

# SO THAT ALL THINGS MAY BE DONE IN ORDER PART 2

## CONCERNING THE ORDER IN WHICH NEW MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH PARTAKE OF THE SACRAMENT AND ARE CONFIRMED

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*The duty of the members after they are received by baptism: The elders or priests are to have a sufficient time to expound all things concerning the church of Christ to their understanding, previous to their partaking of the sacrament, and being confirmed by the laying on of the hands of the elders; so that all things may be done in order. (D&C 17:18a,b)<sup>2</sup>*

In February of 1993 the Spirit of the Lord led<sup>3</sup> the elders of our congregation<sup>4</sup> to administer the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to newly baptized members and then *attend* to the laying on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. On March 7, 1993 we followed this order of observance for the first time.

It has been the general practice in the church over the past several generations to administer the sacrament to new members only after they have been confirmed. Therefore, in preparation of the March 7, 1993 confirmations, we prayerfully reviewed the scriptures and commandments given to the church to verify that the instruction we had received was indeed in agreement with God's will and His word.<sup>5</sup>

The scripture the Lord initially referred us to was D&C 17:18a,b (quoted above). Through this passage of scripture He assured us of His intended order of administering the sacrament relative to the confirmation of new church members. In this passage our Lord outlined the order for administering these ordinances, listing the sacrament first and then confirmation. His stated reason for giving the instruction in D&C 17:18 was *so that all things may be done in order* – and *all things*, He assured us, included the order in which these ordinances are to be observed.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The original account was provided in a study letter printed on March 29, 1994 under the title, "*In Retrospect: Administering the Sacrament Prior to Confirmation.*" It has been renamed for clarification and to connect it to an earlier study letter on the same topic titled, "*So That All Things May Be Done In Order.*"

<sup>2</sup> See also D&C 17:7

<sup>3</sup> cf. D&C 46:3b,c with D&C 17:8f,9; see also D&C 43:4a-d with Moroni 6:9

<sup>4</sup> Our congregation meets at 6300 Tarrytown, Park City (Wichita), Kansas, 67219

<sup>5</sup> cf. Acts 17:10-11

<sup>6</sup> Consideration of age, maturity, education, should be taken into account when providing instruction to the new members.

The Spirit of the Lord further taught us that to assume the order in which the ordinances are listed in this commandment is not significant when, in the same scripture, the Lord emphasized the importance of doing *all things* in order, would be to suggest that our God is either careless or inconsistent. He is neither. Order is important to our God, especially in the administration of His ordinances. Why? He has given us His ordinances for establishing and maintaining order within His church.<sup>7</sup>

*For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints...Let all things be done decently and in order.*  
(I Corinthians 14:33,40)

### **By the Will and Commandments of God**

The commandments recorded in D&C 17:18 are consistent with the commandments given to organize the church on April 6, 1830. Taken together, these commandments verify that from the church's inception the Lord intended for there to be a specific order of administering the sacrament and confirming new church members.<sup>8</sup> Consider the opening paragraph of Section 17.

*The rise of the church of Christ in these last days, being one thousand eight hundred and thirty years since the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the flesh, it being regularly organized and established agreeable to the laws of our country, **by the will and commandments of God** in the fourth month, and on the sixth day of the month which is called April; **which commandments were given to***

<sup>7</sup> Mosiah 2:44 with I Corinthians 14:40, D&C 83:3c & D&C 85:36-39

<sup>8</sup> See I Corinthians 1:6 with Acts 1:8 & I Corinthians 12:3. For an in-depth discussion on confirmation and the testimony of Jesus Christ, see "So That All Things May Be Done In Order," (Part 1), Prepared by Elder Dwight Burford, March 29, 1994, Updated April 1994, Reformatted July 2007 (www.hisworkmanship.net)

*Joseph Smith, Jr., who was called of God and ordained an apostle of Jesus Christ, to be the first elder of this church; **and to Oliver Cowdery, who was also called of God an apostle of Jesus Christ, to be the second elder of this church, and ordained under his hand: and according to the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to whom be all glory both now and for ever. Amen.** (D&C 17:1)*

Note that the church was *organized* and *established* by the will and commandments of God, specifically the *commandments* which He gave to Joseph Smith, Jr., and to Oliver Cowdery. What were those commandments? With regard to these two ordinances, according to Joseph's *History of the Church* they were *commanded* to first partake of the sacrament *with them* (the new church members)<sup>9</sup> and then *attend* to the laying on of hands for the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

"...we were commanded to bless bread and break it with them ...and then attend to the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost upon all those whom we had previously baptized; doing all things in the name of the Lord."<sup>10</sup>

On the appointed day they obeyed the Lord and administered the sacrament to the new members of the church, i.e. those who had previously been baptized in water,<sup>11</sup> before confirming them through the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.<sup>12</sup> It is manifestly significant that this *order* of observance was part of the *organization* of the church. It is rather evident,

<sup>9</sup> cf. D&C 17:18a

<sup>10</sup> *The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, Volume 1, Herald House, Independence, Missouri, pp. 60,61.

<sup>11</sup> See D&C 17:7 regarding how the church receives new members. Compare with II Nephi 13:24 with D&C 17:18.

<sup>12</sup> *The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, Volume 1, Herald House, Independence, Missouri, pp. 76,77.

then, that it would be inconsistent to accept the organization of the church as an authentic act of God and yet not accept the order He gave for organizing it.

This order of observing the ordinances was clearly a significant part of setting the church in order and it will again have a significant place in setting the church in order so that the church may faithfully carrying out her assigned labors in these latter days.<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps one may argue that since the church had not previously been organized (or that it was in the process of being organized), this order of observance was unique to this event or setting. However, one may also ask that if it was appropriate at the time the church was set in order to administer the sacrament and then confirm new members, what would be the basis for deeming it inappropriate to do so now? Where is the scripture or instruction rescinding the order of observance given in D&C 17:18 or the order outlined in the command to organize the church on April 6, 1830?

The elders in the first generation of the church evidently believed that it was incumbent upon them to observe these ordinances in the order originally given to them by the Lord. The appendix to this paper includes many of their reports from the early 1830's through the early 1840's as found in *The History of the Church, Messenger and Advocate, Evening and Morning Star* and *Times and Seasons*. When these two ordinances were mentioned together in these records, the sacrament was reported to have been administered first, with the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost following.

Both scripture and history show us that the order of administering the sacrament and confirming new church members is significant. The pattern observed on April 6, 1830 was observed onward in the regular life of the church until sometime after the murder of Joseph and Hyrum Smith. The reason for this change, this straying

from the Lord's ordinances, will be explored further in later sections of this study letter.

### **Now When the Multitude had All Eaten and Drunk, Behold They Were Filled with the Spirit**

The pattern of observance described in the previous section is also found in the manner in which Jesus Christ organized His church nearly 2000 years ago, both in Jerusalem and in Central America. The scriptural record shows that in each location Jesus Christ administered the sacrament to His disciples before baptizing them with fire and the Holy Ghost.<sup>14</sup>

In Acts 1:4,5 we read of how Jesus Christ, our resurrected Lord, told His disciples that “*ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.*” Note that this event took place after they had observed the sacrament of the Lord's Supper together<sup>15</sup> and, as yet, had not been *baptized with fire and the Holy Ghost* (but soon would be He said).<sup>16</sup> And they would go on in *breaking bread* together until that appointed day and beyond.<sup>17</sup>

If it had been important for them to first receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost before partaking of the sacrament, Jesus most assuredly could have arranged to have done so. He had prepared a meal of fish and bread for His apostles on the shore of a lake after His resurrection.<sup>18</sup> Could He not, then, have prepared for them this most sacred of all meals after the day of Pentecost? Clearly He could have done so.

Therefore, if it had been the proper order of things for them to be baptized with the Holy Ghost and then partake of the sacrament, most assuredly our Lord would have had them do so

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<sup>13</sup> cf. D&C 65 with II Nephi 5:9-114

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<sup>14</sup> That is, before the Lord poured out His Spirit more abundantly upon them according to the promise (cf. Acts 2:16-18 with Mosiah 9:41).

<sup>15</sup> e.g. Luke 22:120

<sup>16</sup> Acts 2:14 with John 7:38,39

<sup>17</sup> cf. Acts 2:42,46 with Acts 20:7 & I Corinthians 10:16,17

<sup>18</sup> John 21:414

(remembering He was and is without sin<sup>19</sup>). But, as it was, our Lord first administered the sacrament to His disciples and then baptized them with fire and the Holy Ghost.

