

The Way, the Rod & the Tree

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The Tree of Life vision of Lehi and Nephi in the Book of Mormon encapsulates the primary focus of the book, and that is to *repent* and *come unto Christ* and be saved. The main parts of their visions include *the way* or *path* to the tree, *the rod* that leads to it, and *the tree* itself. Much can be learned from dissecting these three primary components of salvation. They represent key portions of *the doctrine* of Christ, His *gospel*, and those that have entered his *church*. Wise virgins choose to be on this pathway. What is “the way, the rod, and the tree”? Why should we care?

I. The Way – of Life & Salvation

The phrase “**the way**” is found throughout scripture. In the New Testament it was the name for those who believed in Christ. They became “*followers of the way*” (Acts 9:2; 11:26; Heb. 10:19-20). This identification is believed to have originated with Christ’s statement in John chapter 14. Speaking to His disciples, the Lord said:

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, *I will come again, and receive you unto myself*; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and **the way** ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know **the way**? Jesus saith unto him, *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*” (John 14:1-6).

Paul, addressing the Roman leader Felix, stated:

“But this I confess unto thee, that after **the way** which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets...” (Acts 24:14).

Later believers in the New Testament were known by the title of *Nazarenes*. Still later they were known as *Christians* (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; John 14:1-6; 2 Pet. 2:2; Isa. 30:21). In the Book of Mormon “**the way**” is used to signal those following the Lord’s **doctrine** and **gospel**. They became part of His **church**. Frequently in scripture the phrase “**the way**” is connected with instruction tied to *the baptism of fire experience* – when we are made new or “*born again*” in Christ Jesus. Note the following ten Book of Mormon scriptures where “**the way**” is addressed, the last three being the most instructive in relation to being “*born again*” in Christ.

Nephi informed us that Christ is “**the way**” in 2 Nephi 2:4-8. His salvation is *free*. He offered Himself as a *sacrifice for sin* for all those who have a *broken heart* and a *contrite spirit*. Our Lord stated, “I am **the way**, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, *but by me*” (John 14:6).

Later Nephi stated this again, adding that *Christ* is “**the way of deliverance of our God**” (2 Ne. 9:10-12).

Lehi and his family were delivered in the wilderness by the “ball” or “director.” It pointed “**the way**” (1 Ne. 16:10). Christ told the family that He was to be their “*light*” in the wilderness. He said, “I will prepare **the way** before you, if it so be that ye shall keep my commandments . . . ye shall be led towards the promised land; and ye shall know that it is by *me* that ye are led” (1 Ne. 17:13-14).

King Mosiah reinforced the concept that Christ delivers us physically and spiritually, if we trust in Him. He stated that there is “no other *name* given *nor any other way* nor means whereby *salvation* can come unto the children of men, only in and through the *name* of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent” (Mos. 3:17).

In 1 Nephi 10:18, Nephi, quoting the Lord, stated, “**The way** is prepared for all men...if they **repent** and **come unto me**.” The Lord extends this same invitation to all frequently (see also 2 Ne. 9:23-24; 28:32; Jacob 1:7; Alma 5:33-34; D&C 93:1; 3 Ne. 9:14, 22, 51; 11:14; 12:19-20, 23-24; 27:5-21; 30:1-2; D&C

10:67-68). Those who accept it and embrace “**the way**,” also embrace His “**doctrine, gospel, and church**” (see D&C 10:67-68).

The Lord stated, “*Repent...and enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is **the way** that leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is **the way** that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it*” (JST Matt. 7:22-23, see also 24-35; John 10:9).

Nephi then informs us that, “**the way** for man is *narrow*” and that “**the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there**” (2 Ne. 9:41). No mortal *man* can save us, only Christ!

Jacob adds his testimony, stating, “enter in at *the strait gate* and continue in **the way** which is narrow, until ye shall obtain *eternal life*” (Jacob 6:11). *Eternal life* is the gift at the end of “**the way**.”

Alma stated that the Spirit told him to, “Cry unto this people, saying ‘*Repent* ye, and prepare **the way** of the Lord, and walk in *his paths*, which are *straight* . . .’” (see also Alma 41:8).

Nephi taught that those who experience “*the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost*” (2 Ne. 31:13) are “*in this straight and narrow **path** which leads to eternal life; yea, ye have entered in by the gate [Christ]; ye have done according to the commandments of the Father and the Son; and ye have received the Holy Ghost, which witnesses of the Father and the Son, unto the fulfilling of the Promise which he hath made, that if ye entered in by **the way** ye should receive*” (2 Ne. 31:18).

Nephi then added, “And now, behold, my beloved brethren, this is **the way**; and there is *none other way* nor *name* given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God. And now, behold, this is **the doctrine of Christ**, and **the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost**, which is one God, without end. Amen (2 Ne. 31:21).

Nephi concluded his instruction on being “*born again*” by stating, “...if ye will enter by **the way**, and receive the Holy Ghost, *it will show unto you all things what ye should do* [to receive eternal life, by literally coming unto Christ]. Behold, this is **the doctrine of Christ**...” (2 Ne. 32:5-6).

We read in John chapter 3 and Mosiah chapter 27, and other places, that being “*born again*” is a requirement to **see and enter** the kingdom of God. The Lord told Nicodemus:

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be *born again*, he cannot **see** the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? 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 3:3-6).

Alma the Elder adds to this in the Book of Mormon, stating:

. . . I have *repented* of my sins, and have been *redeemed* of the Lord; behold *I am born of the Spirit*. And the Lord said unto me: Marvel not that **all mankind**, yea, men and women, all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, **must be born again**; yea, *born of God*, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being *redeemed* of God, becoming *his sons and daughters*; And thus they become *new creatures*; and **unless they do this, they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God** (Mos. 27:24-26).

The Gate onto the Way The baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost is *the gate* onto the path to the Tree of Life, the tree being God and receiving eternal life at His hands (2 Ne. 31:17; Mat. 7:13-14). These saving truths were placed in the Book of Mormon because “*the plain and precious truths*” of salvation through Christ’s doctrine and gospel have been corrupted in modern churches and the Bible, many of these truths taken out from them. Joseph Smith’s primary mission was to bring them forth again in the latter-day Restoration.

For many today, the most important truths available in **God's word** (*revelation* and *scripture*) have been sacrificed in favor of busily checking off items on our religious to-do lists. These lists often feature items that are tied to "*the philosophies of men mingled with scripture.*" They speak of God, but often "*teach for commandments the doctrines of men.*" In doing so "*they deny the power thereof.*" So said God to Joseph Smith in reference to churches and religion generally in the First Vision. The **power** that is *denied* (2 Ne. 28:32); *rejected* (2 Ne. 1:10-11; 1 Sam. 8:7), and *forsaken* (Jer. 2:13) is Jesus Christ and **His** saving *doctrine* and *gospel*. We must turn to Christ, the light and life of the world, for our salvation! He is "mighty to save." There is no need to fear man and what he can do, but great need to "fear" or reverence and love the living God. He has already paid the price for our Salvation! All He asks from us - to be made new in Him - is to offer up as a sacrifice, a *broken heart* and a *contrite spirit*.

"And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a *broken heart* and a *contrite spirit*. And whoso **cometh unto me** with a *broken heart* and a *contrite spirit*, him **will I baptize** with fire and with *the Holy Ghost*" (3 Ne. 9:20, see also 2 Ne. 2:4-8 the paper *Repent and Come unto Me*).

It is to come to Christ in earnest, heartfelt repentance, crying out in total submission and humility for forgiveness, as did Alma the Younger in Alma 36.

A correct understanding of **the way** is found in God's written word. There, in the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants we read of important truths the Lord calls "*my doctrine*," "*my gospel*," and "*my church*." Because many today look to their leaders (the arm of flesh) rather than to God and His word (*scripture* and *revelation*), **the way** has remained hidden to them. If we first search for the *fulness* of His word in scripture, "*feasting*" upon it, we will find *the gate* onto the pathway to eternal life. We will find that Christ is "**the way**" to *salvation*, not fulfilling our callings valiantly or doing more temple work. We cannot save ourselves in our works. There is "no other way" to salvation but through Christ Jesus (see 2 Ne. 9:41, 31:21; Mos. 3:17; Alma 38:9; Hel. 5:9). We must *repent* and *come unto Him* to be on the path to the tree and eternal life.

A significant marker along **the way** to salvation or eternal life is receiving what the Book of Mormon calls "*the mighty change of heart*," or what many other Christians call being "*born again*." It is **the gate** onto the path to eternal life, received at the Tree of life. It is the "*born again*" experience where we are *cleansed* by the fiery **power** of the *Holy Ghost*, and thereafter receive it as our *guide* - to take us farther on **the way** until we finally reach the Tree of Life. It *and* the direct word of God in *revelation* make up "*the iron rod*" taking us to the tree.

The gift and power of the Holy Ghost is one of two primary definitions for what the Lord calls, "*the endowment of power from on high*." He uses this phrase in six sets of scripture (Luke 24:49 & Acts 1 & 2; D&C 38:32, 38; 43:15-16; 95:8-9; 97:12-18, and 105:10-12). Two of them are tied to the greater priesthood, the other four to being *born again* in Him. It is after we are cleansed by our Savior - in sincere, heartfelt repentance - that the Lord gives us this important *gift* or *endowment* to help us make it to the tree, where we receive eternal life (see 2 Ne. 31:12-21 and 32:3 & 5). The following scriptures reveal that God performs this baptism of fire upon us. It is a gift or "*endowment of power from on high*" or from Him, not man (see D&C 33:15; 3 Ne. 9:20; 12:1; 2 Ne. 31:12; 3 Ne. 11:35; JST Mat. 3:38; JST Luke 3:16; JST John 1:28; 15:26). The Holy Ghost is an essential endowment, helping us discern truth from error as we are led on **the way** to yet another greater gift; God Himself and his love, along with His gift of *eternal life*. This is the sweet fruit available on the tree.

Once we have received *this cleansing fiery baptism*, and the important gift or *endowment of the Holy Ghost*, we have entered through *the gate* and are now **on the way** to the Tree of Life (see 2 Ne. 31:17-18). It is a straight and narrow way, a direct, but limited pathway to the tree, or to God and His literal presence. Note the following three related scriptures.

"...repent ye, and **enter in at the strait gate**, and continue in **the way** which is narrow, until ye shall obtain eternal life" (Jacob 6:11).

"Behold, **the way** for man is *narrow*...in a *straight course* before him, and **the keeper of the gate** is the

Holy One of Israel; and **he employeth no servant there**; and there is **none other way** *save it be by the gate*...And whoso knocketh, to him will he open” (2 Ne. 9:41-42).

“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” (D&C 132:22; Matt. 7:13-14).



The Way, the Straight and Narrow Way to Salvation, also known as the Red Heifer Bridge to Gethsemane and the place of the cross on the Mount of Olives, painting by Larry Christensen

The Straight and Narrow Way of our Lord

*The way of salvation is open to us because of the love and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus in Jerusalem. Historical records reveal that there was once a two-tiered **straight** and **narrow way** or bridge connecting Herod's Temple atop *the Ophel* (a hill or small mountain) in the *west*, with the higher Mount of Olives to the *east*. Christ performed the atonement on both opposing mountains. It was on *Olivet* (the name of the third, southern peak of the Mount of Olives) that Christ and eleven of His Apostles journeyed to after the events of the Last Supper. Olivet to the east was the setting for capital punishment in Jerusalem, and for graves. It was the setting of our Lord's atonement, and before it, the setting for a unique *sin offering* altar, that of the rare red heifer sacrifice. This altar area for both sacrifices was called the *Miphkad* altar, meaning, “*the appointed place*” – for not only the red heifer sacrifice, but the future event it symbolized - our Lord's atonement, occurring in both Gethsemane and the cross in this area. Prior to our Lord's sacrifice, the ancient High Priest offered up the red heifer there, while looking towards the temple westward. It was a type for our Lord's great and last sacrifice offered up at this same, *appointed place*. There, He as the Great High Priest and the Lamb of God, willingly sacrificed Himself that we might live.*

Arriving on Olivet with eleven of the Apostles just after the Last Supper, the Lord first positioned eight of them on the lower area of the mountain, just beyond the last of perhaps eight *gates* along the narrow bridge. Peter, James, and John were then brought up higher, nearer the Garden of Gethsemane, where the Lord would go in alone to perform the first portion of the Atonement for us all. Three scriptures witness that it was the Garden of Gethsemane that He suffered greatly for our sins, iniquities, and more, so great that blood literally oozed from every pore (see Luke 22:44; Mosiah 3:7; D&C 19:18).

Between Olivet to the east, and the Ophel to the west was *the Kidron Valley*, the place where defiling blood drained from thousands of animals sacrificed on the second of the three altars, referred to as “*the burnt offering*” altar of sacrifice, near the temple’s east entrance. This valley was also the setting of much blood and death in various battles near the Holy City. The Red Heifer Bridge was originally built to span the distance between the two mountains, so that the High Priest performing the red heifer sacrifice on Olivet, might not be defiled by touching the defiling nature of the valley, made profane by its *sin*, *blood*, and *death*; three of the most defiling things in the Law of Moses. Our Lord overcame all three of these in His great sacrifice.

Sacred versus Profane Space The *sin offering* altar for the red heifer and our Lord was one of three altar settings tied to sacrifice in the Law of Moses in ancient Israel. Each of them pointed to our Lord’s infinite and eternal sacrifice, which ended blood sacrifices generally. The “*sin offering*” altar is the farthest altar east of the temple, some 3000 feet (2000 cubits) from the Holy of Holies of the temple westward. It was thus directly opposite of Herod’s Temple and in-line with it, east to west. It was also downwind from the temple. The *sin offering* altar was positioned just beyond the third tier of sacred space surrounding the temple, known as “the camp of Israel” (see illustration p. 25). Both sacrifices were thus performed away from the sacred space of the temple and its Holy of Holies, that the *blood*, *sin*, and *death* tied to them would not defile and pollute the holiness of the temple westward.

The *sin offering* of the red heifer was the most rare and significant of the ancient animal sacrifices. It is also the one most closely tied to our Lord and His atonement. This female animal had to be *all red*. More than one hair of any other color disqualified it for this important sacrifice. It served as a symbol of our Lord’s covering in His own red blood in Gethsemane, and thereafter in the scourging and the cross. It was *female* - in connection with *mercy*, as opposed to men and *judgment*. This animal, and the bodies of other animals whose blood was taken into the Holy Holies by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, were all burned upon the “*sin offering*” altar on Olivet. Some of the blood of these animals was collected and taken inside the temple. There, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest *sprinkled* it on the altar (Lev. 1:5), he *poured it out* at its base, and he *smeared* it on the four horns of the altar (placed at its four corners).

