



PERSPECTIVES  
AND  
INSIGHTS

by Douglas MacKenzie Scribner  
and Cecile James Scribner



# PERSPECTIVES AND INSIGHTS

BY DOUGLAS MACKENZIE SCRIBNER

AND CECILE JAMES SCRIBNER



*Thank you to our eight children,  
Russ, Gina, Craig, Scott, Christy, Jim, Spencer and Lora,  
whose experiences in life helped provide examples for our stories*

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## Preface

Having already written, and privately published, autobiographies for our family, some have wondered why we have also written this book. Whereas an autobiography contains the major events of life, this work instead illustrates our search for eternal truths. Our exploration for such truth, such as the meaning and purpose of our existence, has been a life-long endeavor. For me, the beginning of this journey preceded my convert baptism into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which happened over fifty years ago. For my wife Cecile, who was born a member of the LDS church, it began in her youth. Nearly two thousand years ago the Apostle Peter wrote, *“Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you (for) a reason of the hope that is in you . . .”* (1 Peter 3:15) This book is our response to that challenge. It contains not only what we believe, but why we believe it. It is a testimony expressed through the process of discovery by which these unchanging truths have been learned.

We do stand as witnesses that Jesus is the Christ and that He has restored the fullness of His gospel through living prophets in our own time. However, we also realize that this work contains our own perspective of these historical events. We understand that our perception of history may not be shared by all people from this or other cultures. They may perceive history quite differently and we respect their right in coming to a variety of conclusions. Freedom of choice lies at the very heart of the teachings of Jesus and all the prophets of God in all eras of time. Still, it is hoped that these perspectives, when properly understood, will bless and enrich the lives of all who are willing to receive them.

Though this work is my first published book, (other than my own autobiography) my wife, Cecile James Scribner, is already an author in her own right. In 1988 she wrote and published a book titled, “Every Life with a Purpose.” She also wrote a collection of Readers Theater Scripts titled, “The Family and Friends of the Prophet Joseph Smith.” In 2006 this latter work was selected by the Cultural Arts Committee of the Church, along with other submissions, to be recognized for excellence in creative writing. A sample of each selected submission was then performed on Temple Square in Salt Lake City. The items by Cecile which are included in this book were taken from talks and performances she has written and produced since 2006. Her perspective is different from my own, but complements my thoughts perfectly. She was raised in the Mormon Faith and her ancestors came to Utah as pioneers in the nineteenth century. Her whole married life (in addition to raising our eight children) has been devoted to the creative arts of drama and dance. She has co-authored and produced two sesquicentennial church history pageants, one in California and one in New Zealand where we served a mission together. Together we hope that you will find an increase in faith and joy as you read, ponder and put into action the principles presented herein.

Douglas M. Scribner



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## No Middle Ground – Witnesses of Jesus

by Douglas M. Scribner

### A Myriad of Voices

The most profound and life changing challenge found in the words of living prophets from all dispensations of time is for mankind to believe and develop faith in Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God and Savior of the World. Nothing else compares to it! This declaration is the bedrock foundation of Christian doctrine and can not be taken lightly. The world has a growing number of atheists who loudly proclaim that there is no God and that everything pertaining to religion is man's own imagination designed to pacify those who believe. They maintain that God is a myth created so people will be lulled into a condition where they can be manipulated and controlled. Atheists also consider the statement "Jesus is the Son of God," to be a cruel lie designed to give false hope to the intellectually impoverished individuals who embrace it. Their slogan of today is not freedom of religion, but freedom from religion.

There is an even larger segment of the population which is, or claims to be, agnostic. They maintain that it is impossible to know or to prove whether or not God exists. So, say they, the only rational position is to rely solely upon biological and physical science. They deem faith to be irrational and declare that neither religion nor atheism is provable. When confronted with evidence of the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, they often respond that he was simply an itinerant preacher who was deluded by his own imagined grandeur.

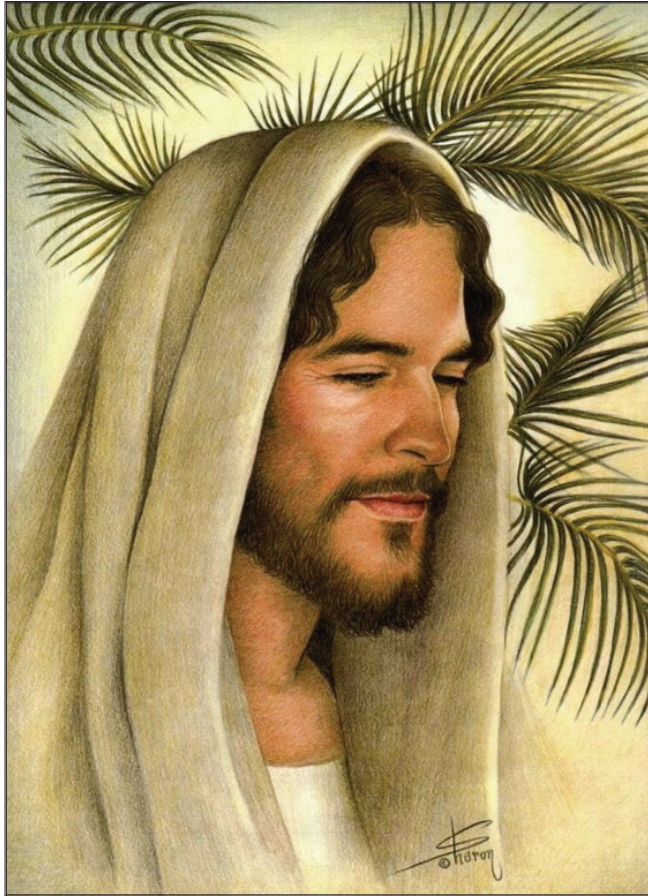
In light of all this confusion, it helps to have an accurate definition of faith – what it is and what it is not. The Book of Mormon prophet Alma defined it well when he said, "*Faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true.*"<sup>1</sup> At the same time, faith is not just wishful thinking, nor is it blind, unquestioning obedience. The Apostle Paul wrote, "*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*"<sup>2</sup> Thus we may expect that real faith will be based on rational observation supported by factual evidence. Though it may not be provable, it is reasonable. The confirmation of faith in Jesus as the Christ is a gift from God, which comes through the power of the Holy Spirit. This confirming witness is known as a testimony. A clarification of the process by which a person can gain such a personal testimony was given in modern times by a revelation to the prophet Joseph Smith. He said, "*To some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that He was crucified for the sins of the world. To others it is given to believe on their words, that they also might have eternal life if they continue faithful.*"<sup>3</sup>

Clearly, different people are given a variety of different spiritual gifts. Not everyone will have the gift of personal revelation, but they may well have a gift such as the discernment to know if someone else speaks the truth. The promise from God is that every person is given a gift by the Holy Spirit, whether they recognize it or not. Discovering one's own spiritual gift can in itself be a faith promoting experience. One way to begin this process is to study the life of Jesus Christ. Since there are so many varied viewpoints about Jesus, one must consider the source of these opinions. The most reliable sources are the statements made by those people who knew Jesus intimately – either as eye witnesses during his mortal life, or by way of prophetic vision. The eye witnesses were

his disciples who wrote of his life and ministry. However, both ancient and modern prophets have also received the revelation necessary to testify of the reality of Jesus and his Divine Mission. These revelations came by the power of the Holy Spirit, and in no other way. The Apostle Peter clarified this fact when he said, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For prophecy came not in old times by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”<sup>4</sup> The implication of this statement is that scriptures were given by living prophets and thus they are also to be interpreted by living prophets. The original apostles of Jesus often interpreted the words of earlier prophets, and the apostles in our own dispensation have the authority given them to do likewise. When we are confronted by someone’s own interpretation of a scripture that doesn’t ring true, we should consider the source as well as the words themselves.

## The Reality of Jesus as a Person

Though some continue to besmirch the very existence of Jesus, there is substantial evidence that he was a real person who had a remarkable impact on the lives of those around him. The Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus,



Jesus the Christ by Sharon Matthews from New Zealand

was a contemporary of Jesus and included references to Jesus and John the Baptist in his historical work, *Antiquities Of The Jews*. He wrote, “Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was (the) Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principle men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And, the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.”<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the words of Josephus, we have the eye witness accounts by the disciples of Jesus as they are recorded in the New Testament. Unfortunately, today there are active cults like the *Jesus Seminar Group* who attempt to disprove the authenticity of these Biblical writings. They say that the Gospels were written at a much later date and are thus not really verifiable as eye witness accounts. However, there are external evidences to the contrary. One of these is known as the *Magdalen Papyrus*. It was written on Codex

and is an early fragment of the *Book of Matthew*. The Bible Dictionary says, “Codex, a manuscript volume of ancient biblical text: A codex form of manuscript is somewhat like our present book style with pages piled on one another and joined at one side, generally with stitching. This is contrasted with a scroll, in which the sheets are joined side by side in a series, making one long and continuous piece. . . Thus Old Testament documents are scrolls, although many New Testament documents are codices.”<sup>6</sup>

The *Magdalen Papyrus* was discovered by an English missionary, Charles Bousfield Huleatt, in Luxor, Egypt in 1901. He was excavating early Coptic Christian records in the Luxor Temple when he discovered what he believed to be fragments from the original Book of Matthew. He had the three fragments sent to Magdalen College at Oxford. Initially these fragments did not get too much attention because they were estimated to have been written in the third or fourth century, AD. In 1953, Collin H. Roberts re-dated the *Magdalen Papyrus* to the second century. Finally, in 1995, new technology was used to get a clearer understanding of the date when this papyrus codex was written. Carsten Theide wrote, “*The final answer came in June, 1995, when the Magdalen Papyrus was brought to Germany by Dr. Christine Ferdinand, the Fellow Librarian of Magdalen College, Oxford. In her presence, Carsten Theide and his colleague Georg Masuch analyzed the fragments under their epifluorescent confocal laser scanning microscope. Unlike any other modern microscope, it is able to differentiate between twenty separate micrometer layers of a papyrus manuscript. . .*” (and) “. . . has reached a conclusive result. The comparable material yields a date of AD. 66 . . . The margin of error would allow for earlier, but not for later dates.” “*The re-dating of the Magdalen Papyrus should be considered in this context. If St. Matthew was written before the destruction of the Temple in AD. 70, – perhaps many years before – it was written for men and women who would look upon the events it described as recent reality.*”<sup>7</sup>

Though some words of the New Testament manuscripts have been changed over the years, through errors in translation or by intent, they are predominantly correct and were written by those who knew Jesus, heard his voice and were eyewitnesses of his deeds. We are also the beneficiaries of the Inspired Version of the Bible, as translated by the Prophet Joseph Smith, which corrects those words and phrases which have been changed over the centuries since they were first written. In addition, The Book of Mormon is another witness that Jesus is the Christ. All considered, there is ample evidence of the reality of Jesus as a person.

### **Jesus’ Declaration of His Divinity**

Some would say that Jesus was a wise, honest and good person who preached and helped others, but that he was no more than a mortal man. This is an illogical conclusion because Jesus testified of his own divine origin and calling. A good and honest man would not declare that he was the promised Messiah unless it was true. There is no middle ground! Either Jesus was a liar and a fraud, or he was the person he claimed to be. Consider the following statements which were made by Jesus to his disciples: To Peter, Jesus asked, “*Whom say ye that I am?*” to which Simon Peter answered saying, “*Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God.*” Jesus then responded by stating, “*Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven.*”<sup>8</sup> When Pilate confronted Jesus, he asked, “*Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?*” to which Jesus replied, “*I am. And ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*”<sup>9</sup> The Samaritan woman by the well said, “*I know that the Messiah cometh, which is called Christ; When he is come, he will tell us all things.*” Jesus responded and said, “*I that speak unto you am he.*”<sup>10</sup> Jesus was in a synagogue on the Sabbath Day reading from the prophecy of Isaiah 61: 1-2 about the coming of the Messiah. He then said, “*This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*”<sup>11</sup> Those who heard him were enraged and wanted to stone him for blasphemy. While contesting with the Jews in the temple, Jesus said, “*And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me . . . Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. . . For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me.*”<sup>12</sup>

### **Isaiah and his Prophecies of the Messiah:**

The longest and most detailed description of the future events in Israel are found in the writings of the Prophet Isaiah, recorded between 740 and 721 BC. In today’s King James Version of the Bible, the Book of Isaiah comprises 66 chapters of complex predictions. These prophecies range from the conquest of the Kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians and the capture of Jerusalem by Babylon, to the birth of the promised Messiah. They go on to include the eventual gathering of Israel in the last days, and the Millennium of peace and righteousness that will follow the Lord’s Second Coming. Critics of the Book of Isaiah claim that the book must have been written by at least three different people at various times of history. They doubt that Isaiah could have known the



name of King Cyrus a hundred years before he was born, or the exact circumstances of the birth of Jesus Christ seven hundred years before he lived.

However, Isaiah was a holy man of God who was blessed with specific, detailed revelation and prophecy about future events. This was especially true about the coming of the promised Messiah. The writings of Isaiah were faithfully recorded and meticulously copied onto various materials. They were originally written in the Hebrew language and were copied on scrolls of papyrus and leather and even on metal plates. The Brass plates of Laban contained an extensive portion of the Book of Isaiah when Nephi obtained them in 600 BC. Four hundred years later, about 200 BC, the Isaiah scrolls were translated into the Greek language. This translation, called the Septuagint, became the means of spreading these prophecies throughout the Gentile world. There is one particularly interesting discrepancy between the translations. This verse, as it is found in the present Old Testament (which was translated from Hebrew to English), states, “*And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures.*”<sup>13</sup> The Greek translation reads, “*And upon all the ships of the sea, and upon all pleasant pictures*”<sup>14</sup> whereas the Book of Mormon author, Nephi, when quoting from the Brass Plates of Laban, includes both halves of the verse, stating, “*And upon all the ships of the sea, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures.*”<sup>15</sup> Evidently the original Hebrew record contained the entire verse and it was preserved correctly on the brass plates. This is a profound evidence of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.

Numerous verses from the Book of Isaiah predict the coming of the Messiah including the following: “*Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel (God with us).*”<sup>16</sup> “*And he shall be for a sanctuary (security for those who trust him), but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel (dismay and suffering for unbelievers), for a gin and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.*”<sup>17</sup> “*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.*”<sup>18</sup> “*For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant. . . and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our grief, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*”<sup>19</sup> “*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. . . And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence (evil), neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief. . . and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*”<sup>20</sup>

Finally, Isaiah foretold that the Messiah would say, “*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes . . .*”<sup>21</sup> The prophet Isaiah wrote of many other subjects, but these prophecies about the coming of the Messiah are a powerful testimony that certainly strengthened my faith in the reality of Jesus as the Christ. Nephi echoed this witness when he wrote, “*My soul delighteth in the words of Isaiah . . . in the days that the prophecies of Isaiah shall be fulfilled, men shall know of a surety, at the times when they shall come to pass. Wherefore, they are of worth unto the children of men . . .*”<sup>22</sup>

## **Witness of the Dead Sea Scrolls**

My testimony is that we can rely upon these prophecies of Isaiah as being authentic! They stand alone as a clear prediction of the future birth of the Messiah, his life and atonement. However, in addition to the records of Isaiah’s words available in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, we now have the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls found in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. To fully understand their impact, first consider how these scrolls came into existence. The Essenes, who



*Caves of Qumran where the scrolls were found*

wrote on these scrolls, were a strictly religious sect of Jews who were disgusted by the corruption found among the chief priests of the Sanhedrin. About 100 BC, they decided to leave the prosperity of Jerusalem and move to the desert village of Qumran on the edge of the Dead Sea to purify their lives. There they meticulously copied the words of the ancient prophets like Isaiah as well as prayers, commentary and hymns. Then, during the Jewish Revolt in 68 AD, the Essenes decided to preserve their records. This they did by placing the papyrus and leather scrolls in large clay jars and hiding them in caves located in the cliffs overlooking the Dead Sea. Between 68 and 70 AD, the Roman Legions systematically exterminated seven million Jews, including the peaceful Essenes of Qumran. There in the dry, arid heat, the records remained intact for nearly 1,900 years. Then, in another period of warfare, two Bedouin shepherds scaled the cliffs and crawled through the small openings of the caves. There they found several large pottery jars, containing scrolls of leather, linen and parchment. The year was 1947 and Britain's Occupational Troops were in control of Palestine. However, large numbers of Jews had returned to this area having fled their homes in Europe because of the Nazi Extermination Camps. These returning Jews, who wanted to carve out the land of Israel, faced tremendous odds because the Palestinians refused to let them into the country. In 1948 Britain decided to remove their army, leaving the Jews and the Arabs to fight it out. In this turmoil of war, it was a miracle that the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered and safely removed by the Syrian Orthodox Christian Church and taken to an American school for preservation and study. The most perfectly preserved scrolls were on leather and contained, in Hebrew, the entire sixty six chapters of the Book of Isaiah. It has now been translated from Hebrew into English and is nearly identical to the King James Bible version. Thus with the Dead Sea Scrolls these prophecies pass the test that every word of God will be established in the mouths of two or more witnesses. Isaiah was only one of many prophets, whose words are found in both the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon, who were given revelation describing the birth, life, ministry, miracles, atonement, death and resurrection of the Son of God and Savior of the world. Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled every one of these events as foretold.

## Book of Mormon Prophecies

In addition to the prophecies of Isaiah, which the family of Lehi brought with them to the new world, the Lord revealed his promises anew to them and to their descendants. The frequency of these revelations increased as the time of the Savior's birth drew closer, but the message remained the same. They were to look forward to the time of the birth, life, ministry, atonement, death and resurrection of the Son of God in the land of Jerusalem, from which they came. He would be the Messiah of the entire world, so they needed to believe, repent and prepare for his coming just as much as did those who lived in the land of Israel. The following scripture is only one of the many examples of these prophecies. No wonder the Book of Mormon is called "*Another Testament of Jesus Christ.*"

About 595 BC: "*Yea, even six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews – even a Messiah, or in other words, a Savior of the world.*"<sup>23</sup> "*And I beheld the city of Nazareth; and in the city of Nazareth I beheld a virgin, and she was exceedingly fair . . . and he said unto me; behold the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God after the manner of the flesh . . . and the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea even the son of the Eternal Father.*"<sup>24</sup> "*And I beheld that he went forth ministering unto the people in power and great glory . . . and I beheld multitudes of people who were sick, and who were afflicted . . . and they were healed by the power of the Lamb of God. . . (then) the Son of the everlasting God was judged of the world . . . and I Nephi saw that he was lifted up upon the cross and slain for the sins of the world.*"<sup>25</sup>

## Witnesses of the Resurrection

Given the validity of the New Testament records as previously discussed it is appropriate to consider them as evidence, especially as they document the statements of those who saw the resurrected Christ. The first human being to see Jesus resurrected was Mary of Magdala. She came to the tomb, where Jesus had been buried, early on Sunday morning. She was a faithful disciple who had previously been healed by him and who loved him as her teacher and master. When Mary first arrived, she was startled to see the stone rolled back and the tomb empty. Thinking that someone had removed the Lord's body, she ran and told Peter and another disciple to come see the sepulcher. When these two disciples ran to the tomb and found it empty, their first reaction was that wicked men must have stolen the body of the Lord. They left wondering but Mary remained behind and again entered into the sepulcher. There she saw two angels, who asked her why she was crying. Suddenly Jesus appeared before her. He simply said, "*Mary,*" and she recognized his voice. Then Jesus said, "*Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.*"<sup>26</sup> After Mary Magdalene left, other women arrived to anoint the body of Jesus with spices. Mary the mother of Joses, Joanna, Salome, the mother of James and John, and other unnamed women encountered the angel who said, "*Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here.*"<sup>27</sup> They too were sent to tell the apostles the good news. The thought that the body of Jesus had been stolen was reinforced by the fact that the Pharisees had persuaded Pilate to seal the tomb and place a "*watch*" of soldiers nearby to guard it. Evidently these guards fell asleep and awoke to find the stone rolled back and the tomb empty. Fearfully, they went into the city and described the event to the Jewish leaders. A cover-up was planned and the soldiers were paid and told to spread the word that the disciples came by night while they slept and stole away the body. Matthew records, "*So they took the money, and did as they were taught; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.*"<sup>28</sup>

Though there is no detailed record of the encounter, the resurrected Jesus apparently appeared to Peter. Two of the disciples reported this to the eleven apostles in Jerusalem saying, "*The Lord has risen indeed and hath appeared to Simon.*"<sup>29</sup> This was logical because Peter was the presiding apostle of the church. Elder Bruce R. McConkie stated, "*Peter was to direct the building up and rolling forth of the Lord's work in that apostolic dispensation, and he was thus singled out for a special appearance of the resurrected Lord.*" A few days later, the resurrected Lord appeared to his apostles. John wrote, "*Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors*

were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.”<sup>30</sup> Luke also recorded this appearance saying, “But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.”<sup>31</sup>

One of the twelve apostles was not with the others when Jesus appeared to them. Thomas, was told of this miracle by the others but he refused to believe them. Thomas said, “Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.”<sup>32</sup> Thomas received his desire, for a week later Jesus again appeared to the apostles as they were gathered together on the first day of the week. This time Thomas was with them. When he appeared, Jesus spoke directly to Thomas and said, “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; be not faithless, but believing.”<sup>33</sup> Once Thomas acknowledged Jesus Christ as his resurrected Lord, the Savior gave him counsel which applies equally to all of us. Jesus said, “Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”<sup>34</sup>

Over a period of forty days following his resurrection, Jesus appeared to many people. One of the most notable was to Saul of Tarsus. Saul was persecuting the followers of Jesus, frequently condemning them to prison for sedition against Rome. According to Saul, Jesus had declared himself a king and so his followers were guilty of allegiance to someone other than the emperor. On the road from Jerusalem to Damascus, Saul had an experience that changed his life forever. “And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined around about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he (Saul) said, Who art thou Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest . . .”<sup>35</sup> Saul was blinded for three days, during which time he did neither eat or drink. Finally the Lord sent him a messenger named Ananias who restored his sight and instructed him to be baptized and then to eat so his strength might be restored. Saul was renamed Paul who then became a great missionary for the Christian faith.

Even more impressive was the appearance of the resurrected Jesus to his faithful disciples in the New World. The Book of Mormon, another Testament of Jesus Christ, records it as follows: “And it came to pass that there was a voice heard among all the (remaining) inhabitants of the earth, upon all the face of this land . . . Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God.”<sup>36</sup> Then, following a silence of many hours, the people again heard a voice from heaven, “. . . and it said unto them: Behold my Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, in whom I have glorified my name – hear ye him. And it came to pass, as they understood they cast their eyes up again towards heaven; and behold they saw a Man descending out of heaven; and he was clothed in a white robe; and he came down and stood in the midst of them; and the eyes of the whole multitude were turned upon him, and they durst not open their mouths”<sup>37</sup>

The people present at this remarkable event bore strong testimonies to their children and recorded the proceedings of those days so that future generations might know the strength of their witness that Jesus did rise from the dead and did fulfill his promise of salvation to all those who would believe on his name and keep his commandments. Among the recorded words which the resurrected Christ delivered to his disciples in the Americas was a duplication of the words he spoke earlier in his *Sermon on the Mount* near the Sea of Galilee – with some notable differences. Matthew’s account of this sermon, as found in the King James translation of the New Testament begins, “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,”<sup>38</sup> whereas the Book of Mormon record states that Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit who come unto me: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>39</sup> Clearly this phrase was recorded correctly by Matthew but was lost over the years through errors in translation. This may seem like a small thing, but realize that the atheist Friedrich Nietzsche (founder of the philosophy of Existentialism) made it a big thing in his book of contempt toward Christianity titled, *The Antichrist*. He surmised, that if there were a god, he would surely reward the rich in spirit rather than the poor in spirit.

I am grateful for the testimony of these past eyewitnesses of the reality of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I am equally thankful for the prophets, seers and revelators in our own dispensation of time who have

testified that the resurrected Christ lives today. It was 1838 in Far West, Missouri, that the thirty-three year old Prophet Joseph Smith wrote the account which we have in the *Pearl of Great Price* describing his First Vision of God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son. Joseph wrote, “. . . I felt much like Paul, when he made his defense before King Agrippa, and related the account of the vision he had when he saw a light, and heard a voice; but still there were but few who believed him; . . . So it was with me. I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true.”<sup>40</sup>

## The Power of the Atonement

Jesus overcame physical death through His resurrection and, in so doing, promised us that every human being who has ever lived, or who ever will live, will eventually experience a similar reuniting of their eternal spirit with a glorified and perfect body. The prophet Alma said, “*The soul shall be restored to the body, and the body to the soul; yea, and every limb and joint shall be restored to its body; yea, even a hair of the head shall not be lost; but all things shall be restored to their proper and perfect frame.*”<sup>41</sup> This assurance of a universal resurrection for all mankind, whether they be good, bad or indifferent, is an astounding promise. And yet it is accompanied by another promise of even greater magnitude. At the will of his Heavenly Father, Jesus suffered for the sins and transgressions of all so that those who are willing to believe on him, repent of their sins, be baptized in his name by one having authority, receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, and strive to keep his commandments throughout their life, will gain eternal life. The prophet Joseph Smith wrote, “*Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God. For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him. And he hath risen again from the dead, that he might bring all men unto him, on conditions of repentance. And how great is his joy in the soul that repenteth.*”<sup>42</sup> This is the promise of eternal life which Jesus holds out to all his faithful disciples – those who will come unto him with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, and inherit his kingdom. “*And if you keep my commandments and endure to the end you shall have eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God.*”<sup>43</sup>

Taken all together, the words of Josephus, Old and New Testament prophets, Book of Mormon and Latter-day prophets, as well as the words of Jesus himself, are ample evidence of the Savior’s life, teachings and divinity. I am grateful that such a life-changing set of events was so well documented that earnest seekers of truth might be persuaded by them. Truly there is no middle ground.

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1. Alma 32:21.
  2. Hebrews 11:1.
  3. D&C 46: 13-14.
  4. II Peter 1: 20-21.
  5. *The Life and Works of Josephus*, translated by Whiston, page 535.
  6. *Bible Dictionary*, page 647.
  7. *Eyewitness to Jesus*, Carsten Thiede & Matthew D’Ancona, pages 60, 125, 165.
  8. Matthew 16: 15-17.
  9. Mark 14: 61-62.
  10. John 4: 25-26.
  11. Luke 4: 18.
  12. John 5: 37-39, 46.
  13. Isaiah 2: 16.
  14. Bible Footnotes for Isaiah 2: 16.
  15. II Nephi 12: 16.
  16. Isaiah 7: 14.
  17. Isaiah 8: 14 and II Nephi 18: 14.
  18. Isaiah 9: 6 and II Nephi 19: 6.
  19. Isaiah 53: 2-5 and Mosiah 14: 2-5.
  20. Isaiah 53: 6-12 and Mosiah 14: 6-12.

21. Isaiah 61: 1-3.
22. II Nephi 25: 5-8.
23. I Nephi 10: 4-11.
24. I Nephi 11: 13-21.
25. I Nephi 11: 31-33.
26. John 20: 17.
27. Mark 16: 6.
28. Matthew 28: 15.
29. Luke 24: 34. John 20: 19.
30. Luke 24: 37-43.
31. John 20: 25.
32. John 20: 27.
33. John 20: 29.
34. Acts 9: 3-5.
35. III Nephi 9: 1, 15, 21-22.
36. III Nephi 11: 7-10.
37. Matthew 5: 3.
38. III Nephi 12: 3.
39. Joseph Smith History 1: 24-25.
40. Alma 40: 23.
41. D&C 18: 10-13.
42. D&C 14: 7.



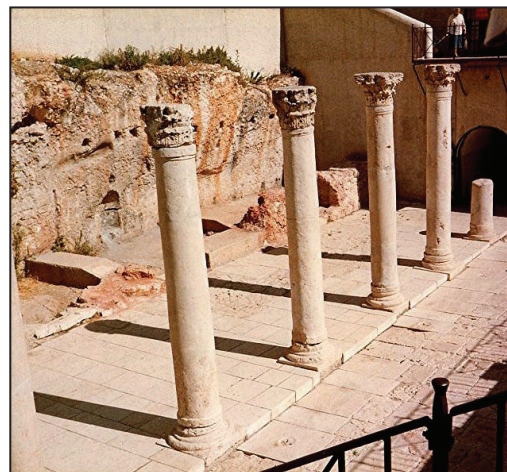
## A Personal Conversion

by Douglas M. Scribner

Thus far the focus of this writing has been about evidences which substantiate the reality that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the long promised Messiah. However I now want to share my own personal witness of this fact and of the Restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ through the prophet Joseph Smith. A complete assurance of these things comes only as a gift from God through the Holy Ghost. For me, gaining a firm and immovable knowledge that Jesus was and is the promised Messiah has been a gradual process. Such a pattern was predicted by the ancient prophet Isaiah when he said, “*Whom shall he teach knowledge? And who shall he make to understand doctrine... for precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line; here a little and there a little.*”<sup>1</sup> Gaining knowledge about God the Father and His Son Jesus begins with having a desire to know them. If we then make a place for this desire to grow, it becomes a belief. Our belief in Christ becomes faith as we actively strive to live by his teachings. Then finally, following a trial of our faith, our belief can become knowledge. My search for knowledge about God began when I was sixteen. I remember singing in the one hundred and twenty voice San Diego High School choir led by E. Harrison Maxwell at an Easter Sunrise Service in Balboa Park in San Diego, California. It was early Easter Sunday morning in 1954 and the outdoor organ pavilion of the park was enshrouded in a dense fog. We went on with our performance even though there were very few people there to hear us. One of the songs we sang that day was about Jerusalem. It was *The Holy City* by Frederick E. Weatherly, written in 1892. During that song I had an overwhelming feeling that Jesus Christ was real and that his birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection were the most significant events of all time. I still remember that impression now, even though it happened many years ago.



*Mosaic of the Ancient City of Jerusalem found on an old wall in that city. The old Roman road runs through the center of it.*



*Excavation of the old Roman Road (both photos taken on our trip to Israel in 1987)*

I wanted to know more about the life and ministry of Jesus and so became active in a Protestant Church youth group. Though my association with the other young people was enjoyable, I became increasingly discouraged because there didn't seem to be any answers to my questions about God the Father and Jesus the Son. Finally an appointment was made with the minister to meet in his office and discuss my concerns. The two questions I then placed before him were, "*Who is God?*" and "*What happens to us when we die?*" He spoke on and on, but his answers were vague and unsatisfying. Perhaps his lack of knowledge was because Reverend Barber had won his way through theological seminary on a hockey scholarship, but, whatever the reason, I only became more frustrated and decided to wait until later to learn more.

The next time this quest emerged was in my second year at Stanford University. Even though my major was engineering, we were required to take certain liberal arts courses such as English Composition. One day I was in a basement study hall with one of my housemates, who happened to be a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. To fulfill an English class assignment it seemed appropriate to write a paper about "*Who God is.*" Not knowing the answer, I made it all up! By surmising that God was like a rain cloud, and that people leave his presence like individual rain drops, it was easy to conclude that we all get together in the puddle at the end of our lives and then evaporate our way back to God. Being very proud of my paper, I asked my Mormon friend to read it. After doing so, he said, "*That was very interesting. Would you like me to tell you who God really is?*" He took me to a small private room and told me the experience of the prophet Joseph Smith. The spirit was strong, deeply touching my soul. However afterwards, though expressing my appreciation for his sincerity, I explained that I couldn't believe it. I just wasn't ready yet.

My third encounter with enlightenment from the Holy Spirit came at the end of my third year at the university. Upon returning home to San Diego to work for the summer, I phoned a young lady whom I had known at my church youth group when in high school. She agreed to spend a Saturday with me at the beach. As we talked, she explained that, after graduation, she had attended Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. There she had been converted to the restored Gospel of Jesus Christ. At this point she asked if I would like to go to church with her the next day. I agreed, and so picked her up the next morning and drove to an old chapel in Hillcrest, not too far from my parents' home. The Sunday School lesson we attended was on the Plan of Salvation. I was astounded because the teacher was answering my second question, "*What happens to us when we die?*" He spoke of our individual spirits which include our intelligence, knowledge, personality and capacity to love. He explained that we had lived as spirit children of God before we were born and continue to live as individual spirits after we die, while we await the resurrection. I was so intrigued by this concept that I agreed to meet with the Mormon missionaries for the rest of the summer to learn more. Surely my heart had been touched, but I still was not ready to accept it as truth, so I returned to the university in the fall, undecided.

In the late 1950s, Stake Missionaries actually taught the lessons, as well as did the full time Elders and Sisters. I began attending the Palo Alto First Ward where students, working young adults and local families all worshiped together. Donald C. Bennion, a Palo Alto attorney, was a Stake Missionary assigned to be my teacher. He was a dedicated, spiritual man who, throughout that entire senior year, went through the missionary lessons with me three times. His teaching was excellent and his personal spiritual experiences were inspirational, but I had to know the truthfulness of the Gospel for myself. As the year progressed, the fellowship offered by Mormon students and families was impressive. On two occasions I was invited to the home of our Stake President, David B. Haight, for dinner. The love and friendship of his family was greatly appreciated, but that wasn't sufficient to give me a testimony. I began fasting on Sundays and staying in a church classroom from the end of the morning Sunday School until the evening Sacrament Meeting to read *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder*, by LeGrand Richards, and to pray. The answer seemed to be that I would eventually know for myself.

The Book of Mormon prophet, Alma, proposed an experiment to gain faith in Christ. I was intrigued by it as well as the blessing that was promised, "*But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties, even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith, yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words. Now, we will*

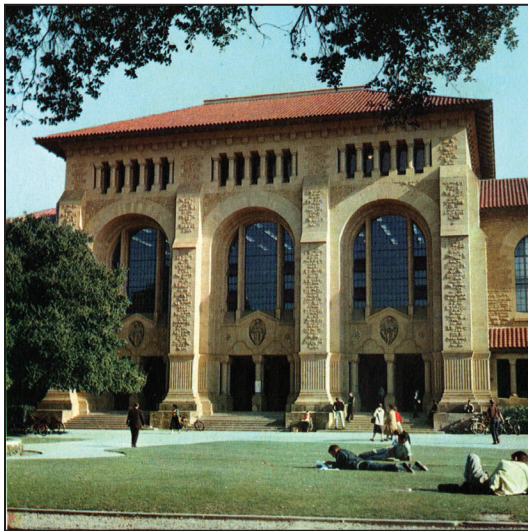




Doug Scribner in 1959  
Below: Stanford University Library

*compare the word unto a seed. Now, if ye give place, that a seed may be planted in your heart, behold, if it be a true seed, or a good seed, if ye do not cast it out by your unbelief, that ye will resist the Spirit of the Lord, behold it will begin to swell within your breasts; and when ye feel these swelling motions, ye will begin to say within yourselves – It must needs be that this is a good seed, or that the word is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understanding, yea, it beginneth to be delicious to me.”<sup>2</sup>*

With graduation approaching, it was clear that it was necessary to make a decision soon. Either Jesus was the Christ and had restored his Gospel, or the message was false. As I sat on the steps of the Stanford Memorial Library, this question kept haunting me. Then my understanding became enlightened by the Holy Spirit. As best I can remember these thoughts, the realization was: I know that God created



mankind, and that He must have had a purpose in doing so. The only way that men, women and children above the age of accountability could hope to fulfill that purpose would be for God to tell them what it is. Otherwise, success would be completely random and salvation would be arbitrary. Certainly God could tell each individual exactly what they must do to be saved, but that would remove any need for faith. Instead, the pattern He had always used was to call a righteous individual to be a living prophet. The prophet would declare the revelation he received to the people and the people would need to believe it and obey the commandment to please their Heavenly Father. This pattern, which had been established from the time of Adam, continued after Jesus rose from the dead. Until they were all killed, the ancient Apostles of Jesus were also prophets. Then, following this, there was nearly eighteen hundred years of spiritual darkness without revelation. The beginning of enlightenment began with the Reformation and culminated in the Restoration with the calling of a new living prophet. I



Doug with youngest brother, Steve, in front of the Palo Alto LDS Church Building - 1959

had examined the life, teachings and works of the prophet Joseph Smith so that I might know of his goodness, for *“By their fruits ye shall know them.”* At that point, the Holy Spirit bore witness to my soul that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is true and has been restored by living prophets in our own time. I was now ready to seek baptism.

On May 2, 1959, Donald C. Bennion led me into the waters of baptism (Palo Alto, California) and then confirmed me a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by using his priesthood to give me the Gift of the Holy Ghost. The following year was spent starting a new career as an electronics engineer and growing in my faith as a Latter-day Saint. After finally receiving the Melchizedek Priesthood and being ordained an Elder, I began to seriously consider the possibility of serving a mission for the church. This is when I was confronted by the trial of my faith. It happened because I had no grasp of the purpose of symbolism in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In growing up, I had seen many examples of symbolism in the various churches I attended. In some churches it was a crucifix, in others it was candles and elaborate robes. I was relieved when attending the Mormon Church that such symbols

were not present. A testimony was in your heart and mind and didn't require such symbols. Then I first attended the Temple, and found the experience to be full of symbolic meaning. I was surprised, upset and worried. My solace was the realization that I must not doubt the things which I did know to be true because of the things which I did not yet understand. Gradually an awareness distilled upon my soul, that true symbolism is always found in the Priesthood Ordinances, wherever they are performed. In fact, three things which always occur together are ordinances, covenants and symbolism. Take baptism, as an example:

1. Baptism is a priesthood ordinance. It must be performed by a person having the proper priesthood authority to be valid in the sight of God. John the Baptist held the priesthood of Aaron when he baptized Jesus. Later, Jesus gave that authority to his Apostles, and they ordained Priests and Elders to carry out this same ordinance for others. In our time, the same authority has been restored through a living prophet.
2. Baptism has a covenant. The Book of Mormon prophet Alma taught, “. . . as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they might be light; Yea are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things . . . if this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?”<sup>3</sup>
3. Baptism is symbolic. Jesus taught, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”<sup>4</sup> The first time a child is born, its body is born in water and blood from its mother's womb and a spirit enters the body. In baptism, the body is immersed in water, justified by the blood of Christ, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. The person is symbolically born again. Also, the water symbolically washes away the person's sins.

The same line of reasoning applies to other ordinances, such as the Sacrament. Again there is an ordinance performed by authority with a covenant and the symbolism of the bread and water, representing the body and blood of Christ. Suddenly I realized that it is exactly the same in the Temple Ordinances, for they also are accompanied by covenants and symbolism. Finally my heart was at peace, the trial of my faith was past, and my faith had turned into knowledge. I felt that the time was right to serve a mission.



Elder Bruce R. McConkie and Sister Amelia Smith McConkie

After serving for one and a half years in the Southern Australian Mission, there was a change in leadership. John Simonsen completed his three year calling as our Mission President and was replaced by Elder Bruce R. McConkie, of the First Council of Seventy. At the time of his arrival I was serving in Perth, Australia, which was three thousand miles from the Mission home and office in Melbourne. A few months went by before President McConkie made his first trip to Perth, but when he did come, it was an experience to remember. He phoned ahead and asked us to prepare a *Share the Gospel* meeting and to have someone ready to join the church in a baptismal service which was to be scheduled immediately following the meeting. All church members were welcome to attend, but their admission required that they bring a non-member friend with them. In Western Australia at that time, there

were a number of people who had been taught the Gospel for some time, but who had not yet made the commitment to be baptized. Many of them came to hear him speak so he asked the missionaries to remain with their investigators after the meeting was over so he could talk with each one individually. President McConkie spoke for nearly an hour on the subject of baptism with the most powerful remarks I had ever heard. Afterwards he met and challenged each investigator personally that this was the time for them to make the decision to accept Jesus Christ and his Restored Church through the ordinance of baptism. In the end, instead of baptizing just the one person who was committed beforehand, we baptized eleven individuals.



*Elder Douglas M. Scribner  
Perth, Australia 1962*

Years later, Elder McConkie – then an apostle, contracted cancer. Shortly before he died, he spoke in General Conference and rendered his testimony that Jesus is the Christ, in the following words: *“I am one of his witnesses and in a coming day I shall feel the nail marks in his hands and in his feet and shall wet his feet with my tears. But I shall not know any better than I do now that he is God’s Almighty Son, that he is our Savior and Redeemer ...”*<sup>5</sup> Certainly for him, and also for me, there is no middle ground. I too know that Jesus is the Christ, the Savior of mankind and that His Church has been again restored to the earth with living prophets and apostles to guide it.

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1. Isaiah 28: 9-10.
  2. Alma 32: 27-28.
  3. Mosiah 18: 8-10.
  4. John 3: 3-5.
  5. General Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *April, 1985*.



## He Taught Us How to Live

(A talk given at the Provo, Utah Mission Training Center in 2011)

by Cecile J. Scribner

### Choosing Light

In Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, we get an overview of Jesus' life and teachings. They are called the *Four Gospels* because they literally teach the Gospel as we should know it, understand it and practice it. His disciples and those who were the apostles followed him and learned first hand how to practice living the Gospel as he healed the sick, raised the dead, blessed the children, set the example of righteousness and taught them how to love by actually doing it. He also taught them with parables, which put certain images and feelings into their heads. In other words, for three years, he filled their minds and hearts with goodness and gave them experiences of light that would help them to carry on with all that he had taught. For example, he used the very land around him to help him teach. How could they ever walk past his tomb, and not be reminded of the resurrection, or walk by the Garden of Gethsemane and not be reminded of the moment when Christ took upon himself the sins of all those who would repent and come unto him so he could give them even greater blessings, or walk in that little town of Capernaum and look up and see the city that is set upon the hill and not be reminded that Christ had taught them that a city set upon a hill cannot be hid. He then instructed them saying, "*let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*"<sup>1</sup> There is so much imagery in the land itself in Israel – the scriptures and Gospel come to life and the land itself becomes symbolic of how we should live our lives.

I don't know what kind of images or memories were in the heads and hearts of those disciples before they met Jesus and went on that three-year journey with him, but if they had experienced darkness instead of light, then I feel certain that in those three years of light, that the light started to replace the darkness because the two cannot exist together. We do know that one of those apostles, Judas Iscariot, did not allow this miracle to happen in his life – he allowed the darkness to take over the light – or he just simply would not let the light in. So just being there with the others, and walking the path with them, was not a guarantee – he had to allow that miracle to take place in his life as well, but he did not. It was his choice.

Near the end of his ministry, Jesus very carefully explained to them that his life was going to end, but that they would not be left alone. They didn't fully understand what he was saying. However, he did explain how they were going to be able to keep light in their life. He said, "*But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*"<sup>2</sup> As I was thinking about our missionaries heading out on a one and a half or two year journey, it occurred to me that they have the same opportunity as Christ's disciples had. During their ministry they can fill their minds and hearts with light, with good experiences, with relationships, scriptures, with good feelings, good smells, good sights in different lands, and these will be in their memories forever. If they are wasteful with their time, then it is an opportunity lost. If they have stored good things in their memories, then the Holy Ghost

has something to work with when he brings “*all things to your remembrance.*” My husband and I served a mission in 2004-5 in New Zealand, and I decided that not only in Jerusalem, but in any land there are reoccurring



symbolic images that remind us of the light that can fill our heads and our hearts. Most mornings I would get up and walk up the hill to the temple grounds. It was often pitch black when I left the house, but in just a few minutes that orb of the sun would start creeping over the horizon and lighting up the Valley of the Waikato. And every time I would ask my walking companions, “*How could anyone on earth see this and not believe in a Creator?*” Symbolic images of light surround us constantly. We need to make the choice to look. For example, the sun itself can remind of so many eternal principles that we need to

remember: the Celestial Kingdom, the Savior himself who is a light unto the world, and even ourselves if we stay righteous, for he tells us that “*Ye are the light of the world. . .*”

I believe the Holy Ghost has the power to even bring feelings from our pre-existence to our memory. Perhaps it was our association with Christ in the pre-existence that causes us to recognize and love his teachings here on earth. Perhaps it is some of these feelings that inspire us to serve missions. For me, I’ve had those fleeting moments when I’ve met someone and there’s an instant connection – it causes me to long for more experiences like this. I just know there is something more for us than even this life. It gives me my faith. My mother, Lucie Howard James, wrote this in a poem when she was the age that I am now:

*Sometimes quite suddenly and quite unforeseen  
Comes a fleeting awareness of something, a gleam  
Lost or forgotten but familiar, clear,  
That has for a moment been alluringly near.*

*A dream of a place never seen, nor yet sought  
Have we ever been there? We think we have not.  
Yet into our minds it persistently creeps  
Returning in moments just prior to sleep.*

*Or a song we once knew or may have once heard  
A flash of beauty in a kindly said word,  
Something ethereal that quickens, elates,  
May challenge us, enriching our erstwhile states.*

*The chance meeting of minds in perfect rapport  
Gives a touch of nostalgia, a longing for more,  
A feeling of wholeness, a feeling of peace  
Granting surcease to sorrow, to pain a release.*

*Are we indeed strangers on this planet Earth,  
Far from our real home by chance of our birth?  
And when we return to our heavenly home  
Will glimpses so frail be symphonically toned? <sup>3</sup>*

## Symbolic Images

You can't help but wonder these things when you grow older. I believe it's those small things in our lives that surround us, that will be the big things when we reach our heavenly home. They are the things, if we take the time to observe them, that will change our lives for good and give us happiness. The beauty of that sun in New Zealand, filling the Valley of the Waikato from darkness to light lives with me every single day. I can't forget this image. Growing older has been an interesting process for me. One of my little daughters (who is quite a grown woman now) once asked me one of those impossible to answer questions. *"Why doesn't God make it so we can feel it when we grow?"* Growing older is just like growing up – you can't feel it happening. It's one of life's miracles. You can't really tell when you're getting wiser, or smarter or more spiritual. But you know you're not the same person as you were twenty years ago, or in some cases, an hour ago. Experiences happen every day and they add to our life, expanding who we are, changing us forever. As we experience certain things, particularly things of light, the joy is tucked away in our memory, and then something, certain people, certain places, certain smells or whatever, years later will spark those same wonderful feelings. And they bring moments of joy. And then at my age, you start wondering, *"Did Heavenly Father know fifty years ago how that chance meeting of someone in Australia, or Russia, or Idaho or wherever was going to affect my life now?"* *"Was it just by chance that I was sent on a mission to a particular part of the world?"* Then you start thinking, *"Does Heavenly Father have a plan for me?"* *"Did he allow a certain trial to happen to me because he knew I would be a better person for having passed through it?"* You do a lot of thinking when you're my age!