Similarly, in III Nephi 9:40-45 we read of how our resurrected Lord administered bread and wine to *the more righteous* during His ministry in ancient America prior to their being filled with the Holy Ghost.<sup>20</sup> Many people had gathered together to see Jesus the day after He had instructed them in the New Covenant.<sup>21</sup> They then received *the promise of the Father*, the Comforter, following their partaking together of the covenant meal Jesus provided for them.<sup>22</sup>

*And he [Jesus] said unto them, He that eateth this bread, eateth of my body to his soul, and he that drinketh of this wine, drinketh of my blood to his soul, and his soul shall never hunger nor thirst, but **shall be filled**. **Now when the multitude had all eaten and drunk, behold***

<sup>19</sup> cf. Hebrews 4:15 with I John 3:5

<sup>20</sup> III Nephi 4:41,66-68. The “more **righteous**” referred to in this passage of scripture included those who had been baptized by Nephi and those ordained by him (III Nephi 1:27 & 3:68-70). Remember we are baptized in water *to fulfill **all righteousness*** (cf. Matthew 3:43 & II Nephi 13:7). Therefore, when Jesus spoke of *the more righteous* He spoke of those who had not rejected the call to repent and be baptized as preached by His servants such as Nephi and Samuel the Lamanite (cf. Helaman 5:109-117 & III Nephi 4:66).

<sup>21</sup> Note that this is consistent with the commandments given in D&C 17:18a,b, that new members are to receive instruction prior to their partaking of the sacrament and being confirmed; cf. III Nephi 9:1-3 with II Nephi 14:6,7 & III Nephi 1:27-31.

<sup>22</sup> cf. IV Nephi 1:4 with Genesis 6:64, John 14:15-18, Acts 1:4, Romans 5:5 & Galatians 3:14; Remember, the wine is Jesus Christ’s “blood of the new testament <covenant >” (Matthew 26:24), i.e. “the new testament <covenant > in my blood which is shed for you” (Luke 22:20). Also, please note that the priesthood received the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost first, before the main body of the church received the precious gift following the witness of their obedience to Christ’s commandments in administering the sacrament and the word of God “nothing varying” to Christ’s church (III Nephi 8:39 & 9:10-16).

*they were filled with the Spirit, and they did cry out **with one voice**, and gave glory to Jesus, who they both saw and heard.* (III Nephi 9:44,45)

Please note that all of the people were filled with His Spirit *after* they had partaken together of the bread and wine according to Jesus’ word, not before.<sup>23</sup>

Why is this order important for establishing and maintaining order in the church as a whole? Jesus Christ had His disciples first bear witness of their intent to always remember Him and to keep His commandments (to show their love for Him and for each other)<sup>24</sup> by administering these ordinances after this manner.<sup>25</sup> That is, Jesus Christ had them keep the commandments that He had given them as a witness to the Father of their obedience and devotion to Him as their Lord and Savior.<sup>26</sup>

*And when the disciples had done this, Jesus said unto them, Blessed are ye for this thing which ye have done, for this is fulfilling my commandments, and this doth witness unto the Father that ye are willing to do that which I have commanded you.* (III Nephi 8:39)

Once they obeyed, Jesus then prayed to the Father to give them the promised Comforter according to the pattern He outlined for His apostles back in Jerusalem.<sup>27</sup>

*If you love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.”*

<sup>23</sup> cf. Hebrews 10:36; the twelve disciples had previously been filled with the Lord’s Spirit as promised in III Nephi 8:32-43 (see III Nephi 9:7-16)

<sup>24</sup> See [http://www.hisworkmanship.net/index\\_files/Testimonies/Phm21MarchingToZion03Mar08.pdf](http://www.hisworkmanship.net/index_files/Testimonies/Phm21MarchingToZion03Mar08.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> III Nephi 8:39-43 with John 13:34,35 & I John 5:1-12

<sup>26</sup> cf. Luke 6:46 with Matthew 7:30-37

<sup>27</sup> cf. III Nephi 9:21-23 with III Nephi 9:10-20

Note the pattern.<sup>28</sup> Faithful obedience is to come first. Then the promised blessings follow.<sup>29</sup>

*For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. (Hebrews 10:36)<sup>30</sup>*

### **Except Ye Eat**

Jesus testified of this same order of obedience and receiving His Spirit to a group of Jews who wanted to make Him their king.<sup>31</sup>

*Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.** Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up in the resurrection of the just at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, **dwelleth [abides] in me, and I in him.** As **the living Father** hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so **he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.** This is that bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead; he that eateth of this bread shall live forever. **It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.** (John 6:53-58,63 [cf. John 15:4-11])*

Note carefully the words spoken by Jesus. *Except* we eat His flesh and drink His blood we have no life in us. We must first partake of our Lord's flesh and blood. Then, if we do so faithfully with an eye single to His glory, He promises to fill us with His Spirit, i.e. that which

<sup>28</sup> cf. Mark 14:20-24 & John 14:15-18 with Moroni 4:4 & 5:3 & III Nephi 8:39

<sup>29</sup> cf. D&C 63:3a,b with Mark 16:16 & Luke 16:10-12

<sup>30</sup> cf. Hebrews 6:11,12 & James 1:2-4

<sup>31</sup> cf. John 6:15

*quickeneth and makes all things alive.<sup>32</sup>*

But what exactly does Jesus Christ mean when He tells us we must feast upon His flesh and blood? This is principally a spiritual commandment, not a temporal one.<sup>33</sup> We are to feast upon Jesus Christ as the Incarnate Word of God, that is, the Word of God that was made flesh and dwelt among us.<sup>34</sup> Specifically, we are to feast upon Him by feasting upon His words, specifically by feasting upon His teachings, commandments, instructions, admonitions, prophecies, parables, warnings, etc.<sup>35</sup> These, Jesus said (meaning His words), are His flesh and blood.

*It is the Spirit that quickeneth; **the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you; they are spirit, and they are life.** (John 6:63)<sup>36</sup>*

The people Jesus fed and who then followed after Him had referred Him to their fathers and noted how God had provided them manna in the wilderness to eat.<sup>37</sup> In reply Jesus declared:

*... Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. (John 6:32,33)*

According to Moses, God had humbled His people by feeding them with manna, saying:

*And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doeth not*

<sup>32</sup> cf. Genesis 6:63-65

<sup>33</sup> cf. D&C 28:9a with III Nephi 8:39 & I John 1:1

<sup>34</sup> John 1:14

<sup>35</sup> II Nephi 14:4 with John 6:63 & 12:49,50, Colossians 3:16 & D&C 83:7

<sup>36</sup> See Psalm 34:8

<sup>37</sup> John 6:31 with John 6:50,58

*live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.* (Deuteronomy 8:3)

The lesson God was teaching His people by feeding them with manna was that they are to live by every word that proceeds out of His mouth. That is, God was pointing His people to Jesus Christ, His incarnate Word. And with the advent of Jesus Christ, God's people were to understand that He, as the incarnate Word of God, was and is and shall forever be every word that proceeds forth out of the mouth of God for us, i.e. every word of God that we are to feast upon. Again in the words of Moses we read that must *hearken* unto Jesus Christ in *all things*.

*The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.* (Deuteronomy 18:15)

Jesus Christ verified that He is that prophet of whom Moses spoke, thus confirming that unless we *hearken* to Him in all things we will be cut off from among the people.

*Behold, I am he of whom Moses spake, saying, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me, him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that every soul which will not hear that prophet, shall be cut off from among the people.* (III Nephi 9:60,61)

Like the Psalmist, we must hide God's word in our hearts, i.e. let it sink deeply within us.<sup>38</sup> We must assimilate His words into our very beings that we might not sin against Him.

*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.* (Psalm 119:11)

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<sup>38</sup> cf. Luke 9:44 with Matthew 7:34-37

How does hiding God's word in our hearts keep us from sinning? Nephi taught that Jesus Christ's words will tell us *all things* what we should do.

