

Summary Handout

“The Prisoners Shall Go Free”

Lesson

30

Summary

Scripture Summary: *Doctrine and Covenants 2; An extract from the words of the angel Moroni to Joseph Smith the Prophet, while in the house of the Prophet's father at Manchester, New York, on the evening of September 21, 1823. HC 1: 12. Moroni was the last of a long line of historians who had made the record that is now before the world as the Book of Mormon. Compare Malachi 4: 5—6; also Sections 27: 9; 110: 13—16; and 128: 18. 1, Elijah is to reveal the priesthood; 2—3, Promises of fathers are planted in hearts of children.*

Doctrine and Covenants 124:25—55; Revelation given to Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Nauvoo, Illinois, January 19, 1841. HC 4: 274—286. Because of increasing persecutions and illegal procedures against them by public officers, the saints had been compelled to leave Missouri. The exterminating order issued by Lilburn W. Boggs, Governor of Missouri, dated October 27, 1838, had left them no alternative. See HC 3: 175. In 1841, when this revelation was given, the city of Nauvoo, occupying the site of the former village of Commerce, Illinois, had been built up by the saints, and here the headquarters of the Church had been established. 22—28, The saints are commanded to build both a house for the entertainment of strangers and a temple in Nauvoo; 29—36, Baptisms for the dead are to be performed in temples; 37—44, The Lord's people always build temples for the performance of holy ordinances; 45—55, The saints are excused from building the temple in Jackson County because of the oppression of their enemies.

Doctrine and Covenants 127; An epistle from Joseph Smith the Prophet to the Latter-day Saints at Nauvoo, Illinois, containing directions on baptism for the dead; dated at Nauvoo, September 1, 1842. HC 5: 142-144. 1—4, Joseph Smith glories in persecution and tribulation; 5—12, Records must be kept relative to baptisms for the dead.

Doctrine and Covenants 128; An epistle from Joseph Smith the Prophet to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, containing further directions on baptism for the dead; dated at Nauvoo, Illinois, September 6, 1842. HC 5: 148—153. 1—5, Local and general recorders must certify to the fact of baptisms for the dead; 6—9, Their records are binding and recorded on earth and in heaven; 10—14, The baptismal font is a similitude of the grave; 15—17, Elijah restored power relative to baptism for the dead; 18—21, All of the keys, powers, and authorities of past dispensations have been restored; 22—25, Glad and glorious tidings acclaimed for the living and the dead.

Malachi 4:5-6; At the Second Coming the proud and wicked shall be burned as stubble – Elijah shall return before that great and dreadful day. 4–5, Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights: **Last Known Jewish Prophets Testified of Restoration:** “The rabbis regarded Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi as the last of the prophets, the ‘divine spirit’ having ceased in Israel with their deaths. “Zechariah continued in the same task as Haggai; he too encouraged the Jews to rebuild the Temple. Zechariah reminded Israel that before God returned to the Temple the people must return to God through righteousness, justice, and mercy: ‘Return to Me, says the Lord of hosts, and I will return to you.’ The nation's future security would be guaranteed, ‘Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, says the Lord of Hosts’ (4:6), and Israel would flourish once again. Zechariah prophesied of the Golden Age of the Messiah when God's Kingdom would be established on earth.” (*Encyclopædia Judaica Jr.*)

Special Deliverance Holidays: The greatest return to Israel was from Egypt and every year two holidays are memorials of that deliverance as well as expectations of an even greater deliverance in the future. These holidays are celebrated on the first full moon after the first day of spring (Passover) and fall (Sukkot). “This holiday (Sukkot) was also the occasion for the consecration of the Temple built by Solomon and every seventh year on Sukkot, the Torah was read by the king before the assembled people. In his vision of the end of days, the prophet Zechariah foretells that all the nations of the world will assemble for the festival of Sukkot in Jerusalem to worship God.” (*Encyclopædia Judaica Jr.*)