There's a certain place, just across the street from the Provo MTC – that you can see if you go to the back gate and look across the street. It's an old house – it was added upon, but the oldest part of the house is more than 100 years old. It's a beauty. In fact, to me it is the most beautiful spot on this earth. The house has not changed much in the last sixty years, but everything around it has. When I look at that old house, I have feelings and memories that never quit. I grew up in that house. It was the James Family Home. In those days, there wasn't an MTC standing next to it. There were horse pastures, strawberry fields, neighbors with lots of land surrounding their homes. It was real country living. The old house doesn't belong to our family anymore, but I'm so glad it is still there. My mother has been dead now for over thirty years, but the bushes and flowers she planted still persistently bloom in those gardens. She planted some small lilac bushes that are huge now and give off a certain scent and a certain beauty that is breathtaking. Nobody takes care of them, they just bloom in an old field. My sister and I go over to see them and smell them every year now. These flowers and this old house remind me of certain happy memories – in fact, so many, I couldn't even begin to tell you (but I will). They are symbols that remind me of the light that once filled my life when I was young.



The memories include the smell of roast cooking on a Sunday afternoon after church, the taste of sour green apples sprinkled with salt while laying in the hammock, the joy of dancing the jitter-bug with my friends on the patio, learning the value of work by mowing the lawns and weeding the flower beds and cleaning the kitchen, sharing evenings with my father when we finally were able to buy a TV and watching Friday night wrestling with him, sleeping outside on the lawn under the stars with my friends, the time a boy walked me to the front door and gave me my first kiss, (or did it take place under the apple tree)? Those are good memories.



*The Ever-blooming Lilac Bushes, planted by my mother, Lucie James over forty years ago*

## **My Mission to Australia**

In another few months I'll have a grandson who will be ready for a mission, and yet, I seem to remember as if it were yesterday what it was like when I left with my parents fifty years ago from that old home to go to Australia, where all three of us served missions. My Dad was called to build chapels in Australia, and I just went with my parents in the hopes that I would be called on a mission. Missionaries today know that this is another big change that happened in the last fifty years. In the 1960's it wasn't common for girls to serve missions, and I never grew up with any desire to go. In fact, I had a great desire to be married by the time I was nineteen years old. I had my set of qualifications that my future husband was to have. He had to be tall, had to be from Utah, had to have a testimony, and had to love to dance – especially the jitter-bug. I selfishly prayed that Heavenly Father would send such a person to me – and yes, I felt like I had lived worthy of such a person, but things didn't seem to be happening in the order that I had planned. Just when I thought I was suppose to be married, events came into my life that gave me a great desire to serve a mission, and even though I wasn't quite old enough to be called, I had this opportunity to go with my parents. I wondered if I was making a mistake, but there was something out there for me—I could *feel* it. If ever I took a step into the dark, with only a small amount of faith, this was one of those times. It was just one of those certain feelings.

I'm guessing that there are many young women today who also feel it takes a huge step of faith – a step into the unknown – to make the decision to go on a mission. There may be something urging them to go, even at the expense of leaving something else wonderful behind – perhaps it is a boy, perhaps it is a job or an education. But there they are, not knowing what the next year and a half will bring. They go because of a feeling in their hearts, because of a choice they have made, because of a desire for light in their lives. Well, Bruce R. McConkie was the mission president in the Southern Australian Mission where my Dad was assigned to build his first chapel. As I was meeting him and shaking his hand for the first time, he said to me, in his low voice, “*Sister James, I'd like to talk to you.*” Oh man, I was so full of anticipation. Five minutes later I was called on a mission and needed to be ready to leave in two weeks.

Let me share with you some of the images that come into my mind when I think of my great Mission President. First of all, he gave me a companion for two weeks that I loved so much. I was so disappointed when he changed me to a new companion. This new one had only been out for one week and I had only been out for two. It was like the blind leading the blind. I was with her for almost one-third of my mission. It was not a fun six months. We had no real success. I prayed a lot of selfish prayers at first when I was with her – prayers like, “*Why have I come out here for this? Heavenly Father, please bless me with a new companion.*” Finally, I learned about unselfish prayer



President McConkie and Sister James (me) on the last day of My Mission

while I was with her. After six months of what I considered failure in the mission field, we both became humble. I felt that if we could just find one person who wanted to join the church we would be so happy – just one person! We needed intervention. After a day of fasting, and after getting up from our knees after what I felt was the most memorable prayer of my mission, because it was for other people and not me, we walked out and started knocking on doors . . . again. In just a few minutes, we met Jill Smith, who was baptized four days later. . . and the next week I was transferred. Oh, I had a list of other great experiences in the mission field, but nothing that taught me lessons like I learned in those hard six months. I learned what it meant to seek the spirit, to be humble, to let go of pride, the importance of loving and respecting your companion, to be patient and wait upon the Lord. We have to become teachable so the Lord can work his greatest miracles in us and through us. Young Sister Missionaries (and Elders) today will all have these kinds of experiences in their year and a half or two years. This will bring them to their knees in humble prayer. These times are our “Golden Moments of Adversity.” Glenn L. Pace once said, “But ultimately, just as surely as the day follows the night, as we remain true and faithful, this strange friend, ADVERSITY, leads us straight into the outstretched arms of the Savior.”<sup>4</sup>

## Storing Good Memories

Well, I could say much about my mission, but I’d like to mention the importance of reading good books and filling our minds with the images, thoughts and understanding which these good books will bring. In *Fiddler on the Roof*, Tevye is constantly mentioning what he says is in the *Good Book*. He knows these quotes and passages so well, that they have become part of his vocabulary. They automatically come to his mind when he’s facing trials – trials of poverty, trials of rebellious children, trials of persecution and even those times when he questions his own self – he always seems to know what God has said on the subject. Life is so short. We haven’t the time to sort through all the books that are out there to be read – or even all the ones that don the shelves of our own homes. We must pick and choose. Next to the scriptures, my favorite book is Victor Hugo’s, *Les Miserables*. I hope I will never lose the images that book placed in my head or the quotes that have become part of my life. As Valjean is dying he says to Fantine, “*To love another person is to see the Face of God.*” Oh, that is something I believe. Or another one of my favorite quotes was when Jean Valjean was wading through the sewers of Paris with Marius on his back, and Victor Hugo teaches us with a comparison, “*The pupil dilates in darkness and in the end finds light, just as the soul dilates in misfortune and in the end finds God.*”<sup>5</sup>

It’s important to choose good music, for music will forever be brought back into our minds. My husband years ago wrote these words: “*And beautiful music knows no end. For though by man it has been penned, it was before and will be more where Heavenly voices blend.*” When I was a teenager, I first heard Chopin’s, *Fantasia Impromptu*. There’s no



Rainbow In The Nevada Desert  
October 2006



music on earth I love as much as that. It produces incredible emotion in me. The theme of this piece is entitled, *I'm Always Chasing Rainbows*. I love this song on many different levels. For one, I literally am a rainbow chaser. I search them out in the skies after a rainstorm. I just chased one in my back yard a few days ago, but one particular rainbow in Nevada (October 2006) on Highway 80 was amazing. You could see the end of it, and it was glowing – it must have been the pot of gold! Imagine finding the pot of gold in the Nevada desert of all places! So when I hear *Fantasia Impromptu* on the piano, wonderful images come into my mind. There is a pot of gold at the end – that pot of gold is life with each other and our families and our Heavenly Father in the Celestial Kingdom forever. We must chase after this and keep going. I love Chopin's *Fantasia Impromptu*. I love rainbows. Well, I've spent a lot of time sharing ways to bring light into our lives. Light comes through good experiences in life. Hopefully it comes from your past as you grew up with good memories. For those about to serve, they can find light in the mission field, associations with a great mission president and learning to love their companions. Light comes from passing through trials and tribulations. Light comes to us from reading good books, from listening to beautiful music. Light was in our life in the pre-existence, and we get glimpses of that light at certain times in our lives. We can find it all around us because as Alma told the unbelieving Korihor, "*All things denote there is a God; yea, even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, and its motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Creator.*"<sup>6</sup> We have to make the choice to look and observe.

Look for these great signs and symbols of light all around you – look for them in your life - look for them in your back yard - look for them at church – look for them in the temple. They are there to remind us, to bring to remembrance the great promises and blessings that God has in store for us. The symbols are just symbols, but the promises are real and will bring eternal happiness. But there is more and perhaps this is the most important part. It would be selfish to keep this light within us hidden. The purpose of building your own personal reservoir of experiences of light is so that you may spend the rest of your life sharing this light with others.

Christ instructed us saying: "*Ye are the light of the World . . . Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works. . .*," and that's just what living the gospel is - it is WORK - and it's our good works that will glorify our Father which is in heaven. Your mission for the rest of your life is to do good works. You share this light with your family, with your neighbors, while you're young and when you get old. I think there's a reason that we remember things of the past so clearly when we get old – these memories need to be written down so they can bless the lives of the second and third generations. Our work is never finished (until we are finished!) "*For as the body without the Spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*"<sup>7</sup> That's how the Gospel is lived. We follow the example of Christ and let our light shine forth.

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1. Matthew 5: 14-16.
  2. John 14: 26.
  3. Poem by Lucie H. James, 1975.
  4. October 1992 General Conference, "Spiritual Revival," by Glenn L. Pace.
  5. *Les Miserables*, Victor Hugo, page 1,072.
  6. Alma 30: 44.
  7. James 2: 26.



## Really? A Plan of Salvation?

by Douglas M. Scribner

When the missionaries first used the phrase, *Plan of Salvation*, I recoiled and said, “*What is that?*” Surely I had never heard those words in any of the churches I had previously attended. In fact, I had read much of the Bible and was convinced that there was no reference in either the Old or New Testament to the existence of such a plan. The concept was intriguing but, could it possibly be true? They explained that learning its truthfulness begins with understanding the nature of God and the origin of man.

### The True Trinity

As a boy of fourteen years, Joseph Smith entered a grove of trees near his father’s home in Palmyra, New York. There he knelt to pray and asked God which church he should join. The hour had come for the restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it had been taught by the Savior some eighteen hundred years earlier. In response to this fervent and heartfelt prayer, two glorified, resurrected beings appeared in a shaft of light directly over his head. Joseph later recorded this event saying, “*When the light rested upon me I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description, standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other – This is my beloved Son, hear Him!*”<sup>1</sup> In the conversation that followed, Joseph learned that he must join none of the existing churches.

Not only did young Joseph receive instruction in answer to his question about the churches of his day, but he also became aware of the true corporeal nature of God. Twenty-four years later the prophet Joseph Smith had this nature further clarified by the following revelation: “*The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us. A man may receive the Holy Ghost, and it may descend upon him and not tarry with him.*”<sup>2</sup> This reality was in startling contrast to the religious teachings of the time, but it was true. The true nature of God had been taught to, and was clearly understood by the original disciples of Jesus. Peter, James and John had it confirmed about six months prior to the crucifixion when they traveled with Jesus and climbed the 9,400 foot high Mount Hermon, now known as the Mount of Transfiguration. Matthew recorded, “*And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James and John his brother and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And behold there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. . . While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*”<sup>3</sup>

John further clarified the meaning of unity in the trinity as being one in purpose and one in thought – not one in being. He wrote down Jesus’ intercessory prayer to His Heavenly Father wherein the Savior said, “*And this is*

*life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. . . Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are. . . Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”<sup>4</sup>*

As long as the original Church of Jesus Christ was intact, this clear understanding of the Godhead prevailed. Jesus designed his church to perpetuate and, for a time, it did. It was built upon a foundation of living apostles and prophets who received revelation from the Lord. The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was the governing council of the church and Peter presided, for Jesus had given him all the Keys of the Holy Priesthood including the sealing power saying that *“whatsoever thou shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.”*<sup>5</sup> When one apostle died, another was chosen and sustained by the entire quorum. So it was when Matthias was selected to replace Judas Iscariot in the year 34 AD. *“Beginning with the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justis, and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen. That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.”*<sup>6</sup>

The apostle Paul was not one of the original twelve, but was later called to become part of this quorum. Paul and his missionary companions spread the Gospel throughout the Gentile nations while other apostles continued to preach in Jerusalem and throughout Judea. However, persecutions increased and several of the original apostles were killed. Many church members died when the Roman Legions descended upon Judea in 68 AD and, over a two year period, annihilated all Jews who did not flee into other countries. Roman and Greek Christians were also imprisoned and slain throughout the Roman Empire so the remaining apostles were no longer able to gather together as a quorum and sustain new members. The church then became fragmented into local branches and doctrinal revelation ceased. Without the Keys of the Priesthood and revelation to living apostles and prophets, the true understanding of the nature of God the Father, His Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost faded away. This was apparent when the Roman Emperor Constantine decided to make Christianity the state religion in 325 AD. He gathered leaders from many local branches into the city of Nice and there instructed them to agree upon the nature of God. The Nicene Creed was a compromise of their varied opinions. In part it stated, *“We worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity. Neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance . . . The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible . . . There are not three incomprehensible, . . . but one incomprehensible . . .”*<sup>7</sup> Though full of contradictions, this document became the basis of the churches that followed, even up to the present day. Not until the restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ was revealed through the prophet Joseph Smith was the true nature of the Trinity again found on the earth. As I first met with the missionaries and presented my question, *“Who is God?”* they declared the reality of Joseph Smith’s first vision and explained how this precious knowledge about God had been first established, then lost and finally restored. A feeling of peace flooded into my soul with the assurance that my quest for understanding was then on the right track.

## **The Nature and Origin of Man**

Every human being is comprised of both a mortal physical body and an immortal spirit. Mankind is more than the simple results of heredity and environment. Despite the physiology of the nervous system, I was convinced that our individual ability to think, remember, feel and believe was more than mere electrical impulses from the brain and synapses between nerve endings. Our individual spirits include intelligence, personality, wisdom, emotions, and all of the attributes of Godliness such as love, compassion and forgiveness. This knowledge about the nature of man was indicated by Job when he said, *“But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.”*<sup>8</sup> This dual aspect of men and women gives them great potential. It is possible for the physical drives of the body to be subdued by the spirit, which places each person far above their counterparts in the animal kingdom. In fact, there is a portion of the Divine within each of us that leads us

upward toward the purposes of God. King David of Israel grasped this concept when he wrote, *“What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor.”*<sup>9</sup>

When mortal death comes upon each of us, our spirit continues to live on. The author of Ecclesiastes confirmed this when he wrote, *“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return to God who gave it.”*<sup>10</sup> This immortality of the spirit has been well understood by previous generations including scientific individuals who had faith in God. One example was the German rocket scientist Werhner Von Braun who said, *“Science knows that matter cannot be created or destroyed and this applies to God’s greatest creation – the human soul.”*<sup>11</sup> The prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation on this subject which stated, *“There is no such thing as immaterial matter. All spirit is matter, but it is more fine or pure, and can only be discerned by purer eyes.”*<sup>12</sup> To which American scientist Henry Eyring added, *“Matter can disappear only to reappear again as energy. This liberalization in our conceptions regarding matter gives added significance to the doctrine that the spirit is composed of a refined kind of matter.”*<sup>13</sup>

A question that troubled me until I heard about the Plan of Salvation concerned the origin of the human spirit. Albert Einstein’s work showed that matter cannot be created nor destroyed but can only change form into energy (and visa versa). Energy can be converted into matter and matter can be converted into energy, but the sum of the two is always preserved. Thus, when a match is struck, some matter is converted into heat and light, but nothing is lost. This is one reason it was easy for me to accept that our spirits live on after death. The human spirit cannot be destroyed or eliminated so it must continue on after it leaves the body. I then asked myself, *“If this is true at the point of death, is it not also true at the time of birth?”* The sectarian notion that God created man’s spirit from nothing at the time of birth seemed to defy the laws of the universe. Some of the most profound truths revealed during the restoration of the gospel had to do with this process of creation. In May of 1833, the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation explaining our origin. The Lord said, *“Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be.”*<sup>14</sup> Rather than making something from nothing, the creation was all about the organization of eternal elements. Abraham saw this in vision and wrote, *“Now the Lord has shown unto me, Abraham, the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these were many of the noble and great ones. And God saw these souls that they were good, and He stood in the midst of them ...”*<sup>15</sup>

To this aspect of creation is added the dimension of the relationship between man and God. From the Plan of Salvation I learned that we were created as spirit children of our Heavenly Father before this world was made. There in Heaven, as spirit children of a loving Father, we learned about Him and loved Him. We discovered that our spirit bodies had been created in His image and likeness and that one day we too would receive physical bodies in His similitude. There we knew that we also had a Mother in Heaven – a Heavenly Father and Mother in perfect unity who, as parents, had created us as male and female spirits in their image. The Apostle Paul understood that God the Eternal Father was literally the father of our spirits. He urged church members of his day to give God their reverent obedience, saying, *“Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits,*



*Our first seven grandchildren: Joshua, Benjamin, Bella, Danny, Jacob, Hunter, Matthew*



Doug and Cecile Scribner Family in 2004

Back: Russ, Spencer, Scott, Craig, Jim Front: Gina, Cecile, Doug, Lora, Christy

and live?”<sup>6</sup> This truth helped me understand why people are all so different. The fact that some people have different intelligence, personality traits, and capacity to grow than do others is obvious from birth. This is not an accident, nor a matter of random chance. God has allowed our unique and individual spirits to enter the physical bodies prepared for us by our mortal parents. As this gospel message unfolded before my eyes, I began to see our lives from God’s perspective rather than man’s limited understanding, and a testimony of the pre-existence was born in my heart. This truth has been reinforced in my mind many times since then. As my wife, Cecile, and I became the parents of eight children, we observed that each personality was completely different from the next one. Despite the fact that the heredity of our ancestors and the environment of our home was basically the same, there was a third factor. Each child came to us with different talents as well as different interests and personalities. They had developed these unique attributes during the eons of time when they lived as individual spirit children of God before the world was formed.

### The Need for a Plan

The purposes of God were made abundantly clear in a revelation called The Book of Moses given to the prophet Joseph Smith in June 1830, wherein The Lord said, “For behold, this is my work and my glory – to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.”<sup>17</sup> The question for me was, “How is it to be done, and how is it to be communicated so that every individual can have an equal chance to hear and choose whether or not to accept it?” One thing which was clear to me is that our loving Father in Heaven is in charge and decides when and where each of his spirit children enter into mortality through the channel of human birth. In writing the Book of Acts, Luke recorded a sermon in which the Apostle Paul preached this concept to the people of Athens, Greece. In it Paul said, “God that made the world and all things therein . . . hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us.”<sup>18</sup>

*The Topical Guide* confirms the fact that there is no specific reference to God’s overall plan of salvation in either the Old or New Testament. Certainly there were bits and pieces of it throughout these scriptures, but the words, *Plan of Salvation*, do not appear there. Fortunately, the Book of Mormon was replete with mention of it. At

various times it was called the: Plan of Redemption, Plan of the Creator, Plan of God, Plan of Happiness, Plan of Mercy, and Plan of Salvation. Finally, I realized that the phrase had been known by the ancient Hebrew prophets, but somehow had been lost. When Joseph Smith received the revelation which had originally been given to Moses by the Lord, it had included this concept with significant detail. To Moses, the Lord said, “*And now, behold, I say unto you: this is the plan of salvation unto all men, through the blood of mine Only Begotten, who shall come in the meridian of time.*”<sup>19</sup> Thus the missionary handbook, *Preach My Gospel*, states: “*We have one message – Through a modern prophet, God has restored knowledge about the plan of salvation, which is centered on Christ’s Atonement and fulfilled by living the first principles and ordinances of the gospel.*”<sup>20</sup>

When I was growing up, my own father used to complain that most of the commandments given by Moses were negative (you shall not do this and shall not do that) and those which were positive were very strict. Because of this, I found it very comforting to read Alma’s explanation that the commandments of God were preceded by the teaching of the Plan of Salvation. Thus, we were given an understanding of why each commandment was needed before we were required to live it. There was to be no such thing as blind obedience. Alma taught, “*And they began from that time forth to call on his name; therefore God conversed with men, and made known unto them the plan of redemption, which had been prepared from the foundation of the world; and this he made known unto them according to their faith and repentance and their holy works. . . Therefore God gave unto them commandments, after having made known unto them the plan of redemption, that they should not do evil. . .*”<sup>21</sup>

It was also comforting to learn that every son and daughter of God would hear the Plan of Salvation at least twice. The first time we heard it was in a Council Meeting in Heaven where we were all present together. At that time we were allowed to choose whether or not we would accept the plan and come to earth to gain a physical body and be tested, or refuse the plan and be denied the next phase of our progression. The second time we would hear the plan would either be during our mortal life or in the spirit world after death. Certainly a veil of forgetfulness has erased our memory of the pre-existence, but sometimes that veil is thin so when we do hear the plan of redemption, it seems vaguely familiar. The Holy Spirit then bears witness that it is true if we are willing to receive it. The poet William Wordsworth wrote a glimpse of our fleeting remembrance about pre-existent life in his poem, *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*, wherein he said,

*Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;  
The soul that rises with us, our life’s star  
Hath had elsewhere its setting  
And cometh from afar;  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God who is our home . . .*

Today thousands of missionaries strive to teach this knowledge about a Plan of Salvation to as many people as possible across many of the nations of the world. Still, there are billions of people who are now living or have lived in the past without hearing that there is such a plan of redemption centered in Jesus Christ. Heavenly Father loves them too and will provide a situation wherein each one will have the opportunity to hear, understand, and choose whether they will accept His plan for their progression. Much of this teaching will take place in the world of spirits where people reside after death. The process by which this Plan of Salvation is to be preached to those who have died was seen in vision by President Joseph F. Smith in 1918. Herein he said, “*And as I wondered, my eyes were opened, and my understanding quickened, and I perceived that the Lord went not in person among the wicked and the disobedient who had rejected the truth, to teach them; But behold from among the righteous, he organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness, even to all the spirits of men; and thus was the gospel preached to the dead.*”<sup>22</sup>

## The First Born Spirit Child

The noblest of all the spirit children of Heavenly Father was His first born – a son whose name was Jehovah. This is the same Jehovah who created the earth, under the direction of the Father, and who became the God of the Old Testament. He was the deity who spoke to Abraham, Moses, Isaiah and Jeremiah as well as to Lehi, Nephi, Alma and Helaman. He was the same one who eventually came to earth in the flesh as the baby Jesus, born to Mary. As a premortal Son of God, Jehovah appeared to the brother of Jared nearly 2000 years before his birth, saying, *“And never have I showed myself unto man whom I have created, for never has man believed in me as thou hast. Seest thou that ye are created after mine own image? Yea, even all men were created in the beginning after mine own image. Behold, this body, which ye now behold, is the body of my spirit; and man have I created after the body of my spirit; and even as I appear unto thee to be in the spirit will I appear unto my people in the flesh.”*<sup>23</sup>

The Apostle Paul clearly understood this premortal role of Jesus as the first born spirit child of Heavenly Father. He helped the saints in the city of Colosse understand this truth in his letter to the Colossians. He wrote, *“Giving thanks unto the Father . . . who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is in the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of every creature.”*<sup>24</sup> Centuries later, the resurrected Christ spoke to the prophet Joseph Smith and again revealed the knowledge that He had been the firstborn spirit child of God, saying, *“And now verily I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn; And all those who are begotten through me are partakers of the glory of the same, and are the Church of the Firstborn. Ye were also in the beginning with the Father . . .”*<sup>25</sup>

Being the firstborn did not, in itself, insure Jehovah of his prominent role in the Father’s Plan of Redemption, for there was a need for opposition in all things. In this case, the opposition came from another spirit child of heavenly parentage. His name was Lucifer, Son of the Morning. He was brilliant, articulate and persuasive but he was also incredibly selfish and prideful. The prophet Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon received an understanding of Lucifer’s nature in 1832 when the Lord revealed it to them. Joseph wrote, *“And this we saw also, and bear record, that an angel of God who was in authority in the presence of God, who rebelled against the Only Begotten Son whom the Father loved and who was in the bosom of the Father, was thrust down from the presence of God and the Son, And was called Perdition, for the heavens wept over him – he was Lucifer, a son of the morning. And we beheld, and lo, he is fallen! Is fallen, even a son of the morning.”*<sup>26</sup>

When I was in my youth, and first heard of a personage known as Satan, it seemed like a fantasy to me. I could not understand how there could be a nasty spirit running around creating havoc, tempting individuals to sin, and persecuting people who chose to be good. Only when I learned who he really was, did it begin to make sense. Only then did the words of the prophet Isaiah seem to fit into the eternal scheme of things, when he said, *“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, saying, ‘Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms . . .’”*<sup>27</sup>

But, why? What was the point of contention that was so great that it would cause Lucifer to rebel against the Father and the Firstborn Son, and to persuade other spirits children to follow him? Part of it was pride, as Isaiah indicated. Lucifer wanted the Father’s glory for himself. However, it was more than that! Heavenly Father’s Plan was to allow his children to choose for themselves whether or not they would be willing to keep his commandments. The principle of moral agency would provide them personal growth. As each choice is made between good and evil, man’s spirit either becomes stronger or it weakens. Choosing good when confronted by opposition is an empowering achievement. Lucifer said that he wanted to guarantee that every soul would be good by depriving them of that agency. Basically he wanted to control the thoughts and actions of every person, for his own aggrandizement. This confrontation was described in God’s revelation to Moses. *“And I, the Lord*

*God, spake unto Moses, saying: That Satan, whom thou hast commanded in the name of mine Only Begotten, is the same which was from the beginning, and he came before me saying – Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will redeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely I will do it; wherefore give me thine honor. But behold, my Beloved Son, which was my Beloved and Chosen from the beginning, said unto me – Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever. Wherefore, because that Satan rebelled against me, and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be cast down; And he became Satan, yea, even the devil, the father of all lies, to deceive and blind all men, and to lead them captive at his will, even as many as would not hearken unto my voice.”<sup>28</sup>*

So great was Lucifer’s anger at this rebuke from Heavenly Father, that he tried to implement his own will by force. He persuaded a third of the hosts of heaven to follow him in this conflict for dominion over the souls of men. He declared war against the righteous. Though the battle was not physical, it had all the elements of anger and hatred that could be found later in wars between men and their ideologies. John the Revelator described it thus: “*And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*”<sup>29</sup> Thus, Jehovah, the firstborn spirit child of God, became the central figure in Heavenly Father’s Plan of Salvation. He was assured that he would literally come to earth in the meridian of time as the Only Begotten of the Father, to do the Father’s will.

## Justice and Mercy

Equipped with the gift of moral agency, Heavenly Father’s spirit children were prepared to begin their sojourn on the earth that had been created for them. It was to be a probationary state so that each one could learn to choose good over evil by their own experience. Michael the archangel was the first to come and was named Adam. Together with a choice spirit daughter of God, whom he named Eve, Adam became the father of the human race, and Eve became the mother of all living. They were first created with immortal bodies and without the ability to procreate, but soon were confronted by the deceptions of Satan and chose to violate a commandment of God. By so doing, they were cast out of the presence of God – a spiritual death – and became mortal, which made them subject to physical death. This event has become known as the Fall of Adam, but in reality it was the path to progress and happiness. The Book of Mormon is the best source for understanding the consequences of this momentous beginning of mankind. In it the prophet Nephi wrote, “*And after Adam and Eve had partaken of the forbidden fruit they were driven out of the Garden of Eden, to till the earth. And they have brought forth children; yea, even the family of all the earth. And the days of the children of men were prolonged, according to the will of God, that they might repent while in the flesh; wherefore, their state became a state of probation, and their time was lengthened . . . And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the Garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end. And they would have had no children; wherefore they*



*Adam and Eve, by Lowell Bruce Bennett*



*would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin. But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things. Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.”<sup>30</sup>*

As the missionaries taught me about the role of Adam and Eve in Heavenly Father’s plan, I felt that it was a far more logical explanation for the origin of man than that proposed by those committed to the theory of biological evolution. The idea proposing a spontaneous generation of life is a key fallacy in the argument for organic evolution. Adherents surmise that such a monumental event as going from no-life to life could have occurred if it happened long ago and all the environmental conditions were just right. There is no scientific evidence to support this position. Very little publicity has been given to statements by biologists like Dr. Douglas Maitland, whose book, *Principles of Modern Biology* says, “*No one has yet been able to produce protoplasm artificially. . . So far as we actually know, non-living matter is converted into living matter only in intimate association with existing protoplasm, that is, a living organism. . . We have to admit so far as man knows, there has never been a time when inorganic matter took on life spontaneously.*”<sup>31</sup>

As I pondered the experiences and opposition which Adam and Eve must have faced, it was clear that they must have made some wrong choices along with many good ones. Fortunately, God granted them, and all of us, the process of repentance. This is a way that allows us to recognize our bad choices and replace them with good ones. Some bad decisions are simply foolish, but others violate the commandments of God. True repentance requires that we have Godly sorrow for sin, that we request forgiveness and that we change our thoughts and actions for the better. I wholeheartedly believed in repentance, but it left me with an unanswered question. “*How could God be merciful enough to forgive without forgoing justice? Surely we must be accountable for our own actions.*” The Book of Mormon prophet Alma provided the insight I was seeking when he said, “*And now, the plan of mercy could not be brought about except an atonement should be made; therefore God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice, that God might be a perfect, just God, and a merciful God also.*”<sup>32</sup>

Thus the great Jehovah was foreordained to become the Only Begotten Son of God the Father, born to Mary, and granted power over death to become the Messiah, the Savior of mankind, the Lord Jesus Christ. It was he who was chosen to atone for the sins of all those who would accept him and keep his commandments. The prophet Nephi saw this in vision and wrote, “*Wherefore redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah; for he is full of grace and truth. Behold, he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin, to answer the ends of the law, unto all those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit; and unto none else can the ends of the law be answered . . . and the Messiah cometh in the fullness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall . . .*”<sup>33</sup> Because of the infinite atonement of Jesus Christ, the laws of both justice and mercy are satisfied. The punishment for breaking the laws of God has been paid by the suffering of the Only Begotten Son for and in behalf of every sinner who has faith, repents and is baptized by a worthy holder of the priesthood. Mercy is extended to each truly penitent individual who has a broken heart and a contrite spirit as they accept Jesus as their savior.

## **A Prophet to all Nations**

The Plan of Salvation would be of little value unless there was a way for it to be communicated to every spirit child of God who has ever lived and those who will yet live. As I sat on the steps of the Stanford University Library that spring morning in 1959 thinking about my upcoming graduation, I realized that my life was about to change. To know if Latter-day prophets were truly God’s spokesmen on earth was the key. Then, as I pondered the Plan of Salvation, I realized that living prophets had always been God’s way of communicating important knowledge to mankind. I asked myself, “*Had I lived in 600 BC at the time of Jeremiah, would I have said, ‘Moses and Isaiah were certainly prophets, but who is this person Jeremiah? Can I really believe in a living prophet?’*” The situation is no different today. Through his living prophets, God has always revealed his mind and will. The prophet then speaks to the people and they choose whether or not to believe his words. It was finally clear in my mind. The prophet Amos summed it up when he said, “*Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto*

his servants the prophets.”<sup>34</sup> The young prophet Nephi also understood this great truth. He wanted to receive and understand for himself the revelations that had been given in vision to his father Lehi. He made this a matter of fervent prayer and was granted this blessing so that he also might be a witness of the truth. He wrote, “I Nephi, was desirous also that I might see, and hear, and know of these things, by the power of the Holy Ghost, which is the gift of God . . . For he is the same yesterday, today, and forever; and the way is prepared for all men from the foundation of the world, if it so be that they repent and come unto him. For he that diligently seeketh shall find; and the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto them, by the power of the Holy Ghost, as well in these times as in times of old, and as well in times of old as in times to come; wherefore the course of the Lord is one eternal round.”<sup>35</sup> Thus we see that God is unchanging. He continues to communicate his Plan of Happiness to mankind now by revelation to his servants the prophets just as he has in times past. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. The living prophets are not for their own nation alone, but speak out to all mankind everywhere. Yet in a practical sense, there have been and will be many who live their lives without the benefit of hearing the plan for themselves. Thus God’s plan will be taught to them as spirits while they await the resurrection and their ordinances will be performed for them in the temples.

These are the last days prior to the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to rule and reign throughout the millennium. It is a time of preparation! One aspect of this period is the promised gathering of the House of Israel. Under the direction of the living prophet, this is being done by preaching the restored gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations. Such a gathering was predicted anciently by the prophet Jeremiah when he said, “Therefore,



Our son Craig D. Scribner in 1991 serving as a missionary in Peru

behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, the Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the out of the land of Egypt; but the Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them . . . Behold I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.”<sup>36</sup> With the 1829 translation of the Book of Mormon from Golden Plates by the prophet Joseph Smith came the reiteration of Jeremiah’s promise with the announcement that the time for this gathering of Israel would soon begin. It said, “And then shall the work of the Father commence at that day, even when this gospel shall be preached among the remnant of this people. Verily I say unto you, at that day shall the work of the Father commence among all the dispersed of my people . . . and they shall go out from all nations; and they shall not go out in haste, nor go by flight, for I will go before them, saith the Father, and I will be their rearward.”<sup>37</sup>

Not only will many of the House of Israel be converted by the missionaries but also many of the Gentiles who live in these same nations will have their hearts softened and will repent so that they too can be baptized and numbered among those of Israel. Nephi wrote, “In the latter day shall the truth come unto the Gentiles, that the fullness of these things shall be made known unto them.”<sup>38</sup> Today missionaries are taking the good news of the restoration to many nations. There are still some countries which do not yet permit these missionaries to enter and teach their people, but gradually these doors will open until the light of the gospel will illuminate every clime. Even so, the number of souls who become converted will not be large compared to those who reject the message of the Father’s plan of salvation. Six hundred years before

the birth of Jesus, the prophet Nephi saw our day and the establishment of the true church of Jesus Christ in every nation. As he described it, “*And it came to pass that I beheld the church of the Lamb of God, and its numbers were few . . . and their dominions upon the face of the earth were small . . .*”<sup>39</sup> I am grateful for a personal witness that there really is a Plan of Salvation and that it is being taken to all nations. This knowledge becomes most valuable when each converted soul comes to the realization that God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ know them individually, love them unconditionally, and have a specific plan for them personally. The atonement of Jesus Christ will apply to everyone despite the uniqueness of their lives, their adversities and the imperfections they have to overcome through repentance. I am also grateful for my children who have gone from our home to other states, lands and nations to teach others of the Plan of Salvation - the Plan of Happiness: Russ to Colombia, Gina to Argentina, Craig to Peru, Scott to Minnesota, Christy to France, Jim to Tennessee, and Lora to Texas.

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1. Joseph Smith History (JSH) 1: 17.
  2. D&C 130: 22-23.
  3. Matthew 17: 1-5.
  4. John 17: 3, 11, 20-21.
  5. Matthew 16: 19.
  6. Acts 1: 22-26.
  7. Nicene Creed
  8. Job 32: 8.
  9. Psalms 8: 4-5.
  10. Ecclesiastes 12: 7.
  11. Wherner Von Braun.
  12. D&C 131: 7.
  13. Reflections of a Scientist, Henry Eyring, page 40.
  14. D&C 93: 29.
  15. Abraham 3: 22-23.
  16. Hebrews 12: 9.
  17. Moses 1: 39.
  18. Acts 17: 26-27.
  19. Moses 6: 62.
  20. Preach My Gospel, A Guide to Missionary Service, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, page 6.
  21. Alma 12: 30-32.
  22. D&C 138: 29-30.
  23. Ether 3: 15-16.
  24. Colossians 1: 12-15.
  25. D&C 93: 21, 23.
  26. D&C 76: 25-27.
  27. Isaiah 14: 12-16.
  28. Moses 4: 1-4.
  29. Revelations 12: 7-9.
  30. II Nephi 2: 19-25.
  31. Principles of Modern Biology, Douglas Maitland, page 16.
  32. Alma 42: 15.
  33. II Nephi 2: 6-7, 26.
  34. Amos 3: 7.
  35. I Nephi 10: 17-19.
  36. Jeremiah 16: 14-16.
  37. III Nephi 21: 26-29.
  38. III Nephi 16: 7.
  39. I Nephi 14: 12.



## Fervent, Effectual Prayer . . . Avaieth Much

(A Talk given at the BYU Women's Conference in 2011)

by Cecile J. Scribner

I enjoyed many of the talks at Women's Conference this year. So much stood out, but two things particularly caused me to smile. The first was Sister Pearce quoting her father (President Gordon B. Hinckley) – “*Things will work out. . . they always do.*” Through all the years of my doing stage productions, dance festivals, and readers' theaters, that's the quote I heard more than any other, “*things will work out . . . they always do,*” and I always thought to myself, “*But there's going to have to be so much work and prayer before they do.*” And then I heard another quote that goes along with the first one – “*In the end, everything will be okay, and if it's not okay, then it's not the end!*”



My Grandmother, Drucilla Sears Howard, had a motto – “*If you want to have a great experience in life, you have to go out after it.*” She was a happy person – certainly not a bitter person, though she could've been. She had twelve children! She lost three of them as new babies, three others she lost as young adults at ages twenty-two, twenty-four, and twenty-six during the 1930's when tuberculosis was running rampant in the United States. These three died all within three years of each other. Then before another year was out, she lost her thirty-nine year old son from the results of a ruptured appendix. She had a temple marriage, yet in the end her husband became a slave to addiction, so she had to face most of these trials on her own. She survived all this because she had faith in a loving Heavenly Father – she leaned on him through prayer. She understood the power of prayer. In the same year that she lost her last adult child, she wrote this poem:

### *The Camel*

*The Camel at the close of day  
Kneels down upon the sandy plain  
To have his burden lifted off  
And rest again.*

*So shouldst thou to thy knees go  
When daylight draweth to a close  
And let the Master lift the load  
And grant repose,*

*Else how couldst thou tomorrow meet  
With all tomorrow's work to do  
If thou the burden all the night  
Doth carry through?*

*The Camel kneels at break of day  
To have the guide replace the load  
Then rises up anew to take  
The desert road.*

*So shouldst thou kneel at morning dawn  
That God may give thee daily care  
Assured that he no load too great  
Will make thee bear.*

While I served a mission as a young woman, I learned three very valuable things from my mission president, Bruce R. McConkie. These were: Seek the Spirit, always laugh and enjoy life, and don't try to understand a scripture without knowing what the whole chapter and background is all about. Before discussing the scripture in James 5:16, "*The fervent, effectual prayer. . .availeth much,*" I wanted to understand it better. I read all five chapters in the Book of James, and it opened my eyes. It is generally thought that the writer of this book was James, the Lord's brother, who was a leader in the Church in Jerusalem. He gives advice on how to become a righteous person. He was taught by the Master himself. He's speaking to the general membership of the Church. He says that if one lacks wisdom, he should ask of God for help. This was the passage that inspired Joseph Smith to inquire of the Lord in 1820 as to the true Church. You just have to look around you and see the result of that effectual, fervent prayer. James is the one who teaches us that faith without works is dead, to be doers of the word and not hearers only, and to control the unruly tongue, for the tongue has the power to defile the whole body.

He exhorts us to be patient and to draw nigh unto God, and he will draw nigh unto us. After telling us those things that will make us righteous, he then talks about prayer and the good that can come from the fervent effectual prayer, particularly a prayer that is offered by a righteous person – for this is the kind of prayer that availeth much. Effectual fervent prayers should be said for each other: to pray for those who are sick, and for others to change their ways, that they will be converted, that their souls will be saved from death. There is much power in the fervent effectual prayer offered by a righteous person.

I know people who fast and pray and almost immediately they say, "*the Lord has told me to do this or that,*" and I've said to myself, "*How do they get answers like that?*" Some people hear voices or hear a voice in their head or get direction in dreams. I've struggled because I don't feel that my answers have ever been as obvious as that. And yet, . . . I know my prayers have been heard and answered. When I was a child, I remember kneeling by my bed and saying a particular prayer every night. It was a personal quiet prayer, and it became memorized. One thing I always asked was for Heavenly Father "*to help me be a good girl.*" In an article written by Joseph McConkie, he said, "*Few things facilitate getting the right answer like asking the right question.*"<sup>1</sup> Oh, but what are the right questions? I think we might all have an experience (perhaps when we were young) of praying very specifically and asking for something that we desperately needed at that very moment. For me, it was a crochet hook that I needed for Primary that day. I didn't have time to look any further so I quickly knelt and asked Heavenly Father to show me where it was. I didn't see a vision, but I had faith, and I started walking through the living room right to the den. I opened the bottom big drawer of a dresser, wormed through the material that filled the drawer, and at the bottom was my crochet hook! I grabbed my needle and ran off to primary. What a crazy experience to remember for sixty years, yet how many others have had just such an experience? I believe it's good, at a very young age, to know for sure that Heavenly Father lives and answers our prayers. I guess I asked the right question that day.

When I was a young adult, I knew that I didn't want to be married early – like sixteen, or even eighteen. But when my eighteenth year was nearly completed, I started praying earnestly for Heavenly Father to send me *the one*. I knew this process took effort on my own part so when I was lucky enough to have a date, I tried very hard to envision this guy or that guy as my future husband because I was worried that I might not be married by the time I was nineteen. Well, I knew for sure that some of them weren't *the one* when they didn't ask me out for a second date. But for others, since I was desperate, I started letting go of some of my so called requirements that *the one* had to have. Did he really have to be from Utah? Did he really have to be tall? Did he really need to have a strong testimony? Did he really have to be able to dance – particularly the jitter-bug? Could I live without these things? Why wasn't I meeting someone with all my requirements? Twenty years arrived, and I had missed my goal – my prayers were not answered like I had imagined they would be. I was living right. I was a good girl just like I had asked Heavenly Father to bless me to be. Why was this earnest prayer not answered? I knew it had been heard. I could feel the spirit when I prayed and when tears ran down my face. This was a time to take a step into the darkness – to go forth with faith – faith that Heavenly Father knew more about my needs and my future than I did myself. A hard step, but what other choice do we have sometimes?

Events came into my life, which led to my going on a mission to Southern Australia. My prayers changed. I started praying fervently for other people instead of just myself, particularly that those other people would join the church. With all my heart and soul, after six months of what I considered failure in the mission field, I prayed that Heavenly Father would guide my companion and me to just one person. If I could just bring one person into the Church, I would be so happy. In desperation, we finally realized that this was something we did not have the power to do on our own. My companion and I needed intervention – we needed to be humble and seek the Spirit. After a day of fasting, we got up from our knees after one of the most memorable fervent prayers of my mission – we felt calmness and a sisterly love for one another and within one hour we had knocked on the door of a young woman who wanted to be taught and who joined the church a few days later.

After coming home from my mission, I was no longer desperate to find the one. Life was full and enjoyable. I loved my friendships that seemed so much deeper than ever before, and without even worrying about it, I started dating Doug – and this relationship quickly moved to the engagement stage. Yikes, he wasn't from Utah and he wasn't tall. But, he had a testimony and he could dance. The waltz? Hmmm, not so good. But the jitter-bug? Yes! My next earnest prayer that I remember so clearly was in the temple. I prayed for two hours that Heavenly Father would assure me that I was making the right decision. I decided that a whole lifetime and eternity shouldn't just be based on whether or not someone could jitter-bug. Never before or since have I felt the Spirit warm throughout my body as I did just before I answered “yes” instead of “no” at the appropriate time.

Again, for me, there was no voice, but there was a feeling. Bruce R. McConkie said, “*Perfect prayer is addressed to the Father, in the name of the Son. It is uttered by the power of the Holy Ghost and it is answered in whatever way seems proper by him whose ear is attuned to the needs of His children. He will choose his own ways to answer his children, and those ways are numerous.*”<sup>2</sup> For Alma, the Younger, He sent an angel. And, in actuality, for many of us, we are also sent angels in answers to our prayers. Those angels may come in the form of two missionaries knocking on our door, or a neighbor who brings a plate of food to us when we're sick, or have lost a loved one, or have brought a new baby into the world. There are some people around us who will be angels used by Heavenly Father to be the answer to someone else's prayer. Many prayers are answered by absolute miracles.

During the years when I was giving birth and raising my eight children, we saw miracles that came as a result of fasting and prayer. My most fervent prayer for my children was that they'd gain faith in Jesus Christ. This prayer was answered (I hoped) as they prayed for each other – through open heart surgery, cleft palate surgery, kidney surgery, car accidents and other such problems. As just one example, we had a daughter, Christianne, who was born with a partial cleft palate. At first, we were assured that a surgery would most likely fix her problem. However, our first prayers were just for her life that first week because we could not get her to drink - she had no suction power in her mouth. She was a small baby, but she was a fighter, and we solved that problem with a special bottle that we finally found. She had her first surgery at eighteen months, but it did not totally solve her

problem - the uvula in the back of her mouth still was not long enough to make enough closure to help her form words. Even when she was five years old, no one except family members could understand a word she was saying. Our prayers and fasting continued in her behalf. Doctors performed a much more serious surgery on her which involved taking skin from the back of her throat and forming what they called a pharyngeal flap that was delicately attached behind her uvula. This lengthened this area that needed to make



Christy - 1997 - right after her return from her mission in France

a closure when Christy formed her k's and g's. It made all the difference in her ability to speak. However, Christy faced fifteen years of professional speech therapy and other surgeries including dental surgeries, and an operation that brought her chin forward. Our prayers always were that she, first of all, would live through the surgeries, and secondly, that she would be able to

be understood when she spoke. When she was twenty-one years old, she gave a talk at her missionary farewell, and truly we witnessed a miracle. Her speech was perfect. Yes, it took a lot of work, a lot of prayer and fasting, a lot of faith, and years of patience on our family's part, but nevertheless, the final result was so much more than we every dreamed was possible. Not only was her speech beautiful, but she was beautiful inside and out. This miracle came slowly, but it came.



Christy - 1975 - the day before her first surgery

President Monson said: *“To those within the sound of my voice who are struggling with challenges and difficulties large and small, prayer is the provider of spiritual strength; it is the passport to peace. . . Miracles are wrought through prayer.”*<sup>4</sup>

Once my children got married and have now brought almost thirty grandchildren into our lives – well, I don't know about you, there's just not enough night left to pray all the prayers we want to offer in behalf of all these children. But we need to think through what an effectual fervent prayer is. It isn't effective to carry the burden of our cares all the night through. I've tried doing that, and I've had one sleepless night after another. It seems that at my age, the physical problems take a second seat to the spiritual problems. My children are all grown, out of my control, and I even feel that they're out of my influence – it's almost like the only path I have left to help them is the pathway of prayer. And yet, after all these years of practice, prayer has become harder for me. And I know why – I'm now praying most fervently for their souls, and I may not live long enough to see the answers to my most fervent prayers. And yet, sometimes I want to just lift their burdens from off their shoulders – I often wish I could just give them all the money they think they need to be successful, or provide a home to shelter them, or just force them to see the danger they are in spiritually because of their choices. Joseph F. McConkie, in his article *Finding Answers*, in the *Ensign*, said, *“It is not the design of heaven that we be rescued from all difficult situations. Rather, it is the Lord's will that we learn to handle them.”*<sup>5</sup>

Well, that's just exactly what happened to our daughter, Christy. Her trials, which even continued after her mission and through her marriage, made her a strong person with the power to conquer almost any situation. And my grandmother also became strong – she wasn't rescued from her trials, but she was strengthened as she prayed and kept faith in a loving Heavenly Father. She became a great example of endurance to her posterity. I leaned on her strength through all my trials as a mother, and yet I only knew her for the first nine years of my life.

