also 2 Kings 9:7; Luke 11:50–51; Revelation 18:24; Alma 37:30; 3 Nephi 10:12; D&C 136:36). It seems that safety in times of judgment is directly connected to the acceptance of prophets. For more information on the “blood of saints and prophets,” see the commentary for Revelation 18:24.

Revelation 16:15. “Blessed Is He That Watcheth, and Keepeth His Garments”

In Revelation 16:15, the Lord warned, “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.” When the armies of the kings of the earth approach (see Revelation 16:14), all who are ready (clothed) to flee for safety will not be ashamed at having to flee in nakedness (see also Genesis 3:7–10; Exodus 32:25–26; Isaiah 20:4). In a spiritual sense, keeping one’s garments symbolizes the spiritual readiness that results from living in spiritual watchfulness and receiving the blessings of the temple. Many other scriptures exhort people to live with watchfulness (see Matthew 24:42–25:13; 26:41; D&C 45:44; 133:10–11).

Furthermore, **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** taught that keeping one’s garments also represents spiritual safety: “To defile one’s garments [of the holy priesthood] is to disobey the Lord’s law, and to keep one’s garments (Rev. 16:15) is to keep the commandments and qualify for the robes of righteousness that clothe celestial beings” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:454–55; see Revelation 3:3–5).

Revelation 16:16. Gathering in Armageddon

“The name *Armageddon* is derived from the Hebrew *Har Megiddon*, meaning the ‘mountain of Megiddo.’ The valley of Megiddo is in the western portion of the plain of Esdraelon, fifty miles (eighty kilometers) north of Jerusalem, and is the site of several crucial battles in Old Testament times. A great and final conflict that will take place near the time of the second coming of the Lord is called the battle of Armageddon because it will begin in the same locale. (See Ezek. 39:11; Zech. 12–14, especially 12:11; Rev. 16:14–21.)” (*Guide to the Scriptures*, “Armageddon”; scriptures.lds.org). The battle that will begin at Har Megiddo will spread to Jerusalem.

Revelation 16:20. “Every Island Fled Away”

President Joseph Fielding Smith explained the physical changes that will take place when the earth is returned to its original state:

“We are informed that the Lord ‘shall command the great deep, and it shall be driven back into the north country, and the islands shall become one land; and the land of Jerusalem and the land of Zion shall be turned back into their own place, and the earth shall be like as it was in the days before it was divided.’ (Gen. 10:25.) The notion prevails quite generally that the dividing of the earth in the days of Peleg was a

division politically among the people, but from this word of the Lord we gain the idea that the earth itself was divided and that when Christ comes it will again be brought back to the same conditions physically as prevailed before this division took place. The sea is to be driven back into the north. The land is to be brought back as it was originally and the lands of Zion (America) and Jerusalem (Palestine and all the land pertaining unto it) will be restored to their own place as they were in the beginning. The Savior will stand in the midst of his people, and shall reign over all flesh. We have discovered in our study that the wicked, or all things that are corruptible [D&C 101:23–35], will be consumed and therefore will not be permitted to be on the earth when this time comes” (*Church History and Modern Revelation*, 2 vols. [1953], 1:264; see Isaiah 40:4; 64:1; D&C 133:22–24, 40, 44).

Points to Ponder

- How do Revelation 16:9, 11 and Doctrine and Covenants 43:18–25 help you understand why the Lord will continue to pour out plagues upon the wicked?
- How can President Dieter F. Uchtdorf’s statement in the commentary for Revelation 13:10; 14:12 help you faithfully withstand the wickedness you see in the world around you?

Suggested Assignments

- After reading the commentary for Revelation 16:15, read the following scripture references to better understand the phrase “he that watcheth”: Matthew 24:42–46; Mosiah 4:30; Doctrine and Covenants 45:44; 50:45–46; 106:4–5. Also read the following scripture passages to explore further possible meanings of the phrase “keepeth his garments” (Revelation 16:15): Revelation 3:3–5; 1 Nephi 12:10; Alma 5:21; Doctrine and Covenants 109:72–76. Consider writing one or more of these references in the margin of your scriptures next to Revelation 16:15. Then write a summary of what you learned in your scripture study journal.
- Search Revelation 14:11–13 and compare the state of the wicked to that of the Saints with regard to “rest.” List what you would be willing to do to receive the rest promised to the Saints.

Revelation 17–22

Introduction and Timeline for Revelation 17–22

The final chapters of Revelation gave hope to Christians facing persecution from outside the Church and from factions within the Church that were dissenting from accepted beliefs. Revelation 17–22 also describes the crescendo of final earthly events fulfilling Heavenly Father’s plan for the redemption of His children. John heard heavenly servants rejoice in praise for the salvation made possible through the Lamb’s triumph over evil. John saw the fall of wicked Babylon contrasted with the glories of the Second Coming and the blessings of exaltation for all those who follow God’s commands. John further saw that the righteous inhabitants of the earth and those who will come forth in the First Resurrection will enjoy a thousand years of millennial peace with Christ. The earth will

then receive celestial glory and become the eternal home for all righteous Saints.