This rite symbolized the three ways in which our Lord willingly shed His blood for us in the atonement. It came from every pore, *sprinkling* upon the ground in Gethsemane. It was *poured out* in the brutal scourging, where his flesh was literally torn open by the sharp bone and metal embedded in the whip of the Roman soldier. Finally His blood was *smeared* on the cross in the crucifixion. Only He, as the perfect Lamb of God and the Great High Priest could perform this infinite and eternal sacrifice for us.

The straight and narrow **way** of the red heifer bridge, connected two opposing mountains in the capital city Jerusalem, both with altars. The *sin offering* altar on the higher mountain to the east - Olivet, was the setting for the Lord’s fulfillment of an ancient **covenant pattern** that began with Abraham in Genesis 15. This same sacrifice pattern continued with Isaac, and with Jacob later on, finally ending with Christ in the Atonement at Jerusalem. Portions of our Lord’s atonement were carried out on both mountains, their altars pointing to the sacrifice He made in completing this ancient pattern. It fulfilled unique sacrificial symbolism that involved repeated use of two opposing mountains by the ancient patriarchal fathers before Him. They symbolized *two ways*, choosing light or darkness.

The Doctrine of the Two Ways

The *doctrine of the two ways* addresses choices presented us in this life.¹ They lead to blessing or cursing, life or death. The better choice is “**the way**” or “*the way of salvation*” leading to life! In Deuteronomy 30, verses 16 and 19, Moses addressed this saving doctrine in opposition to the *idolatry* that is passed down to us from “*fathers, priests, and kings*,” the *incorrect beliefs and traditions* given us of *men*, leading to *iniquities* - as opposed to *sins*. When many Latter-day Saints and other Christians today see the words “*idolatry*” and “*worshipping other gods*” in scripture, they normally think of physical idols, rather than themselves being led by men - “*fathers, priests, and kings*.” The charge by Moses to avoid the dangerous idolatry originating in *men*, was the last instruction he gave to Joshua to give to the Israelites. He was to do so as soon as they crossed the Jordan

River and entered into the Promised Land! The last charge Moses gave to the people, stated:

“I command thee this day *to love the LORD thy God*, to walk in **his ways**, and to keep **his commandments** and **his statutes** and **his judgments**, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But *if thine heart turn away*, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and *worship other gods*, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you*, that I have set before you **life** and **death**, **blessing** and **cursing**: therefore choose **life**, that both thou and thy seed may **live**” (Deut. 30:16-19).

When Joshua led the children of Israel over the Jordan River (a type for baptism) and into the Promised Land, he did as Moses instructed, placing six of the tribes of Israel on the *eastern* mountain known as Ebal, and the other six tribes on the *western* mountain known as Gerizim. He then read the Law Moses received from God on Sinai to the people in the valley in-between the two opposing mountains.² Thereafter the whole law was read to the Israelites every seventh or Sabbatical Year (of “release”).

Two Ways in the Book of Mormon The important *doctrine of the two ways* is presented us in the Book of Mormon in a variety of places, and in connection with our day. Nephi taught, “*there are save two churches only*” (1 Ne. 14:10); **Christ’s** church versus all others led of men and Satan, all part of the great whore Babylon. Many in Catholicism, Protestant churches, and Mormonism, speak of Christ but never find Him. Latter-day Saints are often distracted by the busy-ness of callings, temple work, and other things that can take us away from the “*plain and precious things*” leading to salvation. It was similar in Christ’s day. The learned teachers then were unfamiliar with the precious saving truths, all tied to Christ and His salvation. Nicodemus is a good example. He was a supposed Master or Rabbi of religious education at the time of Christ. Though set up before the people as a leader and respected teacher, he was not aware of the transformational step of being “*born again*” in Christ. Pride, respect from those around him, and comfort in his *religious traditions* led him to *not* accept the saving doctrine Christ Himself presented to him. Nicodemus came to the Lord in the darkness of night, and sadly left remaining in it.

Many today who embrace the religion of men rather than a relationship with Christ are in the same category. The *law* and man’s *false traditions* dominate too much of our focus and time. The more humble Samaritan woman at the well (a Gentile) had her sins revealed to her by the Lord. Christ then offered her “*living waters*” as part of **the way of salvation**, an offer to her and to us to become “*alive*” in Christ and His salvation. She listened and was moved by His message. She desired His living water and accepted the invitation to receive it and *Him* (John 4:1-26). These two individuals represent *prideful religious men* in the great and spacious building (Nicodemus), versus *the humble, sinful woman* (the Samaritan woman). She is us, the church, the bride of the Lamb. The wise among them are willing to listen, repent, and receive greater light in Him. He is “**the way**.”

1 Nephi 14:5-10 states, “if the Gentiles repent it shall be well with them...whoso repenteth not must perish.” Nephi then addressed the fact that there will be save **two churches** *in our day*, “the church of the Lamb of God” and “the church of the devil. We belong to one or the other³ (1 Ne. 14:10). There is worship tied to the living God in the church of Christ, or the subtle ways of Satan and men.

“There are save **two churches** only” (1 Ne. 14:10).

The Church of Christ – *built on the Rock* (D&C 10:67)

The Church of Men & Satan – *built on sand* (1 Ne. 22:23)

1. **Repent** and
2. **Come unto Me**

1. Seek **gain** *selfishly*, often at the expense of the people
2. Seek **power** *over flesh*
3. Seek to be **popular** *in the eyes of the world*
4. Seek the **lusts** *of the flesh*
5. Seek the **things** *of the world*
6. Seek to do *all manner of* **iniquity**
7. **Such** *belong to the kingdom of the devil*

Names for God's Church

The Church of the Firstborn or Lamb (D&C 76)
The Virgin Bride of the Lamb, His wife (Rev. 19:7)
The Kingdom of God (Jacob 2:18)
The Church of Christ (3 Ne. 27:8; 4 Ne. 26)
The Holy Church of God (Morm. 8:38)
The True Faith (3 Ne. 6:14) & Fold of God (1 Ne. 15:15)

Primary Scriptures

D&C 10:67-68; 1 Ne. 10:18-19; 2 Ne. 28:32;
Jacob 1:7; Alma 5:33-34; 3 Ne. 9:14, 20-22;
3 Ne. 12:19-20, 23-24; D&C 93:1

Names for the other Church

The Great and Abominable Church (1 Ne. 22:23)
The Whore, The Whore of Babylon (Rev. 14:15)
The Kingdom of the Devil (2 Ne. 28:21)
MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS
AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH (Rev. 17:3)
The Great Harlot (Rev. 17:1-2)

Primary Scriptures

1 Nephi 14:10 & 1 Nephi 22:23

Nephi, Mormon, Moroni and others saw our day. They addressed the secret combinations taking hold of governments, corporations, schools, and churches,⁴ and the great division increasing between light and darkness generally. It was very apparent in the division created by the run for President of the United States by Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. Prophets have spoken about a *restoration of all things*, after coming judgment upon Babylon and those who embrace her. Our choice of light or darkness will result in being **sealed** to God (Mosiah 5:15) or to Satan (Alma 34:35).

“For the time cometh, saith the Lamb of God, that I will work a *great and a marvelous work* among the children of men; a work which shall be **everlasting**, either on the one hand or on the other—either to the *convincing* of them unto **peace** and **life eternal**, or unto the deliverance of them to the *hardness of their hearts* and the *blindness of their minds* unto their being brought down into **captivity**, and also into **destruction**, both *temporally* and *spiritually*, according to the captivity of the devil, of which I have spoken” (1 Ne. 14:7).

Relationship versus Religion

The ancient Jews of Christ's day were a very *religious* people. Yet Christ condemned most of them. They were obsessed with the burdensome *law* their leaders had placed upon them. Most failed to recognize and live the greater purposes and spirit beyond God's word, which the teachers changed or kept from them. The leaders in Christ's day enjoyed the status and other perks of their chief seats, living off the tithes of the people. Over time they modified the simplicity of God's *way* and turned it into a complicated *religion*, made up of man's teachings mingled with scripture. “**The way**” of the Lord and the early Patriarchs had become Judaism. It was burdened with some 613 different controlling laws, like the number of steps they could take on a “Sabbath days journey.” The focus on *the law* of the Rabbi's diverted most people away from the *inner spiritual transformation* possible in “**the way**.” This is the message of Abinadi to Noah and the chief priests in Mosiah 13, that the law cannot save us, only being reconciled to Christ - the giver of the law (see also 2 Ne. 25). This *way* is centered on a *relationship* with Jehovah, our Savior Jesus who came to save them and us. The central component of **the way** remains love of God and love of one another, *the two great commandments* (see Matt. 22:36-40; Moses 7:33).

Nicodemus was one of these early, learned leaders wholly devoted to teaching *the law*. He had not become familiar with the simple, foundational concept of being *born again* in Christ and thus neither did the people he taught. His ignorance of *the simpler but greater things* – “the *plain* and *precious* things” - is a type for our day. When the Lord Himself came among the Jews, most did not recognize Him or His simple, profound teachings. He and John the Baptist were viewed as outsiders – outside the accepted religious tradition. They had come to preach truth and repentance among the descendants of Abraham. They had come to break down long established false traditions, teachings, and beliefs in the established religion of the Rabbi's, leading to “iniquities” that kept the people chained to lesser things. They were killed for their teachings that went against the establishment.

A Gallup poll in 2015 found that Utah is seen as the most religious of the 50 states. Many welcome this description. In speaking to the Utah Area South Conference in a broadcast to 235 Stakes making up the Utah South area (Marriott Center, BYU, Sept. 13, 2015), Elder M. Russell Ballard stated, “In greeting you, I will

paraphrase Paul's words: 'Unto the Church of God in the Utah South Area, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be Saints, grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.'" During his remarks, Elder Ballard cited a Gallup poll, stating that the Utah South Area "is one of the most *religious* areas in the United States, revealed in a flourishing *religious* landscape." Elder Ballard then praised those in this region for various accomplishments, citing the seven areas (below) as evidence.

A nationwide Gallup poll found Utah to be *the most "religious" state*
 There are three Missions in Utah
 Six *temples* are located in it, with two under construction (the Payson & Provo City Center temples)
 Utah features *the largest religious university* in America (BYU)
 There are vibrant institutes of religion *programs* associated with the great colleges and universities in the area
 Utah features an expanding *Missionary Training Center* in Provo
 There are numerous ward, stake, and seminary *buildings*

The list above is centered on mostly outward, material things. The April 2017 General Conference report reveals figures that provide more information, much of it troubling.⁵ Like Christ's day, a great gulf often exists between those embracing traditional *religion* versus those who desire a *relationship* with God, the giver of all the best gifts. The chart below represents the opposing focus of the two groups; one on the law and the system versus God and the inner transformation that only He can provide.

<i>Focus on Men, their Churches & Ways</i>	<i>Focus on God and the Way</i>
The Religious Profess to Know God	Those who Seek God's Face Come to Know Him
The Proud think they are chosen	The Humble are Called, Elected & Sealed to God
There is too little Faith & belief & thus no Power	They Have Belief, Faith, and are Endowed with Power
Their Fruits merit Celestial or Terrestrial glory	They Bear Fruit Meet for the Father's Kingdom (Celestial)
Few Receive the Holy Ghost & Gifts of the Spirit	They are Endowed with the Gifts of the Spirit
They Are Cursed with Lesser Light, Even Darkness	They Are Blessed with Greater Light until the Perfect Day
Many are Ripe for Destruction, Salt having lost its Savor	They are Destined for Salvation, Eternal Life & Exaltation

In scripture, the consistent portrayal of Christ as the Bridegroom, and we as believers in the Bride, reveals that God desires us to have a close *relationship* with Him, not a distant religion tied to laws and performances, one often focused on *gain* (see 1 Ne. 22:23). The two great commandments focus instead on real love of God and one another (see Matt. 22:36-40; Moses 7:33).

In D&C 10, the Lord invites us to come to **know** Him using five simple words. They also clearly address what He calls, "**my doctrine**," "**my gospel**," and "**my church**" leading us to *Him* there and in Book of Mormon (see D&C 10:67-68; 1 Ne. 10:18-19; 2 Ne. 9:23-24; 28:32; Jacob 1:7; Alma 5:33-34; D&C 93:1; 3 Ne. 9:14, 22, 51; 11:14; 12:19-20, 23-24; 27:5-21; 30:1-2). These five inviting words are, "**repent** and **come unto me**," It is an invitation to experience His light and great love personally. He has said repeatedly that if we will build upon this *rock*, we will not be swept away when the difficult storms come. It is **the way** of salvation *in Him* in scripture. Nephi, like his father Lehi entered through *the gate*, *obtained* this pathway and *commenced* his journey upon it, until he finally made it to *the Tree of Life* – to the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ (see 2 Nephi 11:2). There both men obtained real knowledge of the reality of the Master, and tasted the sweet fruit of the Tree of Life - the inexpressible **joy** of the Lord's glory and love. The iron rod takes us there.

II. The Rod of Iron

According to Nephi, the meaning behind the symbol of *the iron rod* in His father Lehi's vision, is "*the word of God*." It is an essential guiding tool helping us arrive at the tree. We read in 1 Nephi:

"What meaneth the rod of iron which our father saw, that led to the tree? And I said unto them that it was **the word of God**; and whoso would *hearken unto the word of God*, and *would hold fast unto it*, they would *never perish*; neither could the *temptations* and the fiery darts of the adversary *overpower them* unto blindness, to *lead them away* to destruction" (1 Ne. 15:23-24).

