

New Testament

Supplemental Study Material

Holy Land and Jewish Insights
by Daniel Rona

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The Ensign Foundation

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In 1974, he returned to Israel with his wife, Marilyn, and their three children. Their family has grown to five children. Like all Israelis, his sons and daughters served in the Israeli Military before their full-time missions. His youngest son and daughter are on missions at this time.

Brother Rona directs the nonprofit **ENSIGN FOUNDATION** which unites the people of Judah and Joseph in educational, cultural and scientific activities. The Ensign Foundation also provides learning experiences in the Holy Land. Brother Rona is the only LDS licensed tour guide in Israel. His background is unique: he is an American, an Israeli, a Mormon, and a Jew!

Latter-day Saints, who have experienced **ISRAEL REVEALED** with Brother Rona, tell of greater enrichment in their lives through his spiritual and cultural insights. He harmonizes the language, the culture, the time, and the places of the Holy Land, sharing the deep feelings and spirit of ancient and modern Israel. These are reflected in this Gospel Doctrine supplemental material which he has also provided weekly on the Internet. His book **ISRAEL REVEALED** is an authoritative work which provides a spiritual and pictographic review of the ethnic cultures and traditions of the Holy Land. He also produced a TV mini-series about Israel. These six TV-films are also on home-video cassettes.

Brother Rona has served many years in the presidencies of the Israel District and Jerusalem Branches.

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Supplemental Information For New Testament Studies

Helps for the Teacher and Student

Under each scripture listing is a summary of the chapters being discussed. These are from the LDS scriptures and are provided only as an overview. It is important that the actual scriptures be read. The Holy Land and Jewish insights are added to help the teacher and student “go back” to the setting in which the scriptures were given and also to better understand the general Jewish views of those scriptures. Jewish views have varied with time and dispersion. Yet understanding the Jews (basically Judah) will help Joseph in the prophetic mission of reuniting “Joseph and Judah.” This knowledge will restore the original understanding and truths which God gave to his children, yesterday and today as well as tomorrow.

The 2003 New Testament study material has numerous Christian traditions to consider. Unfortunately, Christian tradition is very competitive. Most traditional Holy Land sites that were significant in Jesus’ life were established hundreds of years after his mortal mission. Let me reiterate that there are four considerations which have helped me ascertain the truth as I guide thousands through Israel. They are archaeology, written accounts (especially scriptures), traditions (especially names of places) and the spirit that God gives confirming the truth.

“That Ye Might Believe That Jesus Is the Christ”

Isaiah 61:1-3; Joseph Smith Translation, Luke 3:4-11; John 1:1-14; 20:31

Summary: *Isaiah speaks Messianically—Messiah shall have the Spirit, preach the gospel, and proclaim liberty—In the last days the Lord will call his ministers and make an everlasting covenant with the people. An extract from the translation of the Bible as revealed to Joseph Smith. Christ is the Word of God—He created all things and was made flesh—John baptizes Jesus and testifies he is the Lamb of God—John, Andrew, Simon, Philip, and Nathanael believe in Christ and follow him. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

The New Testament, mostly refers to the account of the thirty-three-year life of Jesus. It provides some valuable information about his life, describes a short period following his life, and explains what his followers did. In the Greek language (the language of the New Testament’s first canonized presentation), the word “testament” means “covenant.”

“In the Bible we have the Old Testament and the New Testament. The word testament is the English rendering of a Greek word that can also be translated as “covenant . . .” (*Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson*, p.52-53)

“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: . . .” (*Jeremiah 31:31*)

“For this is my blood of the new testament (covenant), which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (*Matthew 26:28*)

“ . . . Jesus the mediator of the new covenant . . .” (*Hebrews 12:24*)

In future lessons we’ll examine and compare the metaphors of “old wine” and “new wine” as compared to the Old Testament and the New Testament. We will see a chiasmus with a center point of Jesus’ life and atonement.

Using the common Gregorian calendar, Jesus lived approximately 12,053 days (33 full years X 365 days + 8 leap-years). Yet the New Testament only documents a record of 31 days of His life.

Wayne Brickey, at an Education Week lecture at BYU, taught that in Jesus’ first thirty years, just eighteen events were reported in the New Testament. In the next year, another eighteen events were reported. In the following year, another twenty-seven events were reported. In Jesus’ last year, over one-hundred-fifty events were reported; however, seventy-five of them occurred in the last six days of his life.

The Jewish view of the life of Jesus is shown in the following statement.

“Although the rift between the synagogue and the church caused later versions of the gospels to imply a gulf between Jesus and the Jewish way of life under the law, the first three gospels portray him as a Jew faithful to both the written and the oral Mosaic law, but more extreme than the Pharisaic school of Hillel in uniquely preaching love of one’s enemies. He was closer in beliefs and lifestyle to the Pharisees than to the Essenes. His criticism of the Pharisees finds contemporary parallels in rabbinic literature and in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Like

the Essenes, he held poverty, humility, purity and simplicity to be essential religious virtues.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Gospel writers had different approaches to describing Jesus’ life. John’s purpose is to explain WHAT He is and begins by describing Him as the WORD.

“... God was not so much putting Abraham through a test, as making his unswerving obedience a shining example of man's devotion to the word of God.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

To the Jews, the scriptures, the words of God, are so special they must never touch the ground. Many use a pointer to read the words rather than touch the scrolls with their fingers. The scroll cabinet, the “Ark,” is said to contain the “presence of God,” meaning the word of God.

John’s book has twenty-one chapters that deal with the period before and during Jesus’ mortal life. The last chapter is after His resurrection. Of the first twenty chapters, half are devoted to His last six days in mortality.

Connecting us to the truthful symbols of the Old Covenant, John links almost everything Jesus does to a Biblical holiday. He mentions Passover, Pentecost, Sukkoth/Yom Kippur (Feast of Tabernacles) and even a non-biblical holiday of Hanukkah (Feast of [Temple] Dedication).

Continuing with some of Brother Brickey’s thoughts on John, we find that the Gospel writer refers to light twenty-four times, to water twenty-eight times, to life fifty-two times, to lamb three times and to bread seventeen times.

Quoting Jesus, John says we can see during the “twelve hours in the day.” This contrasts with the thought that what we can’t see is perceived as “darkness.” These metaphors were used prolifically as prophetic images of the life, mission, and gift of the Messiah.

In the fourth lesson, we’ll introduce another John, a Levite, whom the temple priests persecuted. He is the forerunner of the Messiah and he reiterates the prophecies of the coming Lord.

Old testament prophets are often quoted in the New Testament. Moses is mentioned more than any other Old Testament figure, although Isaiah is quoted most often. A comparison of some of the key words that both John and Isaiah use can deepen our understanding of the Savior’s mission.

Light . . .

“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.” (*Isaiah 9:2*)

“For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.” (*Isaiah 60:2*)

“In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.” (*John 1:4-5*)

“I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.” (*John 12:46*)

Water . . .

“... with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.” (*Isaiah 12:3*)

“I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.” (*Isaiah 41:18*)

“Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” (*John 3:5*)

“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” (*John 7:37-38*)

Life . . .

“O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live.” (*Isaiah 38:16*)

“Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.” (*Isaiah 43:4*)

“In him was life; and the life was the light of men.” (*John 1:4*)

“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (*John 3:16*)

Lamb . . .

“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” (*Isaiah 53:7*)

“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” (*John 1:29*)

Bread . . .

“Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.” (*Isaiah 55:2*)

“For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.” (*John 6:33*)

Darkness . . .

“To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.” (*Isaiah 42:7*)

“Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.” (*Isaiah 50:10*)

“Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” (*John 8:12*)

Latter-day Saints feel that the doctrinal views within the Old and New Testaments are the same, but few Jews ever read the New Testament, and those that have read it view it mostly as anti-Semitic.

“It is only in the New Testament that Satan takes on the meaning it has borne in popular lore to this very day. There, Satan is the very personification of the spirit of evil, an independent personality antagonistic to the goodness of God. He is identified with the anti-Christ and described as "that old serpent called the devil . . . which deceived the whole world. He was cast into the earth and his angels were cast out with him." It is Satan who is the personal tempter of Jesus, and Jews who would not accept Jesus are referred to as "the synagogue of Satan.”

“Strictly speaking, the ministry of Jesus himself does not come under the heading of "Christianity," but rather is part of the history of different Jewish-Christian sects which developed at the beginning of the common era. The first Jewish sects which followed Jesus' teachings still observed much of the Torah but added the belief that Jesus was the messiah. The Greek translation of the word *messiah* is *Christos*, and thus Jesus' followers deemed him Jesus Christ. After his death, these followers came to be known as Christians.”

“At this point, the nature of Christianity began to change from being a Jewish-Christian sect with partial observance of *mitzvot* to a sect embracing gentile followers. This development took place largely under the influence of Paul of Tarsus who attracted a gentile following by teaching that the observance of the commandments was no longer necessary. Faith in Jesus could take the place of the commandments and the "Church" could take the place of the Jewish people.”

“A Christian community began to emerge whose traditions and beliefs concerning Jesus were shaped by the New Testament. The writings included in the New Testament were written between 66 C.E. and 200 C.E., a period in which relations between Jews and Christians had already begun to deteriorate. Thus, the New Testament portrays Jesus as engaged in violent debates with Jewish scribes, and tends to describe "the Jews" as being responsible for Jesus' death. As the scriptural authority of Christianity, the New Testament has served as a basis for Christian anti-Semitism throughout the ages.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The key to recognizing the Messiah and the true meaning of his life and those who testified of Him is the SPIRIT. The word for spirit in Hebrew is Ruach Elohim, the breath - the wind of God. Moses knew that gift well and desired that everyone would have it.

“And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the LORD'S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!” (*Numbers 11:29*)

There are some people who do not have that gift yet, and those that do must exercise patience and love because eventually more will get that gift and be very happy. The gift of belief comes from God.

“My Soul Doth Magnify the Lord”

Lesson

2

Luke 1; Matthew 1

Summary: *Gabriel promises Zacharias that Elisabeth shall bear a son, whom they shall name John—He also tells Mary she shall be the mother of the Son of God—Mary visits Elisabeth and utters a Psalm of praise—John the Baptist is born—Zacharias prophesies of John’s mission. Christ is born of Mary—She conceives by the power of the Holy Ghost—Our Lord is named Jesus.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

We learn much about the time immediately prior to the birth of Jesus from Luke, who was not even there or at least was not of the first generation of disciples/apostles of Jesus. He gives us a key about trusting the witnesses of Apostles and Prophets.

“It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, . . .” (*Luke 1:3*)

The Apostle Luke was Paul’s scribe and wrote two books of the New Testament, Luke and Acts.

“Luke, the beloved physician and missionary associate of Paul, first wrote his Gospel, telling of our Lord’s portions of the ministries of Peter and Paul. Both accounts are addressed to Theophilus, a prominent personage of the period, who, since Luke’s writings are addressed to Gentile or Roman readers, may have been a distinguished citizen of Rome.” (*Bruce R. McConkie, Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Vol.2, p.21*)

Luke gave his witness following Jesus’ death. Another witness, John the Baptist, preceded Jesus. Zacharias, the father of John, was a priest in the temple when he received a remarkable vision. It parallels the Abraham/Sarah scenario of having a child at an advanced age. Later, like other holy martyrs, both Zacharias and his son John were killed by a wicked generation and a priesthood (or priestcraft) that existed among righteous priestly men and women who anticipated the impending arrival of the Messiah.

“That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.” (*Matthew 23:35*)

“When Herod’s edict went forth to destroy the young children, John was about six months older than Jesus, and came under this hellish edict, and Zacharias caused his mother to take him into the mountains, where he was raised on locusts and wild honey. When his father refused to disclose his hiding place, and being the officiating high priest at the Temple that year, was slain by Herod’s order, between the porch and the altar, as Jesus said. John’s head was taken to Herod, the son of this infant murderer, in a charger -- notwithstanding there was never a greater prophet born of a woman than him!” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Section Five 1842-43 p.261*)

There was a righteous branch of priesthood and priestly functions that continued at the time of John’s birth. Many Jewish traditions, including clothes and manner of worship that are still used today, reflect temple functions of that time. They are familiar to Latter-day Saints because the symbols in the temple are eternal signs and tokens. In Zacharias’ time, they observed the same practices we use today.

In the Old Testament Supplemental manual, we have previously discussed temple symbols in Jewish worship such as clothing, robe, sash, apron, shoes removed, and men separated from women in special worship environment.

“The authority of the priesthood was manifest in the days of the Savior's coming. By virtue of the priesthood held by Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, the angel appeared to him. Simeon, the prophet, blessed the infant Jesus, and the scriptures say that Simeon was filled with the Holy Ghost. So there were a few still remaining who had faith and the power of the priesthood.” (*Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., Doctrines of Salvation, Vol. 3, p. 86*)

“... For our own part we cannot believe that the ancients in all ages were so ignorant of the system of heaven as many suppose, since all that were ever saved, were saved through the power of this great plan of redemption, as much before the coming of Christ as since; if not, God has had different plans in operation (if we may so express it), to bring men back to dwell with Himself; and this we cannot believe, since there has been no change in the constitution of man since he fell; and the ordinance or institution of offering blood in sacrifice, was only designed to be performed till Christ was offered up and shed His blood -- as said before -- that man might look forward in faith to that time. It will be noticed that, according to Paul, (see Gal. 3:8) the Gospel was preached to Abraham. We would like to be informed in what name the Gospel was then preached, whether it was in the name of Christ or some other name. If in any other name, was it the Gospel? And if it was the Gospel, and that preached in the name of Christ, had it any ordinances? If not, was it the Gospel? And if it has ordinances what were they? ... From these few facts, we conclude that whenever the Lord revealed Himself to men in ancient days, and commanded them to offer sacrifice to Him, that it was done that they might look forward in faith to the time of His coming, and rely upon the power of that atonement for a remission of their sins. And this they have done, thousands who have gone before us, whose garments are spotless, and who are, like Job, waiting with an assurance like his, that they will see Him in the latter day upon the earth, even in their flesh. ... We may conclude, that though there were different dispensations, yet all things which God communicated to His people were calculated to draw their minds to the great object, and to teach them to rely upon God alone as the author of their salvation, as contained in His law.” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Section Two 1834-37 p. 59-60*)

Zacharias, a worthy priest in the temple, his wife Elisabeth, and John the Baptist initially lived in a city of “Judah.” Being priests, they likely lived in a town that was disciplined by priestly rules of cleanliness.

“... there were 48 Levitical cities which were traditionally set apart, usually four from every tribe, for the exclusive residence of the Levites. Included in these were the six cities of refuge.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

“And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: ... Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had showed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her. And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father. And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John ... And they made signs to his father, how he

would have him called. And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marveled all.” (*Luke 1:39-63*)

Ein Kerem in the fertile watershed hills just outside Jerusalem is the traditional birthplace of John. However, another small Arab town named Yatta, just outside the hills of Hebron may be a more likely location for their residence. It is farther from Jerusalem and seems a more likely place to hide than Ein Kerem. As mentioned in a previous Old Testament lesson supplement, that town’s name, Yatta, may be a derivation of the word Judah. It also has an archaeological ruin of an ancient “Levite” synagogue. It is tempting to give archaeology, plus a written account of “City of Juda,” a little more credence than just tradition. With a linguistic twist we could say that John came from Utah! Utah means “tops of the mountains” and Judah is in the tops of the mountains of Israel. John from Judah preceded the era of the Savior’s first coming. Prophets from Utah are preceding the era of the Savior’s second coming.

John knew who he was and surely knew who the Savior was. Like all prophets, he bore witness of the Lord and desired to bring people to Him.

“Why did John send two of his disciples to Jesus to ask if he were the promised Messiah? (Matt. 11:2-6; Luke 7:19-23) Any inference that the Baptist was uncertain or doubtful in his own mind, as to the identity and mission of the Master, is totally unwarranted. In reality, the imprisoned Elias and forerunner of our Lord was using this means to persuade his disciples to forsake him and follow Jesus.” (*Bruce R. McConkie, Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Vol.1, p.251*)

“There is not a prophet who has borne greater or more important testimony of Jesus than that which fell from John's lips. (Luke 7:28) Joseph Smith gave three reasons why John was considered one of the greatest prophets. First, he was entrusted with a divine mission of preparing the way before the face of the Lord. Whoever had such a trust committed to him before or since? No man. Secondly he was entrusted with the important mission, and it was required at his hands, to baptize the Son of Man. Whoever had the honor of doing that? Whoever had so great a privilege and glory? Whoever led the Son of God into the waters of baptism, and had the privilege of beholding the Holy Ghost descend in the form of a dove, or rather in the sign of the dove, in witness of that administration? Thirdly, John, at that time was the only legal administrator in the affairs of the kingdom there was then on earth. And holding the keys of power, the Jews had to obey his instructions or be damned, by their own law; and Christ himself fulfilled all righteousness in becoming obedient to the law which he had given to Moses on the mount, and thereby magnified it and made it honorable, instead of destroying it. The son of Zacharias wrested the keys, the kingdom, the power, the glory from the Jews, by the holy anointing and decree of heaven, and these three reasons constitute him the greatest prophet born of woman. (Teachings, pp. 275-276.)” (*Bruce R. McConkie, Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Vol.1, p.262 - p.263*)

In this lesson, the word “turn” is emphasized (Luke 1:16-17). In Hebrew the word “turn” is the same word as repent, hence “men turn to God” and sometimes the term is used that “God repents.” Actually, it is His turning to man as man turns to Him, giving a great symbolism to “turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers.”

“Unto You Is Born . . . A Saviour”

Lesson

3

Luke 2; Matthew 2

Summary: *Angelic ministrants herald the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem—He is circumcised, and Simeon and Anna prophesy of his mission—At twelve years he is about his Father’s business. The wise men are directed by a star to Jesus—Joseph takes the child to Egypt—Herod slays the children in Bethlehem—Jesus is taken to Nazareth to dwell.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

I live right next to Bethlehem. The sheep and shepherds are my neighbors. I have experienced visiting Bethlehem and the nearby hillsides close to seven hundred times. To me, it is like stepping into a time warp. Things are so similar to the land Jesus knew. Therefore, I will include an excerpt from my book, ISRAEL REVEALED, to give some added insights to this lesson.

BETHLEHEM

Today many people travel to the Holy Land to look for Jesus in traditional spots. They expect a stable behind an inn. They come looking for scenes they learned from Christmas cards. Their traditional perceptions come from the West. Let’s draw our attention to the East where it really happened. First, let’s examine the traditional site. One foreign broadcast correspondent once commented about his Christmas visit in Israel. He said that Bethlehem should be spelled, B-E-D-L-A-M. The conflict, chaos, and confusion of that Christmas Day were not what he had expected. After that we can examine the not-so-well-known site, where sheep and shepherds still roam on the hillsides of Bethlehem.

The Nativity Church: The traditionally accepted birthplace of Jesus is in a grotto located under the Church of Nativity. A grotto or cave is probable because stables were usually on the ground floor or underneath the inn rooms. Ancient inns were usually caravan stops. People were accustomed to “camping.” There were a few private rooms—not at all like today’s Holiday Inns. The traditional site for Jesus’ birthplace was established only 175 years after His birth. Three Christian churches, the Greek Orthodox, Armenian, and Catholic, hold separate services here and maintain a star decorating the place of birth.

Mixed Ownership of the Church: Ownership is tentative, at best. The three churches rotate their rights in using the grotto. Each church’s priests, in turn, bring their own decorative accouterments, adornments, carpets, and curtains to be used during their particular mass or service. After that they must remove all of their items, relinquishing the temporary ownership during their mass to the next religious group. In the past there have been considerable conflicts over these ownership rights. In 1989 a change was made among the Armenian priests. An Australian, Father Nursis, came to direct the Armenian Bethlehem facility. A good-natured man, he went directly to the Greek Orthodox and Catholic prelates and made friends. He has reconciled centuries of conflict. For example, the fight over ownership of a wall separating their two chapels has been resolved. Previously, regular headlines around Christmas time would read, “Annual Christmas brawl breaks out at Bethlehem church.” This seems to have been settled, mostly through the efforts of a friendly and faithful visiting priest. As of now, his temporary visit seems to be turning into a permanent stay in the Holy Land.

Manger Square and Mosques: During Christmas week the square is full of bleachers for various visiting choral groups. Shops and the few trees nearby are festively decorated; the mosque is not. Opposite or close to every Christian church in this Holy Land is a Moslem mosque; and Bethlehem’s Manger Square is no exception. Also, across the street are the local

police station and souvenir shops. New television antennas stretch up from the aged housetops. The skyline picture is surely a contrast to what the village of Bethlehem must have looked like twenty centuries ago. Let's go back to that time.

Ruth and Naomi in Bethlehem: Around Bethlehem are numerous hills still grazed by sheep and goats. In the spring, the small fields, supported by terraces, are planted with wheat or barley. It was to these hills that the widows Naomi and Ruth returned from Moab. Ruth gathered after the reapers; her good fortune was to come to the fields of Boaz, who was a relative of Naomi's late husband, Elimelech.

“And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons.
And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth. . . .
And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them;
. . . she went forth out of the place where she was, . . .
And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law.
And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:
Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. . . .
So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess . . . and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest.” (*Ruth 1:3-22*)

Ruth married Boaz and had a son named Obed. Obed had a son named Jesse, who tended flocks and crops in these same hills. It is still the Middle-East custom for the husband's family to care for the late husband's widowed wife. What Boaz did was culturally proper, and it certainly blossomed into a sweet love story.

“And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth . . . and his name was Boaz. . . .
And Ruth . . . gleaned in the field after the reapers: And her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech. . . .
Then said Boaz unto Ruth . . . abide here fast by my maidens . . .
Then she . . . said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, . . . seeing I am a stranger?
And Boaz answered . . . a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.” (*Ruth 2:1-12*)

The Lineage of Kings: A genetic line begins as he marries Ruth, a foreign convert, and that set the stage for a line of kings.

“So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife . . . and she bare a son. . . .
And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it.
And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: He is the father of Jesse, the father of David.” (*Ruth 4:13, 16-17*)

King David: Jesse's youngest son was named David. In obscurity during his childhood he was ordained the king of Israel. Yet he continued to be a shepherd; surely he was a good shepherd. Born at Bethlehem he was promised by God that his seed would bring the King of Kings, the Messiah—also to be known as the Good Shepherd.

“I am the good shepherd: The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” (*John 10:11*)

A Latter-day David: The old David proved himself politically, militarily, and spiritually. In spite of his sinfulness later in his life, Israelis still sing about the old David, King of Israel, awaiting a new Davidic descendant. Virtually every Bar Mitzvah celebration is enhanced by singing to the Jewish lad being honored. He is treated as an expected David, one that should come in latter-days, out of obscurity, to reestablish a righteous kingdom. Christians feel that the Davidic prophecies began to be fulfilled when the Davidic kingdom was partially restored in the meridian of time with the coming of Jesus of Nazareth. They do expect the rest of the fulfillment to come later.

“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, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.” (*Isaiah 9:6-7*)

In considering the words of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea, the Jewish expectation of a latter-day David seems to include a person similar to the ancient David in addition to the Davidic Messiah, the King of Kings. He may also come out of obscurity.

“But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.” (*Jeremiah 30:9*)

“And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it.” (*Ezekiel 34:24*)

“Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.” (*Hosea 3:5*)

If ancient events are any kind of pattern for the future, the latter-day David may be like the ancient David. He probably will prove himself politically, militarily, and spiritually. The people may then want to proclaim him a king. However, he will not likely accept that kingship. Although honored as a prince or a noble person, he will introduce and bear witness of the King of Kings. He came in the meridian of time and will return in the latter-days.

THE KING OF KINGS

A simple story that comes out of obscurity is the introduction of the Davidic descendant, the King of Kings.

Born During Passover: Again it was the Passover season, spring of that year. (There was no month with the name of April when Jesus was born). According to the biblical calendar, Passover always occurs on the first full moon after the first day of spring. By the way, April 6, 1830 is the date The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized. It was also the first full moon after the first day of spring. It was Passover,

“... being one thousand eight hundred and thirty years since the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the flesh...” (*Doctrine & Covenants 20:1*)

The Deliverer was born during the season that celebrates the deliverance of Israel from Egypt and also the expectation of an even greater deliverance. The two deliverances are linked by a journey of time through two millennia.

The Journey to Bethlehem: The journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem had taken at least a week to ten days.

“And it came to pass in those days, . . . that Joseph and his espoused wife went . . . unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem . . .” (*Luke 2:1-4*)

Bethlehem was their destination because they were of the house and lineage of David. They may have been staying with relatives for some time, for the scripture reads,

“And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.” (*Luke 2:6-7*)

Angels and Shepherds: Nearby, shepherds watched over their flocks, and angels announced good tidings.

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. . . . Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” (*Luke 2:11-12*)

Twenty centuries later we feel that we may know some of those angels. Were we there? Was Naomi also happily singing? In her life she was bitter, having lost her husband and sons. But she brought a convert daughter-in-law to Bethlehem to become the great-great-grandmother of King David, whose royal line brings our Messiah. Our Savior came from a convert’s family!

Modern Shepherds: Although most of the six million inhabitants of this little land of Israel do not even know anything about Him, I am grateful that I do. Some of my neighbors are shepherds, possibly descendants of ancient shepherds. My family and I have shared their happiness when their babies were born—as naturally as the baby lambs are born. We have mourned with them as their children die.

The Story of Jamil: One of those children was my little Arab friend Jamil, with blonde hair and big brown eyes. For years this silent child, dwarfed and barrel-chested by illness, would stand by me every week as I told and read the story of Jesus’ birth to tourists sitting with me on the hillsides with sheep and shepherds. Jamil even managed to smile a time or two. He did not understand the words, he could not hear nor could he speak, but he soaked in the spirit and love of our simple songs and unspoken love. Week after week, month after month, year after year, he came running out of his mother’s tent to be with us.

One day there was no Jamil—and his mother would not come out of the tent. His cousin from a nearby tent explained, “Jamil died.” The next few weeks were not the same, although other children came to watch and listen to us. Life eventually seemed to return to normal, but his mother never seemed to lose the grief of Jamil’s death. Months later she finally asked me, “Picture . . . Jamil?” I realized she missed him so. It took several months to locate someone who had taken a picture of Jamil. We had it enlarged and framed. Then one of our tourist guests, a modern Ruth, presented the photo to the shepherd mother.

Our Arab driver explained to the shepherdess that Ruth had also lost her son just months before. Ruth offered the framed photo that contained an inscription, a promise that Jamil is

waiting for his mother and that they will be reunited. Our shepherdess, typically showing no emotion, took the picture. Then as the two women sank to the base of an olive tree, both softly wept. The shepherd mother slowly rocked back and forth, holding Jamil close to her. This began the end of her grief; I sensed that she believed the promise that was made.

We made the promise because we know that another child from Bethlehem made it possible for families to be reunited. We shared the thought that in the meantime, departed ones are still near at hand. For more than twenty years, tourists and I have shared feelings and sung songs to these humble shepherds—songs that angels announced two thousand years ago. We cannot sing, “Far, far away on Judea’s plains.” The words come out as, “Near, near at hand on Judea’s hills, shepherds of old heard the joyous trills!”

Today’s shepherds may not yet understand our words, but one day they will; they will understand the gift of the One born in a manger.

Jesus’ youth was spent in Nazareth, an obscure town in the region of Galilee.

“Nazareth, a city in Galilee, sacred to Christians as the home of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. According to the new Testament, Jesus’ birth was announced to Mary in Nazareth. Jesus was brought up in the town, and although he did almost all his preaching outside of Nazareth, he was known in his lifetime as “Jesus of Nazareth.” Early Christians were contemptuously called “Nazarenes” by their enemies, and the Hebrew and Arabic terms for Christian are derived from the town’s name.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Another section of the book, ISRAEL REVEALED, gives added insights to Jesus’ life in Nazareth.

NAZARETH

Childhood Home of Jesus: Well off the traditional crossroad is Nazareth. Today it is a busy city of Arabs and Jews. Its Arab population makes it one of the largest Arab cities in Israel. About twelve hundred feet above sea level and halfway between the Mediterranean and the waters of Galilee, this obscure town became the childhood home of Jesus. Jesus’ upbringing surely included learning the tasks and crafts of his environment.

“Is not this the carpenter’s son?” (*Matthew 13:55*)

Although western language Bibles refer to Mary’s husband, Joseph, as a carpenter, the Greek Bible calls him a craftsman. The industry of Nazareth was, and still is, the regional rock quarry.

Rock of Salvation: That profession surely could have included the trade of working in stone. Interestingly, Jehovah, later known as Jesus, is called the “Rock of Salvation.”

“The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence.” (*2 Samuel 22:3*)

Although it is popular to consider Jesus as a carpenter, He also studied the Law of Moses. In fact, He was considered a rabbi, one schooled in the law. At twelve years of age He was in the temple—with the lawyers—answering and asking questions. Was this an apprentice craftsman or an apprentice lawyer becoming a “son of the law” (*Bar Mitzvah* in Aramaic)?

Nowadays, someone schooled in the law is called a lawyer. Jesus was the lawgiver, our advocate with the Father.

“For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.” (*Isaiah 33:22*)

Bar Mitzvah: When a Jewish lad turns twelve years of age, he has the opportunity to study a section of the Law and the Prophets, a section he will recite at his Bar Mitzvah. Jews regularly read the Law and the Prophets publicly three times a week (Mondays, Thursdays, and Saturday-Sabbaths). All congregations read the same section on each of those days. Therefore, the boy must choose which day he will read—and then be trained in that particular section throughout his twelfth year. A lawyer (rabbi) has been sufficiently trained to read the appropriate sections at any given time. Jesus apparently had that training.

“And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.” (*Luke 4:16*)

Messianic Prophecy: His reading fulfilled a definite messianic prophecy, and Jesus concluded by testifying that He was the realization of Isaiah’s prediction.

“And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,
The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,
To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.
And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.
And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” (*Luke 4:17-21*)

The congregation apparently heard the words but became enraged that he would point himself out as the “Anointed One” (*Messiah* in Hebrew). To them, that kind of blasphemy warranted death.

“And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.” (*Luke 4:28-29*)

MOUNT OF PRECIPITATION

Close to forty different churches mark traditional sites of Jesus’ youth. However, the only scripturally supported site is an old Nazareth quarry.

A Place for Stoning: This is probably the place where angered Nazarenes would have stoned Jesus for blasphemy. This is known today as the Mount of Jumping or the Mount of Precipitation. Rabbinic interpretations of the ancient Jewish law of stoning indicate that it was required that the victim be thrown over a cliff (the execution). The accuser was responsible to make sure the criminal was dead. If not, the accuser had to take the first stone and crush the victim’s heart. The accuser always had to cast the first stone and then all others threw stones to cover the body (the burial). Jesus was brought to the edge of the hill,

(*Luke 4:30*) “But he passing through the midst of them went his way.”

An added thought about Jesus’ youth includes his experience at the Temple. It is suggested that Jesus was there at the age of twelve to become a “Son of the Law.” That expression in Aramaic is “Bar Mitzvah,” which usually happens at the end of the twelfth year, usually at his thirteenth birthday. In some Jewish circles, a boy may become a Bar Mitzvah one year earlier if he has no father. Jesus had no earthly father. Gently, He reminded His parents,

“And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?” (*Luke 2:49*)

“Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord”

Lesson

4

Matthew 3–4; John 1:35–51

Summary: *John the Baptist preaches in Judaea—Jesus is baptized and the Father acclaims him as his Beloved Son. Jesus fasts forty days and is tempted—He begins his ministry, calls disciples, and heals the sick.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

The word Messiah literally means “the anointed one.” Anointing includes the practical and symbolic qualities of softening and healing.

“Anointing with oil is a very ancient custom. It was done for both practical and symbolic reasons. The practical use was cosmetic, to soften and protect the skin, as well as medicinal, to heal various afflictions. Anointing also figured in the coronation of the king, in the ordination of Aaron and his sons as priests, and in the purification of a person suffering from leprosy. These anointings . . . symbolized the new rank and power given to the anointed person and they evoked God's blessing on him.”

“The anointing oil was holy and made according to a special formula. It could be used for no purposes other than those outlined above. In the case of leprosy, the oil used was not holy. According to the Talmud, the anointing oil was compounded only once in history --- by Moses, who made enough to last for the whole period from the anointing of Aaron until the residue was hidden away by King Josiah. After that time no anointing took place.”

“In the case of kings, the whole head was anointed, i.e., covered with the oil, whereas the priests had only a mark made on the head with the oil. For King David and his descendants the oil was poured out of a horn; for King Saul it was from a phial since "his kingdom was not a lasting one." The kings of the Northern Kingdom of Israel were not anointed with oil but with balsam.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

As late as 11th century, there were still some Jewish scholars who saw, as basic to the Jewish religion, the following four principles:

- (1) belief in God;
- (2) belief in the prophets;
- (3) belief in the World to Come; and
- (4) belief in the coming of the Messiah.

The latter two items of a belief in a world to come and in the coming of the Messiah have greatly diminished in modern Jewish society.

One of the problems is that the gathering of the Jews and the coming of the Messiah are linked. There's no question about the gathering of the Jews, but where is the Messiah?

“Isaiah describes a glorious age, the coming of "the day of the Lord." After the evil are punished, "it shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people" (11:11). With the coming of the Messiah, Jews will come home to Jerusalem, the everlasting city.”

“The majority of religious leaders believed that there could be no return to Zion before the coming of the Messiah; and the active Zionists were mostly those who had abandoned their traditional religious roles and replaced them with secular, political activities.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Let us examine Jewish thought about the Messiah so that we may understand our brothers' points of view. The comparisons might be helpful in identifying the true Messiah and what He would really do.

“‘I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah, and, though he tarry, I will wait daily for his coming.’ This is the 12th of Maimonides' 13 articles of faith and clearly expresses what has become a cardinal belief of traditional Judaism.”

“In the Bible there is no direct reference to the Messiah although certain passages are interpreted by later scholars to be referring to him. It seems that belief in the Messiah started to develop during the Babylonian exile after the destruction of the First Temple, when the Jews came into contact with other religions, particularly oriental, mystical faiths. However, by Talmud times belief in the Messiah had become firmly a part of normative Judaism.”

“In traditional Judaism, the Messiah will be a human being --- albeit it a perfect one --- who will come and bring harmony to the world. He will not have a divine aspect other than having been chosen by God for his task. The Hebrew word for Messiah, *mashi'ah*, means "anointed" and indicates that the Messiah has been chosen by God. The coming of the Messiah therefore has come to mean the redemption of the Jewish people and an end to its suffering and tribulations.”

“Throughout history many men have presented themselves as the Messiah and because of the Jews' great longing for his coming, these "messiahs" have sometimes attracted large followings. Of course the most famous was Jesus, although Christianity deviated from Judaism in ascribing to him divine characteristics. Of the purely "Jewish" messiahs, the best known is undoubtedly Shabbetai Zevi who electrified the whole world, both Jewish and gentile.”

“According to the Talmud, the Messiah will be a descendant of the House of David and will be preceded by a secondary Messiah, from the House of Joseph. Folklore has it that he will arrive riding a donkey, although some sources have him arriving triumphantly riding the clouds. A widespread belief was that the Messiah will be born on the 9th of Av, the anniversary of the destruction of the First and Second Temples.”

Throughout the ages there has been a great deal of speculation as to when the Messiah will come and many kabbalists and mystics worked out exact dates for his expected arrival. Most rabbinic authorities were against such speculation, probably because it always brought extreme disappointment to those who accepted the dates.”

“In modern Judaism, the idea of the Messiah has undergone great change. Reform Judaism has substituted a belief in a perfect world when mankind progresses sufficiently and many Orthodox thinkers describe the establishment of the State of Israel as "the beginning of the redemption," that is, the start of the messianic era.”

“Throughout Jewish history, Jews all over the world have yearned for the coming of the Messiah. But at various times, especially in periods of trouble and suffering, the passive yearning turned into active preparation on the part of those who believed that the Messiah had indeed arrived and that the redemption was about to begin. The troubles afflicting them, such as the Crusades or the Chmielnicki massacres, were considered at the time to be the *bevei mashiach* or "birth pains of the Messiah" which must be endured before his actual appearance.”

“Time and time again whole communities became convinced that their redemption was finally at hand. The excitement and jubilation would spread from town to town as the rumors and stories of signs and miracles were passed on. People sold their possessions, neglected their work and prepared themselves for their trip to Erez Israel. What terrible disappointment when in the end their Messiah proved to be merely a false hope!”

“An early example of messianic expectation took place during the period of the Second Temple in Judah. The turbulence accompanying the rule of King Herod and, later, that of the Romans led to the emergence of messianic leaders, each of whom claimed to be the "king of Israel," about to free the Jews from the hated foreign rulers. Many of these, like Jesus of Nazareth, were crucified for their efforts. (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The Herods preceding and during Jesus' time had a significant role in establishing a political and economic era that provided an environment of enough religious freedom that the ancient law and priesthood could be restored, albeit in a rather insignificant way. People desired to be delivered from the cruelty of the Romans (brought on by the traitorous onslaught of Jewish zealots) and the corruption of the Jewish priesthood. It was the precise time that events would result in the Savior's great atonement for all mankind, a deliverance, largely unnoticed at the time, that had eternal implications for everyone.

“Herod I (73--4 B.C.E.), a cunning and ruthless tyrant and vassal of Rome, was king of Judea from 37 B.C.E. until his death. Herod was the second son of Antipater, the Idumean whose family had converted to Judaism in the time of John Hyrcanus, the Hasmonean king (135--104 B.C.E.). Antipater himself was the governor of Edom during the reign of Alexander Yannai who succeeded his father, John Hyrcanus. After Alexander's death, Antipater supported one of the two sons who contended for the throne and had his own son Herod appointed governor of Galilee in 47 B.C.E.”

“Herod crushed a revolt against Antipater's rule led by a Jewish nationalist named Hezekiah, executing the leaders without trial and escaping the sentence of the Sanhedrin by flight to Roman Syria, where he was appointed a provincial governor. After the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C.E., Herod threw in his lot with the assassin Cassius (who had temporarily established his rule in the East). Herod zealously extracted heavy taxes from Judea in order to curry favor with Rome. In 43 B.C.E. Antipater was murdered at the instigation of the Judean ruler Hyrcanus II. By marriage to Mariamne at this time, Herod attached himself to the Hasmonean dynasty.”

“In 41 B.C.E. Herod bribed the Roman ruler Mark Antony into granting himself and his brother Phasael the rule of Judea under Hyrcanus' supervision. The following year Mattathias Antigonus (a grandson of Alexander Yannai) seized the Judean throne and besieged Herod, Phasael, and Hyrcanus in Jerusalem. Phasael committed suicide, Hyrcanus was captured, and Herod escaped to Rome, where he was granted the Judean throne by Mark Antony and Octavian. With Antony's aid Herod took Jerusalem in 37 B.C.E. and Mattathias Antigonus was put to death.”

“Immediately on seizing power, Herod executed 45 Sanhedrin supporters of the Hasmoneans, effectively destroying the court's legislative power. He succeeded in extending the area under his control by bribing and flattering successive Roman emperors. Although in internal affairs Herod had unlimited authority, he remained a mere and willing vassal of Rome, possessing no authority to conduct foreign policy or to appoint an heir without imperial sanction. Always fearful of opposition, he had murdered all members of the Hasmonean family who were potential threats to his power, including his wife Mariamne and her embittered sons Alexander and Aristobulus, Hyrcanus, and his own son and heir Antipater. When granting permission for Antipater's death in 4 B.C.E., Augustus is reported

to have commented: "It is better to be Herod's pig than his son," because Herod would not eat pork. Herod himself died five days later."

"Herod's rule had destroyed the internal organization of the Jewish community and displaced the authority of the Torah. Though a Jew himself, he was hated by the people. One of the few productive aspects of his reign was the large number of cities, fortresses and palaces he had built, amongst which is the mountain lair of Masada. He also employed 11,000 workmen to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem and it was so beautiful that people said: "He who has not seen the Temple does not know what beauty is." His last act was to have burned alive two Jewish scholars who had incited the people to remove the Roman eagle from the Temple facade. His death was celebrated throughout Judea." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The New Testament reports that it was this Herod who ordered all babies in the nearby town of Bethlehem up to two-years old to be killed. This was in response to the "wise men" who came looking for the "new king" about two years after He was born. The Herod that dealt with Jesus at the end of his mortal life was Herod Antipas.

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It is important to note that Herodian and Roman rule was not always oppressive. Most of the difficulties that the Jews encountered were caused by a fairly small segment of society, the Zealots, who made murderous raids against the Roman government.

"Agrippa I (10 B.C.E. - 44 C.E.) became a beloved and respected king of Judea although his early life was one of quarreling, drunkenness and flight from debt. The son of Aristobulus and Berenice, grandson of King Herod of Judea, and Mariamne, the Hasmonean princess, he was educated in Rome with the princes of other courts. These connections were important to him later in his life. During periods of political turmoil among the vassal states of Rome, Agrippa was rewarded with appointment as ruler of parts of the Kingdom of Israel (37 C.E.) and later of Judea and Samaria (41 C.E.). His three-year reign was a period of relief and benefit for the Jews. He was sympathetic to the Pharisees and careful to observe Jewish laws. Thoughtful and sincere, Agrippa once stopped his own procession to let a bride's pass first. He was not proud, and celebrated the festival of First Fruits with other residents of Jerusalem. When called to read the Torah he stood, although a king was allowed to sit. When he read the passage: "One from among thy brethren shalt thou set a king over thee: thou mayest not put a foreigner over thee" (Deuteronomy 17:15), his eyes filled with tears, since he was not of pure Jewish descent. But the rabbis called out, "Agrippa, you are our brother." His death (44 C.E.) was sudden and mysterious. It was thought that he had been poisoned by Romans who feared his popularity with his subjects." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Immediately preceding Jesus' life, another series of events paralleled the political and economic events of the time. A prophet was preparing the way for a deliverer. His effort was to teach the people to have faith in the true redeemer, repent, and make covenants so that they might receive the Holy Spirit which the redeemer would give them.

In Judaism, Faith, Repentance, Baptism (immersion - Mikveh) and the Holy Spirit are viewed as follows.

Faith: “In the Bible there are no articles of faith or dogmas in which the Jew is commanded to believe. Belief in God's existence and infinite ability is taken for granted and is the basis of the Bible. This is the importance of the story of the Exodus from Egypt; the Children of Israel witnessed God's wonders and passed on the record of their own personal experience to their descendants. The biblical word *emunah* (and its other forms) which is often translated as "belief" really means "trust" or "confidence," which is something quite different.”

“Judaism insists on belief, faith and good deeds (which are also called *mitzvot*); but by themselves they are not enough. The actual observance of the *mitzvot*, notwithstanding the fact that it may occasionally cause inconvenience, is a prime doctrine of Judaism.”
(*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Repentance: “A unique aspect of the Jewish faith is that although God rules the world with absolute justice, He is also merciful and forgives sins against Him. The doctrine of repentance is based on this belief.”

“Although Judaism sees sin as a most serious matter, even the sinner is not without hope. One of the most important theological doctrines of both the Bible and the Talmud is that if a sinner repents his bad deeds, God will forgive him. Repentance consists of several stages --- firstly the sinner must reflect on his actions and realize that he has indeed done the wrong thing. He must then make up his mind never to do it again, and confess his sin. This confession is not made to any other human being but is made by the sinner directly to God. On this basis the two confessions *Ashamnu* and *Al-Het* were introduced into the prayers for the Day of Atonement which is a special occasion for repentance and forgiveness. However, even when a sinner has done all these things, his repentance is still not final until he has been exposed to the same temptation and withstood it. Of course he should not deliberately put himself on that spot again.”

“Repentance in Hebrew is known as *teshuvah*, which literally means "return," and signifies a return to God. A person who repents his sins is known as a *ba'al teshuvah*. Many rabbis of the Talmud believed that the real *ba'al teshuvah* is greater even than a person who has never sinned and they furthermore said that when a person repents out of love of God (and not just out of fear of divine punishment), all the sins he had committed are considered to be *mitzvot*. This is perhaps the most comforting doctrine that Judaism has given to the world.”
(*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Conversion - Immersion: “A convert to Judaism is considered a new-born child, and, from the halakhic point of view, he has no father or mother. Thus, if a whole family converts, the children and the parents start their lives as Jews with no legal relationship. Because of this state of affairs, converts are always named as though they were the sons of Abraham, the first Jew. A husband and wife who convert must also have another wedding ceremony in order to be married under Jewish law.”

“A potential convert (or proselyte) is first questioned by a court (*bet din*) of three rabbis. They usually begin by trying to persuade him to give up the idea of joining a nation which has been, and today still is, severely persecuted. If the candidate still affirms sincerely that he is ready to "accept the yoke of the commandments," he or she must undergo a period of instruction in Judaism, in its laws and practices. After thorough study, when he understands the *mitzvot* and is ready to begin his life as a Jew, the candidate is ready for the rituals of conversion. For both males and females the *bet din* oversees their immersion in a ritual bath (*mikveh*).” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Jewish thought requires that the Bet Din should always have the presence of Levites. They will witness the total immersion of the person.

“Just how to construct a *mikveh* in accordance with the numerous legal specifications involved constantly posed a technological problem of great seriousness, and over the generations rabbinic thinkers were repeatedly challenged to come up with novel solutions to this unusual problem which demanded a rare combination of technologic and halakhic ingenuity.”

“Briefly the basic legal requirements are these:

- 1) A *mikveh* must not be filled with water that has been drawn (i.e., has been in a vessel or a receptacle), but with water from a naturally flowing source; spring water or rainwater are the ideal sources, but melted snow and ice are also permitted.
- 2) The water must be able to flow into the *mikveh* freely and unimpeded (any blockage renders the water "drawn water") and must reach the *mikveh* in vessels that are not susceptible to ritual uncleanness.
- 3) The minimum size of the *mikveh* is of a vessel which has a volume of "40 *seah*," variously estimated at between 250 and 1,000 liters (quarts).
- 4) The *mikveh* must be watertight and must be constructed of natural materials on the spot, for otherwise it is deemed itself to be a "vessel" and renders the water in it "drawn water." (*Encyclopedia Judaica* Jr.)

John, a Levite, was administering immersions in a classic Jewish environment. The water source came from springs (living water), it flowed freely (Jordan River), it exceeded the minimum amount of water needed, and it was a natural setting. Jewish tradition also includes a requirement that the Mikveh should be below ground level. The Jordan River, where John the Baptist was immersing people, is at the lowest place on the face of the earth, near the Dead Sea.

Holy Spirit: “*Ruah ha-Kodesh* (holy spirit) is often used as a synonym for prophecy. However, according to some rabbis, unlike prophecy, there are some types of *ruah ha-kodesh* which also can be attained by doing good deeds.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica* Jr.)

The possession of the “Holy Spirit has been used to describe various righteous teachers and sages.

“... Luria already had a reputation as a man of striking personality who possessed the holy spirit.”

“... Nahman was the great-grandson of the Ba'al Shem Tov, the founder of Hasidism, and his mother was said to “possess the holy spirit.”

“... Phinehas is known to have traveled to redeem captives, and on one journey a river in flood parted for him, so as not to delay his mission. He constructed the famous "ladder of saintliness" in which Caution (against evil) leads through Eagerness (for good), Cleanliness, Purity, Asceticism, Holiness, Humility, Fear of God, Attainment of the Holy Spirit (divine inspiration), ultimately to the Resurrection of the Dead.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica* Jr.)

Other statements from Jewish thought may be valuable in understanding temptation and wealth.

“Neither great personalities nor simple folk are immune to the power of the *yezer ha-ra*, which in rabbinic literature, is usually depicted as the influence of Satan. The function of Satan is to tempt all humanity and to test a person's sincerity. The rabbis taught that one must therefore always be aware of the power of temptation, for the *yezer ha-ra* can grow

and become a bad habit. At first it resembles the thread of a spider's web, the wise men tell us, -- fragile and barely visible. If not controlled it will become as strong as a stout rope. Judaism places a high value on the good that results from man's victory over his evil inclinations. "Who is mighty?" ask the sages. "One who subdues his inclinations."

"... However, even when a sinner has done all these things, his repentance is still not final until he has been exposed to the same temptation and withstood it. Of course he should not deliberately put himself on that spot again."

"The Bible also warns against false friendship, saying that people might be attracted to a person solely because of his wealth, and not out of motives of respect." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The area traditionally known as the place where Jesus was tempted (Jericho), is the site of three Biblical stories that deal with wealth. In Joshua's time, Achan was tempted and stole a goodly Babylonish garment, shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold.

"And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it." (*Joshua 7:21-22*)

In New Testament times, Zacchaeus, the tax collector in Jericho, gave half his wealth to the poor and offered a fourfold repayment to anyone who had felt he wronged them.

"And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." (*Luke 19:8*)

Jesus turned down the temptation of wealth.

"Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;
And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.
Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." (*Matthew 4:8-10*)

“Born Again”

Lesson

5

John 3–4

Summary: *Jesus tells Nicodemus men must be born again—God so loved the world that the Only Begotten Son came to save men—John the Baptist testifies: He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. Jesus teaches a woman of Samaria—Men must worship the Father in spirit and truth—Those who harvest souls gain eternal life—Many Samaritans believe—Jesus heals a nobleman’s son.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

There are many people who mistakenly think of Israel as a flat, dry and dangerous land. In contrast to popular opinion, Israel is mountainous, the rainfall equals that of London (average of 26-inches per year), and peaceful feelings envelope visitors the moment they arrive!

Water has always been a concern because most of the rainfall occurs within the months of December, January and February. If it doesn’t rain then, Israel is in risk of a drought. Water has been a metaphor of life throughout the scriptures and “Living Waters” is one of the many names used for the Savior, the giver of life.

“Although the country is described as ‘a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths springing forth in valleys and hills’ (Deuteronomy 8:7) there is no evidence that in ancient times there were more than the hundreds of small springs and the few significant water sources which now exist. The ancient Israelites were careful in their use of rain, which was often stored in cisterns. They mastered the cultivation of the soil, often farming the hills as well. In order to protect the topsoil from erosion, they built contoured stone terraces, some of which may still be seen today.”

“The soil was plowed twice, first to allow the rainwater to penetrate, and then to level the ground before planting or sowing. The ancient wooden plow used in Israel had a plowshare made of bronze, or later of iron. The heads of the oxen were framed in a wooden yoke, which was tied to the plow, and a hoe was used to remove weeds in mountain areas where the plow could not reach. Water for irrigation was drawn from a well in earthenware or metal pitchers attached to a rope or chain.”

“When a person dies, the body is covered with a sheet and a lighted candle placed at the head. There is an ancient custom to cover all the mirrors in the house and to pour out any water that was in containers or vessels at the time of death. This latter practice may be the result of superstitious beliefs but it has been suggested that it was a way to tell the neighbors that a death had occurred without having to say the actual words.”

“It is a particularly important religious duty to wash the hands before eating bread and this washing must be performed by pouring water over the hands from a utensil with a wide mouth, the lip of which must be undamaged. Prior to this ritual washing, the hands must be clean and without any foreign object (such as a ring) to intervene between hand and the water. After this ritual washing, and the washing on rising from bed in the morning, the benediction “on the washing of hands” (*netilat yadayim*) is recited.”
(*Encyclopedia Judaica* Jr.)

It is interesting to note the desire of Israelis to bring more water to the ever-growing population. Many resources have come from Latter-day Saints who have taught the Israelis about water conservation and distribution. Two of them include the late Joel Fletcher from Southern Utah, the developer of Doppler Radar, and John Hanks of the northern Utah city of Logan and the Utah State University. On his last visit, Brother Hanks told me, “I’m not teaching them

anymore; they're teaching me!" Israel's water conservation and distribution system has become a model to many of the world's under-developed communities.

"In order to solve the water problem in this arid country, a national water system was devised, by which water is drawn from the northern portion of the Jordan River via pipelines all the way down to the Negev. This main pipe also links all the local and regional water works. Israel has also developed very efficient irrigation systems which increase the agricultural output." (*Encyclopedia Judaica* Jr.)

Biblical accounts of finding and using water to bless the population include the prophet Elisha blessing a brackish spring at Jericho. It is still running pure water to this day. Also, David brought life back to Jerusalem by using a water tunnel.

"David managed to capture Jerusalem with relative ease by infiltrating his men into the city through the water tunnels and surprising the enemy within the city walls. He used his own private army for this purpose rather than the combined armies of all the tribes. The city therefore became his royal domain -- the "City of David," capital of Israel."

"One of the points that has intrigued archaeologists and historians alike is the way in which Jerusalem has been supplied with water throughout the ages. There is only one natural water source in the Jerusalem vicinity --- the Gihon spring on the eastern slope of the Old City. The Canaanites built a tunnel leading from the spring into the city and it was through this tunnel that David made his historic entry into the city. At the end of the eighth century B.C.E. Hezekiah, king of Judah, had a new tunnel built which conducted the waters of the Gihon to the Siloam pools within what were then the city limits. This tunnel is still in existence today. One can wade through it and read the inscription placed there by the builders over 2,500 years ago. It tells how the workers, digging from both ends, met at an exact point in the center in what must have been a great engineering feat for those days."

"There were other pools, cisterns and reservoirs built round the city to increase its water supply but they proved to be inadequate for the growing population. So Pontius Pilate, the Roman ruler, built an aqueduct to bring more water from the springs near Hebron in the first century C.E." (*Encyclopedia Judaica* Jr.)

There are also traditions that teach the value of water. The following explains "The Water-Drawing Celebration." Note the connection of light with water (both are names of the Lord).

"In the days of the Temple, each day during the last six *hol ha-mo'ed* days of the festival (though not on the Sabbath), the priests used to fill a golden flagon with water drawn from the beautiful spring of Siloam in the valley to the south of the Temple Mount, and carry it up the hill for a ceremony at the altar. This ceremony was called *Simbat Bet ha-Sho'evah* (the joy of the water drawing). According to the Mishnah, whoever failed to witness this ceremony in his lifetime "never witnessed real joy." Golden candlesticks, 50 cubits high, were lit with wicks made out of worn-out garments of the priests, and the light emitted was so bright that "there was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that did not reflect the light of the Bet ha-Sho'evah." Men of piety and good deeds used to dance before the candlesticks with burning torches in their hands, singing songs and praises. And countless Levites played on harps, lyres, cymbals, trumpets and other musical instruments, on the 15 steps leading from the Court of the Israelites to the Court of the Women."