John received revelation from Jesus Christ while on

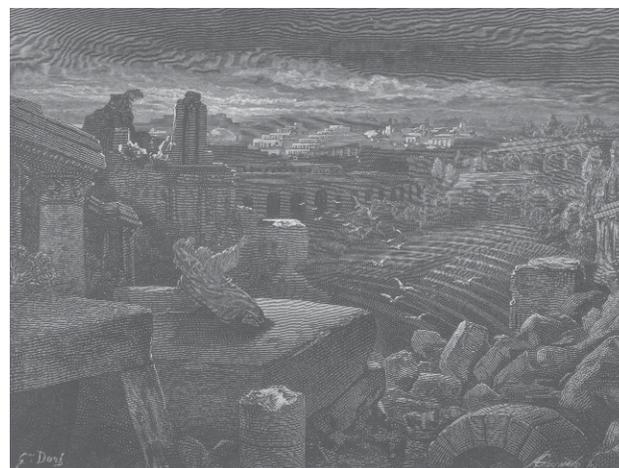
the island of Patmos, probably before A.D. 96.

Commentary for Revelation 17–22

Revelation 17–18. The Fall of Babylon

In Revelation 16:17, the seventh angel poured out his vial, signaling the final destructive events that will precede the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. These concluding events include the fall of Babylon, described in Revelation 17–18. Ancient Babylon had destroyed Jerusalem in 587 B.C., a traumatic and defining event in Israel’s history. Israelite prophets in turn wrote about the eventual destruction of Babylon (see Isaiah 13:19–22; 21:9; Jeremiah 50:35–36, 40; 51:6–8), and John drew upon their language as he described the ultimate destruction of the spiritual enemies of God’s people.

“In Rev. 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21, Babylon probably denotes Rome, the great antagonist of Messiah’s kingdom” (Bible Dictionary, “Babylon or Babel”). It is likely that Babylon also represents all that is wicked in the world (see D&C 1:16; 133:14). Chapters 17–18 depict Babylon as a “whore” holding a cup “full of abominations and filthiness” and as the “mother of harlots” (Revelation 17:1, 4, 5). In this sense, Babylon is the antitype of the righteous bride that represents the Church (see Revelation 19:7–8) and the antithesis of Zion as “the pure in heart” (D&C 97:21). John’s vision of Babylon parallels much of Nephi’s vision of the great and abominable church (see 1 Nephi 13:4–9, 26–29; 14:3–17; 22:13–16, 18).



Isaiah’s Vision of the Destruction of Babylon, by Paul Gustave Doré. Isaiah, John, and other biblical prophets foresaw the destruction of Babylon.

Revelation 17. The Woman and the Beast

Scholars have historically interpreted the beast with seven heads as an allusion to the city of Rome because Rome was founded upon seven hills, as well as a reference to a number of Roman emperors in the first century A.D. Though these are possible meanings, a broader interpretation may be that Rome represented a seat of corruption in John’s day. As such, this worldly city may be likened to similar centers of corruption in all eras.

The terms used to describe the woman who rode upon the beast attest to the great political and destructive power she will have over nations and kingdoms and people. John described the woman as “the great whore that sitteth upon many waters” (Revelation 17:1; see also 1 Nephi 14:10–13); she commits fornication with kings and inhabitants of the earth (see verse 2); her clothing depicts power and wealth (see verse 4); she is the “mother of harlots,” which indicates that she gives birth to other prostitutions—organizations, governments, and ideologies that spew forth wickedness (verse 5). John recorded that he was astonished at the greatness of the woman’s wickedness (see verse 6, footnote c). Nevertheless, in the end she will be overthrown by those she formerly ruled over (see verse 16; 1 Nephi 22:13).

Revelation 17:2–6. The Culture of Babylon Permeates the World

In Revelation 17:2–6, John described Babylon as a harlot clothed in fine, jeweled apparel and drunken with blood. One possible meaning of John’s description in these verses is that in the last days, a lifestyle of sexual immorality, wealth, and violence would permeate the world (see also 1 Nephi 13:5–9). Institutions, governments, and people who embrace this lifestyle can be seen as part of Babylon. While serving in the Seventy, **Elder David R. Stone** spoke of this pervasive corruption:

“There is no particular city today which personifies Babylon. Babylon was, in the time of ancient Israel, a city which had become sensual, decadent, and corrupt. . . .

“. . . That sensuality, corruption, and decadence, and the worshipping of false gods are to be seen in many cities, great and small, scattered across the globe. As the Lord has said: ‘They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world’ (D&C 1:16). . . .

“What an insidious thing is this culture amidst which we live. It permeates our environment” (“Zion in the Midst of Babylon,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2006, 90–91).

Revelation 17:6. “Drunken with the Blood of the Saints”

Revelation 17:6 describes the woman being “drunken with the blood of the saints,” which suggests that

throughout the ages, many righteous people have been slain by the wicked. The scriptural language suggests that the slaying of the righteous had an intoxicating effect on those who carried out the slaughter.