*Wherefore, I said unto you, Feast upon the words of Christ; for behold the words of Christ will tell you all things what you should do.* (II Nephi 14:4)

By feasting upon Jesus Christ, by feasting upon His life-giving words, we receive the wisdom necessary to *walk blamelessly* before God. He is both the power of God and the Wisdom of God manifest in us for our redemption and eternal life.<sup>39</sup>

*For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them who believe, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.* (I Corinthians 1:22-24)

Our partaking of the bread and wine in remembrance of our Lord's flesh and blood is at the heart of feasting on upon His words. It manifests our determination to hold fast to Him as the Word of God, even as *the rod of iron* which God established to lead unto eternal life.<sup>40</sup>

*And they said unto me, What meaneth the rod of iron which our father saw, that led to the tree? And I said unto them, that it was the word of God; and whoso would hearken unto*

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<sup>39</sup> II Nephi 14:4 & Alma 5:38 with Philippians 2:12-16 & John 13:34; see also D&C 22:21b with Genesis 1:8 & Jacob 3:12

<sup>40</sup> cf. I Nephi 4:38-40 with John 1:14 & Micah 6:9; as He said, "*This do in remembrance of me.*" Because Jesus Christ always did those things, and only those things, which He was shown of the Father, because He perfectly fulfilled His Father's will, He was indeed the incarnate Word of God (John 5:17-31, 7:16-18 & 12:49,50).

*the word of God, and would hold fast unto it, they would never perish. (I Nephi 4:38,39)*

Accordingly the prophet Micah reported:

*The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name; here ye the rod, and who hath appointed it. (Micah 6:9)*

In terms of the new and everlasting covenant, this is how we embrace Jesus Christ as the Truth (God's Word<sup>41</sup>) and look up to Him as the wisdom of God.<sup>42</sup> We feast upon His words. Our partaking of the sacrament together manifests our commitment to continue in *the Way, the Truth, and the Life*, Jesus Christ, so that we may endure to the end.<sup>43</sup>

### **After They Had Spoken These Words**

Another account, this time from before the time of Christ, illustrates the same principles discussed in the prior sections. King Benjamin's people were converted (born of the Spirit) through his preaching the gospel of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.<sup>44</sup> The Spirit of the Lord was given unto them in a similar order to that described above.

*And they had viewed themselves in their own carnal state, even less than the dust of the earth. And they all cried aloud with one voice, saying, **O have mercy, and apply the atoning blood of Christ, that we may receive forgiveness of our sins, and our hearts may be purified: For we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who created heaven and earth, and all things, who shall come down among the children of men. And it came to pass that after they had spoken these words, the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were***

<sup>41</sup> John 17:17 with John 14:6 & I John 5:7

<sup>42</sup> Genesis 9:21-23 with I Corinthians 1:24, John 12:36 & James 2:17-27

<sup>43</sup> John 14:6 with Mark 13:13 & I Peter 1:25

<sup>44</sup> Mosiah 1:92-130 & Mosiah 3:1-21 with Alma 3:27-42

*filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience, because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ who should come, according to the words which King Benjamin had spoken unto them. (Mosiah 2:26)*

Note that it was *after* they cried out *in one accord* to God through faith in Christ, seeking His mercy, that His Spirit came upon them and filled them with unspeakable joy. They were, as yet, under the Mosaic Law.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, the sacrament, which is an ordinance of the New Covenant,<sup>46</sup> was not administered to them. Still, their faith was in the mediator of the New Covenant, Jesus Christ.<sup>47</sup>

King Benjamin's people believed the word of God spoken by their beloved king, that if they humbled themselves before God, relying solely upon the atoning merits of Jesus Christ, they would receive a remission of their sins.<sup>48</sup> According to His word, the Lord honored their earnest and faithful plea for mercy by granting them His Holy Spirit of Promise, i.e. *the earnest of our inheritance*.<sup>49</sup> They became partakers of the *heavenly gift* just as those to whom Christ appeared in the flesh following His ascension into heaven.<sup>50</sup>

### **Hunger and Thirst After Righteousness**

Jesus Christ's promise that "*he that drinketh of this wine, drinketh of my blood to his soul, and his soul shall never hunger nor thirst, but shall be filled,*"<sup>51</sup> is foundational to the covenant He mediates.<sup>52</sup> First we partake of Him (as the

<sup>45</sup> cf. II Nephi 11:44,48 & 14:6,7 with III Nephi 1:27-31

<sup>46</sup> Mark 14:24

<sup>47</sup> cf. Alma 14:38

<sup>48</sup> Mosiah 1:118

<sup>49</sup> cf. I John 3:24 & 4:13 & Ephesians 1:13,14 with Alma 14:30-38 & III Nephi 4:49,50

<sup>50</sup> cf. IV Nephi 1:4 with III Nephi 4:49,50 & Alma 14:34-38; see also III Nephi 4:74 & 5:13; see also Acts 10

<sup>51</sup> cf. III Nephi 9:44,45

<sup>52</sup> cf. Galatians 3:20-29

Word of God) and then we are filled with His Spirit of truth – because God’s living and abiding Word is truth.<sup>53</sup> First we hunger and thirst. Then we are filled with the Holy Ghost.

*And blessed are all they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they **shall be filled with the Holy Ghost.** (Matthew 5:8; see also III Nephi 5:53)*

Hungering and thirsting after *righteousness*, i.e. God’s righteousness, must be the primary reason for our partaking of Jesus Christ’s flesh and blood (i.e. His words of spirit and life). More specifically, it must be out of a desire to establish His righteousness on earth that we reach forth our hands to partake of His life giving words.

*Thou meetest him that worketh righteousness, and rejoiceth him that remembereth thee in thy ways; in righteousness there is continuance, and such shall be saved. (Isaiah 64:5)<sup>54</sup>*

*Wherefore, seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matthew 6:38)*

*For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. (Romans 14:17)*

*For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth. (Ephesians 5:9)*

The Lord’s disciples greatest desire was to be filled with Holy Ghost.

*And they did pray **for that which they most desired**; and they desired that the Holy Ghost should be given unto them. (III Nephi 9:10)*

<sup>53</sup> John 17:17 with John 14:6 & Alma 18:12

<sup>54</sup> cf. III Nephi 10:22

Is this righteousness, the Lord’s righteousness, our greatest desire in partaking of the sacrament meal together? If it is, we too will be filled with the Holy Ghost, even as they hungered and were filled.

Oh, for a people, and a priesthood who serve them, whose chief desire and delight is to be righteous by being filled with the Holy Ghost! Oh for a people who would feast together upon our Lord’s flesh and blood, upon the very words of the Incarnate Word of God, the Word made flesh, as did *the more righteous* of old, that they may be endowed with power for building up the kingdom of heaven and establishing our Lord’s righteousness upon the earth!<sup>55</sup> Oh for a people whose God is THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.<sup>56</sup>

### **I Will Try You, And Prove You Herewith**

By being faithful to the words of Christ (His commands, teaching, etc.), our faith increases and grows as a seed that grows into a plant or tree which eventually bears fruit.<sup>57</sup> As we grow, we receive ever increasing assurance from the Comforter that God is pleased with us and that He will continue with us, especially in our endeavors to build up His kingdom upon the earth, and to establish His righteousness.<sup>58</sup> In Jesus’ words to His apostles the night they partook of the Last Supper together:

*If ye love me, keep my commandments. **And** I will pray to the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to*

<sup>55</sup> Matthew 6:38 & I Nephi 3:187,188

<sup>56</sup> cf. Jeremiah 23:6 with Jeremiah 33:16

<sup>57</sup> Alma 16:152-173

<sup>58</sup> I Nephi 3:187,188 & Hebrews 11:1-6 with Galatians 5:22-25 & Romans 8:31

you. (John 14:15-18; cf. II Corinthians 3:17 & D&C 90:4a-c)

Note again the pattern. Obedience first. Then the promised blessings are received:

*For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.* (Hebrews 10:36; cf. Hebrews 6:11,12 & James 1:2-4)

Jesus is “*the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him.*”<sup>59</sup> In His words, we are His friends, those for whom He laid down His life, **if** we do that which He commands.<sup>60</sup>

*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.* (John 15:13,14)

But our Lord is not simply seeking our obedience. He is nurturing our love, and thus our devotion to Himself and His Ways by what the apostle Paul called *the faith which works by love*.<sup>61</sup>

*For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous.* (I John 5:3)

The Lord is not passive in this matter of our obedience and love.<sup>62</sup> Quite the contrary is true. He is determined to prove our love for Him. In fact, He has vowed in His heart to *prove* us, even unto death, to know if we love Him by our keeping His commandments.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Hebrews 5:9

<sup>60</sup> John 15:14; cf. Matthew 28:17-19

<sup>61</sup> cf. Galatians 5:6b

<sup>62</sup> cf. Matthew 22:35-39 with Deuteronomy 13:1-4

<sup>63</sup> Deuteronomy 13:1-4 with I Peter 1:6,7 & D&C 92:1; see also Hebrews 12:5-11, Revelation 3:18-22 & I Corinthians 10:12,13

*...for I have decreed in my heart, saith the Lord, that I will prove you in all things, whether you will abide in my covenant, even unto death, that you may be found worthy; for if ye will not abide in my covenant, ye are not worthy of me...* (D&C 95:3c-d)

*Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh condemnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. **Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.*** (I Corinthians 11:27-33; cf. I Corinthians 12:12-31)

The Lord's determination to prove His people includes proving His priesthood. Administering the sacrament, as Jesus Christ has prescribed, is one of the areas in which He has determined to prove us. The following quote from the Book of Mormon plainly shows His intent in this matter. In this example from the scriptures, Jesus had just commanded His twelve disciples to serve bread and wine to the multitude who had been gathered to hear Him. Then, *after* they had served the people as He had directed, Jesus spoke these words to His disciples:

*...Blessed are ye for this thing which ye have done, for this is fulfilling my commandments, and this doth witness unto the Father that ye are willing to do that which I have commanded you. And if ye shall always do these things, blessed are ye, for ye are built upon my rock.* (III Nephi 8:39,43)

Will we be faithful to Jesus Christ and observe His ordinances as He has given them? Will we do so in the face of opposition and the many trials the Lord may see fit to *inflict* upon us, even unto death?<sup>64</sup> Our Lord will have His witness.

