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Robert L. Millet

Doctrine of the Risen Christ (Parts 1, 2, and 3)

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Summary:

Robert Millet notes the differences between the teachings of Jesus in 3 Nephi and in the four Gospels. The Book of Mormon is more crucial now than ever before in witnessing to the truth of the Bible. Observing the intensified moral demands given by Jesus enables us to keep the Old Testament commandments more easily. Millet considers a more precise definition of what the "gospel" means than the broader definition often associated with that word.

Transcript
Book of Mormon, Christ

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The Doctrine of the Risen Christ (Part 1)

Robert L. Millet

We continue our study of the Nephite prophets and their messages by turning to the ministry of Christ in the Book of Mormon. Over the next few hours, we will consider the central messages of Jesus the resurrected Lord. Remember that he has appeared to the more righteous of the Nephite people, the wicked having been removed. I'd like to have us turn to 3 Nephi 19 to begin, and let's first look at verses 35 and 36. This is a description of the people. Remember that in his own country, Christ had difficulty generating faith among people. For example, in Nazareth he could do no mighty miracle because of their unbelief. Notice the contrast in 3 Nephi 19:35:

And it came to pass that when Jesus had made an end of praying he came again to the disciples, and said unto them: So great faith have I never seen among all the Jews; wherefore I could not show unto them so great miracles, because of their unbelief.

Verily I say unto you, there are none of them that have seen so great things as ye have seen; neither have they heard so great things as ye have heard.

So, we have a people of faith. The Nephites are also a people who, for generations, have had among them the fulness of the gospel. They have been a people who have enjoyed the ministry of angels. They have been a people who have enjoyed great signs and wonders. I am thinking, for example, of the ninth chapter of Alma where Alma and Amulek are preaching to the people and indicate that because of those great blessings, if the people should not prove worthy of those blessings, they will fall farther. So, the Nephites were a people who were a little different from the people Jesus had left in the Old World.

Jesus is now resurrected, fully perfected. The atonement is complete; the law of Moses is fulfilled. As you contemplate the risen Christ appearing to the Nephites and the Jesus of the Four Gospels, what differences do you see? What do you learn in the Book of Mormon about Christ? What contributions do we gain that lead us to greater understanding of the Savior here, over and beyond what we see in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John?

Student answer: One thing I notice is his manner of teaching in the New Testament, where he is speaking in parables all the time; it's a covert way of teaching. In 3 Nephi, Christ is very plain to the people—in fact, he is so plain to them that he speaks words that can't be written because they are so spiritual and powerful; it's a very overt manner of teaching.

That is a very good insight. In fact, how many parables do you discover in 3 Nephi? There are no parables. Do you remember why Jesus gave parables, as described in Matthew 13? Christ gives parables so that people can understand at differing levels. Parables don't generally serve to make things clearer. Parables veil meaning and therefore keep those who are not prepared to understand, from understanding. You don't see parables in the Book of Mormon. You have a people, as you indicated, who seem to be more receptive to Christ's message. Anything else?

Student answer: I notice a difference not necessarily in the teaching but in the way he addresses the people. It seems like *he* goes to *them*. In the New Testament, most people come to him. It is like they are a more faithful people, so he can go to them instead of having them come to him.

That is also a good insight. You know and I know that the Jesus of the Four Gospels is compassionate and understanding and tender, but do you sense in the Book of Mormon that this comes out even more? Notice his feelings and how close to the surface they are among the Nephites. Notice how often it is mentioned that when he had done this or when he had heard this, he wept.

I had a passage in mind that I'd like us to look at. It's in 3 Nephi 17. It seems to me that as chapter 17 begins, the Lord basically wants to leave at this point, that is, to end day one. But there is a problem. They don't want him to leave. Let's read verses 1-7: "Behold, now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words he looked round about again on the multitude, and he said unto them: Behold, my time is at hand. I perceive that ye are weak, that ye cannot understand all my words which I am commanded of the Father to speak unto you at this time" (3 Nephi 17:1-2).

By the way, I hadn't thought about this until this time, but what does that indicate about him? Notice his ability to perceive their weakness. He is a perceptive teacher. Notice he says, "I know you can't understand everything I have said. I know you don't fathom all of this." I remember very well at the October 1972 general

conference, President Harold B. Lee said the same thing. He referred to this incident and said, basically, "Look, I know you can't grasp it all, but go home and think on these things. We will come back in six months and do this again."

Let's continue with verses 3 through 7:

Therefore, go ye unto your homes, and ponder upon the things which I have said, and ask of the Father, in my name, that ye may understand, and prepare your minds for the morrow, and I come unto you again.

But now I go unto the Father, and also to show myself unto the lost tribes of Israel, for they are not lost unto the Father, for he knoweth whither he hath taken them.

And it came to pass that when Jesus had thus spoken, he cast his eyes round about again on the multitude, and beheld they were in tears, and did look steadfastly upon him as if they would ask him to tarry a little longer with them.

And he said unto them: Behold, my bowels are filled with compassion towards you.

Have ye any that are sick among you? Bring them hither. Have ye any that are lame, or blind, or halt, or maimed, or leprous, or that are withered, or that are deaf, or that are afflicted in any manner? Bring them hither and I will heal them, for I have compassion upon you; my bowels are filled with mercy.

This is a very touching description of what the Savior is feeling.

Now look over at verse 18:

And it came to pass that when Jesus had made an end of praying unto the Father, he arose; but so great was the joy of the multitude that they were overcome.

And it came to pass that Jesus spake unto them, and bade them arise.

And they arose from the earth, and he said unto them: Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold, my joy is full.

And when he had said these words, he wept, and the multitude bare record of it, and he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them.

And when he had done this he wept again. (3 Nephi 17:18-22)

And of course, then we have the beautiful scene that follows, with angels descending and ministering to the little children.

Look over in 3 Nephi 19:31-34:

And it came to pass that he went again a little way off and prayed unto the Father;

And tongue cannot speak the words which he prayed, neither can be written by man the words which he prayed.

And the multitude did hear and do bear record; and their hearts were open and they did understand in their hearts the words which he prayed.

Nevertheless, so great and marvelous were the words which he prayed that they cannot be written, neither can they be uttered by man.

That is an indication of the readiness and the receptivity of the audience. I have been in meetings on the other side of this, where a member of the Council of the Twelve would get into a subject, and I would be very excited about what I knew he was going to say. But then he would stop and say, "Maybe we'll talk about this some other time." The Savior was able to speak freely and say everything that he wanted to say to these people.

Anything else you have noticed in your studies of the Four Gospels and "the Fifth Gospel," if you will, or the account in 3 Nephi?

Student comment: Well, I think the atonement was such a traumatic thing for the Savior, and he had just come from people who had rejected him. Then he comes to people who have been ready and prepared for him. That would be a cause to weep and a cause to say thanks to these people who have accepted the atonement.

There is surely, as a teacher or leader, nothing more enjoyable than to enter into a setting where people just want to take everything you can give them. One of the Twelve Apostles said to me once what a joy it was to go into a stake where a stake president wanted to learn. He said that once he had come home from a conference and his wife met him at the airport. He was very tired and worn out. His wife asked if it was a difficult conference and if the members were not open. He said, "Oh, no, they were terribly open. I gave them everything I had!" I think that is a good insight.

Let's turn to some of the central messages in 3 Nephi. We can't cover everything, but let's try to cover some of the main messages of the Lord and Savior, the risen Savior, to the Nephites. Let's go to chapter 11. I guess we don't really know exactly when Christ came to the Nephites. There are people who take different sides to that issue. It seems to me, from 3 Nephi 11:8–11, that the text indicates several months had passed before he came. It is the ending of the thirty and fourth year (see 3 Nephi 10:18). The destruction began the first month of the thirty and fourth year (see 3 Nephi 8:5). The Savior appears at the ending of the thirty and fourth year.

In chapter 11—I hadn't planned to say anything about chapter 11, but I reread it last night—there seemed to be a message weaving itself through this. I'd like to call

this first message "the law of witnesses." Let's pick up with verse 8. The Father has introduced his beloved son, and now it says:

And it came to pass, as they understood they cast their eyes up again towards heaven; and behold, they saw a Man descending out of heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe; and he came down and stood in the midst of them; and the eyes of the whole multitude were turned upon him, and they durst not open their mouths, even one to another, and wist not what it meant, for they thought it was an angel that had appeared unto them.

And it came to pass that he stretched forth his hand and spake unto the people, saying . . . (3 Nephi 11:8-9)

I found myself reading this last night and thinking about the anticipation and eagerness there must have been. These are the first words of the risen Lord to the Nephites, other than his voice being heard in the previous chapters. Now he has appeared, and the opening words would seem to be very important.

. . . Behold, I am Jesus Christ, whom the prophets testified shall come into the world.

And behold, I am the light and the life of the world; and I have drunk out of that bitter cup which the Father hath given me . . .
(3 Nephi 11:10-11)

Which bitter cup? This is the same message given in Isaiah and modern revelation, where the Savior said, "I . . . have trodden the wine-press alone, even the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God" (D&C 76:107). Our Savior has been to Gethsemane; he has been to Golgatha. He has experienced what he never experienced before—the withdrawal of the Father's Spirit from him. He has known the agony of the atonement now, which he could not have known, even as the mighty Jehovah before the world was formed. So he says: "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."

And so, the first illustration of the law of witnesses is the Savior's witness of himself. What follows is interesting to me. I was reflecting on this last evening. The Lord then calls for the people to come forward one by one and become witnesses of the resurrection. There is, in a limited sense, a congregation of 2,500 people who now become apostles in their own way, because they become witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus.

Verse 14 says: "Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world." Though the words are not here, you would have to know that another attribute of the risen Lord was his patience. I don't know how long this took, but it had to take several hours. I have been in stake conferences where apostles and prophets have stood to shake hands with everyone that would, and they have stayed for an hour or two. This could have taken several hours for every one of those 2,500 people to pass by. I suppose that even if they only took a few seconds, it would have taken a long time—and some of us would be prone to take more time than that. So, we now have a people who become witnesses.

Verse 15 reads:

And it came to pass that the multitude went forth, and thrust their hands into his side, and did feel the prints of the nails in his hands and in his feet; and this they did do, going forth one by one until they had all gone forth, and did see with their eyes and did feel with their hands, and did know of a surety and did bear record, that it was he, of whom it was written by the prophets, that should come.

That is the same kind of language that John the Beloved used in his epistle. He was writing as one who had seen and felt and experienced. As these people went home at the end of a long and full day with the Savior, what interesting things they must have told family members about what they had experienced!

Let's now go to 3 Nephi 11:27–30; I call this "the importance of a united witness": "And after this manner shall ye baptize in my name; for behold, verily I say unto you, that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one; and I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one." Let's stop there for a second. What do we learn from this? This is an interesting thing. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one. "I am in the Father, the Father in me," he says. What's going on? What is the doctrinal message here? What is he saying?

Student answer: To me, it seems he is saying how one these people are and how these people have gathered together at the temple as one. He is trying to say to them, "You came as a group, as one, just as we [the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost] are one." To me it is symbolic of the unity of the group along with the unity of the godhead.

Excellent insight. We go to great lengths, as Latter-day Saints, to stress that there is a Father, that there is a Son, that there is a Holy Ghost, and that they are separate and distinct individuals, that they are not somehow mystically intertwined as one spirit essence. But the fact of the matter is that they are infinitely more one than they are separate. They happen to be separate in body, separate distinct individuals, but they are one. The Father is in Christ; Christ is in the Father. That is describing that indwelling relationship that exists between them. And I like your comment about the oneness of the people. I remember Elder Bruce R. McConkie talking in *The Promised Messiah* about this. Why such stress, why such emphasis on oneness and unity among the members of the godhead? How much more graphically could we illustrate that there is only one way—that people must be united in the faith and that we are to come unto God?¹

Let's continue with verse 28:

And according as I have commanded you thus shall ye baptize.
And there shall be no disputations among you, as there have hitherto been; neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there have hitherto been.

For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

You may recall that in the first chapter of Alma, we have an incident in the history of the Nephites wherein certain of the members of the church who are being confronted and attacked, because of their belief, by anti-Christians choose to attack back. They become kind of anti-antis. The account is very descriptive concerning what takes place. They lose the Spirit of the Lord and are eventually cut off from the faith. When we contend in this way, in terms of argument or debate, about the truthfulness of the gospel, we have stepped out of context. The Lord doesn't operate that way. It is as if he is saying, "I don't care if you are right. You are wrong if you do it this way." Going on, verse 30 says: "Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away."