It is okay when a great trial arises in our life, that we pray more fervently than usual. In the most important prayer, and the most fervent prayer ever uttered in the world, Luke says this about the Savior: “*And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*”<sup>6</sup> In this prayer, Bruce R. McConkie states, “*The Son of God prayed more earnestly, teaching us . . . that all prayers, his included, are not alike, and that a greater need calls forth more earnest and faith-filled pleadings before the throne of him to whom the prayers of the saints are a sweet savor.*”<sup>7</sup>

And what was he praying for? He was praying for us. He said: “*I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.*”<sup>8</sup> Well, those are the same people we are praying for aren't they? I usually say it in a different way, but it's the same – I often say, “*Heavenly Father, you gave me these children, but they are also yours – please, won't you bless them!*” There is something that we need to learn from this prayer of the Savior's: The agony was so great, he said, “*Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.*”<sup>9</sup>

I know a young woman who has allowed her once strong testimony to be lost. I asked her once, “*Do you still believe in God?*” She said, “*Of course I do. But He's not the same God I once thought he was.*” In other words, Heavenly Father did not answer her prayers the way she wanted and requested for them to be answered. This isn't something under our control. We don't know ourselves as well as Heavenly Father knows us – he knows what we need, and what our children need. He knows this better than we know it. So why are we afraid to say, “*Thy will be done?*” Can we still have full faith in God if our prayers weren't answered the way we wanted them to be? If we would just look back sometimes, we'd be so thankful that our prayers were not answered in the way we requested – Heavenly Father very often saves us from ourselves.

I would say there is a proper way to offer a fervent prayer, and that is on our knees in a spirit of humility. But of course, there are circumstances that don't always allow this, for I know we have all offered fervent and effectual prayers in our hearts and perhaps even without closing our eyes. For example, when you're sitting in an audience and a child is about to perform, or you're sitting in a hospital waiting room and a loved one is wheeled into surgery, or you're in the middle of a traffic jam and at that moment your husband is being interviewed for a job. Heavenly Father hears all of our prayers!

If I could offer anything about prayer that would be a help to all of us in all of our different stages of life and circumstances, perhaps it would be this: Develop your relationship with all three members of the Godhead. With Heavenly Father, we are his children, he is our Father. He is the one who gave us the plan of salvation and our agency to choose. He loves us unconditionally. We have direct access to him through prayer. With our Savior Jesus Christ, we women were his sisters in the pre-existence, but in mortality He is ever so much more to us. He is the Father of our Salvation because he bled on the cross and in Gethsemane for us, and as such, we are his children. We take upon us His name when we are baptized. Because of him, we can repent and make it back to live in the presence of the Father. He gave us commandments that we might know how to do this. With the Holy Ghost, our relationship is different again. He is a revelator. He lets us know when our prayers are heard and answered. Because of him, we can know things in our hearts – we can know that the Savior lives and is our Redeemer and that God lives and hears and answers our prayers. He lets us know when things are true. He warns us in times of danger. And what I like best, he is a sanctifier. He can give us those feelings that let us know we are clean and pure and have been partakers of the Savior's great sacrifice for us.

Bruce R. McConkie once said, “*We seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our prayers. We ponder the solemnities of eternity in our hearts. We approach Deity in the spirit of awe, reverence, and worship. We speak in hushed and solemn tones. We listen for his answer. We are at our best in prayer. We are in the divine presence.*”<sup>10</sup> I have a testimony of prayer. I know God hears and answers our prayers, particularly when we make the effort to ask. That's the first step. We must pray in order for God to grant us daily care, and to assure us that *he no load too great will make us bear.*



1. *Finding Answers*, Joseph Fielding McConkie, *Ensign Magazine*, February, 2011, page 32.
2. BYU Devotional, Bruce R. McConkie, March 2, 1982.
3. *The Power of Hope* by Douglas M. Scribner.
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## The Holy Priesthood

by Douglas M. Scribner

### Avoiding Priestcraft

During my years of growing up, I held a rather traditional view of priests, rabbis and ministers. It seemed reasonable to me that every flock would have a shepherd, and that the sheep would support their leader financially. The shepherd would then feed the sheep spiritually just as they would feed him materially. Of course, the priestly leader had to be educated in the Bible and in the doctrines of his particular church or congregation. Generally this meant graduating from some kind of a theological seminary and receiving a license that qualified him to preach. How different it all seemed as I began to learn about the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. For starters, there was no paid ministry and no theological seminary required. The male members all had their own careers and worked to support their families, but they and their wives would then volunteer countless hours of time to serve in various capacities of leadership and teaching. There was a definite structure to the organization but all the members seemed eager to serve each other, and the responsibility to teach and preach was spread throughout the congregation. The secret to success seemed to be an official process of delegation, and the authority to make this happen was clearly respected by all the members. This distinction was called the Priesthood!

When I first heard the term *priesthood*, I was concerned that there might be a likelihood of misuse. Throughout history there are numerous examples of corruption and falsehood perpetuated by individuals who claimed to have such authority. Even the Old Testament warned against evil practices emanating from those religious leaders who were unduly influenced by wealth and fame. The prophet Jeremiah spoke of it saying, “*A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so . . .*”<sup>1</sup> At the time of Jesus these practices were prevalent. The Jewish leaders used their power and influence to have Jesus crucified rather than the criminal Barabbas. Then, as Peter and John began to preach of the risen Christ, the Sadducees had them arrested and taken before the leaders of their corrupt priesthood. Luke recorded, “*And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, and Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas . . . and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest were gathered together at Jerusalem . . . saying, What shall we do to these men? . . . Let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name (of Jesus).*”<sup>2</sup> In the years that followed, misuse of authority became a characteristic of a false priesthood, usually resulting in the branding of certain Christian church members as heretics. Such internal church persecution grew worse and more violent, climaxing in the Spanish Inquisition where a unity of church and state condemned accused heretics to prison and even to death.

One of the early Book of Mormon prophets, Nephi, predicted this misuse of priesthood authority saying, “*For the time speedily shall come that all churches which are built up to get gain, and all those who are built up to get power over the flesh, and those who are built up to become popular in the eyes of the world, and to do all manner of iniquity*

... are they who need fear, and tremble, and quake . . .”<sup>3</sup> These prophets, like Nephi in the Americas, identified this kind of behavior as *Priestcraft*, labeling the misuse of divine authority so that all might become aware of its presence and be encouraged to remove it from their places of worship. The prophet Alma, chief judge among the Nephite people, accused a man named Nehor of such behavior. “*But Alma said unto him: Behold, this is the first time that priestcraft has been introduced among this people. And behold, thou art not only guilty of priestcraft, but thou hast endeavored to enforce it by the sword; and were priestcraft to be enforced among this people it would prove their entire destruction.*”<sup>4</sup> None of these degenerate conditions existed in the true priesthood of the Church of Jesus Christ, either at the time when Jesus established it or now in the latter days. I discovered the priesthood to be a true brotherhood of men who had entered covenants to keep the commandments of God and to always remember the life, teachings and atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

## Priesthood Through the Ages

The Holy Priesthood is the authority given to man to exercise the power of God in blessing the lives of Heavenly Father’s children. It was also used in the creation, before the world was made, by those spirit children whom God selected and ordained before they were born. Thus Adam was ordained to the Holy Priesthood so that the ordinances of salvation might become available to all mankind. As such, it was then passed from each righteous father to his righteous sons. The prophet Joseph Smith taught, “*The Priesthood is an everlasting principle, and existed with God from eternity, and will to eternity, without beginning of days or end of years . . . The Priesthood was first given to Adam; he obtained the First Presidency and held the keys of it from generation to generation. He obtained it in the Creation, before the world was formed . . . He is Michael the Archangel spoken of in the scriptures.*”<sup>5</sup>

By latter-day revelation we know that Abel received the priesthood by the hand of his father Adam as commanded by God. Then, following the murder of Abel by his brother Cain, Adam bestowed the priesthood on Abel’s younger brother Seth and many of Seth’s righteous descendants. These men became the well known patriarchs who used their authority to bless the lives of all those who were willing to follow the commandments of God. A substantial understanding of these events was given to the prophet Joseph Smith, and is recorded in the *Doctrine and Covenants* of the church. In part it says, “*The order of this priesthood was confirmed to be handed down from father to son, and rightly belongs to the literal descendants of the chosen seed, to whom the promises were made. This order was instituted in the days of Adam and came down by lineage . . .*”<sup>6</sup> Because the nature of mankind is such that people often depart from God and degenerate into wicked ways, the Holy Priesthood has not always been present on the earth. In fact it has been necessary for the priesthood to be restored on several occasions. Those periods when the priesthood is present are called dispensations. The Bible Dictionary states, “*A dispensation of the gospel is a period of time in which the Lord has at least one authorized servant on the earth who bears the holy priesthood and the keys, and who has a divine commission to dispense the gospel to the inhabitants of the earth. When this occurs, the gospel is revealed anew so that the people of that dispensation do not have to depend basically on past dispensations for knowledge of the plan of salvation.*”<sup>7</sup>

Following the dispensations of Adam, Enoch, and Noah, there arose a righteous king named Melchizedek. It was about the year 2,000 BC, and ten generations after Noah, when Melchizedek rose to power and called his people to repentance. The Book of Mormon prophet Alma spoke of this prophet-king saying, “*Now this Melchizedek was a king over the land of Salem; and his people had waxed strong in iniquity and abomination; yea, they had all gone astray; they were full of all manner of wickedness; But Melchizedek, having exercised mighty faith, and received the office of the high priesthood according to the holy order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they did repent; and Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days . . .*”<sup>8</sup>

Centuries later the Apostle Paul wrote of Melchizedek in his letter to the Hebrews reminding them of his great faith and the fact that even Abraham paid his tithing to this prophet-king. Abraham was taught the gospel, ordained to the priesthood and given a mighty blessing by this righteous king of Salem because his own father had turned away from the truth to the worship of idols. In each of these gospel dispensations, the bestowal of the Holy Priesthood was accompanied by a covenant between the prophet and God. Perhaps the best known

of these was the covenant made with Abraham following the trial of his faith. Jehovah stated, *“And in thy seed shall the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”*<sup>9</sup> In addition to preserving and using the priesthood to bless his people, Abraham also became responsible for maintaining the records left by his righteous ancestors. Abraham wrote, *“But the records of the fathers, even the patriarchs, concerning the right of the priesthood, the Lord my God preserved in mine own hands.”*<sup>10</sup> These records and the priesthood were passed on to Abraham’s descendants including Isaac, Jacob (renamed Israel), Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh. Even though the children of Israel were retained and eventually enslaved in Egypt for four hundred years, a new prophet, named Moses, was called by God from among them. Moses was raised in Pharaoh’s house but fled from Egypt to Media at age forty. There he married Zipporah, a daughter of Jethro who was a high priest in the Holy Priesthood. Moses received the Melchizedek Priesthood from Jethro that he might lead the Lord’s people to safety.

The Ten Commandments were given to Moses but the people were not yet prepared to live them. As a result, a change was made to the structure of the Holy Priesthood. A lesser appendage of the Melchizedek Priesthood was established through the ordination of Aaron, brother of Moses, that he might carry out the temporal duties of a Priest. In time this became known as the Aaronic, or Levitical Priesthood which continued in Israel for centuries. However, Moses and the higher priesthood were removed from the presence of mankind. *“Therefore he took Moses out of their midst, and the Holy Priesthood also; and the lesser priesthood continued, which priesthood holdeth the key of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel; which gospel is the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins, and the law of carnal commandments which the Lord in his wrath caused to continue with the house of Aaron among the children of Israel until John, whom God raised up, being filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother’s womb.”*<sup>11</sup>

Thus, the Melchizedek Priesthood was not generally available to man for nearly 1,600 years – until the birth of Jesus. The Apostle Paul acknowledged that Jesus was ordained to the Melchizedek Priesthood, thus ushering in a new dispensation of time. In writing to the Hebrews, Paul said, *“For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God . . . So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my son, today have I begotten thee! As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”*<sup>12</sup> The Melchizedek and Aaronic Priesthoods were both contained in the church established by Jesus Christ. They provided the power and authority to perform all the ordinances of salvation. The Keys of the Priesthood were held by Jesus until he conferred them upon the Apostle Peter and his counselors James and John. Through the Twelve Apostles the priesthood was distributed to righteous and faithful disciples of Christ who had been baptized and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. Living apostles and prophets holding the Holy Priesthood were the very foundation of the Church of Jesus Christ, he being the chief cornerstone. Only through the great apostasy that followed were both the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood eventually removed from the earth.

### **Priesthood Authority to Baptize**

As mentioned earlier, I was baptized and confirmed a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Palo Alto, California, just a few weeks prior to graduation from Stanford University. The experience was totally new to me and I treasure my memories of it. At first I did not realize that baptism by water was an ordinance of the Aaronic Priesthood, which could be performed by a priest, whereas the baptism of the Spirit through the Gift of the Holy Ghost was an ordinance that required the authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood. Evidently this confusion on my part also occurred with some converts to the early Church of Jesus Christ. In Ephesus the Apostle Paul discovered this with some of the disciples so he asked them about their baptism. *“He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John’s baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came upon them”*<sup>13</sup>

Though I was twenty-one years old when baptized, I soon received the priesthood of Aaron and was ordained to the office of a Deacon. Today a baptized adult male convert would be ordained a Priest, but I was grateful to spend some time experiencing each office in the lesser priesthood. It seemed like a miracle that I was asked to pass the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to the members of our ward. It brought a realization that preparing, blessing and passing the sacrament were all part of a priesthood ordinance designed to bless the lives of all those who partake of the bread and water representing the body and blood of Christ. In fact, as I listened to the words of the prayers on the bread and water, it became clear that this priesthood ordinance was also very symbolic and that it too was accompanied by a covenant. It was a renewal of the baptismal covenant. Thus, if a worthy church member comes with a broken heart and a contrite spirit and partakes of the sacrament, God renews His promise and they become as clean as the day they were baptized. This is why the Lord said, *"Therefore in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest. And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh."*<sup>14</sup>

After spending several months in each office of the Aaronic Priesthood as Deacon, Teacher and then Priest, I was ready to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood and to be ordained an Elder. Once again, this ordinance was accompanied by a covenant. In addition to the promises made in baptism and renewed each week in the sacrament, I was now expected to use the higher priesthood to bless other people in additional ways. These included giving the gift of the Holy Ghost, ordaining others to the priesthood, healing the sick and afflicted, dedicating graves, and blessing babies. It also prepared me to become a missionary. Specifically it required that I enlarge or magnify any church assignment with energy and enthusiasm and fervent prayer. In speaking of this process, the Lord said, *"For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies."*<sup>15</sup>

Following my mission, I attended graduate school at Brigham Young University and finally received a Master's Degree in engineering. More importantly, I was blessed to court and marry Cecile James. We had first met when we were both missionaries in Australia and had become reacquainted a year later when she also returned to attend BYU. Marriage in the temple opened up a whole new dimension in the use of the Melchizedek Priesthood. The temple marriage includes an additional covenant wherein Cecile became an equal partner and shared equally in the blessings that the priesthood provided. Though our roles in the marriage differed somewhat, we were committed to support each other in our individual responsibilities, including both domestic chores, parenting and church callings. At a later time, I was ordained a high priest because it was required to carry out certain positions of church leadership, but this did not change the use of the priesthood in our home. In fact it simply meant that I had to find additional ways to achieve balance in our lives between work, family, church service and the preservation of our close and loving marriage relationship. The latter was the highest priority because it is the eternal relationship, bound by the ordinances, symbolism and covenants of the temple.

## **Keys of Righteousness**

Understanding the history of the priesthood through the ages and its reestablishment in each dispensation helped me understand the need for a restoration of the priesthood in this the Dispensation of the Fullness of Times. On May 15, 1829, the prophet Joseph Smith and his scribe Oliver Cowdery were translating the Book of Mormon from the gold plates on which it had been written in a hieroglyphic language. They came across the mention of baptism and realized that they didn't know how and by what authority this ordinance was to be performed. They made their question a matter of prayer and, in response, they received the manifestation of a heavenly messenger who identified himself as John the Baptist, then a resurrected being, who said, *"Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of the Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins and this shall never be taken again from the earth, until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness."*<sup>16</sup> As glorious as this event was, another heavenly manifestation followed a few weeks later when three of the ancient apostles, Peter, James and John, visited Joseph and Oliver and conferred upon them the Melchizedek Priesthood which included the authority of apostleship. In August of 1830, the Lord referred to the restoration of the greater

priesthood in a revelation wherein he said, “*And also with Peter, and James, and John, whom I have sent unto you, by whom I have ordained you and confirmed you to be apostles and especial witnesses of my name, and bear the keys of your ministry and of the same things which I revealed unto them; Unto whom I have committed the keys of my kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last time; and for the fullness of times, in which I will gather together in one all things, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth.*”<sup>17</sup>

The Keys of the Priesthood are required to authorize its use in building the Kingdom of God on earth. Only one person at a time holds all the keys; this is the prophet and president of the church. Joseph Smith used these keys to organize the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on April 6, 1830, and later to again establish the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Today, some of these keys of the priesthood are delegated to the presidents of stakes, missions, temples and quorums, but only the president of the entire church holds all of the keys of the priesthood. With the restoration of the gospel, the Lord declared, “*The Keys of the kingdom of God are committed to man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth.*”<sup>18</sup> Having the priesthood of God delegated to worthy male members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was a startling change from the structure of the surrounding churches of the day. Those receiving it were not necessarily accustomed to the behavior expected of a holder of the priesthood. Even though each person receiving the Holy Priesthood entered into the oath and covenant it contains, they had much to learn before they could use it wisely. In some cases these men turned against the prophet and went through the stages of individual apostasy. Others felt they were more privileged than other men and were swallowed up in pride to the point of flaunting their authority. Still others used the priesthood in unrighteous ways to exert control over their wives and families. These were all grievous sins.

The revelation given to correct this misuse of priesthood power came in the most unexpected way. The prophet Joseph Smith was incarcerated in Missouri, held in a place ironically called *Liberty Jail* with several other church leaders for months. After suffering from cold, poor food, and dirty conditions, the Lord knew that Joseph was sufficiently humble to receive a heavenly perspective of the appropriate use of the priesthood. The Lord said, “*Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen. And why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson – That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness. That they may be conferred upon us, it is true; but when we undertake to cover our sins, or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man.*”<sup>19</sup>

Here the Lord described the effects of being caught up in pride and yielding to worldly influences. When this happens to one who holds the priesthood, that person often becomes tyrannical and attempts to impose their will and exert control over other people. In effect, these are Satan’s tactics, which then deny individuals of their moral agency. This practice is known as unrighteous dominion. It leads to self-destruction. The revelation continues to say, “*Behold, ere he is aware, he is left unto himself, to kick against the pricks, to persecute the saints, and to fight against God. We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion. Hence many are called, but few are chosen.*”<sup>20</sup> Then the Lord instructed Joseph in the right way to use the priesthood. Humility and love, with a desire to bless the lives of others are paramount to its correct use. This scripture goes on to say, “*No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned; by kindness and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile – Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reprov’d, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy; That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death.*”<sup>21</sup>

Finally, the Lord made a promise of the great blessings that flow from the proper use of his holy power. This blessing, given with a challenge, is so great that it encompasses every hope and dream of the righteous soul. It is, *“Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven. The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever.”*<sup>22</sup>

## **Blessings Sometimes Withheld**

In addition to those periods of time when the authority to act in God’s name was completely removed from the earth, there were also a few occasions when the priesthood was temporarily withheld from certain races of people. One such instance occurred at the beginning of Christ’s ministry, when he first called and set apart his twelve apostles. Matthew recorded this saying, *“And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them (priesthood) power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. . . . These twelve Jesus sent forth and commanded them saying, ‘Go not unto the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’”*<sup>23</sup> Though this was a temporary injunction it was still a commandment and could only be lifted by revelation to a living prophet.

Some years later, the time finally came when the Gospel was to be taken to all nations and the priesthood given to all worthy male members. The revelation to make this change was given to the prophet Peter through a dramatic event. *“Peter went up upon the housetop to pray . . . (where) he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him as (if) it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of four footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, ‘Rise Peter, kill and eat.’ But Peter said, ‘Not so Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.’ And the voice spake unto him again the second time, ‘What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.”* The vision was repeated three times and then, *“While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, ‘Behold three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.”*<sup>24</sup>

Peter went with the three men to Caesarea and met Cornelius, a Roman Centurion, together with his family and close friends who had prayed for enlightenment. Peter taught them of Jesus and testified to them that Jesus was the Christ who had suffered and died that their sins might be forgiven. *“While Peter spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. . . . Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?”*<sup>25</sup> From this day forward the practice of the church pertaining to membership and priesthood was changed and the gospel of Christ was taken to all nations.

A similar circumstance pertaining to the priesthood occurred during the restoration of the gospel. Temporarily the rights of the priesthood were withheld from the Black races of Africa, many of whom had been brought to America as slaves. The priesthood was restored in 1829 and, three years later, the Lord revealed to the prophet Joseph Smith the future scenario of the American Civil War saying, *“Verily, thus saith the Lord concerning the wars that will shortly come to pass, beginning at the rebellion of South Carolina, which will eventually terminate in the death and misery of many souls . . . For behold the Southern States shall be divided against the Northern States, . . . and it shall come to pass, after many days, slaves shall rise up against their masters, who shall be marshaled and disciplined for war.”*<sup>26</sup> Joseph did not live long enough to see the fulfillment of this prophecy, but twenty-eight years after it was given, the Civil War did bring the incredible death and misery he had foreseen. Brigham Young and later prophets all looked forward to the day when the priesthood might be made available to these people who suffered so much in the war and the discrimination of the years that followed. Finally, in June of 1978, the revelation came to the prophet Spencer W. Kimball that all worthy male members of the church might receive the Holy Priesthood of God. He declared, *“Aware of the promises made by the prophets and presidents of the church who have preceded us that at some time, in God’s eternal plan, all of our brethren who are worthy*

may receive the priesthood, and witnessing the faithfulness of those from whom the priesthood has been withheld, we have pleaded long and earnestly in behalf of these our faithful brethren. . . He has heard our prayers, and by revelation has confirmed that the long-promised day has come when every faithful, worthy man in the Church may receive the Holy Priesthood.”<sup>27</sup> Today the Holy Priesthood is bestowed upon every worthy man throughout the world and this has been the means of substantial growth for the Kingdom of God in these latter days.

## Personal Blessings

As I look back upon my life, some of the most tender moments happened through my use of the Holy Priesthood to bless the lives of others. Certainly this included performing the ordinances of baptism and confirmation for my younger brother and our children, as well as ordaining our sons and others to various offices in the priesthood. However, the most sacred opportunities came when the blessings of health and healing were needed. Giving a blessing to Cecile before the birth of each of our children was a source of comfort to us both. Several of our children were born with physical maladies that required major operations, so priesthood blessings were given to ensure their recovery. One such incident occurred early in our marriage in 1968 when our oldest daughter Gina was born. As a baby she had a constant infection in her urinary tract, and it was determined that one of her kidneys would have to be removed. The kidney was defective and the tube from the kidney to the bladder



(Left) Gina with her Grandmother Lucie James in 1968.  
(Right) Gina dancing the Highland Fling in 1986



did not connect in the right place. After fervent prayer and fasting, a priesthood blessing was given that she would survive with only one kidney. X-rays were taken again right before the surgery. It was discovered that she had a third kidney that could be seen behind the defective kidney. This third kidney did not show up on the first set of x-rays taken five months earlier. The bad kidney was removed and delicate surgery was performed to insure that the third kidney would be able to perform properly. Today, forty-eight years later, she is a healthy woman who even teaches classes in Zumba and other energetic

dances. We can only look at this as a great miracle. I will be forever grateful for the reality of the restored Holy Priesthood and for understanding that the real purpose of the Priesthood is its power to bless mankind.

I have often been a recipient of the Priesthood power blessing my own life. I can illustrate this through the great influence a righteous priesthood leader has had on me - this was Elder David B. Haight and his wife Ruby. My first contact with them was in 1959 while I was investigating the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Palo Alto, California. The Hights were members of that ward, and he was serving as President of the Palo Alto Stake. On two occasions before I was baptized, they invited me into their home for a Sunday dinner with their family. Then, fifteen years later, Elder Haight, now one of the Twelve Apostles, traveled to Santa Rosa, California to ordain me as Bishop of the Santa Rosa First Ward. The date was June 1, 1974.





*Far Left: President David B. Haight and his wife Ruby in Palo Alto, about 1959*



*Left: Ruby and Elder Haight in Scotland, July 1987*

*Below: Elder Haight, and Doug, April 2000*

The third encounter took place in Edinburgh, Scotland. Our family had been living there for three years on a work assignment when Elder and Sister Haight arrived to celebrate the 150-year anniversary of the Church in the United Kingdom. The date was July 26, 1987, which was just prior to our returning to America. While there Elder Haight spoke at a fireside and asked me to share the story of my conversion. Finally, on the 27th of April 2000, we by chance met Elder Haight on a street in Salt Lake City where we introduced him to members of our family. Over a forty year period David B. Haight was a consistent example of a righteous holder of the Holy Priesthood.



1. Jeremiah 5: 30-31.
2. Acts 4: 5-17.
3. I Nephi 22: 23.
4. Alma 1: 12.
5. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, page 157, Joseph Fielding Smith.
6. *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 107: 40-41.
7. *Bible Dictionary*, page 657, Dispensation.
8. Alma 13: 17-18.
9. Genesis 22: 18.
10. *Pearl of Great Price*, Abraham 1: 31.
11. D&C 84: 25-27.
12. Hebrews 5: 1-6.
13. Acts 19: 2-5.
14. D&C 84: 20-21.
15. D&C 84: 33.
16. D&C 13.
17. D&C 27: 12-13.
18. D&C 65: 2.
19. D&C 121: 34-37.
20. D&C 121: 38-40.

21. D&C 121: 41-44.
22. D&C 121: 45.
23. Matthew 10: 1, 5-6.
24. Acts 10: 9-15, 19-20.
25. Acts 10: 44, 47.
26. Doctrine and Covenants 87: 1-4.
27. Official Declaration – 2.



## Decisions - Choose To Believe

(talk given in Sacramento Meeting 2016)

by Cecile J Scribner

Some of you may remember the very moving story of seven year old Sailor Gutzler that was given in the April 2015 General Conference by Elder L. Whitney Clayton.<sup>1</sup> Sailor was with her family (her mother and father, 9-year-old sister, Piper, and 14-year-old cousin Sierra Wilder) in a private airplane flying from Florida to Illinois. There were mechanical problems and the plane crashed in the dark hills of Kentucky. Everyone in the plane was killed except Sailor. She climbed from the wreckage and cried out for her mother and father. But, of course, no one answered. She had a broken wrist and some scrapes and cuts, was only wearing shorts and a teeshirt and one sock. It was very cold, just 38 degrees Fahrenheit. She had a choice to make – to stay - or to move with the hope that she could find help. She started walking and after she had gone through creeks, ditches and blackberry briars, she was on top of a small hill and saw a light in the distance, perhaps a mile away. This small light in the distance gave her hope, and hope gave her courage – even with things being as bad as they were, she had faith that her rescue would be found in that light, and so she stumbled through the darkness until she reached that home, and there a kind man opened his door to this little crying girl whose nose was bleeding. This kind man brought her into his home and found help for her.

Most of us will never have to endure what this little seven year old experienced, but we all will face a rugged wilderness of some sort – real, emotional or spiritual – and we will need a light to give us hope. There is a light there for all of us, and it shines from the Savior of all mankind, who is the *Light of the World*. Recognizing that light is different from seeing a physical light. It begins with our willingness to believe. Or perhaps it begins even earlier with just a desire to believe. Therein lies our choice! It's often a matter of choosing to find that light or going it alone.

Briefly I want to take you back to our pre-earth life. There was a great council in heaven when you and I, and all of us, were instructed by our Father in Heaven as to the purpose and opportunities of this earth life. After the earth was formed and beautified, and made ready for man to dwell upon, God said, *“And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them . . . and those who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever.”*<sup>2</sup>

Christ offered a plan for us. He said, *“Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever.”*<sup>3</sup> So what was the will of our Father in Heaven? It was that man would have his agency, and not just agency, but moral agency – the ability to not just make a choice, but to make the right choice! And Satan's plan was to take our agency away – to force us back to heaven so he, in turn, would be given the glory. Christ's plan was accepted and Satan's was rejected, and what followed was the War in Heaven, which was very real – and one-third of the hosts of heaven followed Satan. They lost their right to choose – the right to make their own decisions. They were cast out and put here on earth to test us, and they are doing a good job of it.

In the October, 1971 General Conference, Eldred G. Smith said, “Agency requires that there must be a choice. There must be an opposing force. There is no growth, no movement, no accomplishment or progress without overcoming an opposing force. Satan and his followers provided that opposing force.”<sup>4</sup> We often sing the words found on page 240 in our Book of Church Hymns which say:

*Know this, that every soul is free  
To choose his life and what he'll be,  
For this eternal truth is given  
That God will force no man to heav'n.*

*He'll call, persuade, direct aright.  
And bless with wisdom, love, and light  
In nameless ways be good and kind  
But never force the human mind.*

The right to make a decision, is now ours, and it is the greatest asset we have on earth. The Lord will not, and cannot, and does not intend to take it away from us. He intends for us to use it and He wants us always to make *Right Decisions*. God is just. Satan can do on this earth only what he is permitted to do.

I have some children who right at this moment are faced with huge decisions and, with one daughter, I have discussed the story of Job. Though she doesn't like the story . . . I do. Satan bargained with the Lord for Job, and the Lord allowed Satan to test him. Job lost everything – his family, his wealth and his health, as boils covered him from head to foot, but God did not allow Satan to have his soul. I feel that Job's story is our story! I believe Satan bargains for all of us, and some of us are tried to our limit. Do we choose to have faith or would we prefer to go it alone?

I have a friend who has spoken of those dark places – when we feel so alone - and as she spoke, I was reminded of one of my darkest places. I was driving home to California from Utah with a van full of children – six of my own and two others. I was pregnant with my ninth child. The drive had gone well – it was a beautiful summer day. We were just past Battle Mountain, Nevada, and there was commotion in the back of the van. In 1983 there were no seatbelts for anyone except the two in the front seats. I was going about 65 mph and had just set my cruise control. Through my mirror I was trying to settle the children by getting one of my little boys to come near the front where I was driving. The older children were tired of caring for the little ones in the back. In trying to solve

the problem, I went off the road, onto the gravel. I was about to hit the marker on the side of the road, so overcorrected. Because I was in cruise control, the van wheels were accelerating to keep the car at the right speed, so when I hit the pavement again, I seemed to be flying. I tried to straighten the vehicle, but overcorrected again. The van flipped and rolled three times into the area that divides the freeway. I held onto the wheel and was horrified with each roll of the van. It landed upright, but it seemed that my children were spread all over the desert. All the tires were blown out, and my son Craig was being crushed under the front of the van. Help from



some truck drivers was there immediately. I call these truckers on Highway 80 *blessed*. Somehow, there was a person with each one of the children, calming them, holding them, and wrapping them in something warm

to prevent shock. The details of this rescue are more than miraculous. I saw that Craig was being crushed and tried with all my strength to lift the van, but of course, I couldn't. A kind trucker joined me in trying to lift, but it was too heavy. He said, "We'll have to wait for the jaws of life to arrive to lift this weight from your son." I was in a panic because I knew that waiting would be too late for Craig.

Another trucker was right there – he said very little, but I later realized he very quickly assessed the situation and also knew that we couldn't wait. He saw that I was pregnant and gave me a job to do. He said, "Right there beside you is a box (a food dryer that I was bringing to California), and as we lift the van, I want you to push it firmly under the bumper." With amazing strength, these two men lifted the van about an inch, and I quickly slid the box under the bumper. The trucker pulled Craig out from under the van. Craig took a gasping breath and started to scream and yell. Ambulances were arriving. They carefully took us all back to Battle Mountain to a very small hospital. Amazingly, I got pulled together enough to make sure that all the children were attended to. I had the nurse call LDS Church members, and Priesthood blessings of healing were given to all.

Each child had only one cut on each of their bodies. These needed stitches, but there were no broken bones. How was that possible? They had flown through broken windows! There were only two of us left in the van when it came to a stop. My son Craig was in front with me and somehow he flew out of the car and landed in a spot where the van rested on top of him. He was hurt the worst. He had a huge gash on his back. It was V-shaped and the tip of the V was right at the point of his spine. Many layers of skin were torn back, but he was alive – not even paralyzed! I knew we had been greatly, miraculously blessed. The trucker who helped us was actually a paramedic, who had seen so much death that he quit that job to become a truck driver. How were we so lucky to get such a man at our accident? He knew exactly how to save Craig.

However, when the children were finally asleep and resting, I broke down. I started to cry, and cried the whole night through. I cried because it was my fault. I had made such a big mistake. And I prayed! I knew that God had been there protecting us, and that guardian angels had carefully saved my children as they were flying through broken windows. But after my prayer of thanksgiving, I offered another prayer that you would not believe I prayed. It was that God would not allow me to have the baby I was carrying. I begged him to take it. I felt that I needed punishment. I didn't feel like a good mother. How could he trust me again? For the next four months I prayed that same prayer, and I lived with a guilt that took me to a very dark place. I couldn't get out of it. Doug was frustrated. He gave me blessings, but I somehow refused to let the Spirit heal me. For some reason, God didn't answer my prayer like I asked him to – I wanted punishment, but He didn't punish me. And when Lora, my last child, was born on December 5th, my joy in her was overwhelming and my whole body was filled with light as I felt the warmth and love of the Savior and my Heavenly Father for me. It was overpowering. That love filled the whole room, that joy and light gave me hope, and hope gave me courage to face a year that was so full of decisions and miracles that I couldn't even begin to describe them. New life in a family always brings joy, and also a great promise for the future. Most of all, I forgave myself.

This great love of God that I felt and that I know you've felt is manifest in the Atonement of Jesus Christ, which



Lora Michelle Scribner - birth in December 1983 and again, as a young adult, in 2006 - our Christmas Gift - the kind that keeps on giving. . .



to me means that since Christ has died and suffered for us, he will also be with us in all our trials – particularly if we ask. Even though we stumble and fall, all our guilt, our weaknesses, our mistakes, our temptations, our depressions and despair, our pain and undue stress, our financial woes, our losses, our addictions can be overcome through the atonement - if we choose to follow that path - or we can choose to go it alone. Elder Clayton said: *“We will find spiritual light by embracing belief rather than choosing to doubt . . . we are choosing to believe when we pray . . . read the scriptures . . . fast . . . when we keep the Sabbath Day holy . . . when we worship in the temple . . . when we are baptized . . . when we partake of the sacrament weekly. We are choosing to believe when we repent and seek divine forgiveness and healing love.”*<sup>5</sup> These are the choices that will help us stay on the path that will lead us to our eternal home.

Little Sailor wasn't given her trial because of any wrongdoing on her part, and I hadn't been given that car accident because I was deserving of it, and certainly Job wasn't given all his afflictions because he had been possibly sinful. And yet all three of us were in the darkest of places. Job would not curse God, but on the other hand he wished he could die. He wished he had never entered his mother's womb or darkened the earth with his shadow. Surely, he thought he was nothing in the Lord's eyes. I knew that feeling well – I felt so unworthy. But quite the opposite was true. The Lord loved Job greatly, as I know he loves me, but even more, he KNEW Job and knew how much he could withstand, and after Job came out of his dark place, the Lord then blessed him greatly with more family, wealth and health. But it was still while Job was in his despair that he gave one of the greatest testimonies in all of scripture saying: *“For I know that my Redeemer liveth and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.”*<sup>6</sup>

I think from the story of Job, we get insight into our own lives. We are down here on earth to prove ourselves worthy of returning to God. God knows each of us well – he is our Heavenly Father and he loves us – even more than any earthly father can possibly love us, and knows how much we can withstand. There are many times that we think he has deserted us, has not heard our prayers, but I believe so strongly that when all is said and done, we will find that he has intervened in our lives many, many times and has saved us from wrong choices or damaging situations – without our even asking. We seem to spend our life trying to find out what God already knows about us. Surely, if we seek him, if we choose to believe, He will bless us with *wisdom, love and light*, which will give us hope and the hope will then give us courage. I know these principles to be true - and as I look back on my own life, I feel a great sense of gratitude. My blessings have been so great.

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1. *Ensign Magazine*, May 2015, page 36.
  2. Pearl of Great Price, Abraham 3: 25-26.
  3. Pearl of Great Price, Moses 4: 2.
  4. *Ensign Magazine*, November 1971.
  5. *Ensign Magazine*, May 2015, page 38.
  6. Job 19: 25-26.



## The Power of Hope

by Douglas M. Scribner

In the Apostle Paul's letter to the saints in Corinth, he explained that in looking forward to the next life after we die that we "... see through a glass darkly" and only know the future in part. But he concludes by saying, "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, but the greatest of these is charity."<sup>1</sup> Faith is a subject we often consider, and we should, for it is the essence of our spiritual lives. We also frequently discuss charity, for it is the pure love of Christ. However, I believe that we do not speak often enough about the principle of hope. In the Book of Mormon, Moroni wrote, "And again my beloved brethren, I would speak unto you concerning hope. How is it that ye can attain unto faith, save ye shall have hope?"<sup>2</sup>

To me, faith is believing in God the Eternal Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, as well as fully embracing the restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ in these Latter-days. Whereas, hope is believing that the promises made by Jesus Christ will apply to each of us personally and will come to pass in our lives. It is entirely possible for a person to believe in the teachings of Jesus but lack the hope that the promised blessings will come to them individually. They see their own imperfections and do not feel worthy of His Grace. Such a lack of hope can make us susceptible to Satan's influence and to his 3D tools of: discouragement, depression and despair.



I remember my own childhood when I had an encounter with losing hope. While in the third grade I was diagnosed with rheumatic fever. As a result I missed the entire fourth grade as I was confined to bed and developed a high fever every afternoon. In the midst of this experience I became discouraged thinking that I might never recover. My grandfather, Irvin Aldridge Scribner, visited me and told me of the time when he had to struggle for hope. He was a jeweler who had learned the art of engraving and making beautiful jewelry as an apprentice in his youth. After his marriage and the birth of my father, he was employed as a jewelry designer and artist at a store in Green Bay, Wisconsin. However in 1905 he moved with his wife and son to San Diego, California where he opened his own jewelry store. Over the years his new business

flourished, but he did not trust banks. He had seen their ruthless behavior during the Great Depression of 1929. So, he placed all his money and valuables into a safe in his store. Then one night a thief broke into his store, cracked open the safe and cleaned it out as well as his display cabinets. He could have given up but he did not



Irvin Aldridge Scribner

give in to that temptation. Instead he visited every customer who had jewelry in for repair, told them what had happened and promised to repay them. Then he went to work determined that his bad decision and business failure would not defeat him. Over time he again became successful. His story inspired me not to give up. My parents arranged for a tutor to come to our home each week and with her help I was able to complete the fourth grade requirements and return to school for the fifth grade. I could have given up and let the rheumatic fever ruin my life, but I did not.

You may think that these three words, discouragement, depression and despair, are unique to our generation, but they are not. We need to remember that this happened long ago to the Book of Mormon missionary Ammon when he tried to preach to the Lamanites and they laughed him to scorn. Ammon said, *“Now when our hearts were depressed and we were about to turn back, behold, the Lord comforted us, and said: Go amongst thy brethren, the Lamanites, and bear with patience thine afflictions, and I will give unto you success.”*<sup>3</sup> We all need to follow this counsel given to Ammon. Sometimes our afflictions are caused by circumstances beyond our own control but there are other times in each of our lives when we make bad decisions and are tempted to lose hope and become discouraged. Even if we have made poor choices and need to repent, we must not give up. In California I had two dear friends who each made very seriously bad decisions which cost them their membership in the Church. However, they did not fall into despair. Instead they decided to bear their afflictions with patience and improve their lives through sincere and determined repentance. Eventually they received forgiveness and had their membership and Priesthood blessings restored.

To further illustrate our need for hope, I want to tell you a story about our son Jim. When Jim was a new born baby, Cecile noticed that he did not respond to loud noises. He was examined by our pediatrician when he was two weeks old and was then tested in a hearing laboratory. The conclusion was that he had a total loss of hearing, but hearing aids could help. Then, when he was five weeks old, we were in Utah because of the death of Cecile’s nephew, Johnny James. With so many loving family members there, we decided I should give Jimmy a Priesthood Blessing and we all placed our hope in its fulfillment. As I administered the blessing, the impression came to say that Jim would *“hear all the sounds he was meant to hear.”* Afterwards, Cecile said, *“That’s not the blessing I was hoping to hear. What did that mean?”* And I had to respond *“I do not know.”* We returned to Santa Rosa where every week a professional trainer came into our home to teach us how to work with a deaf child. Then, at the end of that summer, we took all our children on another trip to Provo to visit Cecile’s parents. After a while his grandmother said, *“I don’t think Jimmy needs these hearing aids anymore.”* We responded, *“Of course he does,”* but when we returned home, Cecile took Jimmy back to the hearing laboratory in Marin County to have him tested again. Though the nurse could hardly believe it, his hearing was normal and the hearing aids were returned. The medical world could not explain what happened and we could hardly comprehend it, but the



*Jimmy in 1977  
being tested at the  
Marin Hearing  
Clinic*

*Jimmy - a Senior  
in High School*





prayers of his parents, brothers and sisters had been offered every day – “Please help Jimmy to hear.” What we all understood was that we had witnessed a miracle. As Jim grew up, he developed a great love for music, especially the piano. He could hardly walk by our piano without sitting down to play. Today Jim is a sixth grade teacher at the Wasatch Elementary School in Provo, Utah where he often has opportunities to use his musical skills. Now he hears all the sounds he was meant to hear. Surely there is a God in Heaven who hears and answers our prayers, but often the answers do not come in the way we expect them to happen. He will not revoke our agency to make all of our own decisions, but at all times we need to have the hope that those good things we desire can be ours.

Consider further the consequences of losing hope due to our own failure. This is when discouragement, depression and despair create temptation because we feel guilty for letting other people down. Thus, it is the very time we have the greatest need for the power of hope. This was our son Scott’s experience. He had encouraged investors and also borrowed money to purchase his own business. He had all the skills needed to design and manufacture products for the company and the purchase seemed like a pretty good idea. However, a couple years after buying the company and using all of the financial resources available to him, he gradually realized that



Scott Howard Scribner

he lacked the time and ability to *do-it-all* and wear all the hats necessary to run a successful business. The result was a gradual dwindling cliental which forced him to let employees go and eventually close the business. His feelings of guilt and failure and the inability to provide for his family were huge, but he refused to give up. He even had to take on a very low paying job for several months just to put food on the table. Throughout all of this, he was always able to find hope through his loving family and his faith in a Father in Heaven who loves him. Through many small miracles and contact with an old acquaintance, he finally found a wonderful job and a new career where he could successfully create solutions that people needed and adequately support his family.

The principle of hope also applies to us as parents when our children make incorrect choices. The Apostle Paul warned us about over-reacting when this happens. He wrote, “*Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. (However), Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they become discouraged.*”<sup>4</sup> We should instead creatively teach our children to change and to have hope. I remember one occasion when I was asked to teach a large class of Laurels in our stake in Santa Rosa, California. I asked them to list all the traits they were looking for in the boy they wanted to marry, while I wrote these characteristics on the board. The list filled the whole chalkboard. I then asked them a question but told them not to answer, but to ponder an answer in their hearts, saying, “*Now, what traits do you need to develop in your lives in order to become appealing to this ‘Mr. Perfect’ you have described?*” There was then a long pause as they each began to internalize the changes they needed to make. As parents, we need to love our children even when they make choices of which we do not approve, and we need to find creative ways to teach them so they can have cause for hope.

We will all have trials come into our lives. When this happens we also need to bear them with patience so that we do not lose hope. During the height of World War II London was being bombed almost every night and the people of that great city often lost all their sleep as the sirens went off and they hurried to air-raid bomb shelters for protection. Winston Churchill was their Prime Minister and he counseled the people with just seven words: “*Never give up. Never, never give up.*” So it is with us. We must not lose hope during our trials.

Remember the words of the Book of Mormon prophet Moroni when he said, “*And what is it that ye shall hope for? Behold I say unto you that ye shall have hope through the atonement of Christ and the power of his resurrection, . . .*”<sup>5</sup> Many people do not understand what the Atonement of Christ means to them personally. Jesus is the Son of God and was the only perfect person to ever live on this earth. Hence, during his suffering in Gethsemane

and his excruciating pain on the cross, he took upon himself the consequences of the sins and mistakes of the world. He did it for us that we might be forgiven if we will repent and change our lives. However low we go, he has gone lower and suffered more so that we might realize that he understands our pain and that we might have hope in our own future.

Armed with both faith and hope we are able to serve others with charity. The world teaches us to serve the people we love, but Jesus taught us that we learn to love the people we serve. First we must put our own lives in order, develop realistic goals and actively pursue them with confidence. However, before we can do any of this we need to heal the physical and emotional wounds of our past mistakes and face our future with hope.

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1. New Testament, I Corinthians 13: 12-13.
  2. Book of Mormon, Moroni 7: 40.
  3. Book of Mormon, Alma 27: 27.
  4. New Testament, Colossians 3: 20-21.
  5. Moroni 7: 41.



## **A Passion for Discovering Truth**

by Cecile J. Scribner (July 2016)

We're never too old to learn something new! While on BYU campus last April (2016), I picked up a Daily Universe, and there was an article that really caught my attention, "*Mormons Not Strangers to a Crisis of Faith.*" The author, Michael White, wrote "*Religiosity in general is decreasing, especially among college-aged people. . . Mormons aren't immune to hostile outside influences, even dissident thoughts from people they trust. . .*" He then quoted a BYU church history professor, Michael Goodman, who said, "*There are three ways of finding knowledge (and truth). . .*" (and this was the part that I found new and exciting) "*. . . The first is through reason – which includes logic and historical context. The second is through utilitarianism, or which choice leads to the greater 'good.' And third is through revelation, or knowledge beyond our mortal ability to receive here on Earth. Each method for finding truth gives us further capability to recognize truth. Gaining knowledge by using only one method is not wrong, but it does lend the seeker less of a foundation of truly knowing.*"

Well, there was much more to the article than this, but it's caused me to think quite a bit – and has given me a great deal more understanding of why people do not stay strong in the church – particularly when, at one time, they were immovable in their faith.