Nephi taught that by holding tightly to **the word of God** helps us avoid many temptations and problems that might otherwise cause us to lose our way in the darkness here. It is essential that new converts and all the body of Christ be taught about the necessity of receiving the *three baptisms* mentioned in Moses 6:56-68. The book of Moses comes to us from Joseph Smith's inspired re-translation of the Bible (endnote 5), specifically Genesis. God commands us two times in Moses 6:57-58 to teach **this way** to our children. The third baptism involves that of *the cleansing power of the fiery Holy Ghost*. It is to be "*born again*" in Christ, otherwise they do not receive "*the nourishment of the good word of God*," which is the Holy Ghost. All nine verses of Moroni 6 may provide the reason for poor retention among new baptized members of the church worldwide, along with declining missionary numbers. Too few have been "*wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost*" (or "born again") and "*nourished by the good word of God*" thereafter (endnotes 3 & 5). Moroni stated:

"And now I speak concerning baptism. Behold, elders, priests, and teachers were baptized; and *they were not baptized save they brought forth fruit meet that they were worthy of it*. Neither did they receive any unto baptism save they came forth with **a broken heart** and **a contrite spirit** [*the two requirements for the fiery baptism*] and witnessed unto the church that they *truly repented* of all their sins. And *none were received unto baptism save they took upon them the name of Christ*, having a determination to serve him to the end. And after they had been received unto baptism, and were **wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost** [*the baptism of fire and Holy Ghost*] they were numbered among the people of *the church of Christ*; and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and **nourished by the good word of God**, to keep them in *the right way*, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer, *relying alone* [not on men, but] *upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and the finisher of their faith*. And the church did meet together oft, to fast and to pray, and to speak one with another concerning *the welfare of their souls*. And they did meet together oft to partake of bread and wine, in remembrance of *the Lord Jesus*. And they were strict to observe that there should be no iniquity [*false teachings and traditions creeping in*] among them; and whoso was found to commit *iniquity*, and three witnesses of the church did condemn them before the elders, and if they repented not, and confessed not, their names were blotted out, and they were not numbered among *the people of Christ*. But as oft as they repented and sought forgiveness, with *real intent*, they were forgiven. And *their meetings were conducted* by the church *after the manner of the workings of the Spirit*, and **by the power of the Holy Ghost**; for as *the power of the Holy Ghost led them whether to preach, or to exhort, or to pray, or to supplicate, or to sing, even so it was done*" (Mor. 6:1-9)

Teaching **the way** is not happening throughout much of Mormonism today, and hence *retention* numbers are low, sometimes very low, as low as 70 to 80% of those baptized in the LDS church by water do not attend church in some areas of the world (see endnote 3). The people are thus not holding tightly to the iron rod, *the good word of God* which *nourishes* us. It is like a plant in the hot desert without water *water*. Christ is that *living water*!

The rod of iron may represent three different things within God's *word*; (1) First, it appears to represent our Lord Jesus - as **the Word**; (2) It also represents God's written word in **scripture**; (3) Most importantly, the iron rod represents **the revealed word** of God directly from **Him** or *the Holy Ghost* to us. It is personal "*revelation*."

1. Christ as The Word John the Baptist was a powerful witness for Christ in the meridian of time. He was His "Elias" then, preparing the way before our Lord's ministry in the flesh. D&C 93:6-18 gives us John's powerful witness of the Master, telling us that He was the Creator of many worlds via the *power* of His spoken *word*. John bears testimony that Christ has "*received all power*, both in heaven and on earth, and the glory of the Father was with him, for he; dwelt in Him." Christ is the Father's *representative* on earth, carrying forth His *word* with power, authority, and grace. He is thus **the word of God** (the Father).

Another John may be the Lord's Elias in our day. He is the translated Apostle John the Beloved, the Senior Apostle on the Earth today, ordained to the First Presidency 2000 years ago under the Lord's own hands. The Lord has identified him by name as the latter-day "*Elias*" who will "*gather the tribes of Israel*" and "*restore all things*." This three-part mission is repeated in two verses in D&C 77, verses 9 and 14. His name is mentioned in the later verse, where his mission is referenced as being sweet and bitter, as described in Revelation 10:8-11, and where he "*must prophesy again* before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." Joseph Smith

said, “*translated beings* are designed for *future* missions” (TPJS, p. 191). John the Revelator is perhaps the premiere witness for Christ in all of scripture. He was with our Lord during many of His miracles in Jerusalem. He was at the Mount of Transfiguration with Christ, at the Last Supper, at the trial before Caiaphas, and at the Cross. He saw the empty tomb with Peter and later saw our resurrected Lord. We know he has the *keys* to the bottomless pit (Rev. 9:1, 11; 20:1), and other *keys* in the First Presidency, along with *the seal* of the living God (see D&C 77:9A and 113:3-6).

In D&C 93:18, John the Baptist stated that more of his, and perhaps “the Revelator’s” witnesses, will be forth coming in the near future – “a fulness.” John the Beloved reveals to us that both Christ *and* His gospel *make up the Word*, doing so in the first chapter of John. The Joseph Smith *re-translation* of verses 1 to 5, 9-14 and 16-18 are enlightening (Joseph’s changes are italicized below).

“In the beginning was the *gospel preached through the Son*. *And the gospel was the word*, and the word was with *the Son*, and the Son was with God, and the Son was of God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made which was made. In him was *the gospel*, and *the gospel was the life*, and the life was the light of men; And the light shineth *in the world*, and the world perceiveth it not...[He is] the true light which lighteth every man *who* cometh into the world; *Even the Son of God*. He *who* was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; *only* to them who believe on his name. *He* was born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the *same word* was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth... *For in the beginning was the Word*, *even the Son*, *who is made flesh*, and sent unto us by the will of the Father. And as many as believe on his name shall receive of his fullness. And of his fullness have all we received, *even immortality and eternal life*, through his grace. For the law was given *through Moses*, but *life* and truth came *through Jesus Christ*. *For the law was after a carnal commandment, to the administration of death; but the gospel was after the power of an endless life, through Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father*. And no man hath seen God at any time, *except he hath borne record of the Son; for except it is through him no man can be saved*” (John 1:1-5, 9-14, 16-19).

2. God’s Written Word in Scripture The Prophet Joseph Smith’s primary mission in the Restoration was to bring forth more of *God’s word* in both the Book of Mormon, and the inspired re-translation of the Bible. In the fulness of God’s words are precious truths that lead us to salvation. Without them we would be lost in dark paths, as was the case for so many in the dark ages before scripture became widely available. The *fulness* of God’s word is a powerful, two-edged, dividing *sword*. It separates truth from error! We are to give *heed* to God’s word (D&C 12:2) and *rely* on it for knowledge, wisdom, and guidance (D&C 17:1). The Book of Mormon tells us:

“...whosoever will may lay hold upon **the word of God**, which is *quick* and *powerful*, which shall *divide* asunder all the cunning and the snares and the wiles of the devil, and lead the man of Christ in *a strait and narrow course* across that everlasting gulf of misery which is prepared to engulf the wicked—And land their souls, yea, their immortal souls, at the right hand of God in the kingdom of heaven, to sit down with Abraham and Isaac, and with Jacob, and with all our holy fathers, *to go no more out*” (Hel. 3:29-30).

Relatively few know that the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith’s *re-translation* of the Bible were intended to be printed and distributed together, with the Doctrine and Covenants in what the Lord called, “**the fulness of my scriptures**” (D&C 42:12, 15, 56 & 59; 93:53), “**the fulness of the scriptures**” (JST Luke 11:53), or “**my holy word**” (D&C 124:89). Collectively, they provide us “**the key of knowledge**” necessary to receive Christ and eternal life. They were to go out to the world in Joseph Smith’s day together, as one volume (see endnote 5). Referencing them, God said:

“For *in them* are *all things* written concerning *the foundation of my church, my gospel, and my rock*. Wherefore, if you shall build up **my church**, upon *the foundation of my gospel and my rock*, *the gates of*

hell shall not prevail against you” (D&C 18:4-5).

In verse 59 of D&C 42, we read that what the Lord calls the fulness of “**my scriptures**” were *and* are to be “**my law to govern my church**” (v. 59). In *The Far West Report*, we read, “Brother Joseph Smith, Jr. said ... that the promise of God was that the greatest blessings which God had to bestow should be given to those who contributed to the support of his family while he was translating *the fulness of the Scriptures* ... that God had often sealed up the heavens because of covetousness in the Church ... and *except the Church receive the fulness of the Scriptures that they would yet fail*” (Far West Report, p. 16, TPJS, p 9). He added that “*the salvation of the elect*” was dependent upon **the fulness of truths** being delivered to the world in a future one-volume publication of both the Book of Mormon and the JST Bible (a replacement of the KJV, see D&C 35:20).

The *fulness* of God’s word in the entire Joseph Smith re-translation of the Bible (not the few verses we have at the back of our current scriptures), combined with the Book of Mormon has *power* to change hearts and minds, and to keep us firmly grounded upon **the rock** – Jesus Christ! Alma said, “the preaching of **the word** had a great tendency to lead the people to do that which was just—yea, *it had had more powerful effect* upon the minds of the people than *the sword*, or anything else, which had happened unto them” (Alma 31:5). In the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood, the Lord admonished us to live by His sword of truth, a type of spiritual light saber tied to the Spirit.

“For you shall live by **every word** that proceedeth forth from the mouth of God [not man] For *the word* of the Lord is **truth**, and whatsoever is *truth* is **light**, and whatsoever is *light* is **Spirit**, even **the Spirit of Jesus Christ**. And the *Spirit* giveth *light* to every man that cometh into the world; and the *Spirit* enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the *voice* of the *Spirit*. And every one that hearkeneth to the *voice* of the **Spirit** cometh unto God, even the Father” (D&C 84:44-47; see also Matt. 4:4; 2 Ne. 32:1-6).

Deception is a favorite tool of the Adversary and evil, designing men practicing priestcraft. Valuing God’s word above that of men helps us avoid deception and error. The Lord said:

“And whoso treasureth up **my word**, *shall not be deceived*” (JS Mat. 1:37). He added, “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).

Jesus is that truth! He said, “I am the way, **the truth**, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). Sadly, as soon as the Lord reveals truth, Satan comes to take it away and corrupt it. So too man and his false traditions. D&C 93:39 states, “And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth through disobedience, from the children of men, *and* because of the tradition of their fathers.” God’s word not only *divides* truth from error but it also empowers us with His **Spirit**. In Lehi’s vision of the Tree of life there was a great gulf dividing the humble on the path to the tree, with those who are prideful in the great and spacious building. In 1st Nephi 12:18 in the original 1830 Book of Mormon we read, “And a great and a terrible gulf divideth them; yea even the **sword** of the justice of the Eternal God.” The word “**sword**” has now been replaced with “**word**” in our current version of the Book of Mormon. In many ways, God’s **sword** and **word** are interchangeable, as are **light** and the **Spirit**.

In Ephesians 6 and D&C 27 we read of putting on the *whole armour* of God before we battle dark forces in “the evil day.” In so doing, we are clothing ourselves with His *power*, especially if we do so with *righteousness*, represented by His robe or mantle. It can become our *whole armor of righteousness*. The whole armor of God is mainly defensive in nature, whereas **the sword of the Spirit** is one of two powerful *offensive* weapons listed in Ephesians 6 and D&C 27. In Ephesians 6:17 we read that the sword and the Spirit of God and one and the same. We are to wield or, “take...the **sword of the Spirit**, which is **the word of God** (Eph. 17:6) against the enemy. Note also D&C 27:18. We are to, “take...**the sword of my Spirit**, which *I will pour out upon you*, and **my word** which *I reveal unto you*.” God’s **Spirit** is thus *poured out* upon us, as God’s *word* is *revealed* to us. With them both we become more effective, empowered servants.

3. *The Revelatory Word of the Holy Ghost & God*

As we read God's word in scripture, in personal holy time with Him each day, we may be moved by the Spirit and receive *pure revelation* clarifying the words read. The Lord's direct *word* to us in revelation, given by Him or the Holy Ghost, teaches us more clearly than any other source of knowledge. The prophet Joseph Smith defined *revelation* via the Holy Ghost as "*pure intelligence*" or "*ideas*" entering our mind and heart, not warm, sentimental feelings. Then, in referring to the effects of the gift or *endowment* of the Holy Ghost upon one who is of the *believing blood* of Israel, versus one who is a Gentile, the Prophet Joseph added:

"The Holy Ghost has no other effect than *pure intelligence*. It is more powerful in expanding *the mind*, *enlightening the understanding*, and *storing the intellect* with present *knowledge*, of a man who is of the literal seed of Abraham, than one that is a Gentile, though it may not have half as much visible effect upon the body; for as the Holy Ghost falls upon one of the literal seed of Abraham, it is calm and serene; and his whole soul and body are only exercised by **the pure spirit of intelligence**; while the effect of the Holy Ghost upon a Gentile, is to purge out the old blood, and make him actually of the seed of Abraham. That man that has none of the blood of Abraham (naturally) must have a *new creation* by the Holy Ghost. In such a case, there may be more of a powerful effect upon the body, and visible to the eye, than upon an Israelite, while the Israelite at first might be far before the Gentile in *pure intelligence*" (TPJS, pps. 149-50).

To receive the important gift or *endowment* of the Holy Ghost on a more permanent basis, we must be cleansed by fire and the Holy Ghost, and *born again* in Christ (see 2 Ne. 31-32). This gift was the "*endowment of power from on high*" promised the Saints in the New Testament (the "promise of the Father"). They were told to "*tarry*" or wait at Jerusalem prior to the start of their missionary labors (see Luke 24:49; Acts 1-2). The same instruction to tarry, this time in Kirtland Ohio was given the early Latter-day Saints before they too received a great outpouring of the Spirit at the Kirtland Temple dedication in March of 1836. Believers in both groups were the "bride of Christ" and were *born again* in Him in these events, receiving the Holy Ghost. At Pentecost in the New Testament, 3000 souls received the *endowment of power from on high* - the Holy Ghost as their guide. This balanced the 3000 that were killed at Sinai for their idolatry and for rejecting God and the greater truths. Endowed with the Holy Ghost, those called to the ministry in the New Testament and at Kirtland were then able to teach with convincing **power** and authority in His name on their missions. It came *from on high*" (God provided it). It was an **iron rod** for the "wise virgins" who were to continue on their progression path into the Lord's presence as the Bridegroom (2 Ne. 32:3 & 5), receiving Him in the bridal chamber (JST Matthew 25:10-11). They would then become *one*, connected to the True Vine as a fruit-bearing branch of the Tree of Life. The marriage symbolism throughout scripture symbolizes this oneness (see *The Pentecost Endowment* and *An Endowment of Power from On High*, www.7witnesses.com).

