

That Which Is Sacred

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“Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified; wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life.” D&C 45:1d,e

Again, with thanksgiving and praise to THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (Jeremiah 23:6), Jesus Christ, I greet you with the desire to share the words of grace He has ministered to me recently. As Daniel affirmed in his prayer of confession and supplication, “righteousness belongeth unto thee” (Daniel 9:7).

The Lord alone is holy, and unless His Holy Spirit of promise dwells within us, we remain in our own righteousness, which, as Isaiah confessed, is as filthy rags (Revelation 15:4 & Isaiah 64:6 with Jacob 4:1-8).

May we praise the name of Jesus Christ all the more. For He willingly imparts of His Holy Spirit of truth to all those who believe upon His name so that they might be presentable to our heavenly Father in righteousness. By Him alone are we saved.

And I Will Not Deny The Christ

The writings contained in the Book of Mormon, like all words of scripture, provide us with direction and understandings which are of great worth to the children of men (Romans 15:4 with I Nephi 1:173 & 3:164, II Nephi 15:3 & Mormon 4:17,18). Some of these precious words have been preserved for us in what appears to be an extemporaneous manner. For example, after

Moroni had abridged the record of Ether, he “supposed” that he would not be writing anymore. But finding himself “yet alive” amidst the fierce warfare of the Lamanites, he chose to “write a few more things” (Ether 6:109 & Moroni 1:1-4). Praise be to God that he did write more.

Yet, why specifically did Moroni write these few more things? “That perhaps they may be of worth unto my brethren, the Lamanites, in some future day, according to the will of the Lord” (vs. 4). The Lamanites?! It was from the Lamanites that Moroni had to hide himself, otherwise they would have destroyed him (vs. 1). Only charity could account for the intent behind Moroni’s labor in writing down his final record (cf. Moroni 7:50-53). Those who hold the words of Moroni, along with the words of all the holy prophets who lived before and after him, hold precious words of charity. They are words which reveal the purpose and glory of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

Considering his circumstance and his testimony of Jesus Christ, it is not difficult to see that the words of Moroni are indeed sincere words of charity. Like his father Mormon, he had charity (cf. Moroni 8:18), i.e. he had a pure and perfect love of God and of all men (cf. II Nephi 13:29). He especially loved his “enemies,” i.e. those

who sought to destroy him, and, thus, according to the words of Jesus Christ, he had been perfected in love through Christ, becoming perfect (complete) as his Father in heaven is perfect (Matthew 5:40-50 with Moroni 8:18, I John 4:7-5:5 & Colossians 2:9,10). Thus it is no wonder, then, that Moroni concluded his writings with the invitation to his brethren, the Lamanites, who had become his enemies, to “come unto to Christ, and be perfected in him” (Moroni 10:29).¹

In the “few more things” that he wrote in the closing pages of the record of his people, Moroni presents teachings on a number of subjects, including, but not limited to: faith, hope and charity; baptism for the remission of sins and of the reception of the Holy Ghost; the gifts and fruits of the Spirit of Christ; the plan of redemption; stewardship; the call to be diligent; ordination of priesthood; and the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. In fine, he presents the fullness of the gospel in all its glory and joy according to the “spirit of prophecy,” which is the testimony of Jesus Christ (cf. Revelations 19:10).

It was for this testimony that his life was put in jeopardy, yet he refused to recant the message of the risen Lord which resided within him, stating, “And I, Moroni, will not deny the Christ” (see Moroni 1:2,3). From this determination springs forth the words of Christ which has fed and continues to feed so many hungering souls, even to this day.

All who desire to know their Savior and to be redeemed of Him will find words of great comfort and wisdom in Moroni’s final recorded testimony. Yet we must never overlook the intent and charity of his invitation to his brethren, the Lamanites, and their children “in some future day.” In other words, this invitation will not have been fully received until they come to the

¹ See the last section on perfection and the confession of the antichrist that nobody is perfect.

light of the gospel and are redeemed through faith in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ.

Like Moroni, we too are called to have a determination to serve Jesus Christ to the end of our lives (Moroni 6:3 & D&C 17:7). One of the most important ways to insure that we will not deny our Lord is to always remember Him in the manner He provided, i.e. through the partaking of the bread and wine in remembrance of His flesh and blood (Matthew 26:22-27). My hope in presenting the following section regarding the significance of remembering our Risen Lord through this ordinance established by Him for this purpose is that we might all be encouraged to be ever valiant in the testimony of Jesus Christ and to never deny Him (Mark 14:23,24). May we all be found worthy to abide the day of His coming and to meet together with Moroni at the judgment bar of Christ, singing the song of redeeming love (Alma 3:11-17,46 with Revelation 5:9-14).