Revelation 17:8–11. Temporary Nature of the Beast

John saw that the beast “was, and is not” (Revelation 17:8). He also saw a vision of “seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space” (Revelation 17:10). John’s language suggests that the wickedness of the world will be temporary.

Revelation 17:12; 20:4; 22:5

How long will the followers of the beast exercise power, compared to those who follow Christ? What do these verses teach about the duration of worldly and heavenly rewards? How should this guide your choices?

Revelation 17:14. “War with the Lamb, and the Lamb Shall Overcome”

Though the scenes John saw in Revelation 17 can seem frightening, he also saw that “the Lamb shall overcome” the wickedness of the world (Revelation 17:14). **President Gordon B. Hinckley** (1910–2008) affirmed that the Lord and His people will prevail in the war against evil:

“In the October conference of 1896, President Wilford Woodruff . . . said:

“‘There are two powers on the earth and in the midst of the inhabitants of the earth—the power of God and the power of the devil. . . . When God has had a people on the earth, it matters not in what age, Lucifer, the son of the morning, and the millions of fallen spirits that were cast out of heaven have warred against God, against Christ, against the work of God, and against the people of God.’ [*Deseret Evening News*, Oct. 17, 1896.] . . .

“The war goes on. It is waged across the world over the issues of agency and compulsion. It is waged by an army of missionaries over the issues of truth and error. It is waged in our own lives, day in and day out, in our homes, in our work, in our school associations; it is waged over questions of love and respect, of loyalty and fidelity, of obedience and integrity. We are all involved in it. . . . We are winning, and the future never looked brighter” (“The War We Are Winning,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1986, 43, 45).

Revelation 18:3–4. Choosing Righteousness Despite the Prevalence of Modern Wickedness

Revelation 18 proclaims the fall of wicked Babylon and describes the lamentation of all who associated with her. In all ages, the Lord has commanded His people to “come out of [Babylon]” and “be not partakers of her sins” (Revelation 18:4; see D&C 133:5, 7, 14). **Elder Richard G. Scott** (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles testified that it is possible to follow the Lord’s teachings and avoid being contaminated by the world’s wickedness:

“Much of the world is being engulfed in a rising river of degenerate filth, with the abandonment of virtue, righteousness, personal integrity, traditional marriage, and family life. . . .

“ . . . Despite pockets of evil, the world overall is majestically beautiful, filled with many good and sincere people. God has provided a way to live in this world and not be contaminated by the degrading pressures evil agents spread throughout it. You can live a virtuous, productive, righteous life by following the plan of protection created by your Father in Heaven: His plan of happiness” (“How to Live Well amid Increasing Evil,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2004, 100).

Revelation 18:3, 7–16. The Wealth and Materialism of Babylon

John used phrases such as “waxed rich” and “lived deliciously” (Revelation 18:3, 7, 9) to highlight the lust for wealth and lavish possessions that define Babylon. These riches will be destroyed, and those who have placed their hearts upon them will lament (see Revelation 18:8–19; 2 Nephi 9:30; D&C 56:16). **President Harold B. Lee** (1899–1973) warned that with prosperity often comes the temptation to embrace the materialism of Babylon: “We are tested, we are tried, we are going through some of the severest tests today and we don’t realize perhaps the severity of the tests that we’re going through. . . . Today we are basking in the lap of luxury, the like of which we’ve never seen before in the history of the world. It would seem that probably this is the most severe test of any test that we’ve ever had in the history of the Church” (“First Presidency Devotional” [unpublished Christmas devotional for Church employees, Dec. 13, 1973], 4–5; see Jacob 2:18–19).



Revelation 18:5–6. “Her Sins Have Reached unto Heaven”

John heard a voice from heaven proclaiming that Babylon’s “sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities” (Revelation 18:5). Some people might think their iniquities are hidden, but these verses are a reminder that sins do not go undetected by God, though their consequences may not all come immediately. The voice also declared that Babylon would receive the consequences of her works and would be punished doubly, reminiscent of terminology used in the law of Moses (see Revelation 18:6; see also Exodus 22:4, 7, 9).

Revelation 18:8, 10, 17, 19

What is said in these verses about how quickly Babylon would fall? What message do you learn from these verses about worldly wealth and power?

Revelation 18:11–13. Merchandise and “Souls of Men”

The list of merchandise sold in Babylon reveals a startling truth: people sell not only gold, precious stones, fine textiles, and many other luxury items, but even “slaves, and souls of men” (Revelation 18:13). This refers primarily to the abominable practice of human trafficking but can also be seen as a reference to the spiritually enslaving consequences of materialism and other evils (see 2 Nephi 26:10). It may also describe corrupt religious practitioners who present themselves as ministering to people’s souls while seeking above all to profit financially; in this sense, they traffic in the “souls of men.” Moroni recorded that in the last days “there shall be churches built up that shall say: Come

unto me, and for your money you shall be forgiven of your sins” (Mormon 8:32). In contrast, the gospel of Jesus Christ offers spiritual nourishment “without money and without price” (Isaiah 55:1; 2 Nephi 26:25; Alma 1:20).