### **Utilitarianism**

We can't analyze other people and try to figure out what made them strong at one time and weak at another, particularly as far as the Gospel is concerned. But I can analyze myself – and it's been fascinating for me to do so. I was born in Wyoming, but grew up in Utah and then married and lived in California for over forty years, and now have again lived in Utah for the last nine years. Living in Utah, I'm much more aware of people in the church who have gained or are in the process of gaining knowledge and truth through utilitarianism. This is true all over the world, but in Utah it seems to be more pronounced. If I understand this correctly, it's because they have chosen the greater *good*, and so they happily attend Church every week. This is where their family goes to church, this is where their neighbors and friends go and it's a great social life – there are parties, activities and even meetings that are enjoyable. It's a wonderful place to bring up a family with children surrounded by people who also believe in your same standards and morals. "*Where else can I get all this attention given to my children by people who truly love them and truly love me?*" Some of these people may not have a strong testimony about the sacrament or what it's for – but it's offered to everyone, and they partake of it every week. Maybe they don't have the habits of scripture study, family prayer, or the importance of keeping the Sabbath Day holy or even caring what the prophets are telling us today. "*Do they even listen to conference to learn or do the talks put them to sleep?*" But . . . there's not a better place or way to bring up a family – it's the greater good. So, nothing is really wrong with this type of thinking and participation, and yes, it's one way to gain knowledge and truth. By living it. Or even living part of it. The truth and value of tithing, for example, is learned by living it, and the value and blessings of the Word of Wisdom is learned by living it, but some members of the Church just pick and choose different parts of the Gospel to live.

I may have been somewhat critical of people in the church like this, who, for some reason don't seem to embrace it wholly, but I shouldn't be. In fact, as a young girl growing up in the church, this is how I gained all my knowledge and truth. It's exactly where I was the first twenty years of my life. I loved the Church and bore my testimony of my love of the Gospel, my family, my leaders, my friends – it made me so happy. I didn't need to study, for I was surrounded by people who had studied and knew the truth of the Gospel. My mother was one of those people, and she was a giving person, trustworthy, honest, hard-working, and extremely intelligent. She relied on the spirit for guidance and was wise. I trusted her judgments, and if she knew the Church was true, then I certainly could base my testimony on hers. I was absolutely immovable then. Nothing could convince me that I was in the wrong – for, in fact, I was not in the wrong. Little did I know that utilitarianism couldn't hold me forever.

## Revelation

Then there are the people who we see (particularly as we serve missions) who claim to have gained truth and knowledge by revelation. Surely, this is all anyone needs to make them immovable. I think of my friend Shirley to whom I taught the Gospel in Adelaide, Australia in 1963. During the first lesson in her home, I told her the story of Joseph Smith and the appearance of God the Father and Jesus Christ. I felt the spirit while telling the story and knew that she and her husband must be feeling something as well. Immediately after Shirley had heard that story, it shocked me when she said, *"I know what you're saying is true."* I was in awe. Could someone in just a few minutes know the truth so completely? This happened a few other times on my mission and since, and it always amazes me. It seems that if the spirit reveals something to someone like that, then nothing else really matters. They would have to know where that feeling and knowledge came from, and thus would be immovable the rest of their lives. My friend Shirley was immovable and did so much good – well, she was naturally a giving person – but after a few years she was swayed another direction, left the church and left her family, even though she never denied having felt the spirit bear witness to her. You might say her flesh was weak for many many years. Shirley did come back, but in the meantime, she had lost her husband (who did stay immovable), and unfortunately, most of her children followed her into inactivity. She also lost years of experiencing truth because she no longer chose the greater good.

I've had many prayers answered, but they were not very often answered immediately. Nevertheless, any answer from God is revelation. However, there are times when revelation is so real it is undeniable where the source of that revelation was from. In 1974, while living in Santa Rosa, California, my husband Doug was a young bishop – three of our children were born during those six years while he served in that position. It was a common thing for him to leave for a meeting right after we had finished our dinner. On one evening, the children were all outside playing while there was still daylight, and our little Scotty (only about two years old)



*Scotty - about two years old*

was out there with them. Scotty was so totally attached to his daddy. He was always up early with him in the mornings, watching him shave, brush his teeth, and eat breakfast. He'd even sit on the bed and patiently wait while his daddy was kneeling by the side of his bed in prayer each morning. So, on this particular evening, as Doug came down the stairs, then opened the door as he went outside, I could hear him saying *"goodbye"* to each of the children as he gave them a hug - including his littlest boy. I was in the kitchen, out of view of what was happening, but I could hear the chatter outside. I was distracted somewhat because I was visiting with a friend from across the street, and I was mixing whole milk with powdered milk to help it stretch. I heard Doug get in the car and start the motor. I suddenly dropped the two quarts of milk on the floor, ran down the hall to the front door and yelled, *"Stop!!"* The vision given to me was clear. I could see little Scotty running after his daddy for just one more hug, and he was right behind the car when the motor started. Doug slammed on his brakes, got out of the car, and found Scotty standing with his head next to the back bumper. I knew I had been given a revelation, and I knew the source of it. It would seem that once that

knowledge was there, undeniably, then I would probably be immovable in testimony for life. An experience like that is never forgotten. But could it hold me forever? I certainly thought it could.

### **Reason, Logic and Historical Context**

Then there's the third way of gaining truth and knowledge, which is through reason, logic and historical context. This is the one that has caused my testimony to grow substantially. And yet, it is one area where we see so many people – intellectuals we might say – leave the church. Nephi's brother Jacob said, *"But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsel of God."* (2 Nephi 9:29). However, the learned often think they have the power of interpretation because they've studied so much and that they no longer need to follow the prophets, or even listen to them. Perhaps they believe that, with all men's learning, they (or someone) will be able to reproduce those things that are attributed to God's power. But personally, I think they have stopped the process of gaining knowledge and truth from the right sources, and they start questioning truth that has previously been revealed to them. Perhaps they haven't sought the spirit for confirmation or guidance in decisions for a long time – and they possibly become critical of those who they might feel are just blindly following Church leaders. I don't know what happens to them really, but some of those who have left the church do take a lot of pride in their own ability to make judgments and draw conclusions without God's help – they've lost humility – they are no longer teachable. To quote a modern day prophet, President Ezra Taft Benson, they *" . . . cannot accept the authority of God giving direction to their lives. ("Behold, they do not desire that the Lord their God, who hath created them, should rule and reign over them; notwithstanding his great goodness and his mercy towards them, they do set at naught his counsels and they will not that he should be their guide."* Helaman 12:6). . . *They pit their perceptions of truth against God's great knowledge, their abilities versus God's priesthood power, their accomplishments against His mighty works."* (From *Beware of Pride*, Ensign, May 1989, 4-7)

For me, my first step of gaining knowledge through the means of *"reason, logic and historical context"* was on my first mission, and that's when I read the Book of Mormon for the first time. Then I read other books, including the Bible, other scriptures, other books written by apostles and other general authorities and other great leaders. All together, this has given backbone to my conversion. I feel more able to stand up for what I believe to be true. My most pronounced experience of searching and learning came to me while Doug and I were serving a mission in New Zealand in 2004-5. Doug was the Director of the New Zealand Temple Visitors' Center, and our job seemed clear to us. More people needed to visit the center and feel the spirit there! Together we studied the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and also the lives of his family, his friends and even his enemies. This



*"The Martyrdom"  
being performed in  
the Christus Room  
in the New Zealand  
Temple Visitors'  
Centre  
December 2005*

study resulted in the writing and producing of five Readers' Theaters that took place in the Christus Room at the Visitors' Center during the year of 2005. Learning about the order of events as the Joseph Smith Family left New York and Pennsylvania and came to the Ohio, and then when they were again driven out by persecution and spent that horrible year in Missouri, and then again driven out of Missouri on to the swamplands of Nauvoo has given me knowledge and truth that has changed my life. Often I studied and wrote with tears in my eyes.

Through study and reason, my knowledge of the Church and my great love for Joseph Smith as the Prophet of the Restoration expanded and grew. Yes, there are things I don't understand, but I cannot let that take away the fact that I know what I know and what I feel. I know what the spirit feels like – even though it is not experienced all the time. I do remember in detail the great miracles that have occurred in my life and the lives of my children – miracles that have come through answers to prayers and through revelation. And I'm still very much a utilitarian person – I love to be around the people in the Temples and at Church – to be at the parties, the lessons, the dances, the dinners, the cultural events, and the service projects. I'm strongly influenced by the stature, kindness, humility, faith and intelligence of our General Authorities. All of it combines to give me great satisfaction, happiness, faith and hope.

Understanding people's inactivity is clearer now. It happens when their foundation weakens – they perhaps lean only on revelation, or perhaps only on utilitarianism, or on logic. This understanding has come because of this article, and particularly as I've thought about it and analyzed myself. Just one way of gaining truth and knowledge isn't enough. We must use all three to hopefully one day be fully committed and to have the strongest foundation possible – to become immovable. The missionaries out in the field teach these same principles very simply when helping non-members gain a testimony: they ask them to read the Book of Mormon (logic), pray about the Book of Mormon and the Church (revelation) and attend Church (utilitarianism).

A stronger foundation in truth, knowledge and testimony will help us ward off our own *demons* – those temptations and sins that would take us away from all of our commitments no matter how much the spirit has been felt in our lives, no matter how much we have read and studied, and no matter how often we have regularly attended Church. That's where the understanding of the Gospel and the Atonement goes to work in our lives as we actively repent and forgive, as we become a better person today than we were yesterday, and hopefully as we endure to the end. We can never let up on our search for truth and in our participation in righteous goals such as building and healing family relationships, doing work for our beloved ancestors, and helping to build up the Kingdom of God here on earth. If these things aren't the most important to you, then what are?

Joseph Smith said it best: *“Brethren (and sisters), shall we not go on is so great a cause? Go forward and not backward. Courage, brethren, and on, on to the victory! . . .”* (Doctrine and Covenants 128:22)



## No Man Is An Island

by Douglas M. Scribner

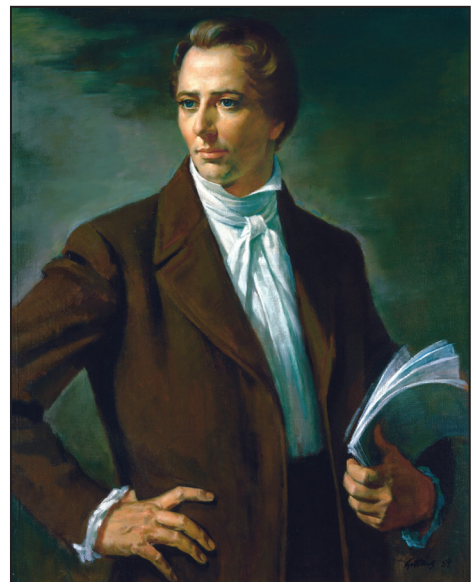
### The Poets

In the early 1600's John Donne wrote a one stanza poem with the title, "No Man is an Island." The essence of the poem is that a man's family and friends become an integral part of him and he becomes a part of their lives as well. Expanding beyond this intimate circle, each person is also part of all mankind and should have, to some degree, concern for each one. Many years later Donne's concept was expanded and put to music. The words and music were written by Joan Whitney and Alex Kramer in 1950. When in high school, I sang in the San Diego High School A'Capella Choir which used this piece of music in its repertoire. The meaning of its words sank deep into my heart. In part they are,

*No Man is an island,  
No man stands alone,  
Each man's joy is joy to me,  
Each man's grief is my own.*

*We need one another,  
So I will defend  
Each man as my brother,  
Each man as my friend.*

I deeply valued the testimony and loyalty of those who were eyewitnesses of Jesus, for they were his family and his friends. They became his disciples. Because of them, Jesus did not stand alone. His joys were joys to them and they received his grief as their own. Similarly, as I began to learn of the life of the Prophet Joseph Smith, there came a desire to know more about the lives of his family members and those who became his closest friends. They knew him the best. Were they credible witnesses? Were they people of integrity? Were they loyal to Joseph and to the things which were revealed to him by God? The persecutions which followed Joseph Smith Jr. would have completely isolated him if it had not been for the support of his family and these dear friends. They needed one another and they were frequently called upon to defend Joseph's very life. This was especially apparent concerning the miracles associated with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.



*The Prophet Joseph Smith  
by Alvin Gittins*

## The Golden Plates

The persecutions that followed Joseph's life began in the year 1820 when he was fourteen years of age and went to a grove of trees near his father's home to pray aloud and ask God which of the many surrounding churches he should join. He was a religious boy who wanted to do the right thing but was confused by the various interpretations of the Bible espoused by the ministers of his day. As mentioned earlier, Joseph received a visitation from two heavenly beings – God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. In answer to Joseph's petition, they told him he should join none of the churches. As Joseph recorded the event, he wrote, *"I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: 'They draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof.' He again forbade me to join with any of them..."*<sup>1</sup>

The reaction, when Joseph Smith recounted his experience, came primarily from local ministers who felt threatened by this claim to modern revelation. They denounced Joseph from their pulpits and tried to turn the tide of public opinion against him. Joseph recalled, *"Though I was an obscure boy, only between fourteen and fifteen years of age, and my circumstances in life such as to make a boy of no consequence in the world, yet men of high standing would take notice sufficient to excite the public mind against me, and create a bitter persecution; and this was common among all the sects – all united to persecute me."*<sup>2</sup> Three years later, at age seventeen, there was an additional strong reaction to Joseph's declaration that he had been visited by an angel of God who stated his name as Moroni. This heavenly personage declared that Joseph would eventually receive an ancient record describing the original inhabitants of the Americas, and that these records were written on plates of gold. This visitation occurred on the night of September 21, 1823. Of it Joseph wrote, *"While I was thus in the act of calling upon God, I discovered a light appearing in my room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noonday, when immediately a personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the floor. . . He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang. He also said that the fullness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants."*<sup>3</sup> Joseph was shown in vision the very location where the plates were located, buried near the top of a nearby hill. He met the heavenly messenger there the next day and was allowed to see the plates, along with the interpreters by which they were to be translated, but was not allowed to remove them. Moroni instructed young Joseph that he was to return to that spot exactly one year hence and to repeat doing so each year for four years. If he was faithful in doing so, the plates would then be available for him to translate by the gift and power of God. After that visitation, Joseph recounted his experiences to his father and they thus became well known by all the members of his family. Once again as this word leaked out, Joseph Smith became the target of a vociferous reaction by the ministers of his day. However this time they were joined by greedy speculators who thought there was a chance to obtain riches from the gold. The persecution reached a fevered pitch in September of 1827 when the twenty-one year old Joseph was to acquire and translate the gold plates.



Lucy Mack Smith

## Joseph's Older Family Members

As I sought to understand the dynamics of the Smith family during these trying times, I realized that Joseph Smith Jr. was a middle child among the nine living children in the Smith household. Alvin, Hyrum and Sophronia were older siblings while Samuel, William, Catharine, Don Carlos and little Lucy were younger. Certainly his parents, **Joseph Smith Sr.** and **Lucy Mack Smith**, were among those who believed wholeheartedly in the miraculous accounts which Joseph described and in the validity of the Book of Mormon when the translation was complete. An interesting example of their trust occurred about six months after the book was published, as recorded by Lucy (Joseph's mother). *"On the day that Hyrum left for Colesville, which was Wednesday, the neighbors began to call, one after another, and*



inquire very particularly for Hyrum. This gave me great anxiety, for I knew that they had no business with him. The same night my husband was taken rather ill, and continued unwell the next day, he was unable to take breakfast with me. About ten o'clock I commenced preparing him some milk porridge, but before it was ready for him, a Quaker gentleman called to see him, and the following is the substance of their conversation:

**Quaker:** Friend Smith, I have a note against thee for fourteen dollars, which I have lately bought, and I have come to see if thou hast the money for me.

**Mr. Smith:** Why, sir, did you purchase that note? You certainly were in no want of the money?

**Quaker:** That is business of my own. I want the money, and must have it.

**Mr. Smith:** I can pay you six dollars now – the rest you will have to wait for as I cannot get it for you.

**Quaker:** No, I will not wait one hour; and if thou dost not pay me immediately, thou shalt go forthwith to the jail unless (running to the fireplace and making violent gestures with his hands towards the fire) thou wilt burn up those Books of Mormon; but if thou wilt burn them up, then I will forgive thee the whole debt.

**Mr. Smith (decidedly):** That I shall not do.

**Quaker:** Then, thou shalt go to jail.

**Lucy Smith:** 'Sir,' I interrupted, (taking my gold beads from my neck and holding them towards him), 'these beads are the full value of the remainder of the debt. I beseech you to take them and be satisfied to give up the note.'

**Quaker:** No, I will not. Thou must pay the money, or thy husband shall go straightway to jail.

**Lucy Smith:** 'Now, here sir,' I replied, 'just look at yourself as you are. Because God has raised up my son to bring forth a book, which was written for the salvation of the souls of men, for the salvation of your soul as well as mine, you have come here to distress my family and me by taking my husband to jail; and you think, by this, that you will compel us to deny the work of God and destroy a book which was translated by the gift and power of God. But sir, we shall not burn the Book of Mormon, nor deny the inspiration of the Almighty.'

The Quaker then stepped to the door and called a constable, who was waiting there for the signal. The constable came forward and laying his hand on Mr. Smith's shoulder, said, 'You are my prisoner.'<sup>4</sup>

Shortly after the first visitation of the angel Moroni, Joseph's oldest brother **Alvin** contracted a condition which his mother called *bilious colic*. The family doctor was not available so another doctor was called in from a neighboring village. Unfortunately, he was inept and treated Alvin with a heavy dose of calomel which lodged in his stomach. This made him far worse, and on November 19, 1823, Alvin died at age twenty-three. However, before he died, Alvin called the family around him. He took his seventeen year old brother Joseph by the hand and made him promise to do everything possible to acquire the gold plates and translate them. Lucy recorded that, "Alvin was never so happy as when he was contemplating the final success of his brother in obtaining the record."<sup>5</sup> Alvin was a capable and loyal son, who had nearly completed building a new home for his parents when he was taken. He was engaged to be married, and in every way he was a credible witness to the honesty and truthfulness of his younger brother's miraculous experiences.

Shortly before Joseph received his first vision, there was a wave of spiritual revivals in the area of Palmyra, New York. Joseph recalled, "I was at this time in my fifteenth year. My father's family was proselyted to the Presbyterian faith, and four of them joined that church, namely, my mother, Lucy, my brothers Hyrum and Samuel Harrison; and my sister Sophronia."<sup>6</sup> Yet, they believed Joseph's account of his experiences and awaited eagerly for the day when he might receive the gold plates to translate. **Hyrum** was the first of the Smith children to marry. He was wed to Jerusha Barden on November 2, 1826, when he was twenty-six years old. The first of their six children, a daughter

named Lovina, was born on September 16, 1827, just six days before Joseph received the golden plates from the angel Moroni. Hyrum and Jerusha were living a short distance from the Smith family home where Joseph and his new bride, Emma Hale Smith, were residing with Joseph's parents. Once the plates were retrieved, Lucy noticed that Joseph sent his younger brother Don Carlos to get Hyrum. She wrote, "*When Hyrum came, Joseph requested him to get a chest that had a good lock and key and 'have it here' said Joseph, 'so that it may be ready by the time I get home.' . . . (later that day) Joseph took the plates from their (hiding) place and, wrapping them in his linen frock, put them under his arm and started for the house.*"<sup>7</sup> Joseph was nearly accosted by three individuals who were after the plates, but he escaped their grasp and ran to the house. The plates weighed between forty and fifty pounds, so Joseph was exhausted when he arrived. Lucy recorded, "*After a moment's rest, he said, 'Mother, send Carlos for Father and Mr. Knight and his friend Stowell, and tell them to go and see if they can find some men who have been pursuing me. Then let Carlos go tell Hyrum to bring his chest.'*"<sup>8</sup>

The attempts of those who heard about the plates and wanted to steal them became so intense that Joseph decided that he and Emma should return to her home in Pennsylvania. They were not even able to stay long enough to see his sister Sophronia married on December 2, 1827. However, Hyrum and Jerusha remained at their home in Palmyra. Throughout 1828, the work of translation moved very slowly. Sometimes Emma served as a scribe and, for part of the time, Joseph's friend Martin Harris recorded what Joseph dictated. However, Martin's wife, Lucy Harris, constantly tried to disrupt the effort and eventually was the cause of Martin losing 116 pages of the translation. Meanwhile, in Palmyra, Hyrum as a trustee of the local school board, hired Oliver Cowdery as a teacher. Oliver boarded with Hyrum's parents and there heard about Joseph Smith and the gold plates. At the end of the school year, in April, 1829, Oliver decided he wanted to become the scribe for Joseph's translation of the plates, so he and Samuel left for Pennsylvania. Though Hyrum and Jerusha remained in Palmyra, they were intensely interested and supportive of the work Joseph and Oliver were doing. So much so, that upon the completion of the translation, Hyrum was selected to be one of the eight witnesses of the gold plates themselves. Hyrum and Jerusha were loyal to Joseph and to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints restored by him for the rest of their lives. Jerusha became ill and died on October 13, 1837, in Kirtland, Ohio while Hyrum was away on a mission for the church. Hyrum then remarried Mary Fielding and they had two more children. He was killed with his brother Joseph as martyrs by an angry mob on June 27, 1844 in Carthage, Illinois.

**Sophronia** had a difficult life! On three occasions she became so ill that she came near to death, though she eventually lived to be eighty-seven years old. The first sickness struck when she was only ten and contracted typhoid fever. Her mother wrote, "*Sophronia was very low and remained so (for) eighty-nine days. On the ninetieth day the attendant physician declared that she was so far gone that it was impossible for her to receive any benefit from the effects of medicine and discontinued his attendance upon her. . . My husband and I clasped our hands together and fell upon our knees by the bedside and poured our grief and supplication into His ears . . . Did the Lord hear our petition? He did hear us (but) . . . My child had apparently ceased to breathe. . . (then) At last she sobbed . . . (and) sobbed again and then looked up into my face with an appearance of natural life, breathing freely.*"<sup>9</sup> At age twenty-four, Sophronia married Calvin Stoddard, but a year later she and her younger brother Samuel became so violently ill that Hyrum moved back into the family home to care for them. They both recovered and Sophronia was then able to bear two children. Eunice was born March 22, 1830, and Maria was born April 12, 1832. She and Calvin embraced the Book of Mormon and were among the first members baptized into the church. When her brother Joseph received the revelation that the church members were to relocate from New York to Kirtland, Ohio, they went with the rest of the family. Then, shortly after they settled in Kirtland, Calvin was called on a mission to the Eastern States with a companion named Jared Carter. All seemed to be going very well for them.

However, after Calvin returned, he began to make bad choices. He became addicted to alcohol and eventually his license to preach was revoked for inactivity and transgression. In 1833, when Sophronia became extremely ill for the third time, Mother Smith asked Jared Carter, a man of great faith, to come and join with her father and brothers using their priesthood to administer to her. Sophronia was miraculously healed, but Calvin was not. He died in Kirtland from his addiction on May 19, 1836. Then, in 1837, Sophronia married an older man, a convert named William McLeary who agreed to care for her and her two daughters. When the Smith family



*The Joseph Smith Sr. Family:*

*(Starting in Back)  
 Samuel, Alvin, Hyrum,  
 Sophronia, Joseph  
 Catherine, Lucy and  
 little Lucy  
 William, Joseph Smith Sr.,  
 Don Carlos*

*(by Dan Baxter)*

decided to leave Kirtland, Sophronia and her family went with them – first to Missouri and then on to Illinois. In September of 1840, Father Smith was dying and wanted to give a final blessing to each of his children. Mother Smith recorded the blessings. To Sophronia he said, “*Sophronia, my oldest daughter, thou hadst sickness when thou wast young. Thy mother and thy father did cry over thee to have the Lord spare thy life. Thou didst see trouble and sorrow, but thy trouble shall be lessened, for thou hast been faithful in helping thy father and thy mother in the work of the Lord. And thou shall be blessed, and the blessings of heaven shall rest down upon you and your last days shall be your best days. Although thou shalt see trouble and sorrow, and mourning, thou shall be comforted and the Lord will lift you up and the blessings of the Lord will rest upon you and upon your family. Thou shall live as long as thou desirest life.*”<sup>10</sup>

Sophronia, along with her younger sister Lucy, cared for her widowed mother after Father Smith passed away until 1843 when their mother moved in with Joseph and Emma. After the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum, Sophronia continued to help and support Lucy and Emma in their trials. She enjoyed a long life and finally died in Hancock County, Illinois in 1876. Sophronia was a viable witness of the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.

### **Faith of the Younger Siblings**

**Samuel Harrison Smith** was nineteen years old when Joseph acquired the gold plates, but he had grown up listening to his brother recounting the experiences with the angel Moroni. He wanted to believe in the validity of these ancient records, but he was unsure until April of 1829. Samuel agreed to take Oliver Cowdery to visit Joseph and Emma at her parent’s home in Harmony, Pennsylvania. Oliver had been boarding with the Smith family while he was teaching school and now wanted to become a scribe for Joseph in the translation of the plates. They began the 135-mile journey in freezing cold weather. Upon their arrival, Oliver began his work as scribe, which allowed the work of translation to move forward much more rapidly. Samuel remained there for nearly four months and learned more about the Book of Mormon. Joseph recorded, “*We informed him (Samuel)*

*of what the Lord was about to do for the children of men, and began to reason with him out of the Bible. We also showed him that part of the work which we had translated, and labored to persuade him concerning the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which was now about to be revealed in its fullness. He was not, however, very easily persuaded of these things, but after much inquiry and explanation, he retired to the woods, in order that by secret and fervent prayer he might obtain of a merciful God, wisdom to enable him to judge for himself. The result was that he obtained revelation for himself sufficient to convince him of the truth of our assertions . . .*<sup>11</sup>

Samuel was baptized by Oliver Cowdery on May 25, 1829, and returned to his family in New York rejoicing. In the latter part of June, Samuel was selected to be one of the eight witnesses allowed to see and handle the gold plates and to bear testimony of them as the ancient record from which the Book of Mormon was translated. He was also one of the original six members when the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was officially organized on April 6, 1830. Samuel was ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood and set apart to be the first missionary for the church on June 30, 1830. Over the next four years Samuel served five short missions, lasting from three to eleven months each. On the first of these he presented a copy of the Book of Mormon to Brigham Young's family and eventually seventeen members of that extended family joined the church. In 1834, Samuel returned to Kirtland, Ohio from his fifth mission. There he met Mary Bailey, a twenty-six year old convert who was boarding with his mother. Samuel Smith and Mary Bailey were married on August 13, 1834, and their first two children, Susannah and Mary, were born in Kirtland, Ohio. However, after Mary's birth, the apostasy and persecution became so great in Kirtland that, in May of 1838, twenty-four members of the Smith family left Kirtland for Far West, Missouri, including Samuel, his pregnant wife and their two children. It was a trip of one thousand miles with many hazards. Lucy wrote about it saying, "*We traveled on through many trials and difficulties. Sometimes we lay in our tents through a driving storm. At other times we traveled on foot through marshes and quagmires, exposing ourselves to wet and cold. Once we lay all night in the rain, which descended in torrents . . .*"<sup>12</sup> They finally arrived at their destination. Samuel and Mary settled in the small village of Marrowbone (later called Shady Grove), Daviess County, Missouri, about thirty miles from the town of Far West. Their son, Samuel Harrison Bailey Smith, was born in Marrowbone on August 1, 1838. A short time later, while Samuel was in Far West, Mary was compelled to leave her home. Lucy records, "*Samuel had not been gone long when a number of men who lived near him went to his wife and told her that the mob was coming there to drive all the Mormons from the country into Far West and perhaps they would kill them. They accordingly advised her to go immediately to Far West at all hazards and proffered to find her a wagon and a boy to drive the horses. She consented, and they brought an open lumber wagon and put her into it on a bed with a very little clothing for herself and her children. . . The (rain) water fell on her in torrents, for she had no shelter for herself or her infant. The bedding was soon completely saturated as the rain continued falling for some time with great violence.*"<sup>13</sup> Though Samuel found them, and both Mary and the baby recovered, Mary's health was never again the same. She suffered further from the elements in the winter of 1839 as she and twelve thousand other Mormons were forcefully expelled from the state of Missouri. Two years later, while giving birth to her fourth child, Lucy, Mary's health finally gave out. She died on January 25, 1841 in Nauvoo at thirty-two years of age. The baby also perished.

Being a single father with three young children, Samuel married Levira Clark on May 30, 1841. Together they had two more daughters, Louisa (who died a year later) and Levira who was born in 1842. Samuel was faithful and true to his testimony of the Book of Mormon and to his brothers Joseph and Hyrum. When they were being murdered by a mob at Carthage, Samuel made every attempt to save them. He was then chased by the mob to such a degree that his own health was severely damaged. He died on July 30, 1844 at age thirty-six, just thirty-three days after his brothers were killed. He was a powerful witness of the validity of the Book of Mormon.

**William Smith** had a unique and volatile personality which became apparent at a young age and affected him all of his life! He was born on March 13, 1811, which made him five years younger than his brother Joseph. He was then sixteen when the angel Moroni delivered the gold plates to Joseph, and William first gained his testimony of their reality. He believed in the truthfulness of his brother's work in translating this ancient record as the Book of Mormon. However, the explosive nature of his temperament became apparent in the autumn of 1830 when, at age nineteen, he found a large group of men invading his parents' home. His mother wrote the following,

*“Just at this instant, William bounded into the house. ‘Mother’, he cried, ‘In the name of God, what is this host of men doing here? Are they robbing or stealing? What are they about?’ I told him, in short, that they had taken his father to prison, and had now come after Hyrum but, not finding him, they were plundering the house. Hereupon, William seized a large handspike, sprang up the stairs and, in one instant, cleared the scoundrels out of the chamber. They scampered downstairs; he flew after them and, bounding into the very midst of the crowd, he brandished his handspike in every direction exclaiming, ‘Away from here you cutthroats, instantly, or I will be the death of every one of you ...’ They seemed to believe what he said and fled in every direction, leaving us again to ourselves.”<sup>14</sup>*

There were certainly times when William was calm and able to be helpful, such as the period when the Lord directed the saints to move from New York to Kirtland, Ohio. Joseph, Emma, Hyrum and his father had gone ahead. Then, in 1831, William met with each family of his branch and prayed with them to soften their hearts and encourage them to follow Joseph and move together with him, his mother and his sisters to the Ohio. Once William became established in Kirtland, he met and married a convert named Caroline Amanda Grant. Their wedding on February 14, 1833, and their life together, helped prepare William for the calling he received two years later to become one of the original Twelve Apostles in this dispensation. The apostles were not selected by Joseph, but were chosen by the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon.

However, William’s reactive nature boiled over in the Fall of 1835 while at a debate class held in his home. There, William behaved in a passionate and unkind way toward one of the other apostles and was gently reprimanded. *“When Joseph attempted to give William some instructions regarding the way he was handling the debate, William became angry and physically attacked the prophet. In fact he injured Joseph ...”<sup>15</sup>* A reconciliation was later achieved through the faith and prayers of Father Smith, and William apologized for his behavior. Still, this fiery temperament exploded once again in the summer of 1836. A meeting was held near the recently completed Kirtland Temple wherein Father Smith vocally criticized a church member, Warren Parrish, for inappropriate behavior. Warren reacted and tried to attack Father Smith, but was stopped by William’s intervention. Again, William’s over-reaction escalated the problem. Mother Smith wrote, *“Parrish made a move to pull Mr. Smith out of the stand. At this, William, who was the oldest one of my sons who was present, sprang from his seat, caught Parrish in his arm, and carried him halfway across the house.”<sup>16</sup>*

Calmed again, William and his wife Caroline traveled with the Smith family from Kirtland to Missouri and later to Nauvoo, Illinois. They did suffer from frequent sickness as well as the effects of the persecution in Missouri, but were loyal to the prophet Joseph and to their testimonies of the Book of Mormon. In 1844, he was called to serve a mission in the eastern states. Since Carolyn was quite ill, William took her with him. This is where they were when Joseph and Hyrum were martyred. Caroline’s health was so poor that they were not able to return to Nauvoo until the spring of 1845. Caroline died in Nauvoo on May 22, 1845, a few weeks after their arrival home. She was only in her early thirties and their two daughters, Mary Jane and Caroline L. were ages ten and nine. William’s temperament made him very susceptible to being offended. As senior apostle and President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, Brigham Young was sustained by the saints to lead the church. Somehow, William thought that he himself should be the leader instead and couldn’t be persuaded otherwise. He lost his membership in the church and wandered in many strange paths until his death forty-eight years later on November 13, 1893. Despite his problems, William never denied his testimony of the Book of Mormon.

**Catharine** (or Katharine) was born July 28, 1812. She was nearly seven years younger than her brother Joseph. Still, Catharine remembered clearly the circumstances surrounding the First Vision, the persecutions that followed, the visitation of Moroni, and Joseph eventually receiving the gold plates. She later wrote those recollections saying, *“I well remember the trials my brother had, before he obtained the records. After he had the vision (of Moroni), he went frequently to the hill, and upon returning would tell us, ‘I have seen the records, also the brass plates and the sword of Laban with the breastplate and interpreters.’ He would ask father why he could not get them. The time had not yet come.”<sup>17</sup>* At age eighteen, Catharine married Wilkins J. Salisbury. The date was January 8, 1831, just prior to the exodus of the saints from New York to Ohio. Together they had six children. The first three, Elizabeth, Lucy and Solomon J., were born in Kirtland. The fourth, Alvin, was born on the road

to Missouri. Of this, Lucy wrote, “*In consequence of this (rain) I took a severe cold and was very sick, so that when we arrived at the Mississippi I was unable to sit up at any length and could not walk without assistance. After we crossed this river, we stopped at a Negro’s hut, a most unlovely place, but we could go no farther. Here my daughter Catharine gave birth to a fine son named Alvin (June 7, 1838).*”<sup>18</sup>

Their last two children, Don C. and Emma C. Salisbury were born in Nauvoo. On September 12, 1840, when Father Smith was giving his final blessing to each of his children, Catharine was unable to come because of sickness among her husband and children. Still, her father spoke of her saying, “*Catharine has been a sorrowful child. Trouble has she seen, and the Lord has looked down upon her and seen her patience and has heard her cries. She shall be comforted when her days of sorrow are ended. . . And she shall live to raise up her family and in time her suffering shall be over. . .*”<sup>19</sup> Catharine had troubles because of her husband’s problems with liquor. He even deserted the family on a few occasions. Wilkins Jenkins Salisbury died of these maladies on October 28, 1853 in his mid-forties when his youngest child was only nine years old. However, Catharine lived to be eighty-seven, the oldest of the Smith children. She died February 1, 1900. She had a firm testimony of the divine origin of the Book of Mormon.

**Don Carlos** was born on March 25, 1816. Don Carlos Smith was Joseph’s youngest brother. He was only eleven years old in September, 1827, when Joseph received the gold plates which were to be translated by the gift and power of God. Two years later, when the translation was complete and the witnesses had been permitted to see and handle the plates, Don Carlos was among the family members who met together to discuss the truthfulness and significance of this great work. Their mother Lucy later wrote, “*After the witnesses returned to the house, the angel again made his appearance to Joseph and received the plates from his hands. That evening we held a meeting in which all of the witnesses bore testimony to the facts, as stated above; and all of our family, even to Don Carlos, who was but (nearly) fourteen years of age, testified of the truth of the latter-day dispensation – that it was ushered in.*”<sup>20</sup> The Book of Mormon was published and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was officially organized on April 6, 1830. All the members of the Joseph Smith family were baptized in the days that followed including his parents and siblings. The men in the family were ordained to the priesthood, including Don Carlos, who was only fourteen years old. Later that summer, Don Carlos and his father, Joseph Smith Senior, were missionary companions as they visited with Joseph’s father, Asael Smith, and his brothers, John, Silas and Jesse. They were well received by all except Jesse, who became angry and refused to hear about the Book of Mormon.

In April 1831, fifteen year old Don Carlos traveled with his brother William, his mother and sisters, and other church members on the long and tedious journey from New York to Kirtland, Ohio. There he frequently spent time with Joseph and Emma as well as with his parents as he grew to maturity. On July 30, 1835, nineteen year old Don Carlos was married to recent convert named Agnes Coolbrith. They had two daughters born in Kirtland and then, three years later, they had a third daughter born in Nauvoo, Illinois. Don Carlos was healthy, strong, active and totally committed to his family and to his faith in the restored Gospel of Jesus Christ. When the persecution in Kirtland became intolerable and dangerous, he helped both Emma and his father escape to the nearby town of Portage, Ohio to prepare for the 870 mile journey to Far West, Missouri. He then joined them with his own wife and children. Arriving the first week of July 1838, Don Carlos, Agnes and their little girls settled on a farm north of the town of Far West, near the Grand River. They enjoyed a few months of peaceful living before Don Carlos was called to serve a mission in Tennessee. However, while he was gone, persecution and mob action against the saints began again. The angry mob came to his home in mid-winter, drove Agnes and her children out into the cold and burned their house. She had to walk three miles with her two little girls in bitter weather and wade through the Grand River before they reached shelter at the cabin of Lyman Wight.

Don Carlos returned from his mission, gathered his family and, together with his parents, began their exodus from Far West, Missouri on February 14, 1839. That winter, 15,000 saints made that journey as a result of the *extermination order* from Governor Boggs. They arrived at the town of Quincy, Illinois just as the ice was beginning to break up on the Mississippi River. Father Smith suffered greatly on that trip and his health never recovered. Just prior to his death on September 14, 1840, Joseph Smith Sr. gave a blessing to each of his children.

To Don Carlos he said, “... *You shall be great in the sight of the Lord, for he sees and knows the integrity of your heart, and you shall be blessed; and all that know you shall bless you. Your wife and your children shall also be blessed, and you shall live to fulfill all the Lord has sent you to do.*”<sup>21</sup>

Don Carlos and his business partner Robert Thompson had successfully salvaged their printing press from Missouri and set it up in a basement of a building in Nauvoo to print the monthly newsletter for the saints called the *Times and Seasons*. This apparently fulfilled what the Lord had sent him there to do because, on August 7, 1841, Don Carlos died after a brief bout with pneumonia, which he contracted in that damp basement office. He was only twenty-five years old. Joseph Smith spoke at his younger brother’s funeral and said the following: “[Don Carlos] . . . was one of the first to receive my testimony, and was ordained to the Priesthood when only fourteen years of age. . . He was one of the twenty-four Elders who laid the cornerstones of the Kirtland Temple. . . Don Carlos visited us several times while we were in Liberty Jail, and brought our wives to see us, and some money and articles to relieve our necessities. . . He was six feet four inches high, was very straight and well made, had light hair, and was very strong and active. His usual weight when in health was 200 pounds. He was universally beloved by the saints.”<sup>22</sup> Certainly Don Carlos Smith was a viable witness of the Book of Mormon and the restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ in the latter-days.

**Little Lucy** was the youngest of Joseph’s siblings, as she was a late-in-life child for her parents. Joseph Smith Sr. was fifty years old and his wife Lucy was forty-six when little Lucy was born, July 18, 1821. Her mother remembered her as a very sensitive child who was particularly attached to her oldest brother Alvin. Though she was only two-and-a-half years of age when Alvin died, Lucy grieved greatly and could not be consoled. She was eight years old when the church was organized so she was able to be baptized with her family. Lucy traveled with the family when they migrated from New York to Ohio, then to Missouri and finally to Illinois. She was seventeen when her brothers Joseph and Hyrum were confined for months in Liberty Jail on trumped-up charges. She suffered greatly in the winter cold when they were forced to leave Missouri and travel to Quincy, Illinois. Her mother wrote of her health problems following that exodus, saying, “*We had not been in Quincy one week when Lucy, my youngest daughter, was taken very sick with a pain in her head and dreadful distress in her limbs, occasioned by her exposure in coming from Missouri. She utterly refused from the first to take any nourishment whatever. I took care of her myself (for) several days, until I was taken in a similar manner myself. The day on which I was taken, Mr. Milliken, a young man to whom she was engaged to be married, came to see her, and he watched with her all that day.*”<sup>23</sup>

Lucy recovered and was married to Arthur Milliken on June 4, 1840. The wedding ceremony was performed by her brother, Joseph Smith the Prophet. Three months later, Lucy’s father was dying and gave her his last blessing. He said, “*Lucy, thou art my youngest child, thou art my darling. And the Lord gave you unto us to be a comfort to us in our old age, and thou must take good care of thy mother. Thou art innocent and thy heart is right before the Lord. Thou hast been through all the persecution and hast seen nothing but persecution, trouble and sickness except when the Lord would cheer our hearts. If thou will continue and hold out faithful, thou shalt be blessed. . .*”<sup>24</sup> Lucy and Arthur Milliken had one son whom they named Don Carlos after her brother who died. Lucy took her patriarchal blessing to heart and, after her father died, she and her husband helped take care of her mother for nearly seven years – until her mother finally gave up her home and moved in with Emma. Lucy and Arthur both died in 1882.

## Emma’s Testimony

**Emma Hale Smith** was born July 10, 1804 in Harmony, Pennsylvania to Isaac and Elizabeth Hale, making her seventeen months older than her husband Joseph. Emma was the seventh of the nine children and was raised in comfortable circumstances. Her mother was the sister of a Methodist minister and Emma was spiritually minded from her youth. “*She and her father had enjoyed an especially close bond since she was a little girl. According to Michael Bartlett Morse, husband to Emma’s sister Tryal, Isaac overheard six-year-old Emma praying for him and was so moved by her childish faith, that he forsook deism and embraced Christianity.*”<sup>25</sup> While Joseph was



Emma Hale Smith  
by Lee Greene Richards

in the employ of Josiah Stowell, he boarded for a short time with Isaac Hale which is how he first became acquainted with Isaac's daughter Emma. Joseph continued working for both Josiah Stowell and Joseph Knight throughout 1826 and went often to Harmony, Pennsylvania to visit Emma. Isaac Hale was not pleased with this courtship between Joseph and Emma because he had heard about Joseph's claim to have had the visitation of angels and a promise to gain access to an ancient record on gold plates. He was also concerned that Joseph had very little formal education compared to Emma and was afraid she would endure a life of poverty if she married him.

In January 1827, Emma came on a visit to the Stowell home, some twenty-five miles from Harmony. As she later related this experience to her oldest son, Joseph Smith III, Emma said, *"I had no intention of marrying when I left home; but during my visit at Mr. Stowell's, your father visited me there. My folks were bitterly opposed to him; and being importuned by your father, aided by Mr. Stowell, who urged me to marry him, and preferring to marry him to any other man I knew, I consented."*<sup>26</sup> In his own history, Joseph recorded his feelings about their decision to be married that very day, January

18, 1827. He wrote, *"Owing to my continuing to assert that I had seen a vision, persecution still followed me, and my wife's father's family were very much opposed to our being married. I was, therefore, under the necessity of taking her elsewhere; so we went and were married at the house of Squire Tarbill, in South Bainbridge, Chenango County, New York. Immediately after my marriage, I left Mr. Stowell's and went to my father's and farmed with him."*<sup>27</sup>

Joseph and Emma lived with his parents that winter, spring and summer as he prepared for the promised final visit with the angel Moroni and the receipt of the gold plates on September 22, 1827. His mother, Lucy recorded the following account of the events late in the night of September 21: *"About twelve o'clock Joseph came to me and asked me if I had a chest with a lock and key. I knew in a moment what he wanted it for and was alarmed, fearing that this might be a matter of great importance to him at that time. But Joseph replied, 'Never mind, I can do very well just now without it'. . . Shortly after this, Joseph's wife (Emma) passed through the room with her bonnet and riding dress; and in a few minutes they left together, taking Mr. Knight's horse and wagon."*<sup>28</sup>

Speaking of the events that followed, Gracia N. Jones, historian and great-great-granddaughter of Joseph and Emma, wrote, *"Joseph and Emma drove to the hill. Joseph had been directed to bring the 'right person' with him, and he knew that right person was Emma. . . We do know, from Emma's own account, that she did not go up on the hill with him. In the predawn darkness, Emma waited at the foot of the hill that would later be called Cumorah. Joseph ascended to the place, near the top, where he received the sacred record from the Angel Moroni and accepted the responsibility of protecting, translating, and publishing it. Emma waited from midnight until dawn, faithfully guarding Mr. Knight's horse and wagon. She saw no angel. But she saw the sun rise on a new day before Joseph came back, carrying a heavy burden wrapped in his coat. On the way home she waited again while Joseph took the bundle and hid it in the woods. Then they drove on home."*<sup>29</sup>

As rumors spread about the presence of the gold plates, many people became involved and went to great lengths to find them. The persecution intensified and became intolerable so, with the help of a fifty dollar gift from his friend Martin Harris, Joseph and Emma left his parents home and made their way to the home of Emma's parents in Harmony, Pennsylvania. They were allowed to move into a small cabin just down the hill from her parents' house. At last they felt they would have the peace and quiet that Joseph needed to begin the translation of the plates. As the winter of 1828 settled in, Joseph turned his attention to copying the characters from the plates and beginning the work of translation, but it moved very slowly. Occasionally his wife acted as his scribe.



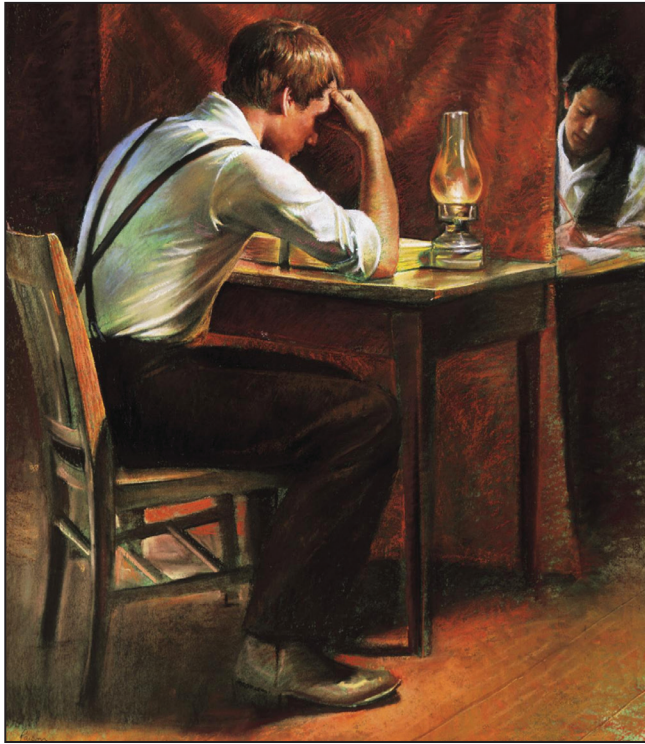
Although Emma never saw the plates, she believed he had them. She later recalled, *“They lay in a box under our bed for months but I never felt at liberty to look at them.”* Emma said they were sometimes on a table in her living room, *“wrapped in a small linen tablecloth, which I had given him to fold them in. I once felt the plates, as they thus lay on the table, tracing their outline and shape. They seemed to be pliable like thick paper, and would rustle with a metallic sound when the edges were moved by the thumb, as one does sometimes thumb the edges of a book”*<sup>30</sup> Emma often lifted and moved the plates as she dusted around them.