### **The Bond of Perfectness and Peace**

The only way we can endure to the end is if we are filled with the pure love of Christ, charity.<sup>65</sup> Why? This pure and perfect love is the bond of perfectness and peace.<sup>66</sup> And it is the only thing that endures all things and never fails.<sup>67</sup> If we have charity, if we embrace Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life, then we too shall never fail.<sup>68</sup> But if not, we cannot help but fall away.<sup>69</sup>

Briefly considered, as the prayers over the bread and wine so plainly explain, it is in our observance of the sacrament as Jesus has instituted it that we have the promise of receiving and retaining His Spirit within us. We partake of the bread **that** we *may always have* His Spirit to be with us.<sup>70</sup> And we partake of the wine as the *blood of the new testament that we may have* His Spirit to be with us.<sup>71</sup> As it is written, *life is in the blood*; specifically it is in the blood of the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world to redeem us and to regenerate us.<sup>72</sup>

Should we then expect to receive the outpouring of this precious gift before our remembering the Lamb and the atonement He has made on our behalf by our partaking of *the blood of the everlasting covenant* together? Those who seek to be justified before God in another way, i.e. other than *through the atoning*

*blood*<sup>73</sup> of Jesus Christ, will not see a need (or even comprehend a need) for doing so. Before answering this question for yourself, then, please remember that it was with this great price, even the shedding of the precious blood of the Lamb of God, that we have become *the purchased possession, the temple of the Holy Ghost, the habitation of God through the Spirit*.<sup>74</sup> As such we must come to understand and live out this important understanding through our observance of the Lord's ordinances, i.e. that it is only through Christ's precious blood that we may enter into the Holy of Holies (Hebrews 10). Otherwise, try as we may, the blessed gift, which is reserved for the reverent, will not be poured out upon us.

### **Washed in the Blood**

Today, both as individuals and also as a body, we are to receive the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost through the baptism that Jesus Christ administers.<sup>75</sup> Any other way<sup>76</sup> would place us outside the fellowship of the Spirit which the saints of old came to know.<sup>77</sup> Why? Only those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb of God will dwell in Zion, the New Jerusalem.<sup>78</sup>

*And there shall be a new heaven and a new earth; and they shall be like unto the old, save the old have passed away, and all things have become new. And then cometh the New Jerusalem; and blessed are they who dwell therein, for it is they whose garments are white through the blood of the lamb; and*

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<sup>64</sup> Mosiah 1:120 & 11:23-27

<sup>65</sup> cf. John 14:6 & Moroni 7:52 with I John 4:16-18 & Moroni 8:18,29

<sup>66</sup> D&C 85:38c with Colossians 3:14

<sup>67</sup> I Corinthians 13:7,8 & Moroni 7:52

<sup>68</sup> II Peter 1:8-11

<sup>69</sup> II Thessalonians 2:9,10 & Mark 13:13

<sup>70</sup> Moroni 4:4

<sup>71</sup> Moroni 5:3 with Matthew 26:23,24

<sup>72</sup> Leviticus 17:11 with Genesis 7:54 & Revelation 13:8

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<sup>73</sup> cf. Colossians 1:19-23

<sup>74</sup> Acts 20:28 with Ephesians 1:14, 3:19-22 & I Corinthians 6:19,20

<sup>75</sup> cf. Mark 1:1-13

<sup>76</sup> See Mosiah 2:3; Like the people of King Benjamin's day, to receive the precious gift of the Holy Spirit we must call upon the Lord for mercy and to "apply the atoning blood of Christ (that we may receive forgiveness of our sins and that our hearts may be purified").

<sup>77</sup> I Nephi 3:117-119 & Mormon 4:65

<sup>78</sup> ref. D&C 36:12g & 83:1b

*they are they who are numbered among the remnant of the seed of Joseph, who were of the house of Israel. And then also cometh the Jerusalem of old; and the inhabitants thereof, **blessed are they, for they have been washed in the blood of the Lamb.*** (Ether 6:10-12)

Consequently, unless directed otherwise by His Spirit of truth, I, as an elder, no longer have the faith to lay my hands upon anyone for the baptism of the Holy Ghost before they first witness to our heavenly Father their devotion to Jesus Christ and His commandments, and more particularly, their reverence for the blood which He shed for them.<sup>79</sup> While I have done so in times past, I am assured that it was accepted of God because He had “winked” at my ignorance.<sup>80</sup> Now that I know His will, to do otherwise would be to sin against God.<sup>81</sup>

Please note that I am speaking of my faith. If there are elders who truly have the faith to lay their hands upon someone for the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost before administering the sacrament, I do not fault them.<sup>82</sup> As it is written, “the just shall live by *his* faith.”<sup>83</sup> Even so, each one of us will be judged by the word of the Lord, which will prove our faith, whether it was truly of God or of men or devils.<sup>84</sup>

And so, I must also confess that I have been strongly urged of the Lord to encourage others to observe the order of administering the sacrament and confirmation given by the Lord in latter day revelation.<sup>85</sup> The main reason for doing so, as I understand it, is the establishment of Zion in our midst. Why? “For this is Zion,

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<sup>79</sup> Except the Lord command it as when the missionaries were to take their journey quickly, “preaching the word by the way” (D&C 52:35).

<sup>80</sup> Acts 17:30

<sup>81</sup> Alma 16:141 with James 4:17

<sup>82</sup> Please note, it is not the mechanics of the order but the obedience of faith and the condition of the heart that is of concern.

<sup>83</sup> Habakkuk 2:4 with Romans 1:17

<sup>84</sup> John 12:48

<sup>85</sup> D&C 17:18

THE PURE IN HEART.”<sup>86</sup> Is there anything other than the blood of the Lamb that can purify us? I know of nothing else:

*...for there can no man be saved except his garments are washed white: yea, his garments must be purified until they are cleansed from all stain, through the blood of him of whom it has been spoken by our father who should come to redeem his people from their sins.*  
(Alma 3:40)

The desire of King Benjamin’s people to have their hearts purified by the blood of the Lamb is highly significant.<sup>87</sup> Simply stated, it was and is the true desire for Zion.

