

The Gospel According to

SAINT MATTHEW

SAINT MARK

SAINT LUKE

SAINT JOHN

CHAPTER 3, VERSES 2, 11-12

3:2 - And saying, Repent¹ ye: for the kingdom² of heaven³ is at hand⁴.
3:11 - I indeed⁵ baptize⁶ you with water⁷ unto repentance⁸: but he that cometh after⁹ me is mightier¹⁰ than I, whose shoes¹¹ I am not worthy¹² to bear¹³: he shall baptize⁶ you with the Holy Ghost¹⁴, and with fire¹⁵:
3:12 - Whose fan¹⁶ is in his hand⁴, and he will throughly¹⁷ purge¹⁸ his floor¹⁹, and gather²⁰ his wheat²¹ into the garner²²; but he will burn²³ up the chaff²⁴ with unquenchable²⁵ fire¹⁵.

CHAPTER 1, VERSES 7-8

1:7 - And preached²⁷, saying, There cometh⁹ one mightier¹⁰ than I after me, the latchet²⁸ of whose shoes¹¹ I am not worthy¹² to stoop²⁹ down³⁰ and unloose³¹.
1:8 - I indeed⁵ have baptized⁶ you with water⁷: but he shall baptize⁶ you with the Holy Ghost¹⁴.

CHAPTER 3, VERSES 10-18

3:10 - And the people³² asked him, saying, What shall we do then³³?
3:11 - He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats³⁴, let him impart³⁵ to him that hath none³⁶; and he that hath meat³⁷, let him do likewise³⁸.
3:12 - Then came also publicans³⁹ to be baptized⁶, and said unto him, Master⁴⁰, what shall we do³³?
3:13 - And he said unto them, Exact⁴¹ no more⁴² than that which is appointed⁴³ you.
3:14 - And the soldiers⁴⁴ likewise demanded⁴⁵ of him, saying, And what shall we do³³? And he said unto them, Do violence⁴⁶ to no man⁴⁷, neither accuse⁴⁸ any falsely⁴⁹; and be content⁵⁰ with your wages⁵¹.
3:15 - And as the people³² were in expectation⁵², and all men mused⁵³ in their hearts⁵⁴ of John⁵⁵, whether he were the Christ⁵⁶, or not;
3:16 - John⁵⁵ answered, saying unto them all, I indeed⁵ baptize⁶ you with water⁷; but one mightier¹⁰ than I cometh⁹, the latchet²⁸ of whose shoes¹¹ I am not worthy¹² to unloose³¹: he shall baptize⁶ you with the Holy Ghost¹⁴ and with fire¹⁵:
3:17 - Whose fan¹⁶ is in his hand⁴, and he will throughly¹⁷ purge¹⁸ his floor¹⁹, and will gather²⁰ the wheat²¹ into his garner²²; but the chaff²⁴ he will burn²³ with fire¹⁵ unquenchable²⁵.
3:18 - And many other things in his exhortation²⁶ preached²⁷ he unto the people³².

CHAPTER 1, VERSES 26-28

1:26 - John⁵⁵ answered them, saying, I baptize⁶ with water⁷: but there standeth⁵⁷ one among you, whom ye know not⁵⁸:
1:27 - He it is, who coming after⁹ me is preferred⁶¹ before me, whose shoe's¹¹ latchet²⁸ I am not worthy¹² to unloose³¹.
1:28 - These things were done in Bethabara⁵⁹ beyond Jordan⁶⁰, where John⁵⁵ was baptizing⁶.

CHRONOLOGY: Around 27 November 26CE

LOCATION: The Wilderness of Judea, more specifically an area on the east bank of the Jordan River somewhere just north of the Dead Sea

COMMENTARY: John the Baptist is fulfilling his mission as the frontrunner. He was sent to call the people unto repentance. He teaches the doctrine of the harvest, helping the listeners understand the need to repent so that the Lord of the Harvest may find them worthy to be taken to the protective garners. He teaches them that the Lord will separate the wicked from the righteous. He uses the metaphor of threshing floor and the willowing fan to help them understand that the Lord will try and test His children in order to separate the wicked from the righteous. The wicked, John compares to the chaff of the field. He promises the chaff will be burned. The only protection is to repent and be baptized. He invites the repentant to be baptized. He then explained that his baptism would be followed by One who was qualified to baptize by fire. This baptism is the gift of the Holy Ghost. The One John was speaking of is the Messiah. Many wondered if John could be the promised Messiah; however, John was clear that he was far beneath the Messiah. He told those with him that he was not even qualified to remove the Messiah's sandals, a job reserved for only slaves. This chapter is the prelude to the Savior's first public appearance in prelude to His ministry.

FOOTNOTES:

1- **Repent** – The word "Repent" is translated from the Greek word "μετανοέω" or "metanoēō". It means to change one's mind, to change one's mind for better, or to heartily amend behaviors, thoughts and desires with abhorrence of one's past sins.

John's message was a call to repent. A call for men to turn their way of life towards God. It is an invitation to change. John's call was similar to other prophets in this respect. The Lord told the Book of Mormon prophet Alma, "... Cry unto this people, saying—Repent ye, and prepare the way of the Lord, and walk in his paths, which are straight; for behold, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, and the Son of God cometh upon the face of the earth." (Alma 7:9). As the prophets Lehi and Nephi faced an army of Lamanites, they found themselves in prison. To their captors, the Lord himself proclaimed, "And behold the voice came again, saying: Repent ye, repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand; and seek no more to destroy my servants. And it came to pass that the earth shook again, and the walls trembled." (Helaman 5:32). This seems to be the message the Lord sends to all mankind; Repent. Alma taught, "And now for this cause, that ye may not be destroyed, the Lord has sent his angel to visit many of his people, declaring unto them that they must go forth and cry mightily unto this people, saying: Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is nigh at hand; And not many days hence the Son of God shall come in his glory; and his glory shall be the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace, equity, and truth, full of patience, mercy, and long-suffering, quick to hear the cries of his people and to answer their prayers." (Alma 9:25-26). Our Father in Heaven is merciful, and therefore sends servants to plead with man to turn away from evil and come unto Christ. We are all blessed with a probationary period to prepare to meet God. Even so, our days are numbered and our time is limited. We must begin the process of change today.



Coming to Christ through repentance, is the way we receive forgiveness. It is through Him and of Him that we are cleansed. President Faust taught, "Our salvation depends on believing in and accepting the Atonement. Such acceptance requires a continual effort to understand it more fully. The Atonement advances our mortal course of learning by making it possible for our natures to become perfect. All of us have sinned and need to repent to fully pay our part of the debt. When we sincerely repent, the Savior's magnificent Atonement pays the rest of that debt." (General Conference, "The Atonement: Our Greatest Hope", October 2001, James E. Faust). The call to repentance is not just a call to change, but to partake of the redeeming power of Jesus. "President J. Reuben Clark Jr. contributed this valuable insight when he said: 'I feel that [the Savior] will give that punishment which is the very least that our transgression will justify. I believe that he will bring into his justice all of the infinite love and blessing and mercy and kindness and understanding which he has. ...And on the other hand, I believe that when it comes to making the rewards for our good conduct, he will give us the maximum that it is possible to give, having in mind the offense which we have committed.' As Isaiah wrote, if we will return unto the Lord, 'he will abundantly pardon.'" (General Conference, "The Atonement: Our Greatest Hope", October 2001, James E. Faust).

Some aspects of John's mission were quite unique to him. He was indeed Jesus' forerunner. Other aspects of his mission are issued to all latter day saints. The Doctrine and Covenants reads, "Yea, open your mouths and they shall be filled, saying: Repent, repent, and prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;" (Doctrine and Covenants 33:10). In a sense, we are all the forerunners of Jesus' second coming.

- 2- **Kingdom** – The word "Kingdom" is translated from the Greek word "βασιλεία" or "basileia". It means royal power, kingdom, dominion, or rule. It can be used metaphorically to refer to the reign of the Messiah. The Savior himself made reference to the fact that His presence represented the Kingdom of God. "And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." (Luke 10:9).