Revelation 18:24. “The Blood of Prophets, and of Saints”

John recorded that in Babylon “was found the blood of prophets, and of saints” (Revelation 18:24), meaning that those who uphold Babylon are to blame for the martyrdom of prophets and Saints throughout earth’s history. At the Second Coming, Babylon and its inhabitants will be recompensed for their evil works (see Revelation 18:6; D&C 1:10), for the blood of the martyrs will stand as a testimony against those who have slain them (see Revelation 6:10; 16:6; 18:24; D&C 109:49). A similar time of judgment was recorded in 3 Nephi 8–9, when whole cities were destroyed “that the blood of the prophets and the saints shall not come any more unto me against them” (3 Nephi 9:5; see also verses 7–9, 11; Alma 14:11; Revelation 19:2; the commentary for Revelation 16:6).

Revelation 19:1–6. Praising the Lord for His Judgment

John heard the inhabitants of heaven crying out “Alleluia” (Revelation 19:1, 3–4, 6), which means “Praise the Lord!” This praise was in response to God’s righteous judgment upon Babylon. Knowing that God is a God of judgment enables Saints to endure in faith: “No sooner is the idea of the existence of [God’s judgment] planted in the minds of men, than it gives power to the mind for the exercise of faith and confidence in God, and they are enabled by faith to lay hold on the promises which are set before them, and wade through all the tribulations and afflictions to which they are subjected by reason of the persecution from those who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, believing that in due time the Lord will come out in swift judgment against their enemies” (*Lectures on Faith* [1985], 53). Knowing that God will one day judge the enemies of His people can help Saints in the last days to endure in “patience and . . . faith” (Revelation 13:10; see also 14:12).

Revelation 19:7, 11, 13, 16

What do the names and titles in these verses reveal about the eternal mission of Jesus Christ? What thoughts and feelings do you have as you consider these names and titles?

Revelation 19:7–9. “The Marriage Supper of the Lamb”

Immediately before seeing in vision the Lord’s Second Coming, John heard a voice proclaim, “The marriage of the lamb is come” and “Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb” (Revelation 19:7, 9). Israel’s covenant relationship with God is symbolically portrayed in the scriptures as a marriage covenant (for example, see Isaiah 54; Jeremiah 31; Ezekiel 16; 23; Hosea 2; Matthew 23). Marriage is the relationship that requires the most fidelity, sacrifice, commitment, and long-suffering of all relationships. The “marriage supper of the Lamb” is a symbolic reference to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained: “In this dispensation the Bridegroom, who is the Lamb of God, shall come to claim his bride, which is the Church composed of the faithful saints who have watched for his return. As he taught in the parable of the marriage of the king’s son, the great marriage supper of the Lamb shall then be celebrated” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3 vols. [1966–73], 3:563).

John saw that the Lamb’s bride was clothed “in fine linen” made “clean and white” through the Atonement (Revelation 19:8; see also 7:14; 19:14). This imagery of a bride dressed in white presents a stark contrast to the harlot in extravagant apparel described earlier in Revelation, who symbolized spiritual Babylon (see 17:3–6; 18:16).

Only the righteous will be called to “the marriage supper.” The **Prophet Joseph Smith** (1805–44) taught: “Those who keep the commandments of the Lord and walk in His statutes to the end, are the only individuals permitted to sit at this glorious feast. . . . Reflect for a moment, brethren [and sisters], and enquire, whether you would consider yourselves worthy [of] a seat at the marriage feast” (*Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* [2007], 165–66; see also Matthew 22:2–14; D&C 58:8–11; 65:3).

Revelation 19:10. “The Testimony of Jesus Is the Spirit of Prophecy”

The angel who spoke to John said that “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10). **Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught that a testimony of Jesus Christ is a gift received through divine revelation:

“We cannot depend on the testimonies of other people. We need to know for ourselves. . . .

“The source of this sure knowledge and firm conviction is divine revelation, ‘for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy’ (Revelation 19:10).

“We receive this testimony when the Holy Spirit speaks to the spirit within us. We will receive a calm and unwavering certainty that will be the source of our testimony and conviction irrespective of our culture, race, language, or socioeconomic background. These promptings of the Spirit, rather than human logic alone, will be the true foundation upon which our testimony will be built.

“The core of this testimony will always be the faith in and the knowledge of Jesus Christ and His divine mission” (“The Power of a Personal Testimony,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2006, 38).

For more insight on how all members of the Church may enjoy the gift of prophecy by having “the testimony of Jesus,” see the commentary for 1 Corinthians 14:1–6.



Revelation 19:11, 13. “A White Horse” and “a Vesture Dipped in Blood”

In his vision of the Second Coming, John saw the Savior riding “a white horse” (Revelation 19:11). The white horse is symbolic of conquest and victory, as horses were used almost exclusively for war in John’s time. John also saw that the Savior would return to earth

wearing “a vesture dipped in blood,” meaning that His garments will be the color of blood. This color calls to mind the Savior’s suffering in Gethsemane, when His atoning blood was pressed from His body just as juice is pressed from grapes in a winepress.

Commenting on the Savior’s red robes, **Elder Neal A. Maxwell** (1926–2004) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles stated:

“Having bled at every pore, how red His raiment must have been in Gethsemane, how crimson that cloak!