Jesus Christ is our hope.<sup>88</sup> And it is only by Him dwelling within us, as *the hope of glory*, that we can become purified.<sup>89</sup>

And so I believe that until we as individuals and as a body reverence the atoning blood of Christ and His cleansing power like those of old, we cannot expect to receive the power of heaven which was poured out upon them. May we then, like those faithful who have gone before us, come to rely solely upon the atoning merits of Christ and His atonement for us.<sup>90</sup>

### **Abide In Me, And I in You**

It is often said that when we partake of the sacrament we are either 1) remembering or 2) renewing the covenant we made in the waters of baptism.<sup>91</sup> Others have suggested that our partaking of the sacrament actually involves the making of a covenant each time we partake. Which is it (any or all of these)? I believe Jesus Christ provided the answer to this question the night He instituted the Lord’s Supper. He said,

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<sup>86</sup> D&C 94:5c

<sup>87</sup> Mosiah 2:3

<sup>88</sup> I Timothy 1:1

<sup>89</sup> I John 3:1-3 & Colossians 1:27 with Romans 5:5

<sup>90</sup> Moroni 6:5 with Moroni 4:14 & 5:13

<sup>91</sup> Actually, the covenant is to be made prior to our baptism. This is evident from the following words of

*Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; **for without me ye can do nothing** [i.e. nothing righteous].* (John 15:5)

The fruit spoken of here by our Lord is *the fruit of righteousness*, referred to elsewhere as *the fruit of the Spirit* or *good works*.<sup>92</sup> And the unique thing about this special fruit is that we simply cannot (nor will we ever be able to) bear any of it without Jesus. For He is THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.<sup>93</sup> In other words, it is impossible for any of us to do that which is righteous or good without first being grafted into and empowered by Jesus Christ according to the new and everlasting covenant:

*As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one...* (Romans 3:10)

Therefore, unless we *abide* (stay, continue, dwell, endure, remain) in Christ, and He in us, by our continual feasting upon Him as the Word of God, we will wither and die as to things pertaining unto righteousness.<sup>94</sup> But most importantly, if we do not abide in Him now according to His word (His commandments and teachings,

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Alma at the waters of Mormon (Mosiah 9:41; cf. Alma 5:24-28): “What have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness... that ye have entered into a covenant with him...” In other words, baptism is a witness of a covenant, not the covenant itself. What then is the covenant? Repentance. Mormon tells us that the first-fruits of repentance is baptism (Moroni 8:29). True repentance involves forsaking our sins and embracing Christ as the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6; cf. Genesis 9:22). It involves determining in our own hearts and committing ourselves to serve Him unto the end of our lives (D&C 17:7 & 58:9d).

<sup>92</sup> Philippians 1:11 with Matthew 5:18, Galatians 5:22,23 & Ephesians 5:9

<sup>93</sup> Jeremiah 23:6

<sup>94</sup> cf. I Nephi 4:52-561 with Hebrews 3:14 & D&C 63:5

etc.), we will not be able to abide the day of His coming in glory.<sup>95</sup>

To draw strength from the Lord we must feast upon His life, His very person, through the Holy Spirit of truth. Otherwise, as emphasized earlier, there is no life in us:

*Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.* (John 6:53)

As part of the new and everlasting covenant which He mediates, Jesus Christ instituted the sacrament as a means of strengthening and sustaining His body, the church.<sup>96</sup> By His design, we abide or remain in Him as the True Vine, and thus in His love, by our continuing to feast upon His flesh and blood represented in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.<sup>97</sup> This is actually signified by the names given this covenant, meaning *new* and *everlasting*.

The word *new* means fresh. Like the Lord’s compassion, His sustaining strength is *new* or *fresh* every morning.<sup>98</sup> Or like the manna which was provided in the wilderness, Jesus Christ as *the true bread of heaven*, provides our daily supply which is sufficient for our need.<sup>99</sup> And so He taught us to pray, “*give us this day our daily bread.*”

The word *everlasting* means perpetual or continuing. That is, it is an ongoing covenant. And we remain in (abide in) the everlasting covenant by continuing to observe its ordinances, including the sacrament and oblation, forgiveness and thanksgiving, prayer, etc.<sup>100</sup>

So, when we observe the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper are we remembering the covenant we have made, or renewing that covenant,

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<sup>95</sup> Malachi 3:2 with D&C 45:10 & Matthew 7:34-37

<sup>96</sup> Revelation 22:1,2 & John 15:9-11 with Galatians 3:20b

<sup>97</sup> John 15:1-17

<sup>98</sup> Lamentations 3:22,23

<sup>99</sup> John 6:32-51

<sup>100</sup> D&C 59:2, Matthew 6:9-16, Hebrews 13:15,16, etc.

or even making a new covenant? I now believe that the best answer is simply to say that we are *abiding* in the person or body of Jesus Christ according to His new and everlasting (or perpetual) covenant. In other words, this is not a technical issue, but a continuing personal relationship of feasting upon that which gives eternal life. It involves feasting upon the tree of life. And so it is written:

*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are **in** Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* (Romans 8:1; cf. I Corinthians 11:27-33)

### **With Them**

As noted previously, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were instructed to partake of the sacrament “*with them*,” i.e. with those who had been previously baptized in water, prior to confirming them for the baptism of the Holy Ghost.<sup>101</sup> What better way for an elder to prepare himself to bestow the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands than by partak-

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<sup>101</sup> To *confirm* in this context means both to strengthen and to authenticate or validate. First, strength to be a member of Christ’s body (i.e. to be holy or set apart unto the Lord for His service) is imparted through the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost (Genesis 6:64 IV with I Peter 1:13-16, Acts 8:14-17, I Corinthians 1:4-9 & D&C 53:2b). Second, by placing their hands upon a newly baptized member, the elders witness before God, the church, and the world that the one being confirmed is indeed a member of Christ’s body and thus worthy to be a partaker of the heavenly gift, the Holy Ghost, with all the saints of God (cf. IV Nephi 1:4 with Ephesians 3:16-19 & Colossians 1:11-15). This validation of membership is to be based upon the member’s witnessing before the church and the elders “by a godly walk and conversation that they are worthy of” partaking of the sacrament and being confirmed (cf. D&C 17:18 with III Nephi 8:60-65). Partaking of the sacrament is the primary witness of new members’ true intent to take upon them the name of Christ, to keep all His commandments and to always remember Him so that they may have His Spirit with them (D&C 17:22d & 23:b). Therefore, it precedes confirmation.

ing of the sacrament “*with them*,” those being confirmed? Why? As noted above, we partake of the sacrament so that we may have and continue to have our Lord’s Spirit with us.

Since the elders of the church are to confirm and ordain by the power of the Holy Spirit which is in them, it should be more than evident that to partake of the sacrament prior to confirmation is according to the wisdom and will of the Lord.<sup>102</sup>

**The Spirit of the Lord continues to affirm to me that there will be no endowment given until there is a priesthood and a people who reverence the atoning merits of Christ by no longer presuming to grant or receive His Holy Spirit without first witnessing before heaven and earth their reliance upon Jesus Christ and the atonement He has made for their redemption.**

### **The Laying on of the Hands by the Water’s Side**

What about the command our Lord gave the missionaries to lay hands on at the water’s edge?<sup>103</sup> The answer to this question is provided in the same command: the Lord said that, in giving this command, He would be cutting His work short in righteousness.<sup>104</sup> To properly understand this comment, we must first remember that our being baptized for the remission of sins has to do with our fulfilling *all* righteousness, namely our fulfilling the commandments of the Lord.<sup>105</sup> The priesthood administer the sacrament to the body of Christ – in a manner designed of God – for the same reason, to witness our willingness to fulfill the commandments of Christ.<sup>106</sup>

In organizing His church in these latter days, the Lord gave clear instruction that there should

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<sup>102</sup> cf. Moroni 2:1-3 & 3:1-3 with D&C 63:16

<sup>103</sup> D&C 52:3

<sup>104</sup> D&C 52:3d

<sup>105</sup> II Nephi 13:7-16 with Matthew 3:43 & Moroni 8:29; cf. Hebrews 5:9 with John 15:13,14

<sup>106</sup> III Nephi 8:39-43

be a space of time between when new members are baptized in water and when they partake of the sacrament and are confirmed by the laying on of hands.<sup>107</sup> During this time, it is the duty of new members (newly baptized members) to give the elders or priests sufficient opportunity to expound to their (the new members’) understanding “all things concerning the church of Christ.”<sup>108</sup> This is possible where there are duly organized branches of the church. But under the circumstances for which Section 52 was given to the elders of the church, this would not have been possible. The missionaries were to travel rapidly through the territory, preaching and baptizing on their way. There was no time for them to expound “all things concerning the church” to the new members’ understanding. So the Lord *cut short* His work of righteousness that He had so carefully outlined for His church to follow.<sup>109</sup> And, although Jesus Christ had the missionaries of the newly founded church administer the laying on of hands immediately following baptism in water and then continue on their journey, He promised to raise up elders for the little flocks started in this way.<sup>110</sup> These elders would then attend to instructing the new members.