When asked if Joseph could have written the story privately, and dictated it, pretending he was translating from the plates, Emma retorted, *“Joseph Smith could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well worded letter; let alone dictating a book like the Book of Mormon. . . It is marvelous to me . . . as much as to anyone . . . I am satisfied that no man could have dictated the writing of the manuscripts unless he was inspired; for when (I was) acting as scribe, (he) would dictate to me for hour after hour; and when returning after meals, or after interruptions, he would at once begin where he had left off, without either seeing the manuscript or having any portion of it read to him.”* Emma continued, *“It would have been improbable that a learned man could do this; and, for one so ignorant and unlearned as he was, it was simply impossible.”*<sup>31</sup>

**Oliver Cowdery** must also be mentioned. It would be virtually impossible to describe all of the friends of the Prophet Joseph Smith, but it is necessary to discuss one of them whose faith and testimony of the Book of Mormon confirms the witness of Joseph’s family. Oliver was born October 3, 1806 in Wells, Rutland County, Vermont to William and Rebecca Fuller Cowdery. He was the youngest of eight children and was educated in literature, writing and mathematics. Some of his older brothers moved from Vermont to western New York to pursue business opportunities and Oliver followed them there. Early in 1829, Oliver’s older brother Lyman Cowdery was hired to teach at the village school in Manchester, New York where Hyrum Smith was one of the school trustees. When Lyman was unable to fulfill his contract, his younger brother Oliver was chosen to take his place. Oliver was invited to live with Joseph Smith Senior and his wife Lucy, and to board with them during the school term.

Meanwhile, Joseph Smith Jr. and his wife Emma were living in Harmony, Pennsylvania where Joseph was endeavoring to translate the gold plates with Emma’s help as a scribe. However, the work was progressing very slowly because Joseph and Emma were both required to work hard for their subsistence, and Emma was still recovering emotionally and physically from the death of their first baby. In March of 1829, Joseph was frustrated and went to the Lord for help. He later wrote, *“I had not where to go and I cried unto the Lord that he would provide for me (a scribe) to accomplish the work whereunto he had commanded me.”*<sup>32</sup> As Oliver gradually gained the trust of the Smith family, Father Smith started to share their knowledge of the calling that Joseph had received and the work he was doing to translate the plates. Oliver prayed to know if the work was truly from God and felt impressed that he should assist in bringing it to fruition. Lucy recorded, *“One day Oliver came home from school in quite a lively manner. As soon as he had an opportunity of conversing with Mr. Smith, he told him that he (Oliver) had been in a deep study all day, and it had been put into his heart that he would have the privilege of writing for Joseph.”*<sup>33</sup>

At the beginning of April 1829, Oliver and Joseph’s younger brother Samuel set out together on the 135-mile journey to Harmony, Pennsylvania. On the way they stopped at the home of Oliver’s friend, David Whitmer, who was fascinated by the story of the ancient record on gold plates and Joseph’s charge from God to translate them. They arrived in Harmony on Sunday, April 5<sup>th</sup>, and Joseph immediately recognized Oliver as the person the Lord had sent to help him with the work of translation. On April 7<sup>th</sup>, they began the work in earnest and proceeded day after day with Joseph dictating the words revealed to him through the Urim and Thummim (interpreters) and Oliver writing those words in long-hand. It was through the kindness and generosity of Joseph’s former employer, Joseph Knight, that they were able to have the food, paper and supplies they needed to complete the task without interruption in about three months. Later Oliver recalled that experience and wrote, *“These were the days never to be forgotten – to sit under the sound of a voice dictated by the inspiration of heaven, awakened the utmost gratitude of this bosom! Day after day I continued, uninterrupted, to write from his mouth,*



*Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery translating the Gold Plates*  
by Del Parson

as he translated with the Urim and Thummim, or, as the Nephites would have said, 'Interpreters' the history or record called *The Book of Mormon*.”

<sup>34</sup> During 1829 and 1830, Oliver Cowdery was the recipient of numerous powerful spiritual experiences.

In addition to serving as scribe in the translation, they included the visitation of angelic messengers as he received the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood and again as he, along with David Whitmer and Martin Harris, was permitted to see and handle the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated. Oliver was also given several personal revelations from the Lord Jesus Christ through the Prophet Joseph Smith, which strengthened his faith. When Joseph and Oliver finished the translation of the large plates abridged by Mormon (the books of Mosiah through Moroni) in June of 1829, the persecution in Harmony was increasing dramatically. Oliver suggested that they contact his friend David Whitmer in Fayette, New York to come and transport them to his home. Joseph agreed and, through a series of miraculous events, David arrived in Harmony with a horse

and wagon to move them. Once in Fayette, through the hospitality of David's parents, Peter and Mary Whitmer, Joseph and Oliver were given refuge and a peaceful place to continue the work of translation. By revelation the Lord instructed Joseph that he was not to retranslate the 116 pages of manuscript that had been lost by Martin Harris. The Lord said, “Behold, I say unto you, that you shall not translate again those words which have gone forth out of your hands.”<sup>35</sup> Instead, they were instructed to translate the smaller gold plates (containing the books of I Nephi through Omni). This was done in an upper room of the Peter Whitmer home. Once completed, the time had come when Joseph was to select witnesses who would be allowed to see and examine the engravings on the gold plates. The Whitmer family was greatly impacted by the marvelous events that were transpiring in their home. Thus Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris were permitted to see the Angel Moroni display the plates to their view. Then five other members of the Whitmer family, together with Hyrum, Samuel and father Smith, were allowed to see and handle the plates themselves. Even Peter Whitmer's wife Mary was permitted to see them.<sup>36</sup>

During the latter months of 1829, Oliver and Hyrum Smith supervised the printing of the Book of Mormon at the Grandin Press in Palmyra, New York. Not only did Oliver write a second copy of the entire manuscript during this period, he also became a direct participant in the printing process. “During the printing of the Book of Mormon, Oliver Cowdery learned the printing business in the office of E. B. Grandin, setting much of the type of the book by his own hands.”<sup>37</sup> Oliver was one of the original six members when the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized on April 6, 1830. He also delivered the first public sermon on the week following. Oliver was ordained an Elder and later in 1830 he, together with Parley P. Pratt, Peter Whitmer Jr., and Ziba Peterson, was called to serve a 1,500 mile mission to the Indian Nations in western Missouri to inform them of the history of their ancestors found in the Book of Mormon. On the way they stopped in northern Ohio, in the vicinity of Kirtland, and preached the Restoration of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and coming forth of the Book of Mormon. Their message was well received and 127 people were baptized into the church. In 1831, when the entire church membership moved to the Kirtland area, Oliver Cowdery and the whole Whitmer family were

among them. There, Oliver developed a romantic relationship with David Whitmer's youngest sister, Elizabeth Ann Whitmer. Oliver and Elizabeth were married on December 18, 1832 in Kirtland and had six children, though only one of their children lived to adulthood. Their daughter, Maria Louise Cowdery eventually married but had no children of her own, so Oliver had no descendants.<sup>38</sup>

At the dedication of the Kirtland Temple, March 27, 1836, Oliver Cowdery was a participant in the remarkable spiritual manifestations which happened that day. Then, the following Sunday after the sacrament meeting was over, Joseph and Oliver went to that place near the pulpit in the temple and dropped the curtains for privacy. Joseph recorded, *"I retired to the pulpit, the veils being dropped, and bowed myself, with Oliver Cowdery, in solemn and silent prayer. After rising from prayer, the following vision was opened to both of us. The veil was taken from our minds, and the eyes of our understanding were opened. We saw the Lord standing upon the breastwork of the pulpit before us . . ."*<sup>39</sup> How could Oliver's faith and loyalty be shaken after so many marvelous experiences? It seemed hard to believe. Still, Joseph saw in a vision that this is exactly what would happen. He and Martin Harris were returning to Kirtland following a trip to the eastern states. Upon reaching Palmyra, New York, a vision was opened to Joseph, which troubled him greatly. Upon reaching Kirtland he gathered the church leaders together and said, *"We are now nearly as happy as we can be on earth, for we have accomplished more than we had any reason to anticipate when we began . . . One would not suppose that anything could occur that would break up our friendship for each other or distress us in the least. But, brethren, beware for I tell you in the name of the Lord that there is an evil in this very congregation, which, if it is not repented of, will result in making one-third of you who are here this day so much my enemies that you will have a desire to take my life; and you would even do so, if God permitted the deed . . ."*<sup>40</sup> Oliver was present that day and denied that he would ever react that way, but he did. To understand the crisis that followed, it is necessary to see what was happening in Kirtland at the end of 1836 and throughout 1837. Back in 1830, Kirtland had been a small town of 680 residents. However, with the rapid growth of the church, converts flowed into Kirtland as well as into the other gathering place in Jackson County, Missouri. By the end of 1836, there were over 13,000 inhabitants in Kirtland. Many of those who came were poor and needed church assistance to survive. This, plus the cost of building the temple, created a financial burden of substantial debt for the church. At the same time, there was developing a spirit of speculation and greed among some of the residents of Kirtland.

Benjamin F. Johnson, who was nineteen years old at that time, later recorded his experience there saying, *"At this time, town property and real estate went up to almost fabulous prices and a general rush was made into business of all kinds . . . But, when goods bought on credit were to be paid for, and notes became due for lands bought at great prices, then began a reaction. Disappointment engendered feelings which reacted upon fellowship, and men in high places began to complain of and reproach each other, and brotherly love was found smothered by the love of the world."*<sup>41</sup> To complicate matters further, this became a year of national economic crisis throughout America. It became known as the "Panic of 1837," which spread from New York, then west into other parts of the country. By May there was a general suspension of payment in currency by all the banks in Ohio. Money was scarce and



*The Lord Appears at the Kirtland Temple*  
by Del Parson

creditors had to postpone due dates on their loans. Because of this concern, the Ohio State Legislature refused to grant a charter to the church to establish the proposed Kirtland Safety Society Bank. Needing to move forward, church leaders restructured their proposal to become a private corporation with the power to issue notes. In the previous six years, Oliver had established his own printing business using the knowledge he gained in printing the Book of Mormon. Then, in February 1837, by mutual consent, Oliver dissolved his printing business, turned it over to the church and was given a note from this corporate bank for the money owed to him. As the financial panic expanded, many banks were failing so the remaining banks refused to honor the corporation's notes. Most of the assets of the church's banking company were in land at inflated prices. So the enemies of the church bought up enough notes to enable them to create a *run on the bank*. Finally, in November of 1837, the church had to close the doors of the bank and the two hundred individuals who had invested in it lost everything. This included Oliver Cowdery.

In this turbulent time, many church leaders became apostate, turning away from the Prophet Joseph Smith and the church. Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer were among them. In April 1838, Oliver was charged for persecuting church members and issuing vexing law suits against the church leaders. He was excommunicated on April 12, 1838. During the following ten years, Oliver and Elizabeth were estranged from the church. However, he never denied his testimony of the miraculous events surrounding the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. At one point he publicly stated, *I beheld with my eyes, and handled with my hands, the gold plates . . . I also saw with my eyes and handled with my hands the holy interpreters. That book is true . . . It contains principles of salvation; and if you, my hearers, will walk by its light and obey its precepts, you will be saved with an everlasting salvation in the kingdom of God on high.*<sup>42</sup>

After the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith in 1844, Oliver humbled his own spirit and decided to renew his membership in the church. The saints were moving West on their trek to the Salt Lake Valley so Oliver left his home in Missouri and traveled north to the Mormon Trail. There in Kaneshville, Iowa, in October 1848, Oliver humbly testified of his repentance and was rebaptized as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He returned home intending to bring his family and travel to Zion, but he became ill and died. His wife Elizabeth then testified of her husband's faith. Speaking of Oliver, she said, *"From the hour when the glorious vision of the Holy Messenger revealed to mortal eyes the hidden prophecies which God had promised his faithful followers should come forth in due time, until the moment when he passed away from earth, he always without one doubt or shadow of turning affirmed the divinity and truth of the Book of Mormon."*<sup>43</sup> Though mortal and subject to faults, Oliver Cowdery stood as a reputable living witness to the truthful reality of the origin of the Book of Mormon.

Surely Joseph Smith Jr. was not an island unto himself. He was surrounded by family and friends who had read the Book of Mormon and had strong convictions that it was true. Like us, they were amazed by the clarity, beauty and optimism of its messages as well as the elaborate history which it contains. They knew that such a wondrous book of scripture, translated in such a short period of time, could only have come by the inspiration and power of God. Without the benefit of scholarly evidences available to us in our own time, they became powerful witnesses that the Book of Mormon is true!

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1. *Joseph Smith History* 1: 19-20.

2. *Ibid.*, verse 22.

3. *Ibid.*, verses 30, 34.

4. *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, pages 238-239.

5. *Ibid.*, page 211.

6. *Joseph Smith History* 1: 7.

7. *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, pages 142-143.

8. *Ibid.*, page 144.

9. *Ibid.*, page 69.

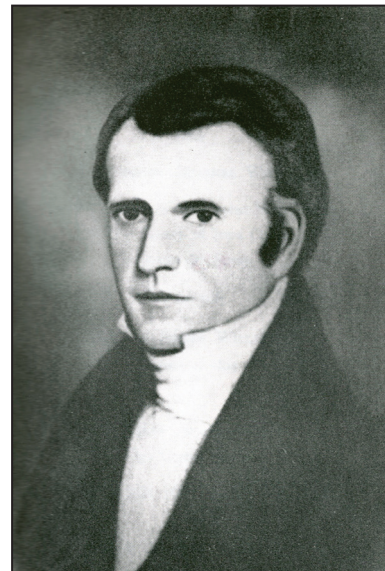
10. *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, page 435.
11. *Documentary History of the Church* 1: 44.
12. *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, page 358.
13. *Ibid.*, pages 364-365.
14. *Ibid.*, page 242.
15. *Emma and Joseph, Their Divine Mission*, Gracia N. Jones, pages 92-93.
16. *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, pages 335-336.
17. *Ibid.*, page 127, note 4.
18. *Ibid.*, page 358.
19. *Ibid.*, pages 435-436.
20. *Ibid.*, page 203.
21. *Ibid.*, page 434.
22. *Documentary History of the Church* 4: 393-399.
23. *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, page 419.
24. *Ibid.*, page 436.
25. *Emma and Joseph, Their Divine Mission*, Gracia N. Jones, page 5.
26. *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, page 136.
27. *Joseph Smith History* 1: 58.
28. *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, page 137.
29. *Emma and Joseph, Their Divine Mission*, Gracia N. Jones, pages 19-20.
30. *The Last Testimony of Emma Smith*, (To her sons Joseph Smith III and Alexander)
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, Dean C. Jessee, page 8.
33. *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, page 181.
34. *Joseph Smith History* (end notes)
35. *Doctrine and Covenants* 110: 30.
36. *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, page 58.
37. *Ibid.*, page 64.
38. *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, page 186, note 2.
39. *Doctrine and Covenants* 110: 1-2.
40. *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, page 335.
41. *Ibid.*, pages 353-354, note 1.
42. *Ibid.*, page 205, note 3.
43. *Ibid.*



## Rebecca Swain Williams – A Woman of Faith

(Part of a Reader's Theater titled "Men and Women of Faith")

by Cecile J. Scribner



Rebecca Swain Williams and Frederick Granger Williams

**Rebecca Swain Williams:** My conversion began long before I heard the Gospel. In many ways I feel like I was led to where the Gospel would reach my ears. I was seventeen years old when I made a voyage from Lake Ontario to Detroit.

**Frederick G. Williams:** And on that voyage, she met the tall, dark-eyed pilot of the ship. Extremely handsome and personable, successful, . . .

**Rebecca:** I suppose you all know my husband, Frederick Granger Williams!

**Frederick:** Affection for each other soon turned to love and we were married in 1815. Rebecca and I finally settled in Kirtland, Ohio in 1828.

**Rebecca:** Very good Frederick, you are getting better at remembering those two important dates! And just two years after our arrival, the first Mormon missionaries arrived in Kirtland. It was 1830, and I attended all of the missionaries' meetings.

**Frederick:** And I came as often as my medical practice would allow.

**Rebecca:** It was such an exciting time in my life. We would study, discuss and learn together. I became convinced of the truthfulness of the Gospel. The excitement and energy of it all still gives me a thrill.

**Restoration Singers:** *Come All Ye Saints of Zion*<sup>1</sup> (sung enthusiastically)

*Come all ye saints of Zion, and let us praise the Lord;  
His ransomed are returning, according to His word.  
In sacred song and gladness, they walk the narrow way  
And thank the Lord who brought them, to see the latter day.*

**Rebecca:** So, in October of that year, I joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at age thirty-two.

**Frederick:** Sometimes I just wanted to leave the church alone, but in the end I could not because I felt drawn back to that sacred, new book of scripture, The Book of Mormon. As the Spirit worked on me, I recognized the truthfulness of the gospel and followed Rebecca's example by being baptized.

**Joseph Smith:** You were as faithful as anyone who had ever joined the Church, Frederick. As I recall, you were ordained an Elder right after your baptism and confirmation, and the very next day you enthusiastically accepted an assignment to leave within a few weeks to serve a mission with Oliver Cowdery.

**Frederick:** I certainly did! And what was supposed to be a three-week mission, turned out to be a ten-month trip to Missouri.

**Rebecca:** Because of Frederick's long absences for the purpose of church service, I spent long months raising my children without the help of my husband.

**Emma Smith:** Oh yes, didn't we all.

**Mother Smith:** Rebecca, I remember how you housed Joseph and Emma in your home when they first arrived in Kirtland. You were always loyal to the whole Smith family.

**Emma Smith:** And Rebecca cared for us through many trying times . . .

**Joseph Smith:** . . . and often in very clever ways! One time a mob came and surrounded the home looking for me. Rebecca disguised me in her bonnet and cloak – can you just imagine that? I was able to leave the house and pass through the crowd to safety. Very clever, indeed, Rebecca.

**Brigham Young:** And then, Joseph, when the mob burst into the John Johnson home in Hiram, Ohio, and dragged you out, tarred and feathered you and Sidney Rigdon, and left you for dead, we were all aware of the kindness that Rebecca and Frederick offered you at that time.

(Soft background music, "*Come, Come Ye Saints*")

**Mother Smith** (to audience, as she recalls this terrible incident): Those terrible men pulled the warm covers from the bed and dragged Joseph out into the cold night where he was savagely clawed and beaten, poisoned, tarred and feathered. One tried to tar up his mouth, but he twisted his head so they could not. All of his clothes were torn off except his shirt collar.

**Emma** (To audience): Another tried to force a vial of poison into Joseph's mouth, but it cracked on his tooth. One man fell on top of him and scratched his body with his nails like a mad cat. Then they left him there, . . . there on the ground.

**Mother Smith:** Perhaps only the Savior himself suffered a similar pain and disgrace for the sake of those who would accept the Gospel.

**Joseph Smith:** That event is a very dark memory in our lives. Rebecca and Frederick both spent the night peeling tar from my bleeding and torn body and helped Emma care for the children. Their succor was greatly needed and appreciated.

**Rebecca:** In becoming a member of the Church, I had tasted the love of God – the least I could do was to return some of that love. My greatest desire was to share the love the Savior has for each of us – to share the Gospel with those I loved most, my own family. So, I wrote my father a letter . . .

**Isaac Swain** (coming up from the audience): This letter infuriates me! I will demand that she leave this church. I will not accept anything of the Mormons. What has she done . . . and what is she doing to us? (then, as if writing a letter) *“Dear Rebecca, I’ve read newspapers about the Book of Mormon and the testimony of the Three Witnesses. I’m sorry to do this, but if you do not leave this church I will vow to cut off all communication with you . . . you will no longer be my daughter.”*

**Rebecca:** *“Dear Father, It gives me pain to hear that your mind is so much disturbed about the Book of Mormon. I’ve read it. I know it is true! I have heard the Three Witnesses, ‘. . . declare in public meeting that they saw a Holy Angel come down from heaven and bring the plates, and lay them before their eyes.’ I know these to be good and honest men. Father, should you and mother know the circumstances as we do in relation to this work, I am persuaded you would believe it.”*<sup>2</sup>

**Isaac:** *“I will have nothing to do with it, and I forbid your brother John to read any more of your letters. I am saddened that you have been so easily swayed . . .”* (shakes his head) Not even one word of repentance in this letter.<sup>3</sup>

**Restoration Singers: *Though Deepening Trials*<sup>4</sup> (Verse 1)**

*Though deepening trials throng your way  
Press on, press on, ye saints of God!  
Ere long the resurrection day  
Will spread its life and truth abroad*

**Frederick:** If only I had been able to support Rebecca.

**Drucilla:** What do you mean Frederick? Why couldn’t you help?

**Frederick:** Those were troubled times, Drucilla. Joseph could tell you the whole story. I was then serving as his counselor in the First Presidency. For a time (a time I’m not proud of), I participated in activities involving several former high-standing members of the Church. Many thought Joseph was a fallen prophet. I began to think so myself. I went to Missouri but was forced off the land in the expulsion order of Governor Boggs. I journeyed to Quincy, Illinois in the wintertime.

**Rebecca:** Upon his arrival in Quincy, Frederick learned that he had been excommunicated from the Church. I had lost a son. The marriage of our daughter Lovina was coming unraveled and my son-in-law had fallen away from the Church. All my dreams - all of them - had been shattered.

**Joseph Smith:** Frederick could easily have felt himself a failure, embittered, and simply could have given up. Quincy, Illinois represents the culmination of the darkest days in the life of President Frederick G. Williams; but it also represents his finest hour as he triumphed over adversity in the final years of his life.

**Brigham Young:** I believe Rebecca was the great strength in his life. It was at this moment of terrible fire-forging that Frederick G. Williams shines. At the first opportunity, he presented himself humbly before



the membership of the Church as General Conference assembled and asked for forgiveness for his former wrongdoings in Ohio and Missouri and expressed his determination to do the will of God. He requested rebaptism, all of which was granted.

**Joseph Smith:** Brother Frederick G. Williams is one of those men in whom I place the greatest confidence and trust, for I have found him ever full of love and brotherly kindness . . . He shall ever have a place in my heart . . . God grant that he may overcome all evil. . . Blessed be Brother Frederick, for he shall never want of a friend, and his generation after him shall flourish.<sup>5</sup>

**Emma Smith:** Frederick's health was never restored, and he died in 1842, two years after his rebaptism. And five years later, Lovina, Frederick and Rebecca's oldest daughter, died and was buried in Quincy.

**Restoration Singers: *Though Deepening Trials (Verse 5)***

*This work is moving on apace,  
And great events are rolling forth;  
The kingdom of the latter days,  
The 'little stone' must fill the earth.*

**Drucilla:** Oh Rebecca, I think you are the "little stone" that Eliza Snow was talking about when she wrote those words – you, Mother Smith and Emma. "By small and simple things are great things brought to pass." You are the inspiration for all of us. However did you manage to go on?

**Brigham Young:** I will tell you how she did it. She had a commitment to the faith – right from the beginning. Her faith and courage endured every imaginable trial. When the Saints trekked west to Utah, she traveled with her son Ezra's family and drove her own team. She remained *steadfast and immovable* to the end.

**Rebecca:** Thank you, President Young.

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1. Hymns, page 38 by W. W. Phelps.
  2. Rebecca Swain Williams letter to Isaac Swain, June 4, 1834, Church History Library, SLC, Utah.
  3. George Swain letter of March 17, 1839, typescript, Church History Library, SLC, Utah.
  4. Hymns, page 122 by Eliza R. Snow.
  5. History of the Church, volume 7, page 297.



## The Restoration of Temple Blessings

by Douglas M. Scribner

### Early Predictions

The restoration of Temple Blessings in the nineteenth century was the means by which all people who die without hearing the Gospel of Jesus Christ can receive the priesthood ordinances necessary for salvation. The temple is also that sacred place where living, faithful Latter-day Saints can be endowed with spiritual knowledge and make covenants that enable them to be sealed to their families forever. Marriages and parent/child relationships are meant to last for eternity, so the temple ordinances were restored to make this a reality. In fact, generations of ancestors can now be united with their posterity forever if they choose to accept the ordinances performed in their behalf. This is a great source of hope for all mankind!

In Joseph Smith's *First Vision*, Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to him in the Sacred Grove of Palmyra, New York. The year was 1820. Following this experience, Joseph pursued the normal chores of life until 1823, when he was nearly seventeen years old. Suddenly, on September 21, while calling upon the Lord in prayer, Joseph received a visitation from an angel who said his name was Moroni. In addition to the information Moroni revealed about the gold plates and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, he also quoted the third and fourth chapters of the Old Testament prophet Malachi. This revelation, however, contained a very important variation from the way Malachi 4: 5-6 appears in the Bible. Moroni said, "I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. . ."<sup>1</sup>

What was this *Priesthood*, and what were these "promises" mentioned by Moroni? At this point Joseph probably did not know, but the words were repeated four times and thus emblazoned upon his memory. There are some who think that this prophecy of Elijah's return was fulfilled when he appeared with Moses to Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, but the only purposes of that visit were to strengthen the Savior so he could face the trials that awaited him, to build the faith of the three apostles who accompanied him there, and to grant them the sealing power of the Melchizedek Priesthood. The Bible Dictionary explains, "We learn from latter-day revelation that Elijah held the sealing power of the Melchizedek Priesthood and was the last prophet to do so before the time of Jesus Christ. He appeared on the Mount in company with Moses (also translated) and conferred the keys of the priesthood on Peter, James and John."<sup>2</sup>

Joseph's attention was focused on the promised acquisition of the gold plates and the *translators* known as the Urim and Thummim so this became the essence of his efforts. Joseph married Emma Hale on January 18, 1827, when he was twenty-one years old and she was twenty-two. The following September, Emma went with Joseph at night in a wagon to the bottom of the hill where the plates were located. This is when the gold plates were delivered into Joseph Smith's hands by the Angel Moroni. In Joseph's own words, "At length the time arrived for obtaining the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the breastplate. On the twenty-second day of September, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-seven, having gone as usual at the end of another year to the place where they



Joseph Smith receiving the Gold Plates from the Angel Moroni in 1827  
painting by Kenneth Riley



Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery receiving the Melchizedek Priesthood from Peter, James and John in 1829  
(By Kenneth Riley)

were deposited, the same heavenly messenger delivered them up to me . . .”<sup>3</sup>

At first, the translation of the Gold Plates moved very slowly. Harassment from those who would steal the plates or otherwise interrupt the work was ongoing. Finally, Joseph and Emma, with help from a friend, Martin Harris, left New York and went to the home of Emma’s parents in Harmony, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania. There, when time was available from the labors of life, Joseph began to copy the characters and translate some of them with Emma as his scribe. Despite help from Emma, and later from Martin Harris, the work moved very slowly. It wasn’t until April 5, 1829, that a school teacher named Oliver Cowdery arrived in Harmony to become Joseph’s scribe. In this process of translation, which now was a full time effort, Joseph and Oliver encountered many references to the *Holy Priesthood*, which Moroni had mentioned six years earlier. A notable example was in the book of Alma stating, “*And thus being called by this holy calling and ordained unto the high priesthood, of the holy order of God, to teach his commandments unto the children of men that they also might enter into his rest – this high priesthood being after the order of his Son, which order was from the foundation of the world . . . Now they were ordained after this manner – being called with a holy calling, and ordained with a holy ordinance . . . thus they became high priests forever after the order of the Son, the only begotten of the Father . . .*”<sup>4</sup>

It was the next month, May 1829, in answer to their prayers, that Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery received the Aaronic Priesthood and then also the Melchizedek Priesthood from heavenly messengers. Even though the priesthood and the ordinance of baptism were restored in May 1829, there were several other important things which had to be fulfilled before that aspect of the priesthood, promised from the hand of Elijah could be accomplished. The Book of Mormon was to be published, the church organized, missionary work started, and a temple built before Elijah could come to restore the “*promises made to the fathers.*” The first three of these events had happened by 1830, but the first temple was not complete for another six years. Just as important as building a physical temple was the need to build a Zion people. New converts were being gathered through active missionary work, but they needed to be cleansed from the sins of the world and joined together in unity – pure in heart – and caring for the poor among them.

Safety for Joseph and his family was also an issue! The period of time from the day Joseph received the plates in September, 1827, until the day in January 1831, when he and Emma left New York for Ohio, there was constant and persistent persecution from those who did not want the Latter-day Restoration to roll forth. Joseph recorded, “. . . we were forced to keep secret the circumstances of having received the Priesthood and our having been baptized, owing to a spirit of persecution which had already manifested itself in the neighborhood. We had been threatened with being mobbed from time to time, and this too by professors of religion . . .”<sup>5</sup> It was during this period of time, that Joseph’s brother Hyrum sought refuge and safety by becoming a Freemason. Joseph decided not to do so at that time, possibly because the Book of Mormon so clearly condemned secret combinations.

Joseph knew that Jesus, following His resurrection, made a prediction of future temple blessings. Luke recorded that Jesus appeared to his apostles and gave them instruction and a promise saying, “*And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued (endowed) with power from on high.*”<sup>6</sup> Again, in the book of The Acts of the Apostles, Luke recorded, “*And, being assembled together with them (Jesus) commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence.*”<sup>7</sup>

This promise was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, when Jews from all nations were gathered together in Jerusalem. “*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*”<sup>8</sup>

By the end of 1830, the persecution in western New York was growing in intensity while missionary work was going ahead rapidly in the vicinity of Kirtland, Ohio. In December of 1830, Joseph received a revelation which instructed the church to move. In part it said, “*A commandment I give unto the church, that it is expedient in me that they should assemble together at the Ohio . . .*”<sup>9</sup> This revelation was followed closely by another on January 2, 1831. This gave the Saints a promise to go along with the previous commandment. Leaving their farms, their employment and families in New York was not an easy thing to do, but this promise was a source of hope and inspiration for them. The Lord said, “*Wherefore, for this cause I gave unto you the commandment that ye should go to the Ohio; and there I will give unto you my law; and there you shall be endowed with power from on high.*”<sup>10</sup>

The kind of endowment that the Prophet Joseph Smith anticipated when he received this revelation was an event similar to what the early saints experienced at Pentecost. The word spread rapidly among the church members in New York, and they became excited about the promised event. In that same month of January 1831, Joseph and Emma entered a horse drawn sleigh and, even though Emma was seven months pregnant, they drove the 300 miles to Kirtland, Ohio. Thus they set an example for all the saints to follow.

## Temple Blessings in Kirtland

Life was full of challenges for Joseph and Emma in Kirtland. On April 30, 1831, Emma gave birth to twins, Thadeus and Louisa, both of whom died within a few hours. Thus, Emma had lost three children at birth. It was then that Joseph and Emma were able to adopt a set of twins who had been born to John and Julia Murdock for Julia died while giving birth. They named the twins Joseph Murdock Smith and Julia Smith. In December 1832, the Lord was very specific about the need to move forward with the construction of the Kirtland Temple. In a revelation to Joseph, he said, “*Organize yourselves; prepare every needful thing; and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God.*”<sup>11</sup>

This scripture emphasizes the fact that the Kirtland Temple had other functions than those found in the modern temples built today. This is evident from the floor plan and architectural renderings of the building. Still, the work was progressing slowly. Six months later, on June 1, 1833, the Lord rebuked the saints for delaying the

construction of the temple. He said, “. . . ye have not considered the great commandment in all things that I have given unto you concerning the building of mine house . . . you should build a house, in the which house I design to endow those whom I have chosen with power from on high.”<sup>12</sup>

The word *endow* as used here by the Lord, was in the same context that Jesus used it with his apostles. It was not yet to be individual ordinances for the living and the dead. Instead, it was to be an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all who were deemed worthy to be present, heavenly visitations, and a restoration of *Priesthood Keys* so that individual temple ordinances for the living and the dead might be performed at some time in the future. On January 11, 1833, Joseph Smith had written a letter to W. W. Phelps saying, “*The Lord commanded us, in Kirtland, to build a house of God . . . this is the word of the Lord to us, and we must, yea, the Lord helping us, we will obey: as on conditions of our obedience, he has promised us great things; yea even a visit from the heavens to honor us with his own presence . . .*”<sup>13</sup>

As the Kirtland Temple was nearing completion, Joseph became very concerned that the members of the church become prepared to receive the promised endowment. His journal entries frequently expressed the desire that the Saints purify their lives and treat each other with civility and kindness. To expand these concepts to a larger base of priesthood holders, Joseph reorganized the School of the Prophets on November 3, 1835, and renamed it the *Elders’ School*. On January 14, 1836, Joseph Smith wrote a set of *Rules of Conduct* for behavior in the Kirtland Temple. Since this temple was more like the chapels of today, non-members were welcome as well as members of the church, as long as they would follow the rules. A Temple President would preside and be sure the rules, which were approved by every priesthood quorum, were followed. However, Joseph wrote, “*All persons, whether believers or unbelievers, shall be treated with due respect by the authorities of the church.*”<sup>14</sup>

John Whitmer recorded that Joseph said, “*Before the Lord could endow his servants, we must perform all the ordinances that are instituted in this house (of the Lord).*”<sup>15</sup> To this end, washing, anointing and blessing the presidents of priesthood quorums began January 21 and 22, 1836. These ordinances were first given by Joseph to the members of the First Presidency and the Patriarch of the Church as a preparation for receiving this endowment. Then, in the following days they were given to all priesthood officers. It was also on that same day, January 21, 1836, that The Prophet Joseph Smith received a vision of the Celestial Kingdom which was recorded in his journal by the scribe, Warren Parish. In part he said, “*I saw father Adam, and Abraham; and my father and my mother; my brother Alvin that has long since slept; and (I) marveled how it was that he had obtained an inheritance in that kingdom, seeing that he had departed this life before the Lord had set his hand to gather Israel the second time, and had not been baptized for the remission of sins. Thus came the voice of the Lord unto me, saying: All who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God*”<sup>16</sup>



On Sunday, March 27, 1836, Joseph dedicated the Kirtland Temple. Following the dedicatory prayer, the choir sang “*The Spirit of God,*” which had been written especially for this event by W. W. Phelps, and the congregation stood and rendered the *Hosanna Shout*, repeated three times. That evening over four hundred priesthood bearers were meeting in the temple when “*A noise was heard like the sound of a rushing mighty wind which filled the Temple and all the congregation simultaneously arose, being moved upon by an invisible power; many began to speak in tongues and prophesy . . . The people of the neighborhood came running together, hearing an unusual sound within, and seeing a bright light like a pillar of fire resting upon the Temple.*”<sup>17</sup>

The dedication was repeated the following Thursday because so many members were not able get in to hear it on Sunday. That week was also filled with spiritual experiences. On Wednesday about 300 men attended a Solemn Assembly. There they received the ordinance of *The Washing of Feet*, wherein Joseph said, “*This is a year of Jubilee for us and a time of rejoicing.*” They had fasted all day so they took the sacrament and Joseph said, “*The time that we were required to tarry in Kirtland to be endowed will be fulfilled in a few days.*”<sup>18</sup> Then, on Sunday, April 3, 1836, following the administration of the sacrament, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery retired to the pulpit, the veils being dropped, and bowed themselves in prayer. A vision was opened to both of them, which is recorded as Section 110 in the Doctrine and Covenants. In part the Lord said, “*For behold, I have accepted this house, and my name shall be here; and I will manifest myself to my people in mercy in this house. Yea, I will appear unto my servants, and speak unto them with mine own voice, if my people will keep my commandments, and do not pollute this holy house. Yea the hearts of thousands and tens of thousands shall greatly rejoice in consequence of the blessings which shall be poured out, and the endowment with which my servants have been endowed in this house.*”<sup>19</sup>

Following the Lord’s appearance, Joseph and Oliver were visited by three ancient prophets, Moses, Elias and Elijah, who restored the keys of the gathering of Israel, the gospel of Abraham, and the turning of the hearts of the children to their fathers. “*Joseph Smith later recounted that the visit of Elijah was foretold by the angel Moroni in 1823. He also taught that Elijah restored the keys of the ‘Fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood,’ including the authority to perform ceremonies that would ‘seal’ for eternal duration, marriages and parent child relationships for both the living and the dead.*”<sup>20</sup> There is no mention of any individual Temple Ordinances occurring in Kirtland following the miraculous events surrounding the dedication of the Temple in 1836. The U.S. economic crash of 1837 affected the Saints dramatically and led to the collapse of the Kirtland Safety Society Bank. Many members of the Church apostatized during this dark period of economic distress. Eliza R. Snow described the spiritual downfall of many of the Kirtland Saints saying, “*Many seemed to think that prosperity was dawning upon them . . . and many who had been humble and faithful . . . were getting haughty in their spirits and lifted up in the pride of their hearts. As the Saints drank in the love and spirit of the world, the Spirit of the Lord withdrew from their hearts, and they were filled with pride and hatred toward those who maintained their integrity.*”<sup>21</sup>

Apostasy was well under way in Kirtland. In February 1837, several Elders called a meeting in the temple for all those who considered Joseph Smith to be a fallen prophet. The meeting was held, but Brigham Young testified to them of the validity of Joseph’s calling as a prophet and seer of the Lord. Still, the apostasy grew in strength and eventually fifty leading members of the Church were excommunicated. Finally it became dangerous, so in January 1838, Joseph and his family decided to move and join the church members who had settled in Missouri.

## A Temple in Nauvoo

By the summer of 1838, the Latter-day Saint population in Caldwell County, Missouri was nearly 5,000 people and over half of them lived in the town of Far West. On July 4, 1838, the cornerstone was laid at the Far West Temple Site. However, the relationship between the Latter-day Saints and their northern Missouri neighbors deteriorated rapidly. The conflict and persecution increased until October 27, 1838, when Governor Boggs issued the *Extermination Order* and sent the state militia to war against the Mormons. Further work on the construction of the Far West Temple was impossible. A few days later, Joseph Smith and other church leaders were captured and imprisoned for the next six months. Thus they were unable to help the Saints as they were forced to flee from the State of Missouri. Joseph and his fellow prisoners were held captive through the winter until April 1839, when they were allowed their freedom. The Summer and Fall of 1839 was a time of great trial for the Saints, who were now residing around Commerce and Quincy, Illinois. The mosquitoes in the swamps surrounding Commerce carried malaria, known as the ague, which cost many lives. Joseph was consumed by the efforts to care for his people, drain the swamp, and begin construction of a new city, which he called Nauvoo. Still, in November of that year, Joseph and a few others, including Parley P. Pratt, traveled to the nation’s capitol. On November 28, 1839, they met with U.S. President Martin Van Buren seeking redress for their losses in

Missouri. However, it was of no use. After hearing their plea, President Van Buren said, “*Gentlemen, your cause is just, but I can do nothing for you.*”

Following this unsuccessful interview, Joseph and Parley visited various branches of the church in Pennsylvania. In Philadelphia, they spoke to a congregation of nearly 3,000 people. During this missionary endeavor, Parley P. Pratt recalled that Joseph began teaching the principle of *Eternal Families*. Parley wrote, “*It was from him that I learned that the wife of my bosom might be secured to me for time and all eternity.*” They then returned to Nauvoo on March 4, 1840. The Spring and Summer of 1840 was a time of immense construction. They were building an entire city for the Saints. It was even to have its own unique *Nauvoo Charter*, which would allow them to raise a militia to protect themselves from further mob action.

The first mention of “*Baptism for the Dead*” occurred in August of 1840, when the Prophet Joseph Smith was speaking at the funeral of Seymour Brunson, who died on August 10, in Nauvoo. Seymour was born in 1799, joined the Church in 1831, served two missions, and was on the High Council in both Missouri and Nauvoo. In his sermon, Joseph discussed the principle and doctrine of being baptized *for and in behalf* of those who died without the opportunity of hearing and accepting the restored Gospel of Jesus Christ. On September 12, Joseph informed his own father that it was now the privilege of the Saints to be baptized for their dead. When he did so, Father Smith requested that a baptism should be performed for Joseph’s brother Alvin. Hyrum Smith was baptized for Alvin that same year. Vicarious baptism for those who had died was not a new doctrine, for it had been known and practiced at the time of Christ. The Apostle Paul mentioned it in his letter to the Corinthians, asking, “*Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?*”<sup>22</sup> However, this was the first time this ordinance was restored in the latter days. Church members were overjoyed that they could provide such a blessing to their beloved ancestors. From September 1840 until October 1841, baptism for the dead in the Mississippi River was one of the most frequently performed religious ordinances. Every day of the week members who knew their genealogy lined up at the banks of the river to provide the blessings of baptism for their deceased relatives. William Weeks wrote down these ordinances as they were performed, and thus he became the first Temple Recorder.

On January 19, 1841, Joseph received a revelation from the Lord commanding him to build a temple in Nauvoo. The Lord said, “. . . *build a house to my name, for the Most High to dwell therein. For there is not a place found on earth that he may come to and restore again that which was lost unto you, or which he has taken away, even the fullness of the priesthood. For a baptismal font there is not upon the earth, that they, my saints, may be baptized for those who are dead. For this ordinance belongeth to my house, and cannot be acceptable to me, only in the days of your poverty, wherein ye are not able to build a house unto me. But I command you, all ye my saints, to build a house unto me; and I will grant unto you a sufficient time to build a house unto me; and during this time your baptisms (in the river) shall be acceptable unto me. . . Therefore verily I say unto you, that your anointings, and your washings, and your baptisms for the dead . . . are ordained by the ordinance of my holy house, which my people are always commanded to build unto my holy name. And verily I say unto you, let this house be built unto my name, that I may reveal mine ordinances therein unto my people. For I deign to reveal unto my church things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world, things that pertain to the dispensation of the fullness of times.*”<sup>23</sup>

This same William Weeks who was the recorder of temple ordinances also became the architect for the Nauvoo Temple. Limestone quarries were prevalent up and down the Mississippi River so each stone was cut there and hauled to the temple site for the construction workers to place in the foundation and walls of this amazing edifice. Once the basement of the temple was complete, the Saints built a temporary wooden *baptismal house* in the basement, which was placed on the backs of wooden oxen. The first baptism for a deceased person performed in this wooden font was on November 21, 1841. Construction of the Temple continued around and over this temporary font, but its presence allowed the church to move the baptisms for the dead away from the river and into the confines of the temple. These baptisms for both the living and the dead were open to the public and crowds thronged to watch the ordinances being performed. Then, once the temple was closer to completion, the wooden baptismal font was taken down and replaced with one of stone.

There were several instances of death occurring in the Smith family during the years of 1840 and 1841, which only intensified Joseph's desire to complete the temple so that the ordinances of sealing families together for eternity might be instituted in Nauvoo. Those who died included Joseph's father, Samuel's wife, Mary Bailey Smith, Joseph's younger brother, Don Carlos Smith and a baby born to Joseph and Emma whom they also named Don Carlos.

However, another situation also caused Joseph distress. In June of 1840, a prominent but devious citizen from Springfield, Illinois, by the name of John C. Bennett, arrived in Nauvoo. He was a highly educated and ambitious man who had "*varied experience as a physician, a Methodist preacher, a university president, a military leader, and most recently as the quartermaster general of the state of Illinois.*"<sup>24</sup> John C. Bennett had a previous close relationship with Sidney Rigdon before Sidney was converted to the Restored Church of Jesus Christ. John expressed a strong interest in learning about the Church so he was taught the Gospel. He soon claimed that he had been converted, so he was baptized in Nauvoo and became a member of the Church. John then became extremely involved in Nauvoo politics and was selected to draft the proposal for Nauvoo to have its own charter. Using his many contacts, he then went to the Illinois state capitol in Springfield to lobby for its passage by the legislature. He was successful in obtaining the charter. Then, on February 1, 1841, John C. Bennett was elected mayor of Nauvoo. He was also a Grand Master in the Freemasons and had a plan to establish this organization in Nauvoo.

At that time, Sidney became quite ill so he recommended that John C. Bennett temporarily stand in his place by being an assistant to the First Presidency of the Church. In April 1841, this proposal was presented in General Conference and sustained by those present. For a short time, John became a companion, a confidant and an advisor to the prophet Joseph Smith. In June of 1841, John spearheaded a petition to Quincy, Illinois, recommending that a chapter of the Masonic Lodge be formally established in Nauvoo. This petition was denied because the Quincy Lodge members felt that they did not know those in Nauvoo sufficiently well to vouch for them. John then sent a similar petition to Springfield which reached the attention of Abraham Jonas, the Masonic Grand Master of the state of Illinois, claiming that several Nauvoo citizens were already "*worthy and fit*" Freemasons, and that a lodge should be established there. Upon this recommendation, on October, 1841, Grand Master Jonas issued a dispensation for the formation of a Nauvoo Freemasons Lodge.

Though John C. Bennett initiated the creation of the Nauvoo Lodge, he was not present to see it fulfilled. On June 15, 1841, just two and a half months after Bennett had been sustained as an Assistant President, Joseph Smith learned that he had an estranged wife and child in Ohio, though he had claimed to be unmarried. He was also then accused of adultery in Nauvoo and of a foiled attempt to assassinate the prophet. John C. Bennett left Nauvoo abruptly in a rage and was excommunicated in the spring of 1842. Church scholar Matthew B. Brown wrote, "*There is no evidence that Joseph Smith played a direct role in trying to have a Masonic Lodge established among the saints, though it must be admitted that the Masons adhered to principles that would have been especially attractive to the leader of a frequently and recently persecuted people. . . The public installation ceremonies for the Nauvoo Lodge took place on 15 March 1842. An immense crowd attended the installation of the Lodge officers. . . Grand Master Jonas delivered a polished address on Ancient York Masonry to the crowd gathered before him. . . He probably told them the legendary tale of freemasonry stretching back in time to the building of Solomon's Temple.*"<sup>25</sup>

There were many church leaders in Nauvoo who had previously been initiated into the Masonic fraternity at some earlier point in their lives. However, immediately following the installation ceremony, several additional members of church leadership decided to enter into freemasonry. They included Joseph Smith, William Law, Brigham Young and Willard Richards. There are three degrees of advancement in a Masonic Lodge: Apprentice, Fellow Craftsman, and Grand Master and there is normally a significant period of time between each one. However, Abraham Jonas made an exception for Joseph Smith so that he was initiated into the lodge on March 15, and then advanced to Fellow Craftsman and Grand Master the very next day. Some people have speculated that Joseph Smith used the symbolism of the Masonic rituals as a basis for the Temple Endowment ceremony. Though there may be some similarities, the Masons certainly did not understand the purpose and meaning



of symbols which may have been passed down to them through the ages. Lorenzo Snow later wrote that the Prophet and the other Nauvoo Church leaders joined freemasonry in order to “*obtain influence in furtherance of the purposes of the Lord.*” Though Joseph was curious to learn about freemasonry, he had very little involvement with it after March 16, 1842.

Next came the restoration of the individual endowment for men and women. Thus, one of the most important things Joseph did in 1842 was to prepare the upstairs room of his newly constructed red brick store for the introduction of the *Temple Endowment Ordinance*. Perhaps he sensed that he might not live until the completion of the Nauvoo Temple so felt he could wait no longer. On April 28, Joseph lectured to the recently created Relief Society and said, “*The Church is not fully organized, in its proper order, and cannot be until the temple is completed, where places will be provided for the administration of the ordinances of the priesthood.*” He also spoke of “*delivering the Keys of the Priesthood*” to the Church and women receiving them in connection with their husbands. This he then wrote as an editorial on “*The Temple*” and published it in a portion of his serialized church history.