This Do In Remembrance of Me

Before being betrayed and taken to be crucified, Jesus Christ broke bread and poured wine with His disciples. In doing so, Jesus was setting an example for them (cf. III Nephi 8:49 with Matthew 26:25 & John 13:12-15). The breaking of bread and the partaking of wine together was to become an observance for His disciples, not only on this occasion, but also “unto the end” (Matthew 26:25). They were to partake of the bread in remembrance of His body which He would soon offer up as a sacrifice for the sins of the world (John 10:17,18). The wine was for a remembrance of His blood “of the new testament” which would soon be shed (Matthew 26:22-25).

Regarding the bread, Jesus said, “Take, eat; this is in remembrance of my body which I give a ransom for you” (Matthew 26:22). By offering up His body as a payment to cancel the debt of sin, Jesus established a special relationship be-

tween God and all men, i.e. that all men would become subject unto Him (II Nephi 6:10). This relationship and the responsibility it brings are described in the following words by the apostle Paul:

“What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” I Corinthians 6:20

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God is.” Romans 12:1-2

Regarding the wine, Jesus said, “For this is in remembrance of my blood of the new testament, which is shed for as many as shall believe on my name for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:24). [Question: When is a covenant in force and how is it “dedicated?” See Hebrews 9:16-20.] Except for the infinite atonement offered up by Jesus Christ, everyone of us must have had to have remained under condemnation before our heavenly Father because of our sinful and fallen state (Hebrews 10:9-27, Mosiah 1:115-122 & II Nephi 6:8-105).

The penalty for sin required by God’s justice is death (Romans 6:23). If we were required to pay the penalty for sin ourselves, after our physical death we would remain a captive to death, being subject to the devil and eternally separated from God by His justice (II Nephi 6:8-105 & I Nephi 3:127 & 4:48). By God’s word everyone must die once according to the flesh because of the original sin (Genesis 2:22, 3:30 & Hebrews 9:27). However, because of the atonement and the resurrection brought about

through Jesus Christ, everyone will be raised from the dead and be judged by Christ according to their works done in the flesh, whether they be the good works of God or dead works of the flesh (II Corinthians 5:10 with John 3:22).

“...we must come forth and stand before him in his glory, and in his power, and in his might, majesty, and dominion, and acknowledge to our everlasting shame, that all his judgments are just: That he is just in all his works, and that he is merciful unto the children of men, and that he has all power to save every man that believeth on his name, and bringeth forth fruit meet for repentance.”
Alma 9:26-27

God is not only just; He is also loving and merciful.

*“The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide; neither will he keep his anger forever. **He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.** For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.”* Psalms 103:8-14

It was according to His love and mercy, that our heavenly Father sent His Only Begotten Son into the world as a light to deliver the children of men from condemnation (John 3:14-22).

He removed our transgressions from us through the death of His Son, who satisfied the demands of divine justice which held claim upon the children of men because of the sin of disobedience (Romans 5:1-21). By the Son’s victory over death through the resurrection, there has come the hope and promise of eternal life in His

presence as our heavenly Father (Romans 8:1-28 & II Nephi 6:8-30). This promise is to all those who love Him, i.e. those who repent and come to Jesus Christ to be transformed by His saving grace and truth into the children of light, even the children of our heavenly Father who is the Father of lights (John 12:35,36 & James 1:17).

At the Last Supper Jesus Christ affirmed that it is only by Him that we are able to come into the presence of our heavenly Father.

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” John 14:6

As the Truth, and according to the mercy of God, Jesus Christ frees us from the bondage of death through His Spirit of truth, i.e. the Holy Ghost (John 8:31,32,36, II Corinthians 3:17 & Alma 19:81-111 with D&C 83:7). There is no savior beside Jesus Christ (Isaiah 43:11 & Hosea 13:4). He is our Advocate with the Father (I John 2:1,2). All who repent and come to Him as the Way because of the hope of redemption will taste of His saving grace. Our redemption was secured through His sufferings and death at Calvary and His resurrection from the garden tomb. As our Redeemer, Jesus pleads our cause before the heavenly Father, saying:

“Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou wast well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son which was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified; wherefore, Father, spare these my brethren that believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have everlasting life.” D&C 45:1d,e (John 14:30-32)

The words of this prayer evidence the beauty and strength of Jesus’ assurance to His disciples that the observance of the breaking of bread and the sharing of poured wine as initiated by Him

is to “be a testimony unto the Father, that ye do always remember me” (III Nephi 8:35). In the observance of partaking of bread and wine, we show forth His suffering and death as the apostle Paul testified:

“For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come.” I Corinthians 11:26

Through this ordinance, then, we give credence to, and reinforce the prayer that Jesus Christ offers up on our behalf as quoted above (D&C 45:1d,e). By continuing to witness before our heavenly Father of our faith in the mercy and grace of Jesus Christ we find grace in the eyes of God, i.e. we obtain His divine favor through the prayer of our Advocate and Friend.