“No wonder, when Christ comes in power and glory, that He will come in reminding red attire (see D&C 133:48), signifying not only the winepress of wrath, but also to bring to our remembrance how He suffered for each of us in Gethsemane and on Calvary!” (“Overcome . . . Even as I Also Overcame,” *Ensign*, May 1987, 72).

The red apparel may also symbolize the destruction of the wicked at the Lord’s coming (see Isaiah 63:1–4; D&C 133:46–51). When Jesus comes again to the earth, He will bring justice against the wicked (see Revelation 19:11).



Christ in red robes sitting upon a white horse

Revelation 19:15–16. “He Shall Rule Them with a Rod of Iron”

The Joseph Smith Translation of Revelation 19:15 clarifies how Jesus Christ will rule the earth: “And out of his mouth *proceedeth the word of God, and with it he will smite the nations; and he will rule them with the word of his mouth; and he treadeth the winepress in the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God*” (in Revelation 19:15, footnote *a*; see also 1 Nephi 11:25).

The titles of the Savior recorded in Revelation 19:16—“King of kings, and Lord of lords”—make clear that Jesus Christ will rule over the whole earth and over every earthly ruler. He will also reign over heavenly kings and lords.

Revelation 19:17–18, 21. “The Supper of the Great God”

John saw the ultimate destruction of the wicked when their slain bodies would be eaten by carrion birds (Revelation 19:17–18, 21; see also D&C 29:18–20). Ezekiel prophesied of this same destruction (Ezekiel 39:17–22). This dreadful “supper of the great God” (Revelation 19:17) stands in stark contrast to the joyful “marriage supper of the Lamb” (Revelation 19:7–9), vividly highlighting that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ will be a very different experience for the wicked than for the righteous. The Joseph Smith Translation of Revelation 19:18 clarifies that these verses describe the destruction of only “all *who fight against the Lamb*” (in Revelation 19:18, footnote *a*).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie wrote: “Those with refined senses find it difficult to conceive of the desolation, destruction, and death that will prevail during the final great battles ushering in Christ’s reign of peace. So great shall be the slaughter and mass murder, the carnage and gore, the butchery and violent death of warring men, that their decaying bodies ‘shall stop the noses of the passengers’ [Ezekiel 39:11], and it shall be a task of mammoth proportions merely to dispose of them” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:569).

Revelation 20:1–3. “The Bottomless Pit”

“The bottomless pit” is a term for the realm of Satan and those who follow him (Revelation 20:1, 3). Even there, God holds supreme authority, for it is God’s angel who has “the key of the bottomless pit” (Revelation 20:1; see Joseph Smith Translation, Revelation 9:1 [in Revelation 9:1, footnote *a*]).

Revelation 20:2–3. Satan Will Be Bound

John saw that Satan would be bound at the beginning of the Millennium and that for a thousand years he would “deceive the nations no more” (Revelation 20:3) or, as a modern revelation states, “not have power to tempt any man” (D&C 101:28; see also 1 Nephi 22:26; D&C 43:31; 88:110–11). During this time, “children shall grow up without sin unto salvation” (D&C 45:58).

Concerning Satan’s binding, **President Joseph F. Smith** (1838–1918) stated: “As to whether the binding of Satan is a literal binding as with a chain or not, it matters not. I am inclined to believe that the chain spoken of in the Bible, with which Satan is to be bound, is more figurative than real. [Satan] will be bound both by the faith of the righteous and the decrees of the Almighty during the Millennial reign and will be cast down into hell” (*From Prophet to Son: Advice of Joseph F. Smith to His Missionary Sons*, comp. Hyrum M. Smith III and Scott G. Kenney [1981], 71). The prophet Nephi taught that because of the righteousness of the Saints, Satan will have no power (see 1 Nephi 22:26).



Without Any Ire, by Nancy Glazier-Koehler. The Millennium will be a time of great peace (see Isaiah 11:6; 65:25; 2 Nephi 30:10–18).

Revelation 20:3, 7–8. “Loosed a Little Season”

The scriptures do not entirely explain why Satan “must be loosed a little season” after having been bound for the thousand years following Christ’s Second Coming (Revelation 20:3; see D&C 43:31). However, the Lord has revealed that after the thousand years have ended, people would “again begin to deny their God” (D&C 29:22). The Book of Mormon also describes a time when people again turned their hearts toward Satan after an extended season of peace and righteousness because of the pride that followed prosperity (see 4 Nephi 1:22–46). Whatever the reason that Satan will be loosed, John saw that after the Millennium, Satan would “deceive the nations . . . to gather them together” for a final battle against the Saints (Revelation 20:8; see D&C 88:110–11; the commentary for Revelation 20:7–10).

Revelation 20:4. “Judgment Was Given unto Them”

The enthroned beings John saw in Revelation 20:4 who were given power to judge may represent the Twelve Apostles Jesus called during His mortal ministry. Jesus said that these Apostles would sit on thrones and judge Israel (see Matthew 19:28; 1 Nephi 12:9–10; Mormon 3:19; D&C 29:12). Though the Lord has indicated that some of His servants will assist Him as judges, the scriptures also affirm that Jesus Christ Himself will be the great and final Judge of all (see John 5:22; Acts 10:42; 2 Nephi 9:41).