"King Alexander Yannai, who also acted as High Priest, once chose to ignore the traditional way of conducting this ceremonial. The vast throng of worshippers

immediately reacted by pelting him with thousands of *etrogim* (citrus fruits).”
(*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Another powerful metaphor in the scriptures is the word “ruah.” As mentioned in previous lessons, the word ruah means “wind, breath and spirit.” “Ruah Elohim” is the spirit or breath of God.

“Flesh is the term used in the Bible to distinguish mortal man from God. The Hebrew word for flesh, *basar*, is contrasted with the Divine Spirit, *ru'ah*, with which man is temporarily endowed. Thus: "My spirit shall not abide in man forever, for that he is also flesh; therefore shall his days be a hundred and twenty years" (Genesis 6:3). The Talmud and Midrash refer to man as *basar va-dam* ("flesh and blood") to indicate his mortality as against the eternity of God.”

“*Ruah ha-Kodesh* (holy spirit) is often used as a synonym for prophecy. However, according to some rabbis, unlike prophecy, there are some types of *ruah ha-kodesh* which also can be attained by doing good deeds.”

“The Talmudic rabbis thought the body to be separable, in a sense, from the soul. God breathed the soul into the body of Adam (Genesis 2:7).” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Ezekiel spoke of breath and of wind bringing life into a dead skeleton. As the sticks (ETZ-emot) of the body are clothed again with flesh and come alive, so shall the stick (ETZ) of Judah, the dead skeleton of a once true and living religion, come together with the stick of Joseph. This embodies the true religion and with the “breath” of the Lord, his spirit - a resurrection - a new life begins again. That new life will include a new sanctuary of the Lord.

“... and the bones came together, bone to his bone . . . the sinews and the flesh came up upon them . . . and the breath came into them, and they lived . . . Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel . . . And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not show us what thou [meanest] by these? Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand. . . . Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side . . . And I will make them one nation . . . Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.” (*Ezekiel 37*)

In Israel’s history, a foreign ethnic group, Samaritans, intermarried with Israelites and wanted to assist in building the temple at Jerusalem, but they were refused. These Samaritans then built their own temple on Mount Gerizim. Thereafter, their interaction with the rest of Israel was tenuous at best.

“Samaritans (are) a small religious sect residing in Israel whose members consider themselves to be direct descendants of the Israelite tribes. According to Samaritan history, they broke away from the Israelites in the 11th century B.C.E., refusing to accept a change in the location of the religious capital. To this day the Samaritans maintain that Mount Gerizim near Shechem (Nablus, in northern Israel) is the place chosen by God as the center of Israelite worship and not Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. They have therefore continued to live around Shechem and to make pilgrimages to Mount Gerizim.”

“The Samaritans refused to accept any of the Jewish religious writings which followed their split with the Israelites. Their religion is therefore based mainly on the Five Books of Moses. Neither the Mishnah nor the Talmud is regarded as valid. But Samaritans adhere strictly to the laws of the Pentateuch and have maintained biblical traditions and rituals for thousands of years. Thus, while the Jews ceased to offer sacrifices after the destruction of the Second Temple, the Samaritans still celebrate the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb on Mount Gerizim each Passover, and all Samaritan families share in the ritual slaughter and feasting. The Samaritans also make pilgrimages to Mount Gerizim on the three pilgrim festivals of Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot, and continue to observe Rosh Ha-Shanah, Yom Kippur and Simhat Torah. They do not celebrate Purim or Hanukkah, however, because these festivals are not mentioned in the Pentateuch and were instituted only after the split between the Samaritans and the Jews.”

“As they use a different calendar system, the Jews and Samaritans rarely celebrate their holidays at the same time. Yet there is a distinct similarity between the two groups. The Samaritans also observe the Sabbath on Saturday and also maintain *kashrut* laws. They even have a bar mitzvah ceremony, but instead of on the boy's 13th birthday, they celebrate upon the completion of his basic religious studies, which can take place any time between the ages of six and ten.”

“The Samaritan community is headed by priests who are interpreters of the law and keepers of the secret calendar. Until the 17th century these priests claimed direct descent from Aaron. But the last descendant died in 1624 and the priesthood passed to another family.”

“The Samaritan population has remained small due to persecutions and plagues throughout the centuries. By the beginning of the 20th century there were only 150 of them left. With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 this minute community was split into two centers --- one under Jordanian rule and the other in Israel. But the Six-Day War in 1967 ended the isolation of the two branches and under the protection of the Israel government, their population has grown to about 500 persons.”
(*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The ethnic character of people did not alter the Lord's mission. He came to provide living water for all. In a later lesson, we'll discover that we are the ones that label a Samaritan as “good.” Neither the Gospel writers nor the Savior referred to a “good Samaritan.” In the account of the woman at the well, it becomes evident that all people can be “born again,” or in other words, receive new life--His life.

“They Straightway Left Their Nets”

Luke 4:14-32; 5; 6:12-16; Matthew 10

Summary: *Jesus fasts forty days and is tempted of the devil—He announces His divine Sonship in Nazareth and is rejected—He casts out a devil in Capernaum, heals Peter’s mother-in-law, and preaches and heals throughout Galilee. Peter, the fisherman, called to catch men—Jesus heals a leper—He forgives sins and heals a paralytic—Matthew is called. Christ instructs, empowers, and sends the Twelve Apostles forth to preach, minister, and heal the sick—Those who receive them, receive the Lord.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

Most of Jesus’ ministry was in the Galilean region. It is estimated that of his thirty-six-month ministry, eighteen to twenty months were centered at Capernaum. Nowadays, many Christians call it the City of Jesus.

“Capernaum is a village with a Christian and a Jewish history. Located on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, its name is a distortion of the Hebrew words *Kefar* ("village of") and *Nabum* (which is a personal name).”

“The first mention of Capernaum is found in the writings of Josephus. In *The Jewish Wars* he described it as "a highly fertile spring called by the inhabitants Capharnaum." The New Testament refers to the village in several places. Jesus chose Capernaum as his place of residence; Capernaum is sometimes even termed "his own city." He was also said to have preached at the village synagogue. As Capernaum is on the Sea of Galilee, it served as a fishing center. Five of the apostles of Jesus were said to be fishermen from Capernaum.”

“Jews and Christians lived in Capernaum through the Talmudic period (to 500 C.E.). Several notable ruins of historical importance remain there. One of these ruins is called Tell Hum in Arabic. The most significant reminder of the past is, however, a synagogue which was unearthed in 1905.”

“The synagogue dates from the late second or early third century and is one of the best preserved Galilean synagogues of the early type. The exterior is finely decorated. It has one large and two small entrances which lead to a main hall. Within the hall there are two parallel rows of columns and stone benches along the walls. The interior is undecorated and no evidence of a Torah ark is to be found. There are steps leading to an upper gallery, probably used for women worshipers. The walls of the gallery were decorated with art work depicting plants of Erez Israel and Jewish religious symbols, including the Tabernacle, *menorah* and Torah Ark.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

One of the reasons scholars date the synagogue to after Jesus’ life is because of its beautiful Roman architecture. Yet there are some simple, convincing evidences that connect the building to Jesus’ time. First, Luke tells us about the builder.

“Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this: For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.” (*Luke 7:1-5*)

Second, the artistic renditions of the “Magen David” (Star of David) on the synagogue have a noteworthy exception. There are two of these at Capernaum. One of them is straight up; the other (like most of these symbols everywhere else), are at a slight right slant. The fact that the

symbol is slanted denotes the destruction of the temple. The one at Capernaum and a few others that are straight seem to indicate that they were carved while the temple was still standing. Incidentally, all synagogues face toward Jerusalem.

Third, there are two doorways in and out of the synagogue. After the temple was destroyed, all synagogue entrances (coming from Jerusalem) were closed and a back door was opened. The symbolism may mean that we are now coming from the Diaspora into the place of worship and must return to the Diaspora. Jews' synagogue prayers used to end with the hopeful words, "Next year in Jerusalem." Now that Jerusalem is restored, the prayers read, "Next year in Jerusalem - rebuilt." The Capernaum synagogue has both a pre- and post-temple destruction entrance.

It is the custom to read the scriptures, the Law and the Prophets, three times a week. That occurs on Mondays, Thursdays and Sabbaths (Saturdays). It takes one year and the entire "Old Testament" is completed. Although they lack a "correlation department" (as the Latter-day Saints have), every congregation reads the same sections on the same day. That is why a lad anticipating his Bar Mitzvah selects a date and practices reading the section appointed for that day.

In Jesus' day, it seems apparent that the Jews read the scriptures publicly in the synagogue only on the Sabbath day. Since they read only once a week, it stands to reason that it would take three years to read through the entire Law and the Prophets. It is interesting to note that the Savior's ministry was three years in length. Perhaps He chose that time frame so that He could personally teach his Disciples all of the Law and the Prophets.

The scriptural connection to reading once a week is corroborated by Luke's account.

"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read." (*Luke 4:16*)

On that occasion, the Isaiah text was the scripture of the day. Isaiah had written it approximately seven hundred years previously, and he wrote it in "first person." As Jesus read the word "anointed," He was stating that He was the Messiah, which means anointed. The local inhabitants knew Him as the son of Mary and her husband as the "craftsman." The original language of the New Testament was Greek and in that account, Joseph is a craftsman. The craft of Nazareth was and still is a huge stone quarry.

The imagery of one who works with stone is scripturally supported much better than the "western" interpretation of Joseph being a carpenter. Jesus is the Rock of Salvation; He is the stone which the builders rejected. He was rejected at Nazareth and they wanted to stone Him by casting Him to his death over an abandoned quarry covering Him with rocks (that is the Biblical method of stoning). References to the Rock of Salvation and the stone refer to the Messiah.

"O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation." (*Psalms 95:1*)

"The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner." (*Psalms 118:22*)

"And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner?" (*Mark 12:10*)

The central geographic highlight of the Galilean area is the Sea of Galilee. Small as a lake, it is referred to as a sea because in ancient Hebrew, there were fewer words and the word for body of

water was simply, Yam, (pronounced yum). Hence, we have the Yam Hatichon (Mediterranean), Yam HaMelach (the Salt Lake) and Yam Kinneret (Sea of Galilee). Its Hebrew name is Kinneret.

“The Kinneret is a fresh water lake in northeast Israel. It covers an area of 64 square miles; its maximum length (north to south) is 15 miles and its maximum width (east to west) is 10 miles. The surface of the lake is approximately 696 feet below the level of the Mediterranean Sea and, at its deepest, the water is about 144 feet deep. The Kinneret is fed by a number of fresh water streams. There are also salty springs at the lake bottom and along its shores. These add to the salt content (salinity) of the water which is intensified by the high evaporation rate due to the hot climate. The amount of water in the lake varies a great deal with the shift from rainy to drought years. Until the winter of 1973/74 several years of drought had lowered the surface considerably but that exceedingly rainy winter restored it to its average. The river Jordan flows out of the southern end. In 1964 the National Water Carrier was completed to bring sweet water to the more southern sections of Israel; Lake Kinneret is the main reservoir from which the water is taken.”

“Because of its abundant water supply, warm climate and surrounding fertile area, Lake Kinneret has attracted man since prehistoric times. The most ancient human remains and artifacts found in Erez Israel come from an area not far from Lake Kinneret's shores. In the Early Bronze Age some of the largest cities of Canaan were situated nearby and the *Via Maris* ("Maritime Route") passed its shores contributing to the wealth of the cities. In fact, Egyptian documents mention the hot springs on the shores of Lake Kinneret and their beneficial effects. In Bible times, Kinneret served as a prominent boundary mark: in the Canaanite era, it was the border of Sidon, king of the Amorites, and after Israel's conquest of the land, it marked the boundary between the territories of Naphtali on its western shores and Manasseh on its eastern shores.”

“In the period of the Roman occupation, King Herod received the city of Hippus (Susitha), which bordered on the east of the lake, and Herod's sons, Antipas and Philip, founded the cities of Tiberias and Julias (Bethsaida). (Subsequently the lake also became known as the Sea of Tiberias.) Moreover, it was also during the Roman period that the Lake Kinneret region served as the setting of Jesus' preaching, and later as the center of his apostles' activities. As a result, many churches were later built on these same shores. The crusaders fought to control the lake area because of its historic connections with Christianity. The New Testament refers to the lake as the Sea of Galilee and the Sea of Gennesareth.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

To this very day, fishermen ply their craft on the waters of this beautiful lake. Often, they use two boats. One is larger and has a main mast with a pulley to lift the nets up and out of the water. The other end of the net is connected to a smaller boat. The fish (there are more than twenty varieties in the lake) swim through the nets; only the larger ones are caught and are then plucked out of the net as it is lifted into the larger boat.

Fishermen still prefer to fish at night and during the hours just before dawn. They use lanterns to attract the fish. Imagine fishing all night and catching nothing; then a “perfect” stranger embarks on your boat and tells you to cast the net on the other side. And it changes your life!

“And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their

net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” (*Luke 5:4-8*)

Note that this was probably the largest catch they had ever encountered in their professional life, yet they could not quite bring it in. They were also told to let it go, for now they were to become fishers of men.

“And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.” (*Matthew 4:19-20*)

In a subsequent lesson, we will study the repeat of this event as a chiasmus: the first catch before their training, and three years later, the last catch after their training. The first catch failed; the second catch succeeded. Seeing these as patterns of Jesus’ teaching is getting hooked . . . by Him!

“[He] Took Our Infirmities, and Bare Our Sickness”

Mark 1-2; 4:35-41; 5; Luke 11-17

Summary: *Jesus is baptized by John—He preaches the gospel, calls disciples, casts out devils, heals the sick, and cleanses a leper. Jesus forgives sins, heals a paralytic, eats with publicans and sinners, and announces that He is Lord of the Sabbath. Jesus gives the parables of the sower, the candle under a bushel, the seed growing secretly, and of the mustard seed—He stills the tempest. Jesus casts out a legion of devils, who then enter the swine—A woman is healed by touching his clothes—He raises Jairus' daughter from the dead. Jesus heals the centurion's servant—He raises from death the son of the widow of Nain—John the Baptist is extolled as more than a prophet—A woman anoints Christ's feet, and he forgives her sins.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

Miracles are usually viewed with public amazement. Judaism sometimes views miracles as a part of God's work with His people. The further a people stray from knowing God, the more their explanations of miracles become nebulous. In modern times, the late Israeli General and statesman, Moshe Dyan, was asked if he believed in miracles. He said, “No, we just count on them!”

Following is a Jewish commentary about miracles, some of which is contradictory.

“Extraordinary phenomena that seem to fall outside the pattern of normal, explainable occurrences are frequently referred to in English as miracles. In the Bible, such events are termed *otot* or *moftim* "wondrous signs"), and in the Talmudic literature as *nisim* ("heralds"). The terms point to the fact that both for the Bible and for the rabbis, miraculous events were caused by God and served as clear indicators of His controlling power in the universe. When the Red Sea parted to enable the Israelites to flee from the Egyptian armies that were pursuing them, and when the "sun stood still" at Gibeon to enable Joshua to be victorious in his battle with the Canaanites, miracles occurred; at a critical moment in human history, God altered the normal workings of physical phenomena (the sea, the sun), and by doing so, revealed His providential relationship to the people of Israel. Later thinkers, for whom "the natural order" had an existence independent of God, were troubled by the question whether biblical miracles were "natural" or "supernatural," but the Bible makes no such distinction and never questions God's ability to do anything, by any means.”

“The rabbis of the Talmud unquestionably accepted the biblical miracles as related, but they were troubled by the fact that they seemed to imply a lack of perfection in the very act of Creation. They solved this theological problem by postulating that miracles were, so to speak, provided for already at the time of creation. Thus, although they were "extraordinary" they were still manifestations of the natural order. Many rabbis reversed this perspective and emphasized that the very regularity and harmony of the natural world were in fact "miraculous." It is this thought which is vocalized in the thanksgiving prayer which is part of the daily *Amidah*: "We thank You for Your miracles which are daily with us, and for Your wonders and benefits, which are wrought at all times, evening, morning and night.”

“The rabbis rejected, however, the belief in "miracle performers" as bearers of religious truth. Once the Torah had been revealed to man, it was no longer "in heaven." It could not be altered by extraordinary means, but only by a natural process of development which was purely in the hands of ordinary human beings. And although the rabbis emphasized the miraculous aspect of the story of Hanukkah, they generally believed that by their time the age of miracles had ceased, since only in biblical times were people "willing to sacrifice themselves for the sanctification of the Name of God.”

“In modern times, some people have attempted to offer scientific explanations for several of the biblical miracles, such as the parting of the Red Sea. Others have "relativized" them by viewing them as natural occurrences which were recorded as if extraordinary and supernatural, because of the crucial role they played at the particular time.”

“As is the case with all biblical miracles, the ten plagues are natural phenomena; they are miraculous in that they occur in an intensified form at the crucial moment. Every summer when the Nile rises, it is reddened by organisms it carries (blood); swarms of frogs and insects often follow the annual flooding of the Nile; Egyptian boils were proverbial; and hail, although uncommon, has been known to fall in January, the time indicated in Exodus. Locusts may be blown across the country in winter or spring, and a thick, three-day darkness can be explained by heavy sandstorms raised by the *hamsin* winds of early spring.”
(*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Miracles are best viewed from the perspective of the person involved. Sometimes the event dealt with one or two individuals and sometimes with a group of people. Making the miracles a metaphor or a lesson for everyone might detract from the practical, personal, and mostly intimate precept or blessing as they were intended. However, the metaphors may be extended to teach private lessons far beyond the seemingly public nature of the miracle itself.

An example was the blessing of Naaman the Syrian at the time of Elisha the Prophet. On one hand, the children of Israel were obsessed with the thoughts of being occupied. They may have wished harm on their rulers, even though the Lord's instructions had always included a positive attitude about government.

“Curse not the king, no not in thy thought;” (*Ecclesiastes 10:20*)

“... Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.” (*Luke 20:25*)

“Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work . . .” (*Titus 3:1*)

“We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.” (*Articles of Faith 12*)

There were many lepers in Israel at the time of Naaman. He, the occupying military commander, was also cursed with leprosy. Yet, the commander received the blessing of health. This came through the faith of his Israelite servant who suggested he go to the Prophet Elisha to be healed. The King of Israel “did not get it” as he saw this as political intrigue. The prophet did not even meet with Naaman; instead, he sent a message for Naaman to bathe in the Jordan River seven times. Naaman “did not get it,” yet followed the counsel of his simple servant to do as the prophet instructed. He was healed and still “did not get it,” sending a treasure to the prophet as a reward. (*2 Kings 5*)

Elijah returned the reward, but the prophet's servant, Gehazi, wanted to keep something of the treasure for himself. Oh, he “got it” and was even allowed to keep the part he coveted, but he also “got” the leprosy that Naaman had! It is not good to mock the prophet! The miracle had nothing to do with political intrigue or approval of Naaman's pagan life. It was a lesson of Naaman's simple servant's faith and its reward and of not following the prophet's instruction and its punishment. Get it?

“Persons who, without actually being Jewish, follow Jewish practices or claim to be Jews are termed Judaizers. The model of the Judaizer was Naaman, minister to the king of Syria around 850 B.C.E. who, after being cured of leprosy by the prophet Elisha, worshiped the God of the Jews while continuing outwardly to pray to the idols of the state religion.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Jesus showed his personal compassion and individual love in His miracles. They were used to confirm the private, personal faith of those involved. Does it seem out of his nature to use miracles to prove His divinity and power? Was it those observing that interpreted His miracles as such?

“And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him.” (*Mark 1:27*)

“But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy.)” (*Mark 2:10*)

This last account in Mark of the palsied man had another subtle yet powerful lesson. Connect the meaning of this event with others. For example, most people that witnessed Jesus heal the withered hand, (*Matthew 12:12, Mark 3:1, Luke 6:6*) or heal the woman with an issue of blood, (*Mark 5:25*) saw it as a sign of His power over ailments. Yet, His responses often included a broader lesson.

“And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.” (*Mark 5:34*)

He was a “Whole-istic” healer. For example, a palsied man was told that his sins were forgiven. Consider the man with his withered hand. What happened to the rest of his soul? The blood issue of the woman, unclean for twelve years, (untouchable under Mosaic law) was last in His healing. She was told that she was whole, to go in peace and then, be healed of her “plague.” Is it possible that Jesus knew that her distress of bleeding was in fact the lesser of her challenges in life? She may not have had a hug, a touch or caress in twelve years!

Sometimes we are sick one way so that the Lord can bless us another way. Often, the Lord sent the multitude away and asked that the miracle be kept private. It was His nature to ask that “no one know;” it was his way of showing the personal nature of His salvation. Viewing miracles in their private context will give us a greater insight to His mission--of saving each and every one of us.

From the book, ISRAEL REVEALED, the following paragraphs may be helpful.

A Centurion’s Servant: To sense the personal gracious nature of Jesus’ relationships, let’s consider the account of a Roman centurion whose servant was gravely ill.

“Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum.

And a certain centurion’s servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.

And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant.

And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this:

For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.

Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof:
Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.
For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.
When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been Sick.” (*Luke 7:1-10*)

According to Jewish practices in those days, it was not proper for a Jew to come into the house of a foreigner. (Peter reiterated that custom when he spoke to another centurion in Caesarea.)

“Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation.” (*Acts 10:28*)

However, Jesus graciously acquiesced to come to the centurion’s house. The Roman graciously constrained Jesus from compromising Jewish custom by asking Him to bless his servant from a distance. His belief was so strong that he trusted the Savior’s power. His love for the Jews was so strong that he built their meeting house. Even today the remains of the synagogue at Capernaum reveal the Roman construction and style. Archaeology confirms the written scriptural account.

Allow the Children: Upon a closer look, we can also see the familiar nature of Jesus’ personality. He must have made many friends here; after all, thousands followed Him. It is conceivable that the very first ones to gather around Him when He came out or arrived to speak were the little children. He might have had special names or nicknames for them, for he called Simon Bar Jonah, *Peter*, a name denoting rock. (Maybe Simon’s physique was like a rock. Later the rock would sink, and Jesus, the Rock of Salvation, would save him.) Many parents also brought their children for blessings. The disciples attempted to turn them away so they would not disturb the Master; he responded,

“Suffer [allow] little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” (*Matthew 19:14*)

Touching His Garment: Of the children at Capernaum, I recall the account of a twelve-year-old girl who was ill. Her father, the leader of the synagogue, begged Jesus to come and heal her. On the way to bless her, Jesus noted that a woman had touched His garment.

“And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him: . . .
And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet,
And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.
And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him.
And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years,
And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,
When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment.

For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole.
And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.
And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my Clothes?" (*Mark 5:21-30*)

The Talith: Religious Jews today wear a garment of wool called a *talith*. The name seems to be derived from the Hebrew word for lamb, *taleb*. The hem or the strings of the *talith* are customarily touched during Jewish religious services. (The four sets of strings are knotted so that the sum of knots and strings equals 613—the number of laws and covenants including the Ten Commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai.) Modern Jews touch the strings and knots of the *talith* garment to remind and commit themselves to keeping the laws and thereby being blessed of God.

The woman who touched the garment of Jesus (probably the *talith*) was healed. When He questioned who had touched Him, the woman fell at His feet and confessed, probably because it was totally against Jewish custom for a woman bleeding (ritually unclean) to touch anyone. Jesus assured her that her faith had made her whole.

“And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?
And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing.
But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.
And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.” (*Mark 5:31-34*)

Talitha Cumi—A Child Back to Life: By the time Jesus arrived to bless the daughter of the leader of the synagogue, she had died. The people laughed at Jesus when He said the girl was only asleep. He sent all the mourners away, then with Peter, James and John,

“ . . . he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel . . . and entereth in where the damsel was lying.
And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi . . .
(*Mark 5:40-41*)

The endearing term *Talitha* may have been Jesus’ way of saying “my little lamb,” or “curly locks” (a nickname)—and *cumi* in Hebrew means “get up.”

“And straightway the damsel arose, and walked.” (*Mark 5:42*)

In discussing this event with my own curly-locked daughter, we mused on the tender feelings, personal nature, and poetry of Jesus. We wrote a poem together. Jesus’ teaching methods are reflected in the following verses that a young curly locked girl might have also thought two thousand years ago:

TALITHA—THE REFLECTIONS OF A LITTLE GIRL

They said he was a stranger man,
but, I liked him right away.
The crowds lingered and followed him
but, I always heard him say:
Hello, my precious little one,
will you sit with me today?

He called me Talitha, curly locks,
... and he taught me how to pray.
When I was sick, he came to me;
but, my life had slipped away.
He told my father not to fear,
Have faith, he was heard to say.
Then, took my little hand and said:
Talitha, rise up and stay.

Jesus was teaching a bereaved family, torn apart by the untimely death of their daughter. His lesson probably included the personal comforting thought, "Your family is together again." Yet what He was really teaching was that "Families can be together, forever."

The Sermon on the Mount: “A More Excellent Way”

Matthew 5

Summary: *Jesus preaches the Sermon on the Mount—Its teachings replace and transcend some aspects of the Law of Moses—Men are commanded to be perfect like their Father in heaven.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

An excerpt from the book ISRAEL REVEALED gives supplemental information about the Mount of Beatitudes and the special lessons taught there. Most discussions of the Sermon on the Mount concentrate on our "attitudes." There may be an underlying and supporting doctrine teaching a higher law. Could it be that the Savior is saying, "No matter who you are, rich or poor, mournful or happy, popular or persecuted, come unto me and I will give you the Holy Ghost?"

MOUNT OF BEATITUDES

A Peaceful Place: On the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, on a higher elevation overlooking the sea, a higher law was given on the Mount of Beatitudes. Even ancient travelers have written in their journals of the peaceful feeling of this Mount. They have used the expression, "What a place of sweet spirit." A church designed by the Italian architect Barlucci marks the traditional location. Considering the proximity of this place to other communities nearby where Jesus taught and lived (Capernaum, Chorazim, and Bethsaida), the breathtaking view that inspires, and the feelings travelers have reported throughout the centuries, this is likely the place where Jesus shared an explanation of His mission with the twelve Apostles.

Leading the Sheep Today: Today, a farm house is there with more than a hundred sheep nearby. The boy shepherd leads them out every morning and returns in the late afternoon. Leading sheep is typical in this country. Usually there are about a dozen lead sheep, older ones from last year's flock. The shepherd often has them marked with bells around their necks. It is common to hear the boy talk to his sheep. He calls them when it's time to move on, and that's when the lead sheep immediately respond, ringing their bells as they run toward their shepherd. The ringing alerts the other sheep, and, like a wave, they follow the others.

Ancient Temple Practice: The shepherd's model is similar to an ancient biblical temple practice. For example, in the inner courtyard of the temple, the chief priest would light a fire and burn incense to signal his readiness for a sacrifice. That would alert the twelve priests in the next courtyard to wash and ready themselves. Their signal to the congregation was the ringing of bells. The multitudes would then follow the priests to participate in the ritual.

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

A Shepherd's Model: In a possible shepherd's model, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, gives the Sermon on the Mount, apparently to the twelve disciples. In turn, their mission was to teach the multitudes.

“And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him.” (*Matthew 5:1*)

A Christian Guideline: The Beatitudes are often interpreted as Christian guidelines.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit . . . mournful . . . meek . . . hunger and thirst after righteousness . . . merciful . . . pure in heart . . . peacemakers . . . persecuted for righteousness' sake.” (*Matthew 5:3-11*)

Another Sermon on a Mount: However, there may be more to His intention, for another rendition of this same sermon is recorded as

“Blessed are the poor in spirit who come unto me.” (*3 Nephi 12:3*)

In that sense, the Sermon on the Mount is inviting all people, whether rich or poor in spirit, happy or mourning, popular or persecuted, to come unto Him. He promised,

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” (*Matthew 5:6*)

Again, more insight can be gained through another rendition of that verse which states that those hungering and thirsting after righteousness would be filled . . .

“ . . . with the Holy Ghost.” (*3 Nephi 12:6*)

Law of Moses Fulfilled: Jesus indicated that the Law of Moses was fulfilled in Him. He was restoring a higher law, one that was governed and dictated more by the spirit and intent than by the letter of the law (which was given at Mount Sinai). A better understanding of the Sermon on the Mount comes when comparing it to the sermon and the commandments given on Mount Sinai. For example:

“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.
Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:
But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother . . . shall be in danger of the judgment.” (*Matthew 5:20-22*)

Additional Commandments: A closer look at the Beatitudes reveals that Jesus gave additional commandments. They were based on the original Law of Moses but had deeper spiritual meaning implying that the reason behind keeping the commandments was more the spiritual guideline than the letter of the law. Another example is,

“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:
But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh . . . to lust . . . hath committed adultery . . . already in his heart.” (*Matthew 5:27-28*)

Even clearer is the counsel,

“Behold, I give unto you a commandment, that ye suffer [allow] none of these things to enter into your Heart.” (*3 Nephi 12:29*)

The old and new laws are again like a chiasmus, with the Savior's ministry and subsequent atonement as the center, the turning point, linking the lesser and higher laws. The following poem illustrates the two principles.

SERMONS ON THE MOUNTS

The law was given, the standard set. But, best was not accepted yet.
We compromised with Heaven's voice, Just ten commandments was our choice.
Tooth for tooth and eye for eye, retribution was the cry.

LESSER LAW

1. No other God -
2. Or image graven -
3. Not in vain, the name of Heaven -
4. Remember Sabbath,
5. Father, Mother -
6. Thou shalt not kill -
7. Nor defile another -
8. Do not steal -
9. Or false word belabor -
10. Do not covet the wealth of neighbor -

But then was promised a covenant new; inwardly, God would speak to you.
With sins forgiven and God revealed, a higher law on us was sealed.

HIGHER LAW

10. Bless your neighbor -
9. Share a kindly word -
8. Give to others -
7. And clean thoughts preferred -
6. No need for anger to hide your smile -
5. Parents, children, walk the second mile -
4. Use the Sabbath, blessings to bestow -
3. The name of God in your good deeds show -
2. Your life will God's true image mirror,
1. As you and He become much nearer.

The secret of God's law is known—when action by intent is shown.
In Heaven's highest throne to stay, Use thought and reason to guide the way.
The highest law is now defined—in thought, in spirit and in the mind.

CHIASMUS OF THE LAW

As stated before, the two sets of law form a chiasmus around the ministry and atonement of Jesus—the lesser law that would lead to Him and the higher law to live like Him. Fifty days after Jesus' crucifixion at Passover, the Holy Ghost came upon the congregation in Jerusalem. The Jewish holiday commemorating the giving of the lesser law at Mount Sinai is also celebrated fifty days after Passover. Apparently, the same day was also used in giving the gift of the Holy Ghost, the higher law. The day is called Pentecost.

“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.” (*ACTS 2:1-4*)

* * * * *

“Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God”

Matthew 6–7

Summary: *Jesus continues the Sermon on the Mount—He teaches the disciples the Lord's Prayer—They are commanded to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Jesus concludes the Sermon on the Mount—He commands: Judge not; ask of God; beware of false prophets—He promises salvation to those who do the will of the Father.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

Judaism reflects a great history of instructions and traditions in giving charity and making offerings to assist the less fortunate. Philanthropy is a basic part of Biblical life, and hence, a religious life. To devout Jews, Biblical life means a Jewish life.

“The obligation to help the poor and the needy and to give them gifts is stated many times in the Bible and was considered by the rabbis of all ages to be one of the cardinal *mitzvot* of Judaism.”

“In the Bible there are several laws which are in effect a sort of tax for the benefit of the poor. Among these are *leket*, *shikhhah* and *pe'ah*, according to which the farmer could not pick up the ears of corn that had fallen during the harvest, or go back for forgotten sheaves or reap into the corners of the field. All these he was required to leave for the poor. Every third year the farmer was also required to put aside a special tithe for the needy. The institution of the Sabbatical Year and Jubilee was in order "that the poor of your people may eat" as well as to cancel debts. The Torah also insists that the needy be remembered when the Festivals are celebrated, e.g., "You shall rejoice before the Lord your God, with your son and daughter, your male and female slave, the Levite in your communities, and the stranger, the fatherless and the widow in your midst." The Bible expects Israel to be aware of the needs of the poor and the stranger because Israel itself had experienced this situation in Egypt.”

“Although the idea of charity and almsgiving is spread throughout the whole of the Bible, there is no special term for it. The rabbis of the Talmud, however, adopted the word (*zedakah*) for charity and it is used (but not exclusively so) throughout rabbinic literature in the sense of helping the needy by gifts. The word has since passed into popular usage and is almost exclusively used for charity. The term *hesed* ("loving-kindness"), which is used widely in the Bible, has taken on the meaning of physical aid, or lending money without interest.”

“Everybody is obliged to give charity; even one who himself is dependent on charity should give to those less fortunate than himself. The court can compel one who refuses to give charity --- or donates less than his means allow -- to give according to the court's assessment.”

“To give a tenth of one's wealth to charity is considered to be a "middling" virtue, to give a 20th or less is to be "mean"; but the rabbis decided that one should not give more than a fifth lest he become impoverished himself and dependent on charity.”

“The rabbis were especially concerned about the manner in which alms are to be dispensed. The prime consideration is that nothing be done that might shame the recipient. About one pious man it was related that if he met a man of good family who had become impoverished he would say, "I have heard that a legacy has been left to you in such a place; take this money in advance and pay me back later." When the man accepted it he then said to him, "It is a gift.”

“Maimonides lists seven ways of giving *zedakah* which are progressively more virtuous: to give

- (1) but sadly;
- (2) less than is fitting, but in good humor;
- (3) only after having been asked to;
- (4) before being asked;
- (5) in such a manner that the donor does not know who the recipient is,
- (6) in such a manner that the recipient does not know who the donor is; and
- (7) in such a way that neither the donor nor the recipient knows the identity of the other.

“The highest form of charity is not to give alms but to help the poor to rehabilitate themselves by lending them money, taking them into partnership, employing them, or giving them work, for in this way the purpose is achieved without any loss of self-respect at all.”

“This last way of helping the poor is known as *gemilut hasadim*, "dispensing kindness." This term also includes aiding people who need help and encouragement and includes such matters as visiting the sick and looking after them and inviting needy guests to eat at your home. One of the greatest acts of charity is to provide for orphans.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Collecting offerings in a Jewish community is similar to a Latter-day Saint custom of fast offerings.

“In every town where there are Jews they must appoint 'charity wardens,' men who are well-known and honest that they should collect money from the people every Sabbath eve and distribute it to the poor . . . We have never seen or heard of a Jewish community which does not have a charity fund" (Maimonides). Because the charity warden was involved in the collection and distribution of public funds, special care was taken to ensure that there should not be even the slightest suspicion of dishonesty. The actual collection had to be made by at least two wardens who were not permitted to leave each other during the course of it. The distribution of the money was to be made by at least three wardens in whose hands lay the decision as to whom to give and how much. Besides money, food and clothing were also distributed. Apart from maintaining the poor, the fund was also used for redeeming captives and dowering poor brides, both of which were considered to be among the most virtuous of acts. In addition to the fund there were also communal soup kitchens at which any person with less than enough for two meals was entitled to eat.”

“Throughout History the Jewish community has always been sensitive to the needs of the poor and established institutions to provide them with relief. This was a form of taxation which nobody could refuse if he wanted to be considered a member of the community. During the Middle Ages in some towns "meal tickets" were distributed to the needy entitling them to eat at various homes, and there is hardly a synagogue even today without a charity box. Before festivals, charity is distributed so that the poor will also be able to enjoy the Holy Day; this is especially true of Passover when the charity is given a special name, *ma'ot bittim*, "money for wheat" to make *matzot*.”

“Many associations were formed for charitable purposes, particularly to look after the sick and provide proper burial. Some communities set up hospitals; this has its result in modern times in institutions like the Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York which was established by Jews. Often the charitable society would own and maintain a hostel where needy wayfarers could spend the night.”

“Nowadays many communities integrate all their charitable endeavors into one central agency. In the State of Israel the needs of the poor are looked after by the Ministry of Welfare, which is a government agency. However, a great deal of private, non-governmental charity work still goes on.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

In modern times, the principle of tithing has been modified to reflect the charity and alms given. It is a general Jewish understanding that three percent of one's income should be used for charitable purposes. I have found a few who prefer the tithing amount to be ten percent. In the Islam religion, charity is one of the basic five pillars or tenants of faith. The charitable contribution is generally considered to be two percent. The five pillars are underlined below.

Islam, the name given by Muslims to their religion, means "submission" (to the will of God). Muhammad, a seventh century C.E. merchant of Mecca, and founder of Islam, is considered by believers to have been the last of a line of prophets starting with Adam, and the one who revealed to the world the divine doctrine of the Koran, said to have been given him from God by the angel Gabriel. Acceptance of Muhammad's teaching implies belief in Allah as the only god; in the angels; in the divine inspiration of the holy books (including the Bible); in the prophets (including such Jewish and Christian figures as Abraham, "the merciful friend" and the first to profess monotheism, Moses, and Jesus); in the day of judgment; and in Allah's predetermination of good and evil. Muslims are obliged to recite their creed and to pray five times daily; to fast from dawn to sunset in the month of Ramadan; to pay legal alms (charity); and to go on at least one pilgrimage to Mecca, site of the holy Black Stone, the Ka'aba.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

To Moslems and Jews as well as to many Christians, the acts of prayer are accompanied by mannerisms that show the person is in the act of prayer. Various forms of singing (chanting), bobbing (moving), washing, covering heads, and women wearing aprons have been passed down through the ages.

Prayer(s) (Hebrew: *Tefillah*), (are) expressions of praise, thanksgiving, petition and confession made by individuals or groups and directed toward God.”

“The Bible assumes that God exists, that He cares about individual human beings, and that He hears and is moved by their prayers. It also assumes that man has an inborn, spontaneous yearning to communicate with God and that he turns to Him "instinctively," without being commanded to do so. Sometimes man's turning to God comes from his feeling of helplessness, his fear of the future, and his need to petition God for help. Sometimes he wishes to communicate his thankfulness to God because he feels that God does care about him, or because he feels that God has saved him from danger. Often in the Bible, someone expresses his own sense of failure and his desire to be forgiven. Several times a biblical personality finds it necessary to communicate his disapproval of God's planned action, and to urge Him to "change His mind."

“In general, biblical prayer was spontaneous and personal; the more formal aspect of worship probably consisted of bringing sacrifices at set times and with a fixed ritual. It seems, however, that even during the period of the First Temple there were already some prayers whose wording was set and which were always recited on certain specific occasions. Some scholars, basing themselves on Psalms 55:18 and Daniel 6:11, believe that the practice of worshiping at least three times a day may be traced back to the biblical period.”

“Even though there is no specific biblical verse which commands daily prayer services . . . the rabbis of the Mishnah (c. 200 C.E.) and the Talmud assumed that Jews pray at least

three times a day, once in the morning (*Shaharit*), once in the afternoon (*Minhab*) and once in the evening (*Ma'ariv*, sometimes called *Arvit*). They also speak about an additional (*Musaf*) service which is to be recited on Sabbaths and holidays after *Shaharit*, and about a fifth service (*Ne'ilah*) which is recited on the Day of Atonement shortly before darkness falls.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica* Jr.)

The Hebrew word *Kavvanah* is the direction, intention or concentration of prayer. So that we can better understand the customs of others in their form of prayer and worship, the following quotation has been included.

“Because the times of the services and even the words which were to be recited, were fixed, there was a danger that prayer would lose its vitality and become mere routine. In order to overcome this danger, the rabbis urged the worshiper to meditate before he began to worship, to think of "before Whom he was standing" in prayer, and to create a new prayer every time he worshiped. They placed great emphasis on the emotional aspect of prayer, calling it "service of the heart" and stressing that God appreciates most the pure intentions of the worshiper. Later authorities sought to embellish the fixed prayers with original poems . . . or with short introductions (*kavvanot*) whose purpose was to direct the heart and mind of the worshiper. Melodic chanting was used as a means of increasing *kavvanah* and worshipers were taught to sway as they prayed, thus throwing their entire body into the worship.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica* Jr.)

When the Jews pray in a synagogue, they form a prayer circle (*Minyan*). It usually consists of at least ten participants. There is a tradition that if there are only nine persons, the prayer circle can be completed with an agreement that the presence of the Lord or the Spirit of the Lord is with them. In addition to group prayer and the prayer circle, it is still essential to have individual prayer.

“The rabbis placed great emphasis on the relationship of the individual to the community during prayer. Almost all prayer, for example, was written in the first person plural --- "Forgive us," "Teach us," "Bring us to our Land." Although private prayer was certainly permitted, the individual was urged to join a congregation (*minyan*) when he prays and to incorporate the needs of the *minyan* in his prayers.”

“A *minyan* was said to consist of at least ten adult Jewish males. Without the presence of a *minyan* many important prayers --- *Kedushah*, *Kaddish*, the *Priestly Benediction*, the *reading of the Torah* and the *Haftarah* and the *hazzan's* repetition of the *Amidah* -- cannot be recited. Recently, the Conservative movement in Judaism has granted its congregations permission to include women in the *minyan*. Reform congregations generally have not insisted on the presence of a *minyan*. When they have, women have usually been counted.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica* Jr.)

Most prayers in Judaism are pre-written. Many are created from the Psalms. It is common that the prayers were and still are said in the Hebrew language. In fact, the Hebrew language was largely preserved because of prayers and, of course, the scriptures. There is also a recent trend of thought that questions the pre-written structure of prayers.

“The rabbis assumed that God understands all languages; therefore they said that prayers may be recited in any language which the worshiper understands. Hebrew, however, was given a special status --- it may be used even though the worshiper does not understand it. Over the centuries some widely accepted prayers (*Kaddish*, *Kol Nidrei* for example) have been written in other languages. The Reform movement and, to a lesser extent, the Conservative movement, have encouraged prayer in the language understood by the worshiper. Recently, however, all movements have stressed the significance of Hebrew,

not only as the language of prayer which ties the Jew to his past, but also as a means of uniting him with fellow Jews throughout the world.”

“Modern Jewish thinkers, even those with a deep faith in God, have raised many questions about prayer, its effect upon God, and the person who is worshiping. Can the individual pray with real *kavvanah* when he is reciting words written by other people who lived in another era and when he is asked to recite these same words at set times every day? Do prayers, written so long ago, reflect the moral and religious ideas of modern Jews? Does God really "hear" prayer; does He, or can He, change the processes of nature (for example, heal a dying person) in response to prayer?”

“In light of these and other problems, many thinkers who have associated themselves with the Reform and Reconstructionist movements have suggested changes which should be made in the wording of traditional prayers. They have chosen to eliminate or to reinterpret prayers for the Resurrection of the Dead, the coming of a personal Messiah, the restoration of animal sacrifices and the benediction in which a man blesses God for not having made him a woman. Some thinkers, who do not believe that God changes the course of nature or favors the prayers of one person more than another have tried to reinterpret those prayers which call upon God to intervene in human affairs. These authors generally stress the belief that the Hebrew word for prayer, *tefillah*, is derived from a root *pil* which (in reflexive form) means to "judge oneself"; prayer, therefore, is mainly an act of self-judgment in which the individual examines his life in the light of what God expects of him and of what he, himself, is able to achieve.”

The hasidic movement in Judaism places great emphasis on the necessity for *kavvanah* in prayer. According to hasidic teaching, man may easily be overcome by "evil thoughts" which deprive him of *kavvanah* and which, eventually, may destroy his moral and spiritual life. Prayer, in part, involves the "annihilation" of evil thoughts; it helps the good, already present in man's soul, to come forth; it enables man to achieve an intense closeness (*devekut*) to God. Many scholars believe that Hasidism stresses the *devekut* aspect of prayer even more than the literal meaning of the words recited.”

“In prayer, mention of God's holiness should stimulate the worshiper to seek holiness in his own religious and moral life. Holiness is acquired by separation from evil, by the performance of *mitzvot* and by one's willingness to do even more than the law requires, "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God, am holy" (Leviticus 19:2).” (*Encyclopedia Judaica* Jr.)

Kneeling, a common form of prayer among Christians, is shunned by Jews, although scriptural references to kneeling do exist.

“And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the LORD, he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven.” (*1 Kings* 8:54)

“O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.” (*Psalms* 95:6)

“Related to the prohibitions regarding idolatry, is the Torah law of *hukkat ha-goi* (laws and customs of the gentiles). In this law the Torah explicitly states that it is forbidden to adopt any heathen superstitious or idolatrous practice of the gentiles. This encompasses any gentile dress associated with religious practice, on which the Talmud comments that one should accept martyrdom rather than "change even the style of a shoelace." Accordingly, in modern times, this law has raised a serious question about rabbis wearing

the canonical garb which resembles the clothing of the priest in gentile religious ritual. In the same way, it has been questioned whether the organ which is used in Christian ceremonies should be permitted in Jewish prayer. The question has also been raised as to whether Christianity is considered an idolatrous religion, because of its belief in the Trinity and its use of images and icons. However, it is generally accepted that Islam is a monotheistic religion and is not idolatrous." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

As mentioned above, the practice of fasting is found in Islam. It is also a part of Jewish life, although fasting is never done on a Sabbath day because Sabbath is a day of joy and fasting (to many) is less than joyful! Yom Kippur (a High Day - hence, treated as a Sabbath) is the only exception. On that day, fasting begins an hour before the Sabbath and continues until an hour afterwards.

"Fasting is an act of repentance or of supplication seeking divine forgiveness or the prevention of disaster. Public fasts also commemorate catastrophic events in Jewish history. On fast days one neither eats nor drinks. On major fasts, other prohibitions are washing, wearing leather shoes, using ointments or perfumes, and other physical pleasures. There are special prayers and the Torah is read in the synagogue. Yom Kippur and Tishah be-Av are observed from sunset to sunset. All other fasts are from sunrise to sunset."

"When a natural or human disaster threatens or strikes a whole community, a public fast is proclaimed. In biblical times, fasting served to beseech the Almighty to end a famine or to lighten the oppression of foreign rulers."

"Only one fast day is decreed in the Bible, that of the tenth of Tishrei, Yom Kippur. This holiest day is the climax of an annual period of soul-searching and resolution to improve one's life. So important is Yom Kippur that it is observed even if it occurs on the Sabbath." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

In spite of the statement in the Bible that fasting is only required once, Jews have many traditional fasting days and fasting reasons. It is the custom among the very religious to fast at the beginning of every month. The Talmudic teachings caution against excessive fasting. Young children are not required to fast nor are individuals whose health is precarious.

A few other comments may be of interest to Latter-day Saints who consider themselves chosen if they keep the commandments, both ritually and morally.

"How odd of God, to choose the Jews." W.N. Ewer, who wrote this jingle, could not understand why Israel is God's Chosen People. Moses, in Deuteronomy 7:7--8, explains it thus: "The Lord did not set His love upon you because you were more in number than any people . . . but because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn to your fathers." The rabbis insist that Israel was elected because it voluntarily accepted the Torah whereas other nations would not. Mercy and forgiveness, says the Talmud, are distinguishing characteristics of Abraham and his seed, and these characteristics motivated God to choose Israel as His people."

"The exercise of mercy is an obligation for all Jews. By this it is meant that they must act with compassion and forgiveness towards all mankind, and perform deeds of charity and kindness. This quality is an essential characteristic of God who is known as *Rahum* ("Merciful") and, in accordance with the tradition which sets as man's goal the imitation of God: "As He is merciful, so be you merciful." Just as God is bound by His covenant of mercy with His people, so is the Jew bound by specific commandments to act mercifully to the oppressed, the alien, the orphan, the widow, and indeed, every living creature."

“The stress placed upon this quality is evident both in the many charitable institutions existing in Jewish communal life, and in the daily prayers which implore God to deal compassionately even with the undeserving man. Human beings are frail, imperfect creatures constantly open to error, and so they are totally dependent on God's mercy.”

“But God, as depicted by the rabbis, embodies a combination of justice and mercy, of strict judgment and lenient compassion. This combination of justice and mercy in God is represented by the two names of God --- Elohim and YHWH. The former stands for justice and the latter for mercy. Though they may seem contradictory, one actually complements the other and, when there is a conflict between the two, God usually favors mercy.”

“Judaism demands of its judges this same balance, and the principle of mercy thus assumes extreme importance in the administration of Jewish law. The prophet Zechariah (7:9) put it: “. . . execute the judgment and show mercy and compassion every man to his brother.”
(*Encyclopedia Judaica jr.*)

As a closing comment on this lesson, let me add a personal perspective. In the days of the Savior, all believing members committed their time, talent, and even their lives to “the kingdom.” I participated in an archaeological survey close to Jericho where we were discussing the odd nature of a beautiful synagogue floor of the first century. What was odd about it was the signature. Almost every ancient mosaic floor found in Israel has the signature of the donor with his family name and title. This one simply had an inscription that indicated that the “entire community” had done this work. I had the distinct feeling we were standing on the remains of a worship center used by early saints, “Former-day Saints,” people who committed themselves to first building of the Kingdom of God.

“Take My Yoke Upon You, and Learn of Me”

Matthew 11:28-30; 12:1-13; Luke 7:36-50; 13:10-17

Summary: *Jesus acclaims John as more than a prophet—The cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum upbraided for unbelief—The Son reveals the Father—The yoke of Christ is easy and His burden light. Jesus proclaims Himself Lord of the Sabbath and heals thereon. A woman anoints Christ's feet, and He forgives her sins. Jesus teaches: Repent or perish—He gives the parable of the barren fig tree; heals a woman on the Sabbath; and likens the kingdom of God to a mustard seed.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

There is a Mosaic law that relates to a yoke of unlike animals. The unfairness of plowing with a donkey and an ox is clearly visible when looking at the lesser creature.

“Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.” (*Deuteronomy 22:10*)

Consider that the Lord wants to relieve us of the unfairness in life. He is saying, in effect, “I am carrying the burden; take advantage of it.” In learning this principle, following Him and giving our burdens to Him (He has paid for them already), we cleanse our inner selves and are able to better serve Him.

“Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.” (*Psalms 55:22*)

The prophet Isaiah taught us that the Lord would relieve us from the yoke of our burdens.

“For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden . . .” (*Isaiah 9:4*)

In examining the little information we have of Jesus' life, we see how privately and personally He takes burdens upon Himself. Lesson 15 discusses a woman taken in adultery, and Jesus was questioned if she should be stoned. We will later discuss the redeeming lesson of His reply.

Stoning is a capital punishment indicated in the Mosaic Law. Biblical punishments were based on the crime, unlike today's punishments, which are based on the person or the circumstances. Stoning was the punishment for a number of capital sins including murder (Numbers 35:30), adultery (Deuteronomy 22:22-24), blasphemy (Leviticus 24:16), breaking the Sabbath (Numbers 15:32-35), apostasy (Deuteronomy 13:6-10), and rebellion against parents (Deuteronomy 21:18-21).

A better insight to capital punishment can be seen in the Talmud. Rabbinic interpretations of the ancient Jewish law of stoning indicate that it was required that the convicted person be thrown over a cliff. One of at least two witnesses (and thereby accusers) was responsible to make sure the criminal was dead. The aversion to directly taking another's life would motivate having the fall cause the death of the accused. A witness/accuser always had to cast the first stone and then all others threw stones to cover the body (the burial). Abandoned quarries (where the “stone was rejected”) would be likely locations for such rare executions.

There is a village called Turan, close to Nazareth and Cana in Galilee, that is the traditional spot where Jesus was accused of not preventing His disciples from harvesting, threshing, and winnowing grain on the Sabbath day. They were doing this for their own refreshment, needing to eat. There is still a huge stone quarry at Turan which provides a visual connection to the Pharisees and their “death accusation.”

“And he said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.” (*Mark 2:27-28*)

Several times in the New Testament, Jesus is identified as the Lord of the Sabbath.

“For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day.” (*Matthew 12:8*)

“And he said unto them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.” (*Luke 6:5*)

An integral part of ancient Sabbath observance has been the pouring and blessing of wine followed by the breaking and blessing of bread. There is a specific order to dignify the Sabbath and remind us to make it holy.

“The table is set for the festive meal, with the Sabbath candles glowing in polished holders. The family stands and the father raises the brimming silver cup to say *Kiddush*, the blessing and sanctification over wine. This age-old ceremony is in fulfillment of the biblical command, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8). "Remember it," said the rabbis, "over wine," for wine is the symbol of joy.”

“Two loaves appear on the Sabbath table. They recall the double portion of manna which the Israelites in the desert gathered on the eve of the Sabbath for the next day.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Let us also examine three major symbolic reasons and meanings for the Sabbath.

The Sabbath is to be kept in remembrance of the creation.

“Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed. (*Exodus 31:13-17*)

The Sabbath is to be kept in remembrance of being delivered from bondage in Egypt.

“But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.” (*Deuteronomy 5:14-15*)

The Sabbath is to be kept in remembrance of the atonement.

“So important is Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) that it is the only fast day which may be observed on the Sabbath and is never postponed until the next day. Moreover, the Torah describes the holiness of Yom Kippur by calling it the “Sabbath of Sabbaths.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

“The Sabbath bears record of Christ: from Adam to Moses it was the 7th day to signify that our Lord rested on that day from his creative labors (Ex. 20:8-11); from Moses to Christ, the Sabbath day was a different day each year to commemorate our Lord's leading of the children of Israel out of bondage (Deut. 5:12-15); and from the apostolic day until now, the Sabbath has been the first day of the week to point attention to our Lord's resurrection on his holy day.” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, Pg.452)

To the Jews who commemorate the first two reasons for the Sabbath, a sip of wine is partaken, followed by bread. The prayers recited include a recollection of the past, with an eye to the future where an even greater deliverance is anticipated.

In this sense, it is a chiasmas that focuses on the atonement in the center. The Savior's atonement began with suffering and bleeding from every pore, (symbolized by wine) and then followed by giving his body, (symbolized by broken bread).

To those who truly believe in the Messiah, the Sabbath day is commemorated by partaking of a morsel of bread followed by a sip of wine. The prayers are in remembrance of the greatest deliverance eternity will ever know.

First, wine and bread (anticipation) then bread and wine (remembrance); these are the symbols of the Sabbath, a joyful thought of redemption!

“The Sabbath and the festivals are particularly times of joy, and indeed it is a positive commandment, often difficult to observe, to be happy on them. The joy required is not frivolity but, contradictory though it may sound, a serious happiness. “ (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

On the subject of guests, Judaism and Mormonism have a lot in common. I remember an old Primary song containing the words, “Our door is always open, to all who pass this way . . .”