The other example of the law of witnesses I see in chapter 11 is found in verses 21 and 22, where the Savior appoints Nephi and calls twelve others to do what? It is

¹ See Bruce R. McConkie, *The Promised Messiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 131–2.

interesting to note that these are twelve leaders of the Nephites, and what is their first assignment? What is the Lord going to have them do? Baptize. Of all the things that an apostle can do, what is his first responsibility? To baptize. It is interesting that in Doctrine and Covenants 20:38, the revelation simply says, "An apostle is an elder, and it is his calling [duty] to baptize." We speak often of the Nephite Twelve as "disciples" and try to distinguish them from the Twelve Apostles of the Lord in the Holy Land. The fact is, these Nephite disciples have apostolic duties, they have apostolic responsibility, and they have apostolic power.

It is interesting to me that in the Wentworth Letter, Joseph Smith said this, speaking of the Book of Mormon: "This book also tells us that our Savior made His appearance upon this continent after His resurrection; that He planted the Gospel here in all its fulness, and richness, and power, and blessing; that they had Apostles, Prophets, Pastors, Teachers, and Evangelists; the same order, the same priesthood, the same ordinances, gifts, powers, and blessings."² These Nephite leaders are, in very deed, apostles, just as were their Old World counterparts. (Notice that verses 31 through 41 contain a statement, a witness, about the doctrine of Christ. I don't want to cover that now. We will cover that in a later hour as we talk about 3 Nephi 27.)

The first major message of 3 Nephi 11 is the law of witnesses. Chapters 12, 13, 14, contain the sermon—this is important and well-known enough that we will just call it "the sermon." Let's think for a moment about the difference between the sermon in Galilee and the sermon at Bountiful. The Galilean sermon seems to be almost exclusively an apostolic preparation. It is an MTC, a missionary training center, for the Twelve. There are a few other people there, but it is not generally given to the multitude. It is given to the Twelve. In the Book of Mormon, as Jesus speaks, to whom does he speak? He speaks to the Nephite Twelve, but he also speaks to a multitude. One of the very gentle evidences of the truthfulness of this record, in my mind, is the fact that I just don't believe Joseph Smith would have known, at that early age in his ministry, when to break the record and have Jesus turn from the Twelve, by saying, "And then he turned to the multitude and said . . ." And it's so appropriate, as we'll see. There are times when the message is for everybody, and

² Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 4:538.

there are times when it is just for the Twelve. An illustration that we probably won't cover in depth is the passage, "Take ye no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink" (3 Nephi 13:25; cf. D&C 84:81). The principle is true for all of us, but it is a specific charge for the apostles and is so designated in the New Testament *and* in the Book of Mormon.

As I thought of chapters 12, 13, and 14, I thought about what is going on here in regard to repeating the same message. Why say something over and over? I'd like you to think about this. When Nephi, very early in our record, was taken into vision and had the same visionary experience that his father, Lehi, had, among the things he saw was that a time would come when plain and precious truths and many covenants of the Lord would be taken from the Bible. Back in 1 Nephi 13, he saw that that would happen. He saw that a time would also come, though, when the Book of Mormon would come forth and other books would come forth, and what would they do? They would establish that Jesus is the Christ, but they would also establish the essential truthfulness of the Bible itself.

Let me refer you to something that I have come to appreciate in recent years. This is a segment of a talk given by President Harold B. Lee in 1971 at an LDSSA fireside:

Fifty years ago or more, when I was a missionary, our greatest responsibility was to defend the great truth that the Prophet Joseph Smith was divinely called and inspired and that the Book of Mormon was indeed the word of God. But even at that time there were the unmistakable evidences that there was coming into the religious world actually a question about the Bible and about the divine calling of the Master himself. Now, fifty years later, our greatest responsibility and anxiety is to defend the divine mission of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, for all about us, even among those who claim to be professors of the Christian faith, are those not willing to stand squarely in defense of the great truth that our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, was indeed the Son of God. So tonight it would seem to me that the most important thing I could say to you is to try to strengthen your faith and increase your courage and your understanding of the place of the Master in the great Plan of Salvation.

The vital necessity of having that testimony was put in language by a beloved colleague of ours, the late President Charles A. Callis, who was a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, and before that served for many years as president of the Southern States Mission. He [Brother Callis] said: "Beautiful flowers do not grow on a rosebush unless the parent bush has its roots firmly planted in rich fertile soil, unless it is watered, cultivated, unless it is pruned and carefully cared for by a gardener. Just so, beautiful flowers of sobriety, honesty, integrity, and

virtue do not blossom in a human soul unless the feet of that human soul are firmly planted in a divine testimony of the mission of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.”³

That was in 1971. More than twenty years later, we find ourselves living in a society where it is becoming quite the fad to doubt the historicity not just of the Book of Mormon but of the New Testament. We have people rising up on all sides telling us what they are convinced Jesus said and what he didn’t say. As you may know, a recent group, called the Jesus Seminar, had the contention that 82 percent of all that was written in the Gospels was never spoken by Jesus. It is okay as long as Jesus talks about flowers and pretty days. But when he talks about Messiah, resurrection, life after death, or godhood, they conclude it couldn’t have been Jesus himself who said those things.

It occurred to me as I was thinking about this the last few days what an interesting witness the Book of Mormon becomes. That the Nephite writers would feel moved upon to give to us much of what is in the New Testament—there are slight differences, but it contains much of what is in the New Testament—establishes the truthfulness that the Savior delivered a message that is important. Doctrine and Covenants 20:11 says the Lord said one of the purposes of the Book of Mormon is to prove to the world that the holy scriptures are true. And so, as we dip into this important sermon, let’s keep in mind that one of the things we are doing through the Book of Mormon is establishing that there was a Lord and Savior, that he did preach, and that we can rely, for the most part, on what is in the Bible.

When I teach this sermon, I often tell students to consider that this sermon represents a call to a higher righteousness. For example, let’s notice in the Book of Mormon the things that the Lord wants us to know. Look back in 3 Nephi 9:13. Part of the call to a higher righteousness, even before we come to the sermon, is this one. Notice what the Savior says, beginning in verse 13: “O all ye that are spared because ye were more righteous than they, will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, that I may heal you?” Isn’t that interesting? In other words, these people are not all glowingly righteous; they are just better than some of the bad guys. Verse 14: “Yea, verily I say unto you, if ye will come unto me ye shall

³ Paul R. Cheesman, ed., *The Book of Mormon: The Keystone Scripture* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young

have eternal life. Behold, mine arm of mercy is extended towards you, and whosoever will come, him will I receive; and blessed are those who come unto me."

You know, it would be an interesting study just to take the word *come* and notice how it is used by Christ. In the last several years, notice how often we have been given this idea of "come unto Christ." We have restated the mission of the Church; it is to invite all to come unto Christ through three means. Notice how many times these verses, verses 15–19, use the words *come unto me*:

Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. I was with the Father from the beginning. I am in the Father, and the Father in me [there's that phrase again]; and in me hath the Father glorified his name.

I came unto my own, and my own received me not. And the scriptures concerning my coming are fulfilled.

And as many as have received me, to them have I given to become the sons of God . . .

What an interesting idea. I thought we already *were* the sons and daughters of God. The principle is that because of the fall, we are not only alienated from things of righteousness, but we are alienated from the divine family. Thus the atonement not only forgives sins but reinstates us in the family of God. We become the sons and daughters of God once again, through adoption through the covenant.

. . . And even so will I to as many as shall believe on my name, for behold, by me redemption cometh, and in me is the law of Moses fulfilled.

I am the light and the life of the world. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and your burnt offerings.

Therefore, with the redemption of Christ, we are bringing to an end that which had begun a long time before. How long before? In whose days? In the days of Adam. Adam learned about the offering of sacrifices, and now we are bringing, four thousand years later, an end to an important ritual and religious ordinance. We're not going to lose the principle, though: "And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (3 Nephi 9:20).

Let's talk about that for a second. The call to a higher righteousness is a call to put away the *ordinance* of sacrifice for now, but at the same time to put on the *principle* of sacrifice. It is to gain a broken heart. Why would you ever want to have a broken heart? Most of us who have had broken hearts haven't liked it. Why should we have a broken heart or a contrite spirit? What comes to mind?

Student answer: Before a horse can be ridden and used in the service of man, it must be "broken." And then it is able to be led by the person riding it. We have to know who our Master is. If the Lord is the one guiding us, then we are to be broken and can be guided by him.

Good. So our being broken is the Lord's way of preparing us to receive. It is an interesting thing. As we realize our nothingness without the Lord, and as we realize his greatness, we are more open to be taught, to be trained, to be fashioned. *Contrite* is a word that implies "crushed spirit." That sounds brutal, but it means that if I occasionally have a heart that can't be molded, it has to be broken. That is so that I can be submissive.

Verse 20 continues: "... And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost, even as the Lamanites, because of their faith in me at the time of their conversion, were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not." What an interesting phrase that is, referring, presumably, to what took place in Helaman 5, where Nephi and Lehi are ministering and a tremendous conversion takes place. But look at this language: they are converted, they are "baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and they knew it not." As President Benson taught, most of us are born again, changed, and converted, by process and by degree, a little bit at a time. Here a bit, there a bit. Most of the change that comes to us is slow, even imperceptible.⁴ And verse 21 says: "Behold, I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin." And so, the first invitation to a higher righteousness is to gain a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

Let's go back to 3 Nephi 12 and begin discussing the sermon. Do you notice right away that as we dive into the chapter, we are introduced to what I suppose could be called two additional Beatitudes? Does anybody know what the word *beatitude*

refers to? It is related to the word *beatific*, "the glorious," or "the blessed." This is the series of "the blessed," beginning, "Happy is the man [or woman] who . . ." In the Nephite record, we find two additional Beatitudes, if you will. Let's read 3 Nephi 12:1 and 2 and see if we can pick up on these additional Beatitudes:

And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words unto Nephi, and to those who had been called, (now the number of them who had been called, and received power and authority to baptize, was twelve) and behold, he stretched forth his hand unto the multitude, and cried unto them, saying: 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; and unto them I have given power that they may baptize you with water; and after that ye are baptized with water, behold, I will baptize you with fire and with the Holy Ghost; therefore blessed are ye if ye shall believe in me and be baptized, after that ye have seen me and know that I am.

And again, more blessed are they who shall believe in your words because that ye shall testify that ye have seen me, and that ye know that I am. Yea, blessed are they who shall believe in your words, and come down into the depths of humility and be baptized, for they shall be visited with fire and with the Holy Ghost, and shall receive a remission of their sins.

Notice the detail that is there. That is important detail. I am touched by the fact that one of the very first things he says to them is, essentially, "Blessed are those who give heed to the words of the Twelve whom I have chosen." What an interesting way to begin. It seems to me that acceptance of the Lord's servants, eagerness, and willingness to hear their words and abide their counsel really does underlie much of what matters in this life.

It has occurred to me that perhaps there are two sources of spiritual power in our lives. One, the obvious one, is righteousness. The more faithful we are, the more we open ourselves to spiritual power. The more we study scripture, the more we keep the commandments, the more we serve. The second source of spiritual power is not so obvious. It is the idea that loyalty to the Lord's anointed opens us to a spiritual power that we could not have otherwise.

When you read, in the 21st section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the blessings and benefits that flow to the members who give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, it is sobering. It says, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against [them]

⁴ See Ezra Taft Benson, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 72.

... the Lord God will disperse the powers of darkness from before [them]" (D&C 21:6). That is pretty strong language. So it is meaningful to me that the Savior would begin with the idea of giving heed to the Twelve. It would never make any sense to say, "I will accept what Jesus says, but I'm just not going to listen to Peter, James, and John." In our day it would make little sense to say, "Well, I don't care much for the First Presidency. I am just getting close to Jesus on my own." That is absolutely impossible. One cannot reject the mantle of authority worn by the Lord's servants and expect to know the Master. It just doesn't work. So, that is one thing we learn in this sermon.

What comes up in the second verse? Here we see that there are ordinances associated with the full realization of what follows—that is to say, though the Beatitudes, or the blessed state enjoyed by people, can, to some degree, be experienced by everyone, they have a special meaning for those of the household of faith. These things, many of them gifts of the Spirit, can only be had in their full measure by those who have been changed and renewed by the Holy Spirit. So, that second verse implies the importance of ordinances. You have a Christian world, for example, that says being born again consists in receiving the sacraments of the church. You have a segment of the Christian world that says being born again consists in having a personal spiritual experience. Joseph Smith comes on the scene and says that being born again comes *by* the Spirit of God *through* ordinances; they are both necessary.

Beginning in verse 3, we pick up with the traditional Beatitudes, the blessedness: "Yea, blessed are the poor in spirit [of course, what is added?] who come unto me, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." It isn't just enough to be bankrupt in soul, to be bankrupt in spirit, and to acknowledge one's bankruptcy, as it were; it has to be an acknowledgment before the greatness of something else. The message is very clear. It isn't enough just to be humble. To be humble is to acknowledge. It was once said of President Harold B. Lee that his greatness consisted in the fact that he knew that he walked in the shadow of the Almighty. Verses 4 and 5 say: "And again, blessed are all they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. And blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Generally, I think when you mention meekness, people automatically think of humility. They are certainly related, but I don't think Christ

would give us the same virtue twice. Meekness is one of the most misunderstood virtues, I suppose. In our day, which is a macho world, we are prone to talk in terms of avoiding meekness. We talk about people who are meek as being “milk toast,” as having no spine. That is not what the Lord intended. Meekness has to do with emotional control. Meekness has to do with being in charge of one’s emotions, acting with poise under provocation.