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. But if any man sin and repent, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of whole world.” I John 2:1,2

On the occasion when Jesus instituted this ordinance of remembrance, He said to His disciples “If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). How best to show our love for Him than to remember Him in the manner specified by Him, i.e. through the partaking of the bread and wine according to the commandment “this do in remembrance of me?”

At this same time, Jesus placed His friendship with them within the context of obedience to the commandments, telling His disciples that they were His friends “*if* ye do whatsoever I command you” (John 15:14). That the partaking of the sacrament is an integral part of establishing friendship between God and the children of men is evidenced by our Advocate’s prayer, saying, “Father spare these *my brethren* who believe on my name, that they may come unto me and have

everlasting life” (D&C 45:1e). Thus, the connection between this ordinance of remembrance and the friendship that it fosters between heaven and earth should never be overlooked or treated lightly.

The gift Jesus Christ promises to those who are His friends is the Comforter, or the Holy Spirit of truth, who is the promise of eternal life, “even the glory of celestial glory” (D&C 85:1c with Romans 5:5 & Ephesians 1:13,14).

And so in partaking of the bread we pray that we might *always* have His Spirit to be with us (Moroni 4:4). And in partaking of the wine we pray that we might have His Spirit to be with us (Moroni 5:3). Why? His blood provides the justification to receive the Spirit (Romans 5:1-9) and by becoming a part of His body (I Corinthians 10:17), we continue to receive His Spirit, being sustained by our eternal Head.

When we partake of the bread and wine we are bearing witness of our faith in the Lamb which was slain, i.e. the Lamb provided by God for the remission of our sins. Without the ransom provided by God, enmity would remain forever (Mosiah 1:115-120). But enmity cannot remain because this same Lamb stands in the presence of our heavenly Father “as it had been slain,” as a perpetual, yes, even an infinite and eternal atonement for sin (Revelations 5:6 with Romans 8:1-9).

“Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first [the old law, vss. 1,8], that he may establish the second [the “new and living way” vs. 20]. By which will we are sanctified through the offering once of the body of Jesus Christ. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth to reign until his enemies be made his footstool.

For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us; for after that he had said before, this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.” Hebrews 10:12-20

As affirmed in this scripture, through the blood of Jesus Christ we enter into the “holiest.” The “holiest” refers to the presence of our heavenly Father “who is the holiest of all” (D&C 85:2a).

“And I have given unto you another law and commandment; wherefore teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in no wise inherit the kingdom of God. For no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence; for, in the language of Adam, Man of Holiness is his name; and the name of his Only Begotten is the son of Man, even Jesus Christ, a righteous judge, who shall come in the meridian of time.”
Genesis 6:59-60

The above scripture from the Hebrew letter affirms that it is through our Lord’s flesh, i.e. the veil, that we enter into the “holiest,” the presence of God. Thus we gain an even richer meaning of Jesus’ words at the Last Supper regarding the sacrament; He truly is the only way into the presence of His Father in heaven (John 14:6). Therefore, in conjunction with the prayer of our Advocate we are welcomed into the presence of our Maker through His flesh. And thus our Lord bids us partake of His flesh and blood.

“Oh taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him. Oh

fear the Lord, ye his saints; for there is no want to them that fear him.” Psalms 34:8-9

*“Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? **hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.**” Isaiah 55:1-3*

Jesus Christ, as our High Priest, “ever liveth to make intercession” for us (Hebrews 7:22-26). It is because Jesus submitted to the will of His heavenly Father, in laying down His life for the sins of the world and then taking it up again unto the glory of the Father, that He has received “power to make intercession for the children of men.”