While sitting in church one Sunday, Bishop Rodier was asked to offer our invocation. I was struck by a request he made in his prayer. He said, "Help us remember who the Kingdom belongs to." (Bishop Rodier). Generally, scriptural references to the kingdom make reference to the Kingdom of God. Edersheim said, "A review of many passages on the subject shows that, in the Jewish mind, the expression 'Kingdom of Heaven' referred, not so much to any particular period, as in general to the Rule of God - as acknowledged, manifested, and eventually perfected. Very often it is the equivalent for personal acknowledgment of God: the taking upon oneself of the 'yoke' of 'the Kingdom,' or of the commandments - the former preceding and conditioning the latter." (Jesus the Messiah, Alfred Edersheim, page 40).

- 3- **heaven** – The word "heaven" is translated from the Greek word "οὐρανός" or "ouranos". It means the vaulted expanse of the sky with all things visible in it. It is used for the universe, the starry heavens, and the clouds above us. It is often used metaphorically to represent the seat of order of things eternal and consummately perfect where God dwells with other heavenly beings. The phrase "kingdom of heaven" conveys the idea of a kingdom foreign to the kingdoms of man. Such a kingdom would be one of higher laws, and free from evil and malice. The righteous of this earth have long since longed for the kingdom of heaven. The Israelites of John's time were waiting for a promised Messiah who would destroy the wicked and establish the kingdom of heaven on earth.

- 4- **is at hand or hand** – In Matthew 3:2, the phrase "is at hand" is translated from the Greek word "ἐγγίζω" or "eggizō". It means to bring near, to join one thing to another, or to approach. In Matthew 3:12 and Luke 3:17, the singular word "hand" is translated from the Greek word "χείρ" or "cheir". It means by the help or agency of any one, or by the means of any one. It is often figuratively applied to God's might, activity, and power. Zondervan defines the biblical use of the hand as follows, "HAND, one of the most frequently used words in Scripture, occurring over 1,600 times. Besides its literal use, it occurs in many figurative senses as well. It very often stands for power, as in Genesis 9:2, 5. 'Into your hand are they delivered' would make nonsense if taken literally; and 'at the hand of every beast will I require it' does not prove that beasts have hands. To 'put one's hand under the thigh' as in Genesis 24:2,9; 47:29 meant to take a solemn oath; to 'put one's hand upon the head' meant blessing, as in Genesis 48:14, and signifies ordination, as in I Timothy 4:14 and II Timothy 1:6. To 'kiss one's own hand' can be a mark of adoration, as in Job 31:27; while to kiss the hand of another is one of the usual marks of respect in the East, though this custom is not mentioned in Scripture. The Hebrew expression 'to consecrate' would be literally 'to fill the hand.'" (The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, Edited by Merrill C. Tenney, page 334).

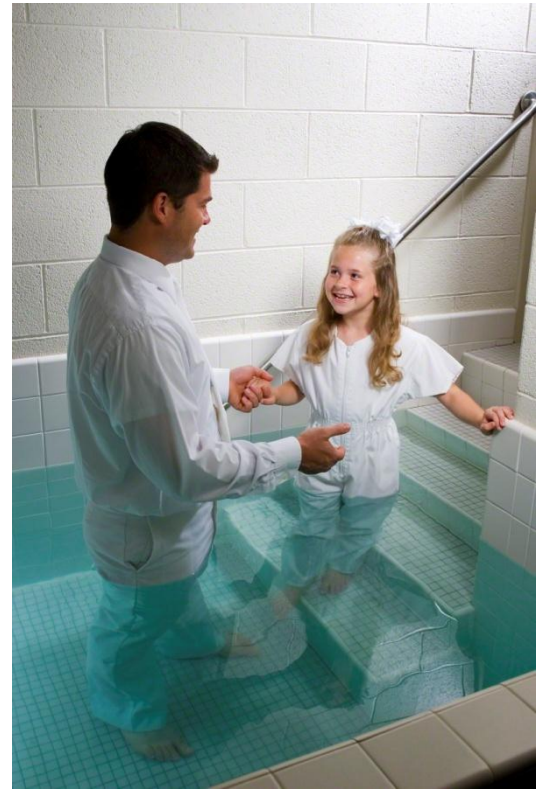


For the purposes of this footnote, the word "hand" or the phrase "is at hand" conveys the idea of nearness or a short time period. It is frequently used in scripture. Joseph Smith recorded, "Wherefore, go forth, crying with a loud voice, saying: The kingdom of heaven is at hand; crying: Hosanna! blessed be the name of the Most High God." (Doctrine and Covenant 39:19). Jesus himself proclaimed, "...Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17). Though the word "hand" is not used, the concept of the salvation of the Lord or the Kingdom of Heaven being near is common to the Old Testament as well. Isaiah wrote, "Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed." (Isaiah 56:1). Albright prefers an alternate translation to this passage. He says, "This section on John begins with a phrase 'Repent - for the kingdom of heaven is fast approaching,' which is used to close the whole section at iv 17 with identical words on the lips of Jesus." (Matthew - A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 28).

- 5- **indeed** – The word "indeed" is translated from the Greek word "μὲν" or "men". It means truly, certainly, surely, or indeed. It is a perfect introduction to a testimony.
- 6- **baptize** – The word "baptism" is translated from the Greek word "βαπτίζω" or "baptizō". It means to dip repeatedly, to immerse, or to submerge. It can also mean to make clean with water, to wash or bath. It can be used metaphorically to be overwhelmed.

Baptism is the gateway to eternal life. It is the first of the saving ordinances required for salvation. Joseph Smith explained to a newspaper editor, **"We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost."** (Article of Faith 4). This clearly places baptism as the first ordinance of the Gospel. It has been so since Adam entered mortality. The Pearl of Great Price teaches that Adam entered the waters of Baptism as the spirit carried him and immersed him in the water. Unfortunately, this ordinance has all but lost itself in the Old Testament record. Edersheim seems to find a glimpse of the ordinance when he wrote, **"May it not rather have been that as, when the first Covenant was made, Moses was directed to prepare Israel by symbolic baptism of their persons and their garments so the initiation of the new Covenant, by which the people were to enter into the Kingdom of God, was preceded by another general symbolic baptism of those who would be the true Israel, and receive or take upon themselves, the Law from God?"** (Jesus the Messiah, Alfred Edersheim, page 41-42). Apparently, the walking below the waters of the Red Sea after the Lord parted it, is seen as a symbol of Israel's baptism.

Many would argue that baptism is a New Testament ordinance and did not exist prior to John. This is not true. It is true that the Old Testament has lost record of the ordinance. Edersheim indicates that the Jews had lost their way by the time of John, and did not fully understand baptism, until John came and once again practiced the ordinance in its restored state. The fact is, John restored that which once existed in the Old Testament. Edersheim's explanation may not be accurate, but it gives us insight into how the Jews might have viewed baptism at the time of John. **"For what John preached, that he also symbolised by a rite which, though not in itself, yet in its application, was wholly new. Hitherto the Law had it, that those who had contracted Levitical defilement were immersed before offering sacrifice. Again, it was prescribed that such Gentiles as became 'proselytes of righteousness,' or 'proselytes of the Covenant,' were to be admitted to full participation in the privileges of Israel by the threefold rites of circumcision, baptism, and sacrifice - the immersion being, as it were, the acknowledgement and symbolic removal of moral defilement, corresponding to that of Levitical uncleanness. But never before had it been proposed that Israel should undergo a 'baptism of repentance,' although there are indications of a deeper insight into the meaning of Levitical baptisms. Was it intended that the hearers of John should give this as evidence of their repentance, that like persons defiled they sought purification, and like strangers they sought admission among the people who took on themselves the Rule of God? These two ideas would, indeed, have made it truly a 'baptism of repentance.' But it seems difficult to suppose that the people would have been prepared for such admissions; or, at least, that there should have been no record of the mode in which a change so deeply spiritual was brought about."** (Jesus the Messiah, Alfred Edersheim, page 41). Unfortunately, the Jews had lost the pure knowledge of the Gospel. Baptism, in its original form and doctrine, was corrupted and misunderstood leading up to John's ministry. John was restoring baptism to its pure state.