Knowledge from God directly in *pure revelation* is the real strength of *the rod*. It is its "iron," solid, trustworthy, providing pure truth. In D&C 93, the section addressing "true worship," God says that no one receives a fulness (of Him and the Celestial kingdom) that does not keep his commandments (v. 27). This is not just the Ten Commandments of Exodus, but also the direct commandments He gives us personally in revelation after receiving the cleansing fire of the Holy Ghost. It is these additional instructions that carefully lead us to Him. Verses 25 -28 speak of the choice we must make, between listening to the spirit of the evil one (v. 25) or to the Spirit of Truth - Jesus Christ. He says there, "I am the Spirit of Truth" (v. 28). Only those "who are begotten through **me**" (becoming His sons and daughters by being "born again" in Him) are partakers of the glory of God and His love (see verses 19-40; Mos. 5:15). This is the fruit of the Tree of Life or Jesus Christ.

Not feasting on the inspired written word, and not having the Holy Ghost because so many have not turned to Christ and been born again in Him – is to not have *the good nourishing word of God* in our lives. Without this living water, meat, or nourishment, we are diverted off "**the way**" into forbidden paths, looking for fulfillment elsewhere in our lives. Moroni addresses this condition, one too many Saints today are in. It is a primary reason why many are leaving the LDS church. They have found the primary message of the Book of Mormon, which is to "repent and come unto me." They have not been *born again* in Christ and received the *nourishing good word of God* – in the Holy Ghost - to guide them as the iron rod on **the way**. Moroni states:

“And *after* they had been received unto baptism, and were **wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost**, they were numbered among the people of *the church of Christ*; and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and **nourished by the good word of God**, *to keep them in the right way*, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer, relying alone upon *the merits of Christ*, who was the author and the finisher of their faith” (Moroni 6:4; see also endnote 3, p. 23).

This is the third step of three that must occur for new converts or they fall away; (1) fellowship them; (2) give them a calling; And most importantly, (3) they must be “*nourished by the good word of God*.” John the Revelator saw that beneath the Tree of Life is the Fountain of Living Waters. The tree and the fountain are both symbols of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. **He** is the source of light *and* living waters. Too many men set themselves up as a source of knowledge and wisdom before us - for the sake of gain (see 1 Ne. 22:23). To do so is to practice priestcraft (see 2 Ne. 26:29). Many today have come to rely on them for nearly all things, when much greater light is available directly from God in pure revelation. The Lord has told us that He is *the light* we are to hold up before all men, along with the things He has done (3 Ne. 18:24). He is our teacher and example, “*the light and life of the world*” (3 Ne. 11:11). He said:

“Behold **I am the light** *which ye shall hold up*—that which ye have seen me do” (3 Nephi 18:24).

Holding tightly to God’s word will take us to the tree – to Him, if we are seeking His face and His best gifts. To depend on fallen men is comparable to walking in darkness at midday, or like being spoon-fed *milk* when *meat* is available. Only four of the sixty-six Bible books do not feature *prophecy* tied to the future – our day! The Book of Mormon, the D&C, and Bible books like Revelation, Isaiah, Joel, Jeremiah and Matthew are all filled with prophecy for us in the last-days. Quoting God, the Prophet Jeremiah said, “For **my people** have committed two evils. *They have forsaken me*, the fountain of living waters and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water” (Jer. 2:13). Cisterns were common anciently. They were areas in rock hewn out to collect and store rainwater. Over time this water could become stagnant and polluted, as it is not running, living water - like a spring welling up from mother earth. The Lord addressed “**my people**” in this scripture, those in both ancient *and* modern Israel. Too many of us today partake of older, stagnate rainwater, and often from broken, imperfect vessels that leak, rather than the “living waters” available only in God.

Looking to men for *living water* or *light* is a form of modern-day idolatry, leading to cursing, deception, and ignorance. Isaiah said that what men offer us is mere sparks compared to God’s glorious light. Nephi stated:

“O Lord, I have *trusted* in thee, and I will *trust* in thee forever. I will **not** put my *trust* in the arm of flesh; for I know that **cursed** is he that putteth his *trust in the arm of flesh*. Yea, **cursed** is he that putteth his *trust* in man or maketh flesh his arm. Yea, *I know that God will give liberally to him that asketh*. Yea, my God will give me, *if I ask not amiss*; therefore I will lift up my voice unto *thee*; yea, I will *cry* unto *thee*, my God, **the rock** of my righteousness. Behold, my voice shall forever ascend up unto *thee*, **my rock** and **mine everlasting God**. Amen” (2 Ne. 4:34-35; see also Psalm 118:8).

Personal Revelation Seeking personal revelation from God is a very important key to faster growth. It provides us much greater and more accurate knowledge than available from any man, university, or church. Without it we cannot make it to the Tree of Life. Pure revelation from God does two things; (1) It helps us remove long held false teachings and traditions, those given us from what scripture calls “*fathers, kings, and priests*.” Their false teachings (innocent or purposeful) cause us to commit “*iniquities*” in addition to our sins. Pure revelation also helps us avoid deception from Satan, his servants, *and* from crafty, designing men in this telestial, darkening world (D&C 76:75). These men and their secret combinations often sit in control in high places, including powerful governments, corporations, and churches, to lead God’s people “carefully down to hell”; And (2) Pure revelation from God is comparable to being plugged into a powerful source of light. At the Last Supper, Jesus invited His disciples to become *one* with Him. He stated that He was the True Vine. His disciples were to be branches of this vine or “tree” and bear fruit in Him - “fruit meet for the Father’s [Celestial] kingdom” (D&C 84:58). Such have access to God’s mind and will. The term “God” may be defined by good

Christian people as Christ, Father, or Mother. The illuminated elite of this world, worship another god, the god of this world – Satan.

The Christian “God” of our Salvation is Jesus Christ. Worshipping Him can bring unlimited light, love, and support to us, often by way of the endowment of the Holy Ghost. With this connection to the True Vine Jesus, we can receive “the mysteries of Godliness” and “all things.” Why settle for anything less?

Those choosing darkness instead, seek to control us and limit our knowledge for selfish gain. They are very often led by Satan - “the father of all lies” (Moses 4:4). One of Satan’s primary goals is to deceive us and blind us, keeping us from turning to Christ for great light. He knows well how to do this, as he was once a “son of the morning” in advanced status and authority. He is now a son of perdition. He fell and was cast to earth because of his desire to usurp God’s power and kingdom, and because his plan was to destroy the agency of man (Moses 4:1-3). His former name was Lucifer, meaning “light bearer.” He is now known as “Satan,” “the devil,” “that old serpent,” and “the father of all lies” (see Moses 4:1-4; D&C 76:25-29). He and those that serve him have been cast to earth. They do their best to tempt us and discourage us from seeking the greater things of Jesus.

How Do We Receive Revelation from God? Learning to receive revelation or “oracles” from the true and living God (D&C 90:4) may be simplified to a three-step process. With time, practice, and faith and trust in our God, we come to recognize the Lord’s voice in pure revelation, in contrast to our own, or that of false spirits. Pure revelation from the Lord Jesus is the oil in the lamps of *wise virgins* in JST Matthew 25, oil essential in the difficult times that lie ahead of us. We have been encouraged to “*awake and arise*” that we might go out and meet the Bridegroom, literally.

A. Have Faith & Trust in the Lord The best way to learn to receive answers in prayer is to first learn how to worship God. Faith in Christ is the first principle of the gospel. It means we place our faith and trust in God in all things. He is the Light and Life of the World. We must believe in Him as a little child does their parents, and act accordingly, doing what is necessary to come to *know* the Lord our God. We have been told to seek His face. We do so by spending **time** with Him every day (1 to 2 hours), regular time for worship, which then sets the tone for receiving answers to prayer.

We as Latter-day Saints are not very good at worship. We must come to realize that “reverence” means more than passive body positions like folded arms, bowing our head, and being quiet. Real worship is active and is about *reverencing* God in real *love, devotion, praise, and thanksgiving*. *This is worship*, true worship (see D&C 93:1-19). King David was very good at this as the Psalms reveal. Consistent “holy time” with the Lord may include gratitude and praise, listening to worshipful music, and even joyous singing and dancing to the Lord. Personal time with the Lord is also useful for internalizing scripture and pondering upon them. Early morning suits me best for these things.

B. Get Clean Prior to approaching the Lord in prayer for revelation, we must purify ourselves, then ask God for His forgiveness. The sanctifying process must include regular, heartfelt, sincere **repentance**, where we seek forgiveness from those we have offended, and then of course from the Lord; our Judge, King, and Savior - the author and finisher of our faith. There are plenty of things to repent of in our relationship with others and with God. Seek to make real changes while disciplining yourself. Look over the Ten Commandments and make corrections where necessary. Ask forgiveness from those that matter most in your life. While doing these things, pray sincerely for forgiveness, for sins, iniquities, all those things done in opposition to God’s will, law, and commandments. Approach God sincerely, with a *broken heart* (receptive, teachable, open to change) and a *contrite spirit* (humility, seeking God’s will). Ask if you are clean before moving on to the next step.

C. Pray Mightily Seek to experience mighty prayer. It involves preparing yourself to approach the Lord effectively in the first two steps, and then **focusing your intent** and **attention upon God** and His will. Address him from your **heart**.

Full Submission One of the most important keys in receiving pure revelation is to “*ask not amiss*” or to pray that God’s *will* be done, rather than your own. It is to have a “**broken**” receptive *heart* and a *humble* or “**contrite**” spirit. It is to pray “*in the Spirit*” or in keeping with God’s superior wisdom, mind and will. When we

are sincerely open to **His** will rather than our own, intelligence from Him can flow. To be centered on our own will in prayer, is to be carnal and self-willed. It is what scripture calls “*setting up idols in our heart*,” which is replacing God and his superior wisdom and love, with our own. He knows what is best for us. Putting our faith, trust, and love in God is laying *our will* on the altar of sacrifice, for the sake of greater light and intelligence.

We can receive information from three voices in revelation; (1) The Lord; (2) Satan or false, deceiving spirits; And (3) Our own voice. Revelation from God, rather than the other sources, requires seeking His will, or we can be deceived because of the *idols set up in our heart*. We read in Proverbs 23:7, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.” James stated, “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts” (James 4:3). The phrase “lusts of the flesh” is not tied to sexual perversion here, but our **own innermost, heartfelt desires**. Some may be good, but not necessarily in line with God’s will for us. If we *sincerely* want *pure revelation from God*, we must be willing to receive it, or we may receive an answer *according to our erring heart*.

David Whitmer saw how the young Prophet Joseph Smith worked his way through truth from error in receiving revelation early on. He stated, “When a man enquires of the Lord concerning a matter, if he is *deceived by his own carnal desires*, and is in error, he will receive an answer *according to his erring heart*, but it will not be a revelation from the Lord. This was a lesson for our benefit and we should have profited by it in future more than we did . . . The revelation to go to Canada was written down on paper, but was never printed. When Brother Joseph was **humble** he had the Spirit of God with him; but when he was not humble he did not have the Spirit . . . When a prophet, or any other man, prays to God and asks wisdom concerning a matter, his conscience will reveal an answer to him just *according to the desires of his heart*. If his desires are in any way *carnal, he being deceived, an answer will be revealed to him accordingly; and he will think it is the revealed will of God*. Satan reveals his will to deceive him, and makes it appear as an Angel of Light. This is a mystery to a great many people, but only to those who are weak and have need of milk that they may grow in spiritual knowledge to understand the word of God. It is Satan who deceives the man, but **God permits it because of the wicked desires of the man**, and it is right and justice in God's wisdom to permit the persistent transgressor to be led off and deceived by a delusive false doctrine.”

Continuing, Whitmer added, “Paul, in 2 Thess. 2:11, says: ‘And for this cause God shall send them *strong delusion*, that they should believe a lie.’ Why would God do this? Verses 10 and 12 give the reason why; ‘*because they received not the love of the truth*’...because they ‘believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.’ In Isaiah 66:2-4, the Lord says, ‘But to this man will I look, even to him that is **poor and of a contrite spirit**, and trembleth at my word.’ But to the people who ‘have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations, I will also choose their delusions.’ In Ezekiel 14:4-9 we read: ‘Thus saith the Lord God; every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet, I, the Lord, will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols; that I may take the house of Israel in their own heart.’”⁶

One last example is Ezekiel 14:1-6. There we read, “Then came certain of the elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me. And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, these men have *set up their idols in their heart*, and put *the stumbling block of their iniquity* before their face; should I be inquired of at all by them? Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his *idols in his heart*, and putteth *the stumbling block* of his *iniquity* [false traditions passed down through others to you] before his face, and cometh to the prophet; *I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols*; That I may take the house of Israel *in their own heart*, because they are all estranged from me through *their idols*. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations.”

Intent Real **focused intent** has significant *power* in prayer. State your intentions and then create as much strength in your *will* and *faith* as possible to pierce your own *veil of unbelief* and the darkness separating you and God in heaven. *Visualize* your prayers as a beacon to *light* in a dark storm, getting brighter and breaking through the clouds above you as you draw on your **willpower**, combined with **great faith** in the Lord Jesus. **Cry** unto him with **heartfelt intent**. John the Revelator spoke about *overcoming* the world. Jacob spoke about *prevailing* with the Lord in his *wrestle* with God. Both men addressed our need to *overcome* the distractions of the world and our flesh in order to part the veil of *unbelief*, along with the veil - which is our weak, mortal bodies. Don’t forget to be persistent. Having faith and trust in God means trudging forward when there is no

response from the other side – yet. God will respond, but sometimes it may be a test of your patience and resolve. Push through - prevail, then wait patiently on the Lord.

Pure Answers Faith and trust in the Lord means desiring and expecting answers from Him, and then listening for the Lord's gentle voice. It most often comes within our *mind* as "still small voice" (see Enos 5, 10). We must "believe as little children" that this is from Him, but given us in our language and words - that we might understand. We sometimes doubt that this is the Lord because of these familiar words. Picking up a pen, listening, and writing can be an effective method for receiving revelation. Writing answers engages the mind *with* action in a trusting connection. Having discernment with this child-like faith in Him, while removing idols in the heart (seeking His will) helps us not be deceived by other voices. It is also a way to express faith through action. These things move us forward, until yes and no answers turn into sentences and finally conversations (see also *Receiving Revelation*, www.7witnesses.com).

