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# “This Is Life Eternal”

Lesson  
**24**  
Summary

John 16–17

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**Scripture Summary:** *Jesus discourses on mission of Holy Ghost—He tells of His death and resurrection, announces His own divine Sonship, and says He has overcome the world. Jesus offers the great intercessory prayer—He is glorified by gaining eternal life—He prays for His apostles and all the saints—How the Father and Son are one.*

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**Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:** **Spirit, Breath and Wind Synonymous in Hebrew:** The concept of the “Holy Ghost” is unclear for Jews, yet the Hebrew term “Ruach Elohim” means the Spirit of God and has been used as breath and wind in several Biblical verses. One of my favorites is in the vision of dry bones. “. . . the bones came together . . . but there was no breath in them . . . Come from the four winds, O breath . . . that they may live . . . And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves . . . and shall put my spirit in you . . . and I shall place you in your own land . . .” (Ezekiel 37:7-14)

**The Gathering of Israel, a Symbol of the Resurrection:** Ezekiel spoke of breath bringing life into a dead skeleton as well as Judah and Joseph coming together. As the bones (sticks – ETZ-emot in Hebrew) are again clothed with flesh and come alive, so shall the stick (ETZ in Hebrew) of Judah, the Jews and the Bible, a skeleton of a once true and living religion, come together with the stick of Joseph, the Latter-day Saints and the Book of Mormon. This scripture and family “coming together” also symbolizes that with the “breath” of the Lord (His spirit), a resurrection and a new life begins.

**The Gift of the Holy Ghost, a Tool of Truth:** Ruach ha-Kodesh (Holy Spirit) is often used as a synonym for prophecy. A tool or gift of spirit used by ancient and modern prophets is the Urim and Thummim. “The exact meaning of the words “Urim” and “Thummim” have puzzled scholars over the generations . . . in . . . translations of the Bible they were rendered as “revelation and truth” or “teaching and truth” and this understanding gave rise to the incorporation of the Hebrew words *Urim ve- Thummim* on the official seal of Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) The Lord’s gift of spirit reveals and teaches truth. In **Lesson 28, “We Are Witnesses,”** there is an explanation of Pentecost when Jesus gave His apostles the gift of spirit. This occurred on the Mount of Olives fifty days after the Passover when Jesus atoned for all. In the Biblical calendar, fifty days after Passover is Shavuot, a day to commemorate receiving the “Law of Moses at Sinai,” a Jewish Pentecost. Both the “spirit” and the “letter” of the Law were given on the same calendar day.

**Similarities in LDS and Jewish Conformations:** “In many modern synagogues, the ceremony of confirmation takes place on Shavuot . . . to emphasize the relationship between Shavuot and the study of Torah.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) For Latter-day Saints, the procedure of confirmation includes giving the gift of the Holy Ghost. One of its blessings is helping us understand the scriptures. The companionship of the Holy Ghost is like a dear friend. A wise Orthodox Jew, Shaul Kullo, once told me, “It is easy to be friendly, but it is rare to be a friend.” “Friendship is a relationship . . . arising from mutual respect and affection . . . Hebron is an ancient biblical city in Erez (land of) Israel . . . the name Hebron may derive from the Hebrew word “*haver*” meaning friend . . . In Arabic it is known as al-Khalil, which means “the city of the beloved” and refers to Abraham.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) In Hebrew, a Latter-day Saint member is called Haver or in plural, Haverim. The word we use for members in Israel is friend!

**Is There Friendship Beyond This Life, a Resurrection?** There are various expressions of spirituality in Judaism, yet it seems to be a minimal part of Jewish dialogue. Also rarely discussed is the principle of life after death or resurrection. Even at Jesus’ time, religious division existed based on acceptance or rejection of resurrection. “Essenes (Dead Sea Scrolls people) were a religious sect in Erez (land of) Israel toward the end of the Second Temple period. Their religious outlook was close to that of the Pharisees . . . they believed in . . . immortality of the soul; but not in physical resurrection.” “The Sadducees also rejected the Pharisaic belief in the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body.” “Some rabbis believed in resurrection . . . God will bring everybody back to life and then the world will be a perfect place and physical life will go on indefinitely. This doctrine poses some obvious difficulties: the body actually decomposes after burial so how can it be reconstituted; furthermore what about overpopulation of the world? Those who believe in resurrection claim that anyway the whole process will be miraculous and the miracle will solve all the problems. Other rabbis however denied physical resurrection entirely and understood the afterlife to be a completely spiritual experience.” In modern times most Jewish theologians do not subscribe to the doctrine of physical resurrection and movements such as Reform Judaism do not consider it to be a necessary belief for the Jew.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