The first ordinance restored in the latter days was baptism. John the Baptist appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery on the banks of the Susquehanna River where they were both baptized. The necessity of this ordinance is made plain the Book of Mormon. We read, **"And now, if the Lamb of God, he being holy, should have need to be baptized by water, to fulfil all righteousness, O then, how much more need have we, being unholy, to be baptized, yea, even by water! And now, I would ask of you, my beloved brethren, wherein the Lamb of God did fulfil all righteousness in being baptized by water? Know ye not that he was holy? But notwithstanding he being holy, he showeth unto the children of men that, according to the flesh he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments. Wherefore, after he was baptized with water the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove. And again, it showeth unto the children of men the straitness of the path, and the narrowness of the gate, by which they should enter, he having set the example before them. And he said unto the children of men: Follow thou me. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, can we follow Jesus save we shall be willing to keep the commandments of the Father?"** (2nd Nephi 31:5-10).

Modern day missionaries are called to preach repentance unto baptism. Modern scripture teaches, **"Let them go two by two, and thus let them preach by the way in every congregation, baptizing by water, and the laying on of the hands by the water's side."** (Doctrine & Covenants 52:10). Quinton L. Cook of the Quorum of the twelve apostles visited Versailles, France on 20 November 2014 and spoke to a conference of the Paris, France Mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. My son Jared wrote, Elder Cook taught us that **"Preach my gospel came from the other side of the veil."** to bring people unto Christ. He then **"gave us three scriptures which explain why people"** do not get baptized. He said that among the nations of the world **"god will establish his church in his own due time"**. The scriptures Elder Cook quoted are as follows:

"Yea, I will open the hearts of the people, and they will receive you. And I will establish a church by your hand;" (Doctrine and Covenants 31:7).

"And for this cause have I said: If this generation harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them." (Doctrine and Covenants 10:53).

"And ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect; for mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts;" (Doctrine and Covenants 29:7).

The key to entering the waters of baptism appears to be a soft heart. A person with a soft heart is humble and teachable. To be soft hearted is to be submissive and willing to listen, especially to the spirit.

- 7- **water** – The word "water" is translated from the Greek word "ὑδωρ" or "hydōr". It means water, or any body of water. It can be used figuratively to represent a body of many people. Water is a requirement to sustain our mortal existence. As such, it is also a symbol used in conjunction with the sustaining of eternal life. It symbolizes purity, joy, and cleanliness.
- 8- **repentance** – The word "repentance" is translated from the Greek word "μετάνοια" or "metanoia". It means a change of mind, as it appears to one who repents of a purpose he has formed or of something he has done. It is a submission to God's will over our own. **"John came to call Israel to submit to the Reign of God, about to be manifested in Christ. Hence, on the one hand, he called them to repentance - a 'change of mind' - with all that this implied; and, on the other, pointed them to the Christ, in the exaltation of His Person and Office. Thus the symbolic action by which this preaching was accompanied might be designated 'the baptism of repentance.'"** (Jesus the Messiah, Alfred Edersheim, page 41).

The scriptures are full of passages that reference and clarify the subject of repentance. Repentance is at the core of God's plan for our earthly probation. **"For behold, angels are declaring it unto many at this time in our land; and this is for the purpose of preparing the hearts of the children of men to receive his word at the time of his coming in his glory."** (Alma 13:24). The turning of our hearts towards God is necessary for our progression. We are being beckoned through the circumstances of life to come unto Him. Such progression is only made possible through a trial of faith, and with a freedom of choice. Central to God's plan, is the ability to correct our poor choices. In this manner, we can learn to exercise choice with assurance that all can be made whole should we stumble. Jesus proclaimed, **"For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink—"** (Doctrine and Covenants 19:16-18).

Repentance is so important, that as early saints embarked on missionary service the Lord counseled them to focus their teachings on the subject of repentance. He taught, **"And I command you that you preach naught but repentance, and show not these things unto the world until it is wisdom in me. For they cannot bear meat now, but milk they must receive; wherefore, they must not know these things, lest they perish."** (Doctrine and Covenants 19:21-22). Repentance is the key to eternal progression, and therefore we must be taught and understand the subject so clearly as to make it fundamental to our actions. Joseph Smith recorded, **"And they that believe not unto eternal damnation; for they cannot be redeemed from their spiritual fall, because they repent not;"** (Doctrine and Covenants 29:44).

Repentance naturally brings us to the waters of baptism. As we repent of our sins, and align ourselves with the spirit of God, we find a deep desire to bond with our Father in Heaven. We do this through covenant. We bind ourselves to Him, and he to us, through covenant binding ordinances. The scriptures teach, **"And again, by way of commandment to the church concerning the manner of baptism—All those who humble themselves before God, and desire to be baptized, and come forth with broken hearts and contrite spirits, and witness before the church that they have truly repented of all their sins, and are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end, and truly manifest by their works that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins, shall be received by baptism into his church."** (Doctrine and Covenants 20:27). Repentance to does not result in action, cannot be true change, and therefore should not be considered true repentance.

Once we turn ourselves towards God, in word and deed, we will notice change in the way we think and act towards ourselves and others. Once we truly experience God's mercy, we will begin to extend that same mercy to others. We will have mercy for even our enemies. The Lord explained, **"And again, verily I say unto you, if after thine enemy has come upon thee the first time, he repent and come unto thee praying thy forgiveness, thou shalt forgive him, and shalt hold it no more as a testimony against thine enemy— And so on unto the second and third time; and as oft as thine enemy repenteth of the trespass wherewith he has trespassed against thee, thou shalt forgive him, until seventy times seven. And if he trespass against thee and repent not the first time, nevertheless thou shalt forgive him. And if he trespass against thee the second time, and repent not, nevertheless thou shalt forgive him. And if he trespass against thee the third time, and repent not, thou shalt also forgive him. But if he trespass against thee the fourth time thou shalt not forgive him, but shalt bring these testimonies before the Lord; and they shall not be blotted out until he repent and reward thee four-fold in all things wherewith he has trespassed against thee. And if he do this, thou shalt forgive him with all thine heart; and if he do not this, I, the Lord, will avenge thee of thine enemy an hundred-fold; And upon his children, and upon his children's children of all them that hate me, unto the third and fourth generation. But if the children shall repent, or the children's children, and turn to the Lord their God, with all their hearts and with all their might, mind, and strength, and restore four-fold for all their trespasses wherewith they have trespassed, or wherewith their fathers have trespassed, or their fathers' fathers, then thine indignation shall be turned away;"** (Doctrine and Covenants 98:39-46).

9 - **after** – The word "after" is translated from the Greek word "ὀπίσω" or "opisō". It means back, behind, after or afterwards.

10 - **mightier** – The word "mightier" is translated from the Greek word "ἰσχυρός" or "ischyros". It means strong or mighty. It is sometimes used of one who has strength of soul to sustain the attacks of Satan. It also means strong and therefore exhibiting many excellences. **"Matthew 3:11 has adapted the Marcan formula more explicitly to the theme he erchomenos, 'the One Who Is to Come', of the gospel tradition."** (The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, The Anchor Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 472).

I find it less than happenstance that John is speaking of repentance and baptism and then humbly announces that someone would shortly be coming onto the scene, who was "mightier" than himself. John was undoubtedly seen as a master teacher. He had disciples. He was influential and powerful. He was revered, and by earthly terms would be considered a mighty man. Yet, he was humble and understood where he stood in relation to eternity.

The world looks upon humility as weakness. They see submission and dependence as a disadvantage. Yet the Lord proclaimed, **"The weak things of the world shall come forth and break down the mighty and strong ones, that man should not counsel his fellow man, neither trust in the arm of flesh—"** (Doctrine and Covenants 1:19). John's humility made him mighty, because he found his strength in God rather than man. His strength was placed in He who is mighty to save. The Doctrine and Covenants teaches, **"And he shall say: I am he who spake in righteousness, mighty to save."** (Doctrine and Covenants 133:47). Jesus Christ is mighty to save. He, and only He, can deliver us unto salvation. Like John, we should seek Him. We should look forward to His arrival. **"And it shall come to pass that I, the Lord God, will send one mighty and strong, holding the scepter of power in his hand, clothed with light for a covering, whose mouth shall utter words, eternal words; while his bowels shall be a fountain of truth, to set in order the house of God, and to arrange by lot the inheritances of the saints whose names are found, and the names of their fathers, and of their children, enrolled in the book of the law of God;"** (Doctrine and Covenant 85:7).