Nephi's Revelation The vision of Lehi and Nephi of the Tree of Life was a revelation. It provides the primary foundation of this paper's content. Nephi desired to know the things his father knew in his revelatory vision or dream (1 Ne. 10:17; 11:1). It was *instruction* and knowledge given of God to Lehi via His Spirit. Because of Nephi's great **desire** to know what his father knew, and because he "**believed**" that the Lord could *and* would make it known to him, Nephi *pondered* upon them, and was then *caught away* in vision or "*in the Spirit of the Lord*" (1 Ne. 11:1). We can ponder, meditate, visualize, and imagine in this fashion too. At some point, the Lord takes over, providing us instruction. Nephi stated:

"For it came to pass after I had **desired to know** the things that my father had seen, and **believing** that the Lord was able to make them known unto me, as I sat *pondering in mine heart* I was *caught away in the Spirit* of the Lord, yea, into an exceedingly high mountain, which I never had before seen, and upon which I never had before set my foot" (1 Ne. 11:1; D&C 76:116-118).

Nephi was then taught in the heavenly way via a revelatory vision. One of its purposes for Nephi, was for him *to bear record* of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ and His mission - to us, and for us - as an example of how to receive knowledge from God (vs. 7, 20-21, 24, 31-33). Note that there was no mortal man or servant in Nephi's vision standing between him and God's vision, only an angel; a sent messenger from God's presence. Like his father's experience, and that of Joseph Smith and many others in scripture, **the way** to God is a direct one. Christ alone is the gate or door to the heavenly realm, not any man. He employs no mortal servant there (2 Ne. 9:41). He says, "**repent and come unto me.**" He is our source of light and living water.

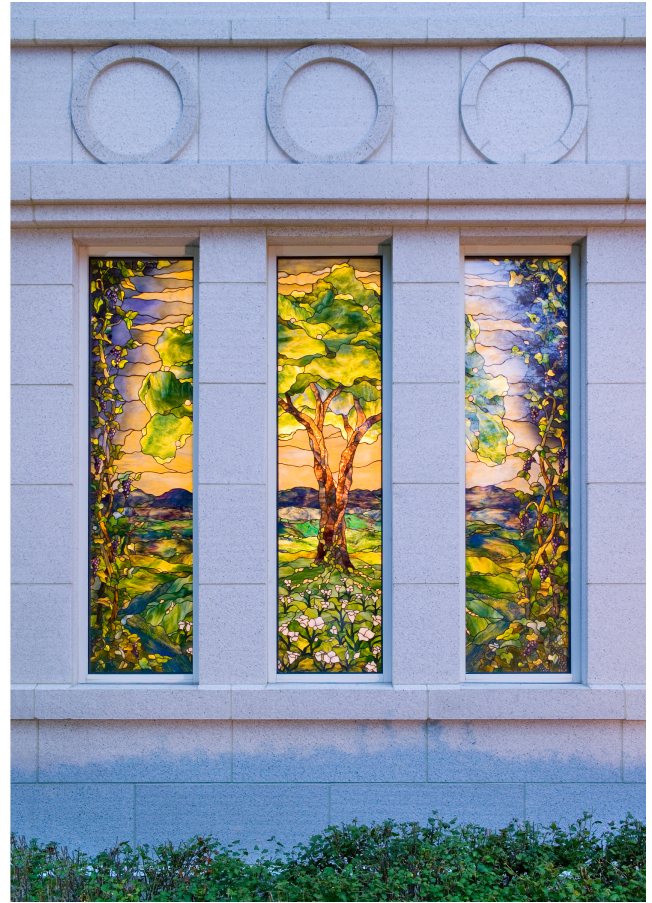
III. The Tree of Life

In the last book of the New Testament - John's Revelation, we read that at the throne of God, a "pure river of water of life" issues forth beneath it, and that a path or "way" in front of it has a Tree of Life "on either side of it." The trees have "twelve manner of fruits" upon them. Their leaves are "for the healing of the nations" (see Rev. 22:2). Prayer and revelation is the best way to unravel the cryptic meaning behind John's revelation. In contrast to it, Lehi and Nephi's visions of the Tree of Life involved only one tree. They noted a rod of iron leading



Left; Tree of Life carving upon Stela 5 at Izapa, Mexico; Right, Tree of Life Petroglyph at Parowan Gap in Southern Utah. Note in both illustrations the branches reaching skyward, and the roots extending downward into the living water of mother earth.

to it. Some never found the pathway to the tree, nor the iron rod beside it. Others did. Prideful ones in high places were critical of those who found **the way** to the beautiful tree and were pressing forward towards it. They joyfully partook of its precious, white, fruit. Then, after so doing, they desired family and others to experience this very sweet fruit.



Left, Assyrian Tree of Life relief, British Museum (865 BC). This relief was positioned behind the king's throne in his palace at Nimrud in northern Iraq. The king receives his power from the God atop of the tree, thought to be Shamash, the winged god of the sun. The vine or tree there was a symbol of fertility and abundance, given by the gods; Right, Tree of Life stained glass window, Winter Quarters Nebraska LDS Temple. The Celestial Room is on the other side of the window.

The Tree of Life is one of the most common symbols in the world. Nearly every world religion uses this familiar motif in some fashion to symbolize the things of God. Trees are sources of *life* in the natural world and in scripture. Their fruit, seeds, and leaves provide food and medicine for man, and thus *healing* and *comfort*. For this reason many associate the Tree of Life with Mother in heaven, as mothers are the primary source of *love*, *healing*, and *comfort* in families. After the angel, Lehi next saw Mary the mother of Christ in the vision. Nephi described her as a beautiful virgin in Nazareth, “beautiful above all other virgins.” The “beauty” here is not only outward physical beauty, but also that tied to purity of heart and soul. Nazareth was the early home of Mary, Joseph, and the Christ child. In later verses we read of Mary holding the baby Jesus in her arms. From this point forward, our Lord Jesus is the focus of Lehi’s vision.

Many suggest that the sweet fruit of the tree represents *immortality*, or the love of God the Father, as He gave up His only Begotten Son to redeem us. Abraham was certainly a type for this. He too was willing to provide his precious son Isaac (through Rebekah) as a sacrifice too. In addition to the love of Father and Mother in Heaven, we see love again in the Lord Jesus. He willingly descended to this wicked earth to redeem us. All three define the love of God (Father, Mother and Son) in this family oriented tree.

The Fruit of the Tree

It is Nephi's additional vision that clarifies the real meaning of the Tree of Life and its fruit. His answer to prayer came in revelation, a vision, because of a heartfelt desire to understand and receive knowledge. Nephi stated that the fruit of the tree is "**the love of God**" in 1 Nephi 11:22, but too often we ignore the second portion of this statement – that it is, "**the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men**" (verse 22). Receiving God's love within our hearts is the key meaning we are to receive in this story. The **LOVE** of God – and the **JOY** tied to it – is the *fruit* of the Tree of Life. We too are to taste the sweet, white fruit of the tree. It is to be *consumed* and *enjoyed* by each us, as part of the believing bloodline of Israel, the family of God, just as Lehi and Nephi did. To do so is to heed the Lord's invitation to "**repent and come unto me**" and literally receive Him in His great glory and love in this life. **Joy** is the best word to describe this love and this glorious event, one described in 3 Nephi 11. The great beauty of the tree, its golden color, and its majesty and size, are features tied to this love. Throughout scripture the word "**joy**" is a key word tied to receiving Christ and the fulness of His great *glory* and *love* in a face-to-face encounter (D&C 84:24), most often via an *ascent-vision* experience in this life (see D&C 76:116-118; 124:99). Those so blessed are often *brought to heaven* and *sealed His* (Mosiah 5:15).

In Alma 36, Alma the Younger reveals that he had a similar experience to that of Lehi in 1st Nephi 1:6. Confronted with his sins, Alma *cried* unto the Lord for mercy and forgiveness, doing so with a *broken heart* and *contrite spirit*. This is the sacrifice the Lord has identified that we all must make to be made clean, and be *born again* in Him. This places us through the gate and onto the path to the tree (see 2 Ne. 31:16-18). Alma the younger experienced this fiery baptism of the Spirit, sharing it with us in the Book of Mormon in two places (Mosiah 27 and Alma 36). Addressing this important, necessary, saving event with his son Helaman, he spoke of the *mighty change of heart* he had while praying for forgiveness. *Crying out* to His Savior Jesus, he stated:

"O Jesus, thou Son of God, have *mercy* on me, who am in the gall of bitterness, and am encircled about by the everlasting chains of death." Alma then remembered his sins no more. "And oh, what **joy**, and what *marvelous light* I did behold, yea, my soul was fill with **joy** as exceeding as was my pain...there can be nothing so exquisite and *sweet* as was my **joy**... Yea, methought I saw, even as our father Lehi saw, God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels, in the attitude of singing and praising their God; yea, and my soul did long to be there...I had been *born of God*...I have [since] labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto *repentance*; that I might bring them to *taste* of the exceeding **joy** of which I did *taste*; they they might also be *born of God* and be *filled* with the *Holy Ghost*... O my son, the Lord doth give me exceedingly great **joy** in the *fruit* of my labors" (Alma 36:18-2).

Note that Alma mentions the word **joy** 5 times in this testimony, the number tied to Christ's *grace* throughout scripture. God's grace is a *gift* from Him to us *after all we can do* (2 Ne. 25:12), and all we can do is *repent* (Alma 24:11). The number 5 is also associated with making *covenants* with God in scripture, like the five covenant steps that lead into His presence in D&C 93:1. Our covenants with God are typically tied to *repentance* as we start out on a *new pathway*. In the next few verses, Alma repeats that he was "*born of God*," and that he "*tasted*" of God's love. He states that he had "*seen eye to eye*," "*did know*," and did have "*knowledge...of God*" (v. 26). He then stated that he was *delivered* or *redeemed* of God, adding, "I will praise **him** forever" (v. 28). Alma's stirring testimony to his son Helaman also includes the revealing words, "*taste*" and "*sweet*" – both associated with the *fruit* of the Tree of Life in the visions of Lehi and Nephi.

Forbidden Fruit

In direct opposition to this precious fruit are the fruits of *the Tree of Knowledge* (of good and evil, Gen. 2:17; 2 Ne. 2:15). It is "*forbidden fruit*" because it is tied to the lesser, corrupted, inaccurate things given us of men and Satan, versus that of God Himself in His pure word (revelation *and* the written word). We learn in Mosiah 13 (Abinadi's teaching to Noah and his chief priests) and 2 Nephi 25 (Nephi's teaching to us today) that there is "**deadness**" *in the law and teachings of men*, versus being "**alive in Christ**." When we turn to imperfect men for knowledge, wisdom, and their law, placing our faith and trust in them, we receive lesser things, including false teachings and traditions. They come to us from well-meaning people, *along with* those having sinister motives (see **JST Luke 11:52**; JST Matt. 23:10). Those without pure intent practice often priestcraft for *gain* – or filthy lucre (2 Ne. 26:29; 3 Ne. 18:24). Scripture says forbidden fruit comes to us from "*fathers, priests, and kings*" (see Josh. 24:2, 15; D&C 93:39; Mos. 11:17). Their false teachings and

traditions lead to *iniquities* that are passed down from generation to generation in families (fathers), from church teachings (priests), and in the mere milk given us in schools, universities, and by governments (kings). Over time we learn the hard way, through experience that God waits patiently for us to finally come out of Babylon and instead turn to Him for light and truth (2 Ne. 26:29; 3 Ne. 18:24). When we finally remove our *unbelief* and put our *faith* and *trust* in our merciful, living God (Psalm 136), bright light finally breaks forth. We can then begin bearing fruit “*meet for the father’s [Celestial] kingdom*” (D&C 84:58; 76:50-70 & 92-96). Trees that bear bitter fruit, or no fruit at all in the Lord’s vineyard are purged or burned (Jacob 5:26). Such inherit lesser kingdoms (see endnote 3).

In 2 Timothy 2:6 we read that effective laborers in the Lord’s last-days kingdom must first be *partakers* of the fruit God offers us on the tree, partakers of *the Heavenly Gift* (4 Ne. 1:3). Without it, we are *impotent* servants, missing the **empowerment** that comes only from God. In Galatians 5:22-23 we read of nine “*fruits*” or *signs* tied to God’s Spirit. Significantly, the first two are **love** and **joy**. The remaining seven include *peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance*. Those *born again* in Christ are new creatures. They have received *a mighty change of heart*. They begin exhibiting these fruits of the Spirit as the Holy Ghost now accompanies them. It is first comforter, a more familiar companion and helpful guide. It is *the iron rod* leading them to a greater gift or endowment - that of *the Heavenly Gift* (see 4 Ne. 1:3; Ether 12:8; Heb. 6:44; John 14:16), who is Jesus Christ, the Second Comforter. Our Lord and Savior then becomes our one-on-one personal mentor. There is no greater blessing in this life!

You can have this gift too, if you will diligently seek His face. He repeatedly invites all to receive Him, stating, “**repent and come unto me**” (see D&C 10:67-68; 1 Ne. 10:18-19; 2 Ne. 9:23-24; 28:32; Jacob 1:7; Alma 5:33-34; D&C 93:1; 3 Ne. 9:14, 22, 51; 11:14; 12:19-20, 23-24; 27:5-21; 30:1-2). This direct, five-word invitation, summarizes well the essence of what He calls, “**my doctrine**,” “**my gospel**,” and “**my church**” in both the Doctrine and Covenants and the Book of Mormon. The vision of the Tree of Life in the Book of Mormon is a more symbolic invitation to receive Him and His best gifts. In it we experience great **joy**. Thereafter we have unlimited access to the fruit of the Tree, and at its roots, the never-ending river or fountain of *living waters*. This is to have His love, light, wisdom, and direction at our fingertips. It is the magnificent “*endowment of power from on high*” that the temple ordinances point to. Let us come, partake freely and live.

End Notes

¹ ***Two Mountains & Their Altars*** In Genesis 15 we read of Abraham’s “blood trail” experience at Bethel wherein God revealed a special covenant pattern to him, involving two opposing mountains and their altars; tied to blessing or cursing, life or death. The two parties in the covenant walked a trail of blood in the valley between two hills or mountains, the blood coming from the bodies of animals split in half, placed on the opposing hills. The higher hill or mountain in the east was tied to the sin offering altar (cursing); the lower mountain in the west was tied to the burnt offering altar (blessing).

In Jerusalem, Christ suffered in Gethsemane and upon the cross as a sin offering for all of us eastward on the higher mountain called Olivet. He was tried, convicted, and scourged on the lower mountain west, called today the Temple Mount. The Lord’s Atonement in Jerusalem fulfilled the ancient pattern of sacrifices carried out by Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joshua below, in the same opposing mountain with altar pattern, all tied to our choice in *the doctrine of the two ways*, resulting in blessing or cursing, life or death.