In one of my favorite statements on this subject of meekness, President Howard W. Hunter says:

And what of the meek? In a world too preoccupied with winning through intimidation and seeking to be number one, no large crowd is standing in line to buy books that call for mere meekness. But the meek shall inherit the earth, a pretty impressive corporate takeover—and done *without* intimidation! Sooner or later, and we pray sooner rather *than* later, everyone will acknowledge that Christ’s way is not only the *right* way, but ultimately the *only* way to hope and joy. Every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that gentleness is better than brutality, that kindness is greater than coercion, that the soft voice turneth away wrath. In the end, and sooner than that whenever possible, we must be more like him.⁵

That is a great statement—“a pretty impressive corporate takeover.”

Verse 6 reads, “And blessed are all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.” Can you see the relationship of this concept of hungering and thirsting after righteousness to the Lord’s call for us, in Doctrine and Covenants 59:14, to continue in fasting and prayer? Well, you say, fasting is doing without food and water. Yes, and fasting is also hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

Verses 7 and 8: “And blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. And blessed are all the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” What comes to mind there is the concept of who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord and who shall stand in his holy place, and that is, “he that hath clean hands, and a pure heart” (Psalms 24:4).

Next, verse 9: “And blessed are all the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.” Peacemakers. On first blush we think of those who get along with others, those who settle disputes, and that is certainly someone the Lord had in mind. But think also, in a broader way, of how Abinadi defined peacemakers. Go

⁵ Howard W. Hunter, *That We Might Have Joy* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 9–10.

back with me to Mosiah 15:13: "Yea, and are not the prophets, every one that has opened his mouth to prophesy, that has not fallen into transgression, I mean all the holy prophets ever since the world began? I say unto you that they are his seed." This is Abinadi talking about Isaiah 53, as we know. "Who were the seed of Christ" is the answer to the question. Go on to verses 14–18:

And these are they that have published peace, who have brought good tidings of good, who have published salvation; and said unto Zion: Thy God reigneth!

And O how beautiful upon the mountains were their feet!

And again, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those that are still publishing peace! [So, one description of a peacemaker is one who is declaring peace. He goes on:]

And again, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who shall hereafter publish peace, yea, from this time henceforth and forever!

And behold, I say unto you, this is not all. For O how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that is the founder of peace, yea, even the Lord, who has redeemed his people, yea, him who has granted salvation unto his people.

In other words, the Prince of Peace is Christ himself.

Let's go back to 3 Nephi 12. We can't cover everything, but let's just look at a few things that are here. Look at verse 13: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I give unto you to be the salt of the earth; but if the salt shall lose its savor wherewith shall the earth be salted? The salt shall be thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men." Why would the Lord use salt as an illustration? What property does salt have that the Lord would want to use it to have people be like salt?

Student answer: Salt, until this last century, was used as a preservative.

Yes, as a preservative. So, how is it that he wants people to be preservatives? How are the Saints to be preservatives?

Student answer: Well, men have a tendency to become corrupt. That's human nature. Preservatives can help the race be preserved.

All right. We help preserve the human race. Do you notice how many times in the Book of Mormon the Lord will say something like, "Were it not for the righteous element that is among you, I would destroy this city"? So, the righteous are as a preservative. What else is salt? Well, interestingly, this is not something to really ponder, but it is a purgative. It purges the system of that which is unclean. Salt is

also a spice or a flavor. Think about this. It is that which brings out the best in other things; it is a flavor enhancer.

Think about this. In Doctrine and Covenants 101:39–40, we are told that the Savior's commission to us to become the salt of the earth has to do with our acceptance of the covenant gospel. Those who accept that gospel and come into it by covenant are expected to make a difference. That is the whole idea. We are expected to spice up the earth, to flavor the earth, to preserve the earth, to purge the earth. The earth should be better because we are in it. I remember Brother Carlos Asay, at the April 1980 general conference, saying to the brethren in the priesthood session: "Salt will not lose its flavor with age. Savor is lost through mixture and contamination."⁶ That is a great message.

Move to the next verse, 3 Nephi 12:14: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I give unto you to be the light of this people. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." A few years ago I wrote this passage, which kind of reflects my feelings on what it means to be a light unto the world:

In a world which is too often shrouded in uncertainty and doubt, the Light of Life bids us to let out light shine, to stand as beacons in the storms of the night, and to certify our discipleship by preachment and practice. Discipleship entails example. Discipleship involves standing out from the generality of mankind and standing up for what is true and right and good. We come to make a difference only when we are different, and that difference must be substantive enough to be witnessed and then acknowledged by others.⁷

In connection with this idea, President Harold B. Lee once warned that "any Latter-day Saint in Church circles, in military service, in social life, or in the business community is looked upon not just as an individual, but as the visible Church today. Someone has said, 'Be careful of how you act, because you may be the only Standard Church Works some people may ever read.'"⁸

In a world in which values and direction are set by consensus, the Savior bids his disciples to cleanse the inner vessel within themselves, work in harmony with others of the household of faith, and seek to build up and establish the cause of Zion. Zion, the society of the pure in heart, is a city of light. It stands in marked contrast to Babylon, the

⁶ Carlos E. Asay, "Salt of the Earth: Savor of Men and Saviors of Men," *Ensign* (May 1980): 42.

⁷ Robert L. Millet, *An Eye Single to the Glory of God: Reflections on the Cost of Discipleship* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991), 47.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

abode of darkness, the gathering place of the worldly and the wayward. Babylon is the city of man; Zion, the city of God. Zion is the receptacle of virtue; Babylon, the embodiment of vice. Babylon judges according to ephemeral whims and current trends; Zion, according to the rock of revealed religion. Zion thus becomes the banner, the ensign to which the honest in heart rally when they have become weary of the shifting sands of secularity.⁹

In verse 17, the Savior makes reference to coming not to *destroy* the law of the prophets but to *fulfill* the law. Let me just ask a question. You hear all the time that the Savior “fulfilled the law.” What does that mean? Does he do away with things? Well, some things are done away with; we have just read about animal sacrifice being done away. But does he do away with the commandment not to murder, not to commit adultery, and so forth? No. What does he do? If the law, as Amulek says in Alma 34, is the prophecy of Christ and his atonement, then Jesus fulfills the law in the sense that he fulfills the prophecy. Another way of saying it, and I like this statement from Elder Bruce R. McConkie, is:

Now Jesus came to restore that gospel fulness which men had enjoyed before the day of Moses, before the time of the lesser order. Obviously he did not come to destroy what he himself had revealed to Moses anymore than a college professor destroys arithmetic by revealing the principles of integral calculus to his students. Jesus came to build on the foundation Moses laid. By restoring the fulness of the gospel he fulfilled the need for adherence to the terms and conditions of the preparatory gospel. No one any longer needed to walk by the light of the moon, for the sun had risen in all its splendor.¹⁰

Now, as we look ahead in the rest of this chapter, notice the call to a higher righteousness. It deals with such matters as killing and murder. If that were the original call, what is the call now? Avoid anger. If not committing adultery was the original commandment, what is the call now? It is a call to avoid lust and lustful thoughts. If problems with divorce are the issue, what is the call now? To see to the sanctity of marriage. If the problem were the breaking of oaths, what is the call now? To swear no oaths. (I once had a missionary companion who I think misunderstood this one. He would often, when he stubbed his toe or had someone slam a door on his fingers, say, “Yea, yea, nay, nay!” I never understood what he was doing. He

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973), 1:219–20.

would always say, "Yea, yea, nay, nay!" whenever anything would go wrong. I finally said, "Elder, what is it you are doing?" And he said, "The scriptures say swear not at all, but say, 'Yea, yea, nay, nay.'" Well, it is best not to cuss, best not to profane, but I don't think that is what the Lord is talking about.) If, originally, people had somehow been taught that it is well and important and you're commanded to love your neighbor and hate your enemy, now what is the call? Love your enemies.

In verse 48 we come to the highest commission of all: "Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect," he now being perfected. Well, this is the beginning of the Savior's commission, or command, for us to come to a higher level, to stand on higher ground. We are not destroying or speaking unkindly of the law. It served an important function. Jesus now calls us to stand on that law and move to a higher level of righteousness. The law of witnesses, the call to a higher righteousness, is the introduction to the message of the Savior. That it is true and that the Book of Mormon bears witness of those eternal truths is my witness, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The Doctrine of the Risen Christ (Part 2)

Robert L. Millet

In the last hour we talked about the Savior calling us to a higher righteousness. We talked in 3 Nephi 11 about the Lord's system, or law, of witnesses. I want to look again at this call to a higher righteousness by saying a few more things about 3 Nephi 12. There is a sense in which perhaps the Savior is hedging, or "fencing the Torah," as the rabbis used to say. If the commandment were "Thou shalt not A," then the Savior seems to be telling us to avoid anything that would come close to A.

In the early 1970s Elder Hartman Rector Jr. gave a fascinating talk in general conference about how when he was in the Navy, he and his copilots used to see how close they could come in their planes to the tops of the trees. It occurred to them that if the engine should even cough, they would be in trouble. The Navy had a rule that went something like this: "Thou shalt not fly thy planes through the trees." Elder Rector and his friends decided that to avoid the real problem, they would establish their own rule: "Thou shalt not fly thy planes lower than 1,000 feet above the trees."

If the command is "Thou shalt not kill," then surely we would want to avoid anything that would get us in the path of that. So, the Savior tells us, in verse 21 and thereafter, to avoid anger. Let's go to 3 Nephi 12:23–24: "Therefore, if ye shall come unto me, or shall desire to come unto me, and rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee—go thy way unto thy brother, and first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come unto me with full purpose of heart, and I will receive you." I think we usually read that this way: If you want to come unto the Lord and you know you have bad feelings toward someone, work them out. But that is not what he said. He said, if you want to come unto the Lord and you know that someone has bad feelings toward you, *you* better go work on them. Our tendency is to say, "That's *his* problem." The Lord is saying that it is *your* problem too, indicating that you and I have a responsibility to do what we can to work out unkind feelings that other people have toward us. Now, we may not be able to do that, but we can try.

Verse 27 repeats the command against committing adultery, or sexual sin. And so, if we are to "fence the Torah," if we are to draw a line before that law, what do we do? We learn to control lust and lustful thoughts. Thus, in modern revelation, in

Doctrine and Covenants 42:23 and 63:16, the Lord specifically says that when a man looks upon a woman (we presume that also means when a woman looks upon a man) with lust, he or she loses the Spirit and denies the faith. If the person doesn't repent, he or she will lose membership in the Lord's church. Verse 30 reads: "For it is better that ye should deny yourselves of these things, wherein ye will take up your cross, than that ye should be cast into hell."

Then comes verses 31 and 32. This is hard doctrine. We can't tell to what degree the Nephites may have had difficulty with marriage laws, as was the case in the Old World. You are probably aware that in the Old World, Jesus was essentially trying to slow down the quick-and-easy divorce that was so prevalent among his people. There were both conservative and liberal rabbis, as you know, but among the more liberal rabbis, the reading on divorce and marriage went something like this: A divorce could be had just because you were tired of this person, or because she burned your beans, or because you found yourself more attracted to a younger woman. Jesus comes onto the scene and says, essentially, "Wait a minute. It was never intended to be this way. If I had my way, if things were as they should be, the only time that divorce would be permissible and appropriate would be in the case of serious violation against that marriage through sexual transgression." In the Old World, Jesus was calling them to a higher righteousness in regard to the sanctity of marriage. Even that standard didn't hold in his day, though.

It is what Brother Benson used to call "the Samuel principle." President Benson said that ancient Israel wanted a king, like all the nations. Samuel said, "You don't want a king. If you have a king, this will happen." The people cried, "No, we want a king. We want to be like all the nations." And they insisted, so the Lord gave them a king. The principle Brother Benson went on to teach is that sometimes the Lord will allow some things that are less than the ideal, because that is all the people are then ready to receive. I think it is like this in our day in regard to marriage and divorce. Divorces are permitted today in the true church for reasons other than sexual transgression. If the Lord had his way, if all things were as they should be, the higher standard would hold. But inasmuch as all men and women cannot abide by that high standard, other things are practiced. The principle at stake here that we would

abide by is that the present practice of the Church constitutes the interpretation of the scripture.