When John uttered the words that one "mightier" would soon show himself, this must have amazed his disciples. They respected John, and saw him as a mighty prophet. How could one be mightier, unless it was the Messiah Himself. I would imagine that this could have been confusing to young disciples, but the Messiah had long since be prophesied. The statement is an admission by John as to where he stood relative to the Messiah. It in no way diminishes the fact that he himself was a mighty prophet. Similar prophecies were made in the Book of Mormon regarding Joseph Smith. Jacob taught, **"And there shall rise up one mighty among them, who shall do much good, both in word and in deed, being an instrument in the hands of God, with exceeding faith, to work mighty wonders, and do that thing which is great in the sight of God, unto the bringing to pass much restoration unto the house of Israel, and unto the seed of thy brethren."** (2nd Nephi 3:24).

11 - **shoes** – The word "shoes" is translated from the Greek word "ὑπόδημα" or "hypodēma". It means literally that what is bound under. It is often translated as a sandal or a sole fastened to the foot with thongs. Shoes were considered ritually impure throughout many middle eastern cultures. They contacted the ground and protected one's feet from the world. Symbolically, they were the dirtiest part of one's attire. From a positive view, shoes symbolically protected one from evil. Isaiah taught, **"None shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken:"** (Isaiah 5:27, 2nd Nephi 15:27). Having one's shoe intact and on one's feet was a sign of spiritual worthiness.

The Book of Mormon prophesied of John's statement regarding him not being worthy to loose the Savior's shoes. **"Yea, even he should go forth and cry in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight; for there standeth one among you whom ye know not; and he is mightier than I, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. And much spake my father concerning this thing."** (1st Nephi 10:8). Even so, we must understand that shoe in ancient times were not the same as we might picture today.





Zondervan helps us understand what ancient shoes would have looked like. He wrote, "Shoes and sandals were considered the lowliest articles that went to make up the wearing apparel of the people of Bible Lands (Mark 1:7). In the Bible, and in secular sources, they were mentioned at a very early period, and are seen in considerable variety on the Egyptian, Babylonian, Assyrian, and Persian monuments. A pair of terra cotta shoes, of the modern snow-shoe variety, were found in an Athenian grave of about 900 B.C. Shoes were of soft leather, while sandals were of a harder leather. The sandals were worn for rougher wear. According to some authorities, the sole was of wood, cane, or sometimes bark of the palm tree and was fastened to the leather by nails. They were tied about the feet with thongs, or shoe lachets (Gen. 14:23; Neh. 1:7). It was customary to have two pairs, especially on a journey. Shoes were usually removed at the doorway before entering a home, on approaching God (Exod. 3:5), and during mourning (II Sam. 15:30). Property rights were secured by the seller pulling off his shoe and giving it to the purchaser (Ruth 4:7). The 'clouts' referred to in Josh. 9:5 are patched shoes." (The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, Edited by Merrill C. Tenney, page 227).

One of the lowest, menial jobs in the ancient world was to remove someone's shoes. Even the humblest of disciples would have reserved that job for a lower level servant. "To carry the master's sandals was considered the most menial duty that could be performed. On entering a house the sandals are taken off by a servant, who takes care of them, and brings them again when needed. In India it is customary for a servant to accompany his master when he walks out. If the master desires to walk barefoot on the soft grass or the smooth ground the servant removes the sandals and carries them in his hand. John felt himself unworthy to do for Christ even the meanest work of a servant." (Manners and Custom of the Bible, James M. Freeman, page 333).

12 - worthy – In the books of Matthew, Mark and Luke, the word "worthy" is translated from the Greek word "ἰκανός" or "hikanos". It means to be sufficient, enough, meet or fit. John 1:27 breaks away from the other Gospels and uses the Greek word "ἄξιος" or "axios" for the word "worthy". John's term means weighing, having weight, having the weight of another thing of like value, or worth as much. Brown said, "**worthy. Axios; strangely both Bodmer papyri read 'fit' (hikanos).**" (The Gospel According to John (i-xii), The Anchor Bible, Raymond E. Brown, S.S., page 44). Debatably, 'hikanos' and 'axios' could be used interchangeable.

Being worthy before God is often a difficult question. At what point have I done enough? At what point can I say that I am fit to be called His? When do I measure up to the standards of Heaven? The simple answer is that without the Savior, I will never be fit. I cannot be counted worthy without His grace. Even so, I have a role in obtaining any degree of worthiness. I must exercise my agency. I must choose the Savior, regardless of circumstances, so that His glory can make up for my inadequacies. The Lord taught, "**My people must be tried in all things, that they may be prepared to receive the glory that I have for them, even the glory of Zion; and he that will not bear chastisement is not worthy of my kingdom.**" (Doctrine and Covenants 136:31).

It is interesting that the only way we can be counted worthy is through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, while the path to unworthiness is as divers as one can imagine. King Benjamin taught, "**...I cannot tell you all the things whereby ye may commit sin; for there are divers ways and means, even so many that I cannot number them.**" (Mosiah 4:29). Given the magnitude of temptations in this world and the weaknesses of the flesh, we will surely sin. So, we must work towards our salvation. It means that we must constantly repent. We must be constantly searching for Jesus. The Lord taught, "**He that is slothful shall not be counted worthy to stand, and he that learns not his duty and shows himself not approved shall not be counted worthy to stand. Even so. Amen.**" (Doctrine and Covenants 107:100).

The concept of worthiness is a balance between our proper use of agency, and the Savior's mercy. Worthiness is combination of good choices, and having bad choices washed clean. John counted himself unworthy to be even a servant of the Savior. This should not be taken to mean that John was somehow evil, or not worthy of his call to be a prophet of God. Rather, the phrase is used to contrast John from the Savior. John was a humble man who recognized how great the Savior is, and was not reluctant to declare himself inferior and dependent upon He who is mighty to save.

13 - bear – The word "bear" is translated from the Greek word "βαστάζω" or "bastazō". It means to take up with the hands, to carry or bear. It often takes on the meaning of bearing up something that is burdensome. It can mean to sustain, uphold and support. John did not consider himself an adequate servant to perform or bear even a menial task for the Savior. Even so, John did bear all that was asked of him. He was faithful regardless of how he viewed himself.

We are often called to bear someone's burdens. In fact, part of the baptismal covenant requires that we bear each other's burden. We are surely called to bear our own burdens. "Each of us also carries a load. Our individual load is comprised of demands and opportunities, obligations and privileges, afflictions and blessings, and options and constraints. Two guiding questions can be helpful as we periodically and prayerfully assess our load: "Is the load I am carrying producing the spiritual traction that will enable me to press forward with faith in Christ on the strait and narrow path and avoid getting stuck? Is the load I am carrying creating sufficient spiritual traction so I ultimately can return home to Heavenly Father? Sometimes we mistakenly may believe that happiness is the absence of a load. But bearing a load is a necessary and essential part of the plan of happiness. Because our individual load needs to generate spiritual traction, we should be careful to not haul around in our lives so many nice but unnecessary things that we are distracted and diverted from the things that truly matter most." (General Conference, "Bear Up Their Burdens with Ease", April 2014, David A. Bednar). We can be assured that the Lord will not allow us to fail when we bear up that which He asks of us. The Book of Mormon teaches, "**...bear with patience thine afflictions, and I will give unto you success.**" (Alma 26:27).

We learn through scripture that the Lord will only bear our disobedience for so long. The Book of Jeremiah teaches, "**So that the Lord could no longer bear, because of the evil of your doings, and because of the abominations which ye have committed; therefore is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant, as at this day.**" (Jeremiah 44:22). The Lord often responds to our disobedience by placing firm consequences upon our shoulders. This often causes us to shrink, and groan under the weight. Such consequences are design to bring us back to an attitude of obedience. Oddly enough, some of the burden we bear are designed to bring to pass a positive result. Some of our burdens are self inflicted, to which the Lord said, "**And go ye out from among the wicked. Save yourselves. Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord. Even so. Amen.**" (Doctrine and Covenants 38:42).

John bore the burden placed on him for the cause of righteousness, not because he was actually unworthy. The Lord had a vital work to do here on earth during His mortal ministry and needed John to bear the burden of his calling. John faithfully did so.

14 - Holy Ghost – The word "Holy" is translated from the Greek word "ἅγιος" or "hagios". It means a most holy thing or a saint. The word "Ghost" is translated from the Greek word "πνεῦμα" or "pneuma". It means the spirit, or the principle being by which the body is animated. The two words together, "Holy" and "Ghost", refer to the third member of the Godhead.