Revelation 20:5. “The First Resurrection” and “the Rest of the Dead”

John saw that many of the dead would be resurrected during what is called “the first resurrection” (Revelation 20:5–6). **Elder Bruce R. McConkie** explained the First Resurrection: “To those who lived before the resurrection of Christ, the day of his coming forth from the dead was known as the *first resurrection*. Abinadi and Alma, for instance, so considered it. (Mosiah 15:21–25; Alma 40.) To those who have lived since that day, the first resurrection is yet future and will take place at the time of the Second Coming. (D. & C. 88:96–102.) We have no knowledge that the resurrection is going on now or that any persons have been resurrected since the day in which Christ came forth excepting Peter, James, and Moroni, all of whom had special labors to perform in this day which necessitated tangible resurrected bodies” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 639). Those who will receive celestial and terrestrial bodies will come forth in the First Resurrection.

“The rest of the dead” who “lived not again until the thousand years were finished” (Revelation 20:5) are those of “the last resurrection” (D&C 76:85)—“the resurrection of the unjust” (D&C 76:17)—which occurs at the end of the Millennium (see D&C 88:100–101). This resurrection will include those who will inherit a telestial glory and those who will “remain filthy still” (D&C 88:102), meaning the sons of perdition who inherit no degree of glory but “go away into the lake of fire and brimstone, with the devil and his angels” (D&C 76:36; see Revelation 20:10). To read more about the order of the Resurrection, see the commentary for 1 Corinthians 15:23.

Revelation 20:7–10. A Final Battle

John saw that after the Millennium, Satan would be loosed, and he and his evil forces would again wage war against “the camp of the saints” and “the beloved city,” which is Zion, a place of safety and refuge (Revelation 20:8–9). John referred to Satan’s host by the symbolic names “Gog and Magog.” Ezekiel used these names to refer to foreign invaders who would attack Israel before the Lord’s coming (see Ezekiel 38–39), but in Revelation 20:7–9, “Gog and Magog” refer to the forces of Satan that will wage another battle at the end of the Millennium. Though the number of Satan’s forces will be “as the sand of the sea,” they will be “devoured” by “fire . . . from God out of heaven,” and the devil and his followers will be eternally “cast into the lake of fire and brimstone” (Revelation 20:8–10; see 2 Nephi 9:16; D&C 43:31–33; 88:110–16). With this final cleansing of evil, the earth will be prepared to receive celestial glory.

Latter-day revelation adds the detail that Michael the archangel, who is Adam (see D&C 27:11), will play an important role in this final battle by gathering the armies of God together against Satan and his armies (see D&C 88:112).

Revelation 20:10. What Is “the Lake of Fire and Brimstone”?

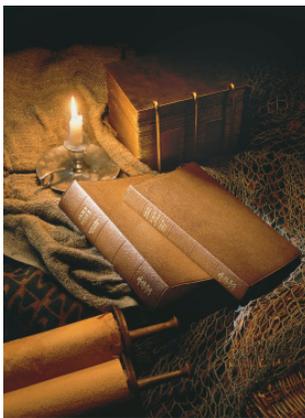
The Old Testament describes the destruction of the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire and brimstone from heaven (see Genesis 19:24). In the book of Revelation, fire and brimstone symbolize the destruction and ultimate abode of the wicked. **President Boyd K. Packer** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained:

“The prophets speak of the ‘gall of bitterness’ [Acts 8:23; Alma 41:11] and often compare the pain of guilt to fire and brimstone. *Brimstone* is another name for sulfur. . . .

“That lake of fire and brimstone, ever burning but never consumed, is the description in the scriptures for hell [see Revelation 19:20; 20:10; 21:8; D&C 63:17; 76:36]” (“The Touch of the Master’s Hand,” *Ensign*, May 2001, 23).

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** taught: “A man is his own tormentor and his own condemner. Hence the saying, They shall go into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone [see Revelation 21:8]. The torment of disappointment in the mind of man is as exquisite as a lake burning with fire and brimstone” (*Teachings: Joseph Smith* [2007], 224).

Revelation 20:12–15. Judged “According to Their Works”



The final judgment is part of God’s plan of salvation. John saw the day when all God’s children would stand before Christ to be “judged out of those things which were written in the books” (Revelation 20:12). These books include:

(1) The book of life (see Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; Alma 5:58; D&C 128:6–7; the commentary for Revelation 13:8). (2) Church records that record the saving ordinances and perhaps other actions of faith and devotion (see D&C 127:6–7, 9; 128:6–7). (3) The scriptures, which contain the standards and commandments by which we are to live our lives and by which we will be judged (see 2 Nephi 29:11; 33:15). In addition to these, “the books” might also refer to other sources of light and knowledge that were available to people during their lives.