There was, however, a very important command that accompanied this instruction to lay hands on at the water’s side. The elders were to be careful to observe it. The Lord gave them a *pattern* by which they were to discern who truly was worthy to be received into the church by baptism, for, as He warned, “*Satan is abroad in the land, and he goeth forth deceiving the nations.*”<sup>111</sup> Satan is always intent on sowing tares among the flock.<sup>112</sup> And so the elders would have to be vigilant by observing this pattern if they were to be victorious over their adversary in preserving the body of Christ.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>107</sup> D&C 17:18

<sup>108</sup> D&C 17:18; cf. D&C 17:16

<sup>109</sup> D&C 17

<sup>110</sup> cf. D&C 85:19c

<sup>111</sup> D&C 52:4b-5b

<sup>112</sup> Matthew 13:22-29

<sup>113</sup> cf. III Nephi 8:61-67 with emphasis on verse 63

Should we now observe the instruction given to the missionaries or the commandment to *do all things in order* where there are organized branches or sufficient time for the imparting of this instruction? The answer which I have received when prayerfully considering this matter is, “*Though the Lord may do so, let no man presume to cut His work short in righteousness.*” Simply stated, we must do as the Lord has directed in the scriptures **and** His Holy Spirit of truth expressly directs.<sup>114</sup>

*...ye are commanded in all things to ask of God, who giveth liberally, and that which the Spirit testifies unto you, even so I would that you should do in all holiness of heart, walking uprightly before me, considering the end of your salvation, doing all things with prayer and thanksgiving, that ye may not be seduced by evil spirit, or doctrines of devils, or the commandments of men, for some are of me, and others of devils. (D&C 46:3b,c)*

And while we are *commanded in all things to ask of God* we must both ask and also study out matters such as these so that we might abide together in unity as the children of Christ.<sup>115</sup> **This, our asking of God and doing whatsoever His Spirit testifies for us to do, is the basis of common consent.** It is the basis of unity within the body, of being of one heart and one mind. For how else can we come to a common understanding and witness unless it comes directly from the mind of Christ, i.e. the Spirit of God?<sup>116</sup> Who else has the right to preside as the head of the body of Jesus Christ other than Christ Himself? It may be given to some to preside as His representative for a time while He is yet absent from us, but whosoever they may be, they must keep in mind that they must only lead they are led by the Spirit of our Lord<sup>117</sup> – who witnesses

<sup>114</sup> D&C 46:1 & 17:9

<sup>115</sup> Matthew 7:12,13 with D&C 9:3 & Mosiah 11:120,126

<sup>116</sup> cf. I Corinthians 2:9-16 with Philippians 2:1-13

<sup>117</sup> cf. D&C 17:8-9 with Moroni 6:9, etc.

of Jesus Christ!<sup>118</sup> Otherwise they are usurpers and shall be exposed for their deceit.

### **Do The Things Which Ye Have Seen Me Do**

Jesus said, “Follow me, and do the things which ye have seen me do.” Specifically, He commanded us to **do** those works which He had done in His church:

*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. Verily, verily I say unto you, This is my gospel; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do, that shall ye also do; For that which ye have seen me do, even that shall ye do; therefore if ye do these things, blessed are ye, for ye shall be lifted up at the last day.* (III Nephi 12:33-35)

It is in this way that we are to lift Him up as the light of the world.<sup>119</sup>

*Behold I am the light; I have set an example for you.* (III Nephi 8:49)

*Behold I am the light which ye shall hold up – that which ye have seen me do.* (III Nephi 8:55)

This is especially true with respect to the ordinances which He instituted for our observance in His church.<sup>120</sup> The reason? His ordinances reveal a very important aspect of His own character and nature: He is our unchangeable Lord and Savior. This truth was wonderfully affirmed in an inspired admonition given of the Lord through former apostle, Joseph Luff:

<sup>118</sup> cf. John 16:13-15

<sup>119</sup> cf. Matthew 5:16-18 with Matthew 7:30-37

<sup>120</sup> e.g. II Nephi 14:6,7 with III Nephi 8:28-55 & Mark 14:24

“...for wheresoever my law is in honor and my ordinances are held as a sacred thing, **even as they were delivered unto you from the beginning, Behold there is my church;**<sup>121</sup> and he that imagineth change in them hath not known me, for I CHANGE NOT, and my ordinances are my witness. Whoso laboreth to maintain the integrity of these among my people confesseth me as his Lord; but he that varieth therefrom, seeketh not to build up my kingdom, but his own.”<sup>122</sup>

Why would such a message have come forth to the reorganized restored church except there had been a departure, a straying if you will, from the ordinances as the Lord had given them “*from the beginning*”, i.e. from the organization of the church in April 1830? A comparison of the historical record (see the Appendix) with the commonly held practice of administering the sacrament only to those who have been confirmed by the laying on of hands, clearly shows that such a change or departure has, indeed, taken place.

From considerable prayer and study, I now understand that this change occurred primarily by a question of authority. Following the death of Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum, there was much confusion and uncertainty over where the seat of authority rested. Many individuals and groups claimed to be the true heirs of the authority originally vested in the church. And, as a way of maintaining their claims, many withheld the sacrament from those who had not as yet submitted to their authority (to administer the ordinances of baptism and confirmation).

A proper perspective of how the ordinances are to be observed can be preserved only by our ever remembering that all power and authority, both in heaven and in earth, has been given to Jesus Christ and does always reside with Him.

<sup>121</sup> cf. D&C 3:16,17 & III Nephi 12:21-24

<sup>122</sup> From a message received April 5, 1925 entitled UNTO THOSE WHO HAVE EARS TO HEAR as recorded in *CONCERNING OUR WHEREABOUTS*, by Joseph Luff.

Accordingly, we must be diligent in keeping His commandment to teach every nation to observe “all things whatsoever” He has commanded us to observe, “nothing varying.”<sup>123</sup> If we do, will we not be blessed as the disciples of old were blessed with the gift and power of the Holy Ghost?<sup>124</sup> I believe we will be.<sup>125</sup> For the Spirit of the Lord continually affirms to me in my soul that when there is a priesthood who has the heart of John the Baptist (a heart to prepare the way of the Lord so He can increase while they decrease), whose members carry out their responsibilities by preferring the Lord over themselves as did John, that priesthood will be endowed with power unto the convincing of the nations.<sup>126</sup> The presumptuous, those who act on their own understanding or reasoning, who step in front of Christ to perform the ordinances, will not.

All who maintain their own authority have their reward already.<sup>127</sup> But the faithful who humble themselves through repentance and the working of righteousness will become the sanctified of the Lord, having “their garments... washed white through the blood of the Lamb.”<sup>128</sup> And they shall rise up and go forth in the strength of the Lord to the convincing of the nations that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God, even the very God of Israel and of the whole earth who has been slain for the sins of the world as foretold by the prophets of old.<sup>129</sup> Thus saith the Lord.

To follow Jesus Christ we must be willing to grow in our knowledge of Him and in His grace.<sup>130</sup> Knowing this, it has not been discouraging to me to learn that there is an appropriate order for administering the sacrament and con-

firmation, which the church apparently strayed from years ago.<sup>131</sup> Rather, this understanding of order in administering the sacrament prior to confirmation now holds great promise to me. It affirms that the Lord still answers the prayer of faith of those who ask of Him in sincerity of heart and purpose, so that they might be led of His Spirit into all truth.<sup>132</sup>

Furthermore, I believe the Lord’s guidance in this matter has been a significant step in His leading us closer to the time when He will usher in Zion’s return upon the earth. Why? According to the New and Everlasting Covenant, when we as a people “embrace the truth” and look up to heaven in keeping all His commandments, Zion will come again upon the earth.<sup>133</sup> What better way to embrace the Truth, who is Jesus Christ, than to *eat and drink* to our souls His flesh and blood and, thus, to feast upon and continue in His word as it has been given?<sup>134</sup>

Let us, therefore, contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints of old.<sup>135</sup> And let us do so by feasting upon the words of Christ so that we might receive that wisdom which comes from above and in turn know how to live in righteousness before God.<sup>136</sup> In the words of Mormon, let us begin as in times of old by standing on the firm ground of faith.<sup>137</sup> For it is written:

*Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls... (Jeremiah 6:16)*

The redemption of Zion, THE PURE IN HEART, awaits.

<sup>123</sup> Matthew 28:17-19 with III Nephi 9:10

<sup>124</sup> III Nephi 9:10-15

<sup>125</sup> I Nephi 3:187,188 with Acts 10:34,35

<sup>126</sup> cf. D&C 65:1 with Mark 1:1-6; see also Galatians 2:20

<sup>127</sup> III Nephi 6:94-108

<sup>128</sup> Alma 10:2,3

<sup>129</sup> II Nephi 11:78 & III Nephi 5:14

<sup>130</sup> II Peter 3:18 & D&C 90:3c

<sup>131</sup> D&C 17:18b; cf. D&C 1:3d,e

<sup>132</sup> John 14:26 & 16:13,14

<sup>133</sup> Genesis 9:22 with Hebrews 13:20,21

<sup>134</sup> III Nephi 9:44,45 & John 6:53,58,63 with John 8:31,36, 14:6 & II Nephi 14:4

<sup>135</sup> Jude 3

<sup>136</sup> cf. II Nephi 14:4 with James 3:17,18

<sup>137</sup> Mormon 4:93-95

## APPENDIX

Selected references from historical church documents have been included below. They show that the members of the early church were instructed to, and often did, observe a particular order (pattern) of administering the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to new members. Note that new members are considered those who have been baptized in water prior to their being confirmed by the laying on of hands by the elders as directed in D&C 17:18a,b.<sup>138</sup> Emphasis, in the way of italicizing and bolding, were added to highlight phrases of interest.