The Holy Ghost is perhaps the most misunderstood member of the Godhead. We know nothing of his pre-earth role. There is no record as to how he became the Holy Ghost, or his relationship to the Father and the Son. Bruce R. McConkie says in Mormon Doctrine regarding the Holy Ghost, "**In this dispensation, at least, nothing has been revealed as to his origin or destiny; expressions on these matters are both speculative and fruitless. But because of this lack of revelation, is it not a 'safe' area of speculation?**"

So what do we know? We know that spiritual death resulted in the need for the Holy Ghost. Fallen man needed a guide, and testifier of truth in order to find the path back to God. Being cut off from God required spiritual guidance, and that is the function of this third member of the Godhead. In this role, the Holy Ghost could not have a physical body and perform His essential duties. Modern day revelation records, **"The Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us."** (Doctrine and Covenants 130:22). Whether or not he eventually receives a physical body is unknown.

So how does the Holy Ghost do his job? **"When a man has the manifestation from the Holy Ghost, it leaves an indelible impression on his soul, one that is not easily erased. It is Spirit speaking to spirit, and it comes with convincing force. A manifestation of an angel, or even of the Son of God himself, would impress the eye and mind, and eventually become dimmed, but the impressions of the Holy Ghost sink deeper into the soul and are more difficult to erase"** (Answers to Gospel Questions, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith Jr., 5 vols. [1957–66], 2:151). So how does the Holy Ghost differ from one's conscience or the light of Christ? **"Elder Lorenzo Snow spoke of this light when he said, "Everybody has the Spirit of God" (in Journal of Discourses, 14:304). The Light of Christ enlightens and gives understanding to all men (see D&C 88:11). In contrast, a manifestation of the Holy Ghost is more focused. This manifestation is given to acquaint sincere seekers with the truth about the Lord and his gospel."** (General Conference, "Always have His Spirit", Dallin H. Oaks, October 1996). The Holy Ghost can manifest himself to any and all seekers of the truth, however such manifestations are temporary unless one receives the gift of the Holy Ghost through divine ordinance. **"President Wilford Woodruff called the gift of the Holy Ghost the greatest gift we can receive in mortality (see The Discourses of Wilford Woodruff, ed. G. Homer Durham [1990], 5). Unfortunately, the great value of that gift and the important conditions for its fulfillment are not well understood. Nephi prophesied that in the last days churches would be built up that would "teach with their learning, and deny the Holy Ghost, which giveth utterance" (2 Nephi 28:4). He also pronounced "wo" upon "him that hearkeneth unto the precepts of men, and denieth the power of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost!" (2 Nephi 28:26)." (General Conference, "Always have His Spirit", Dallin H. Oaks, October 1996). The Gift of the Holy Ghost, can be a constant and unfailing companion once received by covenant; however, like any covenant it is dependent on the receivers faithfulness in keeping the promises associated with the covenant.**

- 15- **fire** – The word "fire" is translated from the Greek word "πῦρ" or "pyr". It means literally fire. Like water, fire is a symbol of purification. While water washes impurities away, fire is far more effective in fully destroying impurities. This is the contrast we find, water represents our covenant with God to repent and seek forgiveness. Fire represents the Lord sending the Holy Ghost to actually remove those sins. Hence, the Holy Ghost is often referred to as the baptism by fire. The Lord taught Joseph Smith, **"And of tenets thou shalt not talk, but thou shalt declare repentance and faith on the Savior, and remission of sins by baptism, and by fire, yea, even the Holy Ghost."** (Doctrine & Covenants 19:31). The Joseph Smith translation of Mark records, **"... but he shall not only baptize you with water, but with fire, and the Holy Ghost."** (Joseph Smith Translation of Mark 1:6). The Holy Ghost is the refining and purifying agent that cleanses us from sin in the repentance process. This is why baptism is not complete without the gift of the Holy Ghost. It is the Holy Ghost that actually removes our sins.

The earth was symbolically baptized by water at the time of Noah's flood. Similarly, it shall be baptized by fire at the second coming of the Messiah. At that time, the scripture say, **"...he that liveth in righteousness shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye, and the earth shall pass away so as by fire."** (Doctrine & Covenants 43:32). Just like the Holy Ghost removes our sins, fire shall remove the wicked from the earth. The Lord proclaimed, **"While the tares shall be bound in bundles, and their bands made strong, that they may be burned with unquenchable fire."** (Doctrine & Covenants 101:66). He said elsewhere, **"I have sworn in my wrath, and decreed wars upon the face of the earth, and the wicked shall slay the wicked, and fear shall come upon every man; And the saints also shall hardly escape; nevertheless, I, the Lord, am with them, and will come down in heaven from the presence of my Father and consume the wicked with unquenchable fire."** (Doctrine & Covenants 63:33-34).



The work of the Holy Ghost is often compared to the refining of precious metals such as gold or silver. When precious metal ore is mined, it must have the impurities removed to the extent that pure metal is the desired outcome. This is done by fire. Not any fire will do. Only extreme heat will be sufficient to do the job. The metal must be heated hot enough to liquefy the ore. For gold, this occurs when the fire brings the ore to a temperature of 1947.52 degrees Fahrenheit. The melted ore is then poured into a mold. Since it has been through the refiners fire, it is now moldable. The impurities will naturally float to the top. As the metal cools, the impurities will harden along with the gold. The impurities are called dross or slag. The dross is removed, and the molded precious metal is then dipped in nitric acid to remove and residual dross on the surface. The Holy Ghost follows a similar process in removing sin that has a dramatic symbolic relationship to the refining of gold. The Holy Ghost helps us identify and separate the impurities from our soul. As we separate our dross or sins, from our souls, it is then possible to shed them from our lives. Without fire, it would be very difficult to separate dross, if not impossible. Similarly, without the Holy Ghost it would be impossible to separate our sins and remove them. He is the refiner and the purifier.

Perhaps the fact that the Holy Ghost is the key tool used to purifying ourselves from sin is the reason why the sin against the Holy Ghost is unforgivable. By casting the Holy Ghost aside, we are residing ourselves to live eternally in our sins. Joseph Smith said, **"Hear it, all ye ends of the earth—all ye priests, all ye sinners, and all men. Repent! repent! Obey the Gospel. Turn to God; for your religion won't save you, and you will be damned. I do not say how long. There have been remarks made concerning all men being redeemed from hell; but I say that those who sin against the Holy Ghost cannot be forgiven in this world or in the world to come; they shall die the second death. Those who commit the unpardonable sin are doomed to Gnom—**to dwell in hell, worlds without end. As they concoct scenes of bloodshed in this world, so they shall rise to that resurrection which is as the lake of fire and brimstone. Some shall rise to the everlasting burnings of God; for God dwells in everlasting burnings, and some shall rise to the damnation of their own filthiness, which is as exquisite a torment as the lake of fire and brimstone.**" (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, page 361).**

The scriptures contain several passages that refer to everlasting burnings. These references point to the symbol of fire. It is commonly used in two ways. It is used in a negative sense when referring to the wicked. The wicked shall suffer in everlasting burnings. Alma testified, **"Nevertheless, after wading through much tribulation, repenting nigh unto death, the Lord in mercy hath seen fit to snatch me out of an everlasting burning, and I am born of God."** (Mosiah 27:28). Moses wrote, **"For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God."** (Deuteronomy 4:24). When speaking of everlasting burning, it implies an eternal torment that the wicked will experience because of the sins that they refused to shed. Everlasting burnings is used in a positive sense when referring to the righteous. **"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."** (Isaiah 43:2). The righteous will be purified through the atonement, and consequently will stand confident before the Lord at His coming. **"But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:"** (Malachi 3:2).



The answer to Malachi is the righteous shall abide. They shall stand in everlasting burnings with joy and confidence.

The symbol of fire can be a good symbol or a bad symbol according to your standing. Moses described God as a "consuming fire" (Deuteronomy 4:24), his glory consuming everything corrupt and unholy (Doctrine and Covenants 63:34;101:23-24). The Prophet Joseph Smith explained, "God Almighty Himself dwells in eternal fire; flesh and blood cannot go there, for all corruption is devoured by the fire," but a resurrected being, "flesh and bones quickened by the Spirit of God," can (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pages 326, 367; cf. Luke 24:36-43; 1 Corinthians 15:50). Heaven, not hell, is the realm of everlasting burnings, a view contrasting with the popular conception of hell as a place of fire, brimstone, and searing heat. Heat is a characteristic of God's glory (Doctrine and Covenants 133:41-44). Isaiah wrote, "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Isaiah 33:14).