“And thus God breaketh the bands of death; having gained the victory over death; giving the Son power to make intercession for the children of men: having ascended into heaven; having the bowels of mercy; being filled with compassion toward the children of men; standing betwixt them and justice; having broken the bands of death, taken upon himself their iniquity and their transgressions; having redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice.” Mosiah 8:35-37

And thus it is for the sake of His Only Begotten Son that our heavenly Father has pardoned us and grants us entrance into His Holy presence where we receive the fullness of joy by partaking of His love (Ephesians 4:32, Psalm 16:11 & I Nephi 2:52 with I Nephi 3:63-69). The closing lines of the prayer of worship offered up by the prophet Zenos sums up these truths in a most

beautiful manner:

“And it is because of thy Son that thou hast been thus merciful unto me; therefore I will cry unto thee in all mine afflictions; for in thee is my joy; for thou hast turned thy judgments away from me, because of thy Son.” Alma 16:184

And so may we ever remember that in our sharing in the bread and wine of remembrance, we do show forth the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ as a witness before the Father. For in so doing we are assured of the Lord’s blessing:

*“...if it so be that ye do it with an eye single to my glory; **remembering unto the Father my body which was laid down for you, and my blood which was shed for the remission of your sins...**” D&C 26:1b,c*

The Manner of...Administering The Flesh and Blood of Christ Unto the Church

One of the rich treasures which Moroni provided, while hiding from those who sought to slay him for the testimony of Christ, is “The manner of their elders and priests administering the flesh and blood of Christ unto the church” (Moroni 4:1). Central to “the manner of administering” were the prayers offered up to our heavenly Father. Note that in latter revelation, “the administering of the flesh and blood of Christ unto the church” is referred to simply as “the sacrament” (D&C 26:1b & 119:5a).

The partaking of the Sacrament, of the bread and the wine, signifies the taking of an oath. The Sacrament is administered primarily by ordained priesthood chosen and set apart by Jesus Christ for the bestowal of the gift of His Holy Spirit (cf. D&C 17:8-10 with III Nephi 5:45-49 & 8:28-72 & John 15:16).

One meaning of the word “administer” is “to direct the taking of an oath or pledge.” The oath

is administered through the prayers we have been commanded to offer up to God before we partake of the sacraments (D&C 17:22,23 & Moroni 4,5). We attest to the oath by partaking of the bread and wine. By so partaking of the emblems we are witnessing to God a) that we do always remember Jesus Christ and the atonement He has made on our behalf; b) that we are willing to take His name upon ourselves; and c) that we are willing to keep His commandments.

Because we are taking an oath when we partake of the Sacrament, we must guard against committing ourselves to that which we do not intend on doing. Otherwise, we drink damnation to our souls (III Nephi 8:60), not discerning the Lord's body (I Corinthians 11:29). Why? We are that body, i.e. we are that bread, because we are partakers of that bread (I Corinthians 10:17,12:14). If we do not have charity toward each other and if we are not willingly forgive one another then there must be divisions among. And thus we are not of the body Christ, i.e. we are under condemnation (D&C 38:6a), because such divisions mock the prayer of our Savior who died that we might be one in Him as He is one with the Father (John 17). As it is written, those who sin, sin against the body of Christ (I Corinthians 6:18).

When the Gentiles Sin Against My Gospel

In Moroni's closing words to his brethren, the Lamanites (Moroni 10:1), he encouraged them to remember how merciful God had been to the children of men since the creation of Adam (vs. 3). His evident hope was that, if they would remember God's mercy and believe the covenants which He had made with their fathers, they would be restored to God by the same. He concluded his record and the record of his fathers with this remarkable invitation to his brethren to come to Christ and be perfected in Him:

“And again I would exhort you, that ye would

come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift and touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing. And awake, and arise from the dust, O Jerusalem; yea, and put on thy beautiful garments, O daughter of Zion, and strengthen thy stakes, and enlarge thy borders for ever, that thou mayest no more be confounded, that the covenants of the eternal Father which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled. Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in no wise deny the power of God. And again, if ye, by the grace of God, are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father, unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy without spot.”* Moroni 10:27-30

How were they to receive this marvelous invitation extended to them to have faith in Jesus Christ and to come to Him as their Redeemer? All around Moroni, his brethren, the Lamanites, were in fierce warfare, seeking to take the life of anyone who would not deny Christ. What hope could have driven him to believe that someday they would have respect for his words and come to Christ and be perfected in Him? Moroni had placed his trust in God to bring the invitation to his brethren through the mercy of the Gentiles (Ether 5:22, I Nephi 3:192-199, III Nephi 9:87-93 & Romans 11:31). It would be up to God to fulfill His covenants through a people not of the covenant by birth (cf. II Nephi 11:142-147).

But would the Gentiles receive these things gratefully and would they count them of such great worth for his people that they would de-

clare the message of salvation to them? Moroni was concerned. He felt that the Gentiles would mock his words because of his weakness of writing. But Jesus Christ assured him that His grace was sufficient for all men and that He would show unto the Gentiles their weakness also (Ether 5:23-29). How? I believe that it would be by showing to the Gentiles that they were no better than the Jews in bringing forth the kingdom of God upon the earth, i.e. in bringing forth fruit in their own season (Matthew 21:35-56).