Again, whether the Nephites had that kind of problem with divorce, I don't know. I can't tell. If they did, then it is wise that the Savior repeats the same counsel. But even if they didn't, it seems that the Lord is trying to let the people in the New World know what he taught in the Old World. Look at 3 Nephi 15:1: "And now it came to pass that when Jesus had ended these sayings he cast his eyes round about on the multitude, and said unto them: Behold, ye have heard the things which I taught before I ascended to my Father." So, if for no other reason, the Lord presents it to the Nephites so they would know what the people in the Old World received.

We talked about verses 33 and 34 last time, where it speaks of swearing oaths. Let's just make this clarification: The oath was the most sacred, most solemn agreement into which an individual could enter; the swearing of an oath was something that was not taken lightly. You may remember in the Book of Mormon how seriously oaths were received. It is written in the Nephite account that "when Zoram had made an oath unto us, our fears did cease concerning him" (1 Nephi 4:37). That is an indication of how strong an oath was.

Remember that oaths were such that even bad guys didn't break oaths. One of the enemies of the Nephites refused to enter into an oath of peace by saying, basically, "I will not make an oath that I know I will break" (see Alma 44:8). It was unheard of to break oaths. Oaths, for a time, served a function, but over time, by the time of Jesus, oaths became loopholes. People began to swear by things over which they had no control. In the beginning people would swear an oath and therefore certify that they would not do this or would not do that, and you could trust them. After a while people began to swear by the moon, by the stars, by the earth—things over which they had no control. Jesus calls people to a higher righteousness, and what is the call? Let your word be your bond. If you say, "Yea," mean yea; if you say "Nay," mean nay. "Whatsoever cometh of more than these is evil," he says in verse 37 (see also Matthew 5:37). And in verse 38, he says, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." There were, in ancient Israel, as you know, laws of reparation and damage. Under the law of Moses, the system was that if an injury was done to you, it would

be appropriate on your part to expect someone to repair the damages. Ancient Israel didn't live under some barbaric idea that if someone happened to accidentally poke your eye out, you should search them out and poke their eye out. That is barbaric. No, it was the idea of repairs and damages. The Lord again calls us to a higher level of righteousness.

Verse 43 of 3 Nephi 12 is very interesting. It reads: "And behold it is written also, that thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy." As you know, that also appears in the New Testament. The haunting thing about this is that I am not aware of any passage in the Old Testament that speaks of loving your friends and hating your enemies. Jehovah never told people to hate their enemies. It may well be that in New Testament times, Jesus was responding not to the Old Testament but to a tradition that was very strong among the members of the Qumran community, the Dead Sea Scrolls community. They had as a part of their tradition their manual of discipline, which held the idea that "thou shalt love the sons of light and hate the sons of darkness"—i.e., hate those outside the faith. It seems that maybe the Lord is responding to that and saying that a higher call would be to love your enemies.

Let's go to 3 Nephi 13. This chapter seems to be a call not only to a higher righteousness but to a higher motivation. I don't know and you don't know all the reasons people do what they do, and the Savior is going to warn us soon enough to be careful about judging people's motives. I know me, and it seems to me that I can do the right things for the right reason or the right things for the wrong reason, and maybe I can do the wrong things for the right reason and the wrong things for the wrong reason. That seems to be a discussion that is going on here. It is the call not only to do the right things, but to do them for the right reasons. You will occasionally hear people say, "Oh, the way I feel right now, it would be better not to go to church." No, it is better to go to church. "With the way I feel about this, I shouldn't even pay tithing." No, we should pay tithing, but the Lord calls us to try to gain a new motivation.

So let's pick up with 3 Nephi 13:1-2:

Verily, verily, I say that I would that ye should do alms unto the poor [alms meaning good deeds, kindly things, giving money in some

cases]; but take heed that ye do not your alms before men to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father who is in heaven.

Therefore, when ye shall do your alms do not sound a trumpet before you, as will hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.

What does that mean by “they have their reward”? That is a spooky phrase. Someone give me a commentary on that.

Student comment: That is what they really want—the praise of men—and they got what they wanted.

Therefore they shouldn’t expect any glory or blessings hereafter. They got their reward, so they are fine. They wanted the praise, so they got the praise. Verse 3 says: “But when thou doest alms let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.” What a strange phrase—“Don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.” What is the meaning? This is the call to try to avoid ulterior motivation. I believe this chapter is a call to do among the most difficult things we are called to do as Christians. It is one thing to ask people to do the right thing. It is another thing entirely to say, “Oh, by the way, do it for the right reason.” This is a call to try to see to it that we are not doing the right thing for the wrong reason. The right hand not letting the left hand know what it is doing, or vice versa, is a call for us to see to it that our motives are pure. Verse 4: “That thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father who seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly.”

Okay, so we’ve discussed good deeds. Now let’s go to prayer.

Verse 5 says: “And when thou prayest thou shalt not do as the hypocrites, for they love to pray, standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.” You know, what comes to my mind—and I’ll just turn to this—is this wonderful parable that the Savior spoke in Luke 18, starting with verse 9: “He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican [meaning a tax gatherer, a people who were hated]. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, [and that is a great way of saying it] God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast

twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:9–13). Jesus says, "I tell you, this man [the sinner] went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:14). So, there's that same idea that they have their reward.

We are talking about praying. Let's go on, with 3 Nephi 13:6–8:

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret; and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Be not ye therefore like unto them, for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him.

Think about this one. It says, "Use not vain repetitions." I think sometimes as we teach this in the Church, we place emphasis in the wrong place. I have heard people say that we should be careful that we don't have repetition. I don't think that is the problem. How many different ways can you bless the food, for instance? Do you have an original prayer every time you bless the food? If you do, I want to talk to you, because I don't. The issue is not the repetition. The issue is not the number of times you are going to pray. The issue is not how many times I am going to ask God to bless me with his Spirit (I will generally do that every time I pray). The issue is the vainness. *Vain* means "empty" or "shallow," "impure," "having no substance."

Let me give you an analogy. A man is out in the water swimming and I am on the bank, and I see him begin to go under and hear him gulp, "Help!" I look carefully and see that he's coming up again, and he yells, "Help!" I see him go under the third time, and just before he does, he says, "Help!" The odds are that I wouldn't say, "Well, there's no way I am going to help this guy. He couldn't be sincere. He said the same thing three times." We are kind of like the drowning man. There are only so many ways to ask the Lord for blessings. The issue is not repetition. The issue is the vainness, when what you say doesn't mean anything, when it is empty.

Let's jump down, if you will, to verse 16. Now we come to fasting:

Moreover, when ye fast be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance, for they disfigure their faces that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.

But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face;
That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father, who is in secret; and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

What comes to mind? What do you think about when you read these verses?

We've talked about alms, or deeds; we have talked about prayers; we have talked about fasting. Why would anybody want to appear to fast? Why would you want to look disheveled or hungry?

Student answer: It goes along with the reward of man. People would say, "What a righteous man he is because he is fasting."

So what is the Savior asking us to do? To avoid producing that. This gets interesting. Consider these words from the Doctrine and Covenants, when the Lord says, "Many are called, but few are chosen" (D&C 121:40; see also D&C 121:34; Matthew 22:14). And why are they not chosen? Because "their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world [and then what is the language?], and to aspire to the honors of men" (D&C 121:35). There is nothing wrong with having the honors of men. You are not evil if someone honors you. There is nothing wrong with aspiring to be better, but notice what the problem is—*aspiring* to the honors of men. It isn't a bad thing to fast to become more spiritual, and it isn't even a bad thing to fast to become more spiritual and have people know you are fasting. The issue is to what degree we try to manage an appearance so that it appears that we are what we are not.

Some years ago I happened upon an interesting little book—in fact, it was Elder Jeffrey Holland, many years ago before he was *Elder* Jeffrey Holland, who got me to look into this book. This is a book written by a German Lutheran theologian named Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He wrote a book entitled *The Cost of Discipleship*. Let me read just two paragraphs. Bonhoeffer is trying to reconcile what he sees as a paradox, or a seeming contradiction, between "Let your light so shine" and "Be careful about tooting your horn." Do you see the challenge? Let your light so shine, but don't do things to be seen of men. That is an interesting challenge. He says:

How is this paradox to be resolved? The first question to ask is: From whom are we to hide the visibility of our discipleship? Certainly not from other men, for we are told to let them see our light. No. We are to hide it from *ourselves*. Our task is simply to keep on following, looking only to our Leader [Jesus] who goes on before, taking no notice of ourselves or of what we are doing. We must be unaware of our own righteousness, and see it only in so far as we look unto Jesus; then it will seem not extraordinary, but quite ordinary and natural. Thus we hide the visible from ourselves in obedience to the word of Jesus. . . .

All that the follower of Jesus has to do is make sure that his obedience, following and love are entirely spontaneous and premeditated. If you do good, you must not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, you must be quite unconscious of it. Otherwise you are simply displaying your own virtue, and not that which has its source in Jesus Christ.¹

When you think back at "Let your light so shine before men," what is it that we are supposed to let people see then? How does the rest of that sentence go? "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Thus, the concept of holding up the light is not *me* as the light. I am at best a dim lamp. He (Christ) is the light. Look over in 3 Nephi 18:24: "Therefore, 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."

This has very practical implications. You give a talk in church and someone comes up and compliments you. How do you receive a compliment? It is tough, isn't it? You are shy; you don't want to take a compliment. I learned once from a wise man. As he was complimented, I listened to what he would say. He would say, "There was a good spirit here, wasn't there?" Or he would say, "Well, the Lord came through for us, didn't he?" He would say, "Thank you very much. I am humbled by the fact that we had a great experience." It was a constant deflecting from himself.

So, we are to do the right things for the right reasons. I suppose we do some things, the wrong things, for the right reasons. Let me suggest how that is possible. It seems to me that because we are fallen and we live in a fallen world, we do the wrong things not because we planned it, not because we premeditated upon it, but because we just did it in a moment of weakness. On the other hand, if I were sitting

¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. R. H. Fuller, rev. Irmgard Booth (New York: Macmillan, 1959), 175-7.

at my desk and said to myself, "You know it is about time for me to go home and spank my child. The little bug has been getting away with things more than he should, and he's deserving of something like that." And I plot out how to do it (e.g., I am going to provoke him to upset me). That is a different matter from raising my voice in a moment of weakness. The Savior is telling us not just to do the right thing, but to do it for the right reason. It is a very interesting challenge—in fact, I don't know of anything more challenging than to get my heart right. I don't know how to do that other than pleading constantly that the Lord will help me become unaware of myself, help me that I don't see me, help me that I don't focus on me, help me that I am not constantly trying to draw attention to me.

There is this principle called modesty. When we think of modesty, we usually think of dress, but modesty is a principle where people seek to draw attention away from themselves. It may be in dress, it may be in hairstyle, it may be in whatever, but to be modest is to focus attention elsewhere.

Let's look over in 3 Nephi 13. Here's the summary of the whole matter of motivation. It begins in verse 19. Let me just tell you a story before we read this. I was sitting in Salt Lake City in the home of a very dear friend only hours before I was to leave on a mission. This young man had married after coming home from his mission, and the way I knew him was he had been on a mission in Louisiana and was one of the finest missionaries I had ever known—maybe the most effective, deeply spiritual man I had ever known, and he still is. I had a few moments with him, and I simply said, "I have to leave soon. What counsel could you give me?" Of all the things he could have said, he snapped right back with this. "You keep an eye single to the glory of God, and you will be successful." I thanked him and thought to myself that surely he could have said something more profound than that. Maybe he could have taught me how to find people more effectively. Surely he could have said something about how to teach with power. I wasn't out two days before I realized that what he said was the most centrally significant thing he could have said. Why we do what we do affects what we do and the outcomes. If people are constantly doing what they are doing for praise and applause, in the long run the

outcome will not be as great. Our impact is not as great if we are not a clear, clean vessel. The Lord kind of gives the antidote to this sickness, beginning in verse 19:

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and thieves break through and steal;

But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

The light of the body is the eye; if, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon. (3 Nephi 13:19–24)

Some years ago, I was thinking about this idea, thinking about what my model of missionary work had told me and reflected in these words upon it:

Holding back or giving less than is required always produces divided loyalties. We need not have our membership records in the great and abominable church in order to be disloyal to the kingdom of God; the issue is not where our records are but rather where our hearts are. The divine word is certain; “there are many called, but few are chosen,” because their hearts are set upon the things of this world, rather than upon those things which have eternal worth (D&C 121:34–35).

James explained that “a double minded man is unstable in all his ways.” (James 1:8) [I was thinking about that in light of these verses]. The instability comes much less from lack of native strength than from lack of concentration and focus. Whatever receives from us less than our best will bring forth less than the best results and less than the best reward. Joseph Smith thus taught that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has the power to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation.² Those who refuse to give their all to the Lord, whether by public declaration or by private volition, cannot enjoy the peace and power of single-minded obedience. Cain and his followers “loved Satan more than God” (Moses 5:13, 18, 28). It is not necessarily true that they did not love God. They may have. They simply loved Satan more! Their lives were centered upon Lucifer’s enticements, upon his values, upon his rewards. . . . Whenever we reserve our religion for one day in a week, we come awfully close to loving the things of a fallen world more than we love the things of the world to come. . . .