On May 4, 1842, nine men were invited to Joseph’s red brick store where the upstairs walls had been specially painted and decorated to receive their temple endowments. These nine individuals were: Hyrum Smith (Patriarch), Brigham Young (Apostle), Heber C. Kimball (Apostle), Willard Richards (Apostle), William Law (Counselor in First Presidency), William Marks (Nauvoo Stake President), Newell K. Whitney (Presiding Bishop), George Miller (Bishop), and James Adams (Springfield Branch President). Joseph also received the covenants and symbols of his own endowment that same day. In his journal that day, Joseph wrote the following: “*The principles and order of the Priesthood attending to washings, anointments, endowments and the communication of keys pertaining to the Aaronic Priesthood and so on to the highest order of the Melchizedek Priesthood . . . by which anyone is enabled to secure the fullness of these blessings which have been prepared for the Church of the Firstborn. . . In this council was instituted the ancient order of things for the first time in these last days. And the communications I made to this council were of things spiritual, and to be received only by the spiritually minded (and) there was nothing made known to these men but will be made known to all the Saints of the last days, as soon as they are prepared to receive (them) and a proper place (a temple) is prepared to communicate them.*”<sup>26</sup>

In the months that followed, Joseph Smith administered the endowment ceremony to a few more men and women including Mercy Fielding Thompson (Hyrum’s sister in-law), whose husband Robert Thompson died the previous year. During Joseph’s lifetime, about eighty people received their endowments, including both men and women, in this building. These members then became the Temple Ordinance Workers when the construction of the Nauvoo Temple was complete. However, persecutions of Joseph Smith continued to increase in the fall of 1842 because of the attempted assassination of Governor Boggs in Missouri. Joseph was hundreds of miles away when this happened, but angry men attempted to capture and imprison him nonetheless. In September of 1842, Joseph went into seclusion, but first he received a revelation that he was to instruct the saints to press forward with the completion of the temple and the recording of all temple ordinances including those being performed prior to finishing the edifice. “*And again, verily thus saith the Lord; let the works of my temple . . . be continued on and not cease; and let your diligence, and your perseverance, and patience, and your works be redoubled . . . When any of you are baptized for your dead, let there be a recorder, and let him be eye-witness of your baptisms . . . let all the records be had in order, that they may be put in the archives of my holy temple to be held in remembrance from generation to generation, saith the Lord of Hosts.*”<sup>27</sup>

Joseph was particularly anxious that the work of the saints pertaining to the baptism of their dead ancestors move forward even though the temple was still under construction. From his place of seclusion Joseph wrote, “*... by conforming to the ordinance and preparation that the Lord ordained and prepared before the foundation of the world, for the salvation of the dead who should die without a knowledge of the gospel . . . And now my dearly beloved brethren and sisters, let me assure you that these are principles in relation to the dead and the living that cannot be lightly passed over, as pertaining to our salvation. For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation, as Paul says concerning the fathers – that they without us cannot be made perfect – neither can we without our dead be made perfect. . . The earth will be smitten with a curse unless there is a welding link of some kind or other between the fathers and the children . . . it is baptism for the dead.*”<sup>28</sup>

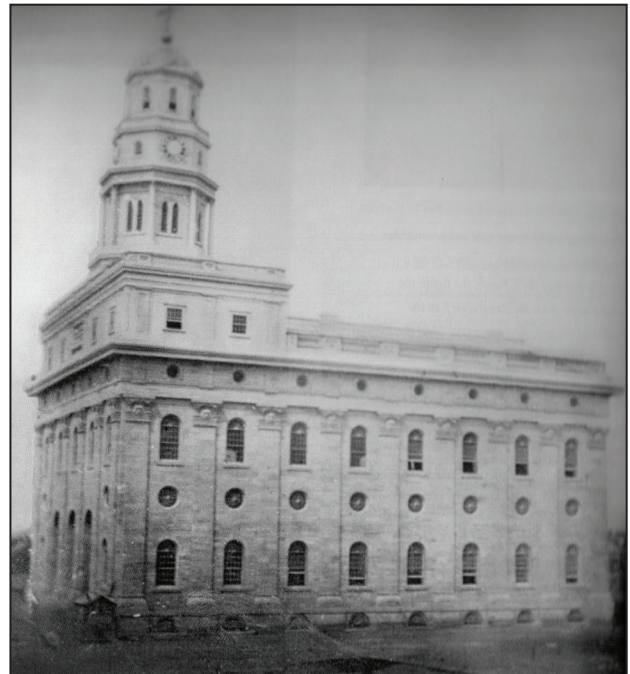
The final temple ordinances to be restored had to do with sealing families together for eternity. In May of 1843, Joseph received a revelation wherein the Lord described the requirements for exaltation. He said, “*In the celestial glory there are three heavens or degrees; and in order to obtain the highest, a man must enter into this order of the priesthood, meaning the new and everlasting covenant of marriage.*”<sup>29</sup> Then



Joseph and Emma Smith

in July of 1843, further information was revealed about the temple marriage covenant. “*And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant (of marriage) and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of Promise by him who is anointed, unto whom I have appointed this power and the keys of this priesthood . . . (it) shall be of full force when they are out of the world. . . to their exaltation and glory . . .*”<sup>30</sup> The prophet explained to the saints that a married couple could be sealed together by the power of the priesthood for time and all eternity. Many of the men and women who had recently been endowed in the upper room of the red brick store were sealed to their spouses in the new and everlasting covenant at that very place by Joseph Smith. In May of 1843, Emma Smith received her endowment and she and Joseph were sealed together for eternity.

On January 21, 1844, the prophet Joseph Smith recorded in his journal, “*Preached at the southeast corner of the temple to several thousand people, although the weather was somewhat unpleasant. My subject was the sealing of the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers.*”<sup>31</sup> Wilford Woodruff recorded that sermon by Joseph Smith and included it in the church history. Joseph spoke of the *Spirit of Elijah* and that this powerful influence enables church members to become “*Saviors of Mount Zion*” for their ancestors and to become sealed to them in the soon to be completed Nauvoo Temple. However, Joseph was not able to see the completion of his beloved temple. In 1844 the persecutions became intense, fanned by the attacking articles written by editors of the newspapers in nearby towns. Most notable were those by Thomas Sharp, editor of the *Warsaw Signal* who advocated Joseph’s death. These dire predictions were fulfilled on June 27, 1844 at Carthage, Illinois when Joseph and Hyrum were martyred by an angry mob at the Carthage Jail. Their brother Samuel was also pursued relentlessly by the mob and died a month later as a result of the fatigue he experienced in that life-or-death chase.



The Original Nauvoo Temple

Still, the work of construction on the Nauvoo Temple went forward under the direction of Brigham Young, president of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles. It was a magnificent structure for its time and has now been restored exactly as it was, from the original architectural drawings of William Weeks. On December 10, 1845 – a year and a half after the death of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball began officiating in the temple that day and each day thereafter. By the end of the year, over a thousand members had

received the ordinances of the endowment. According to temple records, 5,615 of the saints were endowed in the Nauvoo Temple before going West on the pioneer trail. An account given by one of these temple workers, Sarah Dearmon Pea Rich, illustrates the feelings of these valiant people before leaving for the West. *“The work of giving endowments commenced. President Young chose many brothers and sisters to come to the Temple and assist in giving endowments. Among those chosen were Mr. Rich and myself. We were to be there in the morning and remained until the work was done at ten or twelve o’clock at night . . . We helped in the House of the Lord for four months. . . until the house was closed and we as a people commenced to prepare ourselves to depart to the Rocky Mountains. . . Many were the blessings we received in the House of the Lord which caused us joy and comfort in the midst of all our sorrows, and enabled us to have faith in God, knowing he would guide us and sustain us in the unknown journey that lay ahead of us. For if it had not been for the faith and knowledge that was bestowed upon us in that Temple by the influence and help of the spirit of the Lord, our journey would have been like one taking a leap in the dark. To start out on such a journey in the winter as it were, in our state of poverty, it would seem like walking into the jaws of death. But we had faith in our Heavenly Father and put our trust in him, feeling that we were his chosen people and had embraced his gospel. Instead of sorrow, we felt to rejoice.”*<sup>32</sup>

Another aspect of the restoration of temple blessings is found in the depiction of the creation of the earth and the experiences of Adam and Eve. The information portrayed in the temple goes well beyond the account given in the Book of Genesis in the Old Testament. The Prophet Joseph Smith received his expanded perspective of the creation gradually between 1829 and 1842, beginning with his translation of the Book of Mormon in 1829. Then in 1830, as he was retranslating parts of the Bible, the Lord revealed a great deal more about the creation. Much of this is now found in the Book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price. Additional revelations on this subject were given at various times during the decade that followed. However, the greatest insights came early in 1842 when Joseph translated the ancient Egyptian papyrus now known as the Book of Abraham.

In addition to this foundation of doctrine about the creation, the Lord instructed Joseph with numerous details which enabled him to write a drama about the creation for the temple endowment. Considering the limited technology available at that time, the method was ingenious. Each portion of the drama was to be portrayed in a different room of the temple. Murals were to be painted on the walls of each room depicting the *set* for that particular scene. Then the temple patrons would move from room to room as each succeeding scene was enacted. When Joseph first presented the endowment ceremony to the nine church leaders on May 4, 1842, in the upstairs room of the Nauvoo red brick store, he tried to simulate this effect.

On May 3<sup>rd</sup> Joseph asked Lucius Scovil and a few other men to come to the top floor of his store. There the prophet told these men to *“fit up that room preparatory to giving endowments to a few Elders.”* Joseph instructed them on every detail so this large, 25 foot by 44 foot room would be ready by noon the next day. Lucius later reported, *“everything was arranged representing the interior of a temple as much as circumstances would permit.”*<sup>33</sup>

In describing this event, Matthew Brown wrote: *“Brigham Young, (one of the few people who received the temple rituals on May 4) recalled that the hall was divided up into several different departments. One of the workmen who helped to furnish these rooms said that ‘trees’ were placed in one of them in order to represent a ‘garden’ . . . When the temple in St. George, Utah was dedicated by President Brigham Young, in 1877, he reminisced about when he had first received the temple ordinances thirty-five years earlier. He explained that after Joseph Smith had given the inaugural group the various elements that constituted the endowment, he turned to Brigham and gave him an administrative task. He said, ‘Brother Brigham, this is not arranged right but we have done the best we could under the circumstances in which we are placed, and I wish you to take this matter in hand and organize and systematize all of these ceremonies.’ ”*<sup>34</sup>

The restoration of Temple Blessings in the latter days was not complete without the inclusion of symbolism. The temples of ancient Israel were full of sacred symbolism that pointed the people to the promised coming of the Messiah. For example, the sacrificial lamb was a symbol depicting the eventual sacrifice of the life of the Savior. As with many aspects of Mosaic Law, the need for these symbols was fulfilled by the birth, life, ministry and

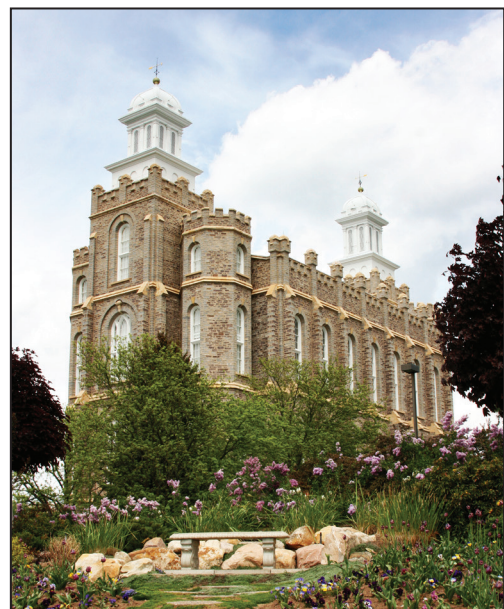
atonement of Jesus, who was the promised Christ. Today the symbolism in modern temples point the Latter-day Saints toward the Second Coming of the Messiah, and the need to purify their lives in preparation for the Millennium when Jesus will reign on earth as well as in heaven. In the priesthood ordinance of the endowment, the symbols remind us of our Temple Covenants in exactly the same way that the symbols of the sacrament remind us of our Baptismal Covenants.

When Brigham Young and the Latter-day Saints who followed him entered the Salt Lake Valley on July 24, 1847, they no longer had access to a temple. Those men who forced them to evacuate Nauvoo desecrated and partially destroyed the recently completed Nauvoo Temple. At first President Young was entirely focused on helping the church members cross the plains and become established in their Rocky Mountain home. However, he soon turned his thoughts to the construction of a new temple. On April 6, 1853, Brigham Young laid the cornerstone of the Salt Lake Temple in a solemn ceremony. However, construction of this edifice was delayed several times. The foundation had been completed with large sandstone blocks when Brigham learned that Johnson's Army was approaching the valley. The entire foundation was buried to prevent it from being vandalized. A few years later, when the danger had passed, the workers uncovered the sandstone foundation only to find that it had cracked badly. In reality it was a blessing, for this stone would have never been able to support the weight of a granite temple. The entire project had to begin all over again, this time with solid granite foundation stones. From start to finish, the Salt Lake Temple took forty years to build so other temples were completed earlier.



*Manti Temple - 2013*

Wilford Woodruff, of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, was called to be the first President of the Saint George Temple. Up to this time the Temple Endowment had only been given to living church members even though Baptism for the Dead had been introduced much earlier. Now President Young directed Elder Woodruff to begin in earnest the temple work for the salvation of those who had died. It was in the Saint George Temple that the first endowments for the dead were performed. That same year, President Young selected and dedicated two more temple sites in Utah. They were to be built in Logan and in Manti.



*St. George Temple (above) Logan Temple (on right)*

Brigham Young then defined the meaning of the word endowment by saying, “*Your endowment is to receive all those ordinances in the House of the Lord, which are necessary for you, after you have departed this life, to enable you to walk back to the presence of the Father, passing the angels who stand as sentinels, being enabled to give them the key words, the signs and tokens pertaining to the Holy Priesthood, and gain your eternal exaltation in spite of earth and hell.*”<sup>35</sup>



Salt Lake Temple

The Salt Lake Temple was completed and dedicated on April 6, 1893. Then in the 1894 General Conference, President Woodruff announced that he had received a revelation from the Lord that temple work for the dead should primarily be done by members for their own ancestors so that the sealing performed would link the member to their progenitors. He announced that, “. . . *from this time forth, members are to trace their genealogies as far as they can, and to be sealed to their fathers and mothers . . . thus uniting the generations through temple ordinances.*”<sup>36</sup> As a result, the Utah Genealogical Society was organized in 1894. The initiation of family history research was then the final step in completing the Restoration of Temple Blessings and it opened the door

to the twentieth century as a period of temple expansion on a world-wide basis. Though minor changes in the details of the temple ordinances have come by revelation to living prophets since then, the essence of these exalting ordinances, covenants and symbols remain essentially the same.

## The Spirit of Elijah

I loved my mission to Australia. The people were warm and friendly. Many were not very religious, but they were almost always willing to have a conversation with an American missionary. The church was growing there, especially among young adults who were not steeped in religious traditions but were spiritually inclined and open to the acquisition of new knowledge. Our Mission President was Elder Bruce R. McConkie so we as missionaries drank deeply at the fountain of his gospel knowledge and shared it with the people. It was a fulfillment of the prophecy of the prophet Joseph Smith when he said, “*How long can rolling waters remain impure? What power shall stay the heavens? As well might man stretch forth his puny arm to stop the Missouri River in its decreed course, or to turn it up stream, as to hinder the Almighty from pouring down knowledge from heaven upon the heads of the Latter-day Saints.*”<sup>37</sup> We were the purveyors of gospel knowledge to a thirsty people. There were no temples in Australia in the early 1960’s but the people were being prepared and, today, temples dot the land.

Upon returning to America, I decided to enroll in the graduate school of engineering at Brigham Young University. Though the courses were rigorous, there was still time to explore other aspects of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is where I first encountered the Spirit of Elijah. I was called to teach a Sunday-School class on Family History Research, which was a subject that I knew practically nothing about. The teachings of the Prophets Joseph Smith and Joseph F. Smith, that every person who has ever lived or ever will live will eventually hear the gospel and choose for themselves, was inspiring. This truth is like a penetrating beacon of light in a dark and dreary world. Most religions that espoused Christianity declared that those who never heard of Christ were doomed to the same fate as those who knowingly rejected him. When President Woodruff first directed church members to seek for knowledge about their own ancestors, there was no pool of names available at the

newly dedicated temples. It was through great effort and sacrifice that members began preparing the names of those who had died so that their temple work could be done vicariously. In the Saint George Temple, members who came to perform endowments for the dead were turned away unless they brought a family name with them. Most of these members had come from Europe and there was no money to pay for European researchers to gather their family names. However, some of the sisters even cut off and sold their own hair to obtain enough money to have the research performed.

This urgency to perform vicarious temple ordinances for those who have died became more clearly understandable to me when I reflected upon the letters written by the ancient apostle Peter to the church members of his time. Peter reminded them of their own salvation and of the great effort that the resurrected Jesus made to launch the preaching of the gospel to the spirits of those who had died long before his own ministry. Peter said, *“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.”*<sup>38</sup> Peter explained the reason why Jesus launched missionary work in the spirit world. He said, *“For, for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men on the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.”*<sup>39</sup> Knowing this aspect of the Plan of Salvation made it easier for me to accept the value and importance of the commandment to go forward and participate in this sacred ordinance work for the dead.

I began to feel the promptings of the Spirit of Elijah turning my heart to those ancestors who had gone before me and to the promises that God had made to them. This began a fifty-year long effort on my part to learn as much as possible about the life of each ancestor and to vicariously perform temple ordinances in their behalf. Of my own four grandparents, three had come from other lands (Scotland, England and Germany) and the fourth had been in America since 1679. The research in each area was fascinating and I learned much about their individual and family lives. More importantly, I have had great feelings of connection to each one as I took their names to the temple and performed ordinances in their behalf. I know that the temple ordinances are their source of hope and I have grown to love them. Truly we learn to love the people we serve. This is especially so for those who have gone before us and in many cases have sacrificed that our lives might be blessed. Perhaps the greatest joy has come to me as I’ve taken the names of my own parents to the temple and have had them sealed for time and all eternity and then have been sealed to them myself.



*My parents, Alice Jane (Johnson) and Gordon Raymond Scribner*

As the Spirit of Elijah has been poured out upon the earth, many people not of our faith have taken interest in researching their ancestral lines. Today a large number of the people who come to use the church genealogical libraries are not members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They too have been benefited by having their hearts turned to those who have gone before them. It gives them a profound feeling of purpose and a connection to their progenitors. Perhaps American General John Mansfield (1822-1896) phrased it best when he said, *“Those who take no interest in their ancestors, do not deserve to be remembered by their posterity.”* I am grateful for the Spirit of Elijah and the good effect it has had upon my life.

In conclusion, let us remember the Lord’s instruction to the Prophet Joseph Smith which he then gave us saying: *“And now my dearly beloved brethren and sisters, let me assure you that these are principles in relation to the dead*

*and the living that cannot be lightly passed over, as pertaining to our salvation. For their salvation is necessary and essential to our salvation, as Paul said concerning the fathers – that they without us cannot be made perfect – neither can we without our dead be made perfect.”*<sup>40</sup>

It is my prayer that each of us will ponder this history as a way of strengthening faith and increasing desire to partake of the blessings of the temple in our lives today. I have now come full circle. The questions that confronted me the first time I entered a temple have been resolved. Now I feel a sense of peace as I participate in temple work, especially when I am able to perform these ordinances for my own ancestors. I feel the welding link to each of them as promised by the ancient prophet Elijah. I know that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is true and that the restoration of temple blessings will bring joy to each of us if we will participate in them with faith and hope.

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1. Joseph Smith History 1: 38 – 39.
  2. *Bible Dictionary*, page 664.
  3. Joseph Smith History 1: 59.
  4. Alma 13: 6 – 9.
  5. Joseph Smith History 1: 75.
  6. Luke 24: 49.
  7. Acts 1: 4-5.
  8. Acts 2: 4.
  9. *Doctrine and Covenants* (D&C), 37: 3.
  10. D&C 38: 32.
  11. D&C 88: 119.
  12. D&C 95: 3, 8.
  13. *Documentary History of the Church* (D.H.C.), Volume 1, page 316.
  14. *Joseph Smith Papers*, Volume 1, page 153.
  15. *Ibid.*, page 167.
  16. D&C 137: 5-7.
  17. D.H.C., Volume 2, page 428.
  18. *Joseph Smith Papers*, Volume 1, page 214.
  19. D&C 110: 7-9.
  20. *Joseph Smith Papers*, Volume 1, page 222.
  21. *Biography and Family Record of Lorenzo R. Snow*, by Eliza R. Snow.
  22. I Corinthians 15: 29.
  23. D&C 124: 27-31 and 39-41.
  24. *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, page 263.
  25. *Mormons and Masons*, Matthew B. Brown, pages 70 – 72.
  26. D.H.C. Volume 5, pages 1-2.
  27. D&C 127: 4-9.
  28. D&C 128: 5, 15, 18.
  29. D&C 131: 1-2.
  30. D&C 132: 19.
  31. D.H.C. Volume 6, pages 183-184.
  32. *Reminiscences of Sarah Dearmon Pea Rich*, pages 65-66, LDS Church Archives.
  33. *Deseret News*, February 15, 1884.
  34. *Mormons and Masons*, Matthew B. Brown, pages 106 – 112.
  35. *Journal of Discourses* 2: 31.
  36. *Deseret Weekly*, April 1894.
  37. D&C 131: 33.
  38. I Peter 3: 18-20.
  39. I Peter 4: 6.
  40. D&C 128: 15.



## Happiness – Joyous Interludes Between Troubles

(Talk Given at the Santa Rosa, California Stake Woman’s Conference in 2012)

by Cecile J. Scribner



Back: Scott, Doug, Russ Middle: Lora, Cecile, Spencer, Jim, Craig Sitting: Christy and Gina - 1987

Twenty years ago, Doug and I were advisors to the Single Adults in the Santa Rosa California Stake, a calling that blessed our lives beyond measure – and that of our family as well. We had monthly firesides in our home and right before one of them, a single divorced woman came into our living room. We knew her well – she hardly ever had a smile on her face, and almost everything that came out of her mouth was negative. This particular night, she stared at our family picture and in a saddened voice said, *“If I could have a husband like yours, a family like yours, and a house like yours, I would be happy.”* Now, we all know that things look pretty good in family pictures for you can’t see the troubles, the disagreements, the illnesses, the losses: pictures can represent the ideal. Nevertheless, no matter how it looked, I answered her and said, *“These things help, it is true, but it really takes something very different to bring happiness. Happiness is found inside of you whether you have any of these things or not.”*



## So, what is happiness?

When my son Craig was on his mission, I asked him what he thought happiness was and he said: “*Happiness is knowing that the life you’re living is acceptable to God.*” The Prophet Joseph Smith said, “*Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God.*”<sup>1</sup> Who knew the Plan of Salvation better than the Prophet Joseph Smith? He knew that God’s plan for us was a plan for happiness. In the Book of Mormon we read: “. . .*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.*”<sup>2</sup> Before we ever came to this earth, we chose to accept this plan. Our happiness can be wrapped up in repenting, being baptized, receiving the Gift of the Holy Ghost, keeping the commandments and becoming sanctified.

We become sanctified by making and keeping covenants, which we make at the waters of baptism and in the holy temples. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ are a covenant-making people. A covenant is simply a two-way promise. As we make promises to obey certain commandments, Heavenly Father also keeps his promise made to us that we will have His Spirit to be with us, and many more promises that are sacred and almost unimaginable. Many of these covenants are made in the Temple. Now I’d like to spend the time talking about finding happiness.

## Formula For Happiness

Is there a formula? I researched this question years ago and have come up with a formula that is easy to remember. It floats in my head all the time – I can’t seem to forget it. ***Know Thyself, Control Thyself and Give Thyself.*** To me these three elements are the formula for happiness, success and self-esteem, which in my mind are all intertwined.

1. Socrates gave us the first element. He said, “***Know Thyself;***” which is to know who you are – that you are a child of God, that He loves you and you love Him. It is by knowing this, that you can have personal communication with Him and that He will hear you.

2. The second element came from Cicero, who said, “***Control Thyself;***” This is being in control of your actions, your appetites, your passions, desires and even financial habits. It is knowing you can have everything in the world that will make you happy, but on your own terms, not Satan’s. His is the way of the world, but there are no shortcuts in this area. Control takes effort, time, patience and prayer.

3. The third element came from the Savior. He said, “***Give Thyself;***” Serving others will bring us happiness. Knowing that you have possibly been the answer to someone else’s prayer and need is the sweetest of feelings. This could be missionary work, forgiveness and kindness in your own family, or just being a good neighbor.

You don’t have to be a member of the LDS Church or any church for that matter to put these three elements into your life and thus find happiness, success and self-esteem. Anybody can do it. But as I mentioned, we are a covenant-making people, and when you make and keep sacred covenants, you take these three elements to a higher level, which in turn will give you greater happiness, even eternal happiness. As we make covenants and thus become recipients of great blessings, we learn more about God, our relationship with Him, and His with us. As we covenant to control our appetites and passions and keep them within the bounds the Lord has set, our self esteem increases – we just plain and simply like ourselves better. Then, as we covenant to sacrifice time, talents and energy in building the kingdom of God, we have taken *giving* to a new level – we give more freely. There is a happiness and satisfaction that is unobtainable in any other way.

## Troubles

There are people – many people - who have achieved happiness, success and self-esteem – despite their troubles. *Troubles* can consist of loneliness, loss of home from fire or flood, or perhaps loss of home and business from economic downfall, loss of children through death, loss of a husband, addiction to food, drugs or technology, loss

of health, loss of faith, loss of the fulfillment of dreams, accidents, loss of self-respect. As we deal with troubles, happiness isn't an easy plateau to reach. In the biblical sense, many of these troubles are called *chastenings*. In Hebrews we read, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."<sup>3</sup> Paul also said ". . .but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope."<sup>4</sup>

Are troubles actually a threat to our happiness? I'm basically a news junkie – I love to watch the presidential debates, then all the commentaries that follow. I watch the news every day – and frankly that is enough to ruin anyone's day if they let it: inflation, energy, murders, unemployment, natural disasters, sexual abuse. With all this happening, W.C. Fields once said, that we should "smile first thing in the morning and get it over with." However, we should be concerned with the national happenings, for America is the land where the Lord chose to restore his Gospel. It's a promised land, and we must support good moral men and women who can lead our country and keep it free, so that we can worship according to the dictates of our own conscience.

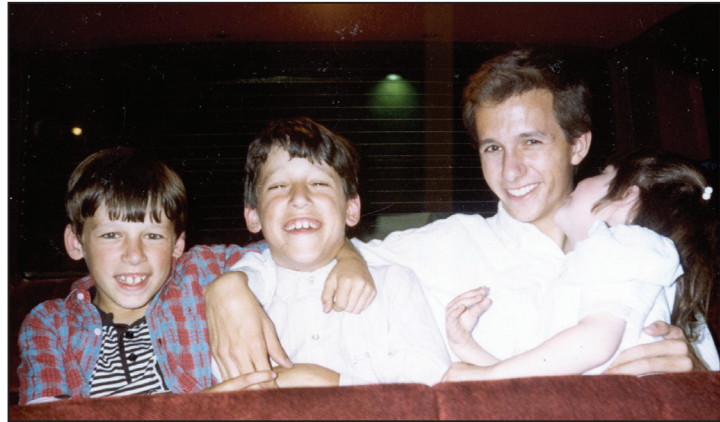
But our happiness does not end if we have national disasters. Our happiness comes from within. It's a choice we make. What we need to avoid is discouragement. We can have trouble in our lives, which many have had, and still find happiness. Quoting F. Scott Fitzgerald, Elder Jeffrey Holland said, "Discouragement has a 'germ' of its own."<sup>5</sup> It's one of Satan's tools. It can draw us downward. We become unhappy and soon we make others unhappy. Elder Holland also said, "The scriptures teach that preparation – prevention, if you will – is perhaps the major weapon in our arsenal against discouragement and self-defeat."<sup>6</sup> So we can't avoid trouble in our lives, but we can prevent discouragement. Many troubles are not under our control. In fact, most of them that I mentioned are not under our control. These troubles have come to good people, who are now having their strength tested. For God wants us to be strong as well as good.

## Examples of Self-Esteem and Happiness

I love the story that Elder Holland tells about Thomas Edison. Edison was almost penniless, but devoted ten years to developing a nickel-alkaline storage battery. He had a film and production company that supported this effort. Suddenly the word, "FIRE" echoed through the plant. Fire companies from eight towns arrived, but the heat was so intense and the water pressure so low that the fire hoses had no effect. Thomas Edison was sixty-seven years old – no age to begin anew. His daughter was frantic, wondering if her father's spirit was broken. She saw him running towards her. He spoke first and said, "Where's your mother? Go get her. Tell her to get her friends. They'll never see another fire like this as long as they live!" At 5:30 the next morning, with the fire barely under control, he called his employees together and announced, "We're rebuilding – and by the way, does anyone know where we can get some money?" Virtually everything we now recognize as a Thomas Edison contribution to our lives, particularly the incandescent light bulb, came after that disaster. Remember, "trouble has no necessary connection with discouragement – discouragement has a germ of its own." Thomas Edison certainly had a sense of humor, but he had amazing control over his emotions – he wouldn't give Satan even a slight foothold.

Again, my formula for happiness: *Know Thyself, Control Thyself, Give Thyself*. Perhaps Thomas Edison was strong in all three of those areas. Another person who also has this strength and sense of humor is our first son, Russ. When he was young, it's true that we provided many activities that could help develop self-confidence: swim lessons, soccer, scouts, piano lessons - and he became very good in several of those areas. But we sadly found out that self-confidence isn't the same as self-esteem – it's not something you can just give to somebody. Unfortunately, our son didn't seem to like himself. Russ went off to college, but didn't do too well. He was failing in a lot of areas. Then he went on a mission to Colombia, which proved to be the key to life for him. As he taught others about God, he learned what his own relationship with God was. He came to *Know* himself. A mission isn't a place for dating, or being a party animal – it's a place of hard work and sacrifice. It's where a lot of young people learn the power of fasting and gaining control over their own bodies as they are serving others and helping them too, to give up life-long habits in order to be baptized and confirmed members of the Church. When Russ came home two years later, he was very thin, and we, of course, were worried about that. The Bishop

of the Young Single Adult Ward got up to introduce Russ as the next speaker, and seemed to go on and on about how skinny he was, “*He left on his mission skinny and has now come back even skinnier, etc.*” I was devastated and prayed so hard for Russ, worrying that his self-esteem would be destroyed altogether. Russ got up to speak. He held the microphone and stood sideways one direction and then sideways another direction. “*What was he doing?*” Then he finally spoke, “*After that introduction, I hope you all can see me behind this microphone!*” The whole audience, who seemed as tense as I was, just broke down in laughter. Russ was comfortable with who he was! It’s such a delight to be around someone like that.



Russ with Spencer, Jimmy and Lora  
the night we picked him up from his mission 1988

## A Joyful Interlude Between Troubles - Emma

Emma Smith is certainly a woman who also fits this category. She definitely knew who she was and would not let that germ of discouragement stay with her long. Her heart was big, and her home was always open to the stranger who needed a place to stay. I see her after the loss of her twins when she was able to open her heart to the Murdock twins, whose mother died at their birth, and give them the Mother’s love that they needed and raise them as her own. After Joseph and Hyrum were killed, she took in Joseph’s mother, Lucy, and mourned with her and cared for her until she died. In the movie, *Joseph Smith, Prophet of the Restoration*, my heart goes out to Emma after the loss of her fourth child when she says to her husband, “*Does God intend on taking everything I love away from me?*” And, unfortunately, that’s just exactly what happened to her. And yet, Emma knew

that much strength came to her from her husband – from his faith in a loving Heavenly Father, from his positive outlook, from his joyous nature. She let him help her through these troubles, just as we need to let others help us through our troubles. No wonder she was called an “*Elect Lady.*”



Emma and Joseph at the organization of the Relief Society, with  
Emma as its first president. (By Nadine Barton)

The Lord gave Joseph Smith a revelation just for Emma.<sup>7</sup> I like to call Doctrine and Covenants 25 the “*Elect Lady*” revelation. Many of the things he tells Emma, can also be told to us, particularly in verses 13-15 where he says: “*Wherefore lift up thy heart and rejoice, and cleave unto the covenants which thou has made . . . Beware of pride. . . keep my commandments continually, and a crown of righteousness thou shalt receive. And except thou do this, where I am you cannot come.*” I wonder why the Lord told Emma to cleave unto her covenants. To me *cleave* is a strong word – it means to cling closely, steadfastly, or faithfully to something or

somebody. Why was this necessary for Emma, particularly at this time in her life? When this revelation was given to Emma in June of 1830, she had already lost her first born child. She had also spent five months alone while Joseph was away to finish the publication of the Book of Mormon. Persecution was rising in Harmony, Pennsylvania where she lived. In contrast, there were some amazing things that were happening as well. The

Church had just been organized in April of that year, a General Conference had been held, several people were being baptized into the church, and she was also ready to be baptized. Her baptism was going to take place in Colesville where they dammed up a stream. However, the persecution was so great during her baptism that afterwards they were unable to confirm her and give her the Gift of the Holy Ghost. In fact, Joseph was arrested, abused, spit upon, ridiculed and insulted and taken to jail. Finally he was acquitted and released.

It was after this persecution that Emma received this great revelation from the Lord. It wasn't until August 1830, after this revelation was given, that a Sacrament meeting was held in Emma's home. The confirmation that followed and the partaking of the sacrament together with friends was a joyful interlude between troubles. Now here's another good definition of happiness: *"A Joyful Interlude Between Troubles."* But Emma's was only a short interlude. After her confirmation, the persecution in Colesville spread to Harmony, and Emma's father turned against Joseph for the second time. When Joseph first married Emma, her father said, *"You have stolen my daughter. I had rather have followed her to the grave."* That wasn't a very welcoming statement! However, he learned to barely tolerate his son-in-law. But now at this second and bitter parting, he told Emma as she was leaving with Joseph, *"No good can ever come of it!"*<sup>8</sup> Emma never saw her parents again.

Emma's health at this time was quite delicate because she was expecting twins, yet she did not favor herself on this account. Lucy Mack Smith said this of Emma: *"Although her strength was exhausted, still her spirit was the same, which, in fact, was always the case with her, even under the most trying circumstances. I have never seen a woman in my life who would endure every species of fatigue and hardship from month to month and from year to year with that unflinching courage, zeal and patience which she has ever done; for I know that which she had to endure – she has been tossed upon the ocean of uncertainty – she has breasted the storms of persecution, and buffeted the rage of men and devils, which would have borne down almost any other woman."*<sup>9</sup> Emma was not only a good woman, but she was also strong. And most of the time her only hope was to cleave unto her covenants, for in them was her only hope for eternal happiness and joy, especially with most of her loved ones lying beneath the ground.

Think of Joseph Smith – his life was one trouble after another, and yet he had a sense of humor, and he had the ability to be a happy person whose vision continually went far beyond this life. He wrote, *"And as for the perils which I am called to pass through, they seem but a small thing to me, as the envy and wrath of man have been my common lot all the days of my life; and for what cause it seems mysterious, unless I was ordained from before the foundation of the world for some good end, or bad, as you may choose to call it. . . but nevertheless, deep water is what I am wont to swim in. It all has become second nature to me; and I feel, like Paul, to glory in tribulation, for to this day has the God of my Fathers delivered me out of them all, and will deliver me from henceforth. . ."*<sup>10</sup>

A part of LDS history that most impresses me is the time after the Prophet Joseph Smith was martyred. The Nauvoo Temple was only partially built. If ever the outside world was going to *win* and prove Mormonism false or if ever the people were going to finally give up faith and hope and let discouragement completely overtake them, well, that was the moment! They were driven by a belief so overpowering that they took up their tools, in the face of bitter persecution and finished the temple – and for what purpose? It was so they would have the opportunity to have their marriages sealed for eternity and so they could make covenants and promise to obey the commandments, to live a life of chastity and sacrifice and to promise to give all they had in time and talents to building up the Kingdom of God – even their own lives if necessary. And in return, God promised them His Spirit to be with them always, and other glorious blessings that can be received in no other way or place than in the temple.

We make those same covenants today, but for those early saints, they had to build the temple first, go in it just a few times before they were driven out by the mobs, only to watch their temple, their labor of love go up in flames, and then proceed across the plains and bury their loved ones along the way. But they had made covenants and promises. No wonder they could sing, *"And should we die before our journey's through, Happy Day, All is well."*<sup>11</sup> *All was well*, because they had made and kept sacred covenants. And if we want *all to be well* with us, we must make and keep these same covenants. What a magnificent time in history that was! Good people becoming

strong as well, particularly as they did give everything they had for the Kingdom of God, and very often their own lives. But covenants are for eternity. Before Joseph Smith died he promised that the temple endowment would bring the people “out of darkness and into marvelous light.”<sup>12</sup> Keeping our covenants will help us in times of trial. President Thomas Monson said, “As you and I go to the Holy Houses of God, and we remember the covenants we make within, we will be more able to bear every trial and to overcome each temptation.”<sup>13</sup>

## Delma - Know Thyself - And Add Humor

I think this is the case with two other women who I would like to tell you about. I love to be around women like these who don't feel singled out because trouble came to them, but who have accepted it as part of life. The first woman is the epitome of *Knowing Herself* and being satisfied with the direction her life went rather than the one she had dreamed about. Her name is Delma Francom Saunders Bott Forsyth. And why does she have so many names? Well, it's because she married and buried three husbands. She carries all four of these names with honor. Her first husband died at age thirty-two, right after kissing Delma good-bye and leaving for work. Five minutes later, he was hit by a train and died instantly. Delma had endometriosis and was never able to have children. After five years of being alone, she married Roy Bott. His wife had died and left him with five children. Delma helped to raise these children, and in 1957, with the children raised and out of the home, she and Roy left on a mission to New Zealand. They were extremely effective missionaries. They taught and baptized Doug and Mihi Strother who lived in Temple View and who later became respected leaders in the Church there.

Much of what I have learned about myself and my relationship with Heavenly Father and his great care and watchfulness over my life has been because of my experience with Delma. I think I've learned what Socrates meant when he said to “*Know Thyself*” as one of the keys to happiness. I know so assuredly that Heavenly Father brings people into our lives who will affect our own lives for good forever. I know that He knows me, that He loves me and cares for me and hears and answers my prayers. I had some preparation before I met Delma. We both had a New Zealand connection. I had been a member of the Kia Ora club in the early 1960's when I was at Brigham Young University. This was a group that performed the dances and songs of the Maori people of New Zealand.

Well, now I'll jump ahead to 1972 when our family moved to Santa Rosa. Doug was called as a young bishop in 1974, and there was an inactive family on the rolls of our ward. We decided to go meet them. It was Roy and Delma Bott, and they weren't inactive at all, but Delma had to stay home and care for Roy because he had diabetes. We all got excited when we found out about our New Zealand connection. We, of course, became fast friends. Delma was facing another trouble. She was gradually going deaf. But she communicated with everyone by lip-reading and by her generosity – her open arms. She loved little children and enjoyed laughing at herself

when she showed them her three and a half fingers because she'd lost half of a finger in a farm accident years earlier.

It wasn't all that long before she had to bury Roy. I asked if she was going to start looking for another boy to marry. And she answered, “*Honey, at my age, I'm not looking for a boy, but a man!*” Before the year was out she was dating Cleon Forsyth - she was seventy-two and he was seventy-seven. He and his wife and Delma and Roy had known each other for years and years. It was a natural union, so they married. After the honeymoon, she came home and looked at me so sincerely and said, “*Have you been kissing your husband much*



Cecile Scribner and Delma Forsyth in 1986

lately?" I answered, "Well, I have to say it's not been a good week for that." She just shook my hands and said, "Oh, kid, you ought to, it's such fun!" By now, Delma was considered totally deaf. She read lips perfectly. She became our children's adopted grandmother. We moved to Scotland in 1984, and in 1986 she and Cleon came to visit us. They'd only been married for about six years. While we were in Inverness visiting some of the graves and homes of the Forsyth Family, Cleon had a heart-attack and died. Delma, once again gathered the pieces of her life and moved on. On the flight home to his burial, we talked about her life, and she told me all about the Strother Family in New Zealand – I never thought I'd actually meet them, but I did.



Mihi Strother, her daughter Cheryl Delma Butters (named after Delma and #12 of Mihi's 12 children), Cecile - Feb 2004, Temple View, New Zealand

In 2004, Doug and I served as Directors of the New Zealand Temple Visitors' Center. Can you just imagine what it was like for me to meet, for the first time, Mihi Strother – the matriarch of what Doug and I call a dynasty in the church in New Zealand. This beautiful Maori woman, known and revered by all who are members of the church in New Zealand, gives all of her thanks to our beloved Delma Bott Forsyth from Santa Rosa Stake. Heavenly Father puts into our path people who will make a difference in our lives, and if we are privileged to live long enough, we can see that circle of friends closing and enveloping us, and we realize that Heavenly Father knew it all along. It just takes us time as we work through our troubles, and as we help others work through their troubles to realize that these are the things that make us strong, give us our testimonies and bring us happiness.

## Drucilla - Control Thyself - If You Want To Find Happiness, Look for It

The other woman I want to tell you about is my Grandmother Drucilla Sears Howard. She was a woman of courage. However to fully understand her courage it helps to know more about the circumstances she faced. Her husband John was a wonderfully handsome man. The day after they were married he left for a three year Latter-day Saint mission to Switzerland. After several years of marriage, they moved to Maywood, Illinois, where he studied to be a doctor. He also studied chiropractic and was probably the first LDS chiropractor in the United States. He started his own Chiropractic School in 1906. This school has grown and is now a full University in Lombard, Illinois. It is called the National University of Health Sciences and teaches about the complete health of the body. As you walk into the foyer of this university, there up on the left is this big beautiful picture of my grandfather, as the founder. But, just like I said at the beginning when this friend of mine was looking at our big family picture above our piano, a picture doesn't reveal the heartache, the pain, and the losses.



Drucilla Sears and John Howard - 1895



John Fitz Alan Howard - This is the photo that hangs in the front hall of National University of Health Sciences at Lombard, Illinois.  
John began the school in 1906

My grandfather was working hard at his new school, and he was attending Rush Medical School in Chicago, and he was also writing a medical encyclopedia. He was *burned out*, had a breakdown and became addicted to the drugs that were used to help him relieve pain. He signed away his ownership of the school and eventually had to separate from his family because of his addiction. Three of their children had died at birth, and now my grandmother had to raise their remaining nine children all on her own. When her three young single adult children died of tuberculosis and one of a ruptured appendix, she was a single mother carrying burdens we can hardly imagine. She was lonely, but not alone because her love, her warmth and her desire for life was contagious, and people gravitated to her. Her children longed to be around her – playing together, working together and praying together. Grandmother Howard was the epitome of what Cicero meant when he said, *Control Thyself*. She never allowed that germ of discouragement to control her or her family. She never was tempted to turn against God and curse him for the heartache that came into her life. She met life head on! As a young child, I only knew her to be a joyous, happy grandmother, who lived her life to the fullest. Every night, no matter how cold the weather, she would go outside to greet the moon as it came over the mountain. She understood so well what Lehi said that “... *it must needs be, that there was an opposition (in all things).*”<sup>14</sup> She, like Lehi, gave the same advice

to her children. And she could not have given it without understanding through her experiences what it really meant. After losing her thirty-nine-year old son from a ruptured appendix, she wrote:

*There will be sorrows waiting on all roads,  
Long heartbreak ‘ere we reach the high abodes.  
Still, we must snatch from these a certain gain,  
No heart can comfort ‘til it has known pain.*

*Press a rich honey from the bitter years,  
No eyes can see ‘til they have known tears.*  
(Drucilla Sears Howard - 1939)

Drucilla was much like Lucy Mack Smith who said: “*We now had learned to appreciate the sweet from having drunk deeply of the bitter for a season.*”<sup>15</sup>

## Spencer - Give Thyself

I do want to tell you about my youngest son, Spencer. When I think of “*Give Thyself*,” I think of him. I have to admit that when he was young, we wondered what kind of trouble he would encounter in his life - not the trouble he would have, but the trouble he would give! We loved him intensely, but he was a *destroying angel*. I guess he was curious. Nevertheless, before he reached two years of age, we had replaced our carpet in the hall and bedroom because of honey dripping off his body as he walked through the house - and that’s just one of many incidents! This boy grew up and became a faithful friend to his large



Spencer John Scribner

circle of friends, literally from all walks of life. He seeks them out and keeps a close contact. His curiosity has led him to be quite an expert in repairing and rebuilding his own homes, but to take this a step further, he has a great willingness and desire to share what he knows and what he can do with others. He's generous beyond normal. He lives in California, but when he comes for a visit, he puts tools and supplies in his trunk so he can spend time fixing broken things in our home and the homes of his siblings. Or he builds and creates something new for us if we have such a want. My favorite creation of his (with the help of one of our sons-in-law) in my yard is what I call our "Stairway to Heaven" - a wonderful set of stairs made from railroad ties, leading from a lawn, up a hill, to the children's playground. Perhaps it can better be called, "Spencer's stairway to heaven," for that's perhaps how we'll all get there (Heaven) eventually - by learning to give willingly of ourselves for others.

I don't know if the same thing that strengthens me will strengthen you. But I lean heavily on people who live exemplary lives. I know Emma Smith, Delma Forsyth, my grandmother and others I've mentioned weren't perfect, but then neither are we. Nevertheless, it helps to look for the good in people and find out what makes them strong - and happy! And I hope it helps you to remember this little formula for happiness, **Know Thyself, Control Thyself, and Give Thyself**. And if you're in the position to do so, take these three elements to a higher level for greater and eternal happiness by **making and keeping sacred covenants** - they're made at baptism, when we take the sacrament, and when we attend the temple. And in times of trouble, which could be right at this very moment for you, **cleave** unto those covenants that you might reach another joyful interlude of happiness. May your lives be full of these interludes!

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1. *Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, Alma P. Burton, page 23.
  2. III Nephi 27: 20-21.
  3. Hebrews 12:11.
  4. Romans 5: 3-4.
  5. "However Long and Hard the Road" by Jeffery R. Holland, page 2.
  6. *Ibid.*, page 3.
  7. *Doctrine and Covenants* section 25.
  8. *Emma and Joseph, their Divine Mission*, Gracia N. Jones, page 50.
  9. *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, page 249.
  10. D&C 127: 2.
  11. *Hymns*, page 3.
  12. *Daughters in My Kingdom - The History and Work of Relief Society*, pages 131-132.
  13. *Ensign Magazine*, May 2011, page 93.
  14. II Nephi 2: 15.
  15. *History of Joseph Smith by His Mother*, page 178.





## I Thee Wed

by Douglas M. Scribner and Cecile J. Scribner

*The Family, A Proclamation to the World* was issued September 23, 1995 by the First Presidency and Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It begins, “We . . . solemnly proclaim that marriage between a man and a woman is ordained of God and that the family is central to the Creator’s plan for the eternal destiny of His children . . . The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally.”<sup>1</sup> This is a fundamental doctrine of the church and has always been so. Certainly a marital union between two men or between two women has always been forbidden by God despite the fact that some governments have decided differently and have legalized such unions. As early as the time of Abraham the Lord has condemned such homosexual relationships. As reported in the Book of Genesis, “Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.”<sup>2</sup> These lustful men strove to force Lot to give them access to two male angels who were spending the night with Lot’s family. “But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round (about) . . . and called unto Lot, and said unto him, where are the men who came in unto thee this night? Bring them out unto us that we may know them.”<sup>3</sup> Clearly these men of Sodom wanted homosexual relationships with the visitors. Even consensual homosexual relationships are contrary to the mind and will of God. Nonetheless, we are commanded to treat all people with respect and dignity including those who have chosen such a lifestyle.

But what about the statement that marriage ordained of God is only between a man and a woman. Have there ever been times when God approved a righteous man being married to more than one woman at the same time? Consider the stories of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. “God commanded Abraham, and Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham to wife . . . Was Abraham therefore, under condemnation? Verily I say unto you nay; for I the Lord commanded it.”<sup>4</sup> Consider also that Abraham and Sarah’s only son Isaac married Rebekah and they had two sons, Essau and Jacob. Jacob married four women : Rachael, her sister Leah, and their two handmaids, Zilpah and Bilhah. From these four wives Jacob had twelve sons and one daughter. Was Jacob under condemnation for his plural marriages? No, because the Lord commanded it. In fact, he wrestled with an angel who asked, “What is thy name? And he said Jacob. And he (the angel) said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.”<sup>5</sup> The house of Israel continues on to this day.

The conditions under which plural marriage could be practiced were clarified in the Book of Mormon. An ancient prophet on the American continent named Jacob said, “Wherefore my brethren, hear me, and hearken to the word of the Lord: For there shall not any man among you have save it be one wife: and concubines he shall have none.”<sup>6</sup> Then Jacob went on to explain the circumstances wherein it might be different. He said, “For if I will, saith the Lord of Hosts, raise up seed unto me, I will command my people; otherwise they shall hearken unto these things.”<sup>7</sup> These were the conditions: a commandment given of the Lord to raise up a righteous posterity.

These were the same conditions given to the Prophet Joseph Smith during the gospel restoration of all things in the latter days.

In 1831 Joseph Smith and his wife Emma were living in Kirtland, Ohio. Their persecution in New York over the publication of the Book of Mormon and the organization of the Church had been great and the Lord had given Joseph the commandment that the church should move to the Ohio. Once settled there, he began an inspired translation of the Old Testament. We know that this work included slight revisions to the Book of Isaiah wherein Joseph was able to read many prophecies about the latter days. One of these prophecies concerned plural marriage. Isaiah wrote: *“And in that day, seven women shall take hold of one man, saying: We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by thy name to take away our reproach. In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious . . .”*<sup>8</sup> These verses were familiar to Joseph for they had also been included by Nephi in his writings on the gold plates found in the Book of Mormon. Still this prophecy was not enough to institute plural marriage in the church, for a commandment was also required. The commandment was given, but not recorded for another twelve years. It is now found in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 132. The preface of this section states: *“Revelation given through Joseph Smith the prophet at Nauvoo, Illinois, recorded July 12, 1843, relating to the new and everlasting covenant, including the eternity of the marriage covenant, as also the plurality of wives. Although the revelation was recorded in 1843, it is evident from historical records that the doctrines and principles involved in this revelation had been known by the prophet since 1831.”*<sup>9</sup>

After receiving this commandment, Joseph faced the most difficult of decisions. What should he do? In Kirtland he decided to keep the commandment himself but mostly not involve other church members. *“In Joseph Smith’s time monogamy was the only legal form of marriage in the United States. Joseph knew the practice of plural marriage would stir up public ire. After receiving the commandment, he taught a few associates about it, but he did not spread this teaching widely in the 1830’s. . . Fragmentary evidence suggests that Joseph Smith acted on the angel’s first command by marrying a plural wife, Fanny Alger, in Kirtland, Ohio in the mid-1830’s. Several Latter-day Saints who had lived in Kirtland reported decades later that Joseph Smith had married Alger, who lived and worked in the Smith household, after he had obtained her consent and that of her parents. . . After the marriage with Alger ended in separation, Joseph seems to have set the subject of plural marriage aside until after the Church moved to Nauvoo, Illinois.”*<sup>10</sup>

This revelation, recorded in Nauvoo on 12 July 1843, was very specific and was communicated widely among the Later-day Saints. In part it said, *“I am the Lord thy God, and I gave unto thee, my servant Joseph, an appointment, and restore all things. . . And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood – if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then he is justified. . . for they are given unto him to multiply and replenish the earth according to my commandment, and to fulfill the promise that was given by my Father before the foundation of the world. . .”*<sup>11</sup>

*“The first plural marriage in Nauvoo took place when Louisa Beaman and Joseph Smith were sealed in April 1841. Joseph married many additional wives and authorized other Latter-day Saints to practice plural marriage. The practice spread slowly at first. By June 1844, when Joseph died, approximately 29 men and 50 women had entered into plural marriage, in addition to Joseph and his wives. When the Saints entered the Salt Lake Valley in 1847, at least 197 men and 521 women had entered into plural marriages.”*<sup>12</sup> Among those who led the way to the Salt Lake Valley were Apostles Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, who had both accepted the covenant of plural marriage. According to Helen Mar Kimball, daughter of Heber C. Kimball, Joseph Smith stated that *“The practice of this principle would be the hardest trial the Saints would ever have to test their faith.”*<sup>13</sup> But she went on to explain that though it was one of the severest trials of her life, it also became one of their greatest blessings.

Between 1852 and 1890, Church members in Utah openly practiced plural marriage. Then in 1890, Church President Wilford Woodruff received the revelation that the purpose of plural marriage had been fulfilled and that the practice should cease. He then issued this Manifesto to the entire Church wherein he said, *“Inasmuch as laws have been enacted by Congress forbidding plural marriages, which laws have been pronounced constitutional*

*by the court of last resort, I hearby declare my intention to submit to those laws, and use my influence with the members of the Church over which I preside to have them do likewise. . . I now publically declare that my advice to the Latter-day Saints is to refrain from contracting any marriage forbidden by the laws of the land.”<sup>14</sup>*

Then in the April, 1904 General Conference of the Church, President Joseph F. Smith issued a Second Manifesto informing all Church members that any new plural marriage would not be approved by God and would not be authorized by any Church Leader. However, the issue that remained was: What should families do who were in existing polygamous relationships? Some couples divorced while others separated but continued financial support. Others moved to Mexico and Canada. Mostly these men retained the love and support of their wives and children in one form or another. President Woodruff said, *“I did not, could not, and would not promise that you would desert your wives and children. This you cannot do in honor.”<sup>15</sup>*

Cecile is a direct descendent of polygamous marriages. Her great grandfather, Isaac Sears (1845 – 1912) married eighteen year old Sarah Jane Gailey in 1867 in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City. He later married twenty-one year old Lovisa Strickland in 1882 and twenty-five year old Alice Norris in 1889. When the Manifesto was published in 1890, these three families apparently chose to stay in Utah and live in three separate residences. Isaac Sears died in 1912 as did Lovisa. However, Sarah Jane Gailey Sears lived another eleven years. Alice lived until 1957 and died at age 93. Of this ancestral heritage, Cecile wrote:

My experiences with polygamy are limited so I can only tell the story of polygamy from what little I know of it. I am a product of four polygamous marriages – one on my father’s side and three on my mother’s side. When I was a very young girl in the 1940’s and 1950’s, I lived in Wyoming and Utah, and polygamy was just a way of life that my great grandparents had lived. I didn’t know why they had more than one wife, and I didn’t know why polygamy had ended. Nothing seemed wrong with it – in fact, I thought it was fascinating. I was young and never thought much of why this way of living could be difficult. There was a photo in my mother’s scrapbook, which now hangs among a collage of framed photos on my entry wall going up the staircase. I call this my *Motherhood Wall*. This particular photo is possibly rare because in it is my Great Grandfather Isaac Sears and his three wives, and they are surrounded by all of his children. The wives are dressed in black, and all of the children are dressed in white.

My grandmother, Drucilla Howard, is one of the oldest girls in the photo. Now I look at that photo and think what a magnificent posterity carry the Sears’ and Gailey’s names. Just looking at my Grandmother alone, she gave birth to twelve children, nine of whom grew to maturity. Her daughter Lucie, my mother, gave birth to



*Isaac Sears is on the back row in the middle.*

*My Grandmother Drucilla Sears is standing in the back on the right,*

*Sarah Jane Gailey Sears is the wife in the middle, Alice Norris is the wife on the left, and Lovisa Eldora Strickland is the wife on the right,*

seven children, and I gave birth to nine children. I have thirty-three grandchildren, and they haven't even started to produce great grandchildren for me yet. What if every person in that polygamous photo produced even half the posterity that my Grandmother Howard produced?

My Grandmother Howard wrote a life story for both her mother and father. About her mother (Sarah Jane Gailey), Drucilla wrote: *"When mother had two children they moved to Salt Lake and built a two room house – one upstairs and one down, and in the little upstairs room the third child, a boy, and also the fourth, a girl, were born. Later on, the house was added upon until there were nine rooms and the family of nine grew up and only left there when they went away to make their own homes. For more than fifty years Mother lived there."*

This is what I do know. In the Church of Jesus Christ we have doctrines. A doctrine cannot ever be changed. A Doctrine is *salvific* – meaning that it is a truth related to our salvation. Even though the Doctrines of the Church are relatively few in number, following them will give us the power to bring about our own salvation or redemption. Within the church there are also policies and practices. Unlike the doctrines, these can change from time to time. For example, a great doctrine of the Church is about The Family: *"The Family is ordained of God. Marriage between man and woman is essential to His eternal plan. Children are entitled to birth within the bonds of matrimony, and to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity . . ."*<sup>16</sup>



*The Old Sears Home in Salt Lake City, Utah*

Between 1840 and 1890, polygamy was the practice of the Church for some specific families approved of by the Prophet. After 1890, polygamy was no longer a practice – but even more so, was against the laws of the land. The Church of Jesus Christ follows the laws of the land. Policies and practices can be changed. But these aren't changed by man – they are changed by God as he reveals his desires to man – a prophet. Another great doctrine of the Church is that there is a Prophet who speaks for God as God reveals truths to him. *"Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets."*<sup>17</sup> This is how policies and practices in the Church get changed. When this practice of polygamy ended, it came through revelation to the living prophet, Wilford Woodruff. We can only guess at all the reasons why it was given in the first place, and we can only guess at all the reasons why it was stopped. Some of our reasons may be correct, but unless God reveals those reasons to us, they are only guesses. I personally like to guess that polygamy existed to bring about a righteous posterity that would give strength to the Church. In fact, I believe all the living prophets in recent years were products of polygamy. But when I study my own family's history, I think these polygamous unions existed for other reasons as well.

Life was so different 100–150 years ago. How can we judge a practice of the Church when we in truth know nothing of what it was like? It's an experience most of us will never have. The saddest part of doing family history is finding how many women died as a result of childbirth. So many died at a very young age. Survival was much more a problem then than it is now. In many cases, these polygamous wives were a strength to each other as they worked at survival.

Perhaps the one family I'd like to tell about here that illustrates my point is the story of my Great Great Grandfather, John Gailey, father of Sarah Jane Gailey. Back in England before he joined the Church, he was one of the United Brethren. The United Brethren were preachers who had broken away or were expelled from other denominations because they believed in repentance and baptism and other doctrines taught by the Savior as was found in the New Testament. They didn't claim to be the true church on earth, but they were looking for such a church. They were devout in their feelings, had intense opposition to all forms of pride and every form

of immorality. Vocal prayer was encouraged by all, and all formal prayer was done away. These thirty or forty preachers taught throughout the region and often traveled around to each other's branches, consisting mostly of poor people, a few working men in fairly good circumstances, and one man who might be called wealthy, who was a farmer and owner of some land – they all became part of the United Brethren. There were also ladies in this group who engaged in vigorous preaching. This was the condition of these people when Wilford Woodruff came as a missionary and preached to them. The Gospel of Jesus Christ was exactly what they were searching for, and all but one of the 600 United Brethren were baptized within the month. John Gailey was baptized on 24 March 1840.

John Gailey spent the next year traveling with Wilford Woodruff, preaching the Gospel and continued in his ministry until he came to Nauvoo on the 10th of May 1843 on the Ship Yorkshire. He was with Ann Greaves, who would soon be his wife, his mother Eleanor Gailey, a widowed sister, Hannah Gailey Jones, and her two sons. John and Ann were married on the 27 June 1843 in Nauvoo, Illinois, only to be celebrating their first anniversary on the same day the Prophet Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum were martyred. They were given their endowments in the Nauvoo Temple, but along with the other Saints were driven out of Nauvoo by the mobs. They left in the winter, and Ann was expecting their first children – twins. They were born and died in Pottawatomie, Iowa in the winter of 1846-47. After burying these babies and after Ann had strength, they continued on their journey to the West to join the Saints in Salt Lake City. In 1849 my Great Grandmother Sarah Jane Gailey was born and two years later another daughter, Elizabeth Ann Gailey was born on the 22 of July 1851. On the 11th of August that same year Ann Greaves Gailey died – it must have been from complications of childbirth. She was only thirty-five years old.

In 1852, John Gailey married again. He was in need of a wife and a mother for his two little girls. Mary Mills Hudson, a widow, had come to Salt Lake from Lancashire, England with three children from her first marriage.



*John Gailey*



*Ann Greaves  
wife of John Gailey*



*Sarah Jane Gailey,  
daughter of John Gailey,  
married to Isaac Sears*



*Elizabeth Ann Gailey  
daughter of John Gailey*



*Mary Mills (Hudson)  
second wife of John Gailey*



*Elizabeth Tregenna Henwood  
third wife of John Gailey*



*Ann Noble  
fourth wife of John Gailey*



*Isaac Sears  
husband of Sarah Jane Gailey*

Her children were just a few years older than John's two girls. The family resided in Salt Lake City until about the year 1854 when they moved to Kaysville, Utah where John spent the remainder of his life, working as a farmer. My Grandmother Drucilla wrote this about Mary Hudson: *"Mother's step-mother, Mary Mills Hudson proved to be a real mother to the little girls whose mother had left them. She gave them all the care and kindness which a real mother can give and they always looked upon her with the greatest affection and esteem. On my visits to the old Gailey home, she was always glad to see us and talk to us, and I remember threading her needles for her and listening to her tell of the things that mother used to do."*

Just six years after marrying Mary Mills Hudson, John Gailey entered into a polygamous relationship. In 1858 he married Elizabeth Tregenna Henwood. She had come to Salt Lake with the first handcart company that traveled in 1856 – only sixteen years of age. In this company, sixteen people had died during the crossing. Elizabeth could well have been one of those numerous children who walked the whole way across the plains. She was much younger than John Gailey's other wives – just eighteen years old in 1858, but she was well equipped with experience and courage and fortitude. She had five sons and one daughter with John. Her youngest child, a daughter, was born and died in 1871 and her oldest son died in 1873 at age thirteen. Then in 1876, Elizabeth died – just thirty-six years of age, leaving four sons in need of a mother. Again, this wonderful, compassionate woman, Mary Mills Hudson, took in four more sons to raise after already having raised two families.

A year after Elizabeth died, John married again – this time to Ann Noble another widow. She was fifty years old – so perhaps it was she who helped to raise these four boys since Mary Mills Hudson was now sixty-five years old. I'm not positive of the details of how these women helped each other, but somehow I believe that polygamy proved to be a great blessing, especially for the children whose mothers left them because of early deaths. They all continued *"to be reared by a father and a mother who honor marital vows with complete fidelity. . . By divine design, fathers are to preside over their families in love and righteousness and are responsible to provide the necessities of life and protection for their families. Mothers are primarily responsible for the nurture of their children. In these sacred responsibilities, fathers and mothers are obligated to help one another as equal partners."*<sup>18</sup>

I believe these women helped each other through the hard times – when children died, when sickness entered the families, when food was scarce – when faced with all those trials that were almost second-nature to early pioneer life. No, polygamy has never been a problem for me to understand. I understand it through my own families' experiences. Do I want to live it? Of course not. Yet, even today, there are mothers or fathers who die early deaths and leave children to be reared, and hopefully not by a lone father or a lone mother – though this happens often. Certainly, we all have enough love in us to love another woman or another man – and surely there's enough love in us to love another woman's or another man's children and take them in as our own. We may someday be surprised when we discover God's reasons for giving commandments and the changes in policies and practices at certain times. We don't need to worry about the past – particularly the past that we will never understand fully because we weren't there. We do have the present to be concerned with, and the doctrine of the Family has never changed as the fundamental unit of society. This is where the greatest happiness is to be found as we live the doctrines of Jesus Christ based on the *"principles of faith, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, respect, love, compassion, work and wholesome recreational activities."*<sup>19</sup>

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1. *The Family, A Proclamation to the World.*
  2. *Genesis 13: 12-13.*
  3. *Genesis 19: 4-5.*
  4. *Doctrine and Covenants 132: 34-35.*
  5. *Genesis 32: 27-28.*
  6. *Book of Mormon, Jacob 2:27.*
  7. *Jacob 2:30.*
  8. *Isaiah 4: 1-2 and II Nephi 14: 1-2.*
  9. *D&C 132 Heading.*
  10. Church Website, lds.org/topics.

11. *D&C 132: 40, 61-63.*
12. Church Website, [lds.org/topics](https://www.lds.org/topics).
13. Helen Mar Kmball Whitney, *Why We Practice Plural Marriage*, pg 23-24.
14. *Official Declaration – 1.*
15. *Abraham Cannon Dairy, October 7, 1890 and November 12, 1891.*
16. *The Family, A Proclamation to the World.*
17. *Amos 3:7*
18. *The Family, A Proclamation to the World.*
19. *Ibid.*



## The Martyrdom

### Part of a Readers' Theater titled, "The Martyrdom and Aftermath"

by Cecile J. Scribner

**Joseph:** *(as his face brightens)* Brethren, the Spirit has spoken to me. The way is open. It is so clear to my mind what to do. All they want is Hyrum and myself. Tell everybody to go about their business, and not to collect in groups, but to scatter about. . . <sup>1</sup> Well, Porter, you've been by my side protecting me for a long time. Now I need you more than ever.

**Porter:** By your side is where I'll stay.

**Joseph:** Hyrum and I will cross the Mississippi tonight and go away to the West. <sup>2</sup> We will take a few others with us and search out a place for the Church. Porter, we will meet you in Montrose. Could you bring horses for us?

**Porter Rockwell:** They'll be there—right on time.

**Hyrum:** Yes, Joseph—you are right. It's the right decision. We'll go West and find a safe haven for the Saints.

**Joseph:** Hyrum, my beloved brother. You possess the mildness of a lamb, the integrity of Job and the meekness and humility of Christ — you know don't you that if you and I are ever taken again, we will be massacred – or I am not a prophet of God. I want you to live to avenge my blood. <sup>3</sup>

**Hyrum:** You cannot change my mind, Joseph. I love you with a love that is stronger than death. I will not ever leave you. I am blessed to be the brother of a Prophet of God.

**Music.** . . "Praise To The Man," <sup>4</sup>

**Willard Richards:** *(sings)* Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!

**Joined by John Taylor, Dan Jones, Hyrum Smith, Porter Rockwell:** *(sing)* Jesus anointed that Prophet and Seer.

**Joined by all the other men:** *(sing)* Blessed to open the last dispensation, Kings shall extol him and nations revere. *(all look at Joseph)*



**Brigham Young:** Late in the evening of the 22nd of June 1844, Joseph and Hyrum tearfully bade farewell to their families, and together with Willard Richards and Orrin Porter Rockwell, crossed the Mississippi River in a skiff. The boat was so leaky and the river so high that it took most of the night to get to the other side.

**Emma:** Early in the morning a posse arrived in Nauvoo to arrest my husband and Hyrum, but they did not find them. They threatened the citizens with an invasion of troops if Joseph and Hyrum did not give themselves up. It just wasn't clear to me what they should do. *(in prayer) Oh, Father in Heaven . . . what are we to do?*

**Hyrum:** Joseph, I think I've got enough food and clothing packed. We'll be ready to leave as soon as Porter gets here. . . Look! I think that's Porter now. . . He's got Reynolds Cahoon with him.

**Joseph:** Porter, where are the horses? And what is that letter in your hand?

**Porter:** Reynolds Cahoon brought it over from Nauvoo. It's. . .it's from your wife.

**Joseph:** Read it, Port.

**Porter:** *(he looks at it and then says)* She is pleading for you to return and submit to trial. Cahoon here has likened you to the shepherd who left his flock to the wolves. It's none of my business, but I know you're not a coward. People don't seem to understand . . .

**Reynolds Cahoon:** I'm sorry, Joseph, but that seems to be the feeling in Nauvoo. People feel like you're running away and deserting them . . .

**Joseph:** Brethren, *"if my life is of no value to my friends, it is none to myself."*<sup>5</sup> Get the boat ready. We are going back to Nauvoo. Porter, get a letter back to the Governor. Tell him I will submit to arrest.

**Porter:** It just ain't right.

**Musical background by flute with everyone else humming.** *"If You Should Hie to Kolob"*

**Dan Jones:** Joseph was confident that arrest would mean his death. Safety had lain within his grasp.

**John Taylor:** The open West had beckoned to him. The Spirit had whispered to him the wisdom of flight. But safety without the faith and devotion of his beloved people was an empty shell.

**Lucy:** My brother requested of Governor Ford by letter that a posse conduct him into Carthage, but the request was denied due to influence of apostates. He was ordered to appear in Carthage by ten o'clock the next morning without a posse. . .

**Thomas Ford:** *" . . . and if General Smith does not come, Nauvoo will be destroyed and all the men, women and children that are in it."* *(music ends about here) (Mother waits for music to end)*

**Mother Smith:** It was a sorrowful procession as Joseph's gaze rested long upon the uncompleted temple and upon his beloved people. . . and then upon Emma and the children.

**Joseph:** *"This is the loveliest place, and the best people under the heavens. Little do they know the trials that await them. . . I am willing to die for them. My work is finished."*<sup>6</sup>

**Emma:** I felt the worst I ever felt in my life. From that time I looked for Joseph to be killed.

**(dark music to end of scene)**

**Hyrum:** Joseph, it seems that a company of mounted militia are approaching. Are you ready to meet them?

**Joseph:** *“I am going like a lamb to the slaughter; but I am calm as a summer’s morning; I have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward all men. If they take my life I shall die an innocent man, and my blood shall cry out from the ground for vengeance, and it shall be said of me, He was murdered in cold blood.”*<sup>7</sup>

**Music:** *“A Poor, Wayfaring Man of Grief. . .”* (sung by Willard Richards, Samuel, Porter Rockwell and Hyrum Smith)

**Willard:** *In Pris’n I saw him next – condemned To meet a traitor’s doom at morn; The tide of lying tongues I stemmed, And honored him ‘mid shame and scorn.*

**Samuel Join him:** *My friendship’s utmost zeal to try, He asked if I for him would die;*

**Hyrum Joins them:** *The flesh was weak, my blood ran chill, But the free spirit cried,*

**Spoken by All Four:** I will. . . Yes, Joseph. . . I would gladly die in your place.

**Reynolds Cahoon:** Upon arriving in Nauvoo, the Prophet had another opportunity to bid farewell to his family. With Captain Dunn and his company of sixty mounted militia men Joseph and Hyrum and members of the Nauvoo City Council left for Carthage at 6:00 p.m.

**Brigham Young:** Five minutes before midnight on the 24th of June, they arrived in Carthage. Joseph and Hyrum were weary from flight, hiding out, and the threat of assassination. Nevertheless, the brothers were imposing figures as they rode into town – the Prophet age thirty-eight, and Hyrum, forty-four – both tall men who towered over most of the others. <sup>8</sup>



**Reynolds Cahoon:** On the morning of the 25th of June, Joseph and his brethren voluntarily surrendered themselves to Constable Bettisworth. Later in the day Joseph and Hyrum were paraded before the troops by Governor Ford, where they endured many vulgar insults and death threats. <sup>9</sup>

**Governor Ford:** I was anxious to appease the militia men. As I paraded General Joseph Smith and General Hyrum Smith before the troops, a near riot ensued. General Smith, the troops have indicated to me that your appearance demonstrates a peaceful character, but they cannot see into your heart, nor can they tell your intentions.”

**Hyrum:** Very true, gentlemen, you cannot see what is in General Smith’s heart, and you are therefore, unable to judge him or his intentions. . .

**Joseph:** But I can see what is in your hearts and I will tell you what I see. I can see that you thirst for blood, and nothing but my blood will satisfy you . . . I prophesy in the name of the Lord that you shall witness scenes of blood and sorrow to your entire satisfaction . . . you shall seek for peace and shall not be able to find it. <sup>10</sup>

**John Taylor:** Governor Ford, we’ve raised the bail money on the charge for destroying the *Nauvoo Expositor*, yet now you’ve allowed us to be arrested a second time. We should be allowed to be free until such a time as the trial ensues. This arrest is illegal!

**Governor Ford:** I refuse to interfere. However, I will be marching my troops into Nauvoo tomorrow. I think I shall take the two generals, Joseph and Hyrum, with me . . . I promise they will be kept safe.



Willard Richards

**Willard Richards:** My name is Willard Richards. I am one of the Twelve Apostles – a special witness for Christ. I was with the Prophet in his last hour. Whether by design or ignorance, Governor Ford’s actions on the fateful day of the 27th of June laid the stage for the perpetration of the tragedy. He marched the militia toward Nauvoo, but his promise to Joseph was disregarded. He left fifteen of the *Carthage Greys* to guard the prisoners at the jail. These men were avowed enemies of the Prophet

*(Some mood music – as we see the men in the jail)*

**Joseph:** Dan, are you afraid to die?

**Dan Jones:** Has that time come, think you? Engaged in such a cause, I do not think that death would have many terrors.

**Joseph:** Dan Jones, you will yet see Wales, and fulfill the mission appointed you before you die. <sup>11</sup> I have here some letters for you to deliver to an attorney.

**Dark Slow music:** “A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief” in a minor key (Piano – continues through whole scene – until John Taylor sings)



Dan Jones

**Willard Richards:** Upon leaving, Dan Jones met with some opposition.

**Carthage Greys:** (1) We have had too much trouble to bring Old Joe here to let him ever escape . . . well . . . alive! . . . (2) and unless you want to die with him you had better leave . . . (1) and you’ll see that we can prophesy better than Old Joe . . . <sup>12</sup> (2) The guards will put up little resistance . . . (1) Yeah, they’re all our men, you know (both) Yeah (*and they all laugh as they are holding their guns up at Dan Jones*)

**Dan Jones:** (*to men as he pushes guns away*) I am leaving, but only to run an errand. I will be back . . . (*leaves and walks towards Gov. Ford*) Governor Ford, I have heard threats. The militia are saying that they will follow your orders and leave the town, but I overheard them saying: “We will return . . .”

**Greys:** (1) We will return and kill those men if we have to tear the jail down. *(followed by cheers from Men, Thomas C. Sharp and others saying things like: “Yeah, tear the jail down, Where’s your army now?”)*

**Thomas Ford:** Captain Jones, you are unnecessarily alarmed for the safety of your friends. Sir, the people are not that cruel.

**Jones:** If you do not place better men to guard them than professed assassins, then I have but one more desire.

**Thomas Ford:** Yes, what is that?

**Jones:** That the Almighty will preserve my life to a proper time and place, that I may testify that you have been timely warned of their danger. <sup>13</sup> *(Governor Ford is alarmed and stiffens –head back)*

**Emma:** Governor Ford took his militia and some reinforcements from Warsaw and put on a display of military force in Nauvoo.

**Lucy:** They were supposed to return home, but about 150 who were disappointed in their expectation to sack Nauvoo, were in a reckless spirit of vengeance.

**Mother Smith:** With blackened faces, these started for Carthage, vowing death to my sons, Joseph and Hyrum.

**Mob:** (1) This time Joe Smith and that brother of his won’t escape. (2) That’s right!

**Carthage Greys:** (1) You kill Smith and you’ll be doing the world a favor! (2) And that’ll put an end to this Mormon Church. (1) That’s for sure!

**Hyrum:** Joseph, as you requested, Dan Jones has been sent with the letter to the attorney, and the others have been sent to procure witnesses. Brother Markham has gone for medicine for Brother Richards. They want us to go in the lower cell for protection.

**Music Piano:** “A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief”

**Joseph:** Dr. Richards, if we go into the cell will you go with us?

**Willard Richards:** “Brother Joseph, you did not ask me to cross the river with you —you did not ask me to come to Carthage — you did not ask me to come to jail with you — and do you think I would forsake you now? But I will tell you what I will do; if you are condemned to be hung for treason, I will be hung in your stead, and you shall go free.” <sup>14</sup>

**Hyrum:** I can feel danger in the air. Joseph, do you feel it?

**Joseph:** Hyrum, what I do feel is a great love for you. Oh, if I could just have another moment with Emma, with the children — to be but a moment in their company again . . . I have written this letter to Emma. Hyrum, will you read it out loud . . .

**Hyrum:** “I am very much resigned to my lot. . . ( Hyrum and Emma speak these next lines together, then Hyrum fades out) knowing I am justified, and have done the best that could be done.

**Emma:** . . . and have done the best that could be done. You are the queen of my home and my heart. My breast is filled with all the feelings and tenderness of a parent and husband. Give my love to all the children and all my friends . . . may God bless you all.” <sup>15</sup> Oh, Joseph . . . will I never see you again? Will the children never be able to play with their father again? Will I never again feel your arms around me? Joseph, Joseph.

**Joseph Smith III:** Mother, is Father coming home?

**Joseph:** Brother John, will you sing to us?

**John Taylor:** Yes, of course, Joseph. (*accompanied by harmonica*)

*A poor wayfaring man of grief had often crossed me on my way,  
Who sued so humbly for relief that I could never answer, nay.  
I had not power to ask his name, whither he went or whence he came;  
Yet there was something in his eye that won my love, I knew not why.*

*(All the men start humming as John continues)  
Once, when my scanty meal was spread, He entered—not a word he spake!  
Just perishing for want of bread; I gave him all; he blessed; he brake,*

**Men:** We can get them men. Death to Joe Smith!

**Carthage Greys:** (1) Where's your angel now Brother Joseph! (2) Show us a miracle. (1) Yeah. Let's hear a sermon. (2) Amen, Brother

**Joseph:** Continue, John. (*He gets up and puts hand on John's shoulder*)

**Music:** (*John Taylor joined by Hyrum, and Willard*). Continue: "A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief"

*And ate, but gave me part again; mine was an angel's portion then,  
For while I fed with eager haste, the crust was manna to my taste.*

**John Taylor, Willard Richards, Hyrum and Joseph:** (*while all men humming*)

*Then in a moment to my view, The stranger started from disguise;  
The tokens in his hands I knew, The Savior stood before mine eyes.*

**All Men:**

*He spake—and my poor name he named—"Of me thou has not been ashamed;  
These deeds shall thy memorial be; Fear not, thou didst them unto me."*

**Willard Richards:** The events thereafter happened with startling rapidity.

**Men and Greys:** (1) Surrender!! (2) Come on, men. . .up the stairs. . .(3) who thinks he's a prophet now??

(throughout this martyrdom scene—the piano plays "A Poor Wayfaring Man" in a minor key mixed with other dark music – can continue all the way to "Praise To The Man")

**Willard Richards:** A shower of musket balls were thrown up the stairway against the door of the prison in the second story, followed by many rapid footsteps. Joseph, Hyrum, John Taylor and myself threw ourselves against the door of our room . . . a ball was sent through the door, which hit Hyrum in the side of the nose. At the same time a ball came from without, through the window and entered his back from the right side.

**Hyrum:** "I am a dead man."

**Joseph:** Oh, dear Brother Hyrum!!

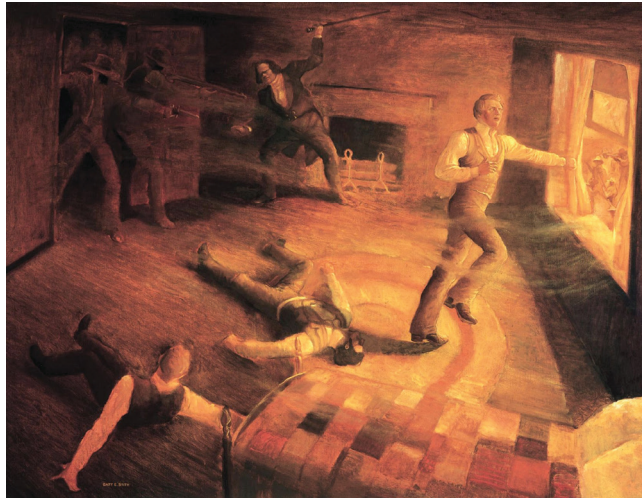
**Willard Richards:** Joseph continued snapping his revolver round the casing of the door into the space; . . . while John Taylor, with a walking stick stood by his side and knocked down the bayonets and muskets which were constantly discharging through the doorway . . . When the revolver failed, we had no

more firearms. John rushed into the window, which is some fifteen or twenty feet from the ground. A ball from within entered his leg, and a ball from without struck his watch—the force of which ball threw him back on the floor, and he rolled under the bed.

**Willard continues:** I kept hitting the muskets with my stick. As a last resort Joseph went to the window when two balls pierced him from the door, and one entered the right breast from without, and he fell outward, exclaiming:

**Joseph:** “Oh Lord, my God!”<sup>16</sup>

**Men:** He’s leaped the window!



Painting by Gary E. Smith

**Willard Richards:** I reached my head out of the window, and waited some seconds to see if there were any signs of life, regardless of my own — *(thoughtfully)* I was determined to see the end of him I loved.

**Men:** “The Mormons are Coming!” *(Greys look around and run off — scared)*

**Willard Richards:** This cry saved my life and John Taylor’s. Who uttered the cry is unknown. It was entirely without foundation, but the results were effective. The mobbers fled in all directions. I was left alone with my dead and wounded comrades.

**Dan Jones:** Samuel Smith heard about the death threats to his brothers and hurried to Carthage.

**Samuel:** Dr. Richards — how is it you are all alone. And my brothers?

**Willard Richards:** *(Sadly nods his head)*

**Samuel:** No!! No!! Dr. Richards! How could this happen?

**Willard Richards:** Samuel, you are physically exhausted.

**Samuel:** The mobbers have been chasing me this whole time. Fatigue and exertion have taken over my body.

**Willard Richards:** You must rest. You have a fever. Tomorrow we will bring your brothers home.

**Dan Jones:** The bodies of the slain leaders were gently placed on two different wagons, covered with branches to shade them from the hot summer sun, and driven to Nauvoo by Willard Richards and Samuel

Smith. They left Carthage about 8 a.m. and arrived in Nauvoo about 3 p.m. (*Joseph and Hyrum walk to the top and stand with backs to audience - as they walk, they take off their jackets, so they just have on their white shirts and white ties*).

**Brigham Young:** The whole city of Nauvoo, on hearing of the tragedy, were like sheep without a shepherd, as being without a father. They were stunned by the blow that had fallen. It was as if a permanent cloud had obscured the face of the sun. Their beloved Prophet and Patriarch were dead. <sup>17</sup>

*(Everyone stand and look at Joseph and Hyrum)*

**Music:** "Praise To The Man," <sup>18</sup>

**Willard Richards, John Taylor, William, Porter Rockwell:** *(at mikes while everyone hums)*

*(2) Praise to his mem'ry he died as a martyr; Honored and blest be his ever great name!  
Long shall his blood which was shed by assassins, Plead unto heav'n while the earth lauds his fame.*

**Everyone:** *(while still facing prophet and Hyrum)*

*Hail to the Prophet, ascended to heaven! Traitors and tyrants now fight him in vain —  
Mingling with Gods, he can plan for his brethren; Death cannot conquer the hero again.*

**Everyone:** *(Face forward - sing a half-note higher)*

*(3) Great is his glory and endless his priesthood. Ever and ever the keys he will hold;  
Faithful and true, he will enter his kingdom, Crowned in the midst of the prophets of old.*

*(Joseph and Hyrum turn to face audience)*

*Hail to the Prophet, ascended to heaven! Traitors and tyrants now fight him in vain —  
Mingling with Gods, he can plan for his brethren; Death cannot conquer the hero again.*

**Joined by Audience:**

*Sacrifice brings forth the blessings of heaven; Earth must atone for the blood of that man.  
Wake up the world for the conflict of justice. Millions shall know "Brother Joseph" again.*

*Hail to the Prophet, ascended to heaven! Traitors and tyrants now fight him in vain —  
Mingling with Gods, he can plan for his brethren; Death cannot conquer the hero again.*

**Mother Smith:** After the bodies of my two sons were washed and dressed in their burial clothes, we were allowed to see them. I had for a long time braced every nerve, roused every energy of my soul, and called upon God to strengthen me, but when I entered the room and saw my murdered sons extended both at once before my eyes and heard the sobs and groans of my family. . . it was too much; I sank back, and cried to the Lord in the agony of my soul. "My God, . . . why hast thou forsaken this family!" A voice replied, "I have taken them to myself, that they might have rest." Emma was carried back to her room almost in a state of insensibility. Her oldest son approached his father and dropped upon his knees and, laying his cheek against his father's and kissing him, exclaimed,

**Joseph:** "Oh My father! My father!"

**Mother Smith:** Oh! At the moment how my mind flew through every scene of sorrow and distress which we had passed, together, in which they had shown the innocence and sympathy which filled their guileless hearts. As I looked upon their peaceful, smiling countenances, I seemed almost to hear them say,

**Joseph, Hyrum and Mother together:** “Mother, weep not for us, we have overcome the world by love; we carried to them the gospel, that their souls might be saved; they slew us for our testimony, and thus placed us beyond their power, their ascendancy is for a moment, ours is an eternal triumph.”<sup>19</sup>

**Brigham Young:** But Mother Smith’s agony wasn’t over. Before another month was gone, Samuel’s fevers increased.

**Samuel:** Mother, I have had a dreadful distress in my side ever since I was chased by the mob, and I think I have received some injury which is going to make me very ill.

**Mother:** Lingered until the 30th of July, Samuel . . . my steady, strong, handsome Samuel, gave in. His spirit forsook its earthly tabernacle and went to join his brothers, and the ancient martyrs, in the Paradise of God.<sup>20</sup>

*(Samuel walks up to join Joseph and Hyrum, also taking off his coat - all three are now on top with white shirts and white ties)*

**Lucy:** There was so much sorrow in our home. Emma had followed Joseph with a rare faithfulness. She had maintained her courage while he lived, in the face of bitter slander, persecution and forced migrations. When driven from Missouri, she walked alone with her four children across the frozen waters of the Mississippi while her husband lay in a filthy jail in Liberty, Missouri. She has been the strength to everyone else, but now her strength was gone . . . Only the old letters from Joseph could console her from moment to moment. . .

**Emma:** *“To my wife: What unspeakable delight, and what transports of joy swelled in my bosom, when I took by the hand, on that night, my beloved Emma—she that was my wife, even the wife of my youth, and the choice of my heart. Many were the reverberations of my mind when I contemplated for a moment the many scenes we had been called to pass through, the fatigues and the toils, the sorrows and sufferings, and the joys and consolations, from time to time, which had strewed our paths . .*

**Emma and Joseph together:** *(Joseph on one knee with his hand outstretched toward Emma): Oh what a commingling of thought filled my mind for the moment. Again she is here, even in the seventh trouble—undaunted, firm, and unwavering—unchangeable, affectionate Emma!”*<sup>21</sup>

**Emma:** Oh, Joseph, where is my strength now?

**Brigham Young:** And Lucy Mack Smith, that worthy character, was, at the last, crushed by the sudden loss of three sons. She had seen within four years the death of her husband and of four sons: Don Carlos, Hyrum, Joseph, and Samuel. To these women, Emma and Lucy, there seemed nothing left for which to strive, nothing further for which to sacrifice. It is not then to be wondered at, that when the Church was driven again, they remained behind near the graves of their dead and the places of their last association together.

**Narrator:** Brigham Young was on a mission in the Boston area when he heard of Joseph’s death.

**Brigham Young:** Upon hearing the news I asked myself, *“Had Joseph taken the Keys of the Kingdom with him from the earth.”* But then I felt assured that the keys of the kingdom rested with the Twelve.

**Narrator:** Returning at once to Nauvoo, Brigham Young found that Joseph’s First Counselor, Sidney Rigdon, had offered to take over leadership of the Church. Then Brigham Young spoke to the gathering of Saints with forceful plainness.

**Brigham Young:** *“For the first time in my life, for the first time in your lives, for the first time in the kingdom of God in the 19th century, without a Prophet at our head, do I step forth to act in my calling in connection with the Quorum of the Twelve, Apostles of Jesus Christ unto this generation—Apostles whom God*



has called by revelation through the Prophet Joseph, who are ordained and anointed to bear off the keys of the kingdom of God in all the world.”<sup>22</sup>

**Narrator:** It was evident that the death of Joseph Smith had not diminished the strength and vigor of the Saints. Attempts to drive the Saints from the state were renewed and intensified.

**Another Narrator:** The newspaper, *The Expositor*, supplied the smokescreen for a barrage of vandalism against the Saints. The feelings intensified again. Governor Ford and Stephen A. Douglas recognized that there would be no peace in Hancock County until the Mormons left Illinois.

**Stephen A. Douglas:** I’m here to counsel the Church leaders to take their people and find a place to settle in the West. I promise to use my influence in assisting your move.<sup>23</sup>

**Brigham Young:** We will agree to go, but need some preparation time—time to sell our lands, grow enough food to sustain life.

**Narrator:** But, of course, the enemies of the Saints did not wait until Spring. Plundering began anew. Meanwhile work in the interior of the temple continued and temple work for the living and dead went forward feverishly, as if there was no thought of removal. This continued until most of the Saints had started the long trek west. On May 1, 1846 the completed temple was publicly dedicated in the presence of about three hundred people.

**Narrator:** The majority of the people had already left. Threats to leaders had prompted the Saints to start leaving as early as February. According to temple records, 5,615 Saints were endowed before going west, thus fulfilling one of Joseph Smith’s fondest desires.<sup>24</sup>

**Dan Jones:** Who could deny the greatness and the prophetic insight that Joseph Smith had. He told me that I would serve a mission to my homeland in Wales, and I did. And now with the temple ordinances available, I even found a woman who wanted to be with me for eternity.

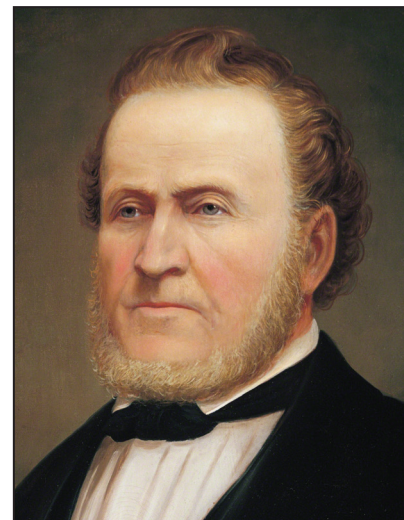
**Everyone:** Imagine that!!

**Narrator:** In Joseph’s journal for August 6, 1842, it reads: “I prophesied that the Saints. . .

**Joseph Smith:** *(Joseph and Hyrum both stand up) I prophesied that the Saints would continue to suffer much affliction and would be driven to the Rocky Mountains, many would apostatize, others would be put to death by our persecutors or lose their lives in consequence of exposure or disease, and some would live to go and assist in making settlements and build cities and see the Saints become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains.*<sup>25</sup>

**Brigham Young:** *I feel like shouting Hallelujah, all the time, when I think that I ever knew Joseph Smith, the Prophet whom the Lord raised up and ordained, and to whom he gave keys and power to build up the Kingdom of God and earth and sustain it. . . I can truly say, that I invariably found him to be all that any people could require a true prophet to be. . .*<sup>26</sup> And now, my good brothers and sisters. . . our story of the Saints begins anew . . . for as Joseph said:

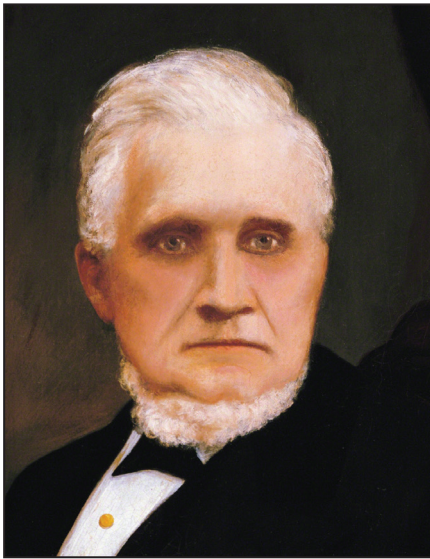
**Joseph and Brigham together:** “The Standard of Truth has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing;



Brigham Young  
the Second Prophet of the Church  
Painting by George Martin Ottinger

**Joined by Hyrum, Samuel, Willard, William, Porter, Mother, Emma, Lucy and John Taylor:**  
*persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame*

**Joined by ALL:** *but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done.*<sup>27</sup>



John Taylor - the Third President of the Church  
By A. Westwood

**John Taylor:** *If there is no other man under the heavens that knows Joseph Smith is a Prophet of God, I do, and I bear testimony of it to God, angels and men. Joseph Smith, the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it. Joseph lived great, and he died great in the eyes of God and his people. . . He sealed his mission and his works with his own blood; and so has his brother Hyrum. In life they were not divided, and in death they were not separated.*<sup>28</sup>

**Music:** “The Seer, Joseph, The Seer,”<sup>29</sup>

**Everyone:** *The Seer, the Seer, Joseph, the Seer!*

**John Taylor solo:**

*I’ll sing of the Prophet ever dear, the Prophet ever dear.*

**Add Samuel and Hyrum:**

*His equal now cannot be found  
By searching the wide world around.*

**Add Willard Richards:**

*With Gods he soared in the realms of day,*

**All men:** *And men he taught the heavenly way*

**Everyone:**

*And men he taught the heavenly way. The earthly Seer! The heavenly Seer!  
I love to dwell on his memory dear; The chosen of God and the friend of man,  
He brought the priesthood back again; He gazed on the past and the future, too,*

**John Taylor:** *And opened, and opened the heavenly world to view*

**Everyone:** *And opened, and opened the heavenly world to view.*

**Everyone:** *The Saints, the Saints, his only pride!*

**Women Only:**

*For them he lived, for them he died; He lived, for them he died;  
Their joys were his, their sorrows too.  
He loved the Saints; he loved Nauvoo.*

**Add Samuel, Hyrum, Willard:** *Unchanged in death, with a Savior’s love*

**All Men:** *He pleads their cause in the courts above.*

**Everyone:**

*He pleads their cause in the courts above.*

*The Seer, the Seer! Joseph, the Seer! O how I love his memory dear!  
The just, the wise, the pure and free, A father he was and is to me  
Let fiends now rage, in their dark hour,  
No matter, no matter, he is beyond their power.  
No matter, no matter, he is beyond their power.*

**All men soloists:** *We'll meet him, we'll meet him, Our martyred Seer, in heaven*

**Everyone:** *We'll meet him, we'll meet him, Our martyred Seer, in heaven.*

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1. *History of the Church*, by Joseph Smith Junior, Volume 6, pg. 545-546.
  2. *Ibid.*, pg. 545-546.
  3. *Ibid.* pg. 545-548.
  4. LDS Hymns, #27, words by William W. Phelps (1792-1872).
  5. *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, Institute of Religion, pg. 276.
  6. *Ibid.*, pg. 277.
  7. D&C 135:4.
  8. *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, Institute of Religion, p. 277.
  9. *Ibid.* Institute of Religion, pg. 278.
  10. *History of the Church*, Vol. 6, Joseph Smith Jr., pg. 566.
  11. *Ibid.*, pg. 601.
  12. *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, Institute of Religion, pg. 280.
  13. *Ibid.*
  14. *History of the Church*, Vol.6, Willard Richards, pg. 616.
  15. *Ibid.*, pg. 605.
  16. *Church History in the Fulness of Times*, Institute of Religion, pg. 281-282.
  17. *Ibid.*, pg. 283.
  18. LDS Hymns, #27, words by William w. Phelps (1792-1872).
  19. *Joseph Smith History* by Mother Smith, Scot and Maureen Proctor, pg. 457-458.
  20. *Ibid.*, pg. 459.
  21. *History of the Church*, Vol. 5, Joseph Smith Jr., pg. 107.
  22. *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church – Brigham Young*, page 1.
  23. *Ibid.*, pg. 302.
  24. *Ibid.*, Pg. 303-304.
  25. *History of the Church*, Vol. 5, Joseph Smith Jr., pg. 85.
  26. *Discourses of Brigham Young*, John A. Widtsoe, pg. 458.
  27. *History of the Church*, Vol. 4, Joseph Smith Jr., pg. 540.
  28. *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church – John Taylor*, pg. 77.
  29. LDS Hymns – 1948 edition, #296, words by John Taylor (1808-1887).



## Watch and be Ready

by Douglas M. Scribner

The world is full of delusions about the Second Coming of the Lord, Jesus Christ. They vary widely. At one extreme the atheist denies that God exists and claims that Jesus was only an itinerant preacher. At the other extreme the evangelist imagines a complete fantasy of mystical events, sometimes called The Rapture. The vast majority of the earth's inhabitants are completely ignorant of the great and marvelous future appearance of the resurrected Lord. Others know of it, but choose to ignore it and hope it will go away. Even among the membership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, there is a lack of understanding of all that God has revealed about the Second Coming, and about the changes that will precede it.

In pondering these coming events, it was clear that my perspective of the future may well be different from that held by others, because it is based on my faith. However, as I entered into an in-depth study of the Lord's promises to the faithful, it brought great joy to my own soul. I had a concern that my children and grandchildren might witness the continually declining world condition, with its ever increasing violence and hatred, and become discouraged. However, I concluded that there truly is good reason to have hope for a positive outcome. This hope is based on a testimony that God loves all of His children and will shield and protect those who love Him. Fortunately a clear explanation of these future events has been foretold by prophets, both past and present. Understanding their words will enable us all to be fully prepared and not fear. Some of the events preceding the Lord's appearance may seem frightening so it is good to remember the counsel given by President Ezra Taft Benson when he said, *"It is a great blessing to have inner peace, to have assurance, to have the spirit of serenity and inward calm during times of strife and struggle, during times of sorrow and reverses. It is soul satisfying to know that God is at the helm, that He is mindful of His children, and that we can with full confidence place our trust in Him."*<sup>1</sup>

### Not In a Secret Place

When the glorious moment of Christ's Coming does occur, every person will know it! An event of this magnitude will not happen in a secret place or in an obscure way where only a few are able to behold it. During his mortal ministry, Jesus specifically warned his disciples about those who will come pretending to be the Christ. He told them that there are false prophets who will proclaim that the Savior is in the desert or in some other remote place. When this happens, we should not believe it for it is not true. An enlightening description of the universal awareness of Christ's Second Coming is found in his own words. *"For as the light of morning cometh out of the East and shineth even unto the West and covereth the whole earth, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be."*<sup>2</sup> Jesus will appear suddenly as the glorified, resurrected, immortal person that he is. Those who are living at that moment shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. He will not come alone, for he will be accompanied by thousands of angels. These angels are righteous, faithful men and women – saints who died and are then resurrected to come forth with him in his triumphant appearance. Jude, the brother



*The Second Coming by Harry Anderson*

of James, referred to a specific prophecy of this glorious moment when he said, “Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all”<sup>3</sup>

Jesus, the great Messiah, will look different than we imagine he was at the time of his mortal ministry, or even at the moment of his resurrection when he appeared alive again to his disciples. When Nephi saw the resurrected Lord descending to speak to the righteous survivors following the destruction of Zarahemlah and other major cities in the Americas, there was a feeling of peace and awe. However, in his Second Coming, Jesus is not coming as the teacher, but as the judge with vengeance against the wicked. As people see him come, they will say, “Who is this that comes with dyed garments?”<sup>4</sup> The Lord will arrive in red apparel as one who has trodden in the wine vat. He will come in power and great glory for his arrival will mark the commencement of the destruction of all those who have willfully disobeyed his commandments. “Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven . . . and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven, with power and great glory.”<sup>5</sup>

## The Whole Earth in Commotion

What will be the world’s condition at the time of this great day of the Lord? It will be a time of upheaval. Nation will be pitted against nation in mortal combat. Economies will be floundering. Neighbors will rise up against one another and even members of families will be at odds. Wickedness will be everywhere and many people will be living in constant fear. Over 170 years ago, the Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation from God describing the circumstances that will exist when the lord comes to destroy the wicked and usher in the new Millennium. In part it said, “And in that day shall be heard of wars and rumors of wars, and the whole earth shall be in commotion, and men’s hearts will fail them, and they shall say that Christ delayeth his coming until the end of the earth.”<sup>6</sup>

Though the entire world will be involved in the conflict, the greatest intensity of the battle will be in the land of Israel. Conquest of Jerusalem will be the objective of every side. The Lord said, “Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem.”<sup>7</sup> Jerusalem will be a city under siege! It is the focal point of this great war involving all nations. The walled city is just fifty miles south of the Jezreel Valley where the horrible battle of Armageddon will be in progress. The majority of those attacking Jerusalem will be there for selfish reasons, fighting without regard for liberty or faith. They are among the wicked of the world, motivated primarily by political power and worldly gain. The defenders of the city will include both righteous and fanatical citizens of Israel. Three world religions claim Jerusalem as a Holy City – Christianity, Islam and Judaism. To them it is a Holy War so emotions and extreme behavior will be running high. Even today the Israeli Air Force has an airfield in the valley of Meggido with all of the hangers and aircraft stored underground. Each plane is brought to the surface by a huge elevator when it is ready to take off. Armageddon will be the focal point of a worldwide war. At this point wickedness will appear to prevail. The death of all mankind will seem inevitable. In 1831 the Prophet Joseph Smith was

allowed to see this future event. He heard the resurrected Christ say, *“I the Lord am angry with the wicked; I am holding my Spirit from the inhabitants of the earth. I have sworn in my wrath, and decreed wars upon the face of the earth, and the wicked shall slay the wicked, and fear shall come upon every man.”*<sup>8</sup> But what about those who are righteous? What will happen to the faithful Latter-day Saints and to other honest and faithful followers of Jesus Christ? Only by the Lord shortening the days until his coming, will his saints be able to withstand the devastation. To his disciples the Lord promised, *“Except those days should be shortened, there should none of their flesh be saved; but for the elect’s sake, according to the covenant, those days shall be shortened.”*<sup>9</sup> When everything seems hopeless, the Lord will appear, and great shall be his coming!

## Suddenly at Jerusalem

The armies who will be attacking the Holy City will come from every nation. Those observing will see that they are powerful and appear to be successful in destroying the defenders. The city will be falling to their aggression when Jesus Christ appears suddenly at Jerusalem. His dramatic arrival amidst lightning and thunder with thousands of the Heavenly Host will draw world attention. The loss of life of the wicked among the defenders will have been so great that two-thirds of the army is destroyed. The remaining third, being more righteous, is in great peril when the Savior places his foot upon the Mount of Olives. The Old Testament prophet Zechariah prophesied of this historic moment. *“And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, it is my people; and they shall say, the Lord is my God.”*<sup>10</sup>

The Promised Messiah, Jesus Christ, is then standing upon the Mount of Olives. The prophecy of ancient times will have been fulfilled. As he steps upon the Holy Mount, the very earth will convulse and change its contour. The Mount of Olives will split in half creating a valley, where the remaining defenders of Jerusalem will flee for safety. As the righteous third of the defenders of Jerusalem flee into the newly created valley, those of the house of Judah will be startled by the Lord’s appearance. They will see the marks of his crucifixion in his resurrected body. *“And then shall the Jews look upon me and say, ‘What are these wounds in thine hands and in thy feet?’ Then shall they know that I am the Lord; for I will say to them: These wounds are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. I am he who was lifted up. I am Jesus that was crucified. I am the Son of God.”*<sup>11</sup> The Jews will lament because they persecuted their king. They will then be fully converted and accept him as their Messiah. Old Testament and Book of Mormon prophets spoke of the day that the Jews would fully accept Jesus as their Messiah and be restored to their land of promise. *“Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah . . . I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be my people.”*<sup>12</sup> Also, Nephi said, *“That He has spoken unto the Jews, by the mouth of his holy prophets, even from the beginning down, from generation to generation, until the time comes that they shall be restored to the true church, and fold of God; when they shall be gathered home to the lands of their inheritance, and shall be established in all their lands of promise.”*<sup>13</sup>



*The Resurrected Christ by Wilson J. Ong*

## The Final Battle

Having secured Jerusalem, the Lord will turn his attention to the Jezreel Valley and the international armies who are there, locked in deadly battle. This is global warfare, but here at Megiddo, the armies of “Gog” and “Magog” will be engaged in the most horrific fight of all. Elder Bruce R. McConkie said, *“Gog and Magog are all the nations of the earth who take up the sword against Israel and Jerusalem in the day of Armageddon. Their identities remain to be revealed when the battle alliances are made.”*<sup>14</sup> The prophet Ezekiel foresaw this day and the Lord commanded him to write it. *“Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord God; In that day, when my people Israel dwelleth safely, shall those not know it? And thou shall come from thy place out of the north parts, thou and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army: And those shall come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days. . .”*<sup>15</sup>

As the Resurrected Lord enters this prolonged and vicious battle with all his Heavenly Host, he will rain down fire and brimstone upon the armies of the wicked from all nations. It will be much like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, but on a much larger scale. Being aware of the happenings at Jerusalem, the righteous inhabitants of Israel will flee into the hills of Judaea, but the wicked will fight on. *“For then in those days, shall be great tribulation on the Jews, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, such as was not before sent upon Israel, of God, since the beginning of their kingdom until this time; no nor ever shall be sent again upon Israel.”*<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, the Lord and his Heavenly Host will prevail. These vivid scenes of destruction will then be repeated throughout the world, for Armageddon is a global conflict. *“The mountains of Israel are but the illustration; the same events will occur in all nations and among all peoples, for Armageddon knows no bounds.”*<sup>17</sup> This is the end of the Pre-Millennial armies of Gog and Magog. Peace will reign for a thousand years until, at the end of the Millennium, the evil forces of Gog and Magog will once again arise as Satan will be loosed for a little while preceding the final judgment.

## Cleansed by Fire

When Christ comes again, there will be a new heaven and a new earth, for all corruptible things will be consumed by fire. Eons ago, when all the earth was ripe in wickedness, God covered the earth with water. Only the righteous prophet Noah, his own family, and representative animals of each specie were saved in the ark. The entire earth was baptized and cleansed by water. With the Second Coming of Christ, the earth will be baptized and cleansed by fire. The fire then will be just as literal and real as was the water at the time of Noah. However, the righteous will not perish from the fire. Elder McConkie illustrates how the righteous will be saved, by recalling the experience of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the days when Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon. At the command of the king, these three righteous men were thrown into a furnace of fire so hot that it slew the men who cast them in. However, God shielded these three righteous ones from the scorching heat of the flames. The Prophet Daniel recorded the event and said, *“. . . the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.”*<sup>18</sup> Elder McConkie then adds the comment, *“And so shall it be at the Second Coming when the same literal fire burns over all the earth. The wicked shall be consumed and the righteous shall be as though they walked in the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar.”*<sup>19</sup>

The righteous and humble people of all faiths will be protected from the fire. However, the converted disciples of Jesus Christ will be caught up to meet him at his coming. These faithful Latter-day Saints will be joined by the righteous saints who died before the Lord’s Second Coming. The prophet Joseph Smith received the Lord’s revelation concerning these events. *“. . . and the face of the Lord shall be unveiled; and the saints that are upon the earth, who are alive, shall be caught up to meet him. And they who have slept in their graves shall come forth, for their graves will be opened; and they also shall be caught up to meet him in the midst of the pillar of heaven. They are Christ’s, the first fruits (of the resurrection) . . .”*<sup>20</sup>

The fire will consume all corruptible things and will have a great cleansing effect. Death and disease from the war and commotion of the time will be purified. Not only will the life and vegetation of organic matter



be burned, but the ground itself will change. *“The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.”*<sup>21</sup> The cleansed earth will return to the condition it possessed before the fall of Adam. It will receive the beauty of paradise as it was in the Garden of Eden. It will become a wonderful place for the righteous to dwell. All things will become new in preparation for the Millennium. Jesus promised this blessing for the righteous people of all lands. *“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come to mind.”*

<sup>22</sup>

### One Taken and Another Left

The prophet Malachi lived 400 years before Jesus was born. Yet, he pondered upon the Lord’s Second Coming in the last days. He asked the question, *“Who may abide the day of his coming? And, who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiners fire and a fuller’s soap.”*<sup>23</sup> This is an important question for us to consider today. The answer will depend upon God’s judgment of every individual’s personal righteousness. This judgment will be based on their works and upon the desire and intent of their hearts.

We are assured that *“There is none else save God that knoweth thy thoughts and the intents of thy heart.”*<sup>24</sup> Thus He alone is able to judge each person in their totality. Those whose actions are righteous and whose hearts are pure will abide the day of his coming.

It is not necessary that we be perfect to abide the day of His coming. What is necessary is to be striving to know God, to love him and to keep his commandments; to love one another, and to treat one another with kindness, compassion and respect. Those who abide the day will be the honorable men, women and children of the earth who are living the best they know how. They will include, but not be limited to, the active and faithful members of the Lord’s Church. They will also include righteous, good living people from all faiths and religions as well as those who know not God but strive to be honest and kind.

Malachi’s reference to the Lord’s coming as being like a refiner’s fire, indicates that even those who abide his coming will be refined by the flame. The dross of bad thoughts and actions will be burned away leaving only the *gold* of pure thoughts and good works. Thus the Second Coming of Christ will bless the lives of the righteous who are prepared, by cleansing them from the effects of their faults and imperfections. Among those living at the time of his coming, one will be taken (shielded and protected) and another will be left (to be burned as stubble). Jesus taught this in the parable of *The Wheat and the Tares*. In the literal sense of the word, tares are noxious weeds that resemble wheat. They can hardly be distinguished from the wheat until the grains of wheat begin to ripen. Jesus said, *“Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, gather ye together first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.”*<sup>25</sup> This is how it will be at the Second Coming. Jesus then said it plainly without a parable. *“Then shall it be fulfilled that which is written, that in the last days, two shall be in the field, the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two shall be grinding at the mill, the one shall be taken, and the other left.”*<sup>26</sup> This event will create a great division among the people. On one hand will be the wicked who have sinned against all that which they know to be right. These are they of the Telesstial world. On the other hand will be those who qualify for the Terrestrial and Celestial kingdoms by striving to live faithfully to that which they know to be right. The Book of Mormon prophet Nephi said, *“For the time speedily cometh that the Lord God shall cause a great division among the people, and the wicked will he destroy; and he will spare his people, yea, even if it so be that he must destroy the wicked by fire”*<sup>27</sup>



## The Government Upon His Shoulder

It is the dawning of the new Millennial Day, and it will begin with a new form of world government. Old governments and nations as we now know them shall be gone away. Only the righteous people will remain in every land, but they still need the direction and stability of a righteous government. That government will emanate from the Lord, Jesus Christ. It will be a theocracy, a kingdom with the Resurrected Christ as King over all. Gone will be the wickedness of unjust laws and secret combinations of leaders who administered these laws to further their own power and gain. In their place will be a perfect system of God-given, righteous laws and inspired leadership. Jesus will reign personally as the king and savior of mankind. The prophet Isaiah spoke of this great day. *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end”*<sup>28</sup>

This government will bring an end to the separation of church and state that we think is so important today. Justice and mercy will be held in perfect balance. It shall be a world government where freedom, liberty and moral agency will be its foundation tenants. *“In time ye shall have no king nor ruler, for I will be your king and watch over you. Wherefore hear my voice and follow me, and you shall be a free people, and ye shall have no laws but my laws when I come.”*<sup>29</sup> This is the beginning of the Millennium, a thousand years wherein the Lord will reign in the midst of his people. The Lord’s government will be the Kingdom of Israel. He will be the king, and all the gathered and converted children of the covenant will form his government. There will be many righteous people in the kingdom who are not yet fully converted, but they will look to the Kingdom of Israel for their temporal and spiritual leadership. There will be two capitol cities, Old Jerusalem in the land of Palestine and New Jerusalem in the land of America. The first will emphasize the gathering and conversion of the House of Judah. The second will focus on the gathering of the House of Joseph, including the lost ten tribes, and on the conversion of the Gentiles. Converted Saints will live throughout the world, linked to the Lord’s leadership by the Stakes of Zion.

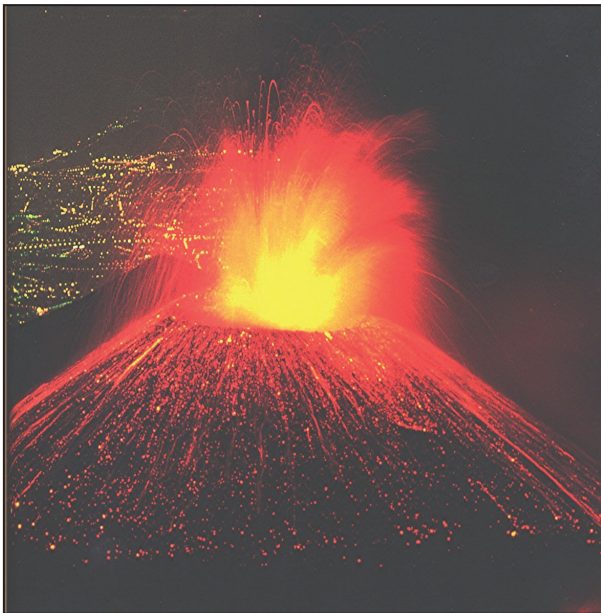
In the Tenth Article of Faith, the Prophet Joseph Smith described the establishment of the Lord’s Millennial reign. *“We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion (the New Jerusalem) will be built upon the American continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.”*<sup>30</sup> Though the word Zion is used here to describe a specific place, it is most often used to describe the Lord’s people, wherever they may live. *“And the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.”*<sup>31</sup> Thus the Lord’s government will be a Priesthood government, led and directed by ordained Priesthood officers, with the intent of building a Zion people throughout the world. The Lord’s word and law will go forth from the two capitols to the stakes of Zion in every land. *“And Zion can not be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the Celestial Kingdom.”*<sup>32</sup> In the Millennium, many of the humble and righteous people of the world will turn to Zion to be taught the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They will proceed to be baptized by his ordained priesthood holders, be confirmed members of his church, and receive their temple blessings in a House of the Lord. Holy temples will cover the earth for this purpose and the continued redemption of the dead.

## The Earth Shall Rest

When God created the earth and the surface cooled enough for life to exist, the entire land mass was in one location and the rest of the surface was covered with water. *“And I, God, said: Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and it was so; and I, God, said: Let there be dry land; and it was so. And I, God, called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters, called I the Sea; and I, God, saw that all things which I had made were good.”*<sup>33</sup> The earth was in this condition when Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden. This is why *“Latter-day revelation confirms the biblical account of the Garden of Eden, and adds the important information that it was located on what is now the North American continent.”*<sup>34</sup> This was a Terrestrial planet.

However, one of the results of the *Fall of Adam* was that this Terrestrial globe became Telesstial. *“After Adam fell, the whole creation fell and became mortal.”*<sup>35</sup> With this, the very surface of the earth began to change. The massive plates of the earth’s crust began to shift. The changes may have been gradual at first for the generations of Adam lived in relative peace for hundreds of years. They remained in the same general vicinity. It was there, at a place called Adam-ondi-Ahman, that Adam called his faithful descendants together to give them a blessing. *“Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared (and) Methuselah, who were all High Priests, with the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing.”*<sup>36</sup>

It was not until the generations of Noah that massive changes in the earth’s surface caused an actual separation of the continents. The great flood that lifted Noah’s ark was likely caused by far more than forty days of rain. Volcanic eruptions, massive earthquakes, cataclysmic changes to the earth’s surface finally resulted in the ark being swept across seas and coming to rest on the side of Mount Ararat. Noah, his family and his selection of animals were then on a different continent from where they started. Mount Ararat is in present day Armenia, between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea. As the waters receded, Noah and his descendants migrated southward into the fertile valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The commotion of the earth’s surface may have gradually abated until finally, five generations later, the scriptures say, *“The name of one (person) was Peleg; for in his days was the earth divided.”*<sup>37</sup> Volcanic action and earthquakes continue to this day, but at a far lesser strength, for generally the earth’s surface has remained in separate continents and islands since that time.



In the turmoil of the Lord’s Second Coming, the earth’s crust will change again. The great noise in the heavens and the melting of the earth’s elements as foreseen by Isaiah will be caused by another gigantic convulsion of the planet. The Lord exclaimed, *“I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall move out of her place in the wrath of the Lord of Hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.”*<sup>38</sup> The result will be another huge change in the oceans and earth’s land mass. The prophet Joseph Smith was given a penetrating vision of the Lord’s Second Coming. The Lord’s voice will be heard around the world. *“And it shall be a voice as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunder, which shall break down the mountains, and the valleys shall not be found. He shall command the great deep, and it shall be driven back into the north countries, and the islands shall become one land; and the land of Jerusalem (Palestine) and the land of Zion (America) shall be turned back into their own place, and the earth shall be like it was in the days before it was divided.”*<sup>39</sup>

The restructuring of the earth into its former Terrestrial condition will again create a single continent, surrounded by water. This will provide a path for the return of the lost ten tribes of Israel. It will be as if a road is raised up for them out of the depths of the ocean, not unlike the path created for Moses through the Red Sea. *“And there shall be a highway for the remnant of His people, which shall be left from Assyria; like it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.”*<sup>40</sup> Joseph Smith’s account continued by describing literal restoration of these ten lost tribes. *“And the Lord, even the Savior, shall stand in the midst of his people, and shall reign over all flesh. And they who are in the north countries shall come in remembrance before the Lord; and their prophets shall hear his voice, and shall no longer stay themselves; and they shall smite the rocks, and the ice shall flow down at their presence. And a highway shall be cast up in the midst of the great deep.”*<sup>41</sup> Finally the commotion will end. Vegetation will again flourish. The new earth will bloom with flowers and trees of every kind. Animal life



By Robert Weiman

past were raised from the grave to receive their immortal bodies. *“And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.”*<sup>46</sup> We know who some of these resurrected prophets were, because they appeared in latter days to the prophet Joseph Smith as part of the restoration of the Gospel. Moroni, John the Baptist, Peter, James, John, Moses, Elias, and Elijah were but a few of the righteous saints who arose from the dead. They and others like them are now resurrected angels of God who are helping to prepare the world for the Lord’s second coming. The number is far greater than these, for there have been many righteous men and women in every dispensation of time who have been promised to come forth in the first resurrection. The resurrection of all mankind will be just as real and literal as was the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The ancient prophet Job knew this and looked forward to it with great anticipation. He held on to this assurance despite the trials and afflictions he was required to face. Job wrote, *“For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me.”*<sup>47</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the Book of Mormon prophet Alma also described the reality of our eventual resurrection. You may ask, *“What of the righteous disciples of Jesus Christ who are alive at the time of his coming? What will happen to them?”* There will be many men, women and children who faithfully prepare and watch for his coming. The Apostle Paul saw clearly that those who are faithful, and prepared, will join the resurrected angels who come with the Lord. *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.”*<sup>48</sup> Their bodies will be changed that they might do this and still live. However, they are not yet immortal. Rather, they will return to earth to live with him during his millennial reign. Then, at the appropriate time, each one will be changed again from mortal to immortal. In the millennium, there will be no more burials. *“Wherefore children will grow up until they become old; old men shall die, but they shall not sleep in the dust, but they shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye.”*<sup>49</sup> This applies to all who abide his coming; the saints who are caught up to meet him, and those who remain on earth to await his arrival. The earth will be filled with mortal and immortal beings. Joseph Smith said, the immortal saints *“will not probably dwell upon the earth, but will visit it . . .”*<sup>50</sup> During the one thousand years of millennial time, the resurrection will proceed for all who lived righteously, but who were not yet converted to the Lord. For them, there will be ample opportunity to be taught the Gospel in its fullness, for the forces of evil and the doctrines of devils will be bound.

will be abundant, and there will be no enmity between the species. *“The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.”*<sup>42</sup> Truly, *“The whole earth is at rest and is quiet.”*<sup>43</sup> This is the day *“When the earth shall be transfigured.”*<sup>44</sup>

## Mortal and Immortal Beings

Jesus became the first of what will eventually be the resurrection of all mankind. The Apostle Paul referred to this when he wrote, *“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.”*<sup>45</sup> The universal resurrection occurs in orderly phases. After Jesus, many of the righteous prophets of ages

## Missionary and Temple Work

Missionaries and Temple Ordinance Workers will labor constantly throughout the Lord's Millennial Reign to complete the task of teaching Gospel Principles and performing Priesthood Ordinances, for both the living and the dead. Elder Bruce R. McConkie said, "*The purpose of the Millennium is to save souls. There can be no doubt about this. It is the Lord's work and his glory to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.*"<sup>51</sup> However, conditions will be different then than they are now. There will be no false religions to lead astray the honest seekers of truth. There will be no wicked people to entice the weak into the entanglement of sin. Satan will be bound and unable to tempt mankind with counterfeits of the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. The prophet Nephi saw this clearly: "*For behold, saith the prophet, the time cometh speedily that Satan shall have no more power over the hearts of the children of men.*"<sup>52</sup>

At the beginning of the Millennium there will be millions of people who, though righteous in living that which they believe to be true, are not yet converted to the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They will still have their moral agency to choose, if they are willing to have faith, to repent and to be baptized into the Lord's church and kingdom. To exercise this agency, they must be taught. Some of those living will be they "*who are honorable men of the earth*", but who have been "*blinded by the craftiness of men.*"<sup>53</sup> Others will be those who have never heard the restored gospel of Jesus Christ, but who would have accepted it had it been taught to them during this life. Mortal people living during the Millennium will continue having children and these children will need to be taught, so "*Their children will grow up without sin unto salvation.*"<sup>54</sup> Millions of innocent children who died before reaching the age of accountability will rise in the first resurrection. The latter are assured a place in the Celestial Kingdom, yet they will still need to be taught the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Elders, sisters and couples who are called to serve their missions during the Millennium will invite all to "*Come unto Christ, and be perfected in Him.*"<sup>55</sup> These missionaries will no longer have to learn a multitude of languages to teach the word of God, for the Lord will restore the pure language of Adam and Eve. The Adamic Language will fill the earth as foreseen by the Old Testament prophet, Zephaniah. "*For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent.*"<sup>56</sup> This great army of missionaries will continue their work throughout this thousand year millennial period without ceasing. Conversions will come gradually at first for many will still be steeped in the traditions of their fathers. As the people begin to accept the message of the missionaries, they will realize that the religious traditions of their ancestors were not true. "*. . . the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit. Shall a man make gods unto himself and they are no gods? Therefore behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know mine hand and my might; and they shall know that my name is the Lord.*"<sup>57</sup> The rate of conversions will increase until, by the end, they will become universal. "*For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*"<sup>58</sup>

Temple work will also go on at an ever-increasing rate because missionary work will continue in the Spirit World during the Millennium. In the holy temples today we perform priesthood ordinances for those who have died whom we are able to identify. These vicarious ordinances, performed for those in the Spirit World, are essential for their exaltation. However, the ordinances are only efficacious for those spirits who receive the glad word and repent of their sins. At this time we do not know who has accepted the word and repented, so we do the work for all we can. Also, our ability to identify all those who have preceded us is limited. These limiting factors will be eliminated in the Millennium. President Brigham Young said, "*In the Millennium . . . we will have revelations to know our forefathers clear back to Father Adam and Mother Eve, and we will enter the Temples of God and officiate for them.*"<sup>59</sup> Those who hear and accept the Gospel during the Millennium, either while living on the Terrestrial earth, or while in the Spirit World, will do so under ideal conditions. Without the influence of wicked men and false religions, they will not have been tried by adversity as fully as we are today. Some are so pure they will not need to be so tried. "*Little children need no repentance, neither baptism . . . But little children are alive in Christ, even from the foundation of the world.*"<sup>60</sup> Others will need to be tested and refined by opposition and adversity. For this reason, Satan will be loosed for a short time at the end of the Millennium. Some hearts will

turn away from Christ at this time. Some souls will not endure to the end. However, when this brief period of testing is over, every son and daughter of God will have been treated fairly. Each one will have been given ample opportunity to exercise their moral agency. Those who have been faithful will receive their final judgment and go forward with confidence into the Celestial Kingdom.

## **Signs of the Times Fulfilled**

No one knows just when the Second Coming of the Lord will occur. In his parable of *The Ten Virgins*, Jesus said, “*Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.*”<sup>61</sup> However, the disciples of Christ during his mortal ministry often pleaded with him to give them some indication of the timing of this event. “*And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying: Tell us when shall these things be which thou hast said concerning the destruction of the temple, and the Jews; and what is the sign of thy coming, and the end of the world, or the destruction of the wicked. . .*”<sup>62</sup>

Signs from heaven are a mixed blessing. Though they reinforce the faith and testimony of those who already believe, the signs are soon forgotten and rationalized away by those who do not believe. In fact, the unbelievers are often left with hearts that are more hardened than before the signs were given. This happened to the Nephite people who were sent a marvelous sign of the Savior’s birth in the land of Jerusalem. Their prophets had predicted that, in the Americas, there would be a day and a night and a day as if there were no night, at the time that Jesus would be born. The Nephites who faithfully waited for the fulfillment of this sign, were persecuted by those people who did not believe in the coming birth of Christ. The non-believers were astonished when darkness never came and their plan to destroy the believers was thwarted. However, only a few years passed away before these same non-believers completely rationalized this sign from heaven. “. . . *and the people began to forget those signs and wonders which they had heard, and began to be less and less astonished at a sign or wonder from heaven, in so much that they began to be hard in their hearts, and blind in their minds, and they began to disbelieve all which they had heard and seen.*”<sup>63</sup>

Many of the prophetic signs of the events preceding the Second Coming have already come to pass. Only a few remain undone. This indicates that the time of his coming is near, even at the door. Of those signs already fulfilled, the primary ones are:

- The Apostasy from the early Christian Church
- The Restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ in Latter days
- The coming forth of the Book of Mormon
- The taking the Gospel of Christ to all nations

One current sign of the times is the growing prevalence of terrorism in our society. In ancient times, the phrase used to describe the phenomena of terrorism was *Secret Combinations*. The Book of Mormon prophets described the mode of operations of today’s terrorist organizations with remarkable accuracy. In about 30 BC, the prophet Helaman spoke of a secret combination in his day, which was known as the *Gadianton Robbers*. This was not an isolated group of criminals in some sort of street gang. The Gadianton Robbers were a highly organized, armed and dangerous group of people who were bound together by secret oaths and covenants. However, their presence was nearly invisible to the human eye

In our modern context, we can easily substitute the word *terrorists* for robbers and murderers. The secrecy of modern terrorist organizations is very similar to those of old. They also covered up for one another to protect their true identity. The prophet Moroni warned the people of our generation that similar secret combinations will arise and seek to overthrow the freedom of all lands, nations and countries. He said, “*And whatsoever nation shall uphold such secret combinations, to get power and gain, until they shall spread over the nation, behold they shall be destroyed. . . Wherefore, the Lord commandeth you, when ye shall see these things come among you, that ye shall awake to a sense of your awful situation. . . for whoso buildeth it up, seeketh to overthrow the freedom of all*

lands, nations and countries.”<sup>64</sup> The presence of terrorist organizations in our own country is a sign of the times. We must be vigilant and determined to protect our nation and the freedom of our people. Like the righteous people in days past, we too may have to take strong action.

### Signs of the Times – Yet to Come

Wars will come upon the world with a force and devastation previously unknown, even in the World Wars of the Twentieth Century. Weapons of mass destruction will be loosed with such power that even the heavens will be affected. Simultaneously, the earth itself will reel from natural disasters of various types. Yet, in the midst of these visible and terrifying signs of the times, there will be some less visible but magnificent signs of His coming. Those who are faithful and observant will see and understand these signs, even though most of the world will not even notice that they have occurred. One of these signs yet to come is the building of the City of Zion, the New Jerusalem, upon the American continent. The exact place for the city has already been designated by the Lord. It will be in Jackson County, Missouri. One of its most distinguishing features will be a Temple to the Most High God. The location of the temple lot was given to the prophet Joseph Smith and is recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants.<sup>65</sup> Today that specific site is owned by a different church, which is known as the Community of Christ. Still, at some future time, a Temple will be erected there. The saints attempted to build a holy city in Jackson County in 1838, but were hindered by their enemies. Their efforts were accepted by the Lord, who assured the prophet that “*Zion will be redeemed in mine own due time.*”<sup>66</sup> The day will yet come when a living prophet of God will receive the sacred commission to resume the work of construction of a Temple and a whole City of Zion in this place. “*Verily this is the word of the Lord that the city New Jerusalem shall be built by the gathering of the saints, beginning at this place, even the place of the temple, which temple shall be reared in this generation.*”<sup>67</sup>

An even more dramatic sign of the times will be the building of the Lord’s Temple in Old Jerusalem. At the time of the birth of Jesus, Solomon’s Temple had been rebuilt by a wicked Jewish king, named Herod. Despite the fact that Herod used the Jewish religion to further his own political aims, the Lord used the temple as a place of revelation. It was there that the angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias to announce the coming birth of John the Baptist. It was also in the temple that Joseph and Mary brought their eight-day old son Jesus, that he also might receive a prophetic blessing. “*Like John, Jesus too was brought to the Temple when he was eight days old.*”<sup>68</sup>

It was also at the Temple where Jesus announced his own Messianic calling. It was there that he drove out the moneychangers and it was there in the Temple that his disciples often met after the Lord’s ascension. A crucial aspect of the *Restitution of all Things*, which precedes the Second Coming, is the building of a Holy Temple in Jerusalem. The Essenes, who lived a purified life in the village of Qumran at the time of Jesus, left their sacred writings in what we now call the *Dead Sea Scrolls*. “*The Temple Scroll of the enigmatic Qumran community gives us a meticulous description of the purified Temple, which they believed would replace the Temple of Herod.*”<sup>69</sup> However, even the Essenes lacked a full understanding of the sacred ordinances of the Temple. This understanding is only found in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Temple that will be built in Jerusalem will be a fully functioning House of the Lord with all of the sacred ordinances for both the living and the dead. There are numerous miracles, which must happen before this Temple can be built. The site, which scholars believe to be the location of Herod’s Temple, presently contains the *Dome of the Rock*, a sacred shrine of Islam. Removing the Mosque would start a global Holy War between Muslim and Jewish people. Even more miraculous will be the conversion of enough Jews to the restored Church of Jesus Christ to build, staff and provide the patrons for the use of an LDS Temple in Jerusalem. Nonetheless, it will be done, for God has willed it so. “*Therefore, thus saith the Lord; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of Hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. . . the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.*”<sup>70</sup>

There is a *Sign of the Times*, which may go unnoticed by most people. It is the Lord’s personal appearance to his living apostles and prophets and to faithful members of his church, both past and present. This appearance will be at a place called *Adam-ondi-Ahman*, at a site in Daviess County, Missouri that was designated by revelation to

the prophet Joseph Smith. As before mentioned, this is the same location where Adam met with all his righteous descendants three years prior to his death and gave them his last blessing. Now Adam will again be present as a resurrected being. Being the first man on earth and the Lord's first prophet, Adam will be known as *The Ancient of Days*. He will preside under the Lord's direction and all the living and resurrected saints of the past will be present. The prophet Daniel saw this day as part of the Second Coming of Christ. "*I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame . . . a thousand thousands ministered unto him: the judgment was set and the books were opened . . . I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him.*"<sup>71</sup>

This will be a most exciting event. The righteous saints from each dispensation of time are here. The Priesthood of God has put everything in its proper order. Adam is conducting the meetings while the Savior presides. The resurrected Adam is standing next to the risen Messiah, Jesus Christ. He is receiving his honor and authority directly from the Lord with the Keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood. There, in that grand council of Adam-ondi-Ahman, the government for the Millennium will be organized. Since all twelve of the Tribes of Israel will be represented, this is the likely time and place where the "*hundred and forty-four thousand*" High Priests will be selected and sealed to come forth with the Lord to administer the everlasting gospel as leaders in Zion during the Millennium.<sup>72</sup> Jesus will again administer the Sacrament to all present, and tears of gratitude will flow from all those who have remembered Him and kept His commandments.

The final *sign* will occur just before the seventh angel sounds his trump and the Battle of Armageddon begins. Two of the Lord's living Apostles will be assigned to preach in Jerusalem. The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are ordained and sustained as Prophets, Seers and Revelators. Any two of them could be called and chosen for this assignment. Theirs will be a three and a half-year mission. Though they will be allowed to come to Jerusalem, they will be hated and reviled by the majority of the Jews. These *Lions of the Lord* will preach repentance and the salvation of Jesus Christ. They will accuse the wicked and make public their transgressions. They will warn the nation of its impending doom. A few righteous and humble souls will accept their words, but many will scoff and revile them. Some will attempt to forcefully quell their condemnations, but they will be prevented and will, themselves, suffer the fate they planned for the two prophets. "*And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.*"<sup>73</sup>

In 1832, the prophet Joseph Smith received a clarification of these words of John and, speaking of the two witnesses, wrote; "*They are the two prophets that are to be raised up to the Jewish nation in the last days, at the time of the restoration, and to prophesy to the Jews after they are gathered and have built the city of Jerusalem in the land of their fathers.*"<sup>74</sup> This is a remarkable statement considering that in 1832 there were no Jews living in Jerusalem or in any of the land of Palestine. At the completion of their pre-appointed mission, the two living prophets will be killed. Their bodies will be left unburied on the streets of Jerusalem for three and a half days. Then, to the amazement of all, they will be resurrected. With modern global media coverage, the whole world will be watching. Suddenly they will all know, and tremble, for the time of the Lord is at hand. In the Book of Revelations, the apostle John foresaw these events in great detail and recorded them faithfully, even though he did not know or understand the technology of our times. "*And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, . . . where also our Lord was crucified. And they of the people and kindred and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. And after three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.*"<sup>75</sup>

## There is Safety

Be assured that protection and peace in the last days before the Second Coming will lie only in and through the Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ. For salvation, we must believe that Jesus is the *“Author and finisher of our faith,”*<sup>76</sup> that He lives today as the resurrected Lord, and that He knows and loves us individually. Men and women everywhere are urged to accept Him and His atoning sacrifice in their behalf. His gift of eternal safety is offered to all people in all dispensations of time. Speaking of the risen Christ, the Book of Mormon prophet Nephi said, *“For none of these iniquities come of the Lord; for he doeth that which is good among the children of men; and he doeth nothing save it be plain unto the children of men; and he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile.”*<sup>77</sup>

Jesus is the Prince of Peace, but the peace that He promises is not the absence of war. It is an inner peace that brings security to the soul no matter how great the chaos of the world around us. Jesus said, *“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”*<sup>78</sup> His peace is the assurance that we will live beyond the grave. He promises, by the power of His own resurrection, that all mankind will live again, to be judged according to their works. His peace is the gift of Eternal Life in God’s presence if we will accept him as our Savior and be willing to live His commandments. There is safety in the knowledge that, because of His suffering in our behalf, our sins and transgressions can be washed clean and completely forgiven if we will repent. Thus, we may eventually be able to enter His Kingdom – no matter how short, or long, our life on earth turns out to be. The promise is sure. When Nephi said, *“... it is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do,”*<sup>79</sup> he assures us that we can rely upon the goodness and love of the Savior, Jesus Christ. The *“all we can do”* part of this promise is probably the least understood verse of modern scripture. It does not refer to a long laundry list of rules like those which burdened down the ancient Jewish Pharisees. Instead it refers to a mighty change in our hearts wherein we are filled with a desire to know both God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love the Lord and our neighbor as ourselves. Once we know and love God sufficiently, we are filled with faith and a desire to repent and change our ways so we may live according to His teachings. When we reach this point, we are ready to start making covenants with Him.

Safety in the Last Days comes to men, women, and those children who are old enough to be accountable, because of their willingness to enter into sacred covenants with Jesus Christ. We must become a *covenant-making* and *covenant-keeping* people. *“And now, because of the covenant which ye have made, ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters.”*

<sup>80</sup> Receiving all of the blessings available to sons and daughters of Christ requires several covenants, the first of which is baptism into His Church. Baptism is a priesthood ordinance and, as such, has an associated covenant. However this covenant is only the beginning. It opens the gate to the path that leads to eternal life. *“For the gate by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water; and then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost. And then are ye in this straight and narrow path which leads to eternal life; yea ye have entered in by the gate . . .”*<sup>81</sup>

This step is necessary, but it alone is not sufficient. To truly become a son or daughter of Christ, one covenants to live by a whole new set of standards. When Jesus said, that we demonstrate our love for him by keeping his commandments, he meant that it requires of us a complete renewal, a spiritual rebirth. *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things become new.”*<sup>82</sup> First in the waters of baptism, and then again each week by taking the sacrament of bread and water, church members make covenants to: take upon themselves the name of Christ, to always remember Him, and to keep His commandments. They also promise to help bear each other’s burdens in life. There are other ordinances, with associated covenants, along the path that leads to eternal life. One such ordinance is to receive the Holy Priesthood. The Priesthood is the power and authority of God delegated to man. It has only one purpose, which is to bless people’s lives. Every worthy man in the Church can and should be ordained to the Priesthood.



The remaining covenants along the path to eternal life all pertain to the temple. They culminate in the in the *new and everlasting covenant of marriage*. Every worthy member of the church, as determined by interviews with their Bishop and Stake President, may receive a recommend to attend the temple. There they may receive a temple *endowment*, a gift of spiritual knowledge and power. Following the endowment, a man and a woman may be married with a covenant that binds them together for eternity. In the temple, their marriage can be sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise. Thus, if they remain true and faithful to each other and to God, their union as husband and wife will continue beyond this life in the Celestial Kingdom. The children of this marriage will then be sealed to their righteous parents as an eternal family.

In addition to the spiritual safety found in the gospel during the last days, the Church will provide safety from the storm of devastation. The brotherhood and sisterhood of church members coupled with wise counsel from living prophets and apostles, will provide a way to survive. Paying a full tithe, staying out of debt, and having a years' supply of food, clothing and money will help members through many of the economic troubles of these days. Living the Lord's law of health, known as the *Word of Wisdom*, will help sustain life through the plagues that will come. Loving and serving one another will help church members face the emotional stress of the times. To his disciples, Jesus said, "*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*"<sup>83</sup> Based on this love, and the power of the Priesthood, the Church will be a refuge for its active and worthy members. "*For thus shall my church be called in the last days, even the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints . . . And that the gathering together upon the land of Zion, and upon her Stakes, may be for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm, and from the wrath when it shall be poured out without mixture upon the whole earth.*"<sup>84</sup>

Thus, to my children, grandchildren and all those who read and ponder these words, you need not fear the events that lie ahead. This is a time for optimism and faith. Know that you will be protected and safe if you trust God, keep His commandments and put your faith in His promises. You are known and loved individually by your Heavenly Father and by His son, Jesus Christ. I promise you that they can grant you an inner peace and confidence in all the circumstances that may confront you. You now know some of the reasons why we believe in the restored Gospel and in His Church. With all my heart and soul I pray that you will strive to strengthen your faith and testimony so that you may receive all the love, blessings and joy that they have offered to you.



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3. Jude 1: 14-15.
4. Doctrine and Covenants 133: 46.
5. JST Matthew 1: 36.
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7. Zechariah 12: 2.
8. D&C 63: 32-33.
9. JST Matthew 1: 20.
10. Zechariah 13: 8-9.
11. D&C 45: 51-52.
12. Jeremiah 31: 31-34.
13. II Nephi 9: 2.
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15. Ezekiel 38: 14-16.
16. JST Matthew 1: 18.
17. The Millennial Messiah, page 489.
18. Daniel 3: 27.
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20. D&C 88: 96-98.
21. Psalms 97: 5.
22. Isaiah 65: 17.
23. Malachi 3: 2.
24. D&C 6: 16.
25. Matthew 13: 3.
26. JST Matthew 1: 44-45.
27. II Nephi 30: 10.
28. Isaiah 9: 6-7.
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31. *Ibid.*(PGP), Moses 7: 18.
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40. Isaiah 11: 16.
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42. Isaiah 11: 6.
43. Isaiah 14: 7.
44. D&C 63: 21.
45. I Corinthians 15: 20.
46. Matthew 27: 52-53.
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48. Thessalonians 4: 16-17.
49. D&C 63: 51.
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52. I Nephi 22: 15, 26.
53. D&C 76: 75.
54. D&C 45: 58.
55. Moroni 10: 32.
56. Zephaniah 3: 9.
57. Jeremiah 16: 19-21.

58. Habakkuk 2: 14.
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60. Moroni 8: 11-12.
61. Matthew 25: 13.
62. JST Matthew 1: 40.
63. III Nephi 2: 1.
64. Ether 8: 22, 24-25.
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66. D&C 136: 18.
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70. Zechariah 1: 16-17.
71. Daniel 7: 9-13.
72. Revelations 7: 4 and D&C 77: 11.
73. Revelations 11:3-6.
74. D&C 77: 15.
75. Revelations 11: 7-12.
76. Hebrews 12: 2.
77. II Nephi 26: 33.
78. John 14: 27.
79. II Nephi 25:23.
80. Mosiah 5: 7.
81. II Nephi 31: 17-18.
82. II Corinthians 5: 17.
83. John 13: 34.
84. D&C 115: 4, 6.