“In Jewish tradition, Abraham's life is an example to this day of supreme faith and devotion to God, and of love for one's fellow man. Abraham is also the personification of hospitality; his tent was open on all four sides. He himself waited on guests, and taught them Grace after Meals to bring them to faith in One God. Because he converted so many people to his belief, Abraham is considered the father of all proselytes, who are often given his name.”

“ . . . aiding people who need help and encouragement . . . includes such matters as visiting the sick and looking after them and inviting needy guests to eat at your home.”

“The Bible is full of examples of hospitality. Abraham, for example, broke off a conversation with God Himself in order to receive guests (the three angels), and though weak in health, ran out to meet them, personally washed their feet, served them food, and made them feel welcomed and honored. Rebekah, Abraham's future daughter-in-law, showed hospitality not only to his servant but to his thirsty camels as well, thus proving herself worthy of marrying Isaac. Jethro was angry that his daughters had not invited Moses to their home, and the prophet Elijah was a permanent guest in the home of the Shunammite woman. Job, like Abraham, had open doors on all four sides of his house so that strangers might have easy access. Breaches of hospitality, on the other hand, were considered punishable offenses.”

“In Talmudic literature, hospitality is a great *mitzvah*, and is even more important, according to some rabbis, than prayer. The guest should be shown his room on arrival, so that he will enjoy his meal and not have to worry about where he will sleep later. The

host is forbidden to make his guest uncomfortable by appearing miserable or sad, or by watching him too closely when he eats. The guest too, has responsibilities, including showing gratitude to his host, and complying with his host's wishes. Guests must not accept hospitality if they think that doing so will impoverish the host.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

In one of the festivals of deliverance called Sukkoth, the booth, (tabernacle, hut, or bowery) must be large enough to accommodate the entire family and still be large enough to welcome at least seven guests with enough food to feed them! Both at Passover and Sukkoth, the door is left open for the expected guests (who will come unexpectedly). They include Elijah, Moses, Aaron, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and David.

Latter-day Saints believe in the returning of prophets and messengers. Several of the above mentioned “guests” have already come!

“He Spake Many Things Unto Them in Parables”

Matthew 13

Summary: *Why Jesus taught in parables—He gives the parables of the sower, the wheat and the tares, the grain of mustard seed, the leaven, the treasure hid in the field, the pearl of great price, and the net cast into the sea—A prophet is not honored by his own people.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

Three tools of learning that God gave us are seeing (visual), hearing (audio) and feeling (kinesthetic). One of the ways of recognizing these meta-programs (human perception modes) is in the words we use to describe our reactions: “I see,” “Sounds right to me,” “I feel all right about this.”

“... then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” (*Genesis 3:5*)

“And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them.” (*Deuteronomy 5:1*)

“Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing; and a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment.” (*Ecclesiastes 8:5*)

Isaiah used simple words as metaphors to reach those who can see, those who can hear, and those who perceive.

“Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.” (*Isaiah 6:10*)

Please note the chiasmus: heart, ears, eyes, then eyes, ears, heart. The center point being eyes; Isaiah is giving us an “insight.”

Advertising experts appeal to our eyes, make it sound right, and have us feel the worth of their products. These are the most powerful meta-programs to teach about and experience life, even Eternal Life.

Around the eastern and northern shores of the Sea of Galilee are numerous coves. They were created by erosion as the prolific rainfall in the winter months raced downward through small canyons to the lake, drawing the black igneous basalt stone and gravel out past the shoreline. One such cove is very close to Capernaum. There are boulders of stone, choking thorn bushes, and patches of fertile land all situated close to the road that leads to Capernaum, where Jesus lived.

People can easily stand around a boat anchored a little way out from the shore in the cove. The water easily reflects the sound of someone speaking from the boat to the audience at some distance from the vessel. This setting of the parable in Matthew 13 is more understandable than speaking from a boat to a multitude on a straight shoreline.

The most significant message in the parable of the sower is in verse twelve. It is the center of a chiasmic image. It is a message of the Gift of the Holy Ghost. The parable uses the wayside,

stony place, and the thorns as image points. Then in reverse, consider that the heart was not pricked, the ears were not unplugged (as if stones were in their ears), and their hearts couldn't understand the way.

The inspired translation of that verse makes the lesson of using the gift of the Holy Ghost easier to understand.

“For whosoever receiveth to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever continueth not to receive, from him shall be taken even that he hath”
(*Matthew 13:12*)

There is a modern proverb which repeats the message, “If you don’t use it, you’ll lose it.” By exercising the gift, it expands and grows. The parables Jesus used offered learning experiences on the level of those listening and according to their sense of understanding. Parables are like paintings. They can be studied for more interpretation. Many of Jesus’ parables contained references of nature and human experiences.

“The laws of ritual purity and impurity, the parables taken from nature and the accounts of God's providence over His creatures all involve biology.”

“The first connection between birds and Judaism is found in the Bible where there are numerous descriptions, parables and allegories taken from bird life, as well as laws concerning their ritual fitness as food. To the 37 birds mentioned in the Bible, the Talmud adds many more discussing in particular, what features make a bird "unclean," and therefore not kosher.”

“When the Gaon of Vilna, the great rabbi Elijah ben Solomon Zalman fell ill and was too weak to study, he asked the Dubno *maggid* to visit him and read him his stories, parables and biblical interpretations. Once the *maggid* was asked, "How is it that for every moral lesson you have a beautiful story to teach it with?" The *maggid* smiled. "To answer that I can tell another story. I was once walking in the woods and saw a boy shooting arrows at targets. There were targets on every tree and each one had an arrow dead center. 'How expert you are!' I said. 'How did you manage so many exactly at the bull's-eye?' 'It's easy,' the boy answered. 'First I shoot the arrow and then I draw the target around it.' I do the same," said the *maggid*.”

“Parables (are) a story often used in the Bible or rabbinic literature to convey a message by means of comparison. The story helps to capture the attention of the listener and its familiar format provides a simple way of illustrating the point.”

“The *marshal* (as the parable is known in Hebrew) takes on many forms in Jewish literature. It can, for example, be an animal tale like Aesop's fables. Thus Rabbi Joshua ben Hananiah dissuaded the Jews from revolting against the Romans by telling them the parable of the crane which extracted a thorn from the throat of a lion. When the crane asked for its reward, it was told that it had been sufficiently rewarded in not being eaten when thrust between the lion's jaws. Similarly, the Jews should feel lucky that they had not been annihilated by the Romans.”

“One of the most frequent motifs in Jewish parables is the "king" who usually symbolizes God. Plants, fruits and natural phenomena are also common subjects for these stories. Many parables are taken from daily life and are a rich source of social history.”

“The rabbis not only used the parable extensively, they also emphasized its great value in understanding the spirit of the Torah. Though the stories in parables are often simplistic and childish, the Midrash warns against ignoring them, "Let not the parable be lightly esteemed in thine eyes, since by its means one can master the whole Torah.”

“Another type of *aggadah*, also often disguised in simple form, was in reality a mystical message. Since mysticism does not lend itself well to exact expression, the rabbis would use a parable or an allegory to make themselves understood.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

“The principle involved which necessitates the policy of teaching by parables is found in Amulek's statement: "It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him." (Alma 12:9.) The difference in receptiveness to the truth of the Jews, among whom our Lord ministered in mortality, and the Nephites, to whom he went after his resurrection, is nowhere better shown than in the fact that he gave at least 40 parables to the Jews, but he taught the Nephites, not in parables, but in plainness.” (*Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine , Page 553*)

Very often the acts of God are referred to figuratively using terms such as "the hand of God." Such metaphors are examples of how the Bible speaks in the language of man in order to help us understand concepts which would otherwise be beyond our grasp. Thus a metaphor like "The hand of God" may be used to represent strength and protection such as in the verse, "Your right hand, O Lord, is glorious in power; Your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy" (Exodus 15:6). At the same time, the image of God's hands has been used to show benevolence and loving-kindness, as in the verse, "You open Your hand and satisfy every living thing with favor" (Psalms 145)."

“Animal metaphors are frequently used in the Bible. For example, the Almighty "is for them like the horns of the wild ox; they shall devour enemy nations . . . ; they crouch, they lie down like the lion" (Numbers 24:8--9). In the Book of Proverbs, the references to animals serve mostly to teach good behavior: "Go to the ant; thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise" (Proverbs 6:6-8)."

In our education, entertainment, and communication we use mediums that enhance sight, sound, and motion. Got the picture? Sound all right to you? Get the drift?

“I Am the Bread of Life”

Lesson

12

John 5-6; Mark 6:30-44; Matthew 14:22-33

Summary: *Jesus heals an invalid on the Sabbath—Why men must honor the Son—Jesus promises to take the gospel to the dead—Man is resurrected, judged, assigned his glory by the Son—Jesus obeys divine law of witnesses. Jesus feedeth the five thousand—He walketh on the sea—He is the living manna sent from God—Salvation gained by eating living bread—How men eat the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus—Peter testifies that Jesus is the Messiah. Our Lord feeds the five thousand, walks on the water, and heals multitudes. Those who touch the hem of His garment are made whole.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

The words Bread, Bread of Life, Leaven, Rock, and Water are some of the more frequently used names of the Lord. That teaches is that He is everywhere and that the common necessities of life reflect how necessary He is to our lives. Note the following involved Jewish ritual and tradition that relate with bread and water.

“The rabbis regarded bread as the staple diet and no meal was considered complete without it. They instituted a special benediction to be recited before eating bread made from one of the five species of cereals (wheat, rice-wheat, spelt, barley and two-row barley) grown in Erez Israel. This blessing (popularly called *Ha-Mozi*) is: “Blessed art Thou, Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who bringeth forth (*ba-mozi*) bread out of the earth.” After pronouncing this benediction, other food or beverages may be eaten without saying another blessing --- except for wine and fruits, for which their particular blessings must be recited in all cases. Before the benediction over bread is said, one is obliged to wash the hands by pouring a quarter “log” (approximately 0.137 liters) of clean water over them, and drying them properly. After eating bread at least of the size of an olive the full Grace after Meals has to be said.”

“A religious duty of Jewish women when baking is to separate a small portion of the dough about the size of an olive, as *hallab*, and to burn it. In Temple times the *hallab* portion was given to the priests. From Talmudic times, it was the special duty of the housewife to bake the bread for the Sabbath. This bread, usually prepared from white flour, is also called “*hallab*.” Two such loaves are placed on the festive Sabbath table as a symbol for the double portion of manna which the Israelites in the wilderness received every Friday, and because of the Showbread in the Temple, which was displayed each Sabbath. The bread for Sabbath is usually braided, and of oblong shape, but for Rosh Ha-Shanah it is round.”

“As a protective measure against assimilation which might lead to intermarriage the rabbis prohibited Jews from eating food cooked by a gentile, or bread baked by a non-Jew (*pat akkum*). However, this interdiction does not apply to bread sold by a professional non-Jewish baker (*pat paltar*), if the ingredients are not otherwise forbidden by the dietary laws.”

“Bread must be treated with special regard. Raw meat should not be placed on it nor spilt wine be allowed to spoil it; it should also not be thrown across the table. Providing bread for the poor was regarded as a great religious duty; the withholding of it from the hungry, a sin. Whenever the Talmud sage, Rabbi Huna, broke bread for a meal, he first opened his door and said, “Let everyone in need come and eat,” as is done at the beginning of the Passover *seder*. Bread with salt was regarded as the poor man's food but sufficient for the humble student of the Torah, and it has remained a custom to sprinkle a little salt on bread partaken at the beginning of meals. In Jerusalem it is the custom to greet official guests of the City Council with bread and salt as they enter the city's limits.”

“Hallah is a form of bread. The term also applies to the bread portion which was brought as an offering to the priests in the days of the Temple. The biblical commandment reads: "Then it shall be that when you eat of the bread of the land, you shall set apart a portion for a gift unto the Lord" (Numbers 15:19). The priests' portion was to be separated from dough made with the flour of any of these five species of grain: wheat, barley, oats, rye or spelt, when the dough was of a specified amount, equivalent in volume to 431/5th eggs. This amount of dough is made with approximately three and a half pounds of flour. All the laws on the subject are in a tractate in the Talmud called *Hallah*. Since the law of *hallah* can no longer be observed, the rabbis decreed that a small piece of dough should always be set aside and burnt so that the *mitzvah* of *hallah* and the destruction of the Temple would never be forgotten.”

“Rabbinic tradition made *hallah* a special *mitzvah* for women. Today the word is generally used to mean the white Sabbath and festival loaf. And the *mitzvah* of separating *hallah* is followed by observant Jews in their bakeries and in homes where the art of baking fresh *hallah* is still practiced.”

“Loaves of *hallah* appear in forms associated with special occasions and different areas. The most distinct special occasion is Passover, when *hallah* appears as *mazzah*, unleavened bread. Dough was often made into symbolic shapes. One example is the bird shape which represents the phrase "As birds hover, so will the Lord protect Jerusalem" (Isaiah 31:5). The sweet *hallah*, often round in shape, is traditional for Rosh Ha-Shanah, to symbolize the prayer for a sweet and a full year. For the Sabbath, the oval loaf has been baked by Ashkenazi Jews for over a thousand years. Another popular form for the Sabbath is the braid, two loaves of three strands each, or one of six strands --- the number six representing the weekdays, handmaidens of the Sabbath. A *hallah* of 12 small sections symbolizes the 12 tribes of Israel. Each variation enriches the beauty of the tradition.”

“It is a particularly important religious duty to wash the hands before eating bread and this washing must be performed by pouring water over the hands from a utensil with a wide mouth, the lip of which must be undamaged.”

“Manna was the miraculous food which sustained the Israelites during the 40 years in which they wandered through the wilderness of Sinai. Exodus 16:4 describes manna as white in color, and resembling a fine frost which covered the ground. It fell from heaven within the area of the Israelite camp every morning excepting the Sabbath, and it needed no cooking. One *omer* (measure) for each person was collected each day, and the amount gathered by every family was enough for all its members. Manna was to be eaten within 24 hours, for if left, it bred worms and rotted. The double portion which fell on Friday did not rot, however, but remained good for the Sabbath. This is commemorated today by the two loaves of bread on the Sabbath table.”

“Manna is called "bread from heaven" in the Book of Exodus, and "bread of the angels" in Psalms. The English name "manna" comes from the words, *man boo?* ("What is this?" in classical Hebrew) which is what the Israelites exclaimed when they saw manna for the first time.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Every time the term bread is used, it should be an automatic reminder to look for the Lord in the meaning of the phrase. The lack of bread may be an indication of the lack of accepting the Lord. He just wasn't there.

“And there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very sore, so that the land of Egypt and all the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine.” (*Genesis 47:13*)

The bread of affliction refers to Him, who was afflicted more than anyone was, is or will be afflicted.

“Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction: for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste: that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life.” (*Deuteronomy 16:3*)

Since the Lord descended below all things and then rose above all things, He came from the rocks below and ascended to the heaven above. The following verse is one of several ways of remembering Him.

“And gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hadst sworn to give them.” (*Nehemiah 9:15*)

Remember, that the Hebrew word for water is “Ma-yim” and that the word for heaven is “She-ma-yim” (from the waters). The Fountain of Living Waters came from heaven. Moses struck the rock and out came water. It became the Rock of Salvation.

The term rock is an ancient metaphor for the Lord. Simon, son of Jonah (Bar Jonah in Aramaic) was affectionately nicknamed Petrus (“rock” in Greek) by Jesus. In that sense, Simon became “Rocky-1” in the scriptures! Jesus, knowing that He was the “Rock of Salvation,” was establishing a profound lesson for one who would be the Lord’s mouthpiece and chief witness.

“*Adon Olam* (Lord of the world) is a rhymed poem of unknown authorship, which was probably written in Babylon around the tenth century. The present version, as it appears in the Ashkenazi service, consists of ten verses. The first six speak of God the eternal, all-powerful and ever- ruling Creator of the universe. The next four verses are more personal in nature. Here, God is much closer to the individual worshiper, his hopes and his fears. “He is my God, my Redeemer, my Rock in time of trouble.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

During Jesus’ three year ministry, Peter and other Disciples were being taught numerous lessons of the eternal and spiritual nature of the Lord and the many physical witnesses of Him. This training was necessary so that when He was gone from their physical presence, they could fulfill their Apostolic mission, witnessing of Him. During this ministry training time, when they unsuccessfully sought to emulate His miracles they asked for an explanation.

“... his disciples asked him privately, Why could not we cast him out? And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.” (*Mark 9:28-29*)

Another lesson took place at the uninhabited eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Even today, the few archaeological ruins indicate the deserted nature of that area. Here is an excerpt from the book ISRAEL REVEALED.

THE SHORES OF GALILEE

At the lower and southern end of the Golan on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee is a more desolate or deserted place where few people lived. During Jesus’ ministry He went there to be alone.

Fishes and Loaves: When the people heard that He was on the other side, they followed Him out of their cities. He blessed them and preached to them until the disciples urged Jesus to let them go home to buy food to eat. He said,

“Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes; except we should go and buy meat for all this people.
For they were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company.
And they did so, and made them all sit down.
Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude.
And they did eat, and were all filled: and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets. (*Luke 9:13-17*)

Jesus told the disciples to feed the people, and they said it couldn't be done because they did not have enough food. Surely five loaves and two fishes could never feed the multitude! Still, Jesus did not change His charge. He took what they had, prepared it and returned it to the disciples. Then they fed the loaves and fishes to five thousand - not counting women or children. There was even enough left over for each disciple to have a basket of food for himself.

Would it have been more dramatic if there had been fourteen basketfuls left over? Or would it have been less dramatic if only ten basketfuls remained? The remaining twelve baskets full of food would surely suffice them as Jesus sent them by boat to the other side of the lake.

“And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.” (*Matthew 14:22-26*)

Faced with what they supposed was a spirit, the only instruction they might have had at that point was that fasting and prayer was necessary to drive spirits away. After they had eaten a miraculous meal the previous evening and had twelve baskets or provisions with them, they were full, not fasting! They may have therefore thought, “We cannot command the spirit.”

“But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshiped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.” (*Matthew 14:27:33*)

Many people believe that with enough faith, they can walk on water. However, the personal nature of the Lord's miracles leads us to view the event more closely. Peter cried, “Lord save me.” Jesus responded, “Wherefore didst thou doubt?” This may have been a personal lesson for the Prophet-to-be. The dialogue might be imagined to have continued, “. . . Wherefore didst thou doubt, I came to save.”

It is possible that the Savior, having named Simon, Peter (Rocky), was now teaching him that rocks sink . . . to be raised by the “Stone which the builders rejected.” (*Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17*).

Just as bread needs to be raised, we need to be raised by the Bread of Life, the Leaven, the Rock of Salvation.

“I Will Give unto Thee the Keys of the Kingdom”

Matthew 15:21–17:9

Summary: *Jesus heals the daughter of a Gentile woman—He feeds the four thousand. Jesus warns against the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees—Peter testifies that Jesus is the Christ, and is promised the keys of the kingdom—Jesus foretells His death and resurrection. Jesus is transfigured before Peter, James, and John on the mount.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

A powerful chiasmus is used to help us remember this lesson. Matthew finds it important to relate the events of the transfiguration in a pattern that extends beyond geography or even chronological events. (The New Testament is an incomplete chronology, since so few of the Savior’s actual days in mortality are mentioned.)

The following verses show the chiastic teaching pattern of Matthew. The dialogue occurs in the area of Caesarea Philippi, one of the northernmost towns in the land of Israel.

13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?
 16 And Simon . . . answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.
 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed [it] unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.
 18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
 19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.
 20 Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.
 21 From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. (*Matthew 16:13-21*)

Note that a promise of keys and a prophecy of three days is stated. This Gospel account is followed by the transfiguration. It happened six days later and, according to President Spencer W. Kimball, occurred on Mount Tabor about sixty-five miles south of Caesarea Philippi. There, the highest witness of Jesus as the Jehovah, Son of God, was given.

(Matthew 17:1-7)

1 And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,
2 And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.
3 And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.
4 Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.
5 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.

(Mark 9:2-7)

2 And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them.
3 And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them.
4 And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus.
5 And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.
6 For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid.
7 And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.

These highest compliments rendered by the Father, “beloved” and “I am well pleased,” are an example for us to use in place of “pride” or “I am proud of you.” In 1989, Prophet and President Ezra Taft Benson gave a profound talk about removing “pride” and “proud” from our language. He taught that there is no justifiable use of the word “proud.” He also said, “Pride is ugly.” Being pleased is a compliment; being proud seems selfish.

As added insights, it is helpful to know about the seasonal and ritual traditions accompanying the transfiguration. It is likely that Jesus’ remarkable transfiguration occurred during the very Sukkoth season when Jews expect the Prophet Moses (and others) to return, preceding the Messiah’s advent. It is the custom to build small booths called tabernacles or in Hebrew, a sukkah. Sukkoth is a sequel to Passover (the first full moon after the first day of spring) when Elijah is expected. It begins on the first full moon after the first day of fall.

The transfiguration may have been a special temple-like endowment for Peter, James, and John.

“When Elijah came to the Prophet Joseph Smith, he was not a translated being, He was a resurrected being. He had received his resurrection, and he came to Joseph Smith just as did Peter, James, and John, and gave to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery--as he did to Peter, James, and John at the transfiguration--the keys of sealing power, so that the work now, not only for the living but also for the dead, may be done. Since the same ordinances are required for the dead as for the living, these keys also pertain to the salvation of the dead.” (*Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, Vol.2, Pg.119*)

“I am convinced in my own mind that when the Savior took the three disciples up on the mount, which is spoken of as the “Mount of Transfiguration,” he there gave unto them the ordinances that pertain to the house of the Lord and that they were endowed. That was the only place they could go. That place became holy and sacred for the rites of salvation which were performed on that occasion.” (*Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, Vol.2, Pg.170*)

“The Savior took Peter, James, and John upon a high mountain and there he, with Moses and Elias, conferred upon these apostles the keys of the priesthood. At that time many things pertaining to the earth and its inhabitants were revealed to these apostles, for the earth was transfigured before them as it will appear when it receives its glory. The Lord consecrated and made holy the mountain top, instead of taking the apostles to the temple in Jerusalem, because the temple had become a "den of thieves," having fallen into the hands of apostate Jews who did not worship the true and living God.” (*Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, Vol.2, Pg.233*)

There are traditions of going to the temple at Sukkoth, as noted in Jewish writings. Note the “foot festivals,” that is “going to the temple,” as well as the festival of Hannukah commemorating Jews regaining access to the temple area by Judas the Macabee in 164 B.C.E.

“In the Torah there are three festivals that are known as (*regalim*), foot festivals or pilgrim festivals. These are Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot. On each of them every male Jew was expected to make a pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem.”

“Interestingly, the rededication of the Temple and the re-celebration of Sukkot paralleled the consecration of Solomon's Temple, which was also an eight-day dedication ceremony held on the festival of Sukkot.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The following information explains one of the two holiest convocations the Children of Israel were commanded to keep. The spring convocation is Passover and Sukkoth is in the fall. (Modern L.D.S. convocations called General Conference also coincide seasonally.)

“Sukkot (Hebrew for "huts" or "tabernacles"), a seven-day festival beginning on the 15th day of the month of Tishrei, which falls in September or October. (In the Diaspora an extra eighth day is celebrated.) One of its main observances is living temporarily in huts, called *sukkot*, resembling those in which the Children of Israel dwelt during their forty years in the wilderness after the Exodus from Egypt.”

“This autumn festival was the last of the three "pilgrim" festivals connected with the farming year. From all corners of the Land of Israel throngs of pilgrims used to make their way up to Jerusalem carrying the gaily decorated baskets of fruit and grain which they brought to the Temple as a thanksgiving offering. At the gates of the city the townsfolk greeted them with music. The pilgrims then ascended the broad marble staircase that led from the City of David to the summit of the Temple Mount, where they would present their offerings to the Priests.”

“This holiday 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.”

“The *sukkah* is a structure with at least three walls, made of any material. It must be at least ten handbreadths in height, and in area at least seven handbreadths square. The roof covering, or *sekhakh*, is usually leafy branches, and these must be arranged so that there is more covered than open space.”

“In present-day Israel, as in other countries, Jews construct sukkot in their gardens, on the sidewalks, and on the roofs and balconies of their houses, just as they did at the time of the return from the Babylonian exile, as described in the Book of Nehemiah: "So the people went forth . . . and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his

house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God . . . and there was very great gladness."

"When a family performs the mitzvah of the sukkah joyfully, they are said to be visited in the sukkah by seven "guests of the festival" (the ushpizin) who are present in spirit. Each day it is customary to invite and welcome one of these seven guests --- Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, (Joseph), Moses, Aaron and David --- by an appropriate recitation."
(*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The verses following the transfiguration complete the chiasmus. Again, we list them side by side for a comparison.

"And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men:
And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry." (*Matthew 17:23*)

"Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (*Matthew 18:18*)

Following the transfiguration, the prophecy of three days and the promise of keys is repeated by Matthew and just the three days is repeated by Mark. Both create a chiasmus emphasizing the Lord's grand role, as well as including the principles of eternal keys and the three-days atonement as explanations of the experience Peter, James, and John had on the mount.

“Who Is My Neighbour”

Matthew 18; Luke 10

Summary: *How we are to treat our offending brethren—The Son of Man came to save that which was lost—All of the Twelve receive the keys of the kingdom—Why we should forgive. Jesus calls, empowers, and instructs the seventy—They preach and heal—Those who receive His disciples receive Christ—The Father is revealed by the Son—Jesus gives the parable of the good Samaritan.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

In 1995, I wrote an article which appeared in the *Israel Revealed Newsletter*. It bears reprinting, befitting this lesson, because it deals with Israel's neighbors, the Jordanians, its recently deceased visionary King Hussein, and little children. The background to the news story included an expected festivity as a new bridge, named the Hussein Bridge, was opened across the Jordan River, connecting Israel and Jordan. The king was coming to visit Israel, this time officially and publicly. The media waited for the two previous enemies to meet half way across the bridge. They were surprised however, that the Israeli officials did not arrive on schedule. Instead, Israeli children with bunches of flowers ran toward the Jordanian king. Unarmed, unaccompanied, they surrounded the king and gave him the flowers. The king wept. The media didn't understand.

Even in a land and among a people that don't know their King of Kings, they know how to greet a king. They sent their little ones.

“Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.” (*Matthew 18:10*)

“And he spake unto the multitude, and said unto them: Behold your little ones. And as they looked to behold they cast their eyes towards heaven, and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them.” (*3 Nephi 17:23-24*)

PEACE ACCORD OPENS BORDERS

I was in the Galilee with tourists on the day when the headline news called out, "The King is coming!" Children were sent first to cross the new bridge across the Jordan River and greet the man, Hussein, the modern day King of Jordan. It was the year 1994. In 1951, this king was a child standing next his grandfather, King Abdullah, as he was shot to death while in prayer at the Al Aksa Mosque in Jerusalem. The underlying reason for the assassination was that Grandfather Abdullah envisioned a peaceful coexistence with the Jews of Israel. Moslem fanatics apparently thought that killing the king would eliminate peace. Among the shots was a bullet that glanced off a medal on young Hussein's chest. His life was spared.

Somewhere tucked in the environmental code of his royal blood, Hussein was destined to become the king who would see the peace his grandfather yearned for. Although not the first peace treaty a Moslem nation would have with Israel, it is by far the warmest peace agreement Israel has with any Arab neighbor.

The gladness and warmth of this peace are reflected by Arabs in Israel. I hear the question repeated almost daily, "Mister Danny, have you been to Amman yet?" I haven't, but I will, and so will thousands of Americans, Europeans and others of the world family. Setting aside man-

made fear and with calmed hearts, they will visit the Holy Land, all of it--Israel, Egypt and Jordan.

The Holy of the land was Jesus of Nazareth. He was born in Bethlehem, moved to Egypt, returned to Galilee, visited beyond the Jordan River and fulfilled his mission in Jerusalem, the Holy City. His influence reaches out from these places to all the world. Have you been to the Holy Land? If you haven't, you should. President Spencer W. Kimball also suggested that every Latter-day Saint should visit the Holy Land. He said, "It will change your life . . . I went and it changed mine." The peace you will experience will warm your heart. You'll experience what the lifeblood of this land really is.

Symbolically, between the first king in this land and the last king was the King of Kings. His purpose was to bring peace,

"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." (*John 14:27*)

You should know that modern peace is still preserved. The prophetic promises of peace are happening now. For awhile, Arab and Jewish children will grow up together in a new understanding of tranquility. This window of time has also opened an opportunity. You can be touched by the ancient culture, religion, and spirit that still reflects ancient truths that have been restored in modern times. I welcome you to see, hear, and feel the gospel in its ancient environment. It will help you prepare to greet the king -- for soon the King of Kings is coming!

The principles of forgiveness, understanding, and childlike faith are necessary elements in modern peace as well as in eternal, personal peace. Another powerful way of affecting our modern lives is to understand the real background of the Samaritan story that Jesus told to a man "learned in the law." The following is another excerpt from the book ISRAEL REVEALED.

TRAVELERS TO JERUSALEM

Up to Jerusalem: From the Dead Sea an ancient highway goes up to Jerusalem. In just a dozen miles or so, there is a climb of about four thousand feet in elevation from thirteen hundred feet below sea level to about twenty-seven hundred feet above. The term "up to Jerusalem" has a physical as well as a spiritual implication. The ancient road out of Jericho leading to Jerusalem was rather desolate. Most of it is below sea level and below the rainfall line. It was, however, the road traveled by temple priests who lived in the Levite city of Jericho and served in Jerusalem's temple. The travel was about a day's journey.

"Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished." (*Luke 18:31*)

Caravan Travel: Travelers in ancient times included animals in their caravans. The animals were used for transportation and food, as well as for barter. Travelers had to carry money for accommodations, so it was not wise to travel alone. As a support group and defense against highway robbers, caravans were organized and regularly scheduled.

Rules of Cleanliness: Special travel rules of cleanliness applied to the priests who had to remain "unblemished" to serve in the holy temple. They stayed away from any decay or waste matter. They kept at least a specific distance away from anything dead (unless it was killed as a sacrifice in the temple).

“And whosoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean.” (*Numbers 19:16*)

It is still a custom among some of those considering themselves to be Levites to circumvent graveyards or any place where there is death.

The Samaritan Inn: On the road from Jericho to Jerusalem, an old inn has been restored to represent the inn of a New Testament story Jesus told. Modern Christians refer to the inn as the “Good Samaritan Inn.” The truth is that Jesus never used the term *good Samaritan*. The setting, however, reminds us of the parable Jesus chose as he answered a lawyer, who challenged Him, the Lawgiver:

“What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (*Luke 10:25*)

JESUS, THE MASTER CRAFTSMAN

Carpenter or Craftsman: Background will be helpful in understanding why Jesus answered as He did. It is sometimes surprising to consider Jesus, known as Rabbi, to be a “Master of the law” (*rabbi* in Hebrew), instead of a carpenter. You’ll remember, that the New Testament Greek word was not *carpenter* but *craftsman*. The craft in Nazareth was a huge stone quarry. It may be more than mere coincidence that Jesus was referred to as the “Rock of Salvation” and the “Chief Corner Stone.” Was He sent to earth to be educated only as a craftsman or carpenter? Or is it more likely that Jesus studied the law that He was supposed to restore? After all, He is the lawgiver, our advocate with the Father.

“We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” (*1 John 2:1*)

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

He was recognized as a rabbi, a lawyer, one schooled in the law; he was authorized to read in the synagogues.

“And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.” (*Luke 4:16*)

So, answering the lawyer who challenged Jesus and having been trained in the law himself, the new rabbi from Nazareth answered with a question,

“What is written in the law? how readest Thou?” (*Luke 10:26*)

Showing his own legal acumen, the lawyer recited the first law of loving God and neighbor, but challenged Jesus to a legal definition.

“Who is my neighbor?” (*Luke 10:29*)

THE “GOOD” SAMARITAN

The Parable: The Savior then related this story:

“A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by the other side.

And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by the other side.

But a certain Samaritan [a non-Jew] . . . came where he was:
. . . and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine and set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn and took care of him. (LUKE 10:30-34)

Anti-Semitic Implications: Today local Jews don't use the term "good" Samaritan; to some, it has anti-Semitic implications to bad Jews. I remember that an instructor of the Ministry of Tourism Guide Course even suggested that Jesus was an anti-Semite. She said, "Even when Jesus made up a story he portrayed the Jews as 'bad guys' and the non-Jew as the 'good guy.'"

Real Intent of Parable: Of course, Jesus had no intention of portraying Jews as uncompassionate. In His story He's making a legal point responding to the lawyer's question, "Legally, who is my neighbor?" The Hebrew inference was that the priest and the Levite were within their legal rights - not to be defiled by being too close to the dead - and rather than take a chance, they walked on the other side. Their lack of action was strictly legal, but it missed the higher law of compassion, governed by the spirit not the letter of the law. Talmudic commentary written some hundreds of years later indicates an additional guideline. Now Levites, or Cohens, are required to bury the dead if they chance upon a cadaver.

In developing true forgiveness, understanding and childlike faith, and to truly be a neighbor, we should consider removing the "good" from the "good Samaritan," thereby removing the inferred "bad" from the Jews in the story. All three were good in their own perceptions. The Levite and the priest just missed the point of a higher law. That doesn't mean the lesser law is bad and those who ardently attempt to keep it are thereby bad as well. As an example for us, the Savior's compassion for all of God's children rises much higher than the question, "Who is my neighbor?."

“I Am the Light of the World”

John 7-8

Summary: *Jesus' kinsmen believe not—He teaches his Father's doctrine and proclaims His divine Sonship—Truth may be known through obedience—He offers living water to all men—Divers opinions concerning Him. The woman taken in adultery—Christ is the light of the world—He again proclaims His Messiahship—True children of Abraham believe in Christ—'Before Abraham was I Jehovah.'*

Supplemental The great “I Am” is the “Light.” Every bit of light is a reflection of Him. That light is all
Holy Land around us. The teachings and traditions of light may be ways of better recognizing Him.

and Jewish
insights:

“Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. As also he is in the moon, and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made; As also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made; And the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand. And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings; Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space . . .” (*Doctrine & Covenants 88:7-12*)

A biblical holiday connected with lights is Sukkoth. Along with Passover, it is one of the holy (and happy) times that the Children of Israel were given to remind them of being delivered from bondage. Remembering that one of the names of the “Deliverer” is “Light,” it becomes apparent that most often the term “light” is a repetitive symbol of the Lord. Sukkoth with its lights is also the time to remember Solomon’s dedication of the temple, the Lord’s house. The temple became the symbol that set the people apart from others. They and their temple were to be an “ensign” to the nations. That ensign was a “light” to the world in its day and would be so again in latter-days.

“The same Prophets who have contemplated and described the . . . reunion of the tribes of Israel . . . have also predicted that, in connection with all these preparations, a new dispensation should be manifested, a new covenant established, "A standard" for the nations, "An Ensign" for the people. In short, "Swift Messengers," "Teachers," Prophets would be commissioned, revelations be manifested, and a new organization be developed, fitted to the times, and with the principles and laws adapted to the reorganization, order, and government of a renovated world.” (*Parley P. Pratt, Key to Theology, Ch.9, Pg.76 - Pg.77*)

It was the practice to light fires on mountain tops at every Sukkoth holiday. Once seen by a distant village, they would light fires on their mountain tops, and in that way the lights spread throughout the diaspora of Jewish communities, mountain to mountain. Later, in 164 B.C.E. when the success of Judas the Maccabee in taking the temple out of the grasp of the Selucid occupiers was celebrated, the practice of lighting candles (eight days of Hanukkah) expanded to lighting fires on mountain tops again.

“It is further related that this eight-day dedication ceremony [Hanukkah] was actually celebrated as a "belated" Sukkot holiday. (Sukkot had not been held that year due to the fighting against the Greeks.) Thus, during the rededication of the Temple, the people came to the Temple in joy and thanksgiving, observed the precept of taking the lulav (palm branch) and rejoiced with lights and illuminations in the Temple. After this, Hanukkah came to be called the "Festival of Lights." Interestingly, the rededication of the Temple and the re-celebration of Sukkot paralleled the consecration of Solomon's

Temple, which was also an eight-day dedication ceremony held on the festival of Sukkot.”

“In the days of the Temple, each day during the last six *hol ha-mo'ed* days of the festival [of Sukkoth] (though not on the Sabbath), the priests used to fill a golden flagon with water drawn from the beautiful spring of Siloam in the valley to the south of the Temple Mount, and carry it up the hill for a ceremony at the altar. This ceremony was called *Simhat Bet ha-Sho'evah* (the joy of the water-drawing). According to the Mishnah, whoever failed to witness this ceremony in his lifetime "never witnessed real joy." Golden candlesticks, 50 cubits high, were lit with wicks made out of worn-out garments of the priests, and the light emitted was so bright that "there was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that did not reflect the light of the *Bet ha-Sho'evah*. "Men of piety and good deeds used to dance before the candlesticks with burning torches in their hands, singing songs and praises. And countless Levites played on harps, lyres, cymbals, trumpets and other musical instruments, on the 15 steps leading from the Court of the Israelites to the Court of the Women.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Another interesting fact about lights is the ancient practice of announcing the new moon by lighting bonfires on mountain tops. This is significant because the biblical calendar and seasonal holidays that had eternal and religious symbolism had to be accurately calculated by the rotation of the moon and the sun.

“Originally the New Moon was proclaimed by the Sanhedrin, the High Court assembled in Jerusalem, after testimony by reliable witnesses that they had actually seen the new crescent; they then "sanctified" the moon. Bonfires were lit on the Mount of Olives to inform the whole nation. As soon as these beacons were seen, others were lit on hilltops by waiting scouts, and so the word was spread over the entire land and in parts of the Diaspora. Later, the Samaritans began to light misleading beacons and word had to be sent by messenger. In the fourth century C.E. the sages established a uniform permanent calendar, based on astronomical calculation, in force to this day.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

When the temple was destroyed, a mourning holiday, Tish'ah Be-av, was instituted and on that holiday lights are diminished.

“Tish'a Be-av, (the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Av, usually falling within the first week of August) is the traditional day of mourning for the destruction of the Temples in Jerusalem. It is the culmination of the three weeks of mourning that start on the 17th of Tammuz. On Tish'ah be-Av in the year 586 B.C.E., the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar stormed the great Temple built by Solomon, turned its marbled columns and gilded rooms into a useless pile of rubble and exiled Jerusalem's inhabitants.”

“This tragic day has therefore been set aside as a time of sadness for all Jews, who are required to fast the whole day and observe most of the mourning rites which apply in the case of a death in the family, such as not wearing shoes or sandals made of leather. At the evening service in the synagogue, all decorations are removed from the ark, the lights are dimmed, a few candles are lit, and the whole congregation sits on low benches or on the floor listening in hushed silence to the mournful notes of Eikhah, the Book of Lamentations written by the prophet Jeremiah, an eyewitness to the destruction of the first Temple.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Desecrating the temple was a capital crime with the penalty of death. Capital crimes included adultery, murder, blasphemy, and rebellion of children against their parents.

“Children may not abuse their parents. According to the Bible, if a son is extremely rebellious and incorrigible and refuses to mend his ways (*ben sorer u-moreh*), his parents may agree to bring him to the town elders for judgment and punishment, which could be death by stoning. However, there is no record of such punishment ever having been carried out.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica* Jr.)

One of the methods of execution was stoning. A truer understanding of the process of stoning would give added insight to the New Testament account of a woman brought to Jesus. The procedure included causing death by precipitating the convicted person over a cliff (an abandoned stone quarry could be an execution site). That part included the participation of one of the witnesses. The second witness threw or placed the “first stone” on the body in a process of burying the convicted. The stoning was more a disrespectful burying, depriving the convicted of a mourning chamber and a burial chamber. (The following explanation adds to the comments made in **Lesson 10, “Take My Yoke Upon You and Learn of Me”** about the procedure of stoning.)

“Our Rabbis taught: Whence do we know that it [the execution] was accomplished by hurling down? Scripture states, And he shall be cast down. And whence the necessity of stoning? Scripture states, He shall be stoned. And whence do we know that both stoning and hurling down [were employed]? From the verse, he shall surely be stoned or thrown down. And whence do we know that if he died through being hurled down, it is enough? Scripture states, or cast down. Whence do we know the same procedure is to be followed for [all subsequent] generations? (*Talmud - Mas. Sanhedrin 45a*)

It should be noted that the Hebrew rendition of stoning including “hurling” or “laying on hands;” to “cast” or “throw” down is not as recognizable in the English King James Translation of Exodus 19:13 and Leviticus 24:14.

Now, consider the story of the woman brought to Jesus. Wisely and compassionately, the Judge of Israel, our Advocate with the Father, the Atoner for our sins reminded the Pharisees that they had a legal system. In effect, was He saying, “Where are your witnesses? What would cause you to come to me when you have a procedure for the witnesses to do their legal duty?” Yet, at the same time, He had them examine their own lives (and lusts?). “Where is the witness - without sin, let him cast the first stone?” When they all left, Jesus, the ultimate Judge and Advocate, said, “Neither do I accuse thee, go thy way and sin no more.” Hopelessness and darkness were turned to lighted hope. She was saved.

“And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more. Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” (*John 8:9-12*)

Jehovah is His name. Salvation is what He provides. Jehovah means “I Am” - and “I Am” is so sacred that it is not repeated; even modern Hebrew does not have a first person conjugation of “I am.” The shortened version of Jehovah is “Jeho” and connected to the abbreviation of “salvation” it is pronounced Jeho-Shua. By the time Jeho-shua was transliterated into Greek and then into Latin, it became pronounced “Je-sus,” and in English, Jesus. He is the “I AM” who “saves.”

“I Was Blind, Now I See”

John 9–10

Summary: *Jesus, on the Sabbath, heals a man born blind—The Jews accuse Him of Sabbath violation—He lectures them on spiritual blindness. Jesus is the good Shepherd—He gained power over death from His Father—He promises to visit his other sheep—He proclaims: ‘I am the Son of God.’*

**Supplemental
Holy Land
and Jewish
insights:**

The Hebrew word for “sent” is “shiloach.” Water emanating from the Gihon spring filled a pool of water was called the “Pool of Sent,” or “Pool of Shiloach.” The “living” (spring) water was sent through Hezekiah’s tunnel to be collected and stored for the people’s use. The name of the collection pool has been transliterated into the “Pool of Shiloam.”

The Apostle John gives us beautiful poetry and insight as he relates the significant way Jesus healed the blind man. Jesus sent a blind man to the “Pool of Sent” to receive sight by washing his eyes in living water. The “Fountain of Living Waters,” giving sight to the blind man, was sent from God to give us all sight.

“The Jewish attitude toward blindness is one of special concern, since blind people are naturally helpless in many ways, and therefore more likely to be exploited or hurt. The Torah commands: “Thou shalt not put a stumbling block before the blind,” and this commandment is taken to include not only those who are actually blind, but also those who lack understanding of a particular matter. In other words, one must not trick a person who may be “blind” to what he is doing. The Bible also mentions blindness in reference to people who were blind, among them the patriarch Isaac, as well as Eli, the high priest, and Samson.”

“Judaism regards a blind person as perfectly normal, and the only restrictions placed upon him are due to the limitations of his physical disability. At one time it was believed that a blind person should not fulfil certain religious duties such as being called up to the Torah reading, conducting the service, acting as judge or reading the Shema. However, all these opinions were later refuted, and it is now accepted that a blind man may practice Judaism like any other Jew. He cannot, however, perform those acts which specifically involve reading a text such as the actual reading of the Torah or Megillah since these must be read from a kosher Hebrew text and not by heart or from braille.”

“Because Israel is a country whose inhabitants have immigrated from all parts of the world, including many backward nations, there is a larger percentage of blind people in Israel than in other Western countries. Nevertheless, in Israel today, blind people can lead a normal life thanks to the fine educational institutions and numerous agencies and associations which aid in their job placement, training and rehabilitation. In addition they can enjoy a vast amount of literature, biblical, secular, Hebrew and foreign, which has been printed in Hebrew braille. (Strangely, Hebrew braille is written from left to right, like English writing.)”

“Moreover, Israel has developed two machines to further aid blind people. The Transicon is a type of computer which electronically photographs printed material, and converts it into braille script. Thus, a blind man does not have to wait for a particular book to be printed in braille, but can read whatever he pleases. The second machine, the Philapbraille, is a typewriter which produces whatever is typed both in ordinary script

and braille, so that the blind person typing may check his own work.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

In Israel, where the Orthodox Jews adamantly wish to impose their religious interpretation and standards, autopsies and dissection of bodies or body parts for study are openly disdained. Yet, corneal transplants are encouraged in order to save blindness.

“Although the objections that apply to autopsies also apply to dissection for the purpose of anatomical study, enough people bequeath their bodies for this purpose so that religious opposition has been confined largely to autopsies, despite the fact that the Halakhic permission for such bequests is doubtful. Similarly most rabbinical authorities permit autopsies in the case of violent or accidental death or where crime is suspected. Most of those who oppose autopsies make an exception in the case of corneal transplants which restore sight to a blind person. In this specific instance one rabbi stated that the deceased would consider it an honor for his eye to be so used. The permissibility of organ banks is less likely in view of the rule in Jewish law that all mortal remains must ultimately be buried.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

In addition to the Lord’s names of sight, light and living waters, the imagery of the shepherd is a powerful lesson of the Savior’s role in our salvation. His prophets had one major role, to witness of Him, the Lamb of God.

“Moses, fleeing from Egypt, came across Jethro's daughters being ill-treated by local shepherds at a well in Midian. He saved them and watered their flocks for them. In gratitude Jethro gave Moses one of his daughters, Zipporah, as his wife and appointed him shepherd of his flocks (Exodus 2:16--21; 3:1). Following this incident he went to work for the priest as a shepherd and married one of his daughters, Zipporah. Thus Moses, like King David, a leader of the Israelites after him, spent his days tending flocks of sheep.”

“With the coming of the Messiah, Jews will come home to Jerusalem, the everlasting city. “He that scattered Israel will gather him as a shepherd his flock.”

"A trouble-maker" is what King Ahab called Elijah. The Bible calls him Elijah the Tishbite, and many people have called him the first of the great prophets of Israel. Elijah was not a professional prophet, but a simple shepherd who felt himself called upon by God to help the Jewish people turn away from evil. He answered this call by setting out on a life-long prophetic mission.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Amos, a shepherd, became a prophet and another shepherd, David, became a king. David’s reign provided the best kingdom Israel ever had. The greatest archaeological treasure, the Dead Sea Scrolls, was found by shepherds. Most important, are the images which connect with His title as the Lamb of God.

The modern Jewish Tallith (prayer shawl) is a garment like that used in the ancient temple. The one worn over the clothing is usually made from wool. It may have a significance in wrapping or covering ourselves in the Lamb of God. The word for lamb is Taleh and a female lamb is a Talitha, hence the name of the garment - Tallith. It has markings that denote its religious meaning.

“In medieval France, it was customary for the groom to cover the bride's head with his tallit as a symbol of sheltering her; and in modern-day Israel, for weddings of soldiers on active duty, it is not unusual to see a *huppah* constructed of a tallit supported by four rifles held by friends of the bride and groom. Generally, the *huppah* is erected inside the

synagogue or the hall where the wedding is to take place, but among Orthodox Jews, the preferred custom is to erect the *huppah* outside, or at least in a spot open to the sky, underneath the stars, because of God's assurance to Abraham that He would make his descendants "as numerous as the stars of the heavens." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Let me repeat the two paragraphs from the book ISRAEL REVEALED about leading sheep in Israel. The setting is in the Galilee, on the Mount of Beatitudes.

Leading the Sheep Today: A farm house is there with more than a hundred sheep near by. The boy shepherd leads them out every morning and returns in the late afternoon. Leading sheep is typical in this country. Usually there are about a dozen lead sheep, older ones from last year's flock. The shepherd usually has them marked with bells around their necks. It is common to hear the boy talk to his sheep. He calls them when it's time to move on, and that's when the lead sheep immediately respond, ringing their bells as they run toward their shepherd. The ringing noise alerts the other sheep, and then like a wave they begin to follow the others.

Ancient Temple Practice: The shepherd's model is similar to an ancient biblical temple practice. For example, in the inner courtyard of the temple, the chief priest would light a fire and burn incense to signal his readiness for a sacrifice. That would alert the twelve priests in the next courtyard to wash and ready themselves. Their signal to the congregation was the ringing of bells. The multitudes would then gather to follow the priests to participate in the ritual.

Additionally, I have noticed how the shepherds in Israel develop a language for their sheep. The grunts, whistles, and sounds are recognized by the flock. I have also seen two shepherds meet on the hillsides as they lead their sheep. The shepherds stop, chat, and typically make a small fire and prepare a hot drink. In the mean time, their sheep begin to mingle. You could imagine the ownership confusion that might follow. Yet, when one shepherd departs, he simply begins talking and making his "sounds," and his sheep follow him.

"For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice . . ." (*Psalms 95:7*)

"And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice." (*John 10:4*)

"And now I say unto you that the good shepherd doth call after you; and if you will hearken unto his voice he will bring you into his fold, and ye are his sheep; and he commandeth you that ye suffer no ravenous wolf to enter among you, that ye may not be destroyed." (*Alma 5:60*)

"How are we to know the voice of the Good Shepherd from the voice of a stranger? Can any person answer this question? I can. It is very easy. To every philosopher upon the earth, I say, your eye can be deceived, so can mine; your ear can be deceived, so can mine; the touch of your hand can be deceived, so can mine; but the Spirit of God filling the creature with revelation and the light of eternity, cannot be mistaken--the revelation which comes from God is never mistaken. When an individual, filled with the Spirit of God, declares the truth of heaven, the sheep hear that, the Spirit of the Lord pierces their inmost souls and sinks deep into their hearts; by the testimony of the Holy Ghost light springs up within them, and they see and understand for themselves. This is the way the

Gospel should be preached by every Elder in Israel . . .” (*Discourses of Brigham Young*, Pg.431)

While visiting Israel, one of my guests, Lorin Moench, a sheep rancher, pointed out the significant difference between shepherds and sheepherders. Sheep herding is usually driving the flock. In Israel, he noticed, the shepherd leads the flock.

“What Shall I Do That I May Inherit Eternal Life?”

Mark 10:17-30; 12:41-44; Luke 12:13-21; 14; 16

Summary: *Jesus counsels the rich young man, foretells His own death, and heals blind Bartimaeus. Jesus teaches: Beware of hypocrisy; lay up treasures in heaven, rather than on earth; prepare for the coming of the Lord; where much is given, much is required. Jesus again heals on the Sabbath—He teaches humility, and gives the parable of the great supper—Those who follow Him must forsake all else. Jesus gives the parable of the unjust steward—He teaches of service and condemns divorce—He gives the parable of the rich man and Lazarus.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

The answer to the title of this lesson is in **Lesson 9, “Seek Ye First The Kingdom of God.”** Let us consider the last paragraph of that supplement.

“As a closing comment on this lesson (#9), let me add a personal perspective. In the days of the Savior, all believing members committed their time, talent and even their lives to “the kingdom.” I participated in an archaeological survey close to Jericho where we were discussing the odd nature of a beautiful synagogue floor of the first century. What was odd about it was the signature. Almost every ancient mosaic floor found in Israel has the signature of the donor with his family name and title. This one simply had an inscription that indicated that the “entire community” had done this work. I had the distinct feeling we were standing on the remains of a worship center used by early saints, “former-day Saint,” people who committed themselves to first the building of the Kingdom of God.”

As a discipline and behavioral structure, the early Saints gave everything to the Lord. By consecrating their resources to the Kingdom of God, they were learning stewardship instead of ownership.

“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.” (*Acts 4:32-35*)

Stewardship is an eternal principle also given before Jesus' time.

“For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.” (*Exodus 32:29*)

“And behold, thou wilt remember the poor, and consecrate of thy properties for their support that which thou hast to impart unto them, with a covenant and a deed which cannot be broken.” (*DC 42:30*)

In Jesus' day, two men asked what they should do to inherit eternal life. Jesus gave each one an answer that applied to him because each had to learn a principle he needed most. The rich young man was told to keep the commandments and when he answered that he observed them all, he was told to sell what he had and give to the poor. On the other hand, a lawyer was asked a question and when he answered correctly Jesus told him to follow his own answer. In other words, “Do it.”

Rich Man

“And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? . . . Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven. . .” (*Mark 10:17-20*)

Lawyer

“And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. (*Luke 10:25-28*)

The answer to the lesson title’s question includes more than a lesson on riches, wealth or worldly aspects. It is a lesson in stewardship, humility, and a fervent purpose of service to others guided by mercy, piety, wisdom, humility, gentility, and understanding.

“The *shofet*, or judge, had to meet strict qualifications, besides just knowing the law. Among these qualifications were piety, wisdom, humility, gentility and human understanding. When Moses set up the first courts, he looked for "able men such as fear God, men of truth, hating unjust gain" (Exodus 18:21) and "wise men, and understanding and full of knowledge" (Deuteronomy 1:13). They were charged to "hear the causes between your brethren and judge righteously between a man and his brother and the stranger," not to be partial in judgment but to "hear the small and the great alike, fear no man, for judgment is God's" (Deuteronomy 1:16--17).”

“Ritual alone does not please God, who demands that it go hand in hand with mercy and compassion.”

“The exercise of mercy is an obligation for all Jews. By this it is meant that they must act with compassion and forgiveness towards all mankind, and perform deeds of charity and kindness. This quality is an essential characteristic of God who is known as *Rahum* ("Merciful") and, in accordance with the tradition which sets as man's goal the imitation of God: "As He is merciful, so be you merciful." Just as God is bound by His covenant of mercy with His people, so is the Jew bound by specific commandments to act mercifully to the oppressed, the alien, the orphan, the widow, and indeed, every living creature. The stress placed upon this quality is evident both in the many charitable institutions existing in Jewish communal life, and in the daily prayers which implore God to deal compassionately even with the undeserving man. Human beings are frail, imperfect creatures constantly open to error, and so they are totally dependent on God's mercy. But God, as depicted by the rabbis, embodies a combination of justice and mercy, of strict judgment and lenient compassion. This combination of justice and mercy in God is represented by the two names of God --- Elohim and YHWH. The former stands for justice and the latter for mercy. Though they may seem contradictory, one actually complements the other and, when there is a conflict between the two, God usually favors mercy. Judaism demands of its judges this same balance, and the principle of mercy thus assumes extreme importance in the administration of Jewish law. The prophet Zechariah (7:9) put it: "...execute the judgment and show mercy and compassion every man to his brother." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The law of consecration, in a celestial sense, is a stewardship of doing without being instructed to do so. Those that have to ask, “What must I do to inherit life?” must grasp the opportunity to reach higher so that the spirit can dictate the answer, “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God.”