Moroni observed the entire destruction of his people because they rejected the fullness of the gospel in less than two hundred years (during the fourth generation) from the time that Jesus Christ walked with them and established His gospel among them (I Nephi 3:118-129). Would the Gentiles be more faithful and have respect for the Word? This latter day revelation suggests the answer:

*“And your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received, which vanity and unbelief hath brought the **whole** church under condemnation. And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all; and they shall **remain** under this condemnation **until** they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written, that they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father’s kingdom, otherwise there remaineth a scourge and a judgment to be poured out upon the children of Zion; for, shall the children of the kingdom pollute my holy land? Verily, I say unto you, Nay.” D&C 83:8*

The church that was established among the Gentiles through the restoration of the gospel was to build up the New Jerusalem so that the cove-

nanted people of Israel would be gathered for their salvation (D&C 42:10c). But the first laborers of the Restoration failed to build the tower of the Lord and were subsequently scattered and chastened of the Lord because of their disobedience (D&C 98:1-4,6,7). Would the Gentiles be given a second opportunity? Yes and no.

By way of a parable, our Lord showed that another “servant” would be called to gather the residue of the Lord’s servants, the strength of His house, and prepare again to build the tower of the Lord in the midst of Joseph’s land (D&C 98:7d). This may indeed mean that the Gentiles will be given a second opportunity to “remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon,” e.g. to carry Moroni’s invitation to his brethren to come and be perfected in Christ.

This invitation of the gospel is to first go to the Gentiles, then the Jews (D&C 104:12,13 & I Nephi 3:199,200). However, because the Gentiles have not brought forth fruit meet for the kingdom in their season, the gospel of the kingdom will be returned to the house of Israel (III Nephi 7:34-35). This is affirmed in the Inspired Version of the Bible where Jesus explained to His disciples that the Gentiles will also be destroyed, even as the Jews, because they did not bring forth fruit meet for the kingdom in their season (Matthew 21:55,56).

While on this continent, Jesus foretold of a time in which the Gentiles would reject the fullness of the gospel presented to them in the last days (III Nephi 7:34-35). The Lord testified that at that day He would bring the fullness of the gospel from among the Gentiles and then bring it to His people by remembering the covenant He had made with their fathers and thus show that He is able to do His own work (cf. III Nephi 7:34-35 & II Nephi 11:142,143). Only those Gentiles who repent will be numbered among God’s people, the house of Israel, and be permitted to “come in unto the covenant” to assist

in the work of establishing Zion (III Nephi 7:38-41 & 10:1-3 with I Nephi 3:197-216). Otherwise, those who do not repent, will be trampled under foot by the house of Israel (III Nephi 9:51-58).

While it is not always clear to whom the term “Gentiles” refers, it is used in this context as representing those nations who came to this land and who scattered the seed of Nephi’s brethren; especially those who have brought the Bible to this land and obtained the land after the Book of Mormon peoples fell into darkness (I Nephi 3:150-216). It was to these that the restored gospel was first brought in these last days through the revelation of the Book of Mormon. It was foretold that they would count it a light thing and reject the fullness thereof and thus come under condemnation (III Nephi 7:34-41). And so they, i.e. those so identified as Gentiles (the peoples who came to Joseph’s land and scattered the peoples of this land), will be humbled under the mighty hand of God.

In this humbled state, those among the Gentiles who embark upon this great work of God to restore the house of Israel according to the covenants of God will do so, I believe, out of mercy and humility (Romans 11:31) because the Lord has shown them their weakness, having humbled them according to His word to Moroni (Ether 5:29).

Originally the gospel was given to the Jews but because of unbelief, the apostles turned to the Gentiles to declare to them the word of truth (Acts 13:46). Now in these last days the gospel has come to the Gentiles first and then is to go to the Jews (D&C 104:12,13). Each of these transitions happened because of unbelief, first on the part of the Jews and now on the part of the Gentiles.

Have the Gentiles already rejected the fullness of the gospel according the prophecy of Jesus Christ (III Nephi 7:34)? I believe the record of

Mormon holds the key to understanding His prophecy. In Mormon’s day, a number of unique conditions existed among his people when they began to reject the fullness of the gospel (IV Nephi 1:42). The following list describes some of these conditions:

1. *Contentions and the formation of “ites” instead growing in oneness in Christ* (IV Nephi 1:20,40 versus Ephesians 4:1-16). Note that the development of such divisions is a manifestation of the law of the telestial glory in operation (D&C 76:71-m), not the law of celestial glory by which we are knit together in the bond perfectness (cf. Colossians 2:2 & 3:12-14) and thus by which Zion is established, i.e. by charity, the pure love of Christ (D&C 85:1c,2a with Moroni 7:50-53).
2. *Separation into classes because of material gain or learning rather than having all things common, i.e. living in righteousness (or living equitably)* (IV Nephi 1:4 versus 1:28).
3. *The building up of many church buildings rather than the edifying or building up of the body of Christ; e.g. the erecting of ornate buildings* (IV Nephi 1:1,2 versus 1:27,48).
4. *Teaching their children not to believe in the gospel as given from the beginning rather than teaching their children to be faithful to the commandments of God* (IV Nephi 1:42,43).
5. *The exercise of power and authority over the people of God to control their testimony and work among the people* (IV Nephi 1:32,37).