1. Abraham at *Bethel* or “the Gate of Heaven” - the mountains of *Bethel west & Hai east*

2. Joshua at *Shechem* - the mountains of *Gerizim west & Ebal east*

3. Jesus at *Jerusalem* - the mountains of *the Ophel west & the Mount of Olives east (Olivet was the southernmost peak*

This pattern was sealed and fulfilled with His own blood in Jerusalem on two opposing mountains with altars, as man’s future “Deliverer.” This pattern, and all things in His creation point to Him. He stated, “Behold...all things are created and made to bear record of me” (Moses 6:63). Nephi added, “Behold...all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him” (2 Ne. 11:4).

Our Savior Jesus Christ *is* the focus of three altars positioned in a straight and narrow line running east to west on the two opposing mountains in Jerusalem. East to west, the three altars are tied to our return to God. There is (1) The *sin offering* altar (farthest east on Olivet), where the red heifer and our Savior were offered up. It is tied to the Lord’s sin

offering, His **Atonement**; (2) The *burnt offering* altar (in front of the temple's east entrance), where most animal sacrifices were offered. It has connection to our **rebirth** in Christ; And (3) The *peace offering* altar (inside the temple's Holy Place, just before the veil into the Holy of Holies, where incense was offered, symbolizing the prayers of the righteous (see illustration, p. 27). It is tied to having **fellowship** with God. He is symbolically present on His throne in the Holy of Holies, observing or witnessing the Atonement of His son carried out on the three altars in Jerusalem.

Entering God's Presence The east to west layout of the three altars symbolize **the way** of salvation into God's presence anciently, by way of three sacrifices; (1) a sin offering (red heifer), (2) a burnt offering (bulls, rams, goats), and then (3) a peace offering (grains, meal, and incense), before parting the veil and entering the Lord's presence in the Holy of Holies. Examples in scripture of these 3 consecutive sacrifices given prior to God's fiery presence appearing, occurred at the following:

1. The dedication of the ancient Tabernacle of Moses (Lev. 9:22)
2. The dedication of David's Altar on the Ophel in Jerusalem (2 Sam. 24:16)
3. The Dedication of Solomon's Temple in the same setting (2 Chron. 7:1)

Note also that the dedication of Nazarites to God, and that of their body *as a temple* of the Spirit, was part of becoming "*holy unto the Lord*" in the Nazarite Vow (men or women). At its conclusion was the promise of the Lord's face shining upon them (see Numbers 6:25-26).

This pathway, "**the way** of *deliverance* of our God" (2 Ne. 9:11), can be equated today with *purification, justification, and sanctification* (see Moses 6:57-60) prior to receiving our Lord as the Heavenly Gift (4 Ne. 1:3; Ether 12:8; Heb. 6:44). These coincide with our repentance and baptism in water, our baptism by fire and the Holy Ghost - where we receive the first comforter - the Holy Ghost, and finally our ascent-vision into God's presence, where we receive Him as our Second Comforter in this life, to mentor us thereafter personally.

The Lord's Day Altar #1 was the *sin offering* (tied to Christ's **Atonement**) altar located farthest east on Olivet in Jerusalem in the Lord's day, the southernmost peak of the Mount of Olives. It was directly east of Herod's Temple, which sat directly above the Gihon Spring below, the only source of *living water* for some five miles (*living water* was necessary to cleanse priests and the temple altars of sin-laden blood). The spring and the temple above it are some 500 feet south of the southern wall of what is incorrectly called today "the Temple Mount." Herod's Temple and the other temples at Jerusalem sat atop the Ophel, a hill in *the center* of the old City of David, located south of the Roman Fortress of Antonia. This hill was later removed in the time of the Hasmoneans. The remaining stones we see today of the Temple Mount are those tied to this fortress. All other buildings, the stones of the temple, and the city Jerusalem, were all laid low by the Romans, not one stone left upon another. So said the Lord himself in Matthew 24:2. Before this destruction in 70 AD, priests carried out various rites on the three altars prefiguring the Lord's Atonement.

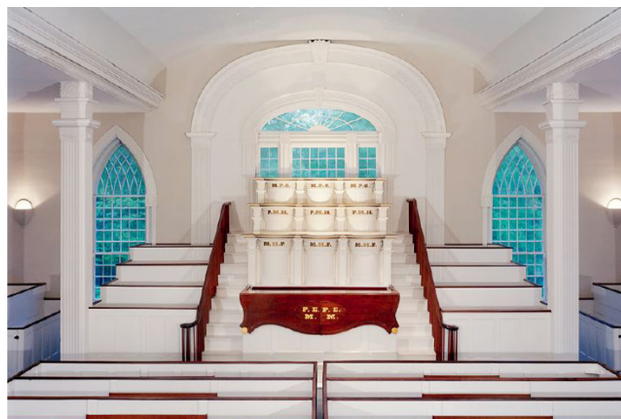
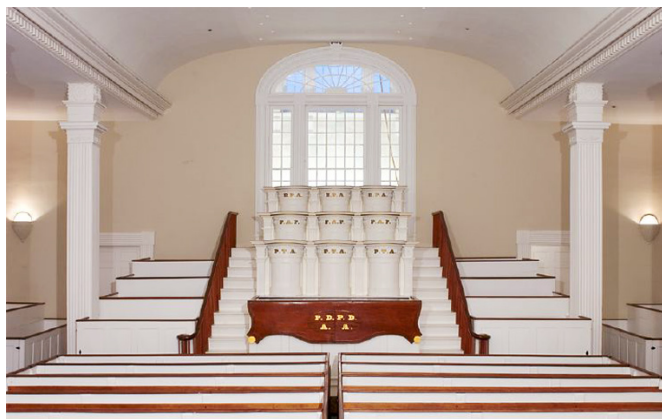
The *sin offering* altar is where our Lord suffered in Gethsemane and upon the cross. It was in the area where capital punishment (tied to **sin**) was carried out in Jerusalem by stoning (for the Jews), and by crucifixion (by the Romans), both east of the temple and downwind from it. This same general vicinity was also the setting for *graves* in Jerusalem, and a set-apart dwelling place for lepers, a type of *living death*. It was also "*the appointed place*" of the Miphkad Altar for the Red Heifer sacrifice, only nine of which are believed to have been offered up total, until Christ. This area is thus a defiled, unclean place tied to sin, blood, and death, all three of which were conquered by our Lord in the atonement and the resurrection. This is why the Miphkad Altar was 3000 cubits to the east of the Holy of Holies; the distance from the Ark (carried by the Levites) to non-priesthood Israelites at the time of Joshua (Josh. 3:4). Christ was apparently the *tenth* and final *perfect* offering at this altar area. It concluded all blood sacrifices that began with Adam and Eve, continuing with Abraham in the blood trail, and then beyond. See illustration, p. 27.

Altar #2 was the *burnt offering* altar of sacrifice (tied to being "**born again**" in Christ) near the front, east entrance of Herod's Temple. All animal sacrifices, excepting the rare Red Heifer sacrifice, were carried out here. The bodies of those animals whose blood was taken into the Holy of Holies by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement for *sprinkling, pouring out, and smearing* rites, were burned away from the temple eastward, on the Miphkad Altar. It should be noted that these three types of blood application by the High Priest were the exact ways in which our Lord's blood was shed on our behalf in the Atonement. His blood *sprinkled* from every pore on the ground in Gethsemane. It *poured out* at the brutal scourging, when his flesh was literally torn open, and his blood was *smear*ed on the wood of the cross.

Altar #3 was the final altar, *the peace offering* altar (tied to **fellowship** with God) located farthest west, directly in front of the temple veil, leading into the Holy of Holies. Incense was offered there, representing the prayers of the righteous. Jacob wrestled with the Lord at Peniel, "the gate of heaven" (the word "peniel" means "face of God"). While in fervent prayer, Jacob finally overcame the veil of his own flesh. He "prevailed" with God and entered into the Lord's presence, having an ascent vision experience where he saw a ladder extending to heaven. His whole household was blessed thereafter, most with "believing blood."

Early LDS Temple Pattern The opposing, graduated pulpit-altars of the Kirtland, Ohio Temple (above) may illustrate visually the opposing mountains of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joshua, and our Lord, and their respective altars. The

Lord Jesus Christ appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery above the west, Melchizedek Priesthood pulpit-altars on Easter Sunday, April 3rd of 1836, one week after the temple was dedicated on March 27, and two weeks after the spring equinox; the sacred New Year of the priest (the Great High Priest Jesus Christ in this case). Joseph Smith said the pulpit-altars of the Kirtland Temple were patterned after an ancient altar he discovered at Adam-ondi-Ahman, a three-tiered altar used by Adam and Eve to offer up an animal sacrifice (believed to be a bull) after leaving the Garden of Eden.



The Kirtland Ohio Temple Pulpit-Altars: Left, 1st floor Levitical or Aaronic order pulpit-altars (east); Right, 1st floor Melchizedek order pulpit-altars (west). The 4th lower tier is the “sacred desk,” the Sacrament table, featuring a yoke-shaped table-top. Yokes were placed on oxen (symbol of the Tribe of Joseph) that they might carry their burden more effectively. Christ accepted the temple, appearing in front of the rising sun window, keystone, and other symbols directly above the west – “Melchizedek” pulpit-altars, while Joseph and Oliver were surrounded by a lowered canvas veil. This was Easter Sunday, April 3rd, 1836, two weeks after the spring equinox; the day the sun rises due east on the horizon. Ancient cultures used two stone pillars on the horizon to mark this point in time (the sun rose between them). It was a rudimentary time piece set up to mark this day, in connection with the sacred New Year of the priest on the Lord’s calendar. Note the two pillars supporting the rising sun motif in front of where Christ appeared (right), and the square pillars supporting the roof on either side of the altars (by the windows). Christ is the rising” resurrected Son, our source of light.

The Prophet Joseph said its three stone tiers represented (lowest to highest); (1) the Levitical or Aaronic order of the priesthood; (2) the Patriarchal order of the priesthood; And (3) the Melchizedek order of the priesthood. Temples at Kirtland, Nauvoo, Manti, St. George, Logan, and Salt Lake all featured three graduated pulpit-altars in this pattern in their upper floor Assembly Halls. Only the Kirtland and Nauvoo Temples had them on the first, main floor.

² *Last Instructions from Moses*

The divided blood covenant pattern first seen with Abraham, continued with Moses. After being released from captivity in Egypt, Moses led Israel as they wandered in the desert for forty years, the people having *rejected* a personal audience with God at Sinai (see JST Ex. 34:1-2; D&C 84:21-26; Hebrews chapters 3 & 4; Jacob 1:7; Alma 12:34-37). Once this *unbelieving* generation had died out, and just prior to the remaining obedient ones entering the Promised Land of Canaan, Moses (with the Elders of Israel) provided final instruction to Joshua and the Israelites. Moses told them to “keep all the commandments.” He then added special instruction involving *two opposing mountains* tied to “*the doctrine of the two ways.*” On the day they crossed over the Jordan River into the Promised Land, they were to set up “great stones, and plaister them...And thou shalt write upon them all the words of this law” (Deut. 27:1-4). The stones with the law inscribed upon them were to be set up on Mount Ebal, the higher of two mountains to the east of Mt. Gerizim (west) in the land of Moriah. “And there [on Mt. Ebal] shalt thou build an altar unto the Lord thy God” (v. 5). The unhewn stones of this altar were also to have the law placed on them. Upon it, special offerings were to be offered up to the Lord (vs. 5-8).

Moses then explained that Joshua was to place six of the Tribes of Israel on each of two *opposing* mountains there; six Tribes on Mt. Gerizim to the southwest (“the mount of **blessing**”), and six Tribes on Mt. Ebal to the northeast (“the mount of **cursing**”). He was then to position himself in the valley between the *divided* tribes, reciting the law “with a loud voice” to the whole “House of Israel,” *placing them under covenant* with God. The *division* of the covenant people on the two opposing mountains symbolized “the Doctrine of the Two Ways” and the opposing sides of all covenants in scripture – *blessing* or *cursing*, *life* or *death* (see Deut. 27). Note that the tribes of Judah (kingship) and Joseph (priesthood) were placed in the “*west*,” in association with *blessing* (see Gen. 49), along with Simeon Levi, Benjamin and Issachar (Deut. 27:11-12). The Tribes positioned to the *northeast* were Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan and Naphtali (verse 13, see also endnote 22). Moses then told Joshua and all Israel, “I call heaven and earth to record this day *against you*, that I have set before you *life* and *death, blessing* and *cursing*: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live” (Deut. 30:19).

Moses’ directions to Joshua provide clear understanding of the two opposing mountains pattern in connection with covenant making for Israel; it was a matter of *life* and *death*. At *Rosh Hashanah*, Ezra read the Law to all Israel. He too

positioned six men on both sides of him as he spoke (Neh. 8:4). Anciently covenants had this dual nature – the law of opposition in all things (2 Ne. 2:27). Each covenant had a *blessing* or a *cursing* attached to it. The curses (or “penalties”) were tied to dividing or cutting – as in the “*cutting off*” off of blessings, the greatest of which was **God’s presence**. In His covenant with each of Israel’s early “fathers” (Abraham, Moses, Joshua and other leaders), God revealed that if covenants were honored, there would be *blessing - liberty* on *promised* lands, with *endless posterity*. If broken, there would be *cursing* – to be *cut off from God’s presence*. Serious sin led to captivity and eventually **death** (spiritually and physically), represented by the *blood* of the sacrifice (“*life*”).

Change Few fully understand this covenant pattern today, as blood related penalties were removed in the modern temple rites in 1990, along with other significant changes (note D&C 1:15; JST Gen. 17:4; Isa. 27:1; 66:15-16). Some blame our *leaders* for these and other changes, and a general decline, as there are a number of *Isaiah* prophecies in the Book of Mormon addressing leaders in a negative sense (see 1 Nephi 21:1; 2 Ne. 7:2; 13:12, 19:16, 26:29, 28:3-4, 2, 11-15, 21, 24-25, 31). A single changed *Isaiah* scripture in the Book of Mormon also points to dwindling belief and faith in *the general membership* of the church (2 Nephi 27:5; Isa. 29:10). Joseph Smith added “*because of your iniquity*.” *Iniquity* is typically tied to *false traditions* and *teachings* passed down through family or “the fathers,” along with others. Mormon addressed “the holy church of God” being polluted in our day. See Mormon 8:26-41; 9:1-37. See also D&C 1:13-17; 64:38-43; 85:7-9; 89-95; 101:44-61, 90; 124:24-26 101:44-61, 90. Note the chart and related text in the next endnote.