“He Was Lost and Is Found”

Lesson

18

Luke 15; 17

Summary: *Jesus gives the parables of the lost sheep, of the piece of silver, and of the prodigal son. Jesus speaks of offenses, forgiveness, and faith—Even the faithful are unprofitable servants—Ten lepers are healed—Jesus discourses on the Second Coming.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

The lesson includes key words that represent our blessings and responsibilities. Some Jewish thoughts on forgiveness, leprosy, gratitude, and work may add insights to the parables and scriptures to be studied this week.

Forgiveness: “Although Judaism sees sin as a most serious matter, even the sinner is not without hope. One of the most important theological doctrines of both the Bible and the Talmud is that if a sinner repents his bad deeds, God will forgive him. Repentance consists of several stages --- firstly the sinner must reflect on his actions and realize that he has indeed done the wrong thing. He must then make up his mind never to do it again, and confess his sin. This confession is not made to any other human being but is made by the sinner directly to God. On this basis the two confessions *Ashamnu* and *Al-Het* were introduced into the prayers for the Day of Atonement which is a special occasion for repentance and forgiveness. However, even when a sinner has done all these things, his repentance is still not final until he has been exposed to the same temptation and withstood it. Of course he should not deliberately put himself on that spot again.”

“The rabbis insist that Israel was elected because it voluntarily accepted the Torah whereas other nations would not. Mercy and forgiveness, says the Talmud, are distinguishing characteristics of Abraham and his seed, and these characteristics motivated God to choose Israel as His people. (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Although leprosy is mentioned several times in the scriptures, Jewish thought suggests that it may not always represent a physical disease.

“The Hebrew word *zara'at*, which has been translated as leprosy is not actually the physiological disease of leprosy as we know it today (i.e., Hansen's disease). Rather it is a general biblical term to describe an affliction which strikes in one of three ways: on one's person, one's clothing or one's house. Several chapters in the Book of Leviticus and the entire Talmudic tractate of *Nega'im* are devoted to a discussion of the disease. They explain the system of diagnosis of skin, garments and home, and enumerate the symptoms of the disease. These are generally a discoloration and deterioration of the flesh, the cloth or the stones. It was the priest who made the inspection; if he diagnosed the disease as *zara'at*, he then imposed a quarantine. At the end of the quarantine period, he made another examination. If no further degeneration was apparent, the patient was isolated for another week, after which he could be pronounced healed. The priest played no part in the healing, however, and only performed rituals after the person was cured.”

“How, then, was the cure effected? It was the responsibility of the afflicted person himself to pray and fast in order to win God's favor. *Zara'at* was seen as a disease inflicted by God and cured by God. The *aggadah* explains that *zara'at* was inflicted as a punishment for slander. Thus, according to the *aggadah*, the Hebrew word for leper, *mezora*, is a play on words of the Hebrew *mozi shem ra*, meaning to slander a person's reputation. The Midrash cites the case of Miriam who was stricken with leprosy after she

had spoken ill of her brother, Moses. Then, after Moses had prayed for her, she was healed by God.”

“Another case of *zara'at* mentioned in the Bible is that of King Uzziah of Judah, in whose case haughtiness and rebelliousness were seen as causes of the affliction. Despite the warning of the priests, King Uzziah had entered the Temple and burned incense on the altar, a privilege granted only to priests. As a result, he was immediately stricken with *zara'at*.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

When the person had prayed and fasted, a purification ritual was performed. That may have been a way to “anchor” the experience of repentance.

“After a person was cured of *zara'at* he went through a purification ritual conducted by the priest, which lasted eight days. On the first day, the priest performed the ritual outside the city or camp. He took cedar wood, crimson cloth and a live bird and dipped them in an earthen vessel containing a mixture of fresh water and the blood of another bird. The leper was sprinkled with this mixture seven times, after which the live bird was set free. The leper was then admitted to the camp after washing his clothes, shaving his hair, and bathing. After the seventh day, he repeated this washing process again, and then was allowed to enter his residence. On the eighth day he brought an offering to the Temple.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Here are comments on leprosy as a physical disease.

“Leprosy as it is known today is a physical disease and those who suffer from it must be isolated. In 1887 a leper hospital was built in Talbiyyeh, Jerusalem. For many years of the hospital's existence, the famous Rabbi Aryeh Levin acted as chaplain of the hospital, and despite the quarantine on lepers, continued to visit the hospital and extend his kindness to the patients.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

An act of kindness and the attitude of kindness is an expression of gratitude.

“As a sign of gratitude for having been spared the fate of Egypt's firstborn who died on the eve of Passover, tradition has made it incumbent upon Jewish firstborn to fast on the day before Passover. If the child is too young, his father fasts in his place. If the father himself is a firstborn, then the child's mother fasts for him. Should Passover fall on a Sabbath, the fast takes place on Thursday, not Friday.”

“The contents of Grace After Meals are as follows: The first blessing (*Birkat ha-Zan*) praises God for providing food for all His creatures. The second (*Birkat ha-Areẓ*) expresses particular gratitude for the redemption from Egypt, the covenant of circumcision, the revelation of the Torah and the “good land” of Israel which God has given the Jewish people.”

“In Talmudic literature, hospitality is a great *mitzvah*, and is even more important, according to some rabbis, than prayer. The guest should be shown his room on arrival, so that he will enjoy his meal and not have to worry about where he will sleep later. The host is forbidden to make his guest uncomfortable by appearing miserable or sad, or by watching him too closely when he eats. The guest too, has responsibilities, including showing gratitude to his host, and complying with his host's wishes. Guests must not accept hospitality if they think that doing so will impoverish the host.”

“Because Jerusalem was regarded as the common possession of the entire Jewish people, householders in the capital were forbidden to take rent from pilgrims, but as a token of

gratitude, the pilgrims would give their hosts the hides of the sacrificial animals.”
(*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

It is interesting that hides of animals are still used for writing Torah Scrolls. Since there are no sacrifices, the supply of first born, unblemished animal skins is rare. A provision has been made to use the skins of unborn calves that have to be taken to prevent the traumatic death of a cow. Incidentally, a major source of this special leather for scripture scrolls in Israel is provided by a Latter-day Saint, Tom Thomaser, from Oklahoma.

The thoughts on the subject of work, labor and charity prompt a memory for me almost every day as I pass the “temporary labor market” close to the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem. Arab laborers are waiting for a day’s work. Some are skilled masons or capable in other crafts. Some get hired in the morning, others only later on in the day when contractors discover an urgent need for some temporary help. It is usually the custom to pay a full day’s wage even if the hire is only for part of the day.

“The Bible regards labor as an aspect of world order. In the story of Creation, man working the soil is the important element in the development of vegetation (Genesis 2:5). Work is praised not only for purposes of earning one's bread but also for the contentment which results. Idleness, on the other hand, is condemned as a social evil. The sages declared, "He who does not teach his son a trade is as though he had taught him to be a thief." Rabbinic literature stresses the dignity of labor and refers with pride to its great scholars who did work that might be thought menial to avoid being dependent on others. Rabbi Johanan the shoemaker is only one example. The ideal suggested and followed by most of the sages is to combine learning and work. Maimonides proposed that the day be divided into thirds, with equal time for learning, labor and other matters.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The Bible has instructions on labor relations.

“Two basic principles helped shape biblical labor policy. First, the employer's duty to pay his worker on time (Leviticus 19:13; Deuteronomy 24:15). Second, the right of the worker to eat from the produce of the field while he is working (Deuteronomy 23:25, 26). The worker's duty is to do his work in a faithful manner. Throughout the ages, rabbinic interpretation of these biblical precepts has developed the labor relations that are a model of social justice. Recent rabbinic decisions have upheld the right of workers to organize and, where unavoidable, to strike. In the modern state of Israel, labor, especially a return to agriculture, is regarded as a basic political philosophy.”
(*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The responsibility of the “landlord” also extends to charity.

“When necessary, accepting charity is perfectly legitimate and no shame attaches itself to the poor who are otherwise unable to support themselves. However, one is advised to do everything in one's power to avoid having to take alms: "Make your Sabbath a weekday (by not eating special food or wearing good clothes) rather than be dependent on other people." Great Sages did physical labor in order to support themselves and remain independent. A person who is really entitled to take charity but delays doing so and consequently suffers rather than be a burden to the community will surely be rewarded and not die before he reaches a position in which he will be able to support others.”

“... specific Torah laws ... apply to all firstborn human beings and animals of the following types: cattle, sheep, goats and donkeys. The purpose of these laws is to teach

us that everything in the world belongs to God and man owns only what God has given to him. When a man has worked hard to raise a family or rear a herd of animals, and finally sees the first fruits of his labor, the Torah tells him that these first fruits belong to God. Therefore, if man wishes to own and enjoy these gifts, he must redeem them from their rightful owner.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

“Thy Faith Hath Saved Thee”

Lesson

19

Luke 18:1-8; 35-43; 19:1-10; John 11

Summary: *Jesus gives the parables of the unjust judge, and of the Pharisee and publican—He invites little children to come unto Him and teaches how to gain eternal life—He tells of his coming death and resurrection, and gives sight to a blind man. Jesus came to save souls. Jesus testifies He is the resurrection and the life—Mary and Martha testify of Him—He raises Lazarus from the dead—Caiaphas speaks prophetically of the death of Christ.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

There are some interesting possibilities in considering Zacchaeus' work as a tax collector. A tax franchise was used at times to collect taxes from Jewish communities. The Roman commander or governor in the Jericho area may have decided to use such a system, thereby guaranteeing a certain tax amount being collected on a regular basis.

The collector may have even over-collected in good times so that he could meet the quota in the bad times.

“Taxes would be assessed against the community as a whole, and amongst themselves, the Jews would determine how to distribute the tax burden.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Examining Jericho's history, a reflection of three Biblical events teach us something about wealth. In Joshua's time, Achan stole wealth when “the walls came tumbling down.” In Jesus' time, He experienced a temptation of wealth and then in a tax collector's conversion, wealth is returned. For added background on the subject of wealth, the following is given from the book ISRAEL REVEALED.

The Walls of Jericho: Just north of the Dead Sea is Jericho, nestled at the bottom of the Judean Hills. It is still a quiet town of fruit and vegetable growers. It is a trade-route city that has encountered at least twenty-eight different conquests, as evidenced in the excavations of this ancient *tel*. One of those conquests was by Joshua, who led the Israelites on six silent daily walks around the walls of the city. On the seventh day they made another six silent walks around the city. All the noiseless marching may have confused the ancient inhabitants of Jericho. It was the seventh walk around the city on the seventh day that was made noisily. Accompanied by trumpets and shouts, the walls came tumbling down!

“And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, . . . And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days.

And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times.

And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city.” (*Joshua 6:2-3, 15-16*)

Achan Stoned for Coveting Wealth: During the conquering of Jericho, the prophet Joshua commanded that all living persons and animals were to be killed except for Rahab (the harlot who had saved the Israelite spies). All gold, silver, other metal, and worthwhile items were to be brought to the Lord's treasury. Though no loot was to be taken at Jericho, a certain man named Achan succumbed to the temptation of wealth and took some spoils. Because he took a Babylonish garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold and hid them in his tent,

the Israelites experienced a terrible defeat at their next battle. After Joshua had interviewed them man by man, he found Achan, who confessed the theft. He and his entire family were stoned to death and then with all of their possessions they were burned with fire.

“And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done:
When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it. So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it.
And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the LORD.
. . . And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the LORD shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones.” (*Joshua 7:20-25*)

Mount of Temptation: As recorded in the New Testament, Jesus was tempted with the wealth of the world by Satan. This probably happened at Jericho, an oasis, an important and busy crossroad. This way station was obviously a place of wealth, both natural and manmade. The Mount of Temptation just above Jericho marks the traditional spot where Jesus’ temptation with wealth may have occurred.

“Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;
And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.
Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” (*Matthew 4:8-10*)

A monastery has been built into the side of the mount. Tradition indicates that for many years, the monastery was “wordless.” Possibly this was done in symbolic gesture of the silent walks the Israelites made around the site.

Tax Collector in a Tree: When Jesus was teaching at Jericho, the tax collector, Zacchaeus, climbed a tree to better see Him. Jesus invited Himself to Zacchaeus’s house to dine with him. People murmured that Jesus was socializing with the expropriator of their taxes. It is interesting to note that tax collectors had to reach a quota set by the Romans. It was imperative that taxes were collected above the normal rate when the economy was good so that the quota could be met when the economy was bad. The people murmured that Zacchaeus may have abused that system for his own benefit. However, a better look into his personality shows a different story, or at least indicates a complete change. Zacchaeus became so impressed with Jesus’ teachings that he offered half of his wealth to the poor and fourfold repayment to the people he had wronged.

“And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.
And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.
And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.
And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.
And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.

And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.
And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.
And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.” (LUKE 19:1-8)

A tree in Jericho marks the traditional site of that event. I recall that some professional tree surgeons touring with me a number of years ago remarked that the supposed Zacchaeus tree looked more like two hundred years old than two thousand. Fortunately, it’s not the tree but the story that reminds us of what is important.

The three Jericho stories have some connection to wealth. Achan succumbed to temptation, disobeyed, and stole. Jesus was tempted but refused the wealth of the world. Zacchaeus, having surrendered to temptation, was willing to repay his wrongs - fourfold.

Everything Belongs to God: The important lesson underlying these accounts is that there is no ownership; it is all stewardship. Everything belongs to the Lord. Whatever wealth man assembles is a test of his stewardship.

The test of stewardship is manifested by faith. The following information about taxation is also interesting.

“The collecting of money or goods for the maintenance of political and social institutions and services, has been an integral part of organized communal life from earliest times, although in different ages and places in history, various forms of taxation have been imposed. From biblical times onward, the Jews have been subject to many types of taxes. The kings in the Bible imposed taxes on the people to maintain their own residences and households, to equip and maintain armies, and to provide for the needs of the Temple. Among the taxes collected were set portions of the annual yield of the fields, vineyards, flocks and olive groves. In addition, individuals would sometimes be "drafted" to perform required personal services for the king. The Book of Kings tells of King Solomon's division of the kingdom into 12 administrative units, each under the charge of an officer, each of which was responsible for providing the king and his household with food for one month of the year. In certain instances, for example after special acts of bravery, individuals would be rewarded with the lessening or elimination of their tax burden.”

“In the Bible itself, the concept of taxation actually has a very broad connotation. Thus the tithe given to the priest or to the poor, the obligation to leave a "corner of the field" for the poor, and the requirements of the Sabbatical year and Jubilee, can also be seen as imposed duties, or as a form of taxation on the people.”

“The urge to evade payment of taxes has always been strong, and as a result rabbinic leaders throughout the generations frequently stressed the need to be forthright in the payment of taxes. Tax evasion was seen as a form of robbery subject to severe punishment, for it was "robbery of the public" -- it increased the burden on the remaining members of the community by obliging them to pay more than their due share for the satisfaction of the community's needs.”

“In the modern State of Israel, there is a taxation system similar to that found in most countries of the western world. However, because of the disproportionate defense burden, Israelis pay the highest tax rate in the world.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Taxation in Israel covers many social responsibilities and also benefits society. Today, a standard burial is one of those services. There are some interesting facts that correspond with Lazarus’ burial two thousand years ago. The procedure in Jesus’ day was to bury within a day of death and leave the burial room open for three days as the family and friends begin a seven-day mourning period. Again, from the book ISRAEL REVEALED, some poignant information may provide illustration.

BETHANY

The House of the Poor: About five miles north of Bethlehem and less than two miles east of Jerusalem is another ancient village called Bethany. The word *Beth-ani* means house of the poor. There are still honorably poor people living here. Their faith is exemplary. For more than twenty years I have been visiting the poor crusader-built room of the family of Abu Issa Mukahal, a Moslem married to a Christian Arab woman, Shifa. She has demonstrated her simple faith by raising eight children in that one room. Over the years the children have added one more room and a kitchen hut. At last count, twenty-one grandchildren assemble there almost daily. There are one full-time job and some scattered temporary jobs to support them all. Shifa often begins preparing food by reaming out carrots and small zucchini squashes to stuff with rice and crumbs of ground meat—which she does not have. Her faith is that before the evening, some money will somehow trickle in and she will be able to purchase the last ingredients. Some tourists do sense that Bethany is still home to the honorably poor.

Home of Lazarus: More commonly Bethany is called Al-Azaria. This is derived from the two-thousand-year-old name of an inhabitant of Bethany who was called Eliezer. In modern English his name became known as Lazarus. Traditional churches mark the events involving Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. These friends of Jesus anxiously awaited His swift return to their home. They had sent a message to Him across the Jordan River that Lazarus was ill. (The message may have taken an overnight journey to reach Him, and Jesus would have needed at least another overnight journey to return if He left immediately.) However,

“When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.
... Then when Jesus came, he found that he [Lazarus] had lain in the grave four days already.” (*John 11:6-17*)

The Tomb of Lazarus: The entrance and steps to Lazarus’s tomb were made by Christians just hundreds of years ago. However, they do lead down through the crest of a hill to the remains of a first-century Jewish tomb. Typically, such tombs had two chambers. One chamber was for the mourners who returned for seven days, praying and weeping. (This mourning is called *Shiva* in Hebrew.) Another chamber is the burial room, wherein the bodies were placed within a day of passing away.

Raised from the Dead: After three days it was customary to close the burial room but to continue mourning for the rest of the seven-day period. Jesus asked,

“Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord come and see.
[Then] Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. . . .
[Jesus] . . . cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.” (*JOHN 11:34-43*)

Lazarus's family was amazed! They knew that within a day of his death, the body had been washed, completely immersed, and anointed with fragrant spiced oils. They probably assisted in dressing the body, fastening his hands and feet, and reverently wrapping the *talith* over his head and around his body. As they laid him in the burial chamber, they knew that he was dead, and now, before their very eyes, he was alive again. His "shuffling" out of the burial chamber must have astonished the mourners so much that Jesus had to reassure them:

"Loose him and let him go." (JOHN 11:44)

Lazarus was one of several people Jesus had raised from the dead. They would all eventually die again. Jesus himself would become the first to resurrect from the dead, never to die again. The raising of Lazarus aroused great interest among the people. The miracle was reported to the high priests who immediately felt threatened. In their minds, Jesus' popularity imperiled their social and political standing. A council convened, and Caiaphas, the High Priest that year, suggested that Jesus should die.

Caiaphas further justified his wicked proposal by exclaiming that Jesus' popularity was spreading to other Jews in other lands. Again, that would imperil his influence throughout the Jewish world.

Caiaphas' anger justified his call for Lazarus' death as well. This was in sharp contrast with the respect and decorum given to death and burial practices. Since Lazarus' death and rising, as well as Jesus' eventual death and resurrection, are so significant to building faith, added insight to Jewish burial practices may be of value.

"Decent burial was regarded to be of great importance in ancient Israel, as in the rest of the ancient Near East. Abraham's purchase of the cave at Machpelah as a family tomb (Genesis 23) and the subsequent measures taken by later patriarchs to ensure that they would be buried there occupy a prominent place in the patriarchal narratives. Biblical biographies ordinarily end with the statement that a man died, and an account of his burial reflects the value assigned to proper interment. To bury an unidentified corpse was considered to be so great a good deed that even the high priest was required to do it although it involved him in becoming ritually unclean."

"There is no explicit biblical evidence as to how soon after death burial took place, but it is likely that it was within a day after death. This was dictated by the climate and by the fact that the Israelites did not enbalm the dead (Jacob and Joseph were embalmed following Egyptian custom)."

"In Talmudic times, burial took place in caves, hewn tombs, sarcophagi, and catacombs; and a secondary burial, i.e., a re-interment of the remains sometimes took place about one year after the original burial. Jewish custom insists on prompt burial as a matter of respect for the dead, a consideration of particular relevance in hot climates. The precedents set by the prompt burials of Sarah (Genesis 23) and of Rachel (Genesis 35:19) are reinforced by the Torah's express command that even the body of a man who had been hanged shall not remain upon the tree all night, but "you must bury him the same day" (Deuteronomy 21:23). Some delays in burial are, however, justified: "Honor of the dead" demands that the proper preparation for a coffin and shrouds be made, and that the relatives and friends pay their last respects. Certain delays are unavoidable. Funerals may not take place on the Sabbath or on the Day of Atonement; and although the rabbis at one time permitted funerals on the first day of a festival, provided that certain functions were performed by gentiles, and regarded the second day of festivals "as a weekday as far as the dead are concerned," some modern communities prefer

postponement. Where there are two interments at the same time, respect demands that the burial of a scholar precedes that of an *am ha-arez* ("average citizen"), and that of a woman always precedes that of a man."

"The duty of burial is an obligation of the deceased's heir but if they cannot or do not perform it, the whole community is responsible. In Talmudic times, the communal fraternal societies for the burial of the dead evolved out of an appreciation of this duty. In many communities, even till modern times, acceptance into the *bevra kaddisha* (as the society is known) is considered to be an honor and only mature, respected men and women are initiated."

"One of the functions of the *bevra kaddisha* is the *Toborah* rite. This is washing the corpse and preparing it for burial. In ancient times various cosmetics were used but these have been largely discontinued. The corpse is dressed in simple white shrouds and, as a rule, wrapped in the *tallit* he wore during his lifetime. The *tallit* is, however, invalidated by having one of the *zizit* removed."

"Coffins were unknown in biblical times. The corpse was laid, face upwards, on a bier and brought to his grave. The custom of burying important people in coffins developed only later. Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi, however, ordered that holes be drilled in his coffin so that the earth touch his body. This custom is always followed where coffins are used and in countries outside Erez Israel it is also customary to put earth from Erez Israel in the coffin."

"In ancient times a form of coffin was the ossuary which was a small chest in which the bones of the deceased were placed after the flesh had decayed. In various places in Israel, such as Bet She'arim, stone coffins, known as sarcophagi (singular sarcophagus) have also been found. Many were elaborately carved, some with non-Jewish motifs. In the Middle Ages there was no general rule as to whether burial should be in a coffin. In Spain the coffin was not used, while in France it was, and was commonly made from the table that had witnessed the hospitality of the deceased. Coffins were also used in Eastern Europe and often rabbis' coffins were made from the desks at which they had studied. In the 16th century the idea grew that it was meritorious to be buried in direct contact with the earth --- "For dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19) --- and interment without a coffin became the rule for strictly Orthodox Jews. In countries where the secular authorities insisted on the use of a coffin, their bottoms were either made of loose boards or holes were drilled into them."

"In the Western world even Orthodox Jews nowadays use coffins in compliance with the law of the land but they are usually made plain and of cheap wood. In Israel, burial is without a coffin except for soldiers who are buried in plain wooden boxes."

"Although nowadays burial always takes place in a cemetery, this was not always so. In biblical times the practice was to bury the dead in family sepulchers which might have been in natural caves or man-made buildings. In Talmud times, the custom developed of setting aside special places to bury the dead. This was primarily to keep the graves out of town since they can be a source of ritual impurity, particularly for the *kohanim* (priests). The cemetery, therefore, has no intrinsic holiness and is not "hallowed ground." However, great care has always been taken to keep the cemetery in the best possible order out of respect for the dead and sensitivity to the mourners. No activity showing disrespect for the dead, such as animals grazing there, was allowed. Further, anything that shamed the dead, such as eating and drinking or wearing *tallit* or tefillin or reading from the Torah, is also forbidden because the dead cannot do these things."

“It is customary to visit the cemetery on the anniversary of a loved one's death, as well as during the month of Elul, preceding the High Holy Days. Cemeteries are usually owned by the community and some people reserve space next to their relatives. *Kobanim* are always buried in the first rows since their relatives, also *kobanim*, may not enter the cemetery and so can see their loved ones' graves from outside. Apostates and suicides were at one time buried in a separate section of the cemetery but this law is usually not followed.”

“The custom of decorating graves with flowers is strongly opposed by some Orthodox rabbis on the ground that it is a "gentile custom." Neither Conservative nor Reform Judaism, however, objects and it is also common practice in Israel, particularly in military cemeteries.”

“The first tombstone mentioned in the Bible is the monument the patriarch Jacob set up over the grave of Rachel. From other parts of the Bible and in Talmudic times, it seems that such monuments were set up for important people. Later the custom developed of erecting some sort of marker on the grave, most probably to be able to locate it easily, and so that *kobanim* should avoid it. Still later people started to inscribe epitaphs on the gravestones, recording the name of the person buried there, his dates and some biblical verse and statement in his praise. Some of the epitaphs described the function and position of the deceased and some, from early periods, have been found in Greek.”

“Escorting the dead to his last resting place is considered a great *mitzvah* "the fruit of which a man enjoys in this world while the stock remains for him in the world to come." It justifies even an interruption in the study of the Torah and is called "the true kindness" since one can expect no reciprocation of any sort. The minimum duty is to rise as the funeral cortege passes, and accompany it for four paces." "One who sees a funeral procession and does not escort it," states the Talmud, mocks the dead and blasphemes his Maker." Only if the hearse passes a bridal cortege is the bride given preference; to honor the living is considered greater than to honor the dead.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

“Wo unto You, . . . Hypocrites”

Lesson

20

Matthew 21—23; John 12:1-8

Summary: *Jesus rides in triumph into Jerusalem—He cleanses the temple, curses the fig tree, and discusses authority—He gives the parables of the two sons and the wicked husbandmen. Jesus gives the parable of the marriage of the king's son—Pay tribute to Caesar and to God—Worldly marriages endure in this life only—First commandment: Love the Lord—What think ye of Christ? Jesus pronounces woes upon the scribes and Pharisees—The blood of the prophets shall be required at their hands—They shall not escape the damnation of hell. Mary anoints Jesus' feet—His triumphal entry into Jerusalem recounted.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

The considerable amount of supplemental information about burial in the previous lesson carries over to this lesson as well. Anointing is done as one of the respectful ways of preparing a body for burial. Perhaps Jesus, knowing that Mary of Bethany would not have the chance to prepare His body in death as she and other women surely would have desired to do, appreciated her anointing Him while He was still alive.

“Anointing with oil is a very ancient custom. It was done for both practical and symbolic reasons. The practical use was cosmetic, to soften and protect the skin, as well as medicinal, to heal various afflictions. Anointing also figured in the coronation of the king, in the ordination of Aaron and his sons as priests, and in the purification of a person suffering from leprosy. These anointings were not for practical purposes but of symbolic value; they symbolized the new rank and power given to the anointed person and they evoked God's blessing on him.”

“The anointing oil was holy and made according to a special formula. It could be used for no purposes other than those outlined above. In the case of leprosy, the oil used was not holy. According to the Talmud, the anointing oil was compounded only once in history --- by Moses, who made enough to last for the whole period from the anointing of Aaron until the residue was hidden away by King Josiah. After that time no anointing took place.”

“In the case of kings, the whole head was anointed, i.e., covered with the oil, whereas the priests had only a mark made on the head with the oil. For King David and his descendants the oil was poured out of a horn; for King Saul it was from a phial since "his kingdom was not a lasting one." The kings of the Northern Kingdom of Israel were not anointed with oil but with balsam.”

“The word messiah literally means "the anointed one." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Mary's affectionate service in anointing Jesus could have been her testifying of His Messiahship.

“Anointing with oil was symbolic of change in a person's status. Thus, for example, Aaron was anointed with oil before becoming a priest. Kings were anointed before taking the throne and even brides were anointed with oil before marriage. A person cured of leprosy had to go through a whole purification ritual involving the sprinkling and anointing with oil.”

“Aaron and his sons were anointed in "holy anointing oil" prepared in the wilderness. Samuel anointed Saul and David with this special oil, and Zadok anointed Solomon. Oil saturated with perfume for ordinary use was called "apothecary's oil" or "precious oil." It was mainly used by women, but men did scent their beards with it. Candidates for

Ahasuerus' favors were treated "six months with oil of myrrh and six months with sweet odors and with other ointments of the women" (Esther 2:12)."

"Josiah was far-sighted. Despite his successes, he heeded Hulda's prophesy and hid the Ark of the Covenant so that it should not be captured when Jerusalem fell. He also hid the anointing oil, prepared in the wilderness by Moses."

"The primary feature of the coronation was the anointing of the king's head with oil by a priest or prophet, the sign of the divine covenant --- that is, he had been chosen as God's anointed." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The triumphal entry of Jesus was indeed an expression of hope, as many people wanted Him to relieve them of the cruelty of the Romans and the corruption of the Jewish priests. A quote follows from the book ISRAEL REVEALED.

TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

Five days before the Passover, Jesus sent His disciples to the neighboring village of Bethphage to acquire a donkey. They returned with two animals, a donkey and its colt. Jesus chose to ride the colt. The sight of a large man riding a small donkey is startling enough. However, the gesture must have called up historical images of honored kings riding into Jerusalem on lowly donkeys that had never before been ridden. To some, this may have implied that Jesus was their King. The people, hearing that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, then took branches of palm trees, a well-known symbol of Jewish independence, and cried as,

"... they heard that Jesus was coming ... Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." (*JOHN 12:12-13*)

Palm Sunday and the Passover: His triumphal entry on a donkey's colt down the Mount of Olives and into the Gate Beautiful raised the spirits of the Jews. They wanted a Messiah, and they praised this extraordinary man of miracles. Simultaneously, priests were angered and decided to set in motion a plan to have Jesus executed. The triumphal entry has been called Palm Sunday; and again, it was five days before the Passover that year.

Riding a donkey's colt was one of the traditions ancient kings of Israel did to symbolize a greater king still to come. Other kings throughout the world ride in lavish vehicles weighted with gold and jewels.

"And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt." (*John 12:14-15*)

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." (*Zechariah 9:9*)

Jewish tradition also indicates a connection between a Messiah and riding a donkey.

"According to the Talmud, the Messiah will be a descendant of the House of David and will be preceded by a secondary Messiah, from the House of Joseph. Folklore has it that he will arrive riding a donkey, although some sources have him arriving triumphantly riding the clouds. A widespread belief was that the Messiah will be born on the 9th of

Av, the anniversary of the destruction of the First and Second Temples.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

With the inference of a Joseph Messiah preceding a David Messiah, please consider the parable Jesus related in Matthew 21:33-39 and 42-44. Paraphrasing, Jesus is saying that the Kingdom will be taken from the “self appointed priests in Judah” and will be given to another nation that will bring forth fruits.

Turning the clock back to Jacob’s time, we see that the spiritual leadership of Israel was the birthright of Joseph, son of Jacob, yet his brothers schemed to replace him.

“And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words . . . And his brethren envied him . . .” (*Genesis 37:8-11*)

The kingdom has been restored with Joseph as the spiritual leader.

“The personal visitation of the Father and the Son, choosing Joseph to be the leader of the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times, marked the beginning of this work, and this was supplemented by the visitation of angels and other holy messengers, conferring upon Joseph the powers of the Priesthood, the authority to act in the name of God--to introduce the gospel of Jesus Christ by divine authority to mankind, and by divine direction to organize and establish the true Church of Christ in the latter days.” (*Heber J. Grant, Gospel Standards , Pg. 16*)

When President Heber J. Grant was the living prophet, Latter-day Saint membership amounted to about 500,000 souls. At present count, there are more than 11,000,000 Latter-day Saints. The ratio was 1 member to 5,000,000 on the earth. It is now 1 member to about 600 on the earth. The fruits are being brought forth!

In the “Parable of the Fig Tree” briefly referred to in Matthew 24:32, Mark 13:28, Luke 13:6, 21:29 and the Doctrine & Covenants 35:16, consideration should be given to the growth of fig trees. First, the fruit appears, then the leaves grow as the tree becomes full, followed by a second fruit. The modern portion of the parable includes, first, the restoration, then the growth of the Church, followed by the second coming of the Messiah.

A pattern emerges as we see ancient Joseph rejected, Israel scattered, and the Messiah rejected. That rejection does not interfere with the eternal atonement He gave all mankind in the Meridian of Times. Then, a modern Joseph receives the restoration; the Lord’s people gather and grow in preparation for the Messiah’s return. The scattering and subsequent gathering of Judah’s scattered remnants parallels the scattering and gathering of Joseph.

“Ever since the time of the first Babylonian exile over 2,000 years ago, Jews of the world have yearned for the return to Zion. This theme is reflected in the daily prayers, literature, and song of the Jewish people.”

“... the dream of re-establishing a Jewish homeland which would draw all of world Jewry to its midst served as a unifying force for the Jews of the Diaspora.”

“This dream began to take on practical form during the last quarter of the 19th century, as Jews set about rebuilding Israel to serve as a refuge for victims of the pogroms and for other Jews the world over.”

“Zionism in its modern sense began in 1897, when Theodor Herzl founded the World Zionist Organization. Herzl's objective was to "secure for the Jewish people a publicly

recognized, legally secured home in Palestine." His ambitious efforts captured the imagination of his fellow Jews and soon the initial settlers were joined by new groups of Zionists as the Second Aliyah (1904) and continuous waves of immigrants after that made their way to Israel. These groups established agricultural settlements all over the country, revived the Hebrew language, and created their own Watchman Society to guard their members from Arab attack. In 1909, on land purchased by the Jewish National Fund, the first kibbutz, Deganyah, was established. By 1914, the *yishuv*, as the Jewish community was called, numbered some 85,000."

"On May 14, 1948 (the fifth of Iyar according to the Jewish calendar) at a special meeting of an elected council, David Ben-Gurion read out the Declaration of Independence, establishing the State of Israel."

"As emigration restrictions in the former Soviet Union were lifted and then with its dissolution, nearly 500,000 immigrants had arrived from the Soviet Union in Israel by the mid 1990s. In the end of 1993, 76,800 new immigrants arrived in Israel, the vast majority, 66,000 were from the former Soviet Union. In the same year, virtually all of the Beta Israel from Ethiopia, approximately 55,000 had also emigrated to Israel."

"As of (1999), the total population in Israel (excluding the administered areas acquired as a result of the Six-Day War) (is nearing 6,000,000) consisting of citizens from almost every religion, geographical area and ethnicity in the world. In this decade, Israel absorbed approximately (1,000,000) immigrants, primarily from the former Soviet Union and its successor states - increasing the population by (about 20%). Israel's population, unlike that of the Diaspora, has a high rate of natural increase (average 2.9 children, and among orthodox Jews it is much higher). It is expected that in the coming decade Israel will overtake the United States as the world's largest Jewish community. Israel is also fast becoming one of the most densely populated countries in the world, particularly in its central coastal area." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

In a juxtaposition of time, other patterns remain consistent. Jesus' teaching "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's," is a repeat of former and later statements of belief. Here is a thought from last year's lesson #29 supplement.

Elisha's continued purpose was to be a servant of God; he even refused payment from Syria's highest ranking officer in the Land of Israel. The anomaly is that the children of Israel strongly objected to the Syrian occupying forces. The prophet was probably teaching the same principle that Jesus taught and that has been revealed again in our day.

"Then saith he unto them, Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. (*Matthew 22:21*)

"We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law." (*Articles of Faith 12*)

The faithful young woman, probably serving in Naaman's household, was a believer and prompted the occupying Syrian officer to come to the prophet to be blessed. Elisha sent a message to do something simple--bathe in the Jordan River. When he finally swallowed his pride he was blessed! Imagine--the enemy was blessed!

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." (*Matthew 5:44*)

We don't know for sure if that resulted in his conversion and it doesn't matter. The blessing was unconditional. The lesson for the unbelieving Israelites was repeated by the Savior as he said:

“And many lepers were in Israel in the time of (Elisha) the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.” (*Luke 4:27*)

Within these thoughts is the cure for hypocrisy. We must love everyone, even those who stray, who believe, worship, dress or speak differently than we do. The Lord loves us ALL, and we are to do the same.

“What Is the Sign of Thy Coming?”

Joseph Smith Mathew (Matthew 24)

Summary: *Jesus foretells the doom of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple—Great calamities shall precede His Second Coming—He gives the parable of the fig tree.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

The poignant information that adds to the subject of the signs of the times is the pattern of the destruction and building of Jerusalem, as well as the scattering and gathering of Israel.

Old Testament history records the prophesy and the subsequent fall of the Lord’s City with the resulting exile of the Jews. The destruction of the wicked Nebuchadnezzar is noteworthy. The scattering is always followed by a gathering. The imagery of “first figs” and “second figs” as stated in a previous lesson supplement, helps us understand the modern interpretation of the signs.

“The LORD showed me . . . two baskets of figs . . . set before the temple of the LORD, after that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, with the carpenters and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon.” “. . . the good figs . . . and the evil . . . Thus saith the LORD . . . Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good.” “For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land . . . I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.” “And as the evil figs . . . So will I give Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes, and the residue of Jerusalem, that remain in this land . . . I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them.”
(*Jeremiah 24:1-10*)

There may be a parallel in the parable of the fig tree when the first fruit allows the wheat and tares to grow together. But in the second fruit, when the Lord comes, judgement will be passed and the tares removed. Sins and hurt will be exposed and a way provided so that they can be removed and the people become redeemed.

“Nebuchadnezzar was the king of Babylon who, in 586 B.C.E., destroyed the first Temple in Jerusalem and exiled the majority of the Jewish population of Judea. He reigned from 605 to 562 B.C.E., a period in which Babylon and Egypt were the two great powers of the civilized world, and during most of that time he was engaged in almost continuous battle with Egypt over the territories of Syria, Palestine and the surrounding region. In 597 he captured Jerusalem for the first time, deposed the Judean king, Jehoiachin, and appointed in his place a king of his own choice, Zedekiah. Several years later, while he was engaged in battle in the far east, Zedekiah together with the king of Syria revolted against his rule, but he returned in 588 and laid siege to Jerusalem. In 586, he captured the city, and on Tish'ah be-Av he had the Temple destroyed, carried off a large part of the population into captivity and put Zedekiah and other Judean notables to death. Daniel and the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel were eyewitnesses to all these events and the biblical books bearing their names testify to the political and spiritual crises which confronted Judea during this period. According to the Book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar suffered greatly for destroying the Temple. He was beset by dreams

which he could not understand. One of them, a vision of a magnificent tree cut down in its prime was interpreted by Daniel for the king as a personal warning of many years of madness that were about to come upon him, during which time he would eat grass and live like an animal. (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

In New Testament history, after the great atonement by the Lord Jesus, similar destruction and scattering were experienced, beginning with Jerusalem.

“Upon Herod's death, Jerusalem was ruled by a series of Roman procurators. (One of these, Pontius Pilate (26--36 C.E.) was responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth in Jerusalem.) But the misrule of these administrators provoked the outbreak of yet another Jewish revolt, which soon became a full-scale war. In 70 C.E. Titus and his Roman legions laid siege to the city and then stormed its weakened defenders. The city was burned, its inhabitants massacred and the Temple destroyed. Of the once-glorious city, only the three towers of Herod's palace and the western wall of the Temple Mount remained intact.”

“According to Jewish sources, the Romans razed Jerusalem to the ground and plowed the site over to prevent further settlement. Even so, some Jews managed to return. When the emperor Hadrian tried to establish a Roman colony there, the second Jewish-Roman war broke out with Bar Kokhba leading the Jewish rebels. They were defeated by Hadrian who subsequently decreed that no circumcised person should be allowed into Jerusalem under pain of death.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The Savior prophesied of the destruction of the temple, a sign of another scattering of Israel.

“And Jesus said unto them . . . there shall not be left here, upon this temple, one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.”

“Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted . . . let them who are in Judea flee . . . and not return to take anything out of his house.” (*Joseph Smith - Matthew 1*)

Yet in the subsequent gathering, an accountability of their sins becomes a blessing when the Redeemer comes and true repentance occurs.

“And again, this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all the nations, and then shall the end come, or the destruction of the wicked;”

“And, as I said before, after the tribulation of those days, and the powers of heaven shall be shaken, then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn; and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory;”

“And whoso treasureth up my word, shall not be deceived, for the Son of Man shall come, and he shall send his angels before him with the great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together the remainder of his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” (*Joseph Smith - Matthew 1*)

The latter-day restoration of the gospel to “Joseph” and the return of the keys of the gathering of Israel which includes both “Joseph and Judah,” represent the first fruit that precedes the growth of leaves in the parable of the fig tree. A remarkable gathering has started. This gathering is reflected in the growth of the Latter-day Saint population as well as the State of Israel, which in the parable of the fig tree is the growth of leaves. This gathering is in preparation for the coming of the Redeemer, which in the fig tree parable is the second fruit.

“Between 1948 and 1951 almost 700,000 Jews migrated to Israel . . . From 1955 to 1957 two-thirds of the almost 250,000 migrant Jews went to Israel (from Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Poland and Hungary). Half of a further 450,000 migrant Jews went to Israel

between 1961 and 1964. (Virtually all Jews left Algeria for France during 1961--62). In the 1980s in two campaigns, Operation Moses and Operation Solomon, virtually the entire Jewish community of Ethiopia was airlifted to Israel. From the area of the former Soviet Union, some 400,000 Jews went to Israel in 1989/91, and many others went elsewhere in the West. In 1992/93 most of the remnant of the Jews in Yemen left the country, many eventually reaching Israel.”

“An undoubted change has occurred in the motive for migration since the 1880s. From then on the main motive was distress. Migrations will continue as new world trouble spots develop.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Within the last ten years, Israel has experienced a growth of a million immigrants, mostly from Russian-speaking countries. That growth would be equivalent to the U.S.A. receiving more than forty million new citizens.

The world-wide Latter-day Saint growth to a sum of more than eleven million members has brought a ratio of “Joseph” and the world population to one Latter-day Saint for every six hundred people.

The leaves are abundant; it is almost time for His arrival, He is coming!

“Inherit the Kingdom Prepared for You”

Lesson
22

Matthew 25

Summary: *Jesus gives the parables of the ten virgins, the talents, and the sheep and the goats.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

Oil lamps and candles have been symbols of God's light. The imagery of lamps was used in the temple and their purpose was to demonstrate that God's habitation is a place of light.

“For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.”
(*Psalm s 18:28*)

“This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” (*1 John 1:5*)

“The warm, shimmering glow of candles has illuminated Jewish homes and synagogues for many centuries. Although horses have given way to automobiles and ancient handicrafts are being replaced by modern machines, the old-fashioned candle will continue to symbolize for Jews the spirit of God, the light of the Torah, the conclusion of the Sabbath and the memory of those who have passed away.”

“Before candles became commonplace, oil lamps were used for ritual purposes, including the *ner tamid* ("eternal light") suspended above the Ark in the synagogue, the Hanukkah and Sabbath lights, and the flickering reminder of a loved one during the seven-day mourning period and on the anniversary of his death. In those days, the oil lamp was preferred to candles, which were often made from the fat of non-kosher animals. The invention of paraffin, a waxy substance extracted from petroleum, led to the widespread use of candles by the Jewish people, and it has continued up to our own times.”

“Women usher in the Sabbath each week by lighting candles and blessing God "who sanctified us by His commandments and commanded us to kindle the Sabbath light." On Saturday night, traditional Jewish families light a *havdalah* candle made of several wicks braided together, raise a cup of wine and sniff fragrant spices, thus bidding farewell to the Sabbath peace and beginning a new week. Sephardic Jews often use a single, unbraided candle for this ceremony. On the evening before Passover, the head of the household searches for the forbidden leaven (*bedikat hametz*) with the aid of a simple candle, and in various parts of the world, candles are carried on weekdays before the scroll of the Torah and held while it is being read in the synagogue. At weddings, too, the parents of the bride and groom sometimes hold candles when they escort the young couple to the *huppah*.”

“Oil was the basic fuel in biblical times, and was used not only for ordinary lamps but also for the *Menorah* in the Temple which burned continuously. The destruction of its oil supply by the Syrians in the second century B.C.E. and the subsequent discovery of one portion of oil which lasted for eight days is the basis of the Hanukkah celebration. The oil used in the Temple had to be ritually pure, which meant it had to be prepared and stored in a special way.”

“Numerous oil lamps in all shapes and sizes have been recovered from archaeological excavations in the Middle East, attesting to their frequent usage in ancient times. Many of these lamps were used as Sabbath lights and Hanukkah *menorot* and are therefore decorated with religious symbols and Hebrew writing.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The common household oil lamp of two thousand years ago had enough capacity for an evening's light. It was small enough to be cradled in the palm of the hand and was about an inch or slightly more in height. It had a hole in the middle on the top for oil. The oil lamp also had an elongated spout-like extension where the cotton string wick protruded. Extending the wick provided a brighter flame while consuming the oil faster. Trimming the lamp meant extending the wick just enough to keep a flickering flame and using a minimal amount of oil. When more light was needed, a pin could be used to pull the wick out a little further, thereby increasing the light.

In the parable of the ten virgins, they were invited to light the way of the bridegroom (still being done in the Middle East). It may include a lesson of irresponsibility or self-service. The foolish virgins may have used up too much light (oil) for themselves early in the evening and were left unprepared for the Master when He arrived later. Were they dedicated to serve Him or themselves?

Service to others reflects the great service the Lord performs for us. Even slavery can be turned into service by remembering the Lord's repeated instruction.

“Then saith he unto them, Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.” (*Matthew 22:21*)

“We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.” (*Articles of Faith 11*)

Service is a hallmark of God's covenant people. Latter-day Saints with their auxiliary organizations of Priesthood and Relief Society and the Jewish organizations of B'nai B'rith, WIZO (World Zionist Organization) and Hadassah are activities for men, youth and women dedicated to serve others.

“B'nai B'rith is the world's oldest and largest Jewish service organization, with lodges and chapters in 42 countries. In 1980 B'nai B'rith's total membership numbered approximately 500,000 Jewish men, women, and youth. There are 1,700 men's lodges, 25% of them outside North America, with a male membership of 210,000, and a U.S. budget of over \$13,000,000. Its program encompasses the totality of Jewish concerns and includes many programs in the interest of the wider community. B'nai B'rith was founded on October 13, 1843, by 12 men who met in a cafe on the Lower East Side of New York to establish a new fraternal order for U.S. Jews who then numbered 15,000 souls. In 1865 the order made a substantial grant to aid cholera epidemic sufferers in Erez Israel, and six years later to provide food, clothing, and medical supplies for victims of the Chicago fire. The organization established orphanages, homes for the aged, and hospitals. After 1881, when the mass immigration from Eastern Europe poured into the country, B'nai B'rith sponsored Americanization classes, trade schools, and relief programs.”

“When anti-Semitism in the United States increased, B'nai B'rith founded its Anti-Defamation League (ADL) in 1913 to strengthen interreligious understanding and cooperation, to improve relations between the races, and above all to protect the status and rights of Jews.”

“The concern of B'nai B'rith for the preservation of Jewish tradition and values was given new impetus with the establishment in 1923 of the first B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation to serve the religious, cultural, and social needs of the Jewish students at the University of Illinois. The Hillel movement spread to almost 400 university campuses on six continents. Hillel also sponsors chairs of Judaic studies and faculty programs. B'nai B'rith also sponsors a youth organization and projects in adult education. It supports the

State of Israel through the advocacy activities of the International Affairs Department, the socially conscious program of B'nai B'rith Israel (District 14), and the activities of B'nai B'rith World Center in Jerusalem (est. 1980). Since 1991 B'nai B'rith has been a member of the WZO.”

“Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, was also active in pioneer medical efforts in Erez Israel, and in 1939, Hadassah Hospital was opened in Jerusalem in conjunction with the Hebrew University. Hadassah has since developed into one of the world's leading research and medical facilities, and together with Israel's several other hospitals, provides the country with outstanding medical care.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

In Jewish thought, prayer is referred to as “service of the heart.” Religious convocations and worship meetings are often called “services.” In Bible times, the firstborn of each family was dedicated to the service of God. The name of the prophet Samuel means dedicated to God.

“Hannah (was) wife of Elkanah and mother of the prophet Samuel. The Bible describes her as a devout woman who made an annual pilgrimage to the Temple in Shiloh to offer sacrifices. Although she was Elkanah's favorite wife, she was childless for many years, and her co-wife Peninnah taunted her about this. Once, as she stood in the Temple, pouring out her anguish at her barrenness, and vowing to dedicate any son born to her to the Temple and to the service of God, the high priest Eli heard her and added his blessing to her pleas. Finally Hannah gave birth to a son, Samuel. After weaning him, she brought him to the Temple, offered a sacrifice and a song of thanksgiving, and left him with Eli to serve in the Temple for life. Each year she returned to bring him a small cloak. Eli blessed her, and she bore three more sons and two daughters. According to the Talmud, Hannah was one of the seven prophetesses mentioned in the Bible.”

“Firstborn, is the term referring to a male offspring who is the first issue of his mother's womb. According to the Torah, the firstborn, known in Hebrew as *bekhor*, has special sanctity. Therefore, he is subject to specific Torah laws which apply to all firstborn human beings and animals of the following types: cattle, sheep, goats and donkeys. The purpose of these laws is to teach us that everything in the world belongs to God and man owns only what God has given to him. When a man has worked hard to raise a family or rear a herd of animals, and finally sees the first fruits of his labor, the Torah tells him that these first fruits belong to God. Therefore, if man wishes to own and enjoy these gifts, he must redeem them from their rightful owner.”

“In addition to the above definition of the *bekhor*, there exists in *halakhab* another definition of firstborn based on the father's side. Here, the firstborn is the male offspring who is the first child born to the father. Legally this child has certain privileges; he is his father's principal heir, and inherits a double portion of his father's property.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Charity is sometimes viewed as a response to begging. As a juxtaposition, in Israel, those requesting money justify themselves as providing the giver with a way to keep one of the commandments.

“For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.” (*Deuteronomy 15:11*)

“... beggars consist of two groups, genuine beggars, and collectors for the old-fashioned yeshivot who are to some extent encouraged by the authorities of the yeshivah, not only

as a source of income but in addition as affording the worshipers an opportunity of combining prayer with charity.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

In continuing a juxtaposition of thoughts, the goat, so often connected with the imagery of wrongs and wrong doing, is also the very sacrificial animal that was “blessed” with the wrong doings of the people. On the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), it escaped sacrifice by being led out of the temple through a gate with three names: the Gate of Mercy, the Gate of Forgiveness, and the Gate Beautiful. It was tied with a red ribbon so that no one would kill it. The goat died on its own, outside the temple, carrying the sins of the people. It was the scape goat. In response to our giving up our sins, the Lord serves us. In His mercy He forgives. It is beautiful. It lightens our lives.

“Love One Another, As I Have Loved You”

Lesson
23

Luke 22:1-38; John 13-15

Summary: *Christ institutes (a new meaning for) the sacrament. Jesus washes the feet of the Twelve—He identifies Judas as His betrayer—He commands them to love one another. Jesus speaks of many mansions; says He is the way, the truth, and the life; that to see Him is to see the Father—He promises the first and second Comforters. Jesus is the vine; His disciples are the branches—He discourses on perfect law of love—His servants have been chosen and ordained by Him—World hates and fights true religion—Promise of the Comforter, the Spirit of truth. He suffers in Gethsemane, and is betrayed and arrested—Peter denies knowing Him—Christ is smitten and mocked.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

The central issue in this lesson was foreshadowed by the Children of Israel through the Passover meal for almost three and a half thousand years. In fact, the substantive elements of that meal, “fruit of the vine” (wine) and bread preceded the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. It is important to realize that what Latter-day Saints call the sacrament was, in fact, an ancient ordinance. The meanings of ordinances may be updated from time to time, yet the basis is still the same.

“And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.” (*Genesis 14:18*)

“And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought forth bread and wine; and he broke bread and blest it; and he blest the wine, he being the priest of the most high God . . .” (*JST Genesis 14:17*)

“It was the design of the councils of heaven before the world was, that the principles and laws of the priesthood should be predicated upon the gathering of the people in every age of the world . . . Ordinances instituted in the heavens before the foundation of the world, in the priesthood, for the salvation of men, are not to be altered or changed. All must be saved on the same principles.” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Section Six 1843-44, Pg.308*)

“Actually, of course, the law of carnal commandments, the law of performances and ordinances revealed through Moses, was an old covenant as compared with the gospel restored by Jesus and his apostles. But this new testament or covenant, this restored gospel, was the same testament that had been in force between God and his people from Adam to Moses in both the old and the new worlds.” (*Mormon Doctrine, Bruce R. McConkie, Pg.543*)

Religious Jews still practice many forms of ancient rites and rituals whose meanings may have become distorted or lost over many years without priesthood guidance. Now that the priesthood has been restored, we can learn about the old practices in order to better understand the “Old Covenant,” which was true and how the “New Covenant” restored the ancient practices with true doctrine.

One of the most consistent rituals includes, at the Sabbath’s beginning, a weekly pouring of “kosher wine” by the eldest male in the family. He will say a blessing, take a sip of the wine and then each family member partakes thereafter. Another part of the Sabbath’s beginning is to bless a piece of broken bread. Again, the eldest male partakes first and the rest of the family partakes thereafter.

A rabbi once explained that if “kosher” wine was unavailable that “living water” should be used instead. In Judaic commentary, the term “bread and water” have been explained as “food and wine.” This may be the possible context of using water instead of “unkosher” wine, that is, wine from an unknown source.

“... And He will bless thy bread and thy water, as the ‘bread’ spoken of is a food that may be bought with the money of the Second Tithe so is the ‘water’ a liquid that may be bought with the money of the Second Tithe. Now such a liquid is, of course, wine, and yet it is called ‘water’.” (Talmud, Eirubin 65a)

Although “wine and bread” are partaken weekly and three times during the Passover meal (Seder), there is one time in Jewish ritual when bread precedes the wine. That is at one particular time in the Passover meal when the children find a “lost piece of bread,” the afikommen. At the end of the meal, the “found” piece of bread is blessed and broken with the master of the house eating the first piece, and others follow. Then, the cup of wine is filled completely with the instruction to “drink all of it.” There is no Jewish explanation as to the meaning of the reversed order.

From the Old Testament supplements of the previous year, **Lesson 35 “God Reveals His Secrets to His Prophets”**, the following quote may be helpful in understanding the principle that Jesus used an old ordinance of “Wine and Bread,” (old wine), explained the meaning of “Bread and Wine,” and instituted a new meaning for a weekly ritual (new wine). This explanation follows.

There is a verse in the Book of Joel that bridges His day when the Lord was known to the end of days when He would not be known. The Lord has many names, one of them being “Wine” and “New Wine.”

“Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine, for it is cut off from your mouth.” (*Joel 1:5*)

In the Meridian of Times, the Apostle Luke seems to amplify this metaphor of the Lord being “New Wine.”

“No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.” (*Luke 5:39*)

It is generally considered that aging makes wine better; hence, old wine is better than the new. At a festivity, the oldest, best wine is used first and then the more recent wine is used. When wine ran out at a marriage feast in Cana, Jesus was asked by his mother for assistance. Perhaps He referred to one of His names (New Wine) by indicating that His time (fulfillment of New Wine) had not yet come.

“And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.” (*John 2:3-4*)

He graciously, turned water into wine (very new), and it was better than the old. It may be that the prophetic metaphor of New Wine was fulfilled when Jesus, at the Last Supper, instituted a new meaning for the old ordinance of wine and bread. Jews still have a memory of that ritual as they pour, bless, and sip wine followed by breaking, blessing, and eating a piece of bread at the beginning of every Sabbath (Kiddush). The prayers accompanying that custom anticipate a future redemption that would be greater than being redeemed from Egypt at the first Passover. The only time Jews will break, bless, and eat a piece of bread first, followed by pouring, blessing, and sipping wine last is when children at the traditional Passover meal (Seder) find the “hidden piece of bread” (afikommen).

It was that piece of bread that Jesus was referring to as he blessed bread and wine giving a new meaning to an old ordinance . . . hence, the New Wine.

“And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.” (1 Corinthians 11:24-25)

As minimal as some of the ancient prophet’s writings were, they still show the deep recognition and symbolism of the Savior’s mission.

A more expanded explanation of the above is found in the book, ISRAEL REVEALED. An excerpt from section six that follows the last hours of Jesus’ mortal life is included. It repeats some of the above information in the context of a Passover meal. Look for the THREE items that were different at Jesus’ Passover meal than at any other Passover meal.

THE PASSOVER

Passover Preparations: Since the Passover was coming soon, preparations for cleaning, removal of all leaven, yeast, or items that might sprout or rise were under way. A tradition still followed in modern Israel is that the leaven must be “sold.” The chief rabbi arranges to sell the entire country’s supply of grain, prepackaged breads, and leavened products to a non-Jew before the Passover begins. In that way whatever leaven is still around does not really belong to the Jews. The deal usually includes that this Gentile will collect all the leaven (or what might rise) when his payment is complete. However, after only a token down payment the non-Jew, a nonbeliever, never really gets around to making the final payment. So, by default ownership is “returned” to the Jews; meanwhile, that the Passover is completed anyway. Probably with the Passover preparation in mind, the disciples asked,

“Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Passover”? (Matthew 26:17)

The Upper Room: He instructed them to find a man carrying a water pitcher; this is something women usually would do. They found the man who led them to an upper room. Most people just assume that the upper room was upstairs. Jerusalem had two city parts known as the upper city and the lower city. It is possible that the term *upper room* really refers to a room in the upper part of the city where many prominent priests lived. The disciples said,

“The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at thy house with my disciples.” (Matthew 26:18)

From what follows in the scriptural narrative, the preparations may have been ready except for the sacrificial lamb. There are no sacrifices made or eaten during the preparation time until the ninth hour of the day (three hours before Passover begins).

Passover Traditions: To better understand Jesus’ Last Supper, consideration of other highlights of the Passover will be helpful. In the past, the Seder table was set up in a U-shape with the participants sitting on the outside. So, looking inward, the master of the house, (usually the oldest male), would sit second from the right end. This kept available an empty spot to his right. Nowadays he will usually select a boy (probably the youngest), to sit at his right hand and assist him in the order (Seder) of the meal and ritual customs. The boy sings a song, “What makes this night different from any other night?”

Elijah at the Passover: Continuing with the seating arrangement, the last seat on the other end remains empty. It is available for Elijah. His place is opposite of the oldest and the youngest. Incidentally, the imagery and symbolism are outstanding. The Passover turns the hearts of the

youngest to the traditions and deliverance of the past. Elijah's mission is to announce the coming of the Deliverer.

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful 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 . . .” (*Malachi 4:5-6*)

At the Master's Right Hand: An event occurring before the Passover two thousand years ago was a discussion of who would sit at the right hand of Jesus, the Master.

“Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.
. . . Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left.

Jesus answered:

. . . to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.” (*Matthew 20:20-23*)

Jesus further taught,

“And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.” (*Matthew 20:27*)
Thus, the ancient Passover seating arrangement became quite significant; could the question have been a practical one for that season? After all, it is usually the youngest son that sits at the right hand of the master of the house. Which of the youngest would sit by the Master?

Foods for the Passover: Considering the Jewish calendar and the scriptural narrative, Jesus then led a Passover meal with his disciples when they found the upper room. It still was only the beginning of the preparation evening/day. The Passover really began on the following evening. Modern-day preparations include bitter herbs that are symbolic of bondage. There is a mixture of chopped fruit, nuts, cinnamon, and honey that represent deliverance. Parsley or watercress is used as a token of gratitude for the earth's abundant goodness. Salted water or vinegar is set out for cleansing use. There are also preparations of a lamb's shank bone, a reminder of past sacrifices. There is an egg, also reminiscent of a sacrifice and new beginning.

Symbolism of Foods: At Passover these and other certain foods are eaten, symbolizing the deliverance from Egypt. Wine is prepared, and it will be used four times. A prominent rabbi in Israel recently suggested that even the wine should be “unleavened” or unfermented. This could be considered as “new wine.” The ancient metaphor of new wine was also used to anticipate the Deliverer. Ancient prophets said,

“Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine.” (*Joel 1:5*)

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine.” (*Joel 3:18*)

“No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.” (*Luke 5:39*)

Wine and Bread Symbolism: Analyzing the symbolism, one can suggest that when wine is poured before the bread is broken, it is done in remembrance of the first Passover deliverance. However, what is more important, it is also to look forward to a greater deliverance in the future. In the Seder, there are three times when the wine is blessed and sipped. Following each wine sip,

a piece of unleavened bread is used. Each piece is blessed, broken, and eaten. There is a total of three pieces of bread, but they are used four times. Toward the beginning of the Seder, the middle of three pieces is first broken in two. Half has to be hidden away, usually in an upper part of the house. In any case, it must be hidden “above” something, preferable to hiding it “underneath” something. It will be found later by children and it will be used with a fourth cup of wine. However, in many traditions, this fourth cup of wine is used after the fourth piece of bread, the *afikommen*.

Door Left Open for Elijah: A complete meal is eaten with a door left open for Elijah who, by Jewish tradition, would announce the coming Messiah. After the meal, children search for the hidden piece of bread that is often wrapped in a red cloth. When found, the children receive a gift. This piece of bread is then blessed, broken, and eaten. Some traditions use this last piece of bread, the *afikommen*, to dip in the very sweet mixture of fruit and nuts, the *Charoseth*. As mentioned, it is after the *afikommen* is found that the fourth cup of wine is poured and blessed. The master of the house then says, “Drink all of it.” The prayer spoken then invokes a hope for a greater deliverance in the future.

Judas at the Last Supper: Let us return to the Last Supper of Jesus with His disciples. Sometime that evening, Judas excused himself and left. The other disciples may have thought he was going out to purchase the lamb for the Passover meal. Instead, he left to sell the Lamb of God. Looking at the event in another way, one can see that his departure was to make a sale; for thirty pieces of silver he was selling the “Bread of Life” to the corrupt priests. Metaphorically we can see it as an act of selling the “Leaven, the Bread of Life,” to unbelievers.

“And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free offerings: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord God.” (*Amos 4:5*)

“Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.” (*1 Corinthians 5:7*)

Jesus Preempts the Passover Meal: It seems that Jesus’ supper preceded the normal time for the Passover meal that year by a day. That is the first item that was different that night than any other Passover night. The following evening really began the seven-day Passover period, and by that time Jesus was already crucified and in the tomb. This high, holy week always began on the first full moon after the first day of spring. Every year that day becomes an extra Sabbath that week; it is called a High Day. That High Day may occur on any day of the week, including the regular Sabbath. However, what is most important is that the beginning and ending day of the Passover is always treated as a Sabbath day.

Bread and Wine Explained: The second item that makes the Last Supper different from any other night is the explanation of the bread taken before the wine. Jesus used this meal to teach his Apostles that He was the Deliverer. He probably showed that the Passover practice of partaking of wine followed by bread (three times) was very likely a symbolic anticipation of a future atonement. It was henceforth changed to bread followed by wine—symbolic of the deliverance He was to carry out within the next four days. The Savior then,

“... took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.” (*Luke 22:19*)

‘And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it . . .’ (*Matthew 26:27*)

He also said,

“For this is in remembrance of my blood of the new testament, which is shed for as many as shall believe on my name, for the remission of their sins.” (*Matthew 26:24 JST*)

Messianic Symbol of Bread: The messianic symbolism can be further visualized in the three pieces of unleavened bread that could represent God, His Son, and the Holy Ghost. The three pieces are usually layered top, center, and bottom. In due course of the meal, the first part of the center piece is blessed (initially) and then broken. The hidden part of the center piece is found later (often wrapped in a red cloth) at the end of the meal by the children (a later generation), and then they receive a reward. That piece is then broken and then blessed, followed by wine. Another chiasmus can be recognized as first it is “wine and bread” then, after the “hidden” piece is found, it is “bread and wine.” The Atonement is the center focus. A tradition to place the hidden piece above something may also connote the second coming of the Messiah. The first time he came in lowly circumstances, a manger. The second time he comes dressed in red and in great glory from above. It is the later generation that finds Him and “great shall be their reward.”

The Traditional Upper Room: A traditional room built only eight hundred years ago reminds us of an upper room, as the scriptures say. As mentioned already, the word *upper* may refer more to the upper part of the city rather than a room upstairs. The upper part of ancient Jerusalem was the area where the priests lived, and generally it was considered the upper-class section of the city. It was the section where many “temple Levites” lived. It was also close to the house of Annas the former High Priest and his son-in-law, Caiaphas.

Jesus as a Servant: The upper room Passover meal concluded with Jesus demonstrating His role as their servant.

“After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.” (*John 13:5*)

Peter objected, and Jesus responded,

“If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.
Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.”
(*John 13:8-9*)

Always teaching, the Savior continued,

“If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.” (*John 13:14*)

A New Commandment: There was another instruction given during this evening that was different from instruction given any other time. This is the third item that makes this night different than any other Passover night.

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you . . .” (*John 13:34*)

From Sinai where the children of Israel compromised themselves to the lesser law of performance, the old concept was different,

“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.” (*Matthew 7:12*)

The old ordinances anticipated Him who would redeem us; the new ordinances look back with the remembrance that He redeemed us! He instituted the old and the new meanings for eternal rituals.

John 16–17

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.*

**Supplemental
Holy Land
and Jewish
insights:**

The concept of the “Holy Ghost” is unclear for Jews, yet the Hebrew term “Ruach Elohim” means the Spirit of God. The Hebrew word for breath and wind is closely related to spirit. There are several Biblical verses using these words. One of my favorites is in the vision of dry bones.

“So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them. Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. . . . And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD.” (*Ezekiel 37:7-14*)

In the previous **Lesson 5: “Born Again,”** I indicated that Ezekiel spoke of breath and of wind bringing life into a dead skeleton. As the sticks (ETZ-emot) of the body are clothed again with flesh and come alive again, so shall the stick (ETZ) of Judah, the dead skeleton of a once true and living religion come together with the stick of Joseph. This symbolizes the true religion and with the “breath” of the Lord (His spirit), a resurrection and a new life begins.

“Flesh is the term used in the Bible to distinguish mortal man from God. The Hebrew word for flesh, *basar*, is contrasted with the Divine Spirit, *ru'ah*, with which man is temporarily endowed. Thus: "My spirit shall not abide in man forever, for that he is also flesh; therefore shall his days be a hundred and twenty years" (Genesis 6:3). The Talmud and Midrash refer to man as *basar va-dam* ("flesh and blood") to indicate his mortality as against the eternity of God.”

“Ruah ha-Kodesh (holy spirit) is often used as a synonym for prophecy. However, according to some rabbis, unlike prophecy, there are some types of *ruah ha-kodesh* which also can be attained by doing good deeds.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

In the previous **Lesson 4 “Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord,”** I included the following thoughts that should be considered again. The expression of the “Holy Spirit” has been used to describe various righteous teachers and sages.

“... Luria already had a reputation as a man of striking personality who possessed the holy spirit.”

“... Nahman was the great-grandson of the Ba'al Shem Tov, the founder of Hasidism, and his mother was said to “possess the holy spirit.”

“... Phinehas is known to have traveled to redeem captives, and on one journey a river in flood parted for him, so as not to delay his mission. He constructed the famous "ladder of saintliness" in which Caution (against evil) leads through Eagerness (for good), Cleanliness, Purity, Asceticism, Holiness, Humility, Fear of God, Attainment of the Holy Spirit (divine inspiration), ultimately to the Resurrection of the Dead.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

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. Both in the Greek and Latin 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 point to consider is that the Lord's gift of spirit reveals and teaches truth. In the upcoming **Lesson 28, "We Are Witnesses,"** there is a discussion of Pentecost when the comforter that Jesus promised His apostles was given as the gift of the spirit. This occurred on the Mount of Olives fifty days after the Passover when Jesus completed the great atonement. In the Biblical calendar, fifty days after Passover is Shavuot, a day to commemorate receiving the "Law of Moses at Mount Sinai," a Jewish Pentecost.

“In many modern synagogues, the ceremony of confirmation takes place on Shavuot. This is a group ceremony in which the boys and girls of the community who have reached the age of maturity (usually when they are 15 or 16 years old), take a sort of symbolic oath of allegiance to the Torah and Judaism. The custom began with the Reform Movement's efforts to deepen the significance of bar mitzvah and 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 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. (*John 14:26*)

“In this last great gift through one of the Godhead, even the Holy Ghost, is to be found the way to the certain knowledge, after one's study of the scriptures . . .” (*Harold B. Lee, Stand Ye In Holy Places, Pg.317*)

The companionship of the Holy Ghost is like a dear friend. A wise Orthodox Jew once told me, “It is easy to be friendly, but it is rare to be a friend.”

“Friendship is a relationship between people arising from mutual respect and affection. The ideal of friendship in the western world is derived from classical Greece, which exalted friendship as one of the great human achievements and prime goals of life. The significance of friendship is recognized in the Bible, but is never raised to such an important place. A friend is defined as "one who is like your very self" (Deuteronomy 13:7) and as one "who sticks closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24). Of the few depictions of close friendship in the Bible, perhaps the most famous is that of David and Jonathan. The Bible appears to be more concerned with social and family relations than with individual ones, and thus puts more emphasis on being a good neighbor than it does on friendship. The Bible also warns against false friendship, saying that people might be attracted to a person solely because of his wealth, and not out of motives of respect.”

“Hebron is an ancient biblical city in Erez Israel located in the Judean Hills, 19 miles south of Jerusalem. The name Hebron may derive from the Hebrew word "*haber*" 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!

“The majority of the people respected the Pharisees and observed most of their teachings, but only a relative few were actually members of the community, and carried the title *haber* (friend or associate). A non-member was known as an *am ha-arez*, a term which at first meant "one of the people" who does not observe all the rules of a *haber*, but later came to designate those who were not learned in the Torah. The sages tried, by living amongst the masses, by loving their fellow men as themselves, by teaching the Torah to all who were interested, and by performing deeds of loving kindness, to bridge the gap between themselves and the *am ha-arez*.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

In Jewish philosophy, the moral aspects of kindness, goodness, and friendship are greater than the “reward” aspect of an afterlife. The minimal discussion of life after death in Jewish culture contrasts with the doctrine of life after death that exists in the scriptures and various sage’s writings.

“Jewish theology, as opposed to Jewish philosophy, has no clear doctrine on the relationship between body and soul. Some Talmudic rabbis did not consider views on such a purely theoretical subject important; rather, they focused their interest on the practical question of the resurrection of the body and God's future judgment.”

“The Talmudic rabbis thought the body to be separable, in a sense, from the soul. God breathed the soul into the body of Adam (Genesis 2:7). During sleep the soul departs and receives spiritual strength from above. However, the Midrash states that body and soul are indeed closely related. The body cannot survive without the soul, nor can the soul survive without the body. The close relationship is also seen in the rabbinic understanding that the soul is a guest in the body during its stay on earth. Just as God fills the world, sees but is not seen, so the soul fills the body, sees but is not seen.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

“The soul is pure, (it is) the spiritual essence of man.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

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 were a religious sect in Erez Israel toward the end of the Second Temple period. The little we know of them is preserved in the writings of Philo and Josephus. They numbered about 4,000 and lived austere in isolated communities which, with few exceptions, excluded women. They were intent on personal piety, and on separation from the defilements of everyday living in what they considered the corrupt society around them. They studied the Torah in minute detail and regularly practiced ritual immersion. They supported themselves by manual labor, mostly farming, and lived together as a group, holding everything in community ownership. They opposed slavery and animal sacrifice, bringing only flour and oil to the Temple. Their religious outlook was close to that of the Pharisees, but they had some beliefs and rituals all their own. They believed in reward and punishment; 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. That is that at a certain point in time 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.”

“The argument about resurrection lasted well into the Middle Ages, and was one of the reasons for the sharp attacks against Maimonides. Many believed that he denied the doctrine and his views started a controversy that lasted for hundreds of years. 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.”

“The whole subject of (an) afterlife is not explicitly stated in the Bible and many scholars are of the opinion that belief in (an) afterlife was adopted by Jews during the Babylonian exile after the destruction of the First Temple when they came into contact with eastern religions such as Zoroastrianism. 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. In contrast to Christianity and Islam which center around a powerful, godlike personality, Moses is never made out to be more than a man and it is emphasized that it is God and not Moses Who gave the Torah to Israel. Divine honors are denied Moses, but his human supremacy is consistently affirmed.”

“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*)

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.

“Heresy is the belief in ideas which are contrary to those of religious authority. Since Judaism has no official creed of belief, there is no clear definition of heresy. 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. The rabbis understood that the study of philosophy and theology without a thorough grounding in traditional Jewish thought could well lead to error. 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.”

“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.”

“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 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.

“Not My Will, But Thine, Be Done”

Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46

Summary: *Jesus suffers in Gethsemane.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

The key words in this lesson are mercy, forgiveness, and atonement. There is also a significant illustration using the color red. Unfortunately, the rich Jewish tradition of mercy, forgiveness and atonement has lost the identity of the Atoner, yet in the last days, the symbolism of time, places, events, and color (red clothing) will identify the sinless One who said, “Not my will, but thine, be done.”

“Mercy and forgiveness, says the Talmud, are distinguishing characteristics of Abraham and his seed, and these characteristics motivated God to choose Israel as His people.”
(*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

One of the most important holidays in Judaism is Yom Kippur, The Day of Atonement. Fasting, special prayers, and the reading of the Book of Jonah establish a symbol that will eventually be used to recognize the Atoner. A further discussion of the subject of Jonah will follow in **Lesson # 27, “He Is Not Here, for He Is Risen.”**

The sign of the prophet Jonah was not and is still not recognized by many, neither were nor are the connections between the way temple sacrifices were carried out and the ultimate sacrifice made on Mount Moriah and the Mount of Olives.

For example, a special sacrifice of a goat, tied with a red ribbon, was performed in the temple in similitude of the Holy One taking our sins upon Himself. That is symbolically tied to the color red. One offering at Yom Kippur was a goat escaping the temple confines through the Gate Beautiful with the sins of the people and tied with a red ribbon. It died on its own outside the temple. The Gate Beautiful is also known by the names The Gate of Mercy and The Gate of Forgiveness.

“In the times of the Temple in Jerusalem, the ritual performed by the high priest was the central feature of the Day of Atonement. The high priest, representative of the people, carried out the special service known as *avodah*. He took two identical goats and cast lots to see which would be sacrificed and which would be sent to *Azazel*. After sacrificing one of them, he sprinkled its blood on the altar and then confessed the sins of the people while placing his hands on the head of the live goat.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

“How do we know that a crimson-coloured strap is tied to the head of the goat that is sent [to ‘Azaz’el]? because it is said, if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” (*Talmud, Shabbath 86a*)

Another symbolic sacrifice was that of the red calf as mentioned in the scriptures. It was to be brought outside the temple and sacrificed and its ashes kept for a separate washing for a purification of sins.

“This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke . . . bring her forth without the camp, and one shall lay her . . . and one shall burn the heifer . . . her skin, and her flesh, and her blood,

with her dung . . . And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin.” (*Numbers 19:1-9*)

“ . . . Red heifer - the animal whose ashes were used in the ritual purification ceremony . . . In biblical times, the heifer was first slaughtered outside the Israelite camp and then burned.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

“The Bible is very specific about the kind of cow to be used. It had to be in perfect physical condition -- "a red heifer, faultless, containing no blemish and which has never been yoked." The rabbis interpreted "faultless" to mean perfect in color also, ruling that even two non-red hairs in its hide were enough to disqualify it. Obviously such an animal was very rare and apparently the ceremony was performed only a very few times in all of ancient Jewish history.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

According to Dr. Asher Kaufman in Israel, an important connection with the red heifer is the Jewish tradition that it was offered high on the Mount of Olives, in line with the Gate Beautiful and in line with the north end of the temple’s altar.

The most significant offering in eternity started with the “red” offering of the Sinless One on the Mount of Olives in spring of that year, just preceding the Passover. Astonished at the suffering He was experiencing as He was taking all the sins upon Himself, He cried out, “Not my will, but thine, be done.” He bled from every pore in his body. His clothing must have been stained red.

“Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?

I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.” (*Isaiah 63:2-3*)

“Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit--and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink— Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.” (*Doctrine and Covenants 19:18-19*)

“ . . . I have trodden the wine-press alone, and have brought judgment upon all people; and none were with me; And I have trampled them in my fury, and I did tread upon them in mine anger, and their blood have I sprinkled upon my garments, and stained all my raiment . . .” (*Doctrine and Covenants 133:50-51*)

The lilies of the field that the Savior referred to are scarlet red. They bloom in the spring. They cover the Mount of Olives. They testify of Him.

Lilies of Red **Daniel Rona, 1996**

The season bursts forth in radiance,
painting the landscape in shades of green.
Flowers add their rythymn in cadence,
splashing color to brighten the scene.

Most precious are the lilies of red.
They spin not, they toil not, yet in their way,
they teach of the color of Him who bled,
on Gethsemane's most fateful day.

His glory is to lighten our load.
He heals us with joy and harmony .
A landscape of love for young and old,
His radiance opened eternity.

Chorus: Lilies of red, they testified of Him who bled and died,
Lilies of red, witness they give, He died so we could live.
He lives, he's risen from the dead, praise God for Lilies of red.

The next lessons carry us through the first night of Passover, bringing remembrance of the symbols of sacrifices, the appointed days, and established hours that were pre-set to commemorate the eternal atonement that the Father planned for us. That unequivocal atonement prompts us to bestow the same blessings on all others.

“The exercise of mercy is an obligation for all Jews. By this it is meant that they must act with compassion and forgiveness towards all mankind, and perform deeds of charity and kindness. This quality is an essential characteristic of God who is known as *Rabum* ("Merciful") and, in accordance with the tradition which sets as man's goal the imitation of God: "As He is merciful, so be you merciful." Just as God is bound by His covenant of mercy with His people, so is the Jew bound by specific commandments to act mercifully to the oppressed, the alien, the orphan, the widow, and indeed, every living creature.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

“Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassion every man to his brother:” (*Zechariah 7:9*)

“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (*Hebrews 9:14*)

We serve the Living God by serving each other. That is the way to thank Him for His first born son who said, “Not my will, but thine, be done.”

“To This End Was I Born” That Jesus Is the Christ”

Lesson

26

Matthew 26:47–27:66; Mark 14:43–15:39; Luke 22:47–23:56; John 18–19

Summary: *Jesus is betrayed by Judas, and taken before Caiaphas—Peter denies that he knows Him. Jesus is accused and condemned before Pilate—Barabbas is released—Jesus is mocked, crucified—He places his mother in John’s care—He dies; His side is pierced with a spear—He is buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

The Savior’s ultimate purpose was to provide a way for us to overcome mortality and provide us a choice between good and evil. As we accept good and shed evil, the Savior’s atonement gives us new life. The atonement symbolism of the Messiah’s death and resurrection was foreshadowed since the beginning of time. Therefore, understanding the past can provide us with a larger picture that provides a clear perspective on the present and a clearer understanding of the future.

That symbolism begins with Adam; his immersion, it was an act of being born again.

“As an everlasting covenant, baptism began on this earth with Adam (Moses 6:64-67) and has continued ever since whenever the Lord has had a people on earth. (D. & C. 20:23-28; 84:26-28.) It was not a new rite introduced by John the Baptist and adopted by Christ and his followers. The Jews were baptizing their proselytes long before John, as is well attested from secular sources. The Inspired Version of the Bible, the Book of Moses being a part thereof contains ample evidence of the practice of baptism in Old Testament times. The part of the Book of Mormon of the pre-Christian Era contains some of the best information we have relative to this eternal law.” (*Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, Pg.71*)

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (*Romans 6:4*)

The experience of Abraham being saved and subsequently Isaac being saved from sacrifice is one of the most direct symbols of the Savior’s atonement. Both father and son shared powerful experiences of being saved.

“And as they lifted up their hands upon me, that they might offer me up and take away my life, behold, I lifted up my voice unto the Lord my God, and the Lord hearkened and heard, and he filled me with the vision of the Almighty, and the angel of his presence stood by me, and immediately unloosed my bands; And his voice was unto me: Abraham, Abraham, behold, my name is Jehovah, and I have heard thee, and have come down to deliver thee, and to take thee away from thy father’s house, and from all thy kinsfolk, into a strange land which thou knowest not of . . .” (*Abraham 1:15-16*)

Abraham was brought to the “Crossroads of the East,” and there was promised a posterity like the “sands of the sea,” yet Sarah was barren. Miraculously, even after the “time of women” had passed, Sarah conceived and bore a child. The miracle may have evoked laughter from the neighbors. Truly, it evoked delight from the almost centenarians Abraham and Sarah. The laughter of joy spilled from their mouths as God’s promised word was fulfilled, and they brought forth new life.

That one child was named Yitzhak (Isaac in English). The name means laughter, delight and humor in Hebrew. Jewish tradition insists that in his early thirties, Isaac obediently followed his father Abraham who was instructed to take this miracle son and offer him as a human sacrifice.

The appointed event was to take place at Mount Moriah, “Moreh-Yah,” (to be taught of Jehovah). The dialogue that followed teaches us the real lesson of two humble and obedient Godly men who are taught the atonement. There are patterns that teach the ultimate sacrifice of the Lord. Please note the three chiasmi with the Lord in the center.

The first chiasmus is “*Here am I*” sandwiches “*God will provide him self a lam b.*” The second chiasmus is “angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven” which sandwiches “ram caught in the thicket.” The third chiasmus has “*hast not withheld thy son*” sandwiching “*Je h o v a h j i r e h.*”

The imagery of these chiasmi teaches that God will provide His son, the Lamb of God, who will take upon himself the sins that we are all caught in, we then can see Jehovah, God’s son, who will take us to His and our Father in Heaven.

“And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, *Here am I*, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

And Abraham said, My son, *God will provide him self a lam b* for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, *Here am I*.

And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou dearest God, seeing thou *hast not withheld thy son, thine only son* from me.

And Abrahams lifted up his eyes, and looked, and beheld behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

And Abraham called the name of that place *Je h o v a h j i r e h*: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and *hast not withheld thy son, thine only son*:

That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice. (*Genesis 22:7-18*)

Abraham and Isaac apparently knew that Isaac was a symbol of God's firstborn son. A substitute was found as a ram in the thicket. Ever since, other substitutes were offered as a symbol of Him who would pay for our sins as we repent. A more expanded look at sacrifices as symbols can be seen in the following excerpts of the book, ISRAEL REVEALED. Also, the ISRAEL REVEALED video number four, *Israel at Worship*, coincides with the following text.

BIBLICAL SACRIFICES

The study of ancient biblical sacrifices is not usually considered exciting reading. The Bible has many details that in today's cultures seem unnecessary. Let's go back to examine a few details and see if we can relate the symbolisms and meanings to our modern religious understanding.

Abraham's Sacrifices: Twenty centuries before Jesus, Abraham, living in the Ur of Chaldees, had a difficult relationship with his father, Terah. He was involved with the idol worshiping prevalent in that area. Various gods were idolized as people made statues and doted on works of wood and metal. (Add glass to the wood and metal, and it might look like a TV today!) Idol worshiping included human sacrifice. Abraham was about to be offered when at the last moment the real God, the Father in Heaven, saved him from that pagan practice. God brought him out of the land of the Chaldees to the Crossroads of the East. There Abraham was to have a great family.

“And the LORD said unto Abram, . . .
And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the
dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.” (*Genesis 13:14-16*)

Some might consider it unfortunate (or even a mistake) that he married a woman, although very beautiful, who could not bear children. After years of pleading with the Lord and then with the Lord's permission, Sarah gave Abraham her handmaids: Hagar (who bore a son named Ishmael, which means heard of God) and Keturah (who bore six children). They began to fulfill the prophecy of a great posterity.

“And Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael.” (*Genesis 16:15*)

“Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah.
And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and
Shuah.” (*Genesis 25:1*)

The Arabs are considered descendants of Hagar. It is also considered that the Bedouin and the Druze of today may descend from Keturah and her six children.

A Miracle Son: When Sarah was ninety years old, an angel appeared to Abraham to announce that she would yet bear a son. Apparently she laughed; surely she at ninety and Abraham at ninety-nine could not have a child! (Can you imagine what the neighbors might have said?) However, the impossible became possible, and God blessed them exceedingly. They had a son (an only son between them), whom they named *Yitzhak* (Isaac in English), which means laughter and joy.

“Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have
pleasure, my lord being old also?
And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety
bear a child, which am old?” (*Genesis 18:12-13*)

Raising this miracle child must have been a great joy. Jewish rabbinical tradition tells us that Isaac was in his early thirties when God commanded Abraham to offer Isaac as a human sacrifice. What a contrast to the very thing that the same God had saved Abraham from years before! Remember, human sacrifice was a pagan custom Abraham had fled from in Ur.

Isaac to be Sacrificed: God instructed Abraham to go to Mount Moriah to sacrifice his firstborn son of Sarah, his wife. Mount Moriah was given as the place of sacrifice, though it is very close to the Mount of Olives which is much higher. High places were usually selected as the sacrificial places. The name *Moriah* is derived from the words *moreh*, teacher, and *Yah*, the shortened version of the word *Jehovah*. Names ending with the sound “ah” often refer to Jehovah, such as Elijah, Micah, Hezekiah, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and so on. The word *Jehovah* is not

spoken in Hebrew; it means “I AM.” There is also no conjugation of the words *to be* in the first person (*I am* is not said in Hebrew). So, Mount Moriah may mean “to be taught of Jehovah.” This is an appropriate metaphor, a lesson giving us insight to this unusual event.

Sacrifices were done by quickly drawing the blade across the blood and breath of an unblemished, firstborn animal. This was the biblical instruction and probably the most humane way of rendering the animal lifeless.

An Angel Stops the Sacrifice: Before the blood and breath of Isaac was taken, an angel commanded Abraham to stop. God would provide a lamb for the sacrifice. Abraham and Isaac found a substitute ram in the thicket and offered it instead.

“And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.
And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said,
. . . Lay not thine hand upon the lad, . . .
And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.” (*Genesis 22:10-13*)

Substitute Sacrifices: From that time on, other substitute animals, always firstborn and unblemished, were sacrificed on Mount Moriah. Interestingly, the sacrifice was always done on the northern side of the temple altar.

“And he shall kill it on the side of the altar northward before the LORD: and the priests, Aaron’s sons, shall sprinkle his blood round about upon the altar.” (*Leviticus 1:11*)

THE PLACE OF A SKULL

A Place of Crucifixion: Today on the northern end of the Temple Mount stands an abandoned quarry with caves that give it a grotesque skull-like look. Many people consider this the Place of a Skull, Calvary or Golgotha. They feel this is where the Lamb of God, the firstborn Son of God, was sacrificed when He was crucified.

“And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha:” (*John 19:17*)

This Place of a Skull looks like the location described as the crucifixion site in the New Testament. However, some scholars and Christians have only recently recognized and identified it as such. Later we will discuss it in more detail and also describe an empty first-century Jewish tomb which is close by.

THE PURPOSE OF TEMPLES

The remarkable symbolism of time, places, and events seemed to have foreshadowed the Messiah, the Holy One of Israel. Abraham’s life was chiastic: first to be offered as a human sacrifice and then to be saved, later to be commanded to offer his own son as a sacrifice and then to have him saved. All this was to teach us that God, also on Mount Moriah, was to offer his Son as a sacrifice to save us all.

Atonement Instruction: It is apparent that the temple, later built on Mount Moriah, was to teach about the Atonement for all people. It is inevitable that the Savior will return to the house of the Lord and restore it as a place of worship and teaching.

“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the

covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.”
(*Malachi 3:1*)

The final hours of the Savior’s mortal life fulfill His reason, His purpose, His ultimate mission. This is reviewed in the following lesson.

“He Is Not Here, for He Is Risen”

Matthew 28; Luke 24; John 20–21

Summary: *Christ the Lord is risen—He appears to many—He has all power in heaven and in earth—He sends the apostles to teach and baptize all nations. Angels announce resurrection of Christ—He walks on Emmaus road—He appears with a body of flesh and bones, eats food, testifies of His divinity, and promises the Holy Ghost—His ascension. Mary Magdalene, Peter, John find empty tomb—The Risen Christ appears to Mary Magdalene in the garden—He appears to disciples and shows his resurrected body—Thomas feels the wounds in Jesus' hands, feet, and side—Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.' Jesus appears to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias—He saith: 'Feed my sheep'—He foretells Peter's martyrdom and John's translation.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights: The atonement has been the central issue of true religion from the beginning of man's mortal sojourn through eternity. In Judaism, a special day was established as a Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

“The tenth of the Hebrew month of Tishrei is Yom Kippur, a day of fasting and prayer for all Israel, a day which has been significant to Jews throughout the ages. The Day of Atonement is the last of the Ten Days of Penitence which begin with Rosh Ha-Shanah, and is the climax of the repentance and soul-searching incumbent on every Jew during this period.”

“The essence of the day and the reasons for its special prayers and ceremony are expressed in the Torah: "For on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins shall ye be clean before the Lord.”

“So important is Yom Kippur that it is the only fast day which may be observed on the Sabbath and is never postponed until the next day. Moreover, the Torah describes the holiness of Yom Kippur by calling it the "Sabbath of Sabbaths.”

“In ancient literature there are several stories of people being rescued from inside fish (Heracles the Hesione, Perseus, and Andromeda); but only in that of Jonah was the rescue effected by prayer and not by force. The book is to be understood as a lesson in Divine forgiveness and mercy --- to Jonah as well as to the people of Nineveh --- and as a lesson in obedience to God's will. As a symbol of the effectiveness of repentance it is read as the *haftarah* at the afternoon service of the Day of Atonement.”

“Jonah is known for the incident involving the whale, or large fish, but that episode is secondary to the lesson the Book comes to teach. Jonah learned through bitter experience that non-Jews are also God's creatures and one must not begrudge them God's love and forgiveness. Also to be learned is the fact that true repentance is accepted by God and earns His pardon for almost any sin. Because of its theme of sin, repentance, and forgiveness the Book of Jonah is read every Day of Atonement at the *Minhah* service.”

“Repentance consists of several stages --- firstly the sinner must reflect on his actions and realize that he has indeed done the wrong thing. He must then make up his mind never to do it again, and confess his sin. This confession is not made to any other human being but is made by the sinner directly to God. On this basis the two confessions *Ashamnu* and *Al-Het* were introduced into the prayers for the Day of Atonement which is a special occasion for repentance and forgiveness. However, even when a sinner has done all these things, his repentance is still not final until he has been exposed to the same temptation and withstood it. Of course he should not deliberately put himself on that spot again.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

When the famous Rabbi Schneersohn from Brooklyn died, some of his followers expected him to rise again after three nights and three days. Thousands of posters of the famous rabbi had been distributed, boldly captioned with statements such as “We want Messiah now!”

“The 7th Lubavitch leader, Menahem Mendel Schneersohn, born in Russia in 1902 and educated in mathematics and engineering at the Sorbonne in Paris, led the New York community from 1951 until his death in 1994. He was childless and did not designate a successor. Under his direction, the influence of the Lubavitch community spread far beyond the hasidic community and penetrated the mainstream of Jewish life in all parts of the world. In theory, the Habad Hasid is too sophisticated to expect miracles from his leader --- he looks to him only for spiritual guidance. Nevertheless, the great "rebbe" was said to have cured a man of cancer by placing his hand on the man's side and saying "*si'z gornisht*" (It's nothing). A campaign hailing Rabbi Schneersohn as a Messiah began in the late 80s and has continued beyond his death in the 1990s. The messianism gripped a large part of the Lubavitch community and has created a huge debate in the ultra-Orthodox communities in the Diaspora and Israel.”

“To some, Messianism undermines the first line of defense against Christian missionizing which has always been that Judaism cannot accept a Messiah who dies in the midst of his redemptive mission. To others, Rabbi Schneersohn is the one who will be resurrected to complete a process of redemption for the Jewish people.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

For the Jews, as well as for the Christians, the example of Jonah being swallowed by a great fish for three days and three nights is a symbol of atonement or at least that the Messiah would rise from the dead. Yet, the three nights and three days of Jesus’ interment and living again is still not recognized by the Jews as a sign of the his Messiahship. One major reason for this may be that the account of his death and resurrection simply is not known, and if it is known it is not recognized.

Many Christians struggle with the symbolism due to a “mainstream” Christian tradition of Good Friday as the crucifixion day and Easter Sunday as the resurrection day. That, according to the scriptural way of calculating twenty-four hour days, still is only two nights and two days.

“Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.” (*Matthew 12:38-42*)

Excerpts from the book, ISRAEL REVEALED and the accompanying video, number six, *In The Footsteps of Jesus*, give a review of those three nights and three days.

DEATH AND RESURRECTION

CAIAPHAS AND THE TRIAL OF JESUS

A Mock Trial: Late that night, Jesus was betrayed, arrested, and taken to Caiaphas the High Priest by his soldiers. The incarceration and interrogation were not part of an official trial. Both were illegal under the circumstances. That evening was the beginning of the Preparation Day, a

holiday by itself; it was night time and there was no formal charge against Jesus. These and other items precluded any trial to be performed legally.

“And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast.

And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

. . . In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.

But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.

And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.

But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.” (*Matthew 26:47-58*)

Caiaphas, the High Priest: Caiaphas was the High Priest over three councils that made up the grand Sanhedrin assembly. However, Caiaphas apparently was only meeting with one of the three councils and not the entire Sanhedrin (seventy men). The Sanhedrin would have to judge in such a case (if it were a legal trial).

The House of Caiaphas: Caiaphas's house is now a church built over dungeon rooms, two thousand years old, where prisoners were held. Holes in the rock walls were used to tie and spread out their hands and feet for scourging. This basement prison reminds us that Caiaphas and some powerful elders conspired to trap Jesus by his own words.

“But Jesus held his peace . . .” (*Matthew 26:63*)

Blasphemy: The priestly wordsmiths, who would not even utter the name of God, had the practice of substituting words representing God's name. They used phrases such as, “He that comes in the clouds of Heaven.” They referred to a Messiah as “He that sits on the right hand of Power,” or “Blessed is His name.” In anger, the High Priest challenged Him, in the name of God,

“ . . . tell us whether thou be the Christ, the son of God.” (*Matthew 26:63*)

Jesus simply replied,

“Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see [this] Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.” (*Matthew 26:64*)

The High Priest, perhaps stung by the realization that he himself had invoked God's name, cried out,

“He hath spoken blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.” (*Matthew 26:65*)

Peter Denies the Savior: The cock had just crowed. In fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy, Peter had just denied the Savior the third time. Then, one can imagine, turning and looking into Jesus' face, Peter turned again and ran out into the break of dawn, weeping bitterly.

“Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew.
And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.” (*Matthew 26:74-75*)

Execution for Temple Violations: Under the Roman political system, the Jewish priests were not to carry out executions except for temple violations. (Their executions would have been by stoning-throwing the victim over a high cliff and then covering him with stones they threw.) The priests bound him and led him away to Pontius Pilate, the governor.

PONTIUS PILATE

The Judgment Hall: Today, the site is maintained by a Catholic Order, The Sisters of Zion. The archaeological ruins recently discovered may have been well preserved from Byzantine times. Floor stones and cisterns reveal ancient Roman markings and usage as a fortress.

A Wife’s Dream: At the Antonia Fortress, Pontius Pilate at first did not want to be troubled with the case. He may have been bothered by his wife’s dream that he should have nothing to do with Jesus. However, he soon realized a potential political gain. Repeatedly, he had Jesus brought forth, beaten, intimidated, and crowned with thorns. He taunted the priests with Jesus’ release. He said,

“I find in him no fault at all.” (*John 18:38*)

Crucify Him: Maddened by Pilate’s reluctance to favor them with an execution, they cried out,

“Away with him, crucify him.” (*John 19:15*)

Political Gain: Pilate, probably egging them on and hoping to accomplish something for himself, said,

“Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.” (*John 19:15*)

Ah, the political gain was achieved (since the priests publicly acclaimed Caesar to be their king).

“Then delivered he him . . . to be crucified.” (*John 19:16*)

This may have been the achievement that endeared Pilate to Herod, since he motivated the Jewish priests to acclaim Caesar.

“And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.” (*Luke 23:12*)

THE CRUCIFIXION

The Place of a Skull: Jesus, bearing His cross (probably just the cross beam, as the upright post was most likely already at the crucifixion place),

“ . . . went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew, Golgotha.” (*John 19:17*)

Simon from Cyrene: On the way, a man named Simon from Cyrene was made to carry the cross beam to the place of execution. (One can imagine that Jesus may have stumbled, although it is not mentioned.) The name Simon is Jewish; the place, Cyrene, is in Africa. The man could

have been one of the hundreds of thousands of Jews of various ethnicities gathering in Jerusalem for Passover. He carried the wood for the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb of God.

Outside the City Wall: A site outside the city wall looks like the described place. It was the Roman practice to crucify along the roadways. A roadway still passes through this ancient, abandoned quarry, known by Jews as a place of execution.

Daylight had progressed about six hours. It was close to noon, but,

“ . . . there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.”
(*Mark 15:33*)

A Slow Death: Crucifixion was a slow, strangling death. Breathing required very painful movements, and speaking was virtually impossible. Yet, during His agonizing physical, mental, and spiritual anguish, He spoke several times. Mostly it was in concern of others.

Jesus Speaks from the Cross: The Bible records seven things that Jesus said while on the cross.

To those who nailed him:

“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.” (*Luke 23:34*)

To those crucified with him:

“ . . . for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise [world of spirits].” (*Luke 23:41-43*)

To His Mother:

“When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!” (*John 19:26*)

To John the Beloved:

“Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.” (*John 19:27*)

To the Guards:

“After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. (*John 19:28*)

To His Father:

“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? That is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (*Matthew 27:46*)

“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.” (*Luke 23:46*)

To the World:

“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.” (*John 19:30*)

His Legs Not Broken: The Jewish priests did not want the crucified bodies hanging on the cross on Sabbath days (for that evening was the beginning of an extra Sabbath day, a High Day).

So, they besought Pilate that the prisoners' legs might be broken. This would hasten their deaths because they could not press against the nails in their feet to gasp for breath. Once dead, their bodies might be taken away. However, when the soldiers saw that Jesus was dead already

“ . . . they brake not his legs.” (*John 19:33*)

A TOMB IN A GARDEN

Disciples of Jesus Help with the Burial: After this, Joseph of Arimathaea, a member of the Sanhedrin, and

“ . . . a disciple of Jesus . . . besought Pilate that he might take the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave.” (*John 19:38*)

With the help of Nicodemus,

“ . . . took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices . . . Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.” (*John 19:40-42*)

Two Sabbaths in a Row: The scurrilous events of that day preceded the Passover which was due to begin at any moment. The Passover (a special Sabbath or High Day) that week probably preceded the regular Saturday Sabbath.

“The Jews [Priests] therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,)” (*John 19:31*)

A Sign to the Pharisees: It is probable that there were two Sabbaths in a row that year (the Passover Sabbath and the regular seventh day of the week Sabbath). In that sense, Jesus was crucified on what we call a Thursday. (This fits in the time reckoning of Palm Sunday being five days before the Passover). Then in fulfillment of prophecy, He really was in the tomb three nights; and on the third day He arose:

“ . . . and be raised again the third day.” (*Matthew 16:21; 17:23, Mark 9:31*)

This is also the only “sign” Jesus gave the Pharisees.

“Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” (*Matthew 12:38-40*)

In speaking to the Pharisees, He specifically connected himself with Jonah, who was in a great fish . . .

“ . . . three days and three nights.” (*Jonah 1:17*)

The scriptures bear witness, the spirit bears witness of an empty: “He is not here.” They teach us that color, calendar, clock, people, places and experiences were used to foreshadow the atonement. With open hearts we may have experiences, meet worthy people, visit holy places, understand God’s timing of calendar events, and see eternal purposes of He who died and came alive again.

“We Are Witnesses”

Lesson

28

Acts 1–5

Summary: *Jesus ministers for forty days after His resurrection—Kingdom to be restored to Israel at a later time—The Twelve to bear witness in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth—Jesus ascends into heaven—Matthias chosen to fill the vacancy in the Twelve. Spirit poured out on day of Pentecost—Peter testifies of Jesus’ resurrection—He tells how to gain salvation and speaks of the gift of the Holy Ghost—Many believe and are baptized. Peter and John heal a man lame from birth—Peter preaches repentance—He also speaks of the age of restoration preceding the Second Coming—He names Christ as the prophet of whom Moses spoke. Peter and John are arrested and brought before the council—Peter testifies that salvation comes because of Christ—Sadducees strive to silence them—Saints glory in the testimony of Jesus—They practice a united order. Ananias and Sapphira lie to the Lord and lose their lives—Apostles continue the miracles of Jesus—Peter and John are arrested; an angel delivers them from prison; they testify of Christ—Gamaliel counsels moderation.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

The profound gift of the Holy Ghost was given to provide a witness of the completion of the Savior’s atonement. Being “set at liberty from our bruises” and happy to share our new-found freedom, we need the gift of the Holy Ghost to be witnesses. Fifty days after the Passover when Jesus was crucified and resurrected; there was a day of Pentecost. It is a holy day for the Jews called Shavuot. The most significant part of the celebration is the receiving of the Torah, the Law of Moses.

“Shavuot (Hebrew for "Weeks"), the name of the festival which celebrates the end of the spring barley harvest and the beginning of the summer wheat and fruit harvests. According to rabbinic tradition, Shavuot is also the day on which the Torah was revealed to the Jewish people on Mount Sinai.”

“Shavuot is the only holiday for which the Torah does not give a specific date. The biblical text (Leviticus 23:4) states that Passover should be celebrated on the fifteenth of the first month (Nisan). It then says "From the day after the Sabbath . . . you shall keep count [until] seven full weeks have elapsed . . . you shall count fifty days . . . then you shall bring an offering of new grain to the Lord." What is the meaning of "the day after the Sabbath?" Does the word "Sabbath" mean "Saturday" or does it mean "the day of rest" which can also apply to the festival? The rabbis of the Talmud understood it in the latter sense and so Shavuot always falls 50 days after the second day of Passover. These 50 days represent the period of the counting of the *Omer*. In English, the festival is often known as Pentecost, from the Greek word which means "the fiftieth day.”

“The Bible refers to Shavuot as *Hag Shavuot* ("The Festival of Weeks," Exodus 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:10), and *Hag ha-Kazir* ("The Harvest Festival," Exodus 23:16). Shavuot is also called *Yom ha-Bikkurim* ("The Day of the First Fruits," Numbers 28:26) and is, therefore the festival which marks the beginning of the summer fruit harvest as well as the beginning of the wheat harvest. According to the Book of Leviticus (23:17 ff) two loaves of bread, baked from the first wheat crop, were brought to the sanctuary as part of the festival offering. According to the Book of Deuteronomy (16:9ff), Shavuot is a holiday on which the entire community is to rejoice "at the place where the Lord your God will choose to establish His name (Jerusalem). The observance of Shavuot also included a "freewill" offering in proportion to one's ability to contribute.”

“Seven weeks after the Exodus from Egypt a horde of slaves stood before Mount Sinai and freely accepted the spiritual and moral teachings which gave meaning and depth to their new-found freedom.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica* Jr.)

The imagery of receiving the Torah from above on Shavuot (Jewish Pentecost), leads to understanding the New Testament day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost descended. The Holy

Ghost descended so that the Savior ascend. Likewise, we must have the Holy Ghost descend on us so that we can ascend to our Savior, who will bring us to His and our Father in Heaven.

The Savior's healing power was given to his apostles as they learned to work in his name. Healing was part of the person becoming whole, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

The great Jewish Rabbi, Maimonides, felt that healing had to be holistic. He was a physician as well as a doctor.

“He abhorred the thought of using Torah learning as a means of support. This was a serious point of contention between him and the geonim of the religious establishment, and he turned to the profession of medicine. Jews and Muslims were among his patients. His ideas on medicine were advanced and sympathetic: he rejected the use of magic and charms in healing, and added that the doctor must know the whole patient in order to diagnose properly.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

There is another image that may help us understand the Savior's power, entrusted to his apostles through the priesthood and gift of the Holy Ghost. It is the comparison of Aaron to Moses.

“Aaron was clearly given a lesser role than Moses. Aaron experienced revelations from God and, being an eloquent speaker, acted as prophet and miracle- worker before Pharaoh in the matter of the Plagues of Egypt. However, it is significant that even where he plays an active role in performing the miracles, it is not a result of his own ability or initiative, but solely by divine command given through Moses.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

In that sense, concentration on the highest power, that of the Lord, helps us consecrate everything to and for Him. Healings, blessings, repeated guidances through the gift of the Holy Ghost are manifestations, witnesses of the Lord's great gift of atonement. We are witnesses!

“The Number of the Disciples Was Multiplied”

Lesson
29

Acts 6–9

Summary: *Apostles choose seven to assist them—Stephen transfigured before the Sanhedrin. Stephen recounts the history of Israel and names Moses as a prototype of Christ—He testifies of the apostasy in Israel—He sees Jesus on the right hand of God—Stephen’s testimony is rejected and he is stoned to death. Saul persecutes the Church—Philip’s ministry in Samaria—He works miracles and baptizes men and women—Peter and John come to Samaria and confer the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands—Simon seeks to buy this gift and is rebuked by Peter—Philip preaches Christ and baptizes an Ethiopian eunuch. Jesus appears to Saul—Saul a chosen vessel—Ananias restores Saul’s sight—He is baptized and begins his ministry—Peter heals Aeneas and raises Dorcas from death.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

The organization and growth of the Church in the Meridian of Times parallels the organization of the Church in ancient and modern times. These were and are men, in their respective times, who had authority from God to bring light and truth to the people. Anciently, Moses had a “First Presidency:” two assistants, Aaron and Hur. Additionally, he had an organization of Twelve and Seventy.

“And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you: and, behold, Aaron and Hur are with you: if any man have matters to do, let him come unto them.” (*Exodus 24:14*)

“These are those that were numbered . . . and the princes of Israel, being twelve men: each one was for the house of his fathers.” (**Numbers 1:44**)

“And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD, thou, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and worship ye afar off.” (*Exodus 24:1*)

The parallel organization is seen in the primitive Church with Peter, James and John appearing as a “First Presidency” within the original Twelve.

“Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother,” (*Matthew 10:2*)

“And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;” (*Luke 6:13*)

“After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.” (*Luke 10:1*)

And, of course, we see a similar structure today in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

“Of the Melchizedek Priesthood, three Presiding High Priests, chosen by the body, appointed and ordained to that office, and upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church, form a quorum of the Presidency of the Church.

The twelve traveling councilors are called to be the Twelve Apostles, or special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world--thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling.

And they form a quorum, equal in authority and power to the three presidents previously mentioned.

The Seventy are also called to preach the gospel, and to be especial witnesses unto the Gentiles and in all the world--thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling.” (*Doctrine & Covenants* 107:22-25)

In that sense, the organization today may give us insight to what was happening in former days.

“And it is according to the vision showing the order of the Seventy, that they should have seven presidents to preside over them, chosen out of the number of the seventy;” (*Doctrine & Covenants* 107:93)

“Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint . . .” (*Acts* 6:3)

The appointment of officers and leaders was compared to parts of the body. All parts were needed and had to work together. The metaphor of the Church and the body was used in ancient times, the Meridian of Times, as well as today.

From last year’s Gospel Doctrine lesson supplements, let us review a section from **Lesson Number 38 - “Beside Me There Is No Savior”**:

Remember, there are two things necessary to understand the scriptures, the learning of the Jews and the spirit, the “still small voice,” that reveals deeper meanings. This lesson deals with so many qualities of the Lord that it would be impractical to comment on each one. One beautiful attribute is His being, His body that He gave for us. Could Isaiah have been suggesting that everything around us can remind us of Him, that even “body language” refers to Him?

He was called from the womb, a perfect body with attributes as eyes, ears, mouth, tongue, neck, heart, shoulder, hands, arms, belly, womb, leg, knee, and foot.

“Lift up your eyes on high,” *Isaiah* 40:26; “To open the blind eyes,” *Isaiah* 42:7; “Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears . . .” *Isaiah* 43:8; Seeing many things, but thou observest not; opening the ears, but he heareth not.” *Isaiah* 42:20; “. . . thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass;” *Isaiah* 48:4; “. . . for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.” *Isaiah* 40:5; “. . . the hand of the LORD hath done this. . .” *Isaiah* 41:20; “Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see.” *Isaiah* 42:18; “. . .for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand.” *Isaiah* 44:18; “. . .Thou hast heard, see all this . . .” *Isaiah* 48:6; “Kings shall see . . .” *Isaiah* 49:7; “And they shall be made perfect notwithstanding their blindness,” *JST Isaiah* 42:20; “. . . formed me from the womb . . . glorious in the eyes of the LORD,” *Isaiah* 49:5; “Lift up thine eyes round about,” *Isaiah* 49:18; “. . . say again in thine ears,” *Isaiah* 49:20; “. . . for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.” *Isaiah* 40:5; “. . . the word is gone out of my mouth . . . every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.” *Isaiah* 45:23; “I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I showed them . . . and they came to pass.” *Isaiah* 48:3; “. . . my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me,” *Isaiah* 49:2; “. . . their tongue faileth . . .” *Isaiah* 41:17; “. . . yet he laid it not to heart.” *Isaiah* 42:25; “. . . considereth in his heart . . .” *Isaiah* 44:19; “. . . a deceived heart . . . my right hand . . .” *Isaiah* 44:20; thou didst not lay these things to thy heart,” *Isaiah* 47:7; “Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children,” *Isaiah* 49:21; “. . . He hath no hands . . .” *Isaiah* 45:9; “. . . and concerning the work of my hands . . .” *Isaiah* 45:11; “. . . my hands, have stretched out the heavens . . .” *Isaiah* 45:12; “I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands . . .” *Isaiah* 49:16; “. . . make bare the leg, uncover the thigh . . .” *Isaiah* 47:2; “. . . the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm

shall rule for him:" *Isaiab 40:10*; "... he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom ..." *Isaiab 40:11*; "... his arm shall be on the Chaldeans ..." *Isaiab 48:14*; "... with the strength of his arms ..." *Isaiab 44:12*; "I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders," *Isaiab 49:22*; "... with his feet," *Isaiab 41:3*; "And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet;" *Isaiab 49:23*; "... called him to his foot," *Isaiab 41:2*;

This constant use of body language can be seen as a metaphor of the "body of Christ."

"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." (*1 Corinthians 12:27*)

The Prophet Joseph Smith emphasized the same principle.

"The Church is a compact body composed of different members, and is strictly analogous to the human system, and Paul, after speaking of the different gifts, says, "Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular; and God hath set some in the Church, first Apostles, secondarily Prophets, thirdly Teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all Teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?" It is evident that they do not; yet are they all members of one body. All members of the natural body are not the eye, the ear, the head or the hand -- yet the eye cannot say to the ear, I have no need of thee, nor the head to the foot, I have no need of thee; they are all so many component parts in the perfect machines -- the one body; and if one member suffer, the whole of the members suffer with it; and if one member rejoice, all the rest are honored with it." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Section Five 1842-43 Pg.244*)

In many cases, the bodies of the Lord's appointed servants were hurt or killed, yet their testimonies and witnesses remained to strengthen the Church members. Stephen's stoning was a dramatic example. Let us review stoning from this year's Gospel Doctrine lesson supplements, **Lesson Number 10 - "Take My Yoke upon You and Learn of Me"** and **Lesson Number 15 - "I Am the Light of the World."**

One of the methods of execution was stoning. A truer understanding of the process of stoning would give added insight to the New Testament account of a woman brought to Jesus. The procedure included causing death by precipitating the convicted over a cliff (like an abandoned stone quarry). That part included the participation of one of the witnesses. The second witness threw or placed the "first stone" on the body in a process of burying the convicted. The stoning was more a disrespectful burying, depriving the convicted of a mourning chamber and a burial chamber.

"Our Rabbis taught: Whence do we know that it [the execution] was accomplished by hurling down? Scripture states, And he shall be cast down. And whence the necessity of stoning? Scripture states, he shall be stoned. And whence do we know that both stoning and hurling down [were employed]? From the verse, he shall surely be stoned or thrown down. And whence do we know that if he died through being hurled down, it is enough? Scripture states, or cast down. Whence do we know the same procedure is to be followed for [all subsequent] generations?" (*Talmud - Mas. Sanhedrin 45a*)

It should be noted that the Hebrew rendition of stoning including "hurling" or "laying on hands;" to "cast" or "throw" down is not as recognizable in the English King James Translation of Exodus 19:13 and Leviticus 24:14.

Stoning is a capital punishment indicated in the Mosaic Law. Biblical punishments were based on the crime, unlike today's punishments which are based on the person or the circumstances. Stoning was the punishment for a number of gross sins including murder (Numbers 35:30), adultery (Deuteronomy 22:22-24), blasphemy (Leviticus 24:16), breaking the Sabbath (Numbers 15:32-35), Apostasy (Deuteronomy 13:6-10), and rebellion against parents (Deuteronomy 21:18-21).

A better insight into capital punishment can be seen in the Talmud. Rabbinic interpretations of the ancient Jewish law of stoning indicate that it was required that the convicted be thrown over a cliff. One of at least two witnesses and thereby accusers was responsible to make sure the criminal was dead. If not, one of the witnesses/accusers had to take the first stone and break the convicted's heart. The intense aversion to directly taking another's life would motivate the accuser's success in having the fall cause the death of the accused. A witness/accuser always had to cast the first stone and then all others threw stones to cover the body (the burial). Abandoned quarries (where the stone was rejected) would be likely locations for such rare executions.

It may be possible that Stephen did not immediately die from the execution's hurdle. The power and glory of his vision of the Father and the Son transcended the cruelty of those who waited to witness his bloody broken body disrespectfully covered with stones. The likely place of Stephen's execution is precisely where the Savior was crucified and where He transcended death, beginning a process of redemption of all mankind. It is still known by Jews in Jerusalem as the place of execution, stoning, and ultimately, two thousand years ago, crucifixion.

Near the place known as The Garden Tomb is a "Place of a Skull." It is an abandoned stone quarry, rejected by builders thousands of years ago because the stone was too crumbly. Unbeknownst to most Jews, it is where the Lord's compassion and heavenly witness were rejected, as Pharisees and wicked priests urged His crucifixion.

Stephen's death, with his accompanying compassion and heavenly witness, was witnessed by Saul, the Pharisee, which began a process of redemption for Paul, the Apostle. Later, his own conversion would ultimately be followed by hurt, persecution, and even an execution attempt where the hurdle did not result in death. (That stoning will be considered in the next lesson).

Another of the seven leaders of the Seventy, Philip, bore witness to an Ethiopian. Today in Israel, we have a better insight as to whom this Ethiopian might have been.

Again, we recall from a previous year's lesson supplement, **Lesson Number 26 - "King Solomon: Man of Wisdom, Man of Foolishness."**

Recent developments in Israel have brought the name of King Solomon to the foreground again. One news item is that various archaeologists feel that a lot of construction attributed to him may have been actually built by someone else.

The most interesting development is the influx of tens of thousands of black Jews from Ethiopia. They feel they are descendants of King Solomon through one of his wives, the Queen of Sheba.

"In Ethiopia, members of this group refer to themselves as Beta Israel . . . They practice an early form of Judaism; the chief rabbis of Israel have recognized them as Jews. Until brought to Israel, they lived in the provinces around Lake Tana. According

to their tradition, their ancestors were Jerusalem notables who came with Menelik, the son of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, when he returned home.”

“They said that he brought Judaic customs and civil law to Ethiopia. The lion of Judah was the symbol of the emperor of Ethiopia.” **(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)**

“Operation Solomon” was the name of a remarkable plan to bring these Jews to Israel. In the early Nineties, fifteen thousand Ethiopian Jews were airlifted to Israel in thirty-one hours. One 747 Jumbo had more than eleven hundred Ethiopian Jews on one flight. In order to keep count and due to the basic illiteracy of Hebrew, each had a number stuck to his clothing. When they landed, two unnumbered disembarked - newborn babies in an unknown land.

The Ethiopian’s Judaism differs from the Western Rabbinical Judaism that most Jews relate to. It is possible, through anthropological studies, to catch a closer glimpse of Judaism as it might have been three thousand years ago.

Also using last year’s supplements, here is another quote from **Lesson # 5 - “If Thou Doest Well, Thou Shalt Be Accepted.”**

References to Enoch appear in several apocryphal works. The Ethiopian Jews who claim to be descendants of King Solomon (and the Queen of Sheba) have brought their holy books from Ethiopia to Israel. Although they are recent in terms of age (less than two thousand years old), they do contain two apocryphal books, one of which is the Book of Enoch.

As of June 1999, another 3,000 to 5,000-member group of Ethiopians Jews, the Quara, are being brought to Israel, the land of their ancient forefather, Solomon.

Jerusalem Post, Aryeh Dean Cohen , David Rudge, June 21, 1999

“Tomorrow night's expected arrival of the first group of 80-100 Quara Jews from Ethiopia since 1992 has enthralled the Jewish Agency Assembly, which opened last night and continues through Wednesday in Tiberias. The agency's board of governors yesterday approved an allocation of \$11 million for their absorption and for the absorption of Yugoslavian and Russian immigrants in the coming months.”

“According to agency officials, some 3,500 Quara Jews are currently in Gondar, from where they will be moved to Addis Ababa for processing. They are the remainder of the Quara community: Some 3,500 Jews living in Upper Quara were brought to Israel seven years ago, while the 2,500 Jews of Lower Quara were left behind - except for 200 who trickled in recently. Four Interior Ministry officials of Ethiopian descent and a doctor were among those traveling to Ethiopia yesterday to help speed up the processing of the newcomers.”

“ . . . an unofficial census has identified around 25,000 Ethiopian Jews - most of them Falash Mura - who have the right under the Law of Return to come to Israel.”

Jerusalem Post, Elli Wohlgeleinter, Aryeh Dean Cohen, June 23, 1999

“Jews from Quara arrive yesterday at Ben-Gurion Airport, as part of an operation to rescue some 3,000 Ethiopian Jews left behind in previous airlifts.”

“... Michael Jankelowitz, a spokesman for the Jewish Agency ... was speaking of this group of Jews who were left behind in the major rescue of 1991, when the Quara province they lived in was under rebel control and they could not make their way to Addis Ababa to take part in Operation Solomon.”

“For Zerihun Fenta Goshu, 75, sitting at a table with his son, daughter-in-law, and three grandchildren, all that is important was that they are here. 'I'm very happy because this is the only place for me, the land of our forefathers.'”

Other references indicating the loyal and possibly ethnic Ethiopian connection to Israel include:

“And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman.” (*Numbers 12:1*)

“Then the king commanded Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon, before he die.” (*Jeremiah 38:10*)

“And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,” (*Acts 8:27*)

The conversion of the Ethiopian Queen Candace's Minister of Finance brought him from his ancient Israelite connection to the restoration of the covenant in his own time. Through his reading, searching and letting his eyes be opened, he received the promised gift of forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Great things were happening in those days. Great and influential men from each end of the Crossroads of the East, Ethiopia, and Damascus were being touched by the light of truth. Men with worldly experience had their eyes touched with the greater heavenly light which was once again available. Saul's “brighter than the midday light” experience on the way to Damascus blinded him physically so that his spiritual eyes would be opened.

His experience of watching Stephen's stoning, holding the witnesses' clothes, ultimately became his own. As his eyes were opened, his commission as one of the Twelve was to open the eyes of the Jews and the Gentiles, to give them light and truth.

“But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;
Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,
To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.” (*Acts 26:16-18*)

As the truth went forth, more and more people were enveloped in its light, and the number of disciples was multiplied.

“God Is No Respecter of Persons”

Acts 10–14; 15:1–35

Summary: *An angel ministers to Cornelius—Peter in a vision is commanded to take the gospel to the Gentiles—Gospel taught by witnesses—Holy Ghost falls upon Gentiles. God grants the gift of repentance to Gentiles—Disciples first called Christians at Antioch—Church guided by revelation. Martyrdom of James—An angel frees Peter from prison—The Lord slays Herod by disease—The Church grows. Saul and Barnabas called to missionary service—Saul, now Paul, curses a sorcerer—Christ came of the seed of David—Paul offers the gospel to Israel, then to the Gentiles. Persecution attends spread of gospel—Paul heals a cripple; he and Barnabas hailed as gods—Paul stoned, revived, preaches—Elders ordained. Great dissension arises at Antioch concerning circumcision—Apostles at Jerusalem decide the issue.*

Supplemental The imagery of sight, sound, and motion used in the New Testament is a powerful part of
Holy Land doctrine and history being studied. “Sight” refers to the visual aspects; “sound” is in the
and Jewish doctrinal message that is spoken; and “motion” refers to the hours of the day and travel time.
insights:

From time to time, social norms in gospel living have been updated. This is usually due to the readiness of God’s children to comprehend and adhere to His teachings. Unfortunately, the sense of time or timing for earthly mankind often obscures the heavenly meanings of God’s timing or His eternal clock.

“In answer to the question--Is not the reckoning of God's time, angel's time, prophet's time, and man's time, according to the planet on which they reside?
 I answer, Yes. But there are no angels who minister to this earth but those who do belong or have belonged to it.” (*Doctrine & Covenants 130:4-5*)

This lesson shows that it was time for all worthy people to receive the covenants of the Gospel. The time frame enveloping Cornelius’ “ninth hour of the day” vision to send for Peter from Jaffa, Peter’s vision in Jaffa with instructions for him to go to Caesarea, and then Cornelius recounting his vision to Peter as he arrived at Caesarea is a three nights and three days chiasmus. The center point is Peter’s vision of salvation for all.

The time when Jesus “gave up the ghost” was the ninth hour of the day. Three nights and three days later He completed the atonement. His resurrection provided salvation for all. That is the central doctrinal point of the Gospel.

The transition from “the times of the Jews” to include “the times of the Gentiles” was socially difficult for many members at that time, even though as Jesus had chosen His disciples, He sent them to teach first the Jews and then the Gentiles. To this day, Jews feel that the Torah (law) was for them and that Gentiles had a different standard (the Noahide laws). The true doctrine of salvation for all was lost. Sometimes, the term used for the Jews or Children of Israel was “the people” and non-Jews (Israelites) were referred to as “the Gentiles.”

“Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.” (*Acts 13:46*)

“Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee,”
 (*Acts 26:17*)

“That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.” (*Acts 26:23*)

“Taking the dispensation of the meridian of time as a starting point, the gospel was preached first to the Jews and thereafter to the Gentiles. Then dropping down to the dispensation of the fulness of times we find the gospel message going first to the Gentiles, with a promise that it will hereafter go to the Jews. Thus the first shall be last and the last first.” (*Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, Pg.721*)

“And the time cometh that he shall manifest himself unto all nations, both unto the Jews and also unto the Gentiles; and after he has manifested himself unto the Jews and also unto the Gentiles, then he shall manifest himself unto the Gentiles and also unto the Jews, and the last shall be first, and the first shall be last.” (*1 Nephi 13:42*)

To better understand the visual aspect of Peter’s vision, a selection from the book, ISRAEL REVEALED, gives Jewish insights to the “words of wisdom” in Peter’s vision of a “sheet” with “unkosher foods.”

TEACH THE GENTILES

Peter’s Vision of the Sheet (Talith): In New Testament times, the city of Jaffa was some twenty feet below today’s city level. Simon Peter was staying there at the home of Simon the Tanner when he received a remarkable vision. It was the sixth hour of the day (the sixth hour is what in modern times we call noon). Simon Peter apparently was praying (religious Jews pray three times a day, covering their heads and using a special prayer cloth, a *talith*, over their shoulders). During his prayers, Peter saw a sheet with knitted or knotted corners—maybe like the typical Jewish prayer shawl, a *talith* with its knotted corners—filled with all sorts of common or unclean foods. Today, this would be called unkosher. An angel commanded Peter to eat of those foods, contrary to Jewish dietary law. The vision was a conflict (or contrast) in symbolism: The talith used in the temple as a holy garment, its 613 knots and strings symbolizing the laws given by Moses, was now filled with foods forbidden by the Law of Moses. Visions really do contain pictures and sounds that convey vital information.

Vision of Cornelius: Connecting Peter’s vision with another experience creates an even clearer picture. On the previous day some thirty-five miles to the north at Caesarea, a Roman centurion named Cornelius received a vision at the “ninth hour” of the day. (Again, in modern times that is three o’clock in the afternoon). In the vision an angel told Cornelius to send for Peter so that he could teach Cornelius the truth. Incidentally, the time to travel the distance of thirty-five miles would take the better part of two days, or at least an overnight journey.

Unkosher: Cornelius’s invitation to Peter arrived just as Peter was contemplating the meaning of the unusual vision of “unkosher” foods he had just been commanded to eat. He lodged his Roman guests overnight, then departed with them to Caesarea—which required another overnight stay. Peter was soon to learn of the correlation of these two heavenly manifestations. When Peter arrived to visit in the house of the Roman Cornelius, again contrary to Jewish law and custom, he related that God had updated or changed the food laws of Israel (showing Israel’s singularity), and said,

“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:
But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.” (**Acts 10:34-35**)

Not just Israelites, but all peoples were able to become children of the covenant. The three nights and three days is a subtle reminder of Jehovah saving Jonah at Jaffa, and later from Jaffa came the reminder that He saves all!

Peter and Cornelius in a Chiasmus: The scriptural report of the Peter/Cornelius events is written in a chiasmus: First we read of Cornelius's vision; next we learn of Peter's vision. But when Peter arrives in Caesarea, the vision of Cornelius is repeated. The center point is the Savior's message: "Salvation is for all people."

"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." (*Isaiah 12:2*)

The name of Jesus is Jeho-Shua. It come from the words, "Jehovah saves" or "salvation is of the Lord" (Jehovah). Since salvation is of the Lord, the direction we need for our process of being saved comes from Him, too. That principle is constant as long as there are living prophets on the earth.

Gentiles being able to become full covenant members at the time of the Apostle and Prophet Peter was similar to "all worthy people" receiving the priesthood (or to be blessed by priesthood functions) at the time of President and Prophet Spencer W. Kimball.

"Priesthood limitation on blacks was changed by revelation. The things of God cannot be understood by the spirit of men. It is impossible to always measure and weigh all spiritual things by man's yardstick or scales. Admittedly, our direct and positive information is limited. I have wished the Lord had given us a little more clarity in the matter. But for me, it is enough. The prophets for 133 years of the existence of the Church have maintained the position of the prophet of the Restoration that the Negro could not hold the priesthood nor have the temple ordinances which are preparatory for exaltation. I believe in the living prophets as much or almost more than the dead ones. They are here to clarify and reaffirm. I have served with and under three of them. The doctrine or policy has not varied in my memory. I know it could. I know the Lord could change his policy and release the ban and forgive the possible error which brought about the deprivation. If the time comes, that he will do, I am sure. These smart members who would force the issue, and there are many of them, cheapen the issue and certainly bring into contempt the sacred principle of revelation and divine authority."

"... I am not sure that there will be a change, although there could be. We are under the dictates of our Heavenly Father, and this is not my policy or the Church's policy. It is the policy of the Lord who has established it, and I know of no change, although we are subject to revelations of the Lord in case he should ever wish to make a change."
(*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, Pages 448*)

Then came the marvelous proclamation that Priesthood blessings were available for all worthy members. It is quoted as follows *Doctrine & Covenants -- Official Declaration 2* (emphasis added):

June 8, 1978, To all general and local priesthood officers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints throughout the world:

Dear Brethren:

As we have witnessed the expansion of the work of the Lord over the earth, we have been grateful that people of many nations have responded to the message of the restored gospel, and have joined the Church in ever-increasing numbers. This, in turn, has inspired us with a desire to extend to every worthy member of the Church all of the privileges and blessings which the gospel affords.

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, spending many hours in the Upper Room of the Temple supplicating the Lord for divine guidance.

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, with power to exercise its divine authority, and enjoy with his loved ones every blessing that flows therefrom, including the blessings of the temple. Accordingly, all worthy male members of the Church may be ordained to the priesthood without regard for race or color. Priesthood leaders are instructed to follow the policy of carefully interviewing all candidates for ordination to either the Aaronic or the Melchizedek Priesthood to insure that they meet the established standards for worthiness.

We declare with soberness that the Lord has now made known his will for the blessing of all his children throughout the earth who will hearken to the voice of his authorized servants, and prepare themselves to receive every blessing of the gospel.

Sincerely yours,
Spencer W. Kimball
N. Eldon Tanner
Marion G. Romney

The First Presidency

President Kimball went on to teach about the process of change that was directed by God.

“ . . . millions of people will be affected by the revelation which came. I remember very vividly that day after day I walked to the temple and ascended to the fourth floor where we have our solemn assemblies and where we have our meetings of the Twelve and the First Presidency. After everybody had gone out of the temple, I knelt and prayed. I prayed with much fervency. I knew that something was before us that was extremely important to many of the children of God. I knew that we could receive the revelations of the Lord only by being worthy and ready for them and ready to accept them and put them into place. Day after day I went alone and with great solemnity and seriousness in the upper rooms of the temple, and there I offered my soul and offered my efforts to go forward with the program. I wanted to do what he wanted. I talked about it to him and said, "Lord, I want only what is right. We are not making any plans to be spectacularly moving. We want only the thing that thou dost want, and we want it when you want it and not until.”

“ . . . Finally we had the feeling and the impression from the Lord, who made it very clear to us, that this was the thing to do to make the gospel universal to all worthy people.”
(*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, Page 448-449*)

Just as in Peter's time, there are those who find change, even prompted from the Lord, difficult to understand. Through various visual travel experiences that the ensuing chapters in the New Testament teach the same “sound doctrine” that salvation is for all, to the ends of the earth. Adjustments in the Word of Wisdom and the social acceptance of non-Israelites into the House of Israel actually amplify the responsibility of those who were first to share their blessings with everyone, as they are fulfilling a sign of the times.

“And So Were the Churches Established in the Faith”

Lesson

31

Acts 15:36–18:22; 1 and 2 Thessalonians

Summary: *Paul chooses Silas as his companion. Paul directed in a vision to preach in Macedonia—He casts an evil spirit out of a woman—He and Silas are imprisoned, and convert the jailor—They admonish all to believe on the Lord Jesus and be saved. Paul and Silas preach and are persecuted in Thessalonica and in Berea—Paul, in Athens, preaches on Mars’ hill about the Unknown God—He says: ‘We are the offspring of God.’ Being rejected by the Jews, Paul turns to the Gentiles—He preaches, ministers, and travels. The gospel comes both in word and in power. True ministers preach in a godly manner— Converts are the glory and joy of missionaries.*

Supplemental

Holy Land and Jewish insights:

A look at Jewish life at the time of the early Saints helps to understand the setting of these chapters. The temple of Jerusalem and the priestly government in Jerusalem were no longer the focal point of worship. Synagogues were becoming more autonomous centers of local leadership and community discussion, as well as worship centers.

The common term “synagogue” comes from the Greek language. It means “meeting house,” Bet Knesset, in Hebrew. Meeting houses existed before the second temple was destroyed, although there were few of them that have been uncovered archaeologically. Several synagogues were mentioned in Jesus’ ministry.

“And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue.” (*Matthew 12:9*)

“And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?” (*Matthew 13:54*)

“And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the Sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught.” (*Mark 1:21*)

“And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read.” (*Luke 4:16*)

“Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue:” (*John 12:42*)

After the Temple was destroyed, many synagogues were built. Their construction was similar to previous synagogues in that they had three meeting areas. The outer area was for the congregation, usually divided into two parts or two sides, one for women and one for men. The second part had a “Bimah” (usually a raised platform) with a table for Torah scroll as it was being read. The third part of the meeting house contained the ark that held the sacred scrolls.

The ark was usually decorated with a “sun stone” or sunburst design above it and had a curtain (veil) that had to be parted as the scroll was retrieved. The “Bimah” sometimes had moon decorations around it. The congregational area had stars decorating it. The Temple had similar decorations of sun, moon and stars. Modern temples still do.

“In the first century C.E., the synagogue emerged as a firmly-established institution. It is mentioned in all literary sources of that period, from various parts of the world. When the Second Temple was destroyed in 70 C.E., many of the rituals formerly conducted there were transferred to the synagogue, and organized prayer became the substitute for sacrifice. The sages referred to the synagogue as *mikdash me'at* (“little sanctuary”), viewing it as a miniature Temple where Jewish congregations all over the world could

gather and, to some extent, fill the void left by the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.”

“The remains of numerous synagogues dating back to the first few centuries of the Common Era have been uncovered, attesting to the widespread acceptance of the institution at that time.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

It was in many of these synagogues that fervent discussions ensued about the future of Jewish worship now that the temple had been destroyed and the priestly cast had become so divided and fraught with wickedness. Various executions and death attempts had been planned for believers in Jesus of Nazareth.

The true believers in the restoration of ancient covenants as preached and administered by the Twelve and the Seventy grew in multitudes well beyond the borders of Israel. Many non-Jews also felt the true spirit and believed. Their conversions bothered some of the Jews because the Jews wanted to hold on to past customs and social traditions. Soon, the growth of the Church became an even greater threat for the Jewish community leaders.

“And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,” (*Luke 4:28*)

“Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing . . .” (*Acts 6:9*)

“And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.” (*Acts 26:11*)

Yet, in many cases there were those who believed in and sought after truths. When Jesus and later the Apostles and Seventies taught, the congregations were ready to listen and follow the spirit.

“And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.” (*Matthew 9:35*)

“And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.” (*Luke 4:15*)

“And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.” (*Acts 14:1*)

“And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.” (*Acts 18:8*)

Another part of Jewish life included writing letters to various congregations or synagogues when personal visits were too difficult.

“The letter holds an honored place in Jewish history and literature. Since the form includes earliest diplomatic and state correspondence, business and private mail, discussions and arguments between communities on local or religious questions, polemics and controversial issues, letters have also provided for scholarly research. Letters were often written to leading rabbis on questions of Jewish law, a practice that prevails even today. Collections of the answers, authoritative rabbinic opinions, are in a

body of literature called Responsa). Jewish letters were written mainly in Hebrew, even after Jews adopted the languages of the countries of their exile. Hebrew was the language common to all Jews and remained the vehicle of all scholarly communication. The form of the letters included the date in Hebrew and the *sedra* of the coming week. At a later stage, Yiddish occupied a similar position for European Jews.”

“Writing usually required a professional to execute it. In ancient times a royal court officer, the *sofer* (scribe), was undoubtedly the letter-writer as well. The professional letter-writer was an important post even into the 20th century. Seals which were used to sign and close the documents of antiquity as well as letters, are displayed in the Israel Museum, and in other collections. Throughout the Middle Ages letters served as a major Jewish literary form. They were widely used as a means of publishing the writers' statements and views and were not necessarily private communications. They were delivered by a messenger whose errand was often interrupted on the journey so that the letter could be read to the public. Messages of importance were copied for reference and often read aloud in the synagogue or other gathering place.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The truth as it was being taught by the Lord's chosen added to the rich culture and tradition that many people still followed. Truth always builds rather than destroys. Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, God revealed a three-point standard by which truth is recognizable.

“Wherefore, he that preacheth and he that receiveth, understand one another, and both are edified and rejoice together.
And that which doth not edify is not of God, and is darkness.
That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day.” (*Doctrine & Covenants 50:22-24*)

“Being truthful is one of the most important virtues that a person can possess. In the Bible God is described as the "God of Truth" and truth is one of the 13 divine attributes. The rabbis taught that "truth has feet," i.e., is well founded and will endure. A sign of this was found in the very word itself. The Hebrew word for truth is *emet*; the first letter of the word is the first letter of the alphabet, the second is the middle letter of the alphabet and the last is the last letter of the alphabet. Thus, the three "feet" of truth are spread out and form a solid base. The Hebrew word for falsehood, however, is *sheker*, which is formed from the three letters of the alphabet before the last letter. The letters are not in their alphabetical order and represent feet which are too close together and not properly fixed. Falsehood has no foundation and will not last.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Paul's mentor and teacher, Gamaliel, had wise counsel for those who wanted the erstwhile Pharisee Saul, now an Apostle of the Lord, brought to death.

“Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space;
And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.”

“And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought:
But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.” (*Acts 5:34-35, 38-39*)

It is important to realize and remember that many are prepared before they embrace the truth. In their best efforts and faith, they respond to the Spirit that directs all open-hearted people. They need not reject their former teachings. Yet, making corrections when needed and building upon the truths they already perceive, these faithful people are edified. In former days and in the latter-days, so were the Churches built in the faith.

“Live in the Spirit”

Lesson

32

Acts 18:23–20:38; Galatians

Summary: *Paul turns to the Gentiles—He preaches, ministers, and travels—Apollos also preaches with power. Paul confers the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands—He preaches and works many miracles—Sons of Sceva fail to cast out devils by exorcism—Worshippers of Diana raise a tumult against Paul. Paul raises Eutychus from death—Paul is free from blood of all men—He predicts apostasy and cultism—He reveals a teaching from Jesus: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ Preachers of false gospels are accursed—Paul received the gospel by revelation—He believes, is taught, and preaches to the Gentiles. Paul goes to Jerusalem—He contends for the true gospel—Salvation comes through Christ. God gave the gospel to Abraham—Mosaic law added because of transgressions—The law was a schoolmaster to bring Israel to Christ—The saints are children of God by faith—All who are of the faith, and baptized into Christ, become Abraham’s seed. The saints are children of God by adoption—Paul calls the Galatians back to Christ—He compares the two covenants. Stand fast in gospel liberty—Seek faith, love, Christ, and the Spirit—The works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit set forth. Bear one another’s burdens—As ye sow, so shall ye reap—Be not weary in well doing.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights: The labors and accomplishments of Paul are exciting and dramatic. Many non-Christians (and some Christians, too) feel that Paul “took over” and that the original Jewish nature of the early believers was changed to accommodate the Gentiles. Similar statements were made about President Spencer W. Kimball when he announced the inclusion of all worthy people in priesthood blessings. The factor that is missing in these assumptions is the spirit. The spirit reveals things as they were, as they are, and as they will be.

“And truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come,” (*Doctrine & Covenants* 93:24)

At a recent conference of scholars dealing with “The Bible Code,” one orthodox Jew stated simply, “Judaism does not have the Holy Spirit.” Readers can refer to previous statements and quotes in these supplements about the Holy Spirit. A repetition and other Jewish comments about the spirit are included for comparison.

“The rabbis regarded Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi as the last of the prophets, the “divine spirit” having ceased in Israel with their deaths.”

“Ruah ha-Kodesh (holy spirit) is often used as a synonym for prophecy. However, according to some rabbis, unlike prophecy, there are some types of *ruah ha-kodesh* which also can be attained by doing good deeds.”

“The first mention of the *Urim* and *Thummim* appears in the passage in Numbers which describes Moses’ transfer of his authority to Joshua prior to his death. Joshua is told by God, through Moses, that in his capacity as leader of the Israelites, “he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the *Urim* before the Lord.” Much later, in the Book of Samuel, King Saul unsuccessfully sought information from the *Urim* and *Thummim* about the outcome of an impending battle with the Philistines, and his failure to receive any response led him to seek advice from the witch of En-Dor who conjured up for him the spirit of the dead prophet Samuel.”

“It is not known exactly when the *Urim* and *Thummim* ceased to function, but the latest period for which there is evidence of their use is that of King David. Subsequently, oracles and predictions about future events were conveyed exclusively by the prophets. The exact meaning of the words “*Urim*” and “*Thummim*” have puzzled scholars over the generations. Both in the Greek and Latin 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.)

One of the necessary requirements to have the true spirit is to have true faith in the Lord. It is a true test with true results. Misinformation usually results in closing the mind and the heart. It requires an open heart and an open mind to exercise true faith. Jewish scholars have described the Christian faith as follows.

“Christianity is the religion which derives from the original followers of Jesus of Nazareth, and which became a major religion in the Western world during the common era. While the history of Christianity has much detailed information, this article . . . is seen from the Jewish point of view.”

“Strictly speaking, the ministry of Jesus himself does not come under the heading of "Christianity," but rather is part of the history of different Jewish-Christian sects which developed at the beginning of the common era. The first Jewish sects which followed Jesus' teachings still observed much of the Torah but added the belief that Jesus was the messiah. The Greek translation of the word *messiah* is *Christos*, and thus Jesus' followers deemed him Jesus Christ. After his death, these followers came to be known as Christians. At this point, the nature of Christianity began to change from being a Jewish-Christian sect with partial observance of *mitzvot* to a sect embracing gentile followers. This development took place largely under the influence of Paul of Tarsus who attracted a gentile following by teaching that the observance of the commandments was no longer necessary. Faith in Jesus could take the place of the commandments and the "Church" could take the place of the Jewish people.”

“A Christian community began to emerge whose traditions and beliefs concerning Jesus were shaped by the New Testament. The writings included in the New Testament were written between 66 C.E. and 200 C.E., a period in which relations between Jews and Christians had already begun to deteriorate. Thus, the New Testament portrays Jesus as engaged in violent debates with Jewish scribes, and tends to describe "the Jews" as being responsible for Jesus' death. As the scriptural authority of Christianity, the New Testament has served as a basis for Christian anti-Semitism throughout the ages.”
(*Encyclopedia Judaica* Jr.)

Surrounding cultures and religions also added their contrasts and created disputations. A popular worship culture included gods of the earth, wind, rain, and sun. Anciently, the religion of Baal featured different gods. Female gods became popular, such as goddesses of victory, a fish goddess (mermaid), and one connected with fertility, Astarte. This goddess was later known as Ashteroth (the word Easter seems to have been derived from Astarte). A very popular goddess was Diana.

“Archaeological finds have included hieroglyphic writings, columns of ancient synagogues, and a statue of the Greek goddess of victory standing on a globe of the world supported by Atlas.”

“Talmudic sources also mention Ashkelon's orchards and a fair held there. In the Byzantine period the city was a center of paganism, whose population worshiped a fish-goddess, Derceto, whose image was a mermaid.”

“*Ecclesia Et Synagoga* is the name given to the symbolic representations in Christian art of the Middle Ages of the victorious Church and defeated Synagogue, symbolizing the triumph of Christianity. The representation is often found in medieval Christian manuscript art. It also became a conventional decoration in very many medieval churches, especially in France, England, and Germany, and took the form of two graceful female figures, usually on the outside of the building. The Church is shown erect and triumphant, bearing a cross; the Synagogue is usually blindfold and dejected, bearing a broken staff and sometimes decorated with the Tables of the Ten Commandments symbolizing the Old Testament. The best-known statues of this type

are on the exterior of the cathedrals of Strasbourg and Bamberg. They are also found in Rheims, Paris, and Bordeaux. In England, they figure generally in a mutilated condition, as in Rochester, Lincoln, Salisbury, and Winchester.”

“The foreign queens Maacah, Jezebel and Athaliah brought in the influence of idolatry, particularly the Canaanite idol Baal, its many names and forms of worship. During this period, it was the mission of the prophets to rebuke the people for their idol worship. The prophets attacked idol worship not only on the grounds that it violates God's covenant with Israel, but also because it was useless. While the pagans believed that the natural phenomena rain, fertility, health etc. were controlled by idols, the prophets taught that God is in control of nature.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

It is interesting to note that Ephesus had a large business surrounding the goddess Diana. The tradition of the burial of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the subsequent veneration of Mary beginning in Ephesus became a counterfeit substitute for a religion. The “business” of religion eclipsed the essence of religion. Jesus taught that the first aspect of true religion is to love God and the second is to love your neighbor. That likens the holiness of all people with the holiness of God.

“... holiness ... applies to the ordinary Jew as much as to the priests. Indeed, one memorable verse reads: "The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 'Speak to the whole Israelite community and say unto them: You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy," and among the laws immediately following this statement comes the commandment: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Clearly, the holiness is not just that of the Tabernacle and the sacrifice, but that of everyday life.”

“Friendship is a relationship between people arising from mutual respect and affection. The ideal of friendship in the western world is derived from classical Greece, which exalted friendship as one of the great human achievements and prime goals of life. The significance of friendship is recognized in the Bible, but is never raised to such an important place. A friend is defined as "one who is like your very self" (Deuteronomy 13:7) and as one "who sticks closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24). Of the few depictions of close friendship in the Bible, perhaps the most famous is that of David and Jonathan. The Bible appears to be more concerned with social and family relations than with individual ones, and thus puts more emphasis on being a good neighbor than it does on friendship. The Bible also warns against false friendship, saying that people might be attracted to a person solely because of his wealth, and not out of motives of respect.”

“Hillel was a great teacher who emphasized the qualities of humility, patience, tolerance, and devotion, and who was responsible for a renewed spiritualism in Jewish life. He is perhaps best remembered for his authorship of what has become the Jewish version of the golden rule: when a heathen came to him and said he would convert to Judaism if Hillel could teach him the whole of Torah while he stood on one leg, Hillel replied, "What is hateful to you, do not do unto your neighbor; this is the entire Torah, all the rest is commentary. Go and study." This basic law, far different from the Christian conception that a person should do to others what he would have them do to him, has become a fundamental tenet of the Jewish faith.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The chastisement that Paul gave to the Saints living in various communities was to help them abandon counterfeit religion and return to the basics.

“The Torah very clearly requires the Jew to rebuke his fellow when he sees him acting wrongly. "You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor and not bear sin because of him" (Leviticus 19:17). The most obvious reason is, of course, to restrain him from evil-doing and to correct his past misbehavior. Thus a

Jew is not only commanded to watch over his own deeds and behavior; he is also responsible for ensuring that his fellow men act righteously.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The new Saints were constantly challenged by the “glitz” of the religions around them. Assimilation was a great challenge. The Apostles taught them to be in the world yet not of it.

“That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;” (*Philippians 2:15*)

“Assimilation is the process in which one cultural or national group loses its identity and becomes part of another group. Referred to Jews, assimilation means losing Jewish identity and becoming absorbed in gentile society. Throughout Jewish history assimilation of Jews has taken place and has been motivated by many factors. In some cases Jews viewed gentile culture as superior and wished to join it. As early as 175 B.C.E., during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, there were Jews who wished to accept the mode of life and culture of Hellenism. Later, in the years of early Christianity, there were Jews who gradually assimilated into the Christian way of life. In other cases, the lure of a better social or economic position led Jews to assimilate. During the Middle Ages this was sometimes the cause of apostasy (conversion out of Judaism). At other times, persecution and anti-Semitism compelled Jews to convert, but often only on the surface while secretly they remained Jews.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The lesson title means that we must live in the spirit in the world. That will guide our life in the society of the world community.

“Ye Are the Temple of God”

Lesson

33

1 Corinthians 1–6

Summary: *True saints are perfectly united in the same mind and in the same judgment—Preach the gospel and save souls—The gospel is preached by the weak and the simple. The gospel is preached by the power of the Spirit—The Spirit reveals all things to the saints—The unregenerated ‘natural man’ cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God. Milk comes before meat in the Church—Men’s works shall be tried by fire—The saints are the temple of God, and if faithful they shall inherit all things. Christ’s ministers must be faithful—The apostles suffer, minister, keep the faith—The kingdom of God is not in word but in power. The Church cannot fellowship sinners—Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. Brethren should not go to law with each other—The unrighteous shall not be saved—True saints are the temple of the Holy Ghost.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

The essence of information in this lesson is that of respect. We are taught that we must respect God, other people, and ourselves. Paul’s ancient teachings still remind us that there is no place for contention which leads to disrespect. Since there will always be reasons for differing points of view that prompt disagreement, disagreeable and contentious tendencies must be removed. This doctrine has been repeated by subsequent apostles and prophets and is recorded throughout the scriptures. This part of Jewish philosophy bases itself on the Torah (The Biblical Law).

“And he commanded them that there should be no contention one with another, but that they should look forward with one eye, having one faith and one baptism, having their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another.” (*Mosiah 18:21*)

“In Resh Lakish’s addresses, both to academy pupils and to the general public, he would emphasize the importance of the *mitzvah* of studying Torah and of the great reward for supporting the poor members of the community. However, he also stressed that enormous effort must be expended in order to master the wisdom of the Torah, and that “the words of the Torah abide only with one who kills himself for them.” He enjoined scholars to be amiable to each other and to respect one another in their halakhic discussions for “if a sage becomes angry, his wisdom departs from him.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

“Judaism is a way of life based, according to its own evidence, on a text --- the Torah --- which was revealed by God. This text was further enhanced by explanations believed to be divinely inspired. If this is accepted, then what further search for wisdom can possibly be required? Furthermore, what should a man’s attitude be if his logical reasoning leads him to conclusions which conflict with the revealed wisdom of the Torah? These questions are, in fact, the basic issues that Jewish philosophy is concerned with and different philosophers throughout the ages have suggested different solutions. Some Jewish thinkers negated the logical reasoning and insisted that the revealed knowledge always takes precedence. In effect, then, they negated philosophy.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

“The term “wisdom” (Hebrew *hokhmah*) has a wide range of meanings in different contexts, ranging from intelligence to an ethical and religious quality of life. As an historical phenomenon biblical wisdom designates a distinctive cultural tradition and scholarly activity in the history of ancient Israel, continuing in Judaism and early Christianity. It was a way of thinking and an attitude to life that emphasized experience, reasoning, morality, and the concerns of man as man rather than as Israelite. Wisdom, however, was not considered to be just intellectual ability or capacity; true wisdom had to be based on the fear of God and on a moral way of life.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

An example of moral strength is found in ancient Joseph, the son of Jacob. He was a trusted servant of Potiphar yet refused the amorous overtures of Potiphar's wife. In a compromising situation he simply "got himself out."

"And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within. And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out." (*Genesis 39:11-12*)

The body has Godlike attributes. One serves God by respecting, caring, and nurturing the body. In LDS doctrine, the body with its spirit constitutes the soul. It is our responsibility to bring and maintain our bodies into a wholeness of physical, emotional, and spiritual health.

"And the spirit and the body are the soul of man." (*Doctrine & Covenants 88:15*)

Judaism generally refers to the soul as only the spirit of a person, yet the lessons from Jewish thought are just as relevant.

"Judaism believes that man must serve God with his soul and his body. A person's soul is that part of him that loves God and His goodness and wants to be like Him, and a person's body is the physical container of his soul on earth. Nearly all the *mitzvot* which God gave are to be performed with the body. Thus the physical actions of man are sanctified. This applies to all the physical aspects of life: even sex when it is practiced in the proper framework, marriage, is in accordance with the will of God and is a *mitzvah*."

"The regulations concerning sexual relations between husband and wife (termed *toborat ha-mishpabah*, literally, "family purity"), constitute another integral component of the laws of purity which still apply today. According to biblical law, a couple must abstain from sexual intercourse while the wife is a *niddah*, i.e., during her period of menstruation. The *halakhab* as it developed over the generations extended the biblical prohibition somewhat, and as it is presently codified, stipulates that sexual intercourse (as well as intimacies which may lead to it) is forbidden from the time the woman expects her menses until seven "clean" days (that is, days on which no blood whatsoever is seen) have elapsed. A minimum of five days is fixed for the menses themselves, so that the minimum period of separation is 12 days. In the evening of the seventh clean day, the woman immerses herself in a *mikveh* and normal marital relations are resumed until the next menses are expected."

"Like other basic human desires, sex is regarded in a positive light in Jewish teaching, especially as it is the means of fulfilling the first biblical commandment: "Be fruitful and multiply." Judaism does not encourage the unbridled fulfillment of desire, however, but rather imposes restrictions which raise the act to the level of holiness."

"Detailed legislation concerning sexual behavior can be found in the Bible as well as in the Talmud and subsequent rabbinic literature. Celibacy (complete abstinence from all sexual activity) is discouraged as an unnatural state and detrimental to the human personality. The primary restriction of sexual activity in Jewish law is that it should take place within marriage, as an expression of love between husband and wife as well as out of a desire to fulfill God's commandments. An element of holiness is added by the laws of *niddah* (separation during the period of menstruation which ensure that the couple does not indulge in sex on impulse but rather directs the act to holiness."

"In general, moderation and self-control in sexual activity are encouraged. Chastity, the goal to be aimed for, does not mean the avoidance of all sex but of illegal sex. This

includes adultery, incest, sodomy, rape and seduction. Adultery is defined as sexual relations between a married woman and any man other than her husband.”

“Judaism encourages modesty as one of the means to chastity. Thus the Jewish woman is enjoined to dress and act modestly at all times. Furthermore, a man is forbidden to be alone with a woman with whom he is not permitted to have sexual relations from considerations of both chastity and modesty.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Latter-day Saint doctrine is more definitive in that any sexual contact or activity with any body, including your own body, that leads to improper sexual emotions is simply unwarranted. Obviously, the world’s mass media culture generally disagrees with such a standard.

The scriptures give us a guideline regarding disagreements and disputes. Too often, disagreements turn onto disputes and they generally result in anger. The Lord gave us a simple instruction in resolving disputes.

“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and thou rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly . . .” (*Matthew 5:23-25*)

Personal reconciliation sometimes requires arbitration and the judgement of disengaged persons; therefore, a judicial system was established in Biblical times.

“The Hebrew word for court is *bet din* (plural: *battei din*), which literally means "house of judgment"; in rabbinic literature it is the term for a Jewish court of law. We find *battei din* which handle the legal problems of the Israelites from the times of Moses. The rule of the law is an important principle of Judaism. The Torah stresses that justice must not be meted out by the parties themselves but must be administered by impartial judges. Indeed, it was Moses who first organized courts on the advice of his father-in-law, Jethro. Upon Israel's entry into their land, they were obligated to establish courts in every town. According to the Talmud, towns with less than 120 inhabitants had to have courts consisting of three judges while larger towns had to have courts consisting of 23 judges. The court of three judges exercised jurisdiction over cases involving fines, divorce, conversion, and absolution from vows. The court of 23 judges exercised jurisdiction over cases including those involving capital punishment.”

“The courts would deal with criminal law as well as all cases between two parties such as for damages and inheritance, decide on the status of individuals and objects as far as purity and kashrut (health laws) were concerned, besides clarifying such laws as those regarding the Sabbath and festivals.”

“Rabbinic courts continued to be established even when the Jews went into exile. In those countries of exile where the Jews enjoyed judicial autonomy, the rabbinical courts dealt with all matters and also imposed the special regulations made by the community. In some countries, cases involving both Christians and Jews could be heard by the *bet din* as long as an equal number of Christian and Jewish witnesses, or an equal number of judges were involved. The *bet din* followed Jewish Law, except in such matters as taxes or pledges of loans, which were often disposed of according to the law of the land. In some countries the Jewish legal system was under the jurisdiction of an officially appointed chief rabbi. In the modern period when such autonomy has disappeared, the function of the *bet din* has been limited to purely religious matters. Nevertheless, throughout the ages Jews have been encouraged to bring their disputes before a *bet din* rather than a secular court, and in the Middle Ages any Jew turning to a secular court to decide a dispute with another Jew was considered a traitor to the Jewish people.”

“The *shofet*, or judge, had to meet strict qualifications, besides just knowing the law. Among these qualifications were piety, wisdom, humility, gentility and human understanding. When Moses set up the first courts, he looked for "able men such as fear God, men of truth, hating unjust gain" (Exodus 18:21) and "wise men, and understanding and full of knowledge" (Deuteronomy 1:13). They were charged to "hear the causes between your brethren and judge righteously between a man and his brother and the stranger," not to be partial in judgment but to "hear the small and the great alike, fear no man, for judgment is God's" (Deuteronomy 1:16--17).”

“In the Talmud *shalom* is the most exalted ideal of the rabbis next to justice. The rabbis knew that only true justice could bring a true peace and that without justice peace could not be attained or preserved between nations or people. The prophet Zechariah (8:16) put it: "Speak truth to each other and judge judgments of equity (*shalom*) in your gates" -- - only justice can completely settle disputes.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Latter-day Saints are also advised to settle differences and disagreements before they develop into disputes.

“Being the kingdom of God on earth and having a perfect organization, provision is made in the Church for the trial of transgressors against church standards and for the settlement of disputes between church members and groups. It is the practice of the Church for home teachers (or other specially assigned brethren) to investigate alleged transgression and then, if necessary, bring charges against accused persons, either before a bishops court or a stake presidency and high council.” (*Bruce R. McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, Page 134*)

“High Councilors, do you have any trials before you? "Yes." Have the brethren complained of each other? "Yes." Are their feelings alienated one from the other? Bishops, do you have any trials? Are the feelings of the brethren in your Wards alienated? "Yes." What should they do in such cases? They should follow the rules laid down, and be reconciled to their brethren forthwith. I think that it can be shown that the great majority of difficulties between brethren arises from misunderstandings rather than from malice and a wicked heart, and instead of talking the matter over with each other in a saint-like spirit, they will contend with each other until a real fault is created, and they have brought a sin upon themselves. When we have done good ninety-nine times and then do an evil, how common it is, my brethren and sisters, to look at that one evil all the day long and never think of the good. Before we judge each other we should look at the design of the heart, and if it is evil, then chasten that individual, and take a course to bring him back again to righteousness.” (*Discourses of Brigham Young, Page.149 -150*)

It may be that the principle of respect for our tabernacles of flesh, temples of God, governs the spiritual, emotional, and physical context of life. Our complete morality can be measured by the respect we have for ourselves, each other, and, thereby, our God.

“Keep the Ordinances, As I Delivered Them”

I Corinthians 11–16

Summary: *Paul speaks of certain customs of hair and grooming—Heresies will arise which test and prove the faithful—Sacramental emblems are partaken in remembrance of the flesh and blood of Christ—Beware of partaking unworthily. Holy Ghost reveals Jesus is the Christ—Spiritual gifts are present among the saints—Apostles, prophets, and miracles found in the true Church. Paul extols the high status of charity—Charity, a pure love, excels and exceeds almost all else. Desire spiritual gifts—Tongues and prophecy compared—Prophecy is the greater gift—‘Ye may all prophesy’—‘Covet to prophesy.’ Christ died for our sins—He rose from the dead and was seen by many—All men will be resurrected—Paul speaks of baptism for the dead—The three degrees of glory—Victory over death comes through Christ. Paul counsels: Stand fast in the faith; let all things be done with charity.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

Ordinances are usually tokens or signs of covenants. Many times they represent a physical gesture or a spiritual commitment. An ordinance can also be a regulation, a directive, and can contain instructional value. The sacred ordinances of life deal with our commitment to accept the personal value of the atonement. Other ordinances of life deal with marriage and creating a family. Those ordinances lead us in fulfilling our responsibility as husbands, wives and children.

Jeremiah used the favorite image of an even earlier prophet, Hosea, comparing the relationship between God and Israel to that of husband and wife. Israel, in not keeping its responsibilities, deserted the true faith and had become like an unfaithful wife. Both husband and wife have a commitment to each other that should be like God’s and Israel’s dedication to one another.

One of the greatest rituals and covenants that Jews maintain is that of marriage and, subsequently, family life. Notice in the following excerpts the similarities of LDS practices to the Jewish practices that seem to come from ancient times. The ritual of marriage in Judaism is considered without end; there is no statement, “Until death do you part.” The canopy or huppah is reflective of the ancient temple. In some cases the huppah is a tallith, the garment that reminds a Jew of the covenants and commandments he has bound to himself. A minyan or “prayer circle” is formed at the marriage. Two witnesses are also present. As in all religious ceremonies, men are separated from women on two sides of the room or hall. Head covering is also required. Blessings are given to the bride and groom. Where polygamy was once accepted, it later was rescinded.

“In Jewish teaching, marriage is considered the ideal human state and a basic social institution established by God at the time of Creation. Both the Bible and the rabbis reject celibacy as unnatural and harmful to the human personality, and insist upon the need for marriage, not only for purposes of procreation, but also for companionship and human self-fulfillment: “It is not good that man be alone; I will make a helpmeet for him” (Genesis 2:15) and “He who has no wife is not a proper man; he lives without joy, blessing and goodness.” The successful marriage in the eyes of the prophets and the rabbis was the most perfect symbol of a meaningful and purposeful relationship and was taken by them as the closest approximation to the idealized relationship between God and Israel, and between Israel and the Torah. The laws of marriage and the customs and practices of the marriage ceremony which developed over the generations are numerous and varied, but all take as their goal the glorification of marriage as a sanctified state and the desire to facilitate to the greatest possible extent the maintenance of a successful and harmonious marriage.”

“The biblical idea of marriage was essentially monogamous, although polygamy was common among the upper classes of society. Among the rabbis, polygamy was almost unknown, but it was not until the 11th century that multiple marriages were legally prohibited. Then an enactment associated with the name of Rabbenu Gershom ben

Judah was promulgated which established monogamy as the legal norm for all the Jews living in Europe.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Other details of Jewish marriage are included to explain interesting cultural and traditional practices.

“A Jewish marriage consists, from the point of view of rabbinic law, of two separate acts, called *kiddushin* and *nissu'in*, which were originally performed at an interval of a year or more apart, but which from the 12th century onward became united in one ceremony.”

“Kiddushin is a legal act of acquisition of the bride by the groom: by handing over an object of value (usually a simple ring) to the bride in the presence of two witnesses and reciting the formula, "Behold you are consecrated unto me with this ring according to the law of Moses and Israel," the groom signifies his intent to reserve the bride exclusively to himself, and by accepting the ring the bride signifies her consent. (The *halakhab* also recognizes the validity of *kiddushin* performed through the writing of a contract or through actual cohabitation, but both these methods became obsolete at an early date and today *kiddushin* is uniquely performed through the transference of an object of value.)”

“Kiddushin is thus a legally binding form of betrothal, but it must be followed by *nissu'in*, the marriage proper, for the couple to be considered completely married. In the *nissu'in* ceremony, the bride is led under a canopy (*huppah*) symbolic of the groom's house, and benedictions are recited, after which the couple may legally live together.”

“The separation of the two ceremonies in Talmudic times allowed the arrangement of long betrothals, but the uncertainties of life in medieval Europe made such an arrangement impractical and perilous, and it was for this reason that it became customary to perform both ceremonies together. The actual wedding ceremony as performed today is an amalgam of customs and traditions which developed over the generations, but its basic features can be summarized as follows:

“Before being led to the *huppah* the groom, in the presence of witnesses, undertakes by an act of *kinyan* the obligations of the *ketubbah* (marriage contract; see below). He is then escorted to the place where the bride is waiting and lets down the veil over her face, while the rabbi pronounces the blessing invoked on Rebekah, "O sister! May you grow into thousands of myriads" (Genesis 24--60). (This ceremony is known in Yiddish as *bedeken di kale* ("veiling the bride") and is not practiced by Sephardi Jews.) The groom is then led to the *huppah* by his and the bride's father, while the bride is accompanied to the *huppah* by her and the groom's mother.”

“The ceremony proper (customarily performed in the presence of at least a *minyan* of males --- a precautionary measure eliminating the possibility of secret marriages) then begins with the recitation of the marriage blessing over a goblet of wine, from which both bride and groom drink. The groom then places the ring on the forefinger of the bride's right hand and in the presence of two witnesses repeats the marriage formula. *Kiddushin* has now been performed, and in order to separate it from the *nissu'in* which is to follow, the *ketubbah* is read out loud. Seven marriage blessings are then recited over a second goblet of wine and the ceremony concludes with the groom crushing a glass under his right foot, as a sign of mourning over the destruction of the Temple. To the rejoicing of the invited guests, the couple are then led to a private room in which they spend some time together, while witnesses are stationed outside. After this *yibud* (being alone together) they are finally considered to be man and wife.”

“Both the week before the wedding and the week after are celebrated in special fashion. In the synagogue on the Sabbath preceding the marriage, the groom is called to the reading of the Torah and, in some communities, while standing at the *bimah* is showered with nuts and candies, in symbolic representation of everyone's wish for his fruitfulness and happiness. This custom is called in Yiddish *aufrufen*. During the days immediately preceding the wedding, bride and groom customarily do not see each other (the actual period varies in different communities from a week to the day of the marriage), and both fast on the day of their wedding as an indication of the spiritual importance of marriage and the fact that they are about to start a new life together. Following the wedding ceremony a festive meal is served, during which the guests entertain the newly-wed couple and following which the seven wedding blessings are again recited. The seven days following the wedding are known as the *Sheva Berakhot*, for festive meals in honor of the couple are arranged each day, and at the conclusion of each the seven wedding blessings are recited in the presence of a *minyan* of invited guests.

“Although the act of marriage can be effected in different ways it has become the universal Jewish practice to use a ring (except in very few oriental communities where a coin is used). By law, the ring must belong to the bridegroom, and can be constructed of any material, as long as it is free of precious stones and its value is more than a *perutah*, the smallest denomination of currency in Talmudic times.

“(The Ketubbah) is the marriage contract, the document which records the financial obligations which the husband undertakes toward his wife consequent to their marriage. In principle, the obligations recorded in the *ketubbah* are imposed upon the husband by law, independent of the writing of the contract, but the *halakhab* still dictates that a deed be written and that it is "forbidden for the groom to live with the bride until he has written and delivered the *ketubbah* to her." According to the Talmud, the *ketubbah* was instituted in order to protect the woman, since it imposes a monetary punishment upon the husband in the case of a divorce, and it also assures the wife at least minimal compensation upon the death of her husband. In the *ketubbah* are spelled out the minimum compensation set by law, as well as all additional sums willingly offered by the husband.”

“Today, the term *huppah* refers to the decorative canopy under which the wedding ceremony is performed. Originally, however, it referred to the actual bridal chamber, the tent or room of the groom to which the bride was brought in festive procession for the marital union. The custom of setting up a canopy for the wedding ceremony was apparently not widely practiced until late in the Middle Ages, for many medieval responsa deal with the question whether the act of entering the *huppah* (canopy) was sufficient to constitute marriage or whether it was to be regarded only as a symbol which would still require the couple to retire in privacy (as in today's practice of *yibud*; see above). The Talmud relates that there was an ancient custom to make staves of the *huppah* from a cedar and a pine tree planted specifically for this purpose at the birth of a male and female child respectively. In medieval France, it was customary for the groom to cover the bride's head with his *tallit* as a symbol of sheltering her; and in modern-day Israel, for weddings of soldiers on active duty, it is not unusual to see a *huppah* constructed of a *tallit* supported by four rifles held by friends of the bride and groom. Generally, the *huppah* is erected inside the synagogue or the hall where the wedding is to take place, but among Orthodox Jews, the preferred custom is to erect the *huppah* outside, or at least in a spot open to the sky, underneath the stars, because of God's assurance to Abraham that He would make his descendants "as numerous as the stars of the heavens" (Genesis 22:17).” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

In some Jewish circles, a special garment is worn in remembrance of repentance and represents the purity of the covenant of marriage. It is also used to clothe the dead. It is called the Kitel in Yiddish meaning "gown" or garment.

“In Ashkenazi tradition it is not just the bride who wears white on her wedding day. The groom, too, stands under the canopy wearing his white *kitel*, or robe, over his wedding finery. The day of their marriage is a solemn one for the bride and groom. They pray that their past sins will be forgiven and they can start their life together afresh. The white of their clothing symbolizes the purity and the forgiveness of sin for which they are hoping. For this reason a similar garment is used to clothe the dead for burial. The *kitel* therefore also serves to remind the wearer of how brief life is, and of the necessity for atonement.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Another interesting similarity to Latter-day Saint practice is the significance of a proper ritual marriage in the faith, even though a secular marriage has already been performed.

“A convert to Judaism is considered a new-born child, and, from the halakhic point of view, he has no father or mother. Thus, if a whole family converts, the children and the parents start their lives as Jews with no legal relationship. Because of this state of affairs, converts are always named as though they were the sons of Abraham, the first Jew. A husband and wife who convert must also have another wedding ceremony in order to be married under Jewish law.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The holiness of marriage is a major part of the beliefs of both the Jews and the Mormons.

“The primary restriction of sexual activity in Jewish law is that it should take place within marriage, as an expression of love between husband and wife as well as out of a desire to fulfill God's commandments. An element of holiness is added by the laws of *niddah* (separation during the period of menstruation; which ensure that the couple does not indulge in sex on impulse but rather directs the act to holiness.”

“Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward” (Psalms 127:3). In Jewish tradition, the central purpose of marriage is to have children. Children are considered a great blessing; they are the hope and the promise of continuing life.”

“Responsibilities of a man, a woman and of children are stated in the scriptures, Talmudic and oral traditions. In many religious Jewish families, the father blesses his wife and children on a weekly basis. Women and children are to be cherished and blessed. They have different responsibilities, yet they should share an honorable status without preference. Yet, as Judaism spread without the guidance of living prophets, some discrimination became evident.”

“The woman's legal status, as defined in the Bible, is generally the same as that of man, as is her moral responsibility but certain laws do discriminate both for and against her. For example, special attention was paid to injury suffered by a pregnant woman, and the conditions applicable to a woman sold into slavery were far better than those of a male slave. The owner was expected to marry her himself or have one of his sons marry her and he had to treat her as a daughter-in-law.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The strong Jewish tradition about women places them on a lofty pedestal.

“It is said that a man without a wife lives without joy, blessing and good, and that a man should love his wife as himself and respect her more than himself. Women have greater faith than men and greater powers of discernment. The Torah, the greatest joy of the

rabbis, is frequently pictured as a woman and is represented as God's daughter and Israel's bride.”

“In modern Israel, the Declaration of Independence ensures complete equality of political and social rights to all its inhabitants, regardless of religion, race, or sex, but the real Magna Carta of the Israeli woman was the Women's Equal Rights Law of 1951, giving women equal legal status with men. The only field of law in which there remains a degree of discrimination against women is that of personal status. Matters of marriage and divorce come within the exclusive jurisdiction of the religious courts and thus, for example, a divorce must be given by the husband to the wife. On the other hand, in accordance with the *halakhab*, children take the national identity of their mother and not that of their father.”

“Woman (Eve) was created primarily to serve man (Adam) as a helper, and throughout the Bible she is expected to be a good wife and mother. But in ages when many cultures regarded their women as mere chattels, the Jews did not disregard the girl's wishes when a marriage arrangement was made. Womanly traits, good and bad, were proverbial in the Bible. Foolishness, contentiousness and indiscretion were censured. On the other hand, graciousness, industry and generosity were lauded, particularly in the paean of praise to the woman in Proverbs, whose beginning is usually translated as "A woman of valor who shall find, and her worth is far above pearls.”

“The Talmud teaches that it is a woman's duty to beautify herself so as to appear pleasing to her husband. The rabbis said: "A woman beautifies herself by powdering herself, by parting her hair and leaving it loose over her shoulders, and by applying rouge to her face." Said Rav Huna: "Only the young ones do so, but not the old ones." Said Rav Hisda to him: "Even your mother does so, even your grandmother does so, and even a woman on the verge of the grave." Though the talmudic attitude toward the use of cosmetics is basically favorable, it is combined with warnings against its utilization for immoral purposes. Furthermore, cosmetics were not permitted during periods of mourning.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Jewish tradition places a strong responsibility on the husband and father. Further details of Jewish custom in the family parallel the Latter-day Saints' lifestyle.

“The father's duty is to provide for his children, to give them a proper education, to teach them a trade, and to prepare them for marriage. Some authorities require that the father teach his son to swim. The father is morally accountable for the behavior and the sins of his children until they reach the age of their own responsibility --- bat mitzvah at the age of 12 for girls, and bar mitzvah at the age of 13 for boys. The father retains responsibility in legal matters for his son until the age of 20 and for his daughter until she marries.”

“Great emphasis is placed on the importance of education and religious training, which should begin early in the home. The mother's role is vital since she is the one who creates the home atmosphere in which basic values are fostered and transmitted. She trains her sons and daughters in *mitzvot* and prepares them for formal education. The rabbis advised parents to be loving but firm in the upbringing of their children, and warned against showing favoritism.”

“In some communities it is customary for the father to bless his children on the Sabbath eve when he returns from the synagogue.”

“Children are obliged to treat their parents with honor and respect. Children must provide dependent parents with food, clothing and personal attention if it is necessary. This obligation is removed from a daughter when she marries.”

“Judaism considers the establishment of a family a holy task. Children are a gift from God and childlessness the greatest misfortune that could befall a marriage. The virtues of domestic bliss have been frequently extolled by the rabbis, and the close knit Jewish family, where the home has been the center of religious practice and ceremony, has greatly helped the survival of Judaism and preserved the moral integrity of the Jews.”
(*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Marriage is one of the greatest covenants God has given to man. The sanctity of marriage is evident in the Bible. The traditions of both Jews and Latter-day Saints similarly uphold the precious responsibilities and blessings of this covenant.

“Be Ye Reconciled to God”

2 Corinthians

Summary: *God comforts and cares for His saints—The saints are sealed and given assurance by the Spirit in their hearts. Saints should love and forgive one another—They always triumph in Christ. The gospel surpasses the law of Moses—Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Gospel light shines on the saints—Mortal trials are nothing as contrasted with eternal glory. Saints walk by faith and seek tabernacles of immortal glory—Gospel reconciles man to God—His ministers carry the word of reconciliation to the world. Now is the day of salvation—God’s ministers must walk uprightly and bear all things—Saints should not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. Godly sorrow for sin leads to repentance—The sorrow of the world worketh death. True saints impart of their substance to the poor—Christ out of His poverty brought eternal riches. God loves and rewards a cheerful giver—Thanks be to Him for his unspeakable gift. Bring every thought into obedience—Paul glories in the Lord. Maintain the simplicity that is in Christ—Satan sends forth false apostles—Paul glories in his sufferings for Christ. Paul caught up to the third heaven—The Lord gives men weaknesses that they may triumph over them—Paul manifests the signs of an apostle. Saints should test themselves as to righteousness—Be perfect, of one mind, and live in peace.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

Being reconciled to God requires us to recognize Him and what He does for us. We must also recognize ourselves and what we can do for Him. The concept of being chosen to represent God is supported by in the scriptures. In upcoming supplement material, **Lesson 43: “A Chosen Generation,”** we will more closely examine the concept. Both Jews and Latter-day Saints consider the House of Israel as chosen. Some of the most important characteristics of reconciliation are mercy and forgiveness.

“How odd of God, to choose the Jews.” W.N. Ewer, who wrote this jingle, could not understand why Israel is God’s Chosen People. Moses, in Deuteronomy 7:7--8, explains it thus: “The Lord did not set His love upon you because you were more in number than any people . . . but because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn to your fathers.” The rabbis insist that Israel was elected because it voluntarily accepted the Torah whereas other nations would not. Mercy and forgiveness, says the Talmud, are distinguishing characteristics of Abraham and his seed, and these characteristics motivated God to choose Israel as His people.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The value of forgiving and being forgiven affects the entire health of a person. The Lord required us to forgive because He forgives us.

“Asaph was a religious doctor and tried to harmonize science and religion. He believed that since many diseases came as punishments for sins, a patient could be cured only by praying hard, asking forgiveness and giving charity, because God was the true healer, only God could give doctors the power to use properly all the medicine they had learnt. He also taught that forbidden food was a cause of disease, while kosher food prevented it.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

There is a mistaken idea that if one truly repents and truly forgives that he will forget. The scriptural verses about remembrance indicate that the Lord is the one who will forget our mistakes. Apparently we need to have memory, because it is from our memory of good and bad that we learn. As we remember our sins and the sins of our forefathers, we can prevent ourselves from repeating the same mistakes.

“But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” (*Jeremiah 31:33-34*)

There is great value in being reconciled with God through the process of remembering. It leads us to seek forgiveness and imbues us a sense of forgiving.

“It is natural for someone who has endured a terrible disaster to want to bury his painful memories along with the dead and forget the past. But the Jews, being only a tiny minority in the world and having a long history of persecution, cannot afford to forget that Nazism brutally murdered six million of their people. Thus in 1953 the Knesset, Israel's parliament, established Yad Vashem, the Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, to perpetuate their memory.”

“... the old-fashioned candle will continue to symbolize for Jews the spirit of God, the light of the Torah, the conclusion of the Sabbath and the memory of those who have passed away.”

“The rabbis of that generation enacted new laws whose purpose was to fulfill the biblical verse, "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem . . ." (Psalm 137). They decreed that a corner of every house, a part of every meal, even some of every woman's jewelry, be set aside --- in memory of the Temple. Special prayers were formulated to express the yearning of the people to return to Zion and to worship once again in the Temple of God. Instrumental music was banned from the synagogue service, a glass was broken at every wedding, and the words "Next year in Jerusalem" were recited on Passover and at the end of the Day of Atonement --- all in memory of the Temple. Most historians believe that these prayers, customs, and hopes helped to unite the Jewish people and kept alive the hope of returning to Zion, a hope fulfilled in our days.”

“In addition to belief in God, one of the important articles of faith of the Jew is that God is good. Often human beings cannot appreciate God's goodness, because no human being can see the whole course of events as God does. A unique aspect of the Jewish faith is that although God rules the world with absolute justice, He is also merciful and forgives sins against Him. The doctrine of repentance is based on this belief.”

“The exercise of mercy is an obligation for all Jews. By this it is meant that they must act with compassion and forgiveness towards all mankind, and perform deeds of charity and kindness. This quality is an essential characteristic of God who is known as *Rahum* ("Merciful") and, in accordance with the tradition which sets as man's goal the imitation of God: "As He is merciful, so be you merciful." Just as God is bound by His covenant of mercy with His people, so is the Jew bound by specific commandments to act mercifully to the oppressed, the alien, the orphan, the widow, and indeed, every living creature. (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

On one occasion, a professor of religion went to the Western (wailing) Wall, microphone in hand, and began asking religious Jews why they were chosen. One responded, “We are chosen to suffer.” Later, in making a point about the Savior's suffering, he said, “No one is chosen to suffer other than the Lord.” Yet, the difficulties, calamities, and sufferings of the Jews will ultimately bring them closer to the Lord who covenanted to remember and save His people. Sufferings bring us closer to Him and those having the highest responsibilities of serving Him often suffer greatly. They “sink to new heights.”

“And if thou shouldst be cast into the pit, or into the hands of murderers, and the sentence of death passed upon thee; if thou be cast into the deep; if the billowing surge conspire against thee; if fierce winds become thine enemy; if the heavens gather blackness, and all the elements combine to hedge up the way; and above all, if the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee, know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good. The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?” (*Doctrine & Covenants* 122:7-8)

“Ecclesiastes or Kohelet, is one of the five *Megillot*. It has won enduring popularity because of its wise maxims and its counsel on life. "Ecclesiastes" from the Greek and "Kohelet" in Hebrew, mean leader or teacher of a group. The Book reveals the wisdom acquired by Kohelet on his journey through life. He experiences joy and sorrow, faith and doubt, vanity and humility, hypocrisy and truth. The struggle to find meaning and purpose in life was as baffling for him as it is for us today. Kohelet arrives at the conclusion that the true joy of life lies not in wealth nor in vain pleasure but in spiritual riches of fulfilling *mitzvot*, God's commandments. Love and reverence for the Almighty help man to accept his fate and to overcome the obstacles and temptation that continually beset him.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Once reconciled to God, the adversity in life brings His peace, resulting in a spirit of fulfillment, completeness and serenity that enables us to comfort and bless others in their difficulties.

“ It is generally thought that the Hebrew word *shalom* means peace, but it is really much more than that. The main problem in understanding *shalom* is that there is no single word for it in English, and even many words when they are strung into deep philosophical theories, cannot capture the full meaning of the simple Hebrew. *Shalom* in Jewish thought has a positive connotation and, as such, is central to Judaism. Peace, on the other hand, is a negative concept; the absence of war, strife, and fighting. *Shalom* is more like fulfillment, completeness, serenity, or security. Its opposite is not only war and strife, but adversity, injustice, fragmentation or disunity.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

“Beloved of God, Called to Be Saints”

Lesson

36

Romans

Summary: *Rom. 1: The gospel is the power of God unto salvation through Jesus Christ—Wrath of God rests on those guilty of murder, homosexual practices, fornication, and other sins if the guilty do not repent. Rom. 2: God shall render to every man according to his deeds—Both Jews and Gentiles judged by gospel laws. Rom. 3: Man is not justified by the law of Moses—He is justified through righteousness which is by faith in Christ, made possible through his atoning sacrifice. Rom. 4: Abraham's faith was imputed to him for righteousness—Man is justified by faith, righteous works, and grace. Rom. 5: Man is justified through the blood of Christ—Adam fell, and Christ atoned that man might be saved. Rom. 6: Baptism is in similitude of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ—The wages of sin is death—Christ brings eternal life. Rom. 7: Law of Moses is fulfilled in Christ—Paul delights in the law of God after the inward man. Rom. 8: Law of Christ brings life and peace—Those adopted as sons of God become joint-heirs with Christ—God's elect are foreordained to eternal life—Christ makes intercession for man. Rom. 9: How the law of election (foreordination) operates—Israel chosen (foreordained) to receive the adoption, the covenants, the promises, and the blessings of the gospel; yet they are not all Israel, which are of Israel—They must seek their blessings by faith—The Gentiles also attain to righteousness and salvation by faith. Rom. 10: Salvation comes through righteousness to those who believe in Christ—Faith comes by bearing the gospel taught by legal administrators sent of God. Rom. 11: Israel was chosen (foreordained) according to the election of grace—But some hardened their hearts against it—The Gentiles are grafted into the bough of Israel—The gospel goes preferentially to the Gentiles until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in. Rom. 12: Paul counsels the saints to present their bodies as a living sacrifice; to use their own grace-given gifts; to live as becometh saints. Rom. 13: Paul counsels: Be subject unto God's ministers; keep the commandments; love one another; righteousness leads to salvation. Rom. 14: Avoid doubtful disputations and unrighteous judgment of each other—Every knee shall bow to Christ—Kingdom of God embraces righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Rom. 15: True saints fellowship one another—Paul recounts his diligence in preaching the gospel—Gifts of the Spirit poured out upon the Gentiles. Rom. 16: Paul salutes divers saints—He counsels the saints to avoid those who cause divisions—They should be wise concerning good, and simple concerning evil.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

Paul's admonition to recognize sins and then do something about overcoming them is a basic principle found in the Bible and in Judaeo-Christian teachings.

“SIN AND REPENTANCE - The very fact that Judaism has a doctrine of mitzvot means that it must also take sin into consideration. Performing a *mitzvah* is doing God's will; sin is doing something which is against God's will. In biblical Hebrew there are about 20 different words which denote sin which range from a deliberate act in defiance of what God has forbidden to accidental, unwilling transgression. The Bible is therefore very much aware of sin.”

“Sins can be divided into two categories --- those of commission and those of omission. The former are more serious insofar as they involve a positive action -- doing something which is forbidden. The latter consist of the failure to perform *mitzvot*. As far as the rabbis were concerned, the three most serious sins are murder, idolatry, and adultery or incest. They ruled that rather than commit these, a person must give up his life. In order to save his life, a person is allowed to commit the other sins.”

“In rabbinic theology, every person has in him a *yezer ha-tov* and a *yezer ha-ra* -- a good inclination and an evil one. The *yezer ha-tov* urges man to do God's will, whereas the *yezer ha-ra* entices man to sin. Thus life is seen as a constant struggle between these two elements. The rabbis, with great psychological insight, also understood that the first time a person sins, he does feel bad about it, but as he performs that sin again and again, it no longer seems to him to be forbidden. As a result of their view of sin, the rabbis tried to give advice on how to avoid it. A person should always realize that there is a Seeing Eye and a Hearing Ear above him, and that all his sins are recorded. A person should reflect on the destiny of all human beings and realize that ultimately he will have to give account for his sins. Above all, the best protection against the evil inclination is the study of Torah.”

“Although Judaism sees sin as a most serious matter, even the sinner is not without hope. One of the most important theological doctrines of both the Bible and the Talmud is that if a sinner repents his bad deeds, God will forgive him. Repentance consists of several stages --- firstly the sinner must reflect on his actions and realize that he has

indeed done the wrong thing. He must then make up his mind never to do it again, and confess his sin. This confession is not made to any other human being but is made by the sinner directly to God. On this basis the two confessions *Ashamnu* and *Al-Het* were introduced into the prayers for the Day of Atonement which is a special occasion for repentance and forgiveness. However, even when a sinner has done all these things, his repentance is still not final until he has been exposed to the same temptation and withstood it. Of course he should not deliberately put himself on that spot again.”

“Repentance in Hebrew is known as *teshuvah*, which literally means "return," and signifies a return to God. A person who repents his sins is known as a *ba'al teshuvah*. Many rabbis of the Talmud believed that the real *ba'al teshuvah* is greater even than a person who has never sinned and they furthermore said that when a person repents out of love of God (and not just out of fear of divine punishment), all the sins he had committed are considered to be *mitzvot*. This is perhaps the most comforting doctrine that Judaism has given to the world.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

One element that Judaism seems to lack is the ordinance that provides knowing that sins are forgiven. Immersions are completed with purification in mind, but immersion for forgiveness of sin is unknown in today's Judaism. Yet, immersions for the Jews and for the Latter-day Saints is similar at least in form. The Jews prefer immersions in “Living Water” from a spring source. The water must be flowing in and out of the font and it should be below ground level.

The sacrifice of a red calf, as discussed in **Lesson 25: “Not My Will, But Thine, Be Done”** and in last year's **Lesson 40: “Enlarge the Place of Thy Tent”** indicates the Biblical ordinance took place in a “water of separation” (separate font?) And for purification of sins.

Through repentance comes peace, also known as grace. Peace is the word *shalom* in Hebrew.

“At the end of the Priestly Blessing (Numbers 6:24--26; "May God turn His countenance unto you and grant you *shalom* . (In this case) *shalom* is more like grace or spiritual fulfillment than simply peace.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

One of Paul's great concerns was the assimilation of early saints into the world culture that existed around them. Today's Latter-day Saints are told to be in the world yet not part of it. One of the Jews' greatest concerns is “conforming to the world,” or as they call it, assimilation. Note the similar trends of the challenge of Jewish assimilation and identity with that of the Latter-day Saints.

“Assimilation is the process in which one cultural or national group loses its identity and becomes part of another group. Referred to Jews, assimilation means losing Jewish identity and becoming absorbed in gentile society.”

“Throughout Jewish history assimilation of Jews has taken place and has been motivated by many factors. In some cases Jews viewed gentile culture as superior and wished to join it.”

“For some Jews, assimilation served as a shortcut to attaining individual advancement . . . Later, their admiration for the modern national state, a growing appreciation of the life-style and social structure of the dominant nations, and the idea of progress combined to create the conception that the Jewish national existence was outdated. Such Jews also felt that they were guilty of intellectual and emotional dishonesty in cherishing Jewish messianic hopes. Furthermore, instead of looking to Erez Israel as the Jewish national homeland, Jews became imbued with nationalistic feelings for the country in which they lived.”

“Assimilation in the Jewish community of the United States has been directed by several different pressures. During colonial times, there were so few Jews that they were regarded as exotic.”

“The Holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel caused many Jews to reaffirm their Jewish identity. The rapid economic rise of the bulk of the American Jewish community into the middle and upper-middle classes during the postwar period remade the life style of American Jews, so that in many aspects Jews became part of the American establishment. This was particularly true in the realms of academic and artistic endeavor, where Jews became a dominant force during this era. It was thus no longer necessary to play down the fact of one's Jewishness. Increased efforts were made by almost every American Jewish body toward intensifying Jewish education and strengthening the connection between American Jews and Israel. The last generation of American Jews has rebuilt the institutions of Jewish communal life at an estimated cost of two billion dollars, and enormous personal energy.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Assimilation for Latter-day Saints represents a compromise in lifestyle and obedience to the Lord's commandments. Yet being “in the world” and yet “not of the world” allows us the interchange with others that would benefit from our God-given standards. Those higher standards even apply to the treatment of our enemies.

On the subject of treating our enemies, let us review a section from **Lesson 8: “Living Righteously in a Wicked World”** from the previous year's Old Testament Gospel Doctrine Supplement.

Through the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, we find that the motivation of those who many call the Essenes was to move away from wickedness and establish a singular community of righteousness. Their organization had a shadow of biblical organization. Their leader was called the “Teacher of Righteousness” and he had two assistants. There was also a council of “Twelve Overseers.” They had an order following the ‘righteous king’ which is said in Hebrew, “Melech Zedek.” The Dead Sea sect shunned others and probably evoked one of the Savior's comments in the Sermon on the Mount.

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.
But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;
That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.
For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?” *Matthew 5:43-46*

Elisha's continued theme was that he was a servant of God, even refusing payment from Syria's highest ranking officer in the Land of Israel at that time. The anomaly is that the children of Israel strongly objected to the Syrian “occupying” forces. The prophet was probably teaching the same principle that Jesus taught and that has been revealed again in our day.

“Then saith he unto them, Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.” (*Matthew 22:21*)

“We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.” (*Articles of Faith 11*)

The faithful young woman, probably serving in Naaman's household, was a believer and prompted the "occupying" Syrian officer to come to the prophet to be blessed. He sent a message to do something simple-- bathe in the Jordan River. When the officer finally "swallowed his pride," he was blessed! Imagine--the enemy was blessed!

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." (*Matthew 5:44*)

We don't know for sure if that resulted in his conversion and it doesn't matter. The blessing was unconditional. The lesson for the unbelieving Israelites was repeated by the Savior as He said:

"And many lepers were in Israel in the time of (Elisha) the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian." (*Luke 4:27*)

"The earliest ethical teachings are commandments in the Bible: to do justice, to avoid bribery, gossip, robbery, oppression, to protect the weak --- the widow, the orphan, the slave, the stranger; to be kind to animals. Man is obliged to overcome his normal feelings and to obey these commands --- even with respect to his enemy." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Jesus Christ: “The Author and Finisher of Our Faith”

Lesson

37

Hebrews

Summary: *Heb. 1: The Son is in the express image of the person of the Father—Christ is the Only Begotten Son and thus above the angels. Heb. 2: Jesus came to suffer death and save men—He came to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. Heb. 3: Christ is the Apostle and High Priest of our profession—Jesus, being the Son is more than a servant—Now is the time and the day of our salvation. Heb. 4: The gospel was offered to ancient Israel—Saints enter into the rest of the Lord—Though tempted in all points, Jesus was without sin. Heb. 5: Ministers must be called of God as was Aaron—Christ was a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek—Jesus Christ is the author of eternal salvation. Heb. 6: Let us go on to perfection—Sons of perdition crucify Christ afresh—God swears with an oath that the faithful shall be saved. Heb. 7: The Melchizedek Priesthood brings exaltation and administers the gospel—It is received with an oath and covenant—Superiority of the Melchizedek over the Aaronic Priesthood—Salvation comes through the intercession of Christ. Heb. 8: Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin—God promised to make a new covenant with Israel. Heb. 9: Mosaic ordinances prefigured Christ’s ministry—Christ is the Mediator of the new covenant. Heb. 10: We are sanctified by the shedding of the blood of Christ—Superiority of His sacrifice—Those who fall from grace through willful sin are damned—The just shall live by faith. Heb. 11: By faith we understand the word and work of God—Faith of the ancients was centered in Christ—By faith men subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, and worked miracles. Heb. 12: Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth—God is the Father of spirits—To see God, follow peace and holiness—Exalted saints belong to the Church of the Firstborn. Heb. 13: Marriage is honorable in all—Christ is the same everlasting—How the saints are to offer acceptable sacrifices.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

Sometimes people think the Old Testament was a lesser law and the New Testament is the higher law. Immediately that prompts the question, “What would cause God to give less than the full plan to His children?” So, let us begin with the premise that the gospel and eternal covenants were given to man from the beginning.

“Commencing with Adam, who was the first man, who is spoken of in Daniel as being the "Ancient of Days," or in other words, the first and oldest of all, the great, grand progenitor of whom it is said in another place he is Michael, because he was the first and father of all, not only by progeny, but the first to hold the spiritual blessings, to whom was made known the plan of ordinances for the salvation of his posterity unto the end, and to whom Christ was first revealed, and through whom Christ has been revealed from henceforth. Adam holds the keys of the dispensation of the fullness of times; i.e., the dispensation of all the times have been and will be revealed through him from the beginning to Christ, and from Christ to the end of the dispensations that are to be revealed.” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Section Four 1839-42 p.167*)

It was later that the Children of Israel rejected the responsibilities (and subsequently the blessings) of the higher law, settling instead for a lesser law. At least, Moses was able to keep the lesser law as a Messianic guideline. It was created to anticipate the Savior. The lesser law was predicated on performance-related criteria rather than on intent or attitude. Simply put, do’s and don’ts became the law instead of the Spirit of God dictating the law.

During the entire twentieth chapter of Ezekiel, the prophet speaks of God’s sadness in giving His children less than the best. Some selected verses highlight His feelings of giving statutes (commandments) that were less than the best, resulting in judgements (rewards) that were less than the best. In fact, the lesser statutes and judgements were a pollution. Here are selected verses from the twentieth chapter of Ezekiel.

6. In the day that I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt into a land that I had espied for them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands:

8. But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt: then I said, I will pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them in the midst of the land of Egypt.
9. But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they were, in whose sight I made myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt.
11. And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them.
13. But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them . . .
17. Nevertheless mine eye spared them from destroying them, neither did I make an end of them in the wilderness.
22. . . . I withdrew mine hand, and wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted in the sight of the heathen, in whose sight I brought them forth.
25. Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live;
26. And I polluted them in their own gifts . . .

Both the physical and spiritual scattering of Israel is compared to heathens who want to worship stone and wooden images. The Israelites stayed away from those images, but resorted to rules of do's and don'ts instead of the Holy Spirit. Yet, in the end, the children of Israel will be gathered, and their original covenants will be restored. Ezekiel chapter twenty continues:

32. And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone.
34. And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out.
35. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face.
37. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant:
41. I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered; and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen.
43. And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled . . .
47. . . . Hear the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will kindle a fire in thee . . .
48. And all flesh shall see that I the LORD have kindled it: it shall not be quenched.

The world will truly see . . . "The spirit of God like a fire is burning." As of now, part of the family of Israel knows that the original covenants have been restored.

"The everlasting gospel made known in the last days is nothing more nor less than the ancient religion restored. It is the commencement of the "restitution of all things, spoken of by all the holy prophets since the world was." (*John Taylor, The Gospel Kingdom*, p.2-3)

A few more comments about Jewish philosophy on faith/belief and works (mitzvot) show some wavering between the two.

“The developing rift between Christianity and Judaism and the animosity after their final split in the second century C.E. produced many great disputations. A crucial one occurred about the time of the Bar Kokhba revolt (c. 135 C.E.) between the Christian Justin Martyr and the Jew Tryphon. While the two adversaries expressed friendship toward each other, the argument became bitter. Justin challenged the Jewish concept of being the chosen people by pointing out their low position in the world, and argued that the Jews were made to follow laws as punishment by God. Tryphon countered by charging Justin with selecting his quotes from the Bible, and - proclaiming that true salvation comes from strictly following the law, not from faith in man. He argued.”

“The medieval Jewish philosophers gave a great deal of thought to formulating articles of faith and disagreed among themselves as to how many there should be. Some even opposed any such formulation on the grounds that every mitzvah (deed or act) is an article of faith.”

“One of the first formulations was that of Hananel ben Hushi'el who was an important Babylonian scholar of the 11th century. He saw, as basic to the Jewish religion, the following four principles: (1) belief in God; (2) belief in the prophets; (3) belief in the World to Come; and (4) belief in the coming of the Messiah.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

That Messiah, still unknown by a part of the House of Israel (and most of mankind), is the original author and finisher of our faith.

“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.” (*Revelation 1:8*)

“Thou Hast Testified of Me”

Acts 21–28

Summary: *Acts 21: Paul journeys to Jerusalem—He is persecuted, arrested, and bound. Acts 22: Paul recounts the story of his conversion and also tells of seeing Jesus in a vision—He is accorded some privileges as a Roman citizen. Acts 23: Paul smitten at Ananias' order—The Lord again appears to Paul—Forty Jews plot his death—He is delivered over to Felix. Acts 24: Paul is accused of sedition—He answers in defense of his life and doctrine—He teaches Felix of righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come. Acts 25: Paul, before Festus, appeals unto Caesar—Agrippa desires to bear Paul. Acts 26: Paul recounts his former persecution of the saints as a Pharisee—He testifies of the appearance of Jesus on the Damascus road—Agrippa is 'almost persuaded' to be a Christian. Acts 27: Paul, in a perilous voyage, travels toward Rome—An angel comforts him—He uses the gift of seership—He is shipwrecked. Acts 28: Paul is unharmed by a viper's bite—He heals the sick in Melita—He preaches in Rome, first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:	The insights in this lesson include how Paul, a former Pharisee, violates the temple precinct (according to the Pharisaic rules), after “he saw the light.” It continues with a look at Paul’s dialogue with King Agrippa resulting in the famous statement by the King (possibly a believer), “almost thou persuadest me . . .” Paul responds with an Apostolic right and challenge, “I wish you were such as “I am.”
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The Jerusalem temple precinct had three courtyards. The outer courtyard circumscribed about forty acres, approximately the area of four square Salt Lake City blocks. On the insistence of the Herod who rebuilt the temple, the outer courtyard was available for any visitor, including Gentiles. Within the outer courtyard was a raised complex under the administration of the Jewish priests that included two major areas. In ancient times, one raised area was under the administration of the twelve High Priests and the innermost area was a little higher and under the charge of the High Priest of the Temple.

The priests of the temple posted signs carved in stone and written in four languages--Hebrew, Aramaic, Latin and Greek--that announced a death penalty for anyone going into the priestly compounds without their express permission. Apparently, it was the only death penalty the Jewish priests were allowed to administer. It would have been by stoning, hurtling a person to his death and casting stones to cover and bury the body. (See the beginning of **Lesson 10: “Take My Yoke upon You and Learn of Me”** for an explanation of stoning).

After Paul’s miraculous conversion, which included blindness as he “saw the light,” Paul boldly returned to Jerusalem and preached in the temple. He escaped stoning at the hand of the Jewish priests and escaped scourging at the hands of the Roman soldiers because he invoked his Roman citizenship. Still under arrest, he appealed to the higher court of Caesar in Rome.

Awaiting transport from Caesarea to Rome to appeal his Roman arrest (thus saving him from murderous plans that Jewish priests had for him), Paul was invited to speak to Herod Agrippa II and some other Roman dignitaries. Paul, taking every opportunity to witness of Jesus and the resurrection, tells his conversion story, giving us some powerful doctrinal guidelines.

“Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.” (*Acts 26:22-23*)

First, understanding God must be with eyes that can see Him and ears that can hear Him. Paul had to be blinded in order for him to open his “inner eyes.”

“Saul of Tarsus saw Jehovah, the glorified Christ, and heard his voice and conversed with him. Even partially protected as he was from the brilliance of light from heaven greater than the noonday sun, Paul collapsed to the earth trembling, shocked. The voice said: "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. . . ." (Acts 9:5.) So intense was the light that even with protection he was blinded. He said: "And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus." (Acts 22:11.) A priesthood miracle restored sight to Paul after three days of total darkness.”
(*Spencer W. Kimball, Faith Precedes the Miracle, p.90*)

Second, the great Messiah should suffer. This is somewhat of an antithesis to Judaism which anticipates a Messiah who would redeem Israel from suffering.

“In traditional Judaism, the Messiah will be a human being --- albeit it a perfect one --- who will come and bring harmony to the world. He will not have a divine aspect other than having been chosen by God for his task. The Hebrew word for Messiah, *mashi'ah*, means "anointed" and indicates that the Messiah has been chosen by God. The coming of the Messiah therefore has come to mean the redemption of the Jewish people and an end to its suffering and tribulations.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Third, there truly is life after death. The resurrection was started by the Messiah. This doctrine was easier for Paul to accept because he already came from a Pharisaic background. The Pharisees believed in life after death whereas the Sadducees did not.

“But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.” (*Acts 23:6-8*)

Fourth, God's instructions to man apply to everyone--the Jews and the Gentiles. Judaism seems to differentiate between the laws for Israel and the laws for others.

“Noachide Laws (are) seven laws which were supposed by the rabbis to have been binding on all mankind even before the revelation at Sinai. They are referred to as "Noachide" because of their universality, since the whole human race was supposed to be descended from the three sons of Noah, who alone survived the flood. Exegetically derived from statements made by God to Adam and to Noah, six of them are negative:

not to

- 1) worship idols;
- 2) blaspheme the name of God;
- 3) kill;
- 4) commit adultery;
- 5) rob;
- 6) eat flesh that had been cut from a living animal.

One is positive:

- 7) to establish courts of justice.

These seven laws are binding on all non-Jews even today. Whoever observes them is considered to be among the "Righteous Gentiles.”

“A convert must observe all the precepts that bind Jews. The sages interpret the statement "There shall be one law for the citizen and one for the stranger (*ger*) that

dwelleth amongst you" (Exodus 12:49) to mean that converts have the same rights and obligations concerning Torah precepts as Jews by birth." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Paul was surely aware that King Agrippa II wished to have a better life and better relationship with his subject than his predecessor Herod Agrippa I, who died being eaten of worms (Acts 12:23). Agrippa II must have studied the Law and the Prophets as well as the language of his subjects. He may have been a "believer," but without commitment.

"King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me . . ." (*Acts 26:27-28*)

"Personal integrity is vital in the living Church. We forget that Korihor actually believed but was possessed of a lying spirit. (Alma 30:42.) Agrippa believed the prophets, but when it mattered he lacked the courage to say so. (Acts 26:27.) How sad that so many cannot see that to be put out of the secular synagogues for one's belief in Christ is the first step toward being let in the kingdom of God! (John 9:22.) How ironic to see so many so-called free spirits imprisoning themselves in roles that, like Korihor's, cause them to be at cruel war with themselves. How lamentable that when all tongues will confess that Jesus is the Christ in that not-too-distant Judgment Day, there will be so many who were, in mortality, undeclared believers, who were actually persuaded and "almost" so acknowledged openly." (*Neal A. Maxwell, Things As They Really Are, p.62*)

"Almost" may work in horseshoe pitching, yet in an eternal scope we must be fully committed, or as Paul said, "altogether."

"And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." *Acts 26:29*)

In his statement, Paul teaches a powerful doctrine of following the Lord's anointed. He is saying that Agrippa, as well as everyone - Jews and Gentiles - should strive to be as "I AM," (the name of the Lord). Paul also has the right to say, "Be like I am," because Paul was one of the Lord's chosen. His eyes had been opened to see the Lord. His ears heard the Lord. His heart had been touched and purified and then he was called by the Lord to be an apostle and prophet.

The same lesson was repeated some time ago in Jerusalem, as Elder Russell M. Ballard was being introduced to the Jerusalem Branch and the BYU students at a fireside. As the young student leader became at a loss for words in announcing an apostle and prophet in Jerusalem, Elder Ballard leaned over and said, "Just tell them I'm one of the good guys." Apostle Ballard then spoke about the guidelines and instructions of following the Savior. He bore a humble witness of the Lord. Elder Ballard's last statement included the humble instruction to follow the brethren, because they will lead you to the Lord.

In a beautiful chiasm, he sandwiched his testifying of a risen Lord between the beginning statement, "Tell them I'm one of the good guys" and the counsel to "Follow the brethren." As an apostle, he had the right and responsibility, like Paul of old, in saying, "Be like "I AM" and as I Am."

“For the Perfecting of the Saints”

Ephesians

Summary: *Eph. 1: Saints foreordained to receive the gospel—Gospel to be restored in latter-days—Saints sealed by Holy Spirit of Promise—They know God and Christ by revelation. Eph. 2: We are saved by grace through faith—Blood of Christ saves Jew and Gentile alike—Church is built upon foundation of apostles and prophets. Eph. 3: Gentiles are fellow heirs with Israel—The love of Christ passeth all understanding. Eph. 4: There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism—Apostles and prophets essential to the Church—Saints exhorted to live righteously—They are sealed unto the day of redemption. Eph. 5: Saints exhorted to avoid uncleanness and walk uprightly—Husbands and wives should love each other. Eph. 6: Children should honor their parents—Servants and masters judged by the same law—Saints should put on the whole armor of God.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

A statement by Elder Bruce R. McConkie is an excellent introduction to this lesson.

“Ephesians is an epistle for all the world, for Jew and Gentile, for husband and wife, for parent and child, for master and servant. It was the mind and will of God in Paul's day; it is the voice of inspiration in our day; it is an epistle of universal appeal and application. Ephesians proclaims the supremacy of God, the glory of his gospel, the dignity and identity of the Church through which salvation is offered to man. It contains some of Paul's best writing, and is a document that deals with fundamentals, with the gospel of God in all its saving glory.”

“In it, among other things, the Apostle teaches: That the saints of God are foreordained to receive the gospel with all of its ordinances, glories, and blessings; That the same gospel had in his day shall be restored in the dispensation of the fulness of times; That through obedience to the gospel the saints receive the Holy Spirit of Promise and are sealed up unto eternal life; That God and Christ and the gospel are known only by revelation; That salvation comes by the grace and goodness of God and is for all men, Jew and Gentile alike; That the gospel is administered through one true Church, the Church which receives revelation, the Church directed by living apostles and prophets; and that because of gospel law Christ's people live righteously, perfect their families, and qualify for exaltation.” (*Bruce R. McConkie, Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Vol. 2, p. 489*)

As stated in **Lesson 32: “Live in the Spirit”**, the challenges in Ephesus included the religion of worshiping Diana, the goddess of fertility. Female gods became popular, such as goddesses of victory, a fish goddess (mermaid), and one connected with fertility, Astarte. This goddess was later known as Ashteroth (the word Easter seems to have been derived from Astarte). A very popular goddess was Diana.

It is interesting to note that Ephesus had a large business surrounding the goddess Diana. The tradition of the burial of Mary the mother of Jesus and subsequently the veneration of Mary beginning in Ephesus became a counterfeit substitute for a religion. The “business” of religion eclipsed the essence of religion.

Each dispensation of time had its challenges. Latter-day Saints believe that, like the creation periods, there are seven dispensations of time often referred to as seven thousand year periods. Seven is a prime number and is very symbolic in the Bible. The two annual holy seasons that celebrate the deliverance of Israel, Passover (in the Spring) and Sukkoth (in the Fall) are seven days in length.

“The idea of orderliness is also conveyed by a fascinating use of numbers, especially the number seven. The first verse of Genesis in the Hebrew text contains seven words; the second verse, 14. The word *Elohim* (God) is mentioned 7 x 5 (35) times; “earth” 7 x 3 (21)

times; "good" seven times. The section on the seventh day consists of 7 x 5 (35) words and the term "seventh day" is mentioned in each of three seven word phrases.”
(*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

“Non-LDS Bible scholars (e.g., Fensham) usually arrange the principal biblical covenants into a fivefold sequence (Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and the New Testament covenant), but Latter-day Saints follow a sequence of seven main dispensations (Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Christ and his apostles, and Joseph Smith) . . .”
(*Encyclopedia of Mormonism, Vol.1, Covenants in Biblical Times*)

The symbol of seven also applies to purification. It took seven days of rain to cover the earth to cleanse it in Noah’s time. Lepers, priests, women, and sacrifices required seven days of purification. It may be considered that the seven dispensations are a type of a purification in order to prepare for the Lord’s arrival in the last days.

Paul speaks of the last days and today, modern religious feelings indicate that the last days are at hand. Rabbi Abraham Cohen Kook, the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi in Erez (land) Israel noted the arrival of the beginning of the last days.

“It was here that he began to identify with the Zionist ideal and, in opposition to most other rabbis, joined the political movement. This combination of orthodoxy and political Zionism seemed almost a contradiction-in-terms in those days. The majority of religious leaders believed that there could be no return to Zion before the coming of the Messiah; and the active Zionists were mostly those who had abandoned their traditional religious roles and replaced them with secular, political activities. Rabbi Kook, on the other hand, believed that the return to Erez Israel marked the beginning of divine redemption (*athalta di-ge'ullah*).” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Bright yellow banners in Israel’s Orthodox community urge “Prepare for The Imminent Arrival of The Messiah.” Various leaders of Islam have proclaimed the imminent return of Mohammed along with Jesus in what they sense are the “last days.” Christianity is generally geared to the imminent return of Jesus.

It is interesting to note that the metaphor of a building was used in ancient times to denote the structure and stability of the Lord’s organization in the “last days.”

“The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.” (*Psalms 118:22*)

“Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.” (*Isaiah 28:16*)

“Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?” (*Matthew 21:42*)

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” (*Ephesians 2:19-22*)

Since this is a visual image, picture a building fitly framed with all parts of it functioning and without apparent holes or breaks in it. From a western building style architectural view, a

cornerstone really cannot be removed and the building still remain “fitly framed.” Therefore, picture an eastern building style, a pyramid. Its chief cornerstone is the capstone. It can be removed and the building is still “fitly framed.” A U.S. one dollar bill has that image with the top, cap or chief cornerstone shown with rays beaming forth from an all-seeing eye. The pyramid also has twelve blocks as its foundation.

The imagery continues into the family. As the children start their own family, the parents are “removed” from their former role yet still maintain a spiritual influence through their previous teaching and subsequent prayers and spiritual influence on their children. The unity of the family can still be imaged as “fitly framed.” As with any home, protection from unwarranted outside influence is necessary. Security systems or defensive armor are part of the proper stewardship of the family’s leaders. With the Lord as the Chief Cornerstone and following His instructions to defend ourselves with *truth, righteousness, preparation, faith, spirit, prayer, and perseverance*, we can protect our families inside or outside of the home.

Paul’s family teachings include sexual purity and propriety as a piece of righteous armor. In the previous **Lesson 33: “Ye Are the Temples of God,”** we stated that “Latter-day Saint doctrine is more definitive in that any sexual contact or activity with any body including our own, that leads to improper sexual emotions is simply unwarranted.”

The constant perfecting of ourselves and the family members around us spreads to the community around us. It establishes a ripple that affects all the world.

“I Can Do All Things Through Christ”

Lesson
40

Philippians; Colossians; Philemon

Summary: *Philp. 1: All that happened to Paul furthered the gospel cause—Our conduct should be as becometh the gospel. Philp. 2: Saints should be of one mind and one spirit—Every knee shall bow to Christ—Saints must work out their salvation—Paul faces martyrdom with joy. Philp. 3: Paul sacrifices all things for Christ—True ministers set examples of righteousness. Philp. 4: Stand fast in the Lord—We believe in being honest, true, and chaste. Col. 1: Redemption comes through Christ—He created all things, is in the image of God, and is the Firstborn of the Father. Col. 2: Fulness of Godhead dwells in Christ—Beware of deceit by traditions of men—The handwriting against us was nailed to cross of Christ. Col. 3: Some lives are hid with God in Christ—Saints exhorted to be holy and to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Col. 4: Saints exhorted to be wise in all things—Luke and others salute the Colossians. Philem. 1: The gospel changes a servant into a brother.*

Supplemental	The lesson title suggests a focus so that human efforts to progress may have a unified
Holy Land and Jewish insights:	purpose. Let's look the theme of unity as it may or may not be apparent in the Middle East. In Israel, several cultures can be observed and their varying forms of unity (or disunity) can be identified.

The Bahai religion, which has its headquarters in Haifa, Israel, has a main religious concept of unity. They believe that all people are brothers and should even speak the same language. They suggest that all religions have truths that would unify mankind and that God will continue to reveal truths through prophets from time to time. Their own religious disciplines are similar wherever you go throughout the world. That discipline includes administrative structure, health rules, and charismatic procedures and exercises.

“Originating out of the mystic Persian Babi movement, Bahaism is a world religion centered in Israel and stressing truth, equality and unity of all peoples.”

“Bahai's reside all over the world, in as many as 11,000 localities. However, the spiritual and administrative center of the Bahai World Faith is in the Universal House of Justice in Haifa, which is directed by nine members known as the Hands of the Cause.”
(*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The Arabs, on the other hand, have a much less unified identity. Although their families are important and many memorize generations of their family genealogy, they have not been able to carry on any major unity as communities or countries.

“With the emergence of strong national identities in the Arab World, Arab countries have never been able to settle their own differences and unite.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The Arab culture is largely influenced by Islam and one of its main principles is to “follow.” The word “Moslem” means “a follower.” The challenge is that Islam has many charismatic leaders, usually geographically separated, and so a unity of religious expression is almost impossible to achieve. The Englishman T. E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) vainly attempted to unify the various Arab tribes and geographic leaders into a common Arab nationality. His western concepts were too difficult to be adapted to the eastern way of thinking.

Looking at the Jews, there is a popular anecdote in Israel that seems to denote a characteristic among them. Jokingly, they say, “Two Jews in a conversation always come up with three opinions.”

It is Jewish nature to discuss and even make up opposite points of view so that the contrasts or opposing ideas of view can become a learning experience. Yet, in the Jewish culture there is an underlying unity of “a people” or a “community of Israel.”

“COMMUNITY OF ISRAEL is the term used to describe the common responsibility, destiny, and kinship of all members of the Jewish people. The rabbis declared that "all Israel are responsible one for another" and sinners must be rebuked because the entire community is ultimately responsible for the sinner's wrongdoings. The unity of the Jewish nation was considered an historic and spiritual concept, in addition to being a social reality. All generations of Jews (including converts to Judaism) were viewed as having been present at Mount Sinai and sharing in the responsibilities of the covenant with God. Likewise, the righteous of all generations will be reunited at the time of the resurrection of the dead during the messianic period. This concept of community and shared fate is referred to often in the Talmud with the terms *kelal Yisrael* and *keneset Yisrael*.”

“WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS (WJC), is an association of major Jewish organizations from more than 80 countries, whose aim is to "assure the survival and to foster the unity of the Jewish people."

“The activities of the World Jewish Congress included working on behalf of threatened Jewish communities such as those in Arab and communist countries; representing the Jewish world community in international organizations such as the United Nations, promoting inter-religious cooperation, and preserving Jewish identity in the face of the increasing trend towards assimilation . . .” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The family has always been the basic unifying element of the community of Israel.

“Judaism considers the establishment of a family a holy task. Children are a gift from God and childlessness the greatest misfortune that could befall a marriage. The virtues of domestic bliss have been frequently extolled by the rabbis, and the close-knit Jewish family, where the home has been the center of religious practice and ceremony, has greatly helped the survival of Judaism and preserved the moral integrity of the Jews.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Modern Jewish communities reflect some similar cooperative efforts as was done anciently. One such community structure is called the Kibbutz.

“Kibbutzim with similar ways of thinking often group together in federations, which save their member-villages money by purchasing for them all in bulk, and arranging from one central office to sell all their crops. In addition, many kibbutzim cooperate with other kibbutzim in the same region, whether they share the same ideas or not, and together they are able to build central silos and arrange heavy transport. Likewise, the kibbutz associations have their own adult education courses, choirs, amateur orchestras, art collections, bulletins, publishing houses, and even their own teachers' training college. Thousands of members of certain older kibbutzim, after completing their three-year army service, volunteer a year's labor --- unpaid, of course --- in newer kibbutzim, in order to help them stand on their own feet.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

A similar unity and community bond can be seen in the scriptures.

“And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having

favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” (*Acts 2:44-47*)

“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.” (*Acts 4:32*)

“And they taught, and did minister one to another; and they had all things common among them, every man dealing justly, one with another.” (*3 Nephi 26:19*)

The valuable lesson that we can learn is that unity represented in the scriptures is always connected with a central belief and faith in the Lord. That focus assures a unity because His directive powers are the same for everyone.

“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” (*Proverbs 3:6*)

“Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.” (*1 Thessalonians 3:11*)

“Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day.” (*Alma 37:37*)

“And now, behold, I give unto you a commandment, that when ye are assembled together ye shall instruct and edify each other, that ye may know how to act and direct my church, how to act upon the points of my law and commandments, which I have given.” (*D&C 43:8*)

“... you would not criticize a group of people who sought the same high ground in the midst of a flood; you would not see their presence in one place as an unintelligent act, for they came together in order to be saved. So it is here. Life here is life in a large, affectionate, and unified family. Love in a family does not diminish the freedom of each member thereof; our unity does not jeopardize our individuality. Undivided, we are multiplied. Being of one heart and one mind permits no divorce between knowing and feeling in the City of Enoch.” (*Neal A. Maxwell, Of One Heart, p.51*)

A beautiful principle of Jewish unity can be sensed in the repeated prayers said when a “prayer circle” (*minyan*) is formed in Jewish ritual. The request for forgiveness should include all.

“The rabbis placed great emphasis on the relationship of the individual to the community during prayer. Almost all prayer, for example, was written in the first person plural --- “Forgive us,” “Teach us,” “Bring us to our Land.” Although private prayer was certainly permitted, the individual was urged to join a congregation (*minyan*) when he prays and to incorporate the needs of the *minyan* in his prayers.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The Latter-day Saint’s concept of focusing on the Lord has promoted a unified way of community life that can still be expressed individually. The thirteenth Article of Faith reflects a unified lifestyle that actually reaches back to God’s initial instructions to all mankind. A look into Jewish cultural statements from the *Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.* also reflects the common biblical similarity.

“We believe in being honest . . .”

“While prophets urged men to be just, the rabbis of the Talmud went into detail about what justice means in commercial life: employer-employee relationships, duties of

workers to employers; legitimate prices, fair weight and measure; fair contracts; fair and unfair competition; the spoken word as a binding contract. The laws are infused with fairness in spirit as well as in fact. It is recognized that in a ruthless business world of mixed peoples, honest dealings are difficult, but the Jew should know and retain his ideals."

"... true ..."

"Communal prayer opens the worshiper to the needs of others, it "takes the mind out of the narrowness of self-interest." "Prayer is a way to master what is inferior in us . . . it helps us discover our true aspirations . . . Prayer teaches us what to aspire to . . . " "However, prayer is no substitute for action." Through prayer we deepen our commitment to righteous living."

"... chaste ..."

"Judaism encourages modesty as one of the means to chastity. Thus the Jewish woman is enjoined to dress and act modestly at all times. Furthermore, a man is forbidden to be alone with a woman with whom he is not permitted to have sexual relations from considerations of both chastity and modesty."

"... benevolent ..."

"In the Bible very often the acts of God are referred to figuratively using terms such as "the hand of God." Such metaphors are examples of how the Bible speaks in the language of man in order to help us understand concepts which would otherwise be beyond our grasp. Thus a metaphor like "The hand of God" may be used to represent strength and protection such as in the verse, "Your right hand, O Lord, is glorious in power; Your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy" (Exodus 15:6). At the same time, the image of God's hands has been used to show benevolence and loving-kindness, as in the verse, "You open your hand and satisfy every living thing with favor." (Psalms 145).

"... virtuous ..."

"Righteous gentiles (Hebrew: *Hasidei Ummot ha-Olam*), rabbinic term for those non-Jews who, because of their moral character or virtuous acts, rank equally in merit and grace with Jews. According to the Talmud, the righteous gentile is as eligible as any Jew for a place in the world to come."

"In the stories, plays and poems of Isaac Leib Peretz (1852--1915) the world of Yiddish-speaking, East European Jewry is brought to life. Not only the Jews in the stories, but all those who are suffering and oppressed are Peretz's real heroes. He understands and sympathizes with their misery and discovers in simple and ignorant people the virtues of love, faith, heroism, gentleness and unselfishness. Perhaps the best known of his stories is *Bontsche Shveig* ("Bontsche the Silent"). Here Peretz describes a man who is the most virtuous of people. His entire life is one long nightmare of suffering, but he endures his troubles silently. Then, in the afterworld, he is to be rewarded and is told that he can have whatever he would like best. And poor Bontsche, so miserable was his life on earth, that, seated among the patriarchs and saints of all ages, he can think of nothing better than a hot roll and fresh butter for breakfast every morning as his heavenly reward."

"... and in doing good ..."

"Ethics are the principles by which man can live a good life in relation to his fellow man. The ethical life is basic to Jewish religious observance: "Love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the Lord" (Leviticus 19:18). Love of God is incomplete without love of man. This precept underlies the rules of conduct which the Torah prescribes . . ."

“Hospitality is considered by Judaism to be one of the most important virtues that a person can develop. This has been true since the time of ancient Israel, when hospitality was not merely a question of good manners, but a moral institution which grew out of the harsh desert and nomadic existence of the people of Israel. The biblical customs of welcoming the weary traveler and receiving the stranger in one's midst developed into an important Jewish virtue. Isaiah states that one of the duties of the pious is to "deal thy bread to the hungry" and to "bring the poor that are cast out to thy house."

“A.J. Heschel (1907-1972) based his views on a Midrash stating that holiness is the only way to combat evil and that learning and obeying the precepts of Torah is the only way to gain holiness. The simplest advice in combating evil: "Turn from evil and do good" is from the Book of Psalms (34:15).”

Each part of the House of Israel has a common unified goal of turning from evil and in doing good. Focusing on the God of Israel makes all good things possible through Him.

“I Have Finished My Course”

1 and 2 Timothy; Titus

Summary: 1 Tim. 1: Exhortation to teach true doctrine only—Christ came to save repentant sinners. 1 Tim. 2: We should pray for all men—Christ is our mediator—Women should dress modestly—Women blessed in childbearing—Admonished to continue in faith, charity, holiness. 1 Tim. 3: Qualifications set forth for bishops and deacons—Great is the mystery of godliness. 1 Tim. 4: Paul describes the latter-day apostasy—Christ is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe. 1 Tim. 5: Saints are to care for their worthy poor—Policies concerning elders are set forth. 1 Tim. 6: The love of money is the root of all evil—Fight the good fight of faith—Trust not in worldly riches. 2 Tim. 1: Christ brings immortality and eternal life through the gospel—Be strong in the faith. 2 Tim. 2: Christ gives eternal glory to the elect—Shun contention and seek godliness. 2 Tim. 3: Paul describes apostasy and perilous times of the last days—The scriptures guide man to salvation. 2 Tim. 4: A solemn charge to preach the gospel in a day of apostasy—Paul and all saints assured of exaltation. Titus 1: Eternal life promised before the world began—Qualifications of bishops given—Unto the pure all things are pure. Titus 2: Saints should live righteously, deny ungodliness, and seek the Lord. Titus 3: Saints must live righteously after baptism.

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

The beauty of this lesson may be in the consideration of the difference between procedure and purpose. Like the Jews practiced for thousands of years, some Latter-day Saints are very faithful in reading scriptures daily. In the course of daily prayers and reading of the scriptures, religious Jews will cover the entire Bible (Old Testament) in one year. These readings include some repetition of verses.

There is an *Akeda* reading every morning during daily prayers. It is a reminder of Abraham's and Isaac's willingness to obey the Lord and perform the sacrifice of Isaac on Mount Moriah. The point here is the daily reminder of the imagery of the Father and the Son. All of our daily reading and prayers should have the same intent and purpose.

“In the liturgy, readings from the Bible play a prominent role. The *Shema* as well as the Song of Moses after the crossing of the Red Sea are central to the daily morning service, and the prayers are studded with various selections from the Book of Psalms as well as verses from other Books.”

“... the declaration of faith that every Jew is required to recite twice daily, reads: "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”

“On most weekdays, *Tabanun* is recited (including some scriptures, Psalms); on Mondays and Thursdays the *Torah* (first five books of Moses) is read. The service is concluded by the recitation of *Aleinu le-Shabbe'ah* and the daily Psalm.” (*Encyclopaedia Judaica Jr.*)

The daily reading and prayers were often used to ward off “the evil eye.”

“Famous men, attractive women and newborn babies were thought to be in particular danger from the evil eye. Thus, the use of praise and the display of beauty, wealth, success and happiness were generally avoided.” (*Encyclopaedia Judaica Jr.*)

The process of acquiring money versus the proper use of money has often been taught in the scriptures. Unfortunately, the Jews have often been maligned with the love of money. Karl Marx perpetuated the myth of greedy Jews.

“Marx's father Heinrich, whose original name was Hirschel ha-Levi, was the son of a rabbi and the descendant of many generations of Talmudic scholars. His brother was chief rabbi of Trier. Marx described his attitude to Jews and Judaism as one of "self-

hatred." At 15 he was confirmed a Protestant and became deeply attached to Christianity and to German culture. Marx associated Jews largely with greed, self-interest and love of money. He reveals a surprising ignorance of Jewish history and culture, and often refers to Jews as the symbol of financial power and capitalist mentality. This attitude did not protect Marx or his ideas from anti-Semitic attacks by his enemies. Ironically, the fascists and Nazis of the 1930s and 1940s used the term "Marxism" to denote a sinister worldwide "Jewish" plot against their national interests. Marx's Jewish origins, though hinted at in Soviet encyclopedias up to the 1940s, were studiously concealed thereafter."

"In Jewish tradition, the lending of money to the needy is a moral obligation of extreme importance. It is an essential component of the *mitzvah* of *zedakah* (charity). Lending money is, of course, also a basic component of any business economy, but both in biblical and Talmudic law, no distinction is made between the two situations: no matter what the occasion, money lent by one Jew to another must not earn interest. Usury of even the most minimal amount is flatly prohibited by the Torah: "You shall not lend upon interest to your brother, interest of money, interest of victuals, interest of anything that is lent upon interest . . ."

"This prohibition proved to be one of the most universally violated obligations of biblical law. The prophets repeatedly denounce "evil-doers" who oppress the poor by taking interest on loans, and this would seem to indicate that even in biblical times there were many who did not live up to this moral requirement imposed by the Torah."
(*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Although the word "fear" is used often in the scriptures, it has two meanings. One meaning is opposite of faith. Fear is expecting what you "don't want" while faith is expecting things you "do want."

"In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me." (*Psalms 56:4*)

"The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (*Psalms 27:1*)

"Just before he died, and on the eve of the Children of Israel's entry into the Promised Land, Moses made a farewell speech to the Jews. In it, he reviewed their history and gave direction for their future. In one sentence (Deuteronomy 10:12) he summed up what the Bible considers to be the entire purpose of human existence: "And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God demand of you? Only this: to revere (fear) the Lord your God, to walk only in His paths, to love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and soul."

"The Hebrew word for "revere" is (*yirah*) which is usually translated as "fear," and that for "love" is (*aha'vah*). These two concepts, although they may seem contradictory at first glance, are the essence of Judaism's view of man's attitude to God."

"The "fear" referred to is not the fright or scaredness which a person feels when he is confronted, for example, with a hungry lion. It is rather a feeling of awe or reverence felt when witnessing greatness or grandeur. The view of a major natural wonder, for instance, is breathtaking and inspires the beholder with awe. It is this kind of feeling that is meant by the "fear of God"; that is, awe at the thought of the infinity and greatness of God." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

According to the (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*), on the subject of theft, stealing, embezzlement, and purloining, Jewish law classifies the criminal act of theft or of robbery into seven broad categories:

- “1) fraud, that is, "stealing another person's mind";
- 2) stealing by way of falsifying weights and measures;
- 3) stealing objects that are useless or have no value;
- 4) misappropriating documents, land or property consecrated to the Temple;
- 5) stealing personal items of worth;
- 6) stealing animals (sheep or oxen) and then slaughtering or selling them;
- 7) stealing a person, that is, kidnaping.”

“Each of these categories carries a different penalty, ranging from death in the case of kidnaping to the payment of a double fine in the case of the theft of a personal item of worth and of a fourfold or fivefold fine in the case of the theft and subsequent slaughtering or selling of an animal. The distinction in Jewish law between theft and robbery is a formal one --- theft being defined as an act of stealing done clandestinely, while robbery is an act of stealing done openly and with force.”

“Prohibitions against theft are scattered throughout the Torah, and the rabbis of the Talmud generally tended to see each as referring to a specific category of theft rather than as a prohibition against theft in general. Thus, the "Thou shalt not steal" of the Ten Commandments, because it appears in the context of prohibitions that carry the death penalty, was interpreted to be a reference to kidnaping, since that is the only type of theft punishable by death.”

“A thief who has been caught must, of course, return the objects he has stolen to their rightful owners. If he no longer has them in his possession, he must pay the value of the objects as they were assessed at the time of the robbery. The money to cover the value of the objects as well as for all the fines imposed, was drawn from the thief's possessions and property. If, after selling all he owns, the thief manages to accumulate sufficient funds to cover the cost value of the objects, he is allowed to pay the fines in instalments. However, if his net worth does not cover the value of the stolen objects, the court has the right to sell him into slavery and use the proceeds to repay the victim. Women, however, were never sold into slavery.”

“Stealing a human being for gain is a capital offense in the Bible. One verse (Exodus 21:16) says that kidnaping is to be punished by death under all circumstances. Another (Deuteronomy 24:7) states that the kidnapper should be put to death if he enslaved or sold his victim. The rabbis interpreted the verses to mean that kidnaping either a Jew or non-Jew is forbidden under all circumstances. But the death penalty is only applicable if the kidnapper actually exploited his victim as a slave or sold him in slavery. Of course, in order to convict there has to be testimony of valid witnesses. The eighth of the Ten Commandments "Thou shalt not steal" is understood by the sages to refer to kidnaping and not to ordinary theft which is prohibited elsewhere in the Torah.”

“Since the prohibition against kidnaping applies to both Jews and non-Jews, slave-trading is absolutely forbidden according to Judaism. There can be no justification whatsoever for enslaving another person against his will.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

As a closing thought, in a very righteous sense, we are all “slaves of our God.” We have been bought and paid for. We should, therefore, show our willingness to serve Him through all of our activities and in all our thoughts and expressions.

“And now, in the first place, he hath created you, and granted unto you your lives, for which ye are indebted unto him.

And secondly, he doth require that ye should do as he hath commanded you; for which if ye do, he doth immediately bless you; and therefore he hath paid you. And ye are still indebted unto him, and are, and will be, forever and ever; therefore, of what have ye to boast?

And now I ask, can ye say aught of yourselves? I answer you, Nay. Ye cannot say that ye are even as much as the dust of the earth; yet ye were created of the dust of the earth; but behold, it belongeth to him who created you.” (*Mosiah 2:23-25*)

James

Summary: *James 1: If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God—Resist temptation—Be ye doers of the word—How to recognize pure religion. James 2: God hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith—Salvation gained by keeping the whole law—Faith without works is dead. James 3: By governing the tongue we gain perfection—Heavenly wisdom is pure, peaceable, and full of mercy. James 4: Wars are born of lusts—The friends of the world are the enemies of God—Sin is failure to walk in the light we have received. James 5: Misery awaits the wanton rich—Await the Lord's coming with patience—The elders are to anoint and heal the sick.*

Supplemental The opening thought of the last lesson suggested that “purpose is preferred to procedure.”

Holy Land This lesson continues to convey the doctrine that true religion is measured by “spiritual

and Jewish clarity of conscience rather than by systematic calculated cadence.” All too often in

insights: organized religion, people mistake motion for success.

It is a human tendency to believe that “doing” things takes on more importance than the Godly purpose behind them.

The following statement has been highlighted to emphasize the spiritual aspects.

“Then what is religion? James declares: “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” This may be interpreted as meaning that a person who is religious is thoughtful to the unfortunate, and has an inner spirit that prompts to deeds of kindness and to the leading of a blameless life; who is just, truthful; who does not, as Paul says, think more highly of himself than he ought to think; who is affectionate, patient in tribulation, diligent, cheerful, fervent in spirit, hospitable, merciful; and who abhors evil and cleaves to that which is good. The possession of such a spirit and feeling is a true sign that a person is naturally religious.” (*Joseph Fielding Smith, Gospel Doctrine*, p.121)

Judaism has centered its philosophy on the “do’s” and the “don’ts.” Many a rabbi has instructed that the commandments (mitzvot) are more important than the feelings behind them, because feelings can be altered. Yet, there seems to be a constant struggle to reach the balance of what Latter-day Saints call “faith and works.”

“The concept of *mitzvot* is central to the Jewish religion. (The Hebrew term for commandments is: *mitzvot*, sing. *mitzvah*). Judaism teaches that Almighty God revealed His will in the Torah in the form of *mitzvot* which were interpreted and amplified by the rabbis on the basis of the traditions they had.”

“According to rabbinic tradition the Torah contains 613 *mitzvot*; 248 of them are positive commandments (the “do” laws, e.g. Honor your father and mother) and 365 are prohibitions (the “don’t” laws, e.g. You shall not eat anything on the Day of Atonement).”

“According to classical Judaism, the reason for men to keep the *mitzvot* is that they were commanded by God. However, Jewish philosophers throughout the ages have tried to find explanations or reasons for the commandments.”

“Some people attempted to interpret the *mitzvot* in an allegorical manner suggesting that the idea a particular *mitzvah* represents is the important thing and that as long as the believer is aware of that idea, the *mitzvah* does not have to be observed. This approach is definitely not within the traditional view of Judaism.”

“Whatever the reasons for the commandments, it is clear that a person who observes them carefully will constantly be aware of the presence of God in his life. Indeed, the benediction with which the observance of most commandments is to be prefaced explicitly points to its being in conformity with God's will. Judaism insists on belief, faith and good deeds (which are also called *mitzvot*); but by themselves they are not enough. The actual observance of the *mitzvot*, notwithstanding the fact that it may occasionally cause inconvenience, is a prime doctrine of Judaism.”

“The prophets cried out against hypocrisy and social injustice, "What does the Lord require of thee: only to do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8). This is one of many passages which sum up the ethical principles which are at the heart of Jewish religion and which have influenced later religions.

“‘I am the Lord your God Who brought you out from the land of Egypt.’ Belief in God is the fundamental basis of the Jewish religion. Without such a belief Judaism becomes merely a social code of behavior and cannot be described as a religion.”

“...the mid-19th century . . . outstanding rabbinical authority . . . (Lithuanian) of his day, Israel Lipkin . . . felt that the Jews were seeing Judaism as a ritualistic religion and were observing the *mitzvot* in a mechanical manner and ignoring the fact that Judaism requires of man to be as good and ethical as he can possibly be. He believed that this could be corrected only by intensive study of texts which discuss the proper behavior required and the way to achieve it; and he inaugurated a movement to make such study an integral part of the curriculum of the yeshivot and to establish a small "*musar* room" in every neighborhood where people would go for a short period every day to "check up on their spiritual well being." (*Encyclopedia Judaica* Jr.)

Well-being is measured by comparing it to the opposite. The principle of looking at opposites helps us to understand affliction, trials of faith, tribulation, and the difficulties of life. Hence, God in His wisdom lets us experience opposites so that we may learn to be more like Him. Our focus must be on Him or we may lose hope.

“One of the most serious challenges to religion is the problem of suffering. If God is all-powerful and good, as Judaism claims He is, how is it possible that He allows His creatures to suffer? This is not a new problem. The Bible is aware that suffering and pain are characteristic of human existence and many of the books of the Bible are concerned about the theological issues involved. The Book of Habakkuk, when it deals with one of the aspects of the problem, says that "the righteous man must live by his faith." This seems to mean that it is beyond the ability of human intelligence to understand the question and that man must have faith that God is doing the right thing.”

“The rabbis of the Talmud and the medieval Jewish philosophers were also troubled about the problem of suffering. Some thinkers suggested that the innocent suffer in this world so that their share in the world to come will be greater, but other philosophers rejected this idea. Another solution suggested was that suffering comes on a man in order to warn him to mend his ways and that "when a man sees that he is suffering, let him examine his deeds." The rabbis of the Talmud believed that it is a great religious virtue to bear one's suffering "with love," i.e., patiently and without becoming rebellious.”

“Whatever the solution to the theological problem of suffering, Judaism absolutely forbids inflicting suffering on other people and even on animals. Also, no man may ignore the suffering of others but must do everything in his power to help remedy the situation. This applies to physical suffering, to poverty and to psychological suffering.

Furthermore, no man has the right to enjoy himself if the rest of the community is suffering.”

“... The sufferings of the righteous are also a sort of test, "afflictions of love" which develop in them patience and complete faith. The Book of Job and other biblical sources support this view.”

“The sages of the Talmud spoke of poverty in terms of both good and evil. On the one hand it is seen as an affliction which robs life of its joy and deprives man of the leisure necessary for the study of Torah. On the other hand, poverty tests a Jew's faith and induces him to be more pious. It also stimulates generosity and sympathy in others.”

“Like the prophets, the rabbis were exceedingly perplexed by the problem of the "righteous who suffers." Among the solutions they proffered was one which made reward and punishment applicable both to man's life in this world and his existence in the world to come (*ha-olam ha-ba*). The righteous suffers on earth for the sins he committed, so that his reward in the next world may be total and complete. The rabbis also developed the notion of *yissurin shel ahavah*, afflictions of love, which explained the suffering of the one who has not sinned as a measure, accorded by God, of increasing the reward of the righteous in the world to come.”

“In traditional Judaism, the Messiah will be a human being --- albeit it a perfect one --- who will come and bring harmony to the world. He will not have a divine aspect other than having been chosen by God for his task. The Hebrew word for Messiah, *mashi'ah*, means "anointed" and indicates that the Messiah has been chosen by God. The coming of the Messiah therefore has come to mean the redemption of the Jewish people and an end to its suffering and tribulations.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

In the previous **Lesson 35: “Be Ye Reconciled to God”**, we discussed the principle of “sinking to new heights.” I repeat the story for this lesson.

On one occasion, a professor of religion went to the Western (wailing) Wall, microphone in hand, and began asking religious Jews why they were chosen. One responded, “We are chosen to suffer.” Later, in making a point, about the suffering of the Savior, the professor said, “No one is chosen to suffer other than the Lord.” Yet, the difficulties, calamities, and sufferings of the Jews will ultimately bring them closer to the Lord who covenanted to remember and save His people. Our sufferings bring us closer to Him and those that have the highest responsibilities of serving Him often suffer greatly. They “sink to new heights.”

“And if thou shouldst be cast into the pit, or into the hands of murderers, and the sentence of death passed upon thee; if thou be cast into the deep; if the billowing surge conspire against thee; if fierce winds become thine enemy; if the heavens gather blackness, and all the elements combine to hedge up the way; and above all, if the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee, know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good. The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?” (*Doctrine & Covenants 122:7-8*)

“Ecclesiastes or Kohelet, is one of the five *Megillot*. It has won enduring popularity because of its wise maxims and its counsel on life. "Ecclesiastes" from the Greek and "Kohelet" in Hebrew, mean leader or teacher of a group. The Book reveals the wisdom acquired by Kohelet on his journey through life. He experiences joy and sorrow, faith and doubt, vanity and humility, hypocrisy and truth. The struggle to find meaning and purpose in life was as baffling for him as it is for us today. Kohelet arrives at the conclusion that the true joy of life lies not in wealth nor in vain pleasure but in the

spiritual riches of fulfilling *mitzvot*, God's commandments. Love and reverence for the Almighty help man to accept his fate and to overcome the obstacles and temptation that continually beset him.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

Once reconciled to God, the adversity in life brings His peace. That gives a spirit of fulfillment, completeness, and serenity that enables us to comfort and bless others in their difficulties.

The Apostle James’ admonition to “Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you,” reminds me of the explanation Rabbi Stanley Wagner of Denver, Colorado gave of the “Magen David.” It is actually two interlocking triangles, one pointing up and the other pointing down. Dr. Wagner said, “It reminds us of our relationship to God and His relationship to us.”

Letting God’s spirit permeate our every action will lead us to living true religion. It conveys a spiritual sweetness that enlivens our souls.

“A Chosen Generation”

1 and 2 Peter; Jude

Summary: *1 Pet. 2: The trial of our faith precedes salvation—Christ foreordained to be the Redeemer. 1 Pet. 2: Converts are newborn babes in Christ—He is the chief cornerstone—Saints hold a royal priesthood and are a peculiar people—We are in subjection to the laws of man.: 1 Pet. 3: Husbands and wives should honor each other—Saints should live by gospel standards—Christ preached unto the spirits in prison. 1 Pet. 4 Why gospel is preached unto the dead—Saints should speak as the oracles of God—The righteous will be tried and tested in all things. 1 Pet. 5: The elders are to feed the flock of God—Humility and godly graces lead to perfection. 2 Pet. 1: Peter exhorts the saints to make their calling and election sure—Prophecy comes by the power of the Holy Ghost. 2 Pet. 2: False teachers among the saints are damned—Lustful saints shall perish in their own corruption. 2 Pet. 3: Latter-day scoffers deny the Second Coming—Elements to melt at the coming of the Lord. Contend for the faith—Some angels kept not their first estate—Michael disputed about the body of Moses—Enoch prophesied of Second Coming—Mockers shall come in the last days.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

The supplemental material for this lesson comes from a symposium sponsored by the Ensign Foundation. Two highly-educated teams of Jews and Latter-day Saints joined together at Denver University to present and discuss each other's concept of being "chosen." It matches the theme of this lesson.

Introductory Remarks Symposium on Covenant and Chosenness Denver University - January 26, 1998 Daniel Rona Chairman, The Ensign Foundation

Welcome to this symposium of two great peoples who are culturally and religiously dealing with being chosen and having made a covenant with the Lord. There are times, however, when both of us may be heard complaining about being chosen - - much like Tevia who suggested that "God could maybe choose someone else?" What a wonderful opportunity we now have to be learning from each other about "chosenness." I believe that this symposium will be more than just a scholarly exercise but also a wonderful social family reunion.

Chosen People

From the Encyclopedia Judaica under the title 'Chosen People' I found the following statements.

"How odd of God, to choose the Jews." W.N. Ewer, who wrote this jingle, could not understand why Israel is God's Chosen People. Moses explains it thus:"

"The Lord did not set His love upon you because ye were more in number than any people . . . but because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn to your fathers . . . Know therefore that the LORD . . . is the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;" (*Deuteronomy* 7:7-9)

Choice, Chosen or Both?

"The rabbis insist that Israel was elected because it voluntarily accepted the Torah whereas other nations would not . . . and [this] characteristic motivated God to choose Israel as His people." (*Encyclopedia Judaica* Jr.)

A legendary anecdote relates that God was seeking among his children those who would accept his commandments. When the Barbarians heard "Thou shalt not kill," they declined. When

some Europeans heard “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” they declined. However, when he approached the Israelites with commandments, their only question was “How much did they cost?” God answered, “They’re free.” Immediately Israel said, “Okay, we’ll take ten!”

“The covenant which signifies the special relationship between God and Israel is based on Israel being elected by God. God has chosen the Jews. Israel has also chosen God.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

“You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord for yourselves, to serve Him. And they said, We are witnesses.” (*Joshua 24:22*)

“This is the thrust of the anonymous retort to the above jingle: “Its not so odd, the Jews chose God.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

Responsibility

“Being the Chosen People means receiving God's love and protection, but it also means accepting responsibilities. The prophet Isaiah says that Israel, God's servant, has been chosen for the task of spreading salvation. Israel must convince the other nations of the world that there is only one God, and must spread the true religion, and through it, happiness.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

We read that God said:

“And yet, for all that . . . I will not cast them away . . . to destroy them utterly and to break My covenant with them, for I am with them, the Lord their God.” (*Leviticus 26:4*)

And, God also indicated on what basis he would keep the perpetuity of the covenant.

“Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.” (*Exodus 31:16*)

Traits of the Chosen

This “chosenness” is identified by a people, by their land, by their kings, by their prophets and prophecies, by their scriptures, and by their fruits.

“Writing had a profound effect on Judaism. The covenant between God and the Chosen People was transformed into a written text; the central religious object became the Ten Commandments, inscribed on stone; and later the Torah scroll was to be revered. The biblical society as a whole became ‘book centered’.”

“ . . . these Books are considered books of prophets, firstly because their authors were divinely inspired, and secondly because they are more than histories of Israel: they also record the Covenant between God and Israel, and they stress that only by continued and faithful adherence to that Covenant can Israel hope to survive.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

In ancient times, in the “Crossroads of the East” Israel’s rightful Kings were established through God’s will. These kings ruled and judged being advised and guided by God’s prophets.

“The primary feature of the coronation was the anointing of the king's head with oil by a priest or prophet, the sign of the divine covenant --- that is, he had been chosen as God's anointed . . . The ideal king was seen as a king of justice. Prophecies of the future declare

that in the "end of days" the kingdom of the Jews will be returned to a descendant of the House of David." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

"But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them." (*Jeremiah 30:9*)

"And I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it." (*Ezekiel 34:24*)

"Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days." (*Hosea 3:5*)

New Covenant

"The prophet Jeremiah was extraordinarily important in the history of the people of Israel. In his criticisms of the people for their transgressions . . . and that after the sinful generation had died out God would contract a new covenant with the reformed people . . ." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

"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: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:" (*Jeremiah 31:31-32*)

Ancient Prophecy of Latter-days

The great prophet wordsmith, Isaiah, spoke and wrote of latter-day servants of the Lord and the fruits of their labors.

"And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: . . . And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people . . . And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim." (*Isaiah 11:1-12*)

Latter-day Traits

Today, a population of more than ten million Latter-day Saints call themselves "a remnant of Israel," mostly from the ancient tribe of Joseph through his son Ephraim. Their modern-day scriptures, living prophets, gathering in a land of "New Jerusalem" and identifying themselves as a "chosen people" has prompted reflection. This very conference, respecting the Sabbaths of both covenant people, brings "Judah" and "Joseph" together.

In the latter-day "Joseph" scriptures, *The Doctrine and Covenants*, a series of questions were answered by the Prophet Joseph Smith Jr. His answers were written as follows.

"Who is the stem of Jesse spoken of in the 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th, and 5th verses of the 11th chapter of Isaiah? Verily thus saith the Lord: It is Christ. What is the rod spoken of in the first verse of the 11th chapter of Isaiah, that should come of the Stem of Jesse? Behold, thus saith the Lord: It is a servant in the hands of Christ, who is partly a descendant of Jesse (father of David and of the tribe of Judah) as well as of Ephraim, or

of the house of Joseph, on whom there is laid much power. What is the root of Jesse spoken of in the 10th verse of the 11th chapter? Behold, thus saith the Lord, it is a descendant of Jesse, as well as of Joseph, unto whom rightly belongs the priesthood, and the keys of the kingdom, for an ensign, and for the gathering of my people in the last days." (*Doctrine and Covenants 113:1-6*)

Choice, Chosen or Both?

Whoever these servants are, two of them will be of the tribe of Judah (David's lineage) as well as of Joseph (Ephraim's lineage). Both Jews and Ephraimites are chosen - whether they like it or not. Both see each other as having 'chosen' responsibilities. Jews maintain a tradition, an "Aggadah" of a "Messiah Ben Joseph." The late Rabbi Avraham HaCohen Kook referred to the tradition when asked if the temple could be built soon. He deferred to the latter-day Joseph and he purportedly said, "To him will be given the keys of the gathering of Israel, he will restore temple worship." The Latter-day Saints maintain that the Jews will build that temple.

At the beginning of the century, LDS President John Taylor was speaking to Baron Rothschild as he was showing him the Salt Lake LDS Temple. Rothschild said,

"Elder Taylor, what do you mean by this temple? What is the object of it? Why are you building it?"

President Taylor answered,

"Your fathers had among them prophets, who revealed to them the mind and will of God; we have among us prophets who reveal to us the mind and will of God, as they did. One of your prophets said--The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, but who may abide the day of his coming? For he shall sit as a refiner's fire and a purifier of silver! . . . sir, will you point me out a place on the face of the earth where God has a temple?"

Rothschild said,

". . . Do you consider that this is that temple?"

President Taylor answered,

"No, sir, it is not . . . The Lord has told us to build this temple so that we may administer therein [ordinances] for our dead and also to perform some of the sacred matrimonial alliances and covenants that we believe in, that are rejected by the world generally, but which are among the purest, most exalting and ennobling principles that God ever revealed to man."

Rothschild asked,

"Well, then, this is not our temple?"

And President Taylor responded

"No . . . you will build a temple, for the Lord has shown us, among other things, that you Jews have quite a role to perform in the latter days, and that all the things spoken by your old prophets will be fulfilled, that you will be gathered to old Jerusalem, and that you will build a temple there; and when you build that temple, and the time has arrived, 'the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple.'" (*Gospel Kingdom, John Taylor, Page 293*)

Chosen

A new temple in Jerusalem--you know Jews pray for it at least three times a day. And as a first step, Jerusalem, where the temple will stand again, has become the capital of a modern State of Israel.

“ . . . not chosen arbitrarily; it was recognized as the historic land of the Jews, to which they had a closer connection and more justifiable claim than any other group. The national home was not to be established, but re-established after a 2,000 year exile.”
(*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

On the other hand and to another part of the Israelite family, America also has a place as a chosen land as described in the *Book of Mormon*.

“During the latter part of the 4th century A.D., Mormon, a prophet-general, made a compilation and abridgment of the records of the people of Lehi, a Jew who led a colony of his family and friends from Jerusalem to their American promised land in 600 B.C. Mormon's son Moroni added a few words of his own to the record . . . the records of these . . . peoples, preserved on the Gold Plates, were translated by Joseph Smith and are known as the Book of Mormon. The main part of the work deals with the period from 600 B.C. to 421 A.D.” (*Mormon Doctrine, Bruce McConkie, Page 98*)

These words are considered books of prophets, firstly because their authors were divinely inspired, and secondly because they are more than histories of another part of Israel: they also record the covenant between God and those Israelites, and they stress that only by continued and faithful adherence to that covenant can all of Israel hope to survive.

Two peoples, Jews and Latter-day Saints have a covenant. They are members of one family, separated by distance and time, who now seem to be coming together. In former days we may have heard, “How odd of God to choose the Jews;” and now in latter days we may hear, “There are complaints He chose the Saints.” Saints and Jews, we are a family, a chosen family!

Summary: *1 Jn. 1: Saints gain fellowship with God by obedience—We must confess our sins to gain forgiveness. 1 Jn. 2: Christ is our Advocate with the Father—We know God by obedience—Love not the world—Antichrists shall come in the last days. 1 Jn. 3: Sons of God shall become like Christ—Love for the brethren required to gain eternal life—Obedience assures us an answer to our prayers. 1 Jn. 4: Try the spirits—God is love and dwells in those who love him. 1 Jn. 5: Saints are born of God through belief in Christ—Water, blood, and Spirit testify of Christ—Belief in Christ required in order to gain eternal life. 2 Jn. 1: John rejoices because the children of the elect lady are true and faithful. 3 Jn. John commends Gaius for his help to those who love the truth.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights: John’s witness of the Savior is poetic and full of tender imagery. He allows the account of one event to become part of an overall lesson, always pointing to the Lord’s mission. Among many interesting features in the first three chapters of John is a simple chiasmus featuring one of the lesser-known names of the Messiah, the “new Wine.”

A few comments about marriage festivities two millennia ago may be helpful in imagining the account of Jesus and his mother at a wedding in Cana. It is appropriate to bring one’s “fruit of the vine” to the celebration. The host has the prerogative to sample each wine offering. The older wine usually has the best flavor and is usually given to the guests first. The newer wine is kept for the last.

The biblical metaphor of “old wine” may be what the Jews still follow every Sabbath as they partake of a sip of wine followed by a piece of bread. The prayers connected with this practice await a future deliverance, greater than from Egypt under Moses’ direction. After Jesus’ atonement, the practice among Christian believers became the “new wine” with bread taken first and followed by wine. This is done in remembrance of the greatest deliverance. An insight about the “new wine” can be derived from the prophet Joel’s statements: drunkards (wine drinkers) prefer old wine, the new wine is taken away (dried up), and then new wine will be returned when the temple is built again.

“Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine; for it is cut off from your mouth.” (*Joel 1:5*)

“The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth.” (*Joel 1:10*)

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD . . .” (*Joel 3:18*)

As new wine is a name of the Lord, John uses several other names to identify the Savior, such as “The Word.” The opening statement of the Book of John is a chiasmus (beginning, Word was with God, Word was God, beginning).

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
The same was in the beginning with God.” (*John 1:1-2*)
He is “The Life” and He is “The Light.”
“In him was life; and the life was the light of men.
And the light shineth . . .” (*John 1:4-5*)

He was born of God.

“Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (*John 1:13*)

He is the New Wine. (It seems that Mary and Jesus knew that one of his names was “New Wine” and Jesus is saying that the wedding feast in Cana was not the time for Him to fulfill or become the “New Wine,” yet graciously, He made water into wine - new and better than the old!)

“... They have no wine ... Jesus saith unto her ... mine hour is not yet come.”
“... When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine ... (he) ... saith unto him ... thou hast kept the good wine until now.” (*John 2:3-10*)

We must be born of God.

“Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.
That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.
Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.” (*John 3:5-7*)

We receive everlasting life by coming to the light.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (*John 3:16*)

“But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.” (*John 3:21*)

We are to accept the words of God.

“For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.” (*John 3:34*)

John’s beautiful language also uses the word “love” to portray the name and the immense gift God gave to us. The use of the words love and fear, although opposites, have related meanings about God. The following statements from Jewish sages may be helpful in the discussion of love and God.

“The Hebrew word for "revere" is (*yirah*) which is usually translated as "fear," and that for "love" is (*aha'vab*). These two concepts, although they may seem contradictory at first glance, are the essence of Judaism's view of man's attitude to God.”

“The "fear" referred to is not the fright or scaredness which a person feels when he is confronted, for example, with a hungry lion. It is rather a feeling of awe or reverence felt when witnessing greatness or grandeur. The view of a major natural wonder, for instance, is breathtaking and inspires the beholder with awe. It is this kind of feeling that is meant by the "fear of God"; that is, awe at the thought of the infinity and greatness of God.”

“Love of God implies a more intimate relationship, which is much closer to a personal relationship; a person does not love a natural phenomenon but something near to him.”

“The two terms, then, express the paradoxical nature of man's relationship to God. On the one hand, God is infinite, great and far away (the philosophers use the word "transcendental") and on the other He is close and involved in every human being's affairs ("immanent"). This idea is expressed very frequently in the prayers by the way God is addressed. The phrase *Avinu malkeinu*, "Our Father, Our King," in particular is indicative: you are close to and love your father but you stand in awe of a king.”

“Another aspect of these two ideas is that awe or reverence implies obedience, while love means the willingness to sacrifice for one's beloved. This is very strongly expressed by the first sentence of the *Shema*: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:5).”

“The idea of love and fear of God has played a central role in all Jewish thinking throughout the ages because believing in God demands an explanation of man's relationship to Him . . . He is both near and far; both Father and King.”

“A third century Rabbi, Abbaye, who worked in his fields at night so that he could study during the day, gave some teaching that are still quoted today. He taught that the commandment to love God means that "God should come to be loved by other people through your behavior.”

“In Jewish tradition, Abraham's life is an example to this day of supreme faith and devotion to God, and of love for one's fellow man.”

“The first verse of the *Keri'at Shema*, the declaration of faith that every Jew is required to recite twice daily, reads: "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." The rabbis asked: How is it possible to command a human being to love? And they answered that this commandment in fact means that the human being must try to imitate God as much as he can: "Just as He is merciful, so must you be merciful; just as He is gracious, so must you be gracious; just as He helps the needy, so must you too help the needy." Thus God is the ultimate example for man.”

“Many kinds of love are represented in the Bible --- the sensuous love between man and woman; affection; concern; the theological idea of love between man and God. The most common term used is *ahav*. Parents have a special compassionate love for their children; affection, esteem and loyalty formed the essential relationship between David and Jonathan, or Naomi and Ruth. Love between man and woman is almost always connected with marriage or the intention to marry. The Song of Songs, described by the rabbis as an allegory of God's love for Israel, has been classed among the world's great love poetry. Its lyric quality and range of imagery have pictured the generosity and understanding which love creates and sustains, and have made these the ideal in human relationships. Love of God is sometimes signified indirectly, such as loving justice, or loving His commandments.”

“Love of one's fellow man is a biblical commandment: "Love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord" (Leviticus 19:18). This law is the basis for all the other laws which prohibit unfair dealings and the bearing of grudges, and stress concern for the defenseless. The great sages Akiva and Hillel regarded love of one's fellow as a basic precept of the Torah. From this commandment was drawn moral responsibility toward all men, including gentiles. In the last century, technology has brought the world and all its people closer together so that all mankind are essentially "neighbors." Recent Jewish philosophy has stressed this. Samson Raphael Hirsch makes the love of all mankind a condition of being a Jew. Sympathy for one's neighbor is basic to Martin Buber's I-Thou philosophy.”

“Just before he died, and on the eve of the Children of Israel's entry into the Promised Land, Moses made a farewell speech to the Jews. In it, he reviewed their history and gave direction for their future. In one sentence (Deuteronomy 10:12) he summed up what the Bible considers to be the entire purpose of human existence: "And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God demand of you? Only this: to revere (fear) the Lord

your God, to walk only in His paths, to love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and soul.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

A beautiful reminder of the Lord’s continual presence and thus His many names can be found in additional scriptures.

“Which glory is that of the church of the Firstborn, even of God, the holiest of all, through Jesus Christ his Son--
He that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth;
Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made.
As also he is in the moon, and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made;
As also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made;
And the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand.
And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings;
Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space--
The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things.” (*Doctrine and Covenants 88:5-13*)

“Yea, they were encircled about with everlasting darkness and destruction; but behold, he has brought them into his everlasting light, yea, into everlasting salvation; and they are encircled about with the matchless bounty of his love; yea, and we have been instruments in his hands of doing this great and marvelous work.” (*Alma 26:15*)

“He That Overcometh Shall Inherit All Things”

Revelation 1–3; 12

Summary: *Rev. 1: Christ chooses some as kings and priests unto God—Christ shall come again—John sees the Risen Lord. Rev. 2: He that overcomes shall gain eternal life, avoid the second death, inherit the celestial kingdom, and rule many kingdoms. Rev. 3: He that overcomes shall retain his name in the book of life, reach godhood, and be with Jesus as he is with the Father. Rev. 12: John sees the imminent apostasy of the Church—He also sees the war in heaven in the beginning when Satan was cast out—He sees the continuation of that war on earth.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights: John’s message to the seven churches (all located in today’s Turkey) brings an immediate symbolism of the Menorah, a seven-branched candelabrum carried by the Israelites through the wilderness of Sinai. The menorah is the emblem of the modern State of Israel.

“God showed Moses the prototype of the menorah when He handed down the Torah on Mount Sinai: from the central shaft of the menorah six branches, three on either side, curved upwards, making seven branches in all; it was carved from one solid piece of gold. It was a sacred object to be used only in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple, and no imitation was permitted. The special candle holder used on Hanukkah is a *hanukkiyyah* and not a menorah --- it has eight branches.”

“The original menorah was 18 handbreadths high and burned in the Tabernacle as a perpetuallight. When Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem, he placed ten golden *menorot* inside it, probably in addition to the *menorah* of Moses. Both these and the original menorah were destroyed completely when the First Temple was desecrated in 586 B.C.E. The returning Babylonian exiles rebuilt the Temple in 516 B.C.E. and, following the custom of the Tabernacle, made a single menorah according to the descriptions of Exodus (25:31--40 and 37:17--24). In 169 B.C.E. it was removed by Antiochus Epiphanes (the king in the Hanukkah story); Judah Maccabee replaced it after the cleansing of the Temple. With the final destruction of the Temple by the Romans under Titus in 70 C.E., the menorah was seized and probably carried in the triumphal procession through Rome. There is no definite information as to the fate of the menorah after this time, but it is certain that it did not exist later than 1204.”

“After the victory of Titus, the symbol of the menorah was preserved by the Jewish people. During the Middle Ages it was used to illuminate manuscripts. Kabbalists (Jewish mystics) took it as a representation of the *sefirot* (emanations of God). Today the menorah remains a familiar symbol. One appears on Marc Chagall's stained glass windows in Jerusalem; the Ghetto memorial in Warsaw embodies two large menorot and the large carved menorah of Benno Elkan stands outside the Knesset building.”
(*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

The fact that the menorah had seven branches may be symbolic of order. The number seven is a prime number in mathematics. The message to the seven churches was to assist their unity and order. It was to keep them “connected.”

“The idea of orderliness is also conveyed by a fascinating use of numbers, especially the number seven. The first verse of Genesis in the Hebrew text contains seven words; the second verse, 14. The word *Elohim* (God) is mentioned 7 x 5 (35) times; "earth" 7 x 3 (21) times; "good" seven times. The section on the seventh day consists of 7 x 5 (35) words and the term "seventh day" is mentioned in each of three seven word phrases. Just as the text is careful to use the proper word in its proper place, so God has been careful to form the proper creation, putting it in its proper place at exactly the appropriate time.

Therefore, creation is judged as being "very good," and all of God's creatures live in peace."

"Aware that he was soon to die, Moses made an impassioned plea to the Jews to keep the covenant that God had made with them. This is recorded towards the end of *Devarim*. He commands the priests to read the Torah publicly every seven years."

"The formal rules of mourning as described below are observed for seven close relatives: wife (or husband), father, mother, son, daughter, brother and sister."

"Joseph was one such interpreter; he explained Pharaoh's dreams of the fat and thin cows as symbolizing seven years of plenty followed by seven years of hunger (Genesis 41)."

"Two of the festivals, Passover and Sukkot, have what are known as intermediate days (*hol ha-mo'ed*, literally, the weekdays of the festival). Both of these festivals last for seven days (eight outside Israel) and only the first and the last day (the first two days and the last two days outside Israel) are full festivals."

"Halakhic requirements of the marriage ceremony include: the *huppah* (canopy); the giving of the ring by the groom to the bride in the presence of two valid witnesses; the *ketubbah* (marriage contract); *yibud*, a brief period of seclusion following the ceremony; and *sheva berakhot*, the seven blessings which combine the hopes of the young couple with the prayers and aspirations of the Jewish people. Differences in detail of foods, dress, procedures etc. which attend the joyful occasion vary as widely as the communities from which the participants come. The shattered glass, recalling the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, is a custom which is widely, but not universally, practiced. Some oriental Jews have a relative cutting paper during the ceremony, to ward off evil spirits. Some Ashkenazi brides make seven circuits around the groom to create a mystical ring which is presumed to serve the same purpose."

"The Bible (Deuteronomy 8:8) mentions seven kinds of produce found in Erez Israel: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, dates, and olives. Out of these products came wine, a variety of types of honey, and olive oil, as well as raisins and varieties of fresh and dried fruit. Nuts and apples were also common in biblical Israel."

"Rabbinic interpretation limited the first fruit offering to seven species growing in Erez Israel, produce which included not only necessities but delicacies as well: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olive oil and date honey."

"In the Book of Ezekiel (38--39) there is described a vision of the End of Days in which a war of God against "Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal" is predicted. Gog, it is prophesied, will lead a host from the furthest north against Israel, but Gog will die in the land of Israel and for seven years the Israelites will use the weapons of the enemy for fuel." (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

As you look at the blessings promised to the seven churches, you can see the contrasts to those blessings.

To Ephesus: Life / sin, death.
To Smyrna: Live with God / suffering.
To Pergamos: Lord's will / earthly honors.
To Thyatira: Eternal life / addiction to self.
To Sardis: Clothed in white / darkness.
To Philadelphia: Lord's name / nameless.
To Laodicea: Sit with the Lord / lukewarm.

The Lord has prepared a way for us to make choices and have those correct choices confirmed by His spirit. Satan's hoped to force everyone to follow his plan. Anything that resembles a choice is in contrast to dictatorship, addiction, and oppression.

“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;
And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (*John 8:32*)

“He Will Dwell with Them and They Shall Be His People”

Lesson

46

Revelation 5–6; 19–22

Summary: *Rev. 5: John sees the book sealed with seven seals and those redeemed out of every nation—He hears every creature praising God and the Lamb. Rev. 6: Christ opens the six seals, and John sees the events therein—In the fifth seal he sees the Christian martyrs, and in the sixth the signs of the times. Rev. 19: The marriage supper of the Lamb is made ready—The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy—Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords. Rev. 20: Satan is bound during the Millennium—The saints shall then live and reign with Christ—The dead stand before God and are judged out of the books according to their works. Rev. 21: Those who overcome shall be sons of God—The earth attains its celestial glory. Rev. 22: The saints shall reign in celestial splendor—Christ shall come and men shall be judged—Blessed are they who do his commandments.*

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights: In more than two and a half decades of being a tour guide in Israel, one of many experiences stands out as most touching. It is the experience of reviewing Israel’s history and sacred way of dwelling. There seemed to be a telestial, terrestrial and celestial identity. I see the Lord’s people as a “temple society,” a “Zion,” with eleven parts of the camp on the outside circle. Each tribe had stakes with banners identifying their location. They circled one tribe, the priestly Levites, who made a ring around the Lord’s “presence,” his tabernacle. The tabernacle, the “Holy of Holies” and center part of the camp of Israel, was likewise identified by stakes that were draped with curtains because of its very holy and high priestly state.

Eventually, Israel began to grow and wander from the unity the temple society required. So, a system of cities and of capital cities began to develop. The capital city had the tabernacle with temple courtyards large enough to handle tens of thousands of worthy Israelites to teach and remind them of ordinances that still applied to the whole Zion society. There still was an outer ring for the multitude that circled a center ring that was under the priestly Levite administration. Only worthy members were able to be brought through the priestly courtyard to participate in ordinances and sacrifices that occurred in the higher priestly part of the temple with its altar in front of the “Holy of Holies”

Eventually, the temple courtyards gave way to sacred “temple buildings” with telestial, terrestrial, and celestial identity. Instructions are given to prepare the people to be a Zion society. Again, its lesser and higher priestly environments and ordinances are designed to bring us into the Lord’s presence.

Going back in history, turning around and looking at today, I begin to better understand the present and the future of temple buildings and the system of two capital cities, the Lord’s cities of new and old Jerusalem. I see the possibility of being the Lord’s people, dwelling with him in his city. We have additional insights from Elder Bruce R. McConkie.

“Up to now, through all of earth's long years, there has been one time, one time only, when the Lord's system of capital cities has worked perfectly. Such was in the day of Enoch, the seventh from Adam. In that holy day, so faithful were the saints that the Lord, the Great Jehovah, "came and dwelt with his people," even as he will in the millennial era that is to be. In that holy day, the saints "dwelt in righteousness," even as they shall when the Lord comes again to dwell among mortals.” (*Bruce R. McConkie, The Mortal Messiah, Vol. 1, p. 84*)

“And the Lord called his people ZION, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there were no poor among them. And Enoch built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even ZION. . . . And Enoch and all his people walked with God, and he dwelt in the midst of Zion; and it came to pass that Zion was

not, for God received it up into his own bosom; and from thence went forth the saying, ZION IS FLED.” (*Moses 7:16-21, 69*)

Other scriptures help us understand more about a ZION or “temple society.”

“And he spake also concerning the house of Israel, and the Jerusalem from whence Lehi should come--after it should be destroyed it should be built up again, a holy city unto the Lord; wherefore, it could not be a new Jerusalem for it had been in a time of old; but it should be built up again, and become a holy city of the Lord; and it should be built unto the house of Israel.” (*Ether 13:5*)

There is a parallel of old Zion and new Zion. Prophecies of one may apply to both. One thing is for sure: The Lord will come and He will dwell in his cities. That means that a degree of sanctity and cleanliness must exist in these cities. It is the same sacredness that any temple building requires. It will require us to be a “temple society.”

“Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain.” (*Zechariah 8:3*)

The Prophet Joseph Smith said, "Judah must return, Jerusalem must be rebuilt, and the temple, . . . and all this must be done before the Son of Man will make His appearance" (*History of the Church 5:337*).

“Jerusalem of old, after the Jews have been cleansed and sanctified from all their sin, shall become a holy city where the Lord shall dwell and from whence he shall send forth his word unto all people. Likewise, on this continent, the city of Zion, New Jerusalem, shall be built and from it the law of God shall also go forth. There will be no conflict, for each city shall be headquarters for the Redeemer of the world, and from each he shall send forth his proclamations as occasion may require. Jerusalem shall be the gathering place of Judah and his fellows of the house of Israel, and Zion shall be the gathering place of Ephraim and his fellows, upon whose heads shall be conferred "the richer blessings.” (*Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., Doctrines of Salvation, Vol.3, p.69 - p.70*)

“Now many will feel disposed to say, that this New Jerusalem spoken of, is the Jerusalem that was built by the Jews on the eastern continent. But you will see, from Revelation 21:2, there was a New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, adorned as a bride for her husband; that after this, the Revelator was caught away in the Spirit, to a great and high mountain, and saw the great and holy city descending out of heaven from God. Now there are two cites spoken of here. As everything cannot be had in so narrow a compass as a letter, I shall say with brevity, that there is a New Jerusalem to be established on this continent, and also Jerusalem shall be rebuilt on the eastern continent (see Book of Mormon, Ether 13:1-12). "Behold, Ether saw the days of Christ, and he spake also concerning the house of Israel, and the Jerusalem from whence Lehi should come; after it should be destroyed, it should be built up again, a holy city unto the Lord, wherefore it could not be a New Jerusalem, for it had been in a time of old." This may suffice, upon the subject of gathering, until my next.” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Section Two 1834-37 p.86*)

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The conflicts that precede this great era are a refining fire. We are fortunate to have prophetic indications so that we can prepare ourselves for the future. As for the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem, there are specific signs and even time frames to guide us through future peril. As some see it, a five-phase era brings us to and through the "Armageddon" scenario.

1. The world turns against Israel. Hasn't the UN practiced this already?
2. The armies of 200,000,000 will gather against Israel. (Is that the size of the army or is it like the army of more than three hundred million people that was gathered for the Gulf War)? Two prophets will hold them back for three-and-a-half years. (They will have political, military as well as spiritual influence.)
3. A great holocaust ensues where the prophets will lie dead in the streets for three-and-a-half days. (One third of the population of Israel as well as two thirds of the population of Jerusalem perishes.)
4. A great heavenly manifestation and deliverance follow. (The mount of Olives cleaves in two, the besieged of Jerusalem are freed.)
5. A great healing begins, as it takes seven months to bury the dead and the instruments of war provide seven years of fuel for the survivors.

One:

"And when that day shall come they [those who then dwell in all lands] shall be visited of the Lord of Hosts, with thunder and with earthquake, and with a great noise, and with storm, and with tempest, and with the flame of devouring fire." We have seen these things as they were manifest among the Nephites at the time of the crucifixion of Christ. We have seen them in the wars and butchery of modern times, particularly where atomic weapons are involved. And we shall yet see them, in a measure never before manifest on earth, when all nations gather against Jerusalem in the days of the coming Armageddon. This Nephi knew, and this we know." (*Bruce R. McConkie, A New Witness for the Articles of Faith, p.435*)

Two:

"And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them." (*Revelation 9:16*)

"... for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

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." (*Revelation 11:2-4*)

Three:

"And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.

By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths." (*Revelation 9:17-18 - see also 16:14-21*)

"And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.

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.” (*Zechariah 13:8-9 - see also 11, 12, 13*)

“These are the two . . . standing before the God of the earth . . . when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them . . . And they of the people and kindreds 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 after three days and an 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.” (*Revelation 11:4-12*)

Four:

“For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.

And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.” (*Zechariah 14:2-5*)

Five:

“And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the hand-staves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years:

So that they shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down any out of the forests; for they shall burn the weapons with fire: and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the LORD GOD.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea: and it shall stop the noses of the passengers: and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude: and they shall call it The valley of Hamon-gog.

And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land.” (*Ezekiel 39:9-12*)

Some cleansing symbolism can be seen. As in the war of heaven when one third were cast out, one third of Israel will perish. Yet, as Israel was once a Zion society, the “Camp of Israel,” reduced to a series of large courtyards dedicated to the Lord and eventually became a House of The Lord, so it will return to the stakes of Zion and become the “Camp of the Lord,” or the “City of The Lord” again. Every dwelling place will be sacred and cleansed for the Lord to be able to dwell there.

“For verily I say unto you, that after you have had sufficient time to build a house to me, wherein the ordinance of baptizing for the dead belongeth, and for which the same was instituted from before the foundation of the world, your baptisms for your dead cannot be acceptable unto me;

For therein are the keys of the holy priesthood ordained, that you may receive honor and glory.

And after this time, your baptisms for the dead, by those who are scattered abroad, are not acceptable unto me, saith the Lord.

For it is ordained that in Zion, and in her stakes, and in Jerusalem, those places which I have appointed for refuge, shall be the places for your baptisms for your dead.” (*D&C 124:33-36*)

“And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defense.” (*Isaiah 4:5*)

In picturing this “city temple” scene from our own home in Jerusalem, my sweetheart, Marilyn, said to me, “Daniel, that means you’ll have to have a temple recommend to carry out the trash!” Our goal is to make our home worthy of being part of a temple city, always open to welcome our Savior.