**Jews Have Different Opinions About an Intermediary for a “Life to Come:”** “Traditional believers claim that there are “hints” to future life in the Torah, such as the verse “Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song” (Exodus 15:1). The Hebrew word for “sang” is in the future tense and the sages took this to mean that Moses and the Israelites will sing in the future, that is, in the world to come.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) This thought has led Jews to suggest that Moses would “live on” and be able to be an intermediary for the living. “Because of the greatness of Moses as a man and because of his towering role in the history of the Jewish people, many stories and legends are told about him. Throughout the legends, however, although he is the most renowned of all Jewish teachers and the intermediary between God and man, there is no attempt to ascribe divine or even semi-divine attributes to him.” “Hasidism was aware that a program of utter devotion to God could hardly be carried out by all men. The solution was therefore to have a *zaddik* (holy man) in each Hasidic group to act as intermediary between God and Israel.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) The present Judaic concept of the singularity of God, however, must be compared with references to intercession in the Talmud. One is about the angel Gabriel, another – about the part of the sacrifice that acts as intercessor. “Piskunit,” ‘an arguing spirit, — an additional name of the Angel Gabriel, who always interceded on behalf of Israel.” (Talmud - Mas. Sanhedrin 44b - Footnote 11) “Why does it (sin offering) come before the burnt-offering? Because it is like an intercessor who enters to appease the King: When the intercessor has appeased him, the gift follows.” (Talmud - Mas. Zevachim 7b)

**Jews and Mormons Have Thirteen Articles of Faith; Agree on Unity – Differ on Singularity of God:** The principle of unity in Judaism usually refers to the singularity of God, yet it is acceptable to have varied or differences of opinion. The concept of heresy applies more to opposition to religious authority than to doctrine. “Differences of opinion have often led to controversy among distinguished scholars as to what actually constitutes heretical belief. The basic heresy is the denial of the unity of God. It differs from apostasy in that the apostate renounces his religion. The heretic does not. He remains a Jew, although holding controversial beliefs.” “. . . In the Bible and the Talmud there is no exact listing of the ideas the Jew must believe in but contact with other philosophies, Greek, Muslim, Christian, led Jewish scholars of the Middle Ages to define the religious beliefs which are distinctly and uniquely Jewish. The best known of these are Maimonides' Thirteen Principles (Articles of Faith) which are widely, although not universally, accepted as the basic dogma of Judaism.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) The first three deal with the “unreality or non-being” of God.

**Without the Gift of the Holy Ghost, the Identity of God Became Obscure:** “Biblical scholars believe that the (Bible) verse comes to emphasize Israel's faith in the absolute uniqueness and unity of God. Because God is one and unique, He alone is the Creator and Ruler of the universe and He alone is its judge. The unique, sole God is completely independent, He has no needs, and therefore the worshiper can “give” God nothing, except his own personal loyalty which is expressed by obedience to the Divine Law.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

**Judaic Belief Includes All People Under “One God:”** “Rabbinic scholars expand this concept beyond Israel to include the hope that all mankind will become unified through its faith in the One God. They interpret: “The Lord our God” (who is now our God alone), “The Lord is One” (He will someday be the sole God).” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

**The Basis of True Religion is Know God and Eternal Life:** “Behold, I am God; Man of Holiness is my name; man of Counsel is my name; and Endless and Eternal is my name also. Wherefore I can stretch forth my hands and hold all creations which I have made, and my eye can pierce them also.” (Genesis 7:42 JST) “For in the beginning was the Word, even the Son of God, who is made flesh, and sent unto us by the will of the Father. And as many as believe on his name shall receive of his fullness. And of his fullness have all we received, even immortality and eternal life, through his grace.” (John 1:16 JST) The unified plan of the Godhead is for mankind to return, sinless and proven, to God the Father. The way was prepared for us by His Son who atoned for all sins if we would repent. It is through the Holy Ghost we can know for a surety of the true nature of God, His Son, and the Holy Ghost – and this is Life Eternal.

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