³ **Opposition in All Things** The “*doctrine of the two ways*” is directly tied to the principle of “*opposition in all things*” (2 Ne. 2:11). Corrupt, designing men, including priests, took away many precious truths from the Bible. In JST Luke 11:53 we read the words of our Lord to them and those who teach for filthy lucre, keeping back precious truths for His people. “Woe unto you, lawyers! For ye have taken away *the key of knowledge*, **the fulness of the scriptures**; ye enter not in yourselves into the kingdom; and those who were entering in, ye hindered.”

Because of Joseph Smith’s inspired re-translation of the Bible, we have much more knowledge of the war of good versus evil that began in heaven. The rare insights given us in chapter 4 of the book of Moses came from Joseph’s re-translation of Genesis 3, for example, as did D&C 76, a revelation on the *three degrees of glory* that came in answer to Joseph’s and Sidney’s desire to understand John, chapter 5. Our choice of **who to follow** determines our resulting kingdom after the final judgment by our Lord. Especially revealing in D&C 76 is the use of the phrase, “*the testimony of Jesus*” (vs. 51, 74, 82 & 101), tied to those who have paid the price to be “*born again*” in Him, finally receiving the promise of *eternal life* from the Lord Himself. This is “*the more sure word of prophecy*,” or in D&C 76, “*the testimony of Jesus*” (our Savior, Judge, and King). As our Judge (John 5:22), He gives us this “*great and last promise*,” a result of our love and devotion to Him, not to churches or men. Those who have come out of Babylon and removed its *idolatry*, heeding the call to “*awake and arise*” and “**repent and come unto me**,” have received Him and His best gifts, including the promise of *eternal life*. They then bear fruit “*meet for the father’s kingdom*” (D&C 84:58), and inherit the highest kingdom of glory (see vs. 116-119). See also *The Testimony of Jesus*, www.7witnesses.com

Judgment & Assigned Kingdom	D&C 76	Chosen One to Follow – to Place Faith & Trust In
<i>2nd Death / Son of Perdition</i>	vs. 44-49	Chose Satan & Darkness / Rebelled after having great light
<i>Telestial Kingdom</i>	vs. 81-89 & 98-106	“Received not the gospel, neither <i>the testimony of Jesus</i> ” (v. 82)
<i>Terrestrial Kingdom</i>	vs. 71-79 (75)	Blinded by Craftiness of Men whom they Followed, then Repented
<i>Celestial Kingdom</i>	vs. 50-70 & 92-96	Sought Christ & received “ <i>the testimony of Jesus</i> ” (v. 51)

Note also in the chart below how Satan has stolen or usurped the good things God created, turning them “*upside down*” (2 Ne. 27:27) for his dark purposes.

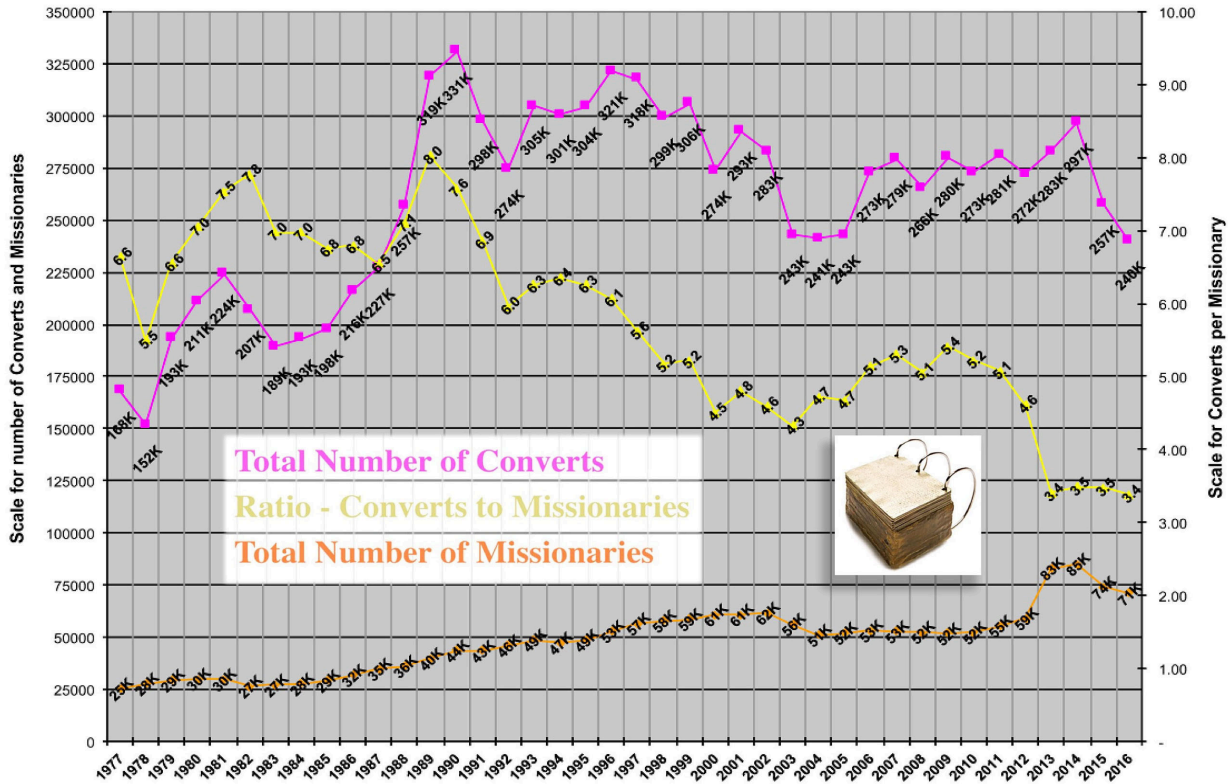
Symbol	Jesus Christ / Creator, Savior	Satan / Usurper, Father of Lies
<i>Pentagram</i>	Light (Star), Perfection, Healing, Divine Proportion	Satan Worship, Goat
<i>Rainbow</i>	Token of the Covenant (JST Gen. 9)	Gay & Lesbian Pride
<i>Swastika</i>	Creation, Spiraling Galaxy, Migration & Gathering (4 corners)	Nazi Germany / Kill Jews
<i>Number 13</i>	Messiah (13 th letter of the Hebrew Alphabet), Meridian of time	Unlucky Number
<i>Number 911</i>	Birthday of Christ: Rosh Hashanah of 3 BC (9/11 on our Cal.) JST Revelation 12 Sign Appeared on this Date	Death, Destruction, Terrorism See Rev. 9:11(king Bottomless Pit)
<i>Pyramid</i>	Melchizedek Temple for Ascension, Healing Earth, etc.	Pagan Worship, New Age Movement
<i>Temple Rites</i>	Signs & Tokens of God’s Love point to Christ’s Atonement & Paul’s “Infallible Proofs” (Acts 1:3; Luke 24:39; 3 Ne. 11:12-17) These marks are tied to real Love for God and Us	Secret Grips of Masonry & Blood-Oaths for Murder & to Get Gain (Moses 5), Polygamy, Homosexuality (vs. 44, 51)
<i>Endowment</i>	The gift or “ <i>endowment of power from on high</i> ” in most scripture is God and His best gifts, including the Holy Ghost, as found in seven sets of scriptures: (1)	

Ex. 19:4-6, 8, 17-18; 20:18-20; JST Ex. 34:1-2; D&C 84:23-27; Hebrews chapters 3 & 4 (Sinai); (2) Luke 24:49 & Acts 1 & 2 (Jerusalem); (3) D&C 38:32, 38 (higher priesthood, Kirtland); (4) D&C 43:15-16 (higher priesthood, Kirtland); (5) D&C 95:8-9 (Kirtland Temple); (6) D&C 97:12-18 (Kirtland Temple); (7) D&C 105:10-12 (Kirtland Temple). See the paper, *An Endowment of Power from On High*.

Sealing

The Way ends in a Sealing to God at the Tree (Mosiah 5:15)
Sons & Daughters of God

Sealed to Satan (Alma 34:35)
Sons of Perdition



LDS Church Stats for 2016 & the Joseph Smith Re-Translation of the Bible

Numbers for 2016 (reported during the 2017 April General Conference) reveal that the growth rate of the LDS church was 1.6% - the lowest since records have been kept in this way (1974). See illustration next page. Converts per missionary are down to 3.38 – the lowest recorded (since 1971). Missionaries serving in 2016 were 70,946, also down from 85,147 in 2014. Member of record baptisms was down too, to 109,246 – the lowest since 2008. The year of the highest convert baptism ratio for missionaries was in 1989, during Pres. Ezra Taft Benson’s administration. He concentrated on *repentance* among all the Saints and *removing the condemnation* we have been under for not using the Book of Mormon (see D&C 84:53-59). Hugh Nibley’s efforts to return the Saints to the Book of Mormon, is thought to have partially influenced this new direction by the church. LDS church manuals suggest that we do three things to retain those who have been recently baptized:

1. *Fellowship* them (treat them as real brothers and sisters in the fold of God)
2. Give them a *calling* (to help them be actively involved)
3. *Nourish* them **with the good word of God** (see Moroni 6:1-6)

Sadly, step 3 above may be the primary reason why so many do not attend church after baptism (around 70-80% of new converts in some areas). Many are not “**nourished by the good word of God**” (Mor. 6:1-6). Too many are not feasting on the good word of God in scripture (including “the fulness of my scriptures”), or receiving direction from the Holy Ghost as a result of being born again in Christ. Thus, too few are experiencing revelation from the Holy Ghost or God. The companionship of the Holy Ghost is only obtained in the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost event. It must occur after the watery baptism. Christ said we must be born again to see or enter heaven (John 3:3-5). The Prophet Joseph said, “The baptism of water, without **the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost** attending it, is of no use . . . *They are necessarily and inseparably connected*. An individual must be **born of water and the spirit** in order to get into the kingdom of God...*You might as well baptize a bag of sand as a man, if not done in view of the remission of sins and getting of the Holy Ghost. Baptism by water is but half a baptism, and is good for nothing without the other half—that is, the baptism of [fire and] the Holy Ghost*” (HC, 6:316). Speaking of these two baptisms while addressing John the Baptist in JST Matthew 3:38,

Joseph altered it to read, “I baptize you with **water, upon your repentance**, but when Jesus Christ – of whom I bear record – comes, who has the power and keys, **He will administer the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost.**” See also JS History 1:73-74. Nephi said, “...**know the gate** by which ye should enter. For **the gate** by which ye should enter is [1] **repentance** and [2] **baptism by water**; and [3] **then cometh a remission of your sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost. And then are ye in this strait and narrow path which leads to eternal life**; yea, **ye have entered in by the gate**; ye have done according to **the commandments of the Father and the Son**; and **ye have received the Holy Ghost**, which witnesses of the Father and the Son, unto the fulfilling of the promise which he hath made, that if ye **entered in by the way** ye should receive” (2 Ne. 31:17-18).

We must not believe we are saved when we are not. God reminds us that, “...this shall be your lamentation in the day of visitation, and of judgment, and of indignation: The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and **my soul is not saved**” (D&C 56:16; 45:2; Jer. 8:20). God provides two commands to teach this – “**the way**” – to our children in Moses 6:56-68. Salvation involves three symbolic cleansings – by *water*, by *fire*, and by Christ’s *blood*; (1) real repentance, (2) full conversion to Christ by having faith and trust in Him, and (3) the necessity of the final two cleansings. The Saints are not receiving this message generally, because most are not heeding the message of the Book of Mormon. Hence we have provoked the Lord and are under condemnation. The following seven scriptures make this very clear. Please read them (JST Ex. 34:12; Hebrews chapters 3 & 4; D&C 84:23-27, 47-57; Jacob 1:6-8; Mosiah 13:13-14, 25-35; 2 Nephi 2:3-11, 15-16, 26-27; Moroni 6:4).

The chart on page 23 reveals declining *conversion* rates by missionaries. These concerning rates, along with those tied to attendance at church and membership retention appear to be tied to a lack of the *nourishing word* of God by too many Saints – the need for the Holy Ghost in their lives, along with good instruction, meetings where the Spirit is present, and the need to search scripture personally to bring us to the “gate,” especially in what the Lord calls, “*the fullness of my scriptures*” – the Book of Mormon, the JST version of the Bible, and the D&C. Without a full conversion to Christ and these added things, Zion will only be a dream.

⁴ **Secret Combinations & Masonry** Governments, corporations, universities, and churches the world-over are often controlled by those involved in the *secret combination* of Freemasonry. It is a brotherhood of men who make secret oaths to up hold one another and the cause of the fraternity. Those at the lower end of this fraternity are mostly unaware of the sinister motifs of those at its top tier, the 30th – 33rd degrees. Leaders at the top tier often have ties to Lucifer worship (see *Lucifer Worship* below). The desire for gain (power, money, sex, etc.) among those at the top levels of Masonry mirrors that of Cain who made a secret blood oath with Satan, and then murdered Abel to *get gain* in Moses chapter 5:18-55 (the book of Moses came to us from the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis, see the next endnote).

Note that *polygamy* (v. 44), *secret blood oaths* with Satan (v. 49), *murder* (v. 50), *darkness* and *deception* (v. 51), and *homosexuality* (v. 51) are all key characteristics of this ancient secret combination, now taking over leadership of most nations, as part of the New World Order (Globalism). This dark controlling force remains mostly hidden behind veils of authority that appear to be seeking the betterment of mankind, when the opposite is true. Their enemy is Christ and Christian morality and beliefs.

Lucifer Worship Albert Pike, 33rd degree Mason died in 1891. He used his high-level positions to unify different branches of American Masonry in the late 19th century. Pike was the Grand Master of the Central Directory (Washington, D.C.), the Grand Commander of the Supreme Council (Charleston, S.C.), and the Sovereign Pontiff of Freemasonry nationwide. At first he declared that Satan was a fabrication of Christianity. Later he completely embraced Lucifer, stating, “The true and pure philosophic religion is the belief in Lucifer” (Edith Starr Miller, *Occult Theocracy*, Christian Book Club of America, p. 221). Pike desired to keep the knowledge of Satan worship away from the lower degree of Masonry. Two years before his death he wrote, “That which we must say to the crowd is – We worship a God [the god of this world – Satan], but it is the God that one adores without superstition...the true and pure philosophic religion is the belief in Lucifer, the equal of Adonay [Christ]; but Lucifer, God of Light and God of Good, is struggling for humanity against Adonay, the God of Darkness and Evil” (Miller, pps. 220-21).