The **Prophet Joseph Smith** taught, “God judges men according to the use they make of the light which He gives them” (*Teachings: Joseph Smith* [2007], 405). He also explained, “[The Lord] will award judgment or mercy to all nations according to their several deserts, their means of obtaining intelligence, the laws by which they are governed, the facilities afforded them of obtaining correct information, and His inscrutable designs” (*Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 404).

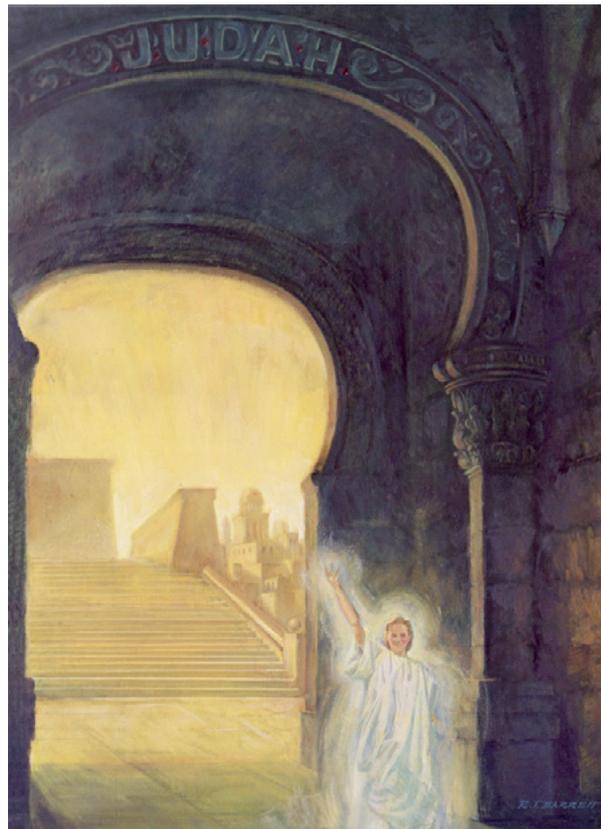
Revelation 21:1–4

What are “the former things” listed in these verses that will pass away with the coming of “a new heaven and a new earth”? What details in these verses mean the most to you?

Revelation 21:1. “A New Heaven and a New Earth”

As part of the Fall of Adam, the earth fell from a terrestrial (paradisiacal) state to a telestial state. When Christ returns and wickedness is destroyed, “Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and . . . the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory” (Articles of Faith 1:10). After the thousand years of Christ’s reign, the earth will be transformed yet again. The **Prophet Joseph Smith** described this change: “This earth will be rolled back into the presence of God and crowned with celestial glory” (*Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 258; see D&C 29:22–25; 88:18–20, 25–26).

Revelation 21:2–27; 22:1–5. “The Holy City, New Jerusalem”



The Holy City

John saw in vision “the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down” to earth, symbolizing God’s presence among His people (Revelation 21:2). The city was depicted as an enormous cube (see Revelation 21:16), which recalls the Holy of Holies in Solomon’s temple (see 1 Kings 6:19–20), also representative of God’s dwelling place. The symbolic elements John saw that

compose the city—clear glass, precious stones, pearls, and gold—share the traits of reflecting light; resisting decaying or tarnishing; and symbolizing purity, beauty, and refinement. The walls of the city were made with all manner of precious stones (see Revelation 21:18–21). Precious stones often represent the Lord’s followers who have been refined and made holy (see Exodus 28:9–10, 17–21; Isaiah 62:3; Malachi 3:17; D&C 60:4; 101:3).

The gates of the city were made of pearls and the streets of gold (see Revelation 21:21; D&C 137:1–4). Both pearls and gold can be seen as symbols of refinement: oysters produce pearls through pain and adversity, and gold requires fire to burn out impurities. The exalted will likewise have been refined through adversity (see Revelation 7:13–14).

There is no need of temples in the Holy City because all of the celestial kingdom will be as a temple; God Himself and Jesus Christ dwell there. There is no need of the sun there, for “the Lamb is the light thereof” (Revelation 21:23). John saw that a central feature of the Holy City was the tree of life, representative of the healing and eternal life found in the celestial kingdom (see Revelation 22:2). The tree of life in the Garden of Eden was guarded by cherubim after the Fall (see Genesis 3:24), but those who dwell in the Holy City have been redeemed from the Fall, and all there are free to partake of the everbearing tree of life in the celestial kingdom.

Revelation 21:4–5. No More Tears, Death, Sorrow, or Pain

Revelation 21:4 highlights the great restorative power of Christ’s Atonement, which will ultimately make all things right. Through the Atonement, all of life’s disadvantages, contradictions, injustices, and unfairness will be made right. **Elder Richard G. Scott** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles affirmed: “The Atonement will not only help us overcome our transgressions and mistakes, but in His time, it will resolve all inequities of life—those things that are unfair which are the consequences of circumstance or others’ acts and not our own decisions” (“Jesus Christ, Our Redeemer,” *Ensign*, May 1997, 54).