But perhaps the most important condition they manifested had to do with the way they changed administering two of the sacred ordinances Jesus Christ had established among them, as described in the following verse.

“And it came to pass that when two hundred and ten years had passed away, there were many churches in the land; yea, there were many churches which professed to know the Christ, and yet they did deny the more part of his gospel, insomuch that they did receive all manner of wickedness, and did administer that which was sacred unto him to whom it had been forbidden, because of unworthiness.” IV Nephi 1:29

6. The first way in which they denied “the more part of his gospel” was that “*they did receive all manner of wickedness*” into their churches. The church or body of Christ *receives* its membership into fellowship through baptism (D&C 17:7d,18a & III Nephi 8:62). Thus this specific phrase refers to baptizing the unrepentant or to receiving into fellowship those who are not baptized unto repentance (cf. III Nephi 5:21-29).

The shed blood of our Redeemer cannot cleanse the unrepentant (cf. D&C 28:4c, Mosiah 8:61-65 & Alma 9:51-56). Thus, Jesus Christ commanded the church to receive, by way of baptism, only those who are baptized unto repentance, i.e. upon their repentance (Mosiah 11:129,130 & D&C 17:7 with Helaman 2:73 & Matthew 3:38). In not obeying Christ in this matter, their churches took upon themselves the sins of those whom it received into fellowship but who had not truly repented of their sins. Thus, rather than having their sins remitted through the blood of the Lamb, they were retained and brought upon the whole body by accepting them into their fellowship (cf. Romans 1:32-2:11).

Our Lord cannot be deceived (II Nephi 6:80-84) nor will He receive unto Himself those who honor Him with their lips but their hearts are far from Him. Everyone must come down into the depths of humility and obey the commandment to repent and be baptized. Otherwise He will

not open to them and they will not be a part of His church (D&C 3:16 & II Nephi 6:80-84). On the other hand, the Lord has said, “Repent, and I will receive you” (Alma 3:57).

Each one who comes to be baptized must be led of their Savior into the waters of baptism (II Nephi 13:16). Baptism must be a fruit of the Spirit of Christ, i.e. a fruit of righteousness (Moroni 8:29 with Philippians 1:11 & Matthew 3:43), or else it is simply a dead work of self-justification. Thus the gospel includes the doctrine of repentance from dead works (Hebrews 6:1). The doctrine of Christ delivered in these last days is consistent with this theme:

“Behold, this is my doctrine: Whosoever repenteth and cometh unto me, the same is my church; whosoever declareth more or less than this, the same is not of me, but is against me; therefore, he is not of my church.” D&C 3:16

Jesus alone can lead someone into the presence of the Father through the gate of repentance and baptism; anyone who tries to come up some other way or to lead others to do the same is a thief and robber (John 14:6 & John 10:1 with II Nephi 6:80-84 & 13:24). And thus everyone must of truth repent and come to Jesus Christ Himself. Any other doctrine comes of priestcraft (II Nephi 11:106). And those who do not comprehend this doctrine and do not teach it alone for the doctrine of Christ are apt to fall into the practice of priestcraft which is forbidden by the Lord. And thus we are to cry nothing by repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ:

“And of tenets thou shalt not talk, but thou shalt declare repentance and faith on the Savior, and remission of sins by baptism and by fire; yea, even the Holy Ghost.” D&C 18:4d

We are commissioned to plant the word of faith and water it but God must bring the increase, i.e. the fruit of righteousness through Jesus Christ

(I Corinthians 3:7 & Ephesians 2:10).

7. The second way mentioned in IV Nephi 1:29 in which these churches began to deny “the more part of his gospel” was that they did “administer that which was sacred unto him to whom it had been forbidden, because of unworthiness.” The phrasing here clearly indicates that this statement is in reference to the administering of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper (cf. III Nephi 8:28-68). Jesus had expressly commanded His disciples not to administer the emblems of His body and blood to those who were unworthy of partaking (III Nephi 8:60-65).

What did our Lord mean by being unworthy? Jesus said that those who did not repent and were baptized by water were not worthy and thus were not to partake nor to be numbered among the church lest they should destroy His people. If someone does not come to the table with a real intent to be redeemed from sin and to be perfected in Christ according to His word, having an eye single to His glory, then they are unworthy before their Advocate to partake of His body and blood (Matthew 5:25,26, 6:16, Luke 21:36, 10:32-34, Ephesians 4:1-4, D&C 17:18c).

When someone partakes unworthily, they drink damnation to their souls by not discerning the body of Christ, i.e. the body of believers (I Corinthians 10:16,17 & 11:29-33). They mock the Lord and His holy bride, not desiring to be pure and without spot as she (the church) is called to be. Thus, they are, as Jude said, spots at your feast of charity (the sacrament), feeding themselves without fear (Jude 12).

As discussed previously, Paul testified that as often as we partake of the bread and wine in remembrance of Jesus Christ we do show His death till He comes in His glory (I Corinthians 11:26). If someone does not have in mind what my Lord had in mind for them when He went to

the cross, i.e. seeking their redemption, then they are mocking Him and putting Him to an open shame by showing His death with the sacrament yet not having real intent to be redeemed by His sacrifice.

Those who come to the table expecting to be accepted of Jesus Christ but who are unwilling to give up the desire to be conformed to this present world have their reward already in their corrupt pleasures, which will become as a cankerworm to them in eternity. What can Jesus do for anyone who wants God to validate their corrupt lifestyles or habits which are unholy? He can do nothing and they will remain unredeemed, i.e. as if no atonement had been made (Mosiah 8:61-65 & Alma 9:32).

If those who come to have fellowship with the church do not have the hope of being holy as our Lord is Holy according to the commandment and by the renewing of the Holy Spirit, why then do they desire to partake of His flesh and blood? He came to redeem us from our sins, not to redeem us in our sins (Helaman 2:72).

*“O remember, remember, my sons, the words which King Benjamin spake unto his people; yea, remember that there is no other way nor means whereby man can be saved, only through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, who shall come; yea, remember that he cometh to redeem the world. And remember also, the words which Amulek spake unto Zeezrom, in the city of Ammonihah; for he said unto him, that **the Lord surely should come to redeem his people; but that he should not come to redeem them in their sins, but to redeem them from their sins.**”*
Helaman 2:71-72

The invitation to come to Christ and be perfected in Him is the central theme of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. With respect to the sacrament, Jesus testified “blessed are ye if ye

have no disputations among you” (III Nephi 8:68). To this blessed end may we earnestly seek, that our Lord may be glorified. However, there continues to be controversy and contentions over this and other ordinances. Notwithstanding the regretful nature of disputations over the sacred doctrine of Christ, according to Paul’s testimony, when they do occur, disputations serve to manifest those who are “approved unto God” (II Timothy 2:15):

“For there must be also divisions among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.” I Corinthians 11:19

That the sacrament serves as a watershed between those who are **approved** and those who are **not approved** should cause each one of us to stop and examine ourselves as admonished by the apostle of the Lord to see whether we “be in the faith” or not before we partake of “that which is sacred,” our Lord’s body and blood (I Corinthians 11:27-33 & II Corinthians 13:5). As when Jesus spoke about the necessity of partaking of His flesh and blood, the administering of the sacrament in a manner designed by Him will still tend to separate the true disciple from the one who is not willing to continue to walk with the Master:

“From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.” John 6:66-69

All who come to Jesus Christ must be willingly patient and obedient. This is how He proves who loves Him. Those who engage in contentions over the sacred things of our Savior only serve the “father of contention,” the devil, and thus separate themselves from the fellowship of the Lamb of God (III Nephi 5:30,31). So that

we do not become embroiled in such snares, we must be of the resolve of Peter, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.” Those who endure through the difficult times of the trial of their faith, will not lose their reward in Christ (I Peter 1:3-9 & 4:12,13).

It appears to me that we are currently embroiled in many of the same things as the Book of Mormon peoples were at the time they rejected the fullness of the gospel (IV Nephi 1:29,42). They *professed* to know Christ even while they “denied the more part of his gospel.” Noting the similarities between then and now, we would do well to remember the prophecy that the whirlwind of the Lord’s vengeance will first come upon the house of the Lord, even those who have *professed* to know Him but have not kept His words (D&C 105:9,10). No doubt these two issues, of receiving all manner of wickedness into the church and of administering that which is sacred to those who are unworthy, will play a significant role in dividing the people between those who are approved and those who are not.

Come and Be Perfected In Christ

“And again I would exhort you, that ye would come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift and touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing.

“And awake, and arise from the dust, O Jerusalem; yea, and put on thy beautiful garments, O daughter of Zion, and strengthen thy stakes, and enlarge thy borders for ever, that thou mayest no more be confounded, that the covenants of the eternal Father which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled.

“Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind, and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ; and if by the grace of God ye are per-

fect in Christ, ye can in no wise deny the power of God.

“And again, if ye, by the grace of God, are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father, unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy without spot.” (Moroni 10:27-30)

The Book of Mormon closes with this amazing invitation and admonition to come unto Jesus Christ and be perfected in Him. In the light of this restored call of God upon our lives, we should be able to discern that the oft quoted phrase “Nobody is perfect” is blasphemy against the truth.

Such a statement is not an utterance of the Spirit of God, but rather a declaration or profession of the spirit of antichrist who denies that Jesus Christ lives; who denies that our Savior is perfect; who denies that those who abide in the True Vine are made perfect by Him, etc. (cf. I John 4:1-8 with John 15:1-17).

Stating that no one is perfect is an affront to God because it mocks the work of our Redeemer who came for this very purpose, i.e. to perfect us by His atoning blood (cf. Hebrews 6:1-3 with D&C 76:5g). Similarly, it mocks the work of the ministry who Jesus Christ called and gave to the church *for the perfecting of the saints* (Ephesians 4:8-12)

“Wherefore he saith, When he ascended upon high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men...and he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ...” Ephesians 4:8-16

The true Christian affirms with Jesus that “whatsoever things” He has spoken are possible

with God (Matthew 19:26). And thus a statement like “nobody’s perfect” should not be affirmed by those who bear the name of our Savior, because it is simply is not true. Nowhere is such a thing even suggested in scripture. Yes, we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God because of our sinful and willful nature, but in Christ Jesus we can, and will, go on to perfection “if God permit” (Hebrews 6:3). Why would God not permit everyone to go onto perfection? Those who enjoy unrighteousness and choose to “remain” in it rather than to love Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life – by whom we may come to the Father – will fail to progress (cf. Hebrews 6:3-8 with John 14:6; see also I Nephi 2:44-76).

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; who love not the truth, but remain in unrighteousness.” Romans 1:18

“And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” II Thessalonians 2:11,12

As in the church of old, it is unrighteousness, i.e. wickedness, that will cause the church to fail in it progress (cf. Alma 2:17 & Mosiah 11:166 with D&C 102:2).

Remember, Jesus commanded us to be perfect.

“Ye are therefore commanded to be perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.” Matthew 5:50

Therefore, we know that God has provided a way for us to be perfect *in this world* (cf. John 14:6 with I John 4:16-18). How do we know the way has been provided? As Nephi professed, there are no commandments given by the living God except He provides a way for His commandments to be accomplished (I Nephi

1:65 & I John 4:17). And Jesus is that Way!

Throughout scripture we are commanded, even compelled, to repent and be perfected in Jesus Christ. The assertion that no one is perfect causes many to stumble and draw back from the calling to press forward and be perfected in Jesus Christ, i.e. such a declaration does not foster trust in the words of Christ (cf. Philippians 3:15). It may sound humble to some. But it more accurately is identified as a statement of unbelief or denial.

Simply stated, the aversion to believing that individuals can be perfect in this life comes of disbelief and the want to make excuse. The carnal mind cannot understand how these things are true and will either discount or refute Christ's words (cf. I Corinthians 2:10-16). But to do so is to miss the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, i.e. it is to sin, to fall short.

There is no need to try and trivialize the matter by attempting to qualify what it means to be perfect. Denying that we can be perfect is to deny God's power. And, as Moroni explains, those who deny God's power cannot be perfected in Christ. Accordingly, they will find it impossible to believe that anyone else can be perfect since they are not able to go on to perfection; and hence the confession of unbelief, "No one is perfect."

Such a statement cannot compare with the words of Moroni, who said "by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ." Oh that all would believe and trust in the word of the Lord.

The Restoration is the Lord's work. May we all repent, therefore, and make His paths straight so that the gospel in all its beauty and simplicity may go forth to Moroni's brethren, to whom he wrote the words of charity, that they might come and taste and know that the Lord is good; and that they might be perfected in Him. May we rise up out of the condemnation which has

rested upon the church these many years by remembering anew the work of restoring the house of Israel to the covenants made to the fathers (cf. D&C 83:8 with Romans 12:1-3).

Finally, may we come unto Christ, having a determination like unto Moroni not to deny Him, so that we, by His power, might be perfect in Him. And may the grace of God fill each one with charity that it might be well with us on the dreadful but glorious day of the Lord (Malachi 4:1-6 & I John 4:16-18).