² See Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith*, comp. N. B. Lundwall (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, n.d.), 58.

Our hearts cannot be wedded to another endeavor.³

Notice what Christ says: "No man can serve two masters." Here we get at the interesting point. I think that is saying that I can't serve God and me, I can't serve God and my applause, I can't serve God and my image. "Our might or strength cannot be spent in secondary causes. Our minds cannot be committed to another enterprise. In the words of the early brethren of this dispensation, It must be the kingdom of God or nothing! Those who fail to place the Savior at the center of their lives rob all other vital relationships of the potency that might otherwise be possible."⁴

Let's look at the last part of 3 Nephi 13, following up on this idea of light of the body being the eye and the eye being single to the glory of God. Notice, beginning in verse 25, what the Savior turns to now:

And now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words he looked upon the twelve whom he had chosen, and said unto them: Remember the words which I have spoken. For behold, ye are they whom I have chosen to minister unto this people. Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink. . . . [Notice how consistent it is with the New Testament sermon, in which the Savior taught this same message to the Twelve.]

But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. (3 Nephi 13:25, 33)

See, what he is teaching is in contrast to seeking your own righteousness, seeking your own goodness, seeking your own praise and applause.

Let's move on to 3 Nephi 14. As a final part of this call to a higher righteousness, the Lord is still dealing with our emotions, with our feelings. He gives some interesting counsel in the opening verses of this chapter. Let's read the first two verses:

And now it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words he turned again to the multitude, and did open his mouth unto them again, saying: Verily, verily, I say unto you, Judge not, that ye be not judged.

For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

³ Robert L. Millet, *An Eye Single to the Glory of God: Reflections on the Cost of Discipleship* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991), 7-9.

⁴ Millet, *An Eye Single to the Glory*, 9.

I think there are few principles that are misunderstood more than this. This is the Savior's invitation to you and me to rise above attributing motivation to others. On the one hand, he is telling us to guard our own motives, to be careful of the purity of our own reasons for doing things. But he is also saying to be careful telling why this person did that. You don't know what's acting upon him. You don't know what caused him to do it. In our effort to make certain that we don't judge another's motive, I find too often, especially in young people, that we are afraid to make judgments for fear we be guilty of judging. Some years ago I visited with a young woman at BYU who happened to mention to me that she didn't get much sleep. "Why don't you?" I asked. She replied that she was up very late every night. I asked why. She said that her roommates and friends were there until 3:00 in the morning. I said, "Why don't you ask them to leave?" She said, "Well, wouldn't that be judging?" You and I are *required* to make thousands and thousands of judgments.

There comes to mind a passage in Moroni 7 (this is Mormon speaking):

Wherefore, all things which are good cometh of God; and that which is evil cometh of the devil; for the devil is an enemy unto God, and fighteth against him continually, and inviteth and enticeth to sin, and to do that which is evil continually. . . .

But behold, that which is of God inviteth and enticeth to do good continually; wherefore, everything which inviteth and enticeth to do good, and to love God, and to serve him, is inspired of God.

Wherefore, take heed, my beloved brethren, that ye do not judge that which is evil to be of God, or that which is good and of God to be of the devil. [There he is saying to use some discernment, and he is going to tell us how to gain that discernment.]

For behold, my brethren, it is given unto you to judge, that ye may know good from evil; and the way to judge is as plain, that ye may know with a perfect knowledge, as the daylight is from the dark night. [In other words, that is how it should be. We should be able to make that discrimination with no difficulty at all.]

For behold, the Spirit of Christ [and we could call it the light of Christ] is given to every man, that he may know good from evil; wherefore, I show unto you the way to judge; for every thing which inviteth to do good, and to persuade to believe in Christ, is sent forth by the power and gift of Christ; wherefore ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of God.

But whatsoever thing persuadeth men to do evil, and believe not in Christ, and deny him, and serve not God, then ye may know with a perfect knowledge it is of the devil; for after this manner doth the devil

work, for he persuadeth no man to do good, no, not one; neither do his angels; neither do they who subject themselves unto him.

And now, my brethren, seeing that ye know the light by which ye may judge, which light is the light of Christ, see that ye do not judge wrongfully; for with that same judgment which ye judge ye shall also be judged. (Moroni 7:12-18)

In the Joseph Smith Translation of Matthew on the passage that mirrors this, what we read is, "Judge not unrighteously, . . . but judge righteous judgment" (JST Matthew 7:2).

Look back to 3 Nephi 14:6: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you." That is a very brutal-sounding verse. I am going to turn now, though it reads here basically as it does in the King James Version, to the Joseph Smith Translation on this passage, Matthew 7:9-11, because I think it is a wonderful addition to our understanding; it reads:

Go ye unto the world, saying unto all, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come nigh unto you [Notice, this that is added by the Prophet]. And the mysteries of the kingdom ye shall keep within yourselves; for it is not meet to give that which is holy unto the dogs; neither cast ye your pearls unto swine, lest they trample them under their feet. For the world cannot receive that which ye, yourselves, are not able to bear [That is interesting. How can the world handle that which *you* don't even handle well? it is saying]; wherefore ye shall not give your pearls unto them, lest they turn again and rend you.

The same concept comes through in Alma 12:9, where Alma says, "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" (that is, only as the Spirit of the Lord tells them to).

We are skipping a little, but let's go to 3 Nephi 14:24:

Therefore, whoso heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock—

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.

And every one that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand—

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew,
and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it.

I was thinking the other day as I read these verses about the modern revelation in section 90 of the Doctrine and Covenants. It is recorded about the time that the First Presidency is being reorganized in this dispensation. Notice the language in Doctrine and Covenants 90:3, 4, and 5:

Verily I say unto you, the keys of this kingdom shall never be taken from you, while thou art in the world, neither in the world to come;

Nevertheless, through you [speaking to Joseph Smith, the president of the Church] shall the oracles be given to another, yea, even unto the church [So, you can have people who are oracles, the living oracles, or you can have the living oracles in the form of continuing revelations].

And all they who receive the oracles of God [this is a sobering thought], let them beware how they hold them lest they are accounted as a light thing, and are brought under condemnation, thereby and stumble and fall when the storms descend, and the winds blow, and the rains descend, and beat upon their house.

Section 90 seems to give real force to what we have just read in 3 Nephi. It is the acceptance of the servants of the Lord that builds that foundation. Remember how the Savior began that sermon? Isn't this an interesting way to end it? What is the first Beatitude in the Book of Mormon account? "Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve" (3 Nephi 12:1). How does he end it? "Give heed to the living oracles." It's the same message.

So, this is a call to a higher righteousness. Two of Christ's messages are the call to a higher righteousness and a law of witnesses. Let's consider a third major message from the Savior: the power of the scriptures. It is interesting that the Savior quotes from Micah, Isaiah, and Malachi. Don't you think that is a little odd? This is the Savior, the Lord of life. Why does *he* have to quote scripture? You would think he would come with a major message. Why is it that when Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith, he spent much of the night quoting scripture? This was an angel appearing to Joseph Smith quoting from Isaiah and from Acts and from several other books of scripture. What is the message?

Student answer: The message came from Christ originally.

Right, he gave it originally. What else comes to mind?

Student answer: It is a pattern an example, of humility. The Savior is setting a pattern for us. He is saying that *he* is taking the words from the scriptures, the words of the prophets, so we must do the same thing.

In fact, what does he say about Isaiah? You see, it is one thing to quote the Lord; it is another to have the Lord quote *you*! That is a pretty good recommendation! In fact, let's just look at 2 Nephi 23, at the opening verses where Nephi quotes or refers to passages from Isaiah. Before he does so, he gives pretty strong recommendations about Isaiah. He has just quoted what we know as Isaiah 54. Then he says:

And now, behold, I say unto you, that ye ought to search these things. Yea, a commandment I give unto you that ye search these things diligently; for great are the words of Isaiah.

For surely he spake as touching all things concerning my people which are of the house of Israel; therefore it must needs be that he must speak also to the Gentiles. (2 Nephi 23:1–2)

Notice what he says next in verse 3: "Great are the words of Isaiah." Why? Because he spoke to both the house of Israel and the Gentiles. That about covers the bases. Is there anyone else? Verse 3 says: "And all things that he spake have been and shall be, even according to the words which he spake" (3 Nephi 23:3). What would that verse mean? What does he mean by "all things that Isaiah spake, have been, and shall be even according to the words he spake"? Does it mean he spoke the truth in saying that these things are going to come to pass? I guess there is another possibility too. This verse may imply, and I don't know if it does, but it may imply a pattern prophecy—that is to say, what he said here will be fulfilled there, but perhaps it will be fulfilled again. We have an illustration of that in the New Testament on the Day of Pentecost. As the people were speaking in tongues, other people who were in the area who didn't understand what was going on concluded that these men were all drunk. Peter said, "They're not drunk. This is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel, who said that in the last days, people would enjoy spiritual gifts."

Interestingly, when Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith, he quoted many chapters of prophecy, including Joel and the prophecy that has just been cited, and said, "This has not yet come to pass, but it will soon." What is that saying? That a prophecy can be fulfilled many times. Let me give you an example from Isaiah that is just off the top of the pile of examples.

"And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of the book that is sealed, which [men] deliver to one that is learned . . ." (Isaiah 29:11). You may remember that prophecy from Isaiah 29. There is no question but that that was fully fulfilled during the ministry of Joseph Smith when Martin Harris took the manuscript to New York City to Professor Charles Anthon, and so forth. But it surely must have meant something in Isaiah's day also. Does it not also refer to a time when the apostasy would be so dark and thick that it would be like having a book that could not be read, as if were sealed? I think it comes to pass in Isaiah's day. And it comes to pass in a day after Isaiah's day, and it comes to pass in our day too.

So, in chapter 23 we get a strong recommendation about Isaiah. I'd like us to look at verses 7-11:

And it came to pass that he said unto Nephi: Bring forth the record which ye have kept.

And when Nephi had brought forth the records, and laid them before him, he cast his eyes upon them and said:

Verily I say unto you, I commanded my servant Samuel, the Lamanite, that he should testify unto this people, that at the day that the Father should glorify his name in me that there were many saints who should arise from the dead, and should appear unto many, and should minister unto them. And he said unto them: Was it not so?

And his disciples answered him and said: Yea, Lord, Samuel did prophesy according to thy words, and they were all fulfilled.

And Jesus said unto them: How is it that ye have not written this thing, that many saints did arise and appear unto many and did minister unto them?

That is to say, as far as I can tell, that Samuel prophesied that at the time Christ would be resurrected, others would be resurrected with him. Jesus said, "Did that happen?" They answered, "Well, yes." And Jesus said, "Why wasn't it written down when it happened?" Then the scripture says, "And it came to pass that Nephi remembered that this thing had not been written. And it came to pass that Jesus commanded that it should be written; therefore it was written according as he commanded" (3 Nephi 23:12-13). So, there's a recommendation on Isaiah.

What does Christ do next? He quotes two chapters from Malachi. Why would the Nephites need that? Why Malachi? What do I need to know about Malachi? Well, when does the Nephite journey to America take place?

Student answer: In 600 B.C.

Malachi is not going to live for another one to two hundred years. So whatever of significance the Lord revealed to Malachi, the Nephites would not have had, unless the Lord gave them another revelation. So, things pertaining to tithing, things pertaining to appropriate sacrifices, things pertaining to the coming of Elijah the prophet—these things the Nephites would not have known unless the Lord gave it to them as he had given it to Malachi.

I would like us to look, if we could, at 3 Nephi 23:14: “And now it came to pass that when Jesus had expounded all the scriptures in one, which they had written, he commanded them that they should teach the things which he had expounded unto them.” Let me put you on the spot. What does it mean by “he had expounded all the scriptures in one”? Jesus is our teacher. He is talking to the Nephites, and he expounds the “scriptures in one.” What comes to your mind? What is he doing?

Student answer: Putting the stick of Joseph and the stick of Judah together. He expounds what the others have already learned.

Yes, it sounds like, in one sense, the scriptural records are now merged, and the testimony of one and the testimony of the other will be joined. Good. I think that’s what happened. What else?

Student answer: There’s a pattern in the Book of Mormon for missionary work, where missionaries will start from the creation and go all the way down to present times or even into the future as the people of those times knew it. I think that’s what Christ was doing here. He could have explained all of these things to them as they were found in the scriptures.