- 16 - **fan** – The word "fan" is translated from the Greek word "πτύον" or "ptyon". It means a winnowing shovel. "FAN (Heb. mizreh, winnowing fan), a fork with two or more prongs used to throw grain into the air after it had been threshed, so that the chaff might be blown away. The work was done toward evening and at night when a wind came in from the sea and carried away the light chaff. Sometimes a shovel was used for the same purpose." (The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, Edited by Merrill C. Tenney, page 276). Such practices are foreign to us of the modern era. The ancient world was an agricultural based society, without mechanical options for harvest and cultivating of crops. "The grain in the East is threshed in the open air by being trampled under the feet of oxen or horses, or by means of instruments... By these processes the straw becomes very much broken; and, to separate the grain from the hulls and straw the mingled mass is thrown against the wind by means of a wooden shovel, or else a wooden fork, having sometimes two prongs and sometimes three, and a handle three or four feet long...It is usually employed in the evening...The wind carries the chaff away, while the grain falls to the ground. The grain is sometimes sifted after the winnowing...The chaff is burned and the grain is stored, either in subterranean granaries or in barns." (The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, The Anchor Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 333-334).



The Lord often uses cultural symbols that are familiar to the people He is teaching. When the symbols are familiar, the teaching becomes powerful. Our challenge is to understand the ancient symbols so that they become powerful in a modern age. Speaking of the symbolic meaning of the fan, Fitzmyer said, "His winnowing-fan. A fork-like shovel, used to 'fan' or toss threshed grain to the wind to separate the light chaff from the heavy kernels, which would fall to the ground in a heap. Cf. Isa. 30:24. It is used here as an eschatological image of the sorting out of human beings according to their worth, to accomplished by him who is the more powerful one." (The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, The Anchor Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 474). This definition helps us understand passages like the one found in the Book of Jeremiah. The prophet wrote, "And will send unto Babylon fanners, that shall fan her, and shall empty her land: for in the day of trouble they shall be against her round about." (Jeremiah 51:2).

We should understand that the Lord is fanning His children today. This is being done in preparation for the great and dreadful day of the Lord. In speaking of a winnowing fan, the LDS Bible Dictionary records, "A winnowing fan, a great fork with which grain was thrown up against the wind to separate it from the chaff. John made use of this procedure in a symbolic reference to the coming judgment to be exercised by the Messiah (Luke 3:17)." (LDS Bible Dictionary, "Fan").

- 17 - **thoroughly** – The word "thoroughly" is translated from the Greek word "διακαθαρίζω" or "diakatharizō". It means to cleanse thoroughly. The translators chose to translate the Greek word used in Matthew 3:12 as "thoroughly purge".

- 18 - **purge** – This word is derived in connection with the word thoroughly in footnote #17. The word 'purge' means to clear out, empty, or cleanse thoroughly.

The word "purge" is used scripturally in association with the purification of metal ore, and symbolically representing the removal of sins. Isaiah quoted the Lord when he said, "And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin:" (Isaiah 1:25). The Lord's goal for his children is to remove their dross. Paul wrote to the Hebrews about the concept of purging. He said, "For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins." (Hebrews 10:2). To the saints of the latter days, the Lord said, "Purge ye out the iniquity which is among you; sanctify yourselves before me;" (Doctrine and Covenants 43:11).



How will the Lord purge sin from His children? Typically, the Lord does so via trial and chastening. As we feel the consequence for our sinful choices, we often make choices to repent and come unto the Lord. The consequences of sin are unpleasant and burdensome. Speaking of this chastening, Isaiah draws upon the imagery of purging the threshing floor. He said, "For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod." (Isaiah 28:27). He also said, "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin; when he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder, the groves and images shall not stand up." (Isaiah 27:9).

We can choose to purge ourselves from sin without chastening. This is a much more pleasant process. It also brings a distinct set of blessings as the Lord recognizes the willing surrender of our choices. It is better to submit through our own awareness of our potential than to wait for the Lord to apply corrective measures.

19 - floor – The word "floor" is translated from the Greek word "ἄλωνα" or "halōn". It means a ground plot or threshing floor, i.e. a place in the field made hard after the harvest by a roller, where grain was threshed out. Zondervan defines a threshing floor as follows; **"THRESHING FLOOR (Heb. goren, Gr. halon), the place where grain was threshed. Usually clay soil was packed to a hard smooth surface. Sheaves of grain were spread on the floor and trampled by oxen which usually drew crude wooden sleds with notched rims (Deut. 25:4; Isa. 28:27; I Cor. 9:9). A shovel and fan were used in winnowing the grain (Isa. 30:24). Since robbers would visit the floor at threshing time (I Sam. 23:1), the laborers slept there (Ruth 3:4-7). Threshing floors were often on hills where the night winds could more easily blow away the chaff."** (The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, Edited by Merrill C. Tenney, page 850).



20 - gather– The word "gather" is translated from the Greek word "συνάγω" or "synagō". It means to gather together, collect, assemble, or meet. The word gathering has significant meaning to the Lord's Kingdom. He has promised, that before His coming, He would gather in His children. His children are defined as those who have entered into covenants with Him. Those He will gather unto himself. In speaking of the gathering at the threshing floor, we should recognize the symbols. **"The heaped up heavy kernels of grain symbolizes the persons who will be saved by the judge who is to come. His discrimination is expressed by two infinitives, 'to clean up' and 'to store'."** (The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, The Anchor Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 475). Elder McConkie further clarifies the symbols by saying, **"Christ is the great Judge. He shall reap the earth and harvest the ripened sheaves. With the winnowing fan of Judgment, he shall separate the wicked chaff from the righteous wheat, gathering the wheat into the celestial garner and burning the chaff in the depths of hell; his threshing-floor is the whole earth."** (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1, Bruce R. McConkie, page 121).



Gathering is a multidimensional function. The Lord of the Harvest will gather His children, but His children are also expected to gather themselves unto Him. The Old Testament proverb teaches, **"He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame."** (Proverbs 10:5). In other words, today is the day to prepare to meet God. We must not wait, but gather to Him, immediately. Additionally, once we have gathered ourselves to the Lord, we must join with Him in the work of gathering. The Gospel writer Matthew recorded, **"He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."** (Matthew 12:30). If we wait to gather, we risk being gathered with the tares or those who have chosen wickedness over righteousness. Those in this category will be gathered by the angels of heaven with the intent of purging the earth. Joseph Smith recorded in modern scripture, **"Which causeth silence to reign, and all eternity is pained, and the angels are waiting the great command to reap down the earth, to gather the tares that they may be burned; and, behold, the enemy is combined."** (Doctrine and Covenants 38:12).

The gathering of those who enter into the covenants of heaven is fulfillment of the promise God made with Abraham. The Book of Mormon testifies, **"And it shall come to pass that my people, which are of the house of Israel, shall be gathered home unto the lands of their possessions; and my word also shall be gathered in one. And I will show unto them that fight against my word and against my people, who are of the house of Israel, that I am God, and that I covenanted with Abraham that I would remember his seed forever."** (2nd Nephi 29:14). Once we enter into the covenants Abraham made with God, we become the sons and daughters of Abraham and adopted into the house of Israel. We also become the sons and daughters of Jehovah. He becomes our shepherd, and we are His flock. The Good Shepherd lives to gather His sheep. **"He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."** (Isaiah 40:11).

21 - wheat – The word "wheat" is translated from the Greek word "σῖτος" or "sitos". It means wheat or grain in general. Grain and wheat were a staple of living in ancient Israel. **"Wheat, Triticum compositum L. (Heb. hittáh), the most common cereal grain. This is the wheat of Joseph's time which bore seven ears in one stalk (Gen. 41:22). Wheat was planted in the winter by the Hebrews. Today as in the time of Jesus, certain varieties of wheat may yield 60 or even 100 grains per head (Matt.13:3-8). The heads roasted over fire constituted the parch corn of the Old Testament (Lev. 23:14; Ruth 2:14; I Sam. 17:17 and 25:18)."** (The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, Edited by Merrill C. Tenney, page 669). Wheat and grain symbolize the blessings of heaven, righteousness, righteous men, and life itself. When God bestowed blessings in the ancient world they often went something like the words of Joel, **"And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil."** (Joel 2:24). On the other hand, wickedness was often associated with the loss of grain and crops. The Savior taught a parable to this end and said, **"But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way."** (Matthew 13:25).