Revelation 21:7. “He That Overcometh”

Revelation 21:7 echoes the promises of exaltation found in Revelation 2–3 to those who overcome (see Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26–28; 3:5, 12, 21; see also D&C 76:58–60). In Revelation 21:7, the promise of inheriting

“all things” does not mean that those who are exalted will no longer worship God; the relationship of God to each of His exalted children is still clear: “I will be his God, and he shall be my son” (Revelation 21:7). For more information on worshipping Heavenly Father in the eternities, see the commentary for Revelation 4:8–11.

Revelation 21:8. “The Second Death”

For information about the second death, see the commentary for Revelation 2:11.

Revelation 22:4. “His Name Shall Be in Their Foreheads”

As in earlier passages in Revelation, to bear a name on one’s forehead indicates allegiance (see Revelation 3:12; 7:3; 13:16; 14:1; the commentary for Revelation 3:12). Bearing the name also suggests taking on the characteristics of the one named. Bearing God’s name on one’s forehead may also be connected to images of priesthood and temple service (see Exodus 28:36–38; Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 7:15). **Elder David A. Bednar** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained how receiving this blessing is associated with temple worship:

“In the dedicatory prayer of the Kirtland Temple, the Prophet Joseph Smith petitioned the Father ‘that thy servants may go forth from this house armed with thy power, and that thy name may be upon them’ (D&C 109:22). He also asked for a blessing ‘over thy people upon whom thy name shall be put in this house’ (v. 26). And as the Lord appeared in and accepted the Kirtland Temple as His house, He declared, ‘For behold, I have accepted this house, and my name shall be here; and I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house’ (D&C 110:7).

“These scriptures help us understand that the process of taking upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ that is commenced in the waters of baptism is continued and enlarged in the house of the Lord. . . . In the ordinances of the holy temple we more completely and fully take upon us the name of Jesus Christ” (“Honorably Hold a Name and Standing,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2009, 98).

Revelation 22:7. “I Come Quickly”

Elder Bruce R. McConkie helps us understand what it means that the Lord will “come quickly” (Revelation 22:7): “Not soon, but in a quick manner; that is, with speed and suddenness after all of the promised conditions precedent have occurred” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:590).

Revelation 22:8–9. “I Am Thy Fellowservant”

After all that John had seen and heard in his vision, he fell down to worship at the feet of the angel, but the angel replied, “See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow-servant” (Revelation 22:9). From modern scripture we learn about the angels who minister to the inhabitants of this earth: “There are no angels who minister to this earth but those who do belong or have belonged to it” (D&C 130:5). Hence, when messengers are sent to minister to the inhabitants of this earth, they are not strangers but are from the ranks of our kindred, friends, and fellow servants.

Revelation 22:18–19. “If Any Man Shall Add unto These Things”

The passage “If any man shall add unto these things” (Revelation 22:18) has been often misunderstood as a declaration that no scripture was to come forth after the writing of the book of Revelation. **Elder Jeffrey R. Holland** of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles clarified that this statement refers only to the book of Revelation, not to the Bible as a whole:

“One of the arguments often used in any defense of a closed canon is the New Testament passage recorded in Revelation 22:18: ‘For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of . . . this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.’ However, there is now overwhelming consensus among virtually all biblical scholars that this verse applies only to the book of Revelation, *not* the whole Bible. Those scholars of our day acknowledge a number of New Testament ‘books’ that were almost certainly written *after* John’s revelation on the Isle of Patmos was received. Included in this category are at least the books of Jude, the three Epistles of John, and probably the entire Gospel of John itself. Perhaps there are even more than these.

“But there is a simpler answer as to why that passage in the final book of the current New Testament cannot apply to the whole Bible. That is because the whole Bible as we know it—one collection of texts bound in a single volume—did not exist when that verse was written. For centuries after John produced his writing, the individual books of the New Testament were in circulation singly or perhaps in combinations with a few other texts but almost *never* as a complete collection. Of the entire corpus of 5,366 known Greek New Testament manuscripts, only 35 contain the whole New Testament

as we now know it, and 34 of those were compiled after A.D. 1000” (“My Words . . . Never Cease,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2008, 91–92).

Points to Ponder

- As you consider the description of Babylon found in Revelation 17:2–4; 18:3, 7, 9, 11–17, what attitudes toward wealth and material possessions do you notice? Do you have any similar attitudes that you may need to reexamine? (see Jacob 2:12–21).
- Revelation 19:7 states that the Lord’s “wife” (the Church and its members) made herself ready for the marriage “feast.” What are you doing to make yourself ready for the coming of the Lord?
- Why was it important for the Saints in John’s day to know the end of the story? Why is it important for us? How can knowing of the eventual triumph of Christ help you in the struggles of your daily life?

Suggested Assignments

- Take your journal and find a peaceful place where you can reflect on the splendor of the celestial kingdom as described in Revelation 21:1–22:5. Write a few of the thoughts you have as you consider the scriptural description of life with Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. Then share with someone what you are motivated to do in order to overcome the world and live forever with Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and all the righteous Saints.
- Think of a passage in Revelation 17–22 that you feel is particularly meaningful or applicable to you. Why did you select this passage? How will the principles in this passage influence the way you live? Write down your thoughts in your journal.



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