Events Preceding Expected Heavenly Guests: On both holidays, special arrangements are made in anticipation of expected guests who will come unexpectedly. They include Moses and Elijah! The prophet Malachi speaks of Elijah's anticipated return and the work needed to prepare the people. The pattern is familiar today. “The ecstasy of rebuilding the holy Temple passed and the Jews fell into disreputable ways once again. Intermarriage was common, as was divorce, and morals were weak. Malachi was faced with the task of awakening the people from their religious lethargy and bringing them back to God.” (*Encyclopædia Judaica Jr.*)

Elijah to Restore Family Identity: “He denounced their neglect of the Temple service and compared this unfavorably with the non-Jews who brought abundant offerings to God. Malachi announced the coming of the Day of Judgment which would remove the sinners from the nation and thus clear the way for the Messianic Age:

‘Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers; lest I come and smite the land with utter destruction.’” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Precise Day When Elijah Should Return: “The Sabbath before Passover is known as Shabbat ha-Gadol. Tradition connects it with the tenth of Nisan, the day on which the Israelites in Egypt set aside the lamb which they were to slaughter on the first Passover (Exodus 12:3). On Shabbat ha-Gadol, a special *haftarah*, taken from the Book of Malachi and referring to the day on which Elijah the Prophet will reappear as forerunner of the great day of the Lord, is read. It is also customary on this Shabbat for the rabbi to devote his sermon to the laws of Passover.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Empty Chair for Elijah: As previously mentioned, Passover is a time for Elijah to return. The ancient eating arrangement at the Passover meal (Seder) was “U” shaped with the oldest seated at the second seat with one of the youngest of his choice seated at his right hand, in the first seat. At the other end of the “U” shaped seating arrangement was an empty chair for Elijah. His place was directly opposite the youngest and the oldest, symbolic (if you please) of Elijah turning the hearts of fathers to children and the children to the fathers.

Door Opened for Elijah: At one Passover I asked my youngest son at the appropriate time to open the door for Elijah. He refused. The seven-year-old said, “I don’t have to open the door for Elijah, he’s already come!” He knew of Elijah’s appearance in the Kirtland Temple on April 3, 1836, the beginning of Passover that year!

Jewish Immersions: Elijah’s return brought back temple functions and eternal ordinances including immersions done for and behalf of the dead – if they accept their spiritual habitat. Immersions are a familiar thing with Jews – precisely as an immersion. (The word baptism in a modern terminology may also be interpreted in other ways such as sprinkling.) There is a baptismal symbolism connecting to entrance into the Promised Land. “Since the tribes of Israel under Joshua crossed the Jordan to enter Erez Israel after the Exodus from Egypt, the Jordan river has come to have a deep significance for Jews, symbolizing the gateway to the homeland after years of wandering in exile in the desert.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Jesus Chose Specific Immersion Location: In context with this lesson, let’s review again that for the religious Jews, immersions are favored below ground level in flowing water that emanates from bedrock - the “Rock of Salvation.” Consider that the lowest spot on the face of the earth where water flows that originated in bedrock is where the Children of Israel crossed into their erstwhile homeland. Judaism and Christianity agree that it is also the likely spot where Jesus came to John in Judea to be immersed. Incidentally, in present Judaism, there is no immersion for “forgiveness of sins,” although instruction are to repent before going to a mikveh.

Jewish Immersion of the Dead: An immersion for the dead is included in the preparation of the deceased. “The burial is entrusted to the Chevra Kadisha. Throughout Jewish history, serving on the Chevra Kadisha has been a great honor. These men and women are selected for their character, integrity and personal devotion and are specially trained to perform what is a *tabarah*. Working in teams, these men or women, depending on the gender of the deceased insure the highest level of sensitivity and dignity in conformity with Jewish law and custom.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Inference of Immersion for the Dead: The deceased is washed and dried. Fingernails and toenails are cleaned, and all personal items such as jewelry are removed. After being washed, the deceased is ritually purified through immersion in a similar manner to the mikveh, or purification bath, that was required of worshipers entering the Temple in Jerusalem. The scriptural reading is precedent translated from the Hebrew Bible as follows. The inference of “pour” in total immersion means the mikve(font) must have water pouring in and out (not stagnant). “I will pour upon you pure water and you will be purified of all you defilements, and from all your abominations I will purify you” (*Ezekiel 36: 25*) “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. (*Ezekiel 36:25 KJV*)

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