The prophets often spoke in terms of agriculture and wheat because the people could easily relate to it. Unfortunately, our society does not readily understand these symbols. Jeremiah recorded, **"The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord."** (Jeremiah 23:28). It would probably be prudent to take a deeper look into the farming of grain in the ancient world.

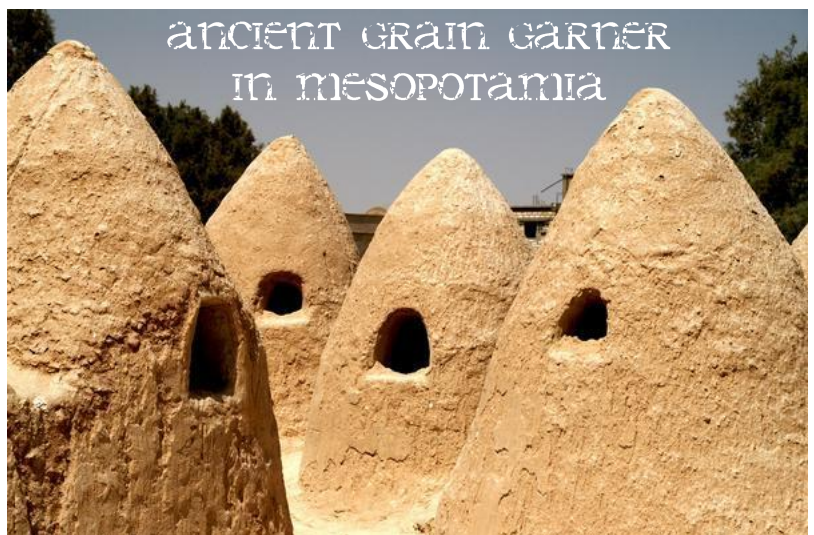
"The soil of Palestine was generally fertile. Fertilizing was almost unknown. To maintain the fertility of the land, the law required that farms, vineyards, and olive orchards were to lie fallow in the seventh year (Exodus 23:10). On the year of jubilee those who had lost their ancestral estates recovered possession of them. Terracing was necessary to make use of soil on the hillsides. Irrigation was not required, since there was usually sufficient rainfall. Plowing to prepare the land for sowing was done in autumn, when the early rains softened the ground that had become stone hard in the summer sun. This was done with a crude wooden plough drawn by oxen; or, if the soil was thin, with a mattock. With such implements the surface of the ground was hardly more than scratched - perhaps three or four inches. Little harrowing was done, and was probably unknown in Palestine in early times. The summer grain was sown between the end of January and the end of February. Usually the seed was scattered broadcast from a basket, but careful farmers put it in furrow rows (Isaiah 28:25). Between sowing and reaping the crops were exposed to several dangers: the failure of the latter rain, which came in March and April: the hot, drying easterly winds that often came in March and April (Genesis 41:6); hailstorms (Haggai 2:17); various kinds of pestiferous weeds like tares and thorns (Jeremiah 12:13; Matthew 13:7, 25); injurious insects, especially the palmer-worm, the canker-worm, the caterpillar, and the locust (Amos 7:2); the thefts of crows and sparrows (Matthew 13:4); and fungus diseases, especially mildew (Deuteronomy 28:22). As the harvest season approached, particularly valuable crops were protected by watchmen (Jeremiah 4:17); but the law permitted a hungry person to pick grain in passing by (Deuteronomy 23:25; Matthew 12:1). The time of harvest varied somewhat according to the climatic condition of each region, but usually began about the middle of April with the coming of the dry season. Barley was the first grain to be cut, and this was followed a few weeks later the wheat. The grain harvest generally lasted about seven weeks, from Passover to Pentecost. Whole families moved out of their village homes to live in the fields until the harvest was over. The grain was cut with a sickle and laid in swaths behind the reaper. It was then bound into sheaves and gathered into shocks (Exodus 22:6). In the interests of the poor, the law forbade a field to be harvested to its limits. The grain was threshed in the open air, a custom made possible because the harvest season was free from rain (1 Samuel 21:16 ff.). During the threshing-time the grain was guarded by harvesters who spent the nights upon the threshing floor (Ruth 3:6). The threshing floor was constructed in an exposed position in the fields, preferably on a slight elevation, so as to get the full benefit of the winds. It consisted of a circular area 25 or 40 feet in diameter, sloping slightly upward at the edges, and was usually surrounded with a border of stones so as to keep in the grain. The floor was level and rolled hard. The sheaves of grain, brought in from the fields on the backs of men and animals, were heaped in the center. From this heap, sheaves were spread out on the floor, and then either several animals tied abreast were driven round and round the floor, or two oxen were yoked together



to a threshing machine, which they dragged in a circular path over the grain until the kernels of grain were separated from the stalks. The threshing machines were of two kinds, a board with the bottom studded with small stones or nails, or a kind of threshing wagon. While this was going on, the partly threshed grain was turned over with a fork. After that the grain was winnowed by tossing the grain and chaff into the air with a wooden fork or shovel so that the wind might blow away the chaff. This was usually done at night, to take advantage of the night breezes. the chaff was either burned or left to be scattered by the winds. The grain was then sifted with a sieve to remove stones and other impurities, and collected into pits or barns (Luke 12:18)." (The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, Edited by Merrill C. Tenney, page 277-278).

22 - garner – The word "garner" is translated from the Greek word "ἀποθήκη" or "apothēkē". It is a place in which anything is laid by or up. It is a storehouse or a granary. Symbolically, a gathering of God's children, which is symbolized by a harvest, is always gathered to the garner to protect the righteous grain or people. In the Book of Mormon God teaches, "**Behold, the field was ripe, and blessed are ye, for ye did thrust in the sickle, and did reap with your might, yea, all the day long did ye labor; and behold the number of your sheaves! And they shall be gathered into the garners, that they are not wasted.**" (Alma 26:5). Anciently, garners took on different forms. Some resembled cisterns, while others looked like silos. The silos had spires that seemed to reach towards heaven. They offered protection from the dangers of the world. They were typically cooler inside than the surrounding environment. They protected the internal content from insects, rodents, thieves and disease. The symbolism is fascinating. The garner symbolizes the temple of God.

Elder Bednar taught that garners symbolize temples. He said, "**The Prophet Joseph Smith declared that in all ages the divine purpose of gathering the people of God is to build temples so His children can receive the highest ordinances and thereby gain eternal life** (see Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith [Melchizedek Priesthood and Relief Society course of study, 2007], 415–17). This essential relationship between the principle of gathering and the building of temples is highlighted in the Book of Mormon: '**Behold, the field was ripe, and blessed are ye, for ye did thrust in the sickle, and did reap with your might, yea, all the day long did ye labor; and behold the number of your sheaves! And they shall be gathered into the garners, that they are not wasted**' (Alma 26:5). The sheaves in this analogy represent newly baptized members of the Church. The garners are the holy temples. Elder Neal A. Maxwell explained: "Clearly, when we baptize, our eyes should gaze