### **Evening and Morning Star (June 1832), Pg.1**

The duty of the members after they are received by baptism. The Elders or Priests are to have a sufficient time to expound all things concerning this Church of Christ to their understanding, *previous to their partaking of the Sacrament, and being confirmed by the laying on of hands of the Elders; so that all things may be done in order.* And the members shall manifest before the Church, and also before the Elders, by a godly walk and conversation, that they are worthy of it, that there may be works and faith agreeable to the holy Scriptures, walking in holiness before the Lord. Every member of this Church of Christ having children, is to bring them unto the Elders before the Church, who are to lay their hands on them in the name of the Lord, and bless them in the name of Christ. There cannot any one be received into this Church of Christ, who has not arrived to the years of accountability before God, and is not capable of repentance.

### **Evening and Morning Star (Jun 1833) Pg.97**

The elders or priests are to have a sufficient time to expound all things concerning this church of Christ to their understanding, *previous to their partaking of the sacrament, and being confirmed by the laying on of the hands of the elders; so that all things may be done in order.*

### **Messenger and Advocate (Nov 1836) Pg.415**

Sabbath at ten o'clock the meeting opened by elder [Jacob] Myers who addressed us on the subject of the depravity of man, and followed by elder George A. Smith, on the gospel; and closed by elder Sherwood with an address appropriate to the situation of the members, their privileges duties &c. after which two came forward for baptism. After the administration, *we convened for a sacramental and confirmation meeting*, when two others came forward for baptism, who after the administration were confirmed at the water edge and the meeting closed, when many were greatly encouraged to strive for the crown.

### **Messenger and Advocate (Jan 1837) Pg.440**

On the 27th the church came together and received joyful and patriarchal blessings under the hands of President Joseph Smith, sen. On Sunday the 28th, father John Smith preached at 10 A.M. and four of us bore testimony to the Book of Mormon. *In the afternoon we administered the sacrament, confirmed three who had been baptized, and blessed the children.* Monday 29th, we having ordained Alvin Symons an Elder, and Levi Chapins a Teacher, to watch over the church; fathers Smith left us. I then went to Black Lake, preached once and baptized one; and thence I went to Potsdam, preached again

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<sup>138</sup> Historical documents of the early (early to mid 1800's) Restoration Movement as found in *LDS HISTORICAL Library*, 3rd Edition, Folio Infobase, Compact Disk. These references can be directly correlated to similar references found in RLDS sources. Please note that some occasions cited are duplicated in different references, showing a consistency in the testimonies given. Italics are added for emphasis.

and baptized another. I then returned to Ogdensburgh called the church together, which then numbered 16, and bid them farewell. I left the church rejoicing in the Lord; and many around them believing the testimony which had been borne. May the Lord bless the church there, and assist them to keep all his commandments.

**Messenger and Advocate (Jan 1837) Pg.441**

In the after part of the day, councillor Groves delivered an address on the dispensation of the fulness of times, who was followed by President Marsh on the same subject. On the next day, which was the Sabbath, President Patten preached to a very large and attentive congregation, and during the intermission 5 were baptized under his hands. In the after part of the day, President Marsh delivered an address, *and councillor Groves administered the sacrament, and confirmed the persons baptized, who received the spirit*, after which the conference adjourned sine die.

**Times and Seasons, Vol.2, Pg.522 (Sept, 1841)**

When Elder Joseph Mount delivered a discourse on the fall of the Gentiles, and reinstating of the Jews. At 2 o'clock P.M. Elder Brown preached on the subject of death and the resurrection &c. *After which, the sacrament was administered and five members confirmed, who had been baptized the day previous.*

**Times and Seasons, Vol.3, Pg.915 (Sept, 1842);**

**(from *History of Joseph Smith*; see *The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, Vol, 1, pgs 60 & 61)**

Meantime we continued to translate, at intervals, when not necessitated to attend to the numerous enquirers, that now began to visit us; some for the sake of finding the truth, others for the purpose of putting hard questions, and trying to confound us. Among the latter class were several learned priests who generally came for the purpose of disputation: however the Lord continued to pour out upon us his Holy Spirit, and as often as we had need, he gave us in that moment what to say; so that although unlearned, and inexperienced in religious controversies, yet were we able to confound those learned Rabbis of the day, whilst at the same time, we were enabled to convince the honest in heart, that we had obtained (through the mercy of God) to the true and everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ, so that almost daily we administered the ordinance of baptism for the remission of sins, to such as believed. We now became anxious to have that promise realized to us, which the angel that conferred upon us the Aaronic Priesthood had given us, viz: that provided we continued faithful; we should also have the Melchizedec Priesthood, which holds the authority of the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. We had for some time

made this matter a subject of humble prayer, and at length we got together in the chamber of Mr. Whitmer's house in order more particularly to seek of the Lord what we now so earnestly desired: and here to our unspeakable satisfaction did we realize the truth of the Saviour's promise; "Ask, and you shall receive, seek, and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you" for we had not long been engaged in solemn and fervent prayer, when the word of the Lord, came unto us in the chamber, commanding us; that I should ordain Oliver Cowdery to be an elder in the church of Jesus Christ, and that he also should ordain others as it should be made known unto us, from time to time: *we were however commanded to defer this our ordination until, such times, as it should be practicable to have our brethren, who had been and who should be bap-*

*tized, assembled together, when we must have their sanction to our thus proceeding to ordain each other, and have them decide by vote whether they were willing to accept us as spiritual teachers, or not, when also we were commanded to bless bread and break it with them, and to take wine, bless it, and drink it with them, afterward proceed to ordain each other according to commandment, then call out such men as the spirit should dictate, and ordain them, and then attend to the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, upon all those whom we had previously baptized; doing all things in the name of the Lord.*

**Times and Seasons, Vol.3, Pg.931 (Oct, 1842)**

The elders or priests are to have sufficient time to expound all things concerning the church of Christ to their understanding, *previous to their partaking of the sacrament, and being confirmed by the laying on of the hands of the elders; so that all things may be done in order.* And the members shall manifest before the church and also before the elders, by a godly walk and conversation, that they are worthy of it; that there may be works and faith agreeable to the holy scriptures walking in holiness before the Lord.

**Times and Seasons, Vol.3, Pg.944-945 (Oct, 1842)**

**(from History of Joseph Smith; see The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Vol, 1, pgs 76 & 77)**

Having opened the meeting by solemn prayer to our heavenly Father we proceeded, (according to previous commandment) to call on our brethren to know whether they accepted us as their teachers in the things of the kingdom of God, and whether they were satisfied that we should proceed and be organized as a church according to said commandment which we had received. To these they consented by an unanimous vote. I then laid my hands upon Oliver Cowdery and ordained him an elder of the "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints." After which he ordained me also to the office of an elder of said church. *We then took bread, blessed it, and brake it with them, also wine, blessed it, and drank it with them. We then laid our hands on each individual member of the church present that they might receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and be confirmed members of the church of Christ. The Holy Ghost was poured out upon us to a very great degree. Some prophesied, whilst we all praised the Lord and rejoiced exceedingly. Whilst yet together I received the following commandment.*

**Times and Seasons, Vol.4, Pg.2223 (Dec, 1842)**

**(from History of Joseph Smith; see The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Vol, 1, pgs 87 & 88)**

On the first day of June, 1830, we held our first conference as an organized church. Our numbers were about thirty, besides whom, many assembled with us, who were either believers, or anxious to learn. *Having opened by singing and prayer, **we partook together** of the emblems of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ; **we then proceeded to confirm** several who had lately been baptized; after which we called out and ordained several to the various offices of the priesthood.* Much exhortation and instruction was given, and the Holy Ghost was poured out upon us in a miraculous manner many of our members prophesied, whilst others had the heavens opened to their view, and were so overcome that we had to lay them on beds, or other convenient places: among the rest was brother Newel Knight, who had to be placed on a bed, being unable to help himself. By his own account of the transaction, he could not understand why we should lay him on the bed, as he felt no sensibility of weakness. He felt his heart filled with love, with

glory and pleasure unspeakable, and could discern all that was going on in the room; when, all of a sudden, a vision of futurity burst upon him. He saw there represented, the great work which through my instrumentality was yet to be accomplished. He saw the heaven opened, and beheld the Lord Jesus Christ seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and had it made plain to his understanding, that the time would come when he would be admitted into his presence, to enjoy his society for ever and ever. When their bodily strength was restored to these brethren, they shouted 'Hosannas to God and the Lamb,' and rehearsed the glorious things which they had seen and felt, whilst they were yet in the spirit.