For a comprehensive discussion of Freemasonry in connection with secret combinations in this land, see: Phil Hunter, *War on Freedom*, Wave Publications; Albert G. Mackey, *Darwin, Charles and Freemasonry*, An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, Vol. III; Anton Chaitkin, *Treason in America*, 2nd Ed., New Benjamin Franklin House; Edith Starr Miller, *Occult Theocracy*, Christian Book Club of America; John Daniel, *Scarlet and the Beast*, Vols. I-III, JKI Publishing; & Steve Quayle, Chap. 10: Satan’s 6th Pillar, in *Aliens and Fallen Angels: Offspring of the Gods, the Sexual Corruption of the Human Race*, SafeTrek Publishing, pps. 166-204.

⁵ **The Fulness of My Scriptures** According to the Lord’s own words, the Book of Mormon represents a portion of “*the fulness of the scriptures*” – an important “*key of knowledge*.” The other parts of this “fulness” include Joseph Smith’s inspired re-translation of the entire Bible (not the limited verses found in our current LDS scriptures), and the modern revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants. Collectively, they are what the Lord calls, “**the fulness of my scriptures**” (see

D&C 42; 12, 15, 56 & 59), “**the fulness of the scriptures**” (JST Luke 11:53), “**my holy word**” (D&C 124:89), and “**the key of knowledge**.” They were to go out to the world in Joseph Smith’s day together, as one volume. The footnote for verse 56 of D&C 42 in the 1989 version of the scriptures features a direct reference to the Joseph Smith Translation, whereas later versions of the scriptures do not reference the JST in this particular verse. A number of other changes have also been made to scripture. In the regular version of John 14:16, for example, the footnote for this verse (16a) reads, “Jesus Christ, *Second Comforter*” in the author’s 1989 scriptures. In more modern LDS scriptures, it now reads, “*The Holy Ghost*,” which is the first comforter, a very different concept.

The Joseph Smith Re-Translation of the Bible At present we have a limited selection of Joseph’s re-translation of the Bible within our current body of LDS scriptures, as the Community of Christ holds the copyright to them (it was preserved by Emma Smith and did not go west with Brigham Young). Too few Saints are aware of the limited verses we have, let alone the entire re-translated Bible. The keys to unlock the fuller truths of Christ’s saving gospel are available to “*the elect*” who love God and diligently search out His **word**, that available in what He calls “*the fulness of my scriptures*” (see D&C 42:15, 56 and 59 & D&C 93:53; 94:10; 104:58 & 124:89), and of course that available in direct revelation from God and the Holy Ghost.

The Prophet Joseph began *re-translating* the King James version of the Bible six months after completing the Book of Mormon. Though Joseph, Oliver, and Sidney held unique prophetic insights learned while re-translating the Bible, the Lord did not allow them to share these insights with the Saints at that time. The reason is apparent in the Lord’s own words. He said, “It is not the will of the Lord to print any of the new Translation in the Star [or elsewhere]; but when it is published, it will all *go to the world together, in a volume by itself; and the New Testament and the Book of Mormon will be printed together*” (HC 1:341). In July of 1833 the Star stated, “At no very distant period, we shall print the book of Mormon and the [New] Testament, and *bind them in one volume*.” When this finally occurs with the whole re-translated Bible, it may be a fulfillment of Ezekiel 37:15-17, when the two sticks come together, the scriptures given Judah (the Bible) and Joseph (the Book of Mormon). This may occur in the near future, when other scripture also comes forth.

The Lord told Joseph that he was to teach by the spirit instead, that given by the prayer of faith, until “**the fulness of the scriptures** is given [in totality],” when they could be given to all men. God said, “It is expedient that thou shouldst hold thy peace concerning them, and not teach them until thou hast received them in *full*. And I give unto you a commandment, that *then* ye shall teach them unto **all men**; for they shall be taught unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people” (verses 56-58). Note, that what the Lord calls “**my scriptures**” were to be “**my law to govern my church**” (v. 59).

Of special note is another statement by the Lord. We read in *The Far West Report*, “Brother Joseph Smith, Jr. said ... that **the promise of God** was that the greatest blessings which God had to bestow should be given to those who contributed to the support of his family while he was translating *the fulness of the Scriptures* ... that God had often sealed up the heavens because of covetousness in the Church ... and *except the Church receive the fulness of the Scriptures that they would yet fail*” (Far West Report, p. 16, TPJS, p. 9). The Lord added that “*the salvation of the elect*” was dependent upon **the fulness of truths** being delivered to the world in a future one-volume publication of both the Book of Mormon and JST version of the Bible (a replacement of the KJV, see D&C 35:20).

Special Insights Joseph’s re-translation of the Bible was preserved by a wise steward, his wife Emma Smith. She chose not to go west with Brigham Young and many of the Saints. Six groups within the body of the Nauvoo Saints departed from the church led by Brigham Young at this time, choosing not to follow him primarily because of his emphasis on polygamy. In an unpublished 1841 revelation of the Lord to Joseph about Emma, we read, “for she holdeth records and **a great key of knowledge...**” Very important insights, like JST Matthew 7:33 and 25:10-11 are **not** found in the limited JST verses in our current scriptures, nor on the LDS Church website, even though Elder David Bednar quoted both scriptures in his October 2016 General Conference address. They are about the necessity of coming to **know** Christ for salvation sake, the essence of what the Lord calls “*my doctrine*,” “*my gospel*,” and “*my church*.” In JST Matthew 25:10-11, the Lord informs us why the five *unwise virgins* were not let into the bridal chamber (the regular King James version says Christ did not *know* them). Other JST scriptures, like JST Matthew 17:11-14 and JST John 1:22 (in combination with other scriptures) reveal insights like Elijah’s return as John the Baptist to complete His mission (see the author’s paper, *To Go No More Out*). Others like JST Matthew 21 reveal severe judgment coming on unbelieving Gentiles in the last-days.

History shows that the *fulness of the scriptures* was never published to the world as commanded by God. The Prophet Joseph tried to obtain financial assistance from the saints right up until his martyrdom. Brigham Young and other leaders pleaded with Emma to get the unpublished manuscript of Joseph’s inspired translation of the Bible, but she refused. Many years later the church made an agreement with the Community of Christ allowing them to include limited *portions* of the re-translation into our scriptures. It is not, however, the “*fulness*” of the re-translation.

Significant insights given us in or by the Joseph Smith re-translation include:

1. We must **know the Lord** to enter the bridal chamber and Zion / JST Matt. 25:10-11; 7:33
2. Greater understanding of the Melchizedek Priesthood, the Sealing Power, etc. / JST Gen. 14
3. Knowledge of the Rainbow Covenant God made with Enoch & his city returning / JST Gen. 9

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4. The mystery that John the Baptist as Elijah and how this effects D&C 110 / See Joseph Smith History 1:36-39; Mark 1:1-4; JST, Mark 9:3; Luke 1:17 & 76; D&C 110:13-16; JST Matthew 17:10-14; JST John 1:22-28 (see also “*To Go No More Out*”, www.7witnesses.com)
 5. That the *salvation of the elect is dependent upon the “the fulness of my scriptures,”* which is the JST Bible, Book of Mormon & D&C, as they provide a return of “*the key of knowledge*” for the Bible, taken by wicked lawyers, rabbis, etc. / JST Luke 11:52
 6. The Lord’s prophecy of destruction of wicked husbandmen in His vineyard in the last-days, along with the Gentiles / JST Matt. 21
 7. The three degrees of glory and who inherits each of them / D&C 76, which comes from the Joseph’s re-translation of John 5:29
 8. The gift of the Book of Moses and its many insights, including Moses’ ascent-vision, who Satan is, choice & accountability, secret combinations and their traits today, spiritual versus physical creation, Enoch, Earth as a living being, and much more / JST Genesis
 9. Clarity on the Lord’s prophecy on the last-days / JST Matt. 24
 10. Clarity on the coming forth of the man child and the last-days kingdom of God / JST Rev. 12
 11. Clarity on John the Beloved’s last-days mission / JST Matt. 11, 17; D&C 77 - JST Rev. various chapters
 12. Clarity on the Beatitudes - how to return to the Lord’s presence / JST Matt. 5

The *entire* re-translation of the Bible may be obtained from the Community of Christ at the Restoration Book Store in Kirtland, Ohio. Some LDS bookstores also carry it. A free on-line version of the JST is available at: <http://www.centerplace.org/hs/iv/> The whole JST Bible is available from the Community of Christ (copyright holder), at the Restoration Bookstore, Kirtland Ohio. Phone 440-256-1830

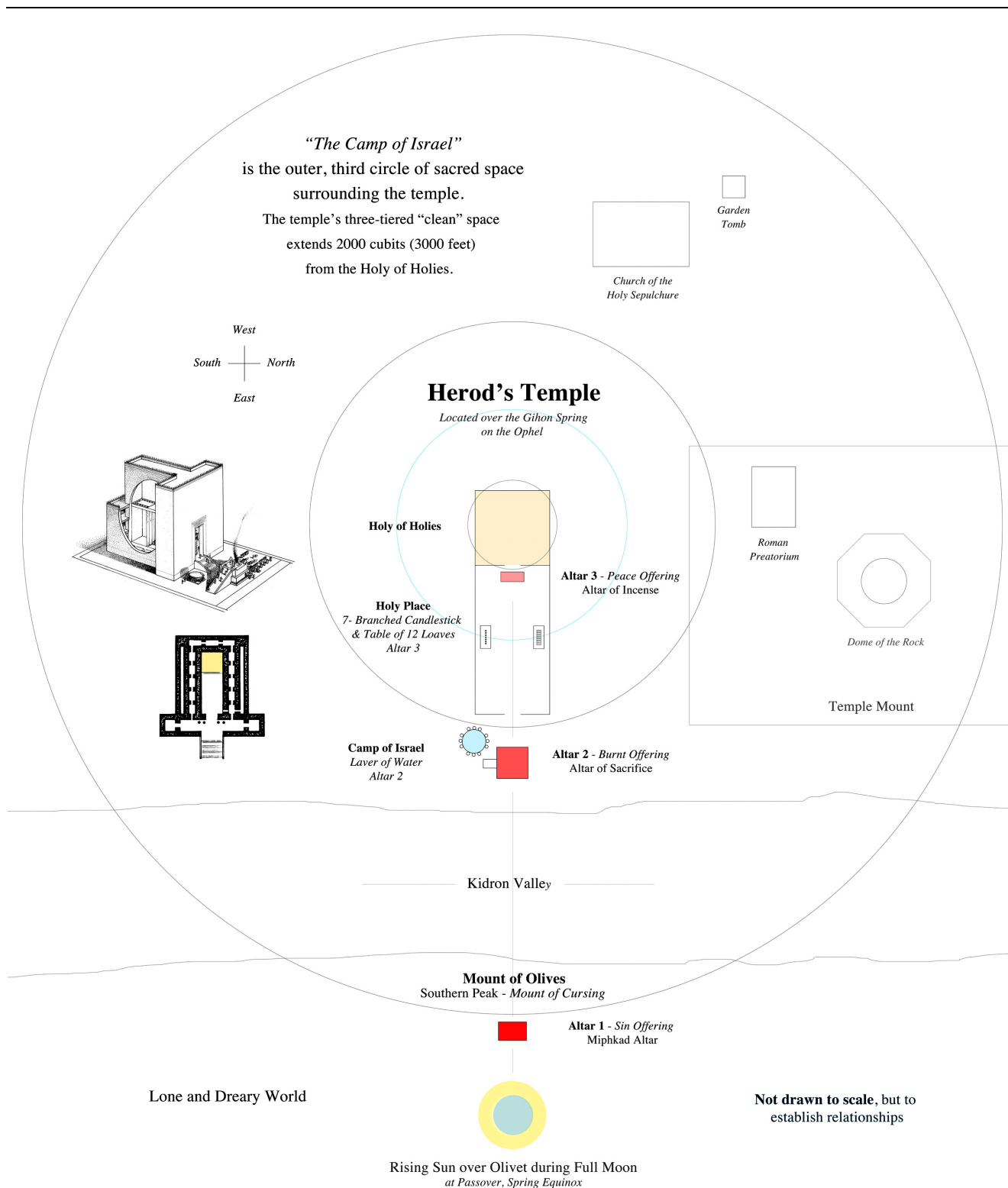
Holy Scriptures, the Inspired Version \$38.00

Side by side comparison version \$25.00

Used copies are 1/3 these prices...

The author remains committed to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for a number of reasons. First, the church does an excellent job in sending the message of the Book of Mormon around the world. The central message of this book is that we must enter through the *gate* to be on the path or “**the way**” to eternal life, by **repenting** and **coming unto Christ**. This inspired Book of Mormon message is what brings us to this *gate*. From this point, however, salvation is an individual path, requiring each one of us to choose to seek the face of the Lord and do all that is necessary to be *born again* in Him. It is in this event that we are placed on **the way** to the Tree of Life, where Salvation can then occur at His hands, and in His time and way, via revelation from God and the Holy Ghost. This is **the way** (see also Moses 6:56-68). There is **no other way** (see 2 Ne. 9:41). All of us as believers must “*awake and arise*,” which is to be fully *converted* to Christ, be *born again* in Him, and then arise or *ascend* into His presence in this life. This is the Prophet Joseph Smith’s definition of being *saved*.

⁶ See David Whitmer, *An Address to All Believers in Christ*, <http://www.utlm.org/onlinebooks/address1.htm> (pps. 42-43). David Whitmer was the third soul baptized into *the Church of Christ* (after Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery). This is one of three names the early LDS church had. Whitmer was also one of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, as chosen by God. He stated that he was with Joseph Smith during many of his early revelations, seeing how Joseph grew to detect true from false revelations. He later left the early church. See also *Receiving Revelation*, www.7witnesses.com



*The Three Altars of the Jerusalem Temple (in red): Note the three light gray circles originating in the centrality of the Holy of Holies, representing the presence of God, symbolically sitting on His throne facing east. All rites of the temple are before God the Father's face, or "before the Lord." This includes those special rites carried out on the Mount of Cursing farthest east, including the Red Heifer sacrifice, the animal covered in red, as was Christ in Gethsemane. His crucifixion most likely occurred in this area on the Mount of Olives. A fourth larger sacred space was the Promised Land itself. Christ was baptized in the Jordan River, lying at its eastern most boundary. See chapter 7 in *The Original Location of the Temple and Atonement*.*