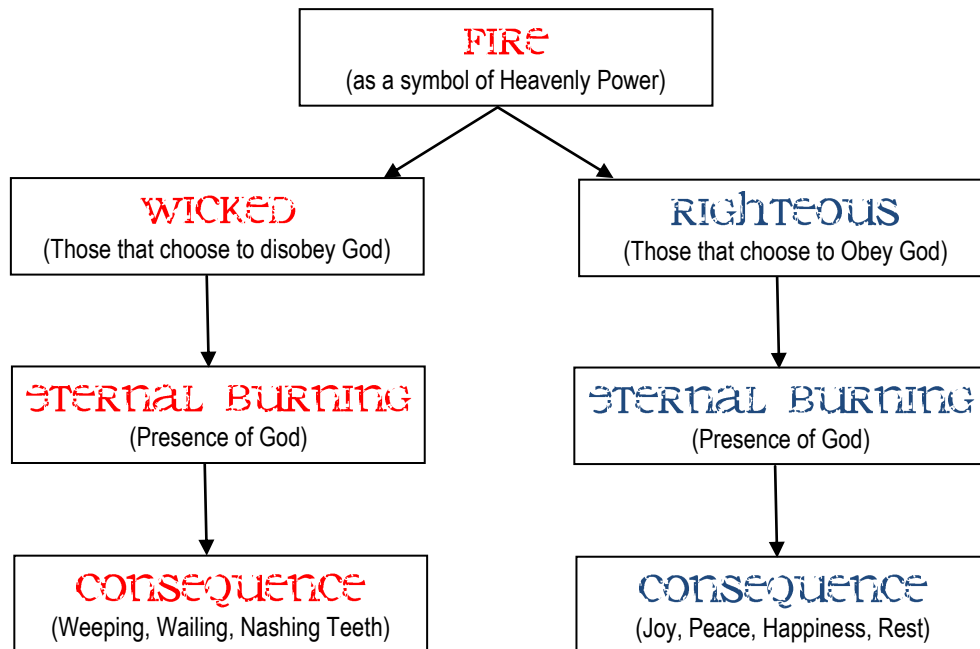


beyond the baptismal font to the holy temple. **The great garner into which the sheaves should be gathered is the holy temple**" (in John L. Hart, "Make Calling Focus of Your Mission," Church News, Sept. 17, 1994, 4). This instruction clarifies and emphasizes the importance of sacred temple ordinances and covenants—that the sheaves may not be wasted." (General Conference, "Honorably Hold a Name and Standing", April 2009, David A. Bednar).

23 - burn – The word "burn" is translated from the Greek word "κατακαίω" or "katakaio". It means to burn up or consume by fire. Much of the symbolism associated with the word burn is the same as fire, see footnote #15. Using the word "burn", adds some significant associations within Judaism. Part of the ancient Israelite Temple rite was burnt offerings. When an Israelite found the need for forgiveness, burnt offering was a key element in the process. When one had committed a sin, the expected elements of the repentance process were to be followed. They included humility, confession, restitution, and prayer. In addition, one was required to offer a burnt offering at the temple. The offerings are diverse and complex; but several elements need to be mentioned. The sinner would acquire a sacrificial animal as described by the law. The animal was to be ceremonial clean, without blemish, and the firstborn. The animal was to be free of disease and defect, as well as never having had a broken bone. The animal was brought to the priest who would lay his hands upon the animals head and set it apart as a sacrifice for the offeror's sins. The animal was then ceremonially killed for an atonement. The animal was then laid upon the altar of burnt offering where the flesh was burned with fire. The burning consumed the impurities of the flesh, and it was fit to be consumed by the worthy priesthood.



The burning of the chaff brings similar symbolic meanings as the burnt offerings. The chaff symbolizes the part of the wheat that was of no worth. It is those that deny the things of God, and worship the things of this world. The burning removes the wicked, the sin, the unrighteous, and all things that are not worthy to be in God's presence. Interestingly, fire is positive to the righteous and scary to the wicked. It purifies the one and destroys the other.



24 - chaff – The word "chaff" is translated from the Greek word "ἀχυρον" or "achyron". It is a stalk of grain from which the kernels have been beaten out, or chaff. We might call it straw or hay. Symbolically, it represents that which is worthless or trash. This explains the Lord warning to the wicked in the Book of Mormon. The scripture reads, **"Therefore, as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, their root shall be rottenness, and their blossoms shall go up as dust; because they have cast away the law of the Lord of Hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel."** (2nd Nephi 15:24).



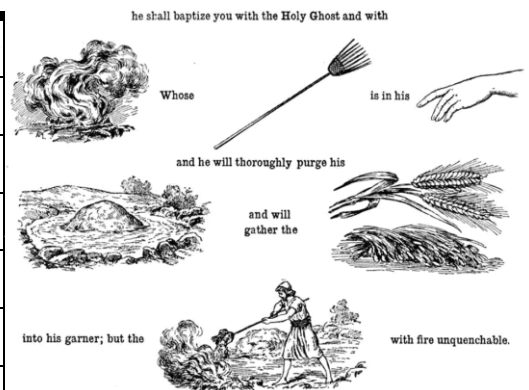
The Lord uses consequences to prevent our utter destruction. He wants us to plant righteous seeds, and harvest worthy grain. He works for our salvation not our destruction. **"For behold, the Lord hath said: I will not succor my people in the day of their transgression; but I will hedge up their ways that they prosper not; and their doings shall be as a stumbling block before them. And again, he saith: If my people shall sow filthiness they shall reap the chaff thereof in the whirlwind; and the effect thereof is poison. And again he saith: If my people shall sow filthiness they shall reap the east wind, which bringeth immediate destruction."** (Mosiah 7:29-31). Our merciful Lord has planned for our failures. He has given us opportunity, even many opportunities, to change and free ourselves from eventual destruction. **"Wicked men do not suffer the full torments of unquenchable fire until they are cast into spirit prison**

which is hell; and the earth itself will not be burned until the Second Coming, the great and dreadful day, the day of burning and desolation." (The Doctrine New Testament Commentary, Volume 1, Bruce R. McConkie, page 122). Even so, we are warned. We must not be the chaff of the earth. We must produce the fruits of repentance.

- 25 - **unquenchable** – The word "unquenchable" is translated from the Greek word "ἀσβεστος" or "asbestos". It means unquenched or unquenchable. It is often used to represent the eternal hell fire to punish the damned. It is a guilt that cannot be shed. It comes by refusing to repent during the days of one's probation. **"Therefore if that man repenteth not, and remaineth and dieth an enemy to God, the demands of divine justice do awaken his immortal soul to a lively sense of his own guilt, which doth cause him to shrink from the presence of the Lord, and doth fill his breast with guilt, and pain, and anguish, which is like an unquenchable fire, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever."** (Mosiah 2:38). Once we have rejected the Savior's mercy, we are left with divine and eternal justice, which must be satisfied. **"And according to the power of justice, for justice cannot be denied, ye must go away into that lake of fire and brimstone, whose flames are unquenchable, and whose smoke ascendeth up forever and ever, which lake of fire and brimstone is endless torment."** (Jacob 6:10). Once we have committed our eternal fate, by repeated choices that violate God's law, justice will bind us. **"While the tares shall be bound in bundles, and their bands made strong, that they may be burned with unquenchable fire."** (Doctrine and Covenants 101:66)
- 26 - **exhortations** – The word "exhortations" is translated from the Greek word "παρακαλέω" or "parakaleō". The word means to call to one's side, to call for or to summon. It is to admonish, beseech, or beg one to listen. It is meant to instruct, comfort, or exhort. Latter day revelation directs us to exhort with specific goals in mind. **"Therefore, strengthen your brethren in all your conversation, in all your prayers, in all your exhortations, and in all your doings."** (Doctrine and Covenants 108:7).

This is a good place to give a summary of terms associated with this chapter and their possible symbolic meanings;

SYMBOL	MEANING
harvest	Symbolizes the Lord gathering in the righteous. It represents the end of our mortal probation.
WINNOWING FORK / Fan	Symbolizes cleansing and the removal of sin. It represents the separating of the wicked from the righteous.
THRASHING FLOOR	Symbolizes man's mortal probation. The period of time where man is free to choose good or evil. The world or mortality.
wheat / KERNELS	Symbolizes the true believer, legitimacy, or God's word. Represents those that have made and kept covenants with God.
chaff	Symbolizes the wicked or those unworthy of God's grace.
TARES	Symbolizes wicked men who work against God's plan for man. They are our mortal enemies.
THRASHING	Symbolizes the earthly trials that either perfect or condemn man.
SICKLE	Symbolizes the harvest, or the bringing of man to judgment. It is the tool that God uses to bring men, both good and bad, before
LABORER	Symbolizes any servant of the Jesus Christ; a missionary, or anyone called to do his will.
enemy	Satan, or anyone acting on his behalf. The enemy is anyone that would place your salvation in jeopardy.
FIELD	The earth and all the inhabitants thereof.
white	Symbolizes purity, cleanliness, and righteousness.
PURGE	Symbolizes the process of purification and the removal of sin.
SIFT	The process of removing our imperfections.
EVENING	Symbolizes the end of man's earthly probation
FIRE	Symbolizes the process of perfection or destruction. It is the process of removing impurities and destroying them.
WIND	Symbolizes the Holy Ghost, and the purifying powers thereof
GATHER	The great work of teaