

Know the Lord – Seek His Face

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Are you saved? The answer depends on your definition of “saved.” The invitation to come and **know** the Lord personally is revealed throughout the Book of Mormon, by Lehi, Nephi, Jacob, and many others. By the sixth verse of the first chapter of this book we read of Lehi seeing God. We read repeatedly of normal people in this book who had the desire *and* faith to **know** the Lord while in the flesh. Too few understand that our Lord’s gentle *invitation* to “**know**” Him *in this life* is an important, *necessary* step in the eternal progression of *the exalted*. Addressing the wicked Pharisees of His day, Christ was more forceful, stating, “Ye neither **know** me, nor my Father: if ye had **known** me, ye should have **known** my Father also” (John 8:19).

To come to **know** the Lord personally, it is worthwhile to study Nephi’s words in 2 Nephi, especially chapters 31-32, along with Moroni Chapter 7, and the ministry of angels there, and D&C 76 verses 50 through 70. We should study the Book of Mormon to see how its authors obtained this *heavenly gift*. They were not satisfied until they **knew** God in mortality. This invitation is explicitly made in D&C 93:1, via a five-step process. We read there, “Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that (1) every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and (2) calleth on my name, and (3) obeyeth my voice, and (4) keepeth my commandments, (5) shall see my face and **know** that I am.” This promise is for this life.

Joseph Smith taught us that we should go to God directly for answers. He stated, “for God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what He will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them, for *the day must come* when no man need say to his neighbor, **Know** ye the Lord; for all shall **know** Him (who remain) from the least to the greatest” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 149).

In connection with this, the Prophet Joseph made a significant change to the parable of the ten virgins story in Matthew chapter 25. In his re-translation of this chapter, Joseph changed the *reason* why the Lord did not let the five unwise virgins into the joyous wedding feast. We know they came without oil and knocked on the door where the wedding feast was held. They were not let in, but it wasn’t because the Lord did not “**know**” those knocking on the door, as this particular Bible verse states. He certainly knew them as He does all of us. Instead it was because **they had failed to come to know Him**. Joseph Smith’s retranslation thus more accurately states, “Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us. But he [the Lord] answered and said, Verily I say unto you, **Ye know me not**” (JST Matthew 25:10-11). Thus they did not enter in the joyous place where Christ and those that knew Him were, those *with oil* in their lamps.

The content of this parable is consistent with that of D&C 112:23-26, addressed *to the Saints* of Joseph’s and our day, those who also do not come to **know** the Lord. It reads, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, darkness covereth the earth, and gross darkness the minds of the people, and all flesh has become corrupt before my face. Behold, vengeance cometh speedily upon the inhabitants of the earth, a day of wrath, a day of burning, a day of desolation, of weeping, of mourning, and of lamentation; and as a whirlwind it shall come upon all the face of the earth, saith the Lord. **And upon my house shall it begin**, and from **my house** shall it go forth, saith the Lord; **First** among those among you, saith the Lord, **who have professed to know my name and have not known me**, and have blasphemed against me in the midst of my house, saith the Lord” (emphasis added).

If we are expecting to **know** Christ after your death when you have not **known** Him in this life, we will be disappointed. During his martyrdom, Stephen would not have been welcomed by Christ into His glory had Stephen not **known** Him in his life. We read in the book of Alma, “**For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God**; yea, behold the day of **this life** is the day for men to perform their labors. And now, as I said unto you before, as ye have had so many witnesses, **therefore, I beseech of you that ye do not procrastinate the day of your repentance until the end**; for after this day of **life, which is given us to prepare for eternity**, behold, if we do not improve our time while in **this life**, then *cometh the night of darkness wherein there can be no labor performed*. Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crisis, that I will repent, *that I will return to my God*. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies **at the time that ye go out of this life**, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world” (Alma 34:32-34). See also John, chapter 8.

Because of Christ’s Resurrection the righteous *and* the wicked will live again. This is not “*eternal life*”, however, as defined by scripture, nor the Prophet Joseph Smith. To have *eternal life* is to be a joint heir with Christ of all that the Father has (Rom. 8:17; John 14:2; Rev. 20:12-13). This is to be *exalted*. Speaking of *exaltation* in the highest glory in the Celestial Kingdom, where there is a “**fullness**,” our Lord states, “For strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth unto the *exaltation and continuation of the lives*, and few there be that find it, *because ye receive me not in the world* neither do ye **know** me. **But if ye receive me in the world, then shall ye know me, and shall receive your exaltation**; that where I am

ye shall be also” (D&C 132:22-23, emphasis added). Note what Mosiah 26 states about the resurrection and **knowing** the Lord. “For behold, in my name are they called; and if they **know** me they shall come forth, and shall have a place *eternally* at my right hand. And it shall come to pass that when the second trump shall sound then shall they that never **knew** me come forth and shall stand before me. And then shall they **know** that I am the Lord their God, that I am their Redeemer; *but they would not be redeemed. And then I will confess unto them that I never knew them*; and they shall depart into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” Mos. 26:24-27). Such was the case with the five unwise virgins.

These teachings are further supported by the D&C 76 verses 50 through 70, where we read of those of **the church of the Firstborn** (v. 54), *those who have come in the presence of our Lord in this life*. They are of the **Celestial** glory (v. 70). They rise in **the first resurrection** – of the **just** (verses 50 and 64). They come *with Christ* when He returns to earth in glory – in the clouds of heaven (v. 63), and are those who “**overcome by faith** and are **sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise** (v. 53, who is Christ, *the Second Comforter*, John 14:16, see footnote a, older scriptures). They are those “into whose hands the Father has given **all things**” (v. 55), those “who are come *unto Mount Zion* and unto *the city of the living God*, the heavenly place, the holiest of all” (v. 66). They are members of a great general assembly of *the saved*, those who are **redeemed** and **have the testimony of Jesus** (v. 51), receiving **the promise of eternal life in this life**. They are members of “**the church of Enoch and of the Firstborn**” (v. 67). Their *names are written in heaven* (v. 68). “These are they who are **just men made perfect** through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood” (v. 69). They “have the privilege of *receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven* [in this life], *to have the heavens opened unto them*, to *commune with* the general assembly and **church of the Firstborn**, and to **enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus** the mediator of the new covenant” here and now (D&C 107:19).

In the book of John we read, “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and **we will come unto him**, and make our abode with him” (John 14:23). These words define those who have become members of the church of the Firstborn, those redeemed of the Lord, those entering His presence in mortality. Christ desires all of us to be one with Him, and Father and Mother. It is a self-selection process in this life. Our desire to **know** Him must increase, along with our faith, if these glorious promises are to become a reality while in mortality.

To receive Christ in this life is a great blessing requiring diligence that is rewarded with *eternal life*. Unfortunately, too many are lulled into a *false sense of security* believing they can participate in a few earthly ordinances performed upon them by men here and then be welcomed into the highest courts of heaven. Such an illusion leads to complacency in our efforts. Such do not understand the gospel of Christ as presented in scripture and by the Prophet Joseph Smith. To receive a “fullness” or true “*salvation*,” according to Joseph Smith, requires dedication to knowing our Lord *in this life*, if we are to inherit the greatest blessings He and the Father have in store for the valiant – those inheriting Celestial glory.

In the Lectures of Faith Joseph Smith stated, “Let us here observe that a religion that does not require **the sacrifice of all things** never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary **unto life and salvation**. For from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of [eternal] *life and salvation* never could be obtained **without the sacrifice of all earthly things**. **It is through this sacrifice, and this only**, that God has ordained that men should enjoy *eternal life*. And it is through the medium of **the sacrifice of all earthly things** that men do actually **know** that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God. When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has for the truth’s sake, not even withholding his life, and believing before God that he has been called to make this sacrifice because he seeks to do His Will, he does know, most assuredly, that God does and will accept his sacrifice and offering and that he has not sought nor will he **seek His face in vain**. Under these circumstances, then, he can obtain the faith necessary for him to lay hold on *eternal life*. **It is in vain** for persons to fancy to themselves that they are **heirs with those**, or can be heirs with them, who have offered their all in sacrifice, and by this means obtained faith in God and favor with him **so as to obtain eternal life**, unless they in like manner offer unto him *the same sacrifice* and through that offering obtain **the knowledge that they are accepted of him**” (Lecture 6, Lectures on Faith, emphasis added). This is to have **the testimony of Jesus** in this life (see D&C 76:51, 101; 88:4, 74-75; Rev. 12:17; 19:10).

The Prophet Joseph Smith had the Lectures on Faith placed into the original version of the Doctrine & Covenants. These lectures were the primary study materials for the early “*School of the Prophets*,” those who would lead the church in Joseph’s day and for some time thereafter. The body of the church accepted them on August 17, 1835, as “the doctrine and covenants of their faith, *by a unanimous vote*” (HC vol. 2, pps. 243–46). Later in 1921, a church committee, without the *common consent* of its lay members and *their vote*, removed this important work from our canon of scriptures. Lecture 6 is important in that it reveals the faith and effort needed to receive the promise of eternal life or exaltation in this life.

The Holy One of Israel is the keeper of the gate to heaven. He is the Father of our salvation. He employs **no servant** there

(2 Ne. 9:41). All *judgment* has been committed into His hands (John 5:22). If we do not have His testimony, “*the testimony of Jesus,*” the testimony that we are clean, given to the Father by Christ - our Advocate with Him, then we will inherit a lesser kingdom. We must have a desire to **know** our Redeemer in this life to receive this most priceless gift - *salvation*, where there is a “fullness.” The five-step process of entering the Lord’s “*rest*” is given in D&C 93:1. It is real, possible, and necessary for those *believers desiring exaltation*. Those who *repent* and humbly work towards entering our Lord’s glorious presence here, have a promise that such is possible. God has said that those who seek Him and His face diligently - **will** find Him (D&C 88:63). Note the related concepts addressed below all tied to returning to our Lord’s presence in this life.

To find Him or receive Him in this life is to enter His “**rest**” (Alma 13:3).

It is to receive “**the heavenly gift**” (4 Ne. 1:3).

It is to have one’s “**calling and election made sure**” (2 Peter 1:10; Joseph Smith TPJS, pps. 149-51).

It is to receive “**the more sure word of prophecy**” (D&C 131:5; 2 Peter 1:1-11, 19).

It is to receive “**the testimony of Jesus**” (D&C 76:51, 101; 88:4, 74-75; Rev. 12:17; 19:10).

It is to receive Christ as **the Second Comforter** (John 14:16).

It is to be “**sealed**” **His** - by Him, as He is “the Holy Spirit of promise” (D&C 76:53).

It is to receive **the promise of “eternal life”** (2 John 2:25) and thus become a “son” or “daughter” of God, not just a servant or friend. A “son” or “daughter” has right to the full inheritance of God as a family member.

It is to be “purified” by living water, “justified” by the fiery Spirit, and “**sanctified**” by the blood of Christ (Moses 6:5-60). Such *blessed* ones “**know** the Lord.”

Such have experienced the “*three baptisms*” addressed in 1 John 5:7-8 and Moses 6:57-62. Collectively, they **are** “*the plan of salvation*” (Moses 6:62). Those so blessed are “*purified*” in the *living waters* of baptism, “*justified*” by the baptism of *fire and the Holy Ghost* (see 2 Ne. 31:13-21), and finally “*sanctified*” **from all sin** by the blood of Christ. They are transfigured by Him, that they might be brought to heaven and endure a face-to-face meeting *with* Him (see D&C 76:114-119). In this ascent-vision experience, they feel the prints of the nails in His hands, wrists, and feet, the wound in His side, and much more (3 Ne. 11:14). They come to **know** the God of Israel, the light and life of the world, the Great I AM.

Sent Ones **True messengers have always pointed to Christ as our Savior, not men who seek acclamation and honor.** True messengers have **the testimony of Jesus**. *They love and worship Him – the Great I AM, the Light and the Life of the World.* The Prophet Joseph Smith has informed us that, “**No man can be a minister of Jesus Christ except he has the testimony of Jesus; and this is the spirit of prophecy**” (TPJS, p. 160). Priestcraft is that men set them selves up to be lights before me (2 Ne. 26:29). Our Lord said that He was the light we are to hold up as an example (3 Ne. 18:24). Those that are to be lights but are not are as salt that has lost its savor. “...they were set to be a light unto the world, and *to be the saviors of men*; And inasmuch as *they are not the savior’s of men*, they are as *salt that has lost its savor*, and is thenceforth good for nothing but to be *cast out* and *trodden* under foot of men” (D&C 103:4, 9-10).

The Prophet Joseph and Oliver Cowdery made this clear in reference to the Twelve in their day – that they all needed to be “*special witnesses*” of the Lord, true messengers or ministers who had “the testimony of Jesus.” Elder Cowdery, speaking to the Twelve of his day, stated, “...**it is necessary that you receive a testimony from heaven for yourselves...never cease striving until you have seen God face to face. Your ordination is not full and complete till God has laid His hand upon you.** We require as much to qualify us as did those who have gone before us; God is the same. If the Savior in former days laid His hands upon His disciples, why not in latter days?”¹ The Prophet Joseph, in speaking to all Saints, added, “It is your privilege to purify yourselves and come up to the same glory, and see yourselves, and know for yourselves” (TJPS, p. 13). Today’s definition of “special witnesses” is a different one. Too many assume all current leaders have such a witness, and that it is reserved for them alone. Christ chastised the leaders of His day for keeping such knowledge back from the body of believers. They were the controlling “Rabbi’s” and “lawyers” (see Luke 11:52).

To enter the Lord’s presence in this life is to be *fruitful*, the kind of “**fruit meet for the father’s kingdom**” rather than a lesser kingdom (D&C 84:58). In this same section of the Doctrine and Covenants – the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood, we are told that because of our “*vanity*” and “**unbelief**” in connection with this and other teachings, that we are in darkness, while we could be enjoying God’s great light. “Which vanity and unbelief have brought *the whole church under condemnation*. And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, *even all*. And *they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent* and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, *not only to say, but to do* according to that which I have written - **That they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father’s kingdom**; otherwise there remaineth a scourge and judgment to be poured out upon the children of Zion” (D&C 84:54-58). In Jacob’s allegory in the Book of Mormon, the Lord and His servant gather out the “*fruit*” in the vineyard one last time. In verse 71 we read, “And the Lord of the vineyard said unto them [the Servant and the 144,000]: Go to, and labor in the vineyard, with your might. For behold, **this is the last time that I shall nourish my**

vineyard; for the end is nigh at hand, and the season [of judgment] speedily cometh; and if ye labor with your might with me ye shall have joy in **the fruit** which I shall lay up unto myself against the time which will soon come” (Jacob 5:71). In D&C 95:6 the Lord addresses those *called* but not ultimately *chosen*. He gives the reason why, stating, “They who are not chosen have sinned a very grievous sin, in that they are **walking in darkness at noon-day.**” They are they who persist in their *unbelief*, and thus inherit a lesser kingdom, thus becoming fruit *not* meet for the Father’s kingdom.

Like us today, the children of Israel were invited into the Lord’s presence (at the base of Sinai). They too were full of unbelief, and thus did not have sufficient faith to act and receive. We are told that they were thus not given the higher priesthood, which is required to enter to the Lord’s “*rest.*” We read in D&C 84 verses 21-22 that the higher priesthood is required to receive the mysteries of Godliness, to “**see the face of God, even the Father and live.**” Moses plainly taught these and other things to the children of Israel, “and sought diligently to *sanctify* his people, *that they might behold the face of God*” (v. 23, italics added). “But they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence” therefore, the Lord in his wrath...swore that they should not enter into his **rest** while in the wilderness, *which rest is the fullness of his glory*” (v. 24, emphasis added). “And the Lord said unto Moses, Hew thee two other tables of stone, like unto the first, and I will write upon them also, the words of the law, according as they were written at the first on the tables which thou brakest; but it shall not be according to the first, **for I will take away the priesthood out of their midst; therefore my holy order, and the ordinances thereof, shall not go before them; for my presence shall not go up in their midst, lest I destroy them.** But I will give unto them the law as at the first, but it shall be after the law of a carnal commandment; for I have sworn in my wrath, that *they shall not enter into my presence, into my rest, in the days of their pilgrimage...*” (JST Exodus 34:1-2, emphasis added, see also Jacob 1:7). Unbelief leads to condemnation and lesser things.

In contrast to this darkness, entering God’s glorious light in mortality is part of His desire for us, His true doctrine with its accompanying blessings in the gospel of Christ. Too few understand that this is His “*plan of salvation*” (Moses 6:62). Encouragement for, and teaching in, *this path*, was common in the days of Joseph Smith. It is now becoming lost, misunderstood, even spoken against. It should not be so. The lawyers in Christ’s day took away truths, including this *key of knowledge*. Our Lord stated, “Woe unto you, lawyers! For ye have taken away the key of knowledge [of me and entering into my rest]; **ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered**” (Luke 11:52).

The Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price were not given us that we might check off reading them as another completed, menial task during the week. Instead the Book of Mormon, for example, is a blessed instruction manual for returning to our Lord’s presence. We know Lehi, Nephi, and Jacob, all in the same family entered the **rest** of the Lord. In 2 Nephi 31:18 we read that only those who have received *the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost* have passed through the gate and are now *on the path* to **eternal life** – the path culminating in God’s presence at some future point. Few understand what *the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost* is, and that it is a preparatory gift for receiving the Lord here and now, revealing overall that there is much more to learn and experience on the journey of coming to Christ that we might realize. We have become much like the Jews of old, complacent in our special nature, our assured salvation because of our works and false beliefs. If we will search God’s word we will find the pearls that are in them, pearls suggesting there is much more to salvation, and that it is not possible without coming to **know** our Lord, our Redeemer in that salvation.

As part of our journey in this life we must not look *beyond the mark* while studying these valued books (Jacob 4:14), or believe that we are saved when we are not, thus remaining in unbelief, bound by the complacent chains of hell, deceived into believing “all is well.” The physical earthly ordinances we participate in, are important symbolic rites - to be sure, but they have no saving value in and of themselves. The Savior and Paul the Apostle taught the people of their day that their repetitive works alone could not save them. Instead, the *symbolic* ordinances are useful teaching tools that are tied to a *greater reality*, the reality of coming unto Christ *literally*. He is our Lord and Savior, not the works of men. He is the mark we must look to for salvation here and now. Jacob of the Book of Mormon stated, “Why not...attain to a **perfect knowledge** of him” (Jacob 4:14, , bold added, see also 6:7-11). Let us diligently seek His face and receive Him, for He is the author and finisher of our faith, the Father of our salvation – the Great Redeemer **Jesus the Christ!** For a modern testimony of these things, see: <http://thejcrewfamily8.blogspot.com/2015/07/testimony-of-christ.html?m=1>

End Notes

¹ Oliver Cowdery, History of the Church, vol. 2, pp. 195-96. Historian D. Michael Quinn has suggested that the Twelve today have abandoned the charge to come to **know** the Lord, and now only require an inward prompting by the Holy Ghost to merit their calling as “special witnesses” of the Lord, rather than an actual audience with Christ, as required in the statements of Oliver Cowdery and Joseph Smith. Quinn states, “repeatedly, the message of the twentieth-century LDS church is that inward conviction rather than outward vision is the basis for being a special witness of Christ” (Michael D. Quinn, Mormon Hierarchy: Extensions of Power, Signature Books, pps. 4-5).

The obligation of revelation for the individual is often referred to as an “ascent vision experience.” It remains of paramount importance to all believers to seek the Lord’s face. Brigham Young said, “What a pity it would be if we were led by one man [or men – the arm of flesh] to utter destruction! Are you afraid of this? I am more afraid that this people have so much confidence in their leaders that they will not inquire of themselves of God whether they are led by Him. I am fearful they settle down in a state of blind self-security, trusting their eternal destiny in the hands of their leaders with a reckless confidence that in itself would thwart the purposes of God in their salvation, and weaken that influence they could give to their leaders, did they know for themselves, by the revelations of Jesus, that they are led in the right way. Let every man and woman know, by the whispering of the Spirit of God to themselves, whether their leaders are walking in the path that the Lord dictates, or not. This has been my exhortation continually” (Journal of Discourses, vol. 9, pps. 149-50).