**Times and Seasons, Vol.4, Pg.112 (Feb, 1843)**

*The sacrament was administered; 1 elder, and 1 priest ordained; 2 confirmed, which had been baptized during intermission.* On the whole we had a very interesting and profitable Conference.

**Times and Seasons, Vol.4, Pg.118 (March 1843)**

**(from History of Joseph Smith; see The History of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Vol, 1, pgs 116 & 117)**

*In obedience to the above commandment* [see D&C 26] we prepared some wine of our own make, and held our meeting, consisting only of five, viz. Newell Knight and his wife, myself and my wife, and John Whitmer. *We partook together of the sacrament, after which we confirmed these two sisters into the church, and spent the evening in a glorious manner.* The Spirit of the Lord was poured out upon us, we praised the Lord God, and rejoiced exceedingly.

**Times and Seasons, Vol.4, Pg.146 (April 1843)**

*We now partook of the sacrament, confirmed and ordained many,* and attended to a great variety of church business on that and the following day, during which time we had much of the power of God manifested amongst us; the Holy Ghost came upon us, and filled us with joy unspeakable; and peace, and faith, and hope, and charity abounded in our midst.

**Times and Seasons, Vol.5, Pg.446 (Feb, 1844)**

Met according to appointment, opened by singing and prayer. *The president then administered the sacrament, and confirmed the person who had been baptized; blessed four children.* Adjourned till evening.

**Times and Seasons, Vol.6, Pg.1035 (Nov, 1845)**

**SHEFFIELD**

I attended a quarterly Conference held at Sheffield, on sunday the 24th of Augus, and found the Sheffield Branch and Conference in general, to be in a very prosperous state. The conference met at the commodious Assembly Rooms at 10 o'clock, A.M. the room was well filled, and to add to the interest of the assembly, about sixty children belonging to the saints, who had been formed into a Sabbath school, took their seats together with their teachers. There were present at the opening of the conference met at the commodious Assembly Rooms at 10 o'clock, A.M. The room was well filled, and to add to the interest pf tje assembly, about sixty children belonging to the saints, who had been formed into a Sabbath school, took their seats together with their teachers. There were present at the opening of the conference, 1 of the quorum of the twelve, 1 patriarch, 2 high priests, 5 elders, 15 priests, 7 teachers and 3 deacons. elder James

Ure, the presiding elder of the conference, was called to the chair, and Elijah Mitchell chosen clerk. The Conference was opened by singing and prayer, after which the representatives were given of seven branches, containing 394 members, 11 elders, 26 priests, 10 teachers and 7 deacons, 56 having been baptized since last conference, nearly all were represented as in good standing. *In the afternoon, sacrament was administered to the Saints, twelve confirmed, two ordained to the office of priest under the hands of elders Woodruff, Homes, Ure, and Albiston.* The assembly was addressed in the evening by elder Woodruff, and followed by elder Holmes. The conference was well attended during the day and evening, and much good seemed to be done.

#### **Times and Seasons, Vol.6, Pg.1036 (Nov 1845)**

As the time had come for elder Hardy to take his departure to his native country, and return to his friends, it was necessary for some person to be appointed for the time being, to preside over the Preston conference and also over the branch, it was accordingly moved by elder Hardy, seconded by elder Parkinson, and carried unanimously, that elder John Melling be appointed elder over the Preston branch for the time being. A letter of recommendation was then read and presented was then read and presented to Elder Leonard Hardy, with the unanimous vote of the conference. *Sacrament was administered in the afternoon, six confirmed, and two ordained to the office of priest, under the hands of elders Woodruff and Hardy.* The most perfect union prevailed, and not a dissenting vote in any of the business of the conference. Elder Woodruff addressed the meeting in the evening to a full house, from the last chapter of Malachi. peace and good feeling prevailed through the conference, and much instruction received.

#### **Times and Seasons, Vol.6, Pg.1036 (Nov 1845)**

*The sacrament was administered in the afternoon, and the ordination of the two elders took place. One member of the church was confirmed under the hands of elders Woodruff and Ross.*

#### **Additional References**

#### **Newel Knight Autobiography in *Classic Experiences* (1969), Pg.52 Pg.53**

During the last week in May I went on a visit to Fayette and was baptized by David Whitmer. On the first day of June, 1830, the first conference was held by the Church. Our number consisted of about thirty, besides many others who came to learn of our principles, or were already believers, but had not been baptized. Having opened the meeting by singing and prayer, *we partook of the emblems of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. A number were confirmed who had lately been baptized, and several were called and ordained to various offices in the Priesthood.* Much good instruction was given, and the Holy Ghost was poured out upon us in a marvelous manner. Many prophesied, while others had the heavens opened to their view. It was a scene long to be remembered. I felt my heart filled with love, with glory, and with pleasure unspeakable. I could discern all that was going on in the room and a vision of futurity also suddenly burst upon me, and I saw, represented, the great work, which, through the instrumentality of Joseph Smith, was to be accomplished. I saw the heavens opened, I beheld the Lord Jesus Christ seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High, and it was made plain to my understanding that the time would come when I should be admitted into His presence, to enjoy His society for ever and ever.

**Newel Knight Autobiography in *Classic Experiences* (1969), Pg.62,63**

In the beginning of August 1, in company with my wife, went to make a visit to Brother Joseph Smith, Jun., who then resided at Harmony, Penn. We found him and his wife well, and in good spirits. We had a happy meeting. It truly gave me joy to again behold his face. *As neither Emma, the wife of Joseph Smith, nor my wife had been confirmed, we concluded to attend to that holy ordinance at this time, and also to partake of the sacrament, before we should leave for home.* In order to prepare for this, brother Joseph set out to procure some wine for the occasion, but he had gone only a short distance, when he was met by a heavenly messenger, and received the first four verses of the revelation given on page 138, of the Doctrine and Covenants (new edition), the remainder being given in the September following at, Fayette, New York.

In obedience to this revelation we prepared some wine of our own make, and held our meeting, consisting of only five persons, namely, Joseph Smith and wife, John Whitmer, and myself and wife. *We partook of the sacrament, after which we confirmed the two sisters into the Church, and spent the evening in a glorious manner. The Spirit of the Lord was poured out upon us. We praised the God of Israel and rejoiced exceedingly.*

**Newel Knight Autobiography in *Classic Experiences* (1969), Pg.63 Pg.65**

After arranging my affairs at home, I again set out for Fayette, to attend our second conference, which had been appointed to be held at Father Whitmer's, where Joseph then resided. On my arrival I found Brother Joseph in great distress of mind on account of Hyrum Page, who had managed to get up some dissension of feeling among the brethren by giving revelations concerning the government of the Church and other matters, which he claimed to have received through the medium of a stone he possessed. He had quite a roll of papers full of these revelations, and many in the Church were led astray by them. Even Oliver Cowdery and the Whitmer family had given heed to them, although they were in contradiction to the New Testament and the revelations of these last days. Here was a chance for Satan to work among the little flock, and he sought by this means to accomplish what persecution failed to do. Joseph was perplexed and scarcely knew how to meet this new exigency. That night I occupied the same room that he did and the greater part of the night was spent in prayer and supplication. After much labor with these brethren they were convinced of their error, and confessed the same, renouncing the revelations as not being of God, but acknowledged that Satan had conspired to overthrow their belief in the true plan of salvation. In consequence of these things Joseph enquired of the Lord before conference commenced and received the revelation published on page 140 of the Doctrine and Covenants, wherein God explicitly states His mind and will concerning the receiving of revelation. Conference having assembled, the first thing done was to consider the subject of the stone in connection with Hyrum Page, and after considerable investigation and discussion, Brother Page and all the members of the Church present renounced the stone, and the revelations connected with it, much to our joy and satisfaction. *The sacrament was then administered, a number were confirmed, many were ordained, and a great variety of Church business was transacted.*