Good. He explained the scriptures by going from beginning to end. I think those are excellent ideas. Let me propose something in addition. Let me read you something from the New Testament, from Luke 24. This is the occasion when the resurrected Jesus is walking with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and they don’t know who he is. Remember that? They were a little upset, because they really thought that Jesus was going to bring about the redemption of Israel. So let me read Luke 24:25–27: “Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to

enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." Wouldn't it be marvelous to have the Son of God standing before you bringing all the scriptures to bear and showing how in reality that they all testify of him, things we hadn't realized in past readings or things we just wouldn't have perceived? Surely if we had his vision and his perspective, we would be able to see, in incidents and historical events in brief passages, that truly all things testify of Christ. Isn't that wonderful language? "He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."

Look over in 3 Nephi 26:1:

And now it came to pass that when Jesus had told these things he expounded them unto the multitude; and he did expound all things unto them, both great and small.

And he saith: These scriptures, which ye had not with you, the Father commanded that I should give unto you; for it was wisdom in him that they should be given unto future generations.

And he did expound all things, even from the beginning until the time that he should come in his glory. . . .

And then it talks about down to the Second Coming and the introduction to the Millennium.

Look over at verse 6:

And now there cannot be written in this book even a hundredth part of the things which Jesus did truly teach unto the people;

But behold the plates of Nephi [meaning the large plates] do contain the more part of the things which he taught the people.

And these things have I written, which are a lesser part of the things which he taught the people [Mormon is our narrator now]; and I have written them to the intent that they may be brought again unto this people, from the Gentiles, according to the words which Jesus hath spoken.

And when they shall have received this, which is expedient that they should have first, to try their faith [that is, when the Book of Mormon should come forth, what is it going to do? Try our faith], and if it shall so be that they shall believe these things [in the Book of Mormon] then shall the greater things be made manifest unto them.

And if it so be that they will not believe these things, then shall the greater things be withheld from them, unto their condemnation.

Behold, I was about to write them, all which were engraven upon the plates of Nephi, but the Lord forbade it, saying: I will try the faith of my people. (3 Nephi 26:6–11)

That is kind of a frustrating passage to read, isn't it? What does he mean that he is going to use the Book of Mormon to try the faith of his people? How? That is an odd use of words. How will he try the faith of the Latter-day Saints with the Book of Mormon? If there are greater things yet to come, how will he assess our readiness to receive them?

Student answer: The way we treat the Book of Mormon would be equivalent to the way we would treat Heavenly Father and Christ, and if we take what little we have been given and really search it and pray about it and ask for more, then he will know we are ready to receive more.

Yes. It is as if he is saying that if we have been faithful with that we have been given—"Thou hast been faithful over a few things," now I will give thee greater things (Matthew 25:21, 23).

Again, it is fascinating to me that the Savior, while visiting his people, should focus so much attention on scripture. Maybe it is getting after the principle that comes through the Book of Mormon again and again and again—that there is power in the Word. Let's close on that thought. This is from President Benson, from a talk never delivered but given to the *Ensign* to be published in May 1986, entitled "The Power of the Word." President Benson said:

Often we spend great effort in trying to increase the activity levels in our stakes. We work diligently to raise the percentages of those attending sacrament meetings. We labor to get a higher percentage of our young men on missions. We strive to improve the numbers of those marrying in the temple. All of these are commendable efforts, and important to the growth of the kingdom. But when individual members and families immerse themselves in the scriptures regularly and consistently, these other areas of activity will automatically come. Testimonies will increase. Commitment will be strengthened. Families will be fortified. Personal revelation will flow.⁵

What a tribute to scripture that the master of scripture should command us to be involved in scripture—that he should quote them, that he should expound upon

⁵ Ezra Taft Benson, "The Power of the Word," *Ensign* (May 1986): 81.

them. It also provides a pretty strong recommendation as to how we as we meet together as Latter-day Saints ought to conduct the meetings of the church. We should look for occasions to teach, to quote, to paraphrase, holy writ.

The call to a higher righteousness—the Lord extends it to us. That we might rise to and respond to that call is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

The Doctrine of the Risen Christ (Part 3)

Robert L. Millet

We continue our study of the prophets and their messages in the Book of Mormon with a third hour on the ministry and message of Jesus Christ among the Nephites. Up until now we have touched on such subjects as the law of witnesses as contained in the Book of Mormon, especially in 3 Nephi 11, where Christ bears witness of himself, where 2,500 others bear witness of him, where he calls twelve special witnesses of him, where he speaks of the importance of a united witness and that there be no contention among the people, and where the Lord's witness concerning his gospel is, which we will talk about during this period. Another central message in 3 Nephi is what we might call "the call to a higher righteousness," the sermon there at the temple being a call to fulfill or live above the law that had been given anciently to Moses. So, we have the announcement and fulfillment of the law of Moses.

We talked last time about the power of the scriptures and how interesting it is that when the Savior appears, among the things he does is quote scripture. How interesting it is that when heavenly messengers appear, they quote scripture. We discussed, for example, how much of Moroni's message to the young Joseph Smith was scripture, and when the Lord Jesus appeared to the Nephites, he felt the need to quote Isaiah and Malachi and Micah.

Let's pick up today with a discussion of the gospel of Christ. Let's go first to 3 Nephi 11. We'll begin reading at about verse 31. Let me have you consider a question that might guide our study. The question is, What is the gospel? Most of us have been to hundreds of testimony meetings, and we have heard people bear testimony that they know the gospel is true. Think, what is the gospel? What do most people think they are saying when they say, "I know the gospel is true"? What are they thinking? What's going on?

Student answer: Perhaps they are confusing the traditions and culture of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with the actual doctrines of Christ.

Okay, I think I'd agree. When most people say, "I know the gospel is true," they are talking about Mormonism, our way of life, which certainly encompasses the

doctrine. I think many people are talking about the Church organization, aren't they? "I know the Church is true"—that is an important witness. This matter of the gospel, or as it is sometimes called, "the doctrine of Christ," is taught repeatedly and very consistently in the Book of Mormon. Notice the words of the Savior, in 3 Nephi 11:31 concerning his doctrine:

Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will declare unto you my doctrine.

And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me. [There again is that witness of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.]

And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God.

And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and I bear record of it. . . . (3 Nephi 11:31–35)

We find a similar testimony in 2 Nephi 31. Nephi begins that chapter by saying that there are a few more things he wants to talk about. He wants to touch on the doctrine of Christ. It is in that same chapter that Nephi deals with the importance of having faith in the Lord, and repenting, and being baptized and receiving the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end.

Let me ask you another question. Let's turn to 3 Nephi 27, which is our most complete statement of the gospel, and let me pose another question. What would you say if I said that an answer I get occasionally to the question, What is the gospel? is this answer: The gospel is all truth. Is that true? Does the gospel contain all truth? Well, it sort of does, doesn't it? I mean, if something is true, we would say that this is part of this larger scheme of things we know as the gospel. If that is our definition, then I could pretty much go into a sacrament meeting and speak on about anything, as long as it was true. I think that could mean I could stand up and say, "Today my message is on the laws of motion," or, "Today I want to talk about some chemical formulas," or, "Today I want to talk about insecticides." Now, if what I was saying or preaching or teaching was true, would I be teaching the gospel? Well, that is why the

Book of Mormon is a very important book; it draws a very important distinction for us. The Book of Mormon prophets' definition of gospel is not all truth. It is a very prescribed definition. Give me a synonym, then, for *gospel*.

Student answer: I believe it comes from *good news*, the good news of Christ, which means we have hope for a better world after this one because of the gospel.

Yes! What's the bad news, if that is the good news?

Student answer: Because we're fallen, if we don't follow Christ, we cannot be saved.

True. The bad news is that there was a fall, and we are in a fallen state and a lost condition, as the Book of Mormon would say. Without the atonement, there is no hope. The good news is Christ, the glad tidings. The Book of Mormon narrows that definition somewhat. In a broad way, we should know all truth, but there are certain truths that are saving. Now, is there redeeming value in me going in to a sacrament meeting or stake conference and preaching on insecticides? Probably not. Would the people be benefited somewhat? Probably not too many souls would be saved that way. Probably not a great deal of conversion would take place.

Let me refer to something that Elder Henry B. Eyring said some years ago. This is in 1984 at a Church Educational System symposium. He gave a very dramatic and powerful message about what he called "the sea of filth into which our young people find themselves traveling." He says:

Now I would like to say this: There are two views of the gospel—both truth. They make a terrific difference in the power of your teaching. One view is that the gospel is all truth. It is. The gospel is truth. With that view I could teach pretty well anything true in a classroom, and I would be teaching the gospel. The other view is that the gospel is the principles, commandments, and ordinances which, if kept, conformed with, and accepted, will lead to eternal life. That is also true.

When I choose which of these views I will let dominate my teaching, I take a great step. If I take the view that the gospel is all truth, rather than that it is the ordinances and principles and commandments which, if kept, conformed with, and accepted, lead to eternal life, I have already nearly taken myself out of the contest to help a student withstand the sea of filth. Why? Because he [the student] needs to have his eyes focused on light, and that means not truth in some abstract sense but the joy of keeping the commandments and conforming with the principles and accepting the ordinances of the gospel of Jesus

Christ. If I decide I will not make that my primary vision of the gospel, I am already out of the contest to help my student with his capacity to see good and to want and desire it in the midst of filth.¹

Joseph Smith, on one occasion, was asked early in his ministry a series of questions about Mormonism and about Mormon views toward government and marriage. One of the questions he was asked was this: "What are the fundamental principles of your religion?" I have often thought, If I had been there and had been asked that question, what would I answer? You see, that requires a big answer. What *are* the fundamental principles of our religion? Would we say that we believe in families, in the perpetuation of the family into eternity? Would we talk about a premortal existence? Would we talk about degrees of glory? Would we talk about the word of wisdom? All of those are important parts of our faith. Joseph Smith's answer is very instructive. He said, "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."² What is an appendage?

Student answer: Extra.

Yes, it's an extra. What did he just say? He just told us that the atonement is the central saving verity. Everything else has to be tied to the atonement, if it is to have any value.

I remember in Elder Packer's April 1977 general conference address on the Mediator—you may remember that wonderful parable that Elder Packer gave—he gave these lines, which tie into Joseph Smith's message:

Know this: Truth, glorious truth, proclaims there is such a Mediator. . . .

Through Him mercy can be fully extended to each of us without offending the eternal law of justice.

This truth is the very root of Christian doctrine. You may know much about the gospel as it branches out from there, but if you only know the branches and those branches do not touch that root, if they

¹ Henry B. Eyring, CES symposium (August 1984).

² Joseph Fielding Smith, comp., *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 121.

have been cut free from that truth, there will be no life nor substance nor redemption in them.³

I think that is telling us, as Joseph Smith did, that the message of the gospel, the glad tidings, the good news, that Jesus came, that an atonement has been offered, that ransom is available, and so forth, is *the* central truth. Anything else, if it can't be attached, tied, or cemented to that truth, won't have saving value. I think it says something about how we should teach the gospel, about what ought to be the focus of our presentation.

Years ago I heard President Harold B. Lee say that if what we do in this church, what we teach or practice or carry out, cannot somehow be tied to the notion that it brings to pass the immortality and eternal life of men and women, it has no place in this church. Now, in a similar way, if what we are teaching or focusing on can't somehow be tied to the atonement of Christ, the central message, then it probably has no place—or at least it won't have strength or life of itself.

One other thing before we turn to 3 Nephi 27. I want to read one of the great definitions given in modern revelation, from Doctrine and Covenants 76:40–42. In the middle of the Prophet's vision of the degrees of glory, he said this:

This is the gospel, the glad tidings, which the voice out of the heavens bore record unto us—

That he came into the world, even Jesus, to be crucified for the world, and to bear the sins of the world, and to sanctify the world, and to cleanse it from all unrighteousness;

That through him all might be saved whom the Father had put into his power and made by him.

The gospel is the glad tidings; there is a sense, then, that we can look at the atonement and the gospel this way. Depending on where you go and what scriptures you concentrate on, you get a slightly different twist on what the gospel is. Sections 33 and 39 of the Doctrine and Covenants say the gospel is faith, repentance, baptism, Holy Ghost, and so on. Other places, like section 76, say the gospel is the atonement. Now, what is it? Let's look at the gospel as the gospel covenant—a two-way relationship between us and God. God promises to do certain things for us that we couldn't do for ourselves; we promise to do certain things that

³ Boyd K. Packer, "The Mediator," *Ensign* (May 1977): 56.

we can do. So, there is a sense that the gospel is the atonement, a sense in which the gospel represents those things that link us to the atonement, those things that tie us to the atonement. So, we begin our definition first by saying that, as pertaining to us, the gospel is faith, and repentance, and baptism, and the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end. We would also add two more: resurrection and eternal judgment. Faith, repentance, baptism, the Holy Ghost—which we call the first principles and ordinances of the gospel—and enduring to the end, resurrection, and eternal judgment. Those constitute the principles of the gospel, our part of this two-way agreement with God.

Let's look at 3 Nephi 27. The second day has ended, as far as I can tell. Beginning with the first couple of verses, the Savior appears once again, to open day three. He shows himself to the people. Let's pick up with verse 2:

And Jesus again showed himself unto them, for they were praying unto the Father in his name; and Jesus came and stood in the midst of them, and said unto them: What will ye that I shall give unto you?

And they said unto him: Lord, we will that thou wouldst tell us the name whereby we shall call this church; for there are disputations among the people concerning this matter. (3 Nephi 27:2–3)

Why would there even be a question? Have you thought about this? Before this, they had named the church "the Church of God" or "the Church of Christ." It had been named "the Church of Christ" before this. Why this question? I don't know the answer, but can I speculate for a second, if that's legal? I have wondered if perhaps the Lord's coming and beginning a new dispensation, as it were, has ended the Mosaic dispensation and has initiated the Messianic dispensation. Remember what has happened up to now? Christ has actually ordained and rebaptized faithful holders of the priesthood. They have already been ordained; he ordains them again. They have been baptized; he baptizes them again. They start anew, you could say. I wonder if, with that as a backdrop, perhaps the people are wondering, "Is there something new that this church should be called?" I suppose you and I, as we move closer to the Millennium, might even ask the same thing: Is there something the Church is going to be called during the thousand years? Will it be "the Church of Jesus Christ of Millennial Saints"? I don't know. But maybe we would wonder the

same kind of thing. Perhaps that is the backdrop for the query, "What do you want us to call the church?"

Let's continue:

And the Lord said unto them: Verily, verily, I say unto you, why is it that the people should murmur and dispute because of this thing?

Have they not read the scriptures, which say ye must take upon you the name of Christ, which is my name? For by this name shall ye be called at the last day;

And whoso taketh upon him my name, and endureth to the end, the same shall be saved at the last day.

Therefore, whatsoever ye shall do, ye shall do it in my name; therefore ye shall call the church in my name; and ye shall call upon the Father in my name that he will bless the church for my sake. (3 Nephi 27:4-7)

There is something terribly significant about the name of Christ. I wish I knew all that was going on here. But do you notice the number of times in scripture it says, "Do this in the name . . ."? Consider that among the earliest things communicated from heaven to earth was a message from an angel to Adam. What did he say? "Thou shalt do all that thou doest in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore" (Moses 5:8). So, there is this emphasis on the name. You see the Savior trying to answer the question and saying, "What is it you are to do? You are to do things in my name. So, if you are going to name this church, what are you going to name it?"

The next verse tells us: "And how be it my church save it be called in my name? For if a church be called in Moses' name then it be Moses' church; or if it be called in the name of a man then it be the church of a man . . ." (3 Nephi 27:8). At this point we could stop and interrupt ourselves and say that all a church needs to be Christ's church is to have his name. But you and I know there is more to it than that, and he's not going to let us get off with just calling it after him. There is something else it must have. He says, "But if it be called in my name then it is my church, if it so be that they are built upon my gospel" (3 Nephi 27:8). It must be built upon his gospel. Notice how we are leading into a definition of the gospel. We first ask, What's the name of the church? And then we say that it must be named after Christ, and it must be built upon his gospel. All right.

Let's pick up with verses 9 and 10:

Verily I say unto you, that ye are built upon my gospel; therefore ye shall call whatsoever things ye do call, in my name; therefore if ye call upon the Father, for the church, if it be in my name the Father will hear you;

And if it so be that the church is built upon my gospel then will the Father show forth his own works in it.

Think about that. If it is Christ's church, if it is named after him, and if it is built upon his gospel, it will evidence that it is the work of the Father. How? The works of the Father will be shown forth. What are the works of the Father? I fear that sometimes we are so eager and busy in doing our works that we forget that the Father has work he wants to do, and there is work he can do through us if we will let him.

It has occurred to me that perhaps the most effective way to get people to do their duty in the Church is not to brow-beat them into guilt. Maybe the way is not to entice them through reward. Maybe the best way to get people to do their duty in the Church is to teach the gospel more effectively, to get the Spirit of the Lord into the people's lives, and then to let that Spirit work changes upon the hearts of the people. When people begin to get the Holy Ghost within them, there comes forth from them what the Apostle Paul called "the fruit of the Spirit"—patience, love, long-suffering, gentleness, and meekness. You don't engender those. You don't say, "Brothers and sisters, go out and work on your meekness," or, "Let's go generate some charity." No, you get the Holy Ghost in them, and then those things come forth. Do you see what I am saying? When people are built upon the Lord's gospel, when they devote themselves to that cause, the works of the Father begin to come forth. That is to say, righteous works flow forth from changed hearts. Understand? I think that is what President Benson was trying so seriously to do with us. It was to cleanse the inner vessel.

Verse 11 reads: "But if it be not built upon my gospel, and is built upon the works of men, or upon the works of the devil, verily I say unto you they have joy in their works for a season, and by and by the end cometh, and they are hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence there is no return." This is an interesting point. There are people out there, and you know them, who can do good. There are people

in the world who sometimes do more good than we do. But it isn't just a matter of doing good. It is a matter of having our foundation be the saving ordinances and the true doctrines and principles of the gospel. When that is our foundation, then ethical behavior follows.

This says something about what constitutes the gospel and what doesn't. You may know that we get our share of criticism from those outside the Church who want to know why we spend so much money on temples. Why don't we devote that to the care of the poor? they ask. Why aren't we more charitable? Why aren't we more eager to get out in society and make a difference? Why aren't we advocates of the "social gospel"? Well, there is only one big reason: The most significant thing we can do is preach the gospel and get the gospel into the hearts of people. As President Benson said, let the change come from the inside out. The world would want to go from the outside in, but the Lord changes things from the inside out. The world would want to mold and shape human behavior; Christ changes human nature.⁴ The only lasting change that can come to this world will be through the gospel.

The works of the devil, I suppose, are obvious. That would be any forms of wickedness or whatever sidetracks that would cause us to forget things that matter. The works of man are more subtle. The works of man might consist of those things that I would devote myself to that are secondary causes, in a sense. Discernment is what we are talking about here—not just the ability to tell right from wrong, but the discerning power to know things that matter from things that matter much less. It would be a tragedy, indeed, to spend our lives laboring in secondary causes. We need to go out and serve. We need to help and assist and lift our brothers and sisters in society, but we can do that ever so much more effectively when motivated and empowered by the gospel.

Verse 13 begins our definition: "Behold I have given unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you—[notice the definition now] that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me. And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross" (3 Nephi 27:13–14). I want to talk about that for a second. Have you ever noticed the difference in our view of the

atoning sacrifice and that of the Protestant or Catholic world? Ask a friend of yours who is not a member of our faith where the atonement took place. From their perspective, the answer would be, "On the cross." Ask most Mormons where the atonement took place, and most Mormons would say, "In Gethsemane." The fact of the matter is that both the answers are correct. What began in Gethsemane was consummated on the cross. The atoning sacrifice by our Savior might have begun to take place in the Garden, but it was consummated on Golgatha. He didn't say that he came into the world just to go into the Garden. He says, interestingly, that he came into the world to be lifted upon the cross. He specifically says, "My Father sent me that I might be lifted upon the cross" (3 Nephi 27:14). When our Lord and Savior went into Gethsemane to pray, he began to feel the weight and burden of the sins of mankind. He began to have the Father's Spirit withdrawn from him. He began to know the awful agony of an atoning sacrifice. How long he experienced that, I don't think we know. But we do know this: The next day on the cross, after ministering for sometime, the Father's Spirit began to be withdrawn again, and as Elder Talmage suggests, all the agonies of the night before returned.

So, verse 14 says:

And after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil—

And for this cause have I been lifted up; therefore, according to the power of the Father I will draw all men unto me, that they may be judged according to their works. (3 Nephi 27:14–15)

Now we get introduced to enduring and judging. We start reading in verse 16: "And it shall come to pass, that 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." There's a very interesting idea here. Notice, we are getting most of the principles now in one or two verses. Notice that the faith, repentance, baptism, Holy Ghost, and the enduring and judging are all in one area here. But notice, if you are baptized, you are filled with the Holy Ghost.

⁴ Ezra Taft Benson, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 79.

But it stipulates, *if* he endures to the end. I am afraid that enduring to the end has, for most of us, a negative connotation. We imagine kind of a hold on, white-knuckled, to the rod of iron and grit your teeth and maybe we can make it to the celestial kingdom. There must be more to it than that. Enduring to the end, in my mind, entails staying on course, staying on the path, staying in covenant. And notice what follows: If he endures to the end, "him will I hold guiltless before my Father." Does that mean the person will never have sinned? No, they are held guiltless because they have kept their part of the covenant as best they can. Enduring to the end means, in that two-way relationship, I am trying to stay in covenant and keep my covenants as best I can, and if I endure faithfully to the end for the rest of my days, the Lord will treat me as though I were guiltless. Isn't that the same thing he is saying in the Doctrine and Covenants, speaking of those who serve faithfully as missionaries? The Lord will not hold sin against you if you serve faithfully. He says, in that most famous section of them all, section 4: "Therefore, O ye that embark in the service of God, see that ye serve him with all your heart, might, mind, and strength, that ye may stand blameless before God at the last day" (v. 2). Blameless because we never sinned? No. Blameless because we never made mistakes? No. But blameless because we gave our whole soul to the cause of truth. Because we stayed on course, because we stayed on covenant, because we endured, the Lord holds us blameless.

Back to 3 Nephi 27:19–21. To put things in summary fashion, notice what the Lord does in these verses:

And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest 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.

Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day.

See how he pulls it all together? Notice, he mentions faith, repentance, baptism, Holy Ghost, enduring. Now, if we went through the entire chapter, we would add the others, resurrection and eternal judgment. The Prophet Joseph Smith said, "The Doctrines of the Resurrection of the Dead and the Eternal Judgment are necessary to

preach among the first principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”⁵ Faith, repentance, baptism, Holy Ghost, enduring to the end, resurrection, and judgment.

Let’s go over to 3 Nephi 27:26: “And behold, all things are written by the Father; therefore out of the books which shall be written shall the world be judged.” The next verse may be one of the most quoted and cited passages in all the Book of Mormon, but I want you to notice the context for it. We often quote it and quote it out of context. That is okay; even out of context it is great. But notice the context for this passage: “And know ye that ye shall be judges of this people, according to the judgment which I shall give unto you, which shall be just. Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am” (3 Nephi 27:27). The context for that is *how* we render judgments, *how* we judge. Is this not the same thing we would find in the Joseph Smith Translation of Matthew 7? What is the command? “Judge not unrighteously,” the Savior said, “but judge righteous judgment.” We are going to make ten thousand judgments. It isn’t that we won’t judge; it’s that we must judge righteously.

So, that pretty much gives us our definition for the gospel. Let me comment on something. We won’t need to take long on this, but let’s look at chapter 28 and notice, in this chapter, the call of the Three Nephites and their ministry as opposed to the other nine Nephite apostles. This chapter makes much more sense when we read it in conjunction with other passages of scripture and prophets’ messages, first with the 21st chapter of John in the New Testament, with the seventh section of the Doctrine and Covenants, and with a couple of statements that I will refer to from Joseph Smith’s teachings. Notice what happens. We could say that another message of the Savior—and I don’t know if we could call it a central message, but it’s a very interesting message—is the ministry and mission of translated beings.

The Twelve were essentially asked, “What do you want before I leave?” Nine of them basically wanted the same thing Peter wanted—to go quickly into God’s kingdom. I don’t know all that that entails. Maybe it meant they wanted to hurry and rush into a resurrected glory and not to deal with the spirit world experience. But

⁵ Ibid., 149.

they wanted to go into his kingdom. The other three were a little nervous about their desire. Look at 3 Nephi 28:5–8:

And they sorrowed in their hearts, for they durst not speak unto him the thing which they desired.

And he said unto them: Behold, I know your thoughts, and ye have desired the thing which John, my beloved, who was with me in my ministry, before that I was lifted up by the Jews, desired of me.

Therefore, more blessed are ye, for ye shall never taste of death; but ye shall live to behold all the doings of the Father unto the children of men, even until all things shall be fulfilled according to the will of the Father, when I shall come in my glory with the powers of heaven.

And ye shall never endure the pains of death; but when I shall come in my glory ye shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye from mortality to immortality; and then shall ye be blessed in the kingdom of my Father.

And so, in a sense, the Three Nephites, like John, wanted to live on. They wanted their ministry to continue, and they were allowed that privilege. We would say they were translated. The description given in verse 8 and elsewhere in this chapter is that they don't seem to be subject to the pulls of a fallen world. In addition, we know they will continue in this condition until the Savior returns, at which time, they will be changed in the twinkling of an eye from their mortal state to an immortal state. Now they are in kind of a supercharged mortal state, but they are mortal still. We are not immortal until we go through the experience of death. Even they will go through the experience of death, but it will be instantaneous. They live, according to what the Prophet Joseph Smith taught, in a higher spiritual standing.

Let me read to you from *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*: "Now the doctrine of translation is a power which belongs to this Priesthood. . . . Many have supposed that the doctrine of translation was a doctrine whereby men were taken immediately into the presence of God, and into an eternal fullness, but his is a mistaken idea. Their place of habitation is that of the terrestrial order. . . ." ⁶ They have been moved from a telestial condition, which we are in, to a terrestrial. To what would you liken their state? What do you think of when you think of a terrestrial order?

Student answer: Eden.

Yes, or the Millennium. The Three Nephites are in sort of an Eden paradisiacal condition. The Prophet goes on: "Their place of habitation is that of the terrestrial order, and a place prepared for characters He held in reserve to be ministering angels unto many planets [I wish I knew what that meant], and who as yet have not entered into so great a fullness."⁷ Later, the Prophet just simply said this: "Translated bodies cannot enter into rest until they have undergone a change equivalent to death. Translated bodies are designed for future missions."⁸

So, these three apostles are allowed the privilege to live on. They will remain in that condition, as we have said, until the Savior returns. What do they do? Look at 3 Nephi 28:27–30:

And behold they will be among the Gentiles, and the Gentiles shall know them not.

They will also be among the Jews, and the Jews shall know them not.

And it shall come to pass, when the Lord seeth fit in his wisdom that they shall minister unto all the scattered tribes of Israel, and unto all nations, kindred, tongues and people, and shall bring out of them unto Jesus many souls, that their desire may be fulfilled, and also because of the convincing power of God which is in them.

And they are as the angels of God, and if they shall pray unto the Father in the name of Jesus they can show themselves unto whatsoever man it seemeth them good.

It appears that their mission is missionary related. Their job is to proclaim the gospel, to build up the kingdom, until the Lord returns. Again, we would learn more about this as we read in Doctrine and Covenants 7 about what was given to John as a mission, because their mission is similar.

Let's find the next message from the Savior. Go back to 3 Nephi 21. The first eleven verses of this chapter are remarkably important in setting forth the place and importance of the restoration of the gospel. I would like to have you look carefully at verses 1 through 7. I want you to find the first place where you find a period, that is, where we end our thought. From the beginning of chapter 21, start looking for a period. It is at the end of verse 7! I don't want to make a theological point out of a dot of ink here, but maybe that's a wise move. This thought goes from verse 1 to

⁶ Ibid., 170.

⁷ Ibid., 170–1.

⁸ Ibid., 190.

verse 7. It is a long thought, but we will express it simply. It is as follows: The Book of Mormon is one of the signs of the times. If we were listing the hundreds of signs of the times, things to look for before the Savior comes, the coming forth of the Book of Mormon is one of those signs. Now, let's say it another way: We can know that the work of the Father here, meaning the gathering of Israel, is well under way when we see the Book of Mormon come forth.

We could find that same language taught elsewhere. Hold your place and go over to 3 Nephi 29:1:

And now behold, I say unto you that when the Lord shall see fit, in his wisdom, that these sayings shall come unto the Gentiles according to his word, then ye may know that the covenant which the Father hath made with the children of Israel, concerning their restoration to the lands of their inheritance, is already beginning to be fulfilled.

This is a very interesting thing. We just touched briefly—and we will touch on it a little more in a minute—this concept of Israel, the destiny of Israel, and the place of the Book of Mormon in that. Can you see the power of the Book of Mormon in the gathering of Israel? First, it defines the process. It tells us what it takes to be gathered. We gather first to Christ, and then we gather to the lands of our inheritance or to the congregations of the faithful. So, it defines the process, but, second, it is also supposed to be the vehicle for accomplishing the process. The Book of Mormon is to be central to the gathering of Israel.

Let's go back to 3 Nephi 21:8: "And when that day shall come, it shall come to pass that kings shall shut their mouths; for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider." What does the phrase *shut their mouths* imply? I don't think it means "to go silent."

Student answer: Astonished.

Yes, astonished, overwhelming. It's unbelievable. Why? Look what's coming. Go ahead with verse 9: "For in that day, for my sake shall the Father work a work, which shall be a great and a marvelous work among them; and there shall be among them those who will not believe it, although a man shall declare it unto them." So, the work of the Father, the work of the restoration, will be just unbelievable, and people won't believe it until it is explained to them.

In verse 10 we get specific about the person who will lead this restoration: "But behold, the life of my servant shall be in my hand; therefore they shall not hurt him, although he shall be marred because of them . . . ," speaking undoubtedly of Joseph Smith. They shall not hurt him, although he will be marred. What comes to mind? Well, they put him to death. They tarred and feathered him and beat him, but it didn't stop the work from progressing. One of the local papers at the time of the martyrdom described it with these words: "Thus ends Mormonism."⁹ Well, not quite. ". . . Although he shall be marred because of them. Yet I will heal him, for I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil. Therefore it shall come to pass that whosoever will not believe in my words, who am Jesus Christ, which the Father shall cause him to bring forth unto the Gentiles, and shall give unto him power that he shall bring them forth unto the Gentiles, (it shall be done even as Moses said) they shall be cut off from among my people who are of the covenant" (3 Nephi 21:10–11).

Verse 11 is a very important verse. Let me suggest why. We won't take the time, but if we took the time, we could go back and read in the 18th chapter of Deuteronomy and later in the New Testament in Acts (where Peter offered commentary upon that) the prophecy made by Moses that the Lord would raise up a prophet who would be great like unto Moses. That was the prophecy concerning Jesus, the coming of Christ. Peter added the detail in Acts that those who don't give heed to the words of that prophet will be cut off from among the people. Notice what the Savior just did. He took that same principle, that same doctrine, or idea, and applied it to the works and words of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Those who don't give heed to him and to his words—and by extension, to those of his successors—will be cut off from among the people of the covenant.

Now, what comes to mind? This is what came to my mind. See if this sounds familiar: "The arm of the Lord shall be revealed; and the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off from among the people" (D&C 1:14). What we are saying is that the work set in motion by Joseph

⁹ *Weekly Herald* (New York, 12 July 1844).

Smith, the work of the Father, the work of restoration, the marvelous work and a wonder, or as it might be rendered more directly, the miraculous miracle—that work is a matter of life and death. It is a matter of salvation. Salvation itself is at stake. It isn't just a matter of another religious way of life. It *is* life. And the Lord takes that principle that he used in Deuteronomy 18 and applies it to Joseph Smith and his words, and he says the world is on trial here.

That's another great message. Let's go to 3 Nephi 10, and then we'll go to chapter 16. Let's make this our final message: the destiny of the house of Israel. Where are we in our story? The destruction has taken place, it is a gloomy setting, and the voice of the Lord is heard. Let's pick up with verse 3:

And it came to pass that there came a voice again unto the people, and all the people did hear, and did witness of it, saying:

O ye people of these great cities which have fallen, who are descendants of Jacob, yea, who are of the house of Israel, how oft have I gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and have nourished you.

And again, how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, yea, O ye people of the house of Israel, who have fallen; yea, O ye people of the house of Israel, ye that dwell at Jerusalem, as ye that have fallen; yea, how oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens, and ye would not.

O ye house of Israel whom I have spared, how oft will I gather you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, if ye will repent and return unto me with full purpose of heart.

But if not, O house of Israel, the places of your dwellings shall become desolate until the time of the fulfilling of the covenant to your fathers. (3 Nephi 10:3–7)

You gain a feel, from those verses, of God's eagerness to gather his people to him, and as we have said, the gathering is much less a geographical phenomenon than it is a spiritual one. We gather to Christ, to the true points of his doctrine. We gather to his gospel. We gather to his church. We gather secondarily to places. The gathering is not to a place; it is to a person.

In chapter 16 there is a warning. It is a sobering warning to the people of latter-day Israel. First of all, before that warning, Christ talks about the lost tribes of Israel. Nephi spoke about the lost tribes in his day. He said they were lost as pertaining to people's knowledge of them, and you will hear, or have heard, many interesting and

diverse interpretations as to where they are. You will hear people say, "Well, if we knew where they were, they wouldn't be lost." Well, we don't know exactly—except we know this much: Keep in mind that to the president of the Church are given certain keys and powers. It doesn't make much sense to give to Joseph Smith, and then to continue to pass down to our own day, to our own prophet, seer, and revelator, the keys of the gathering of Israel, including the restoration of the ten tribes, if you can't use them. Let me just read to you a thought or two that I had on this.

In 721 B.C. the ten northern tribes of Israel were taken captive into Assyria. From there they were led into the lands of the north and were thereafter lost from the annals of history. They have thus come to be known as the lost ten tribes. Much discussion and extended speculation have taken place as to their whereabouts and the manner in which they will return and be gathered home to the lands of their inheritance. It is common for Latter-day Saints, for example, to cite numerous legends or reminiscences of persons who supposedly heard Joseph Smith state that these Israelites are in the center of the earth, on a knob attached to the earth, on the North Star, or on another planet. . . . [But to those who argue that the ten tribes are presently together in one large body somewhere else, I ask them to consider the following:]

1. It is an established doctrine of the Church, one easily sustained by each of the standard works, that there was a universal apostasy after the mortal ministry of Christ. That such an apostasy embraced the ten tribes is evident in the Allegory of Zenos (see Jacob 5:29–29). [Remember, there came a time when *all* the branches of *all* the trees were corrupt.]

2. It is an equally well-established doctrine that in the last days there would be a universal restoration of the gospel. That is, the gospel restored to the earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith is the gospel that is destined to go to those of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. There is no justification to suppose that every nation, kindred, tongue, and people does not include the ten tribes. Indeed, if the ten tribes were together in a body in 1830 with their prophets, why the necessity of a Joseph Smith and the return of a host of ancient prophets with their keys and authority to him? Surely if all these things were already on the earth the Lord wouldn't ignore them and start from scratch with some other people.

3. The keys of the gathering of Israel and the leading of the ten tribes from the land of the north—a phrase that seems to mean, more generally, from their scattered condition (see Zechariah 2:6)—were given to the President of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Keys are the right of presidency, the directing power. They imply responsibility. How could the prophet claim to preside over a people and an event unknown to him? This would be akin to calling a

man to preside over some foreign mission but (a) refusing to tell him where the mission was located or (b) [not] allowing him any contact with the people. According to the analogy, all he would be afforded would be an invitation to the mission reunion. Truly, "It shall not be given to any one to go forth to preach my gospel, or to build up my church, except he be ordained by some one who has authority, and it is known to the church that he has authority and has been regularly ordained by the heads of the church" (D&C 42:11).¹⁰

So, the process of the gathering of Israel is the process of bringing people into the faith through conversion, the process of bringing people to baptism, bringing them into the kingdom of God. Chapters 16, 20, and 21 of 3 Nephi contain this detail. Chapter 16 also contains a warning, a sobering warning, especially for the United States of America and the Saints. If we are not careful, we may lose some great blessings. There will come a time—we call it the fulness of the Gentiles—when the Lord will turn, on a preferential basis, the blessings of the gospel to those we know as the Jews. And why will it happen? Because, as it said in 3 Nephi 16:10, the Gentiles will sin against that gospel.

I just want to close by having us go to 3 Nephi 20:24–26, if we could:

Verily I say unto you, yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have testified of me.

And behold, ye are the children of the prophets; and ye are of the house of Israel; and ye are of the covenant which the Father made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham: And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

[Now, notice this unusual but powerful promise to Israel:] The Father having raised me up unto you first, and sent me to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities; and this because ye are the children of the covenant.

There is power in the covenant, power to secure families everlastingly.

In closing I want to share some thoughts from President Benson and from President Hunter. "That man or woman is most truly successful," said President Benson, "whose life most closely parallels that of the Master."¹¹ This has nothing to do with earthly wealth, power, or prestige. The only true test of greatness, blessedness, joyfulness is how close a life can become to being like the Master, Jesus

¹⁰ Joseph Fielding McConkie, Robert L. Millet, and Brent L. Top, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992), 4:104, 107.

¹¹ Ezra Taft Benson, *Come Unto Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 47.

Christ. And President Hunter said: "The great standard! The only sure way! The light and the life of the world! How grateful we should be that God sent his Only Begotten Son to earth. . . . Let us follow the Son of God. . . . We must know Christ better than we know him; we must remember him more often than we remember him; we must serve him more valiantly than we serve him. Then we will drink water springing up unto eternal life and will eat the bread of life."¹²

The Book of Mormon provides for us an unusual and unique privilege, to come to know Christ in ways that we could know him in no other way. That we will accept and rejoice in the testimony of Jesus and his gospel contained in the Book of Mormon is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

¹² Howard W. Hunter, *That We Might Have Joy* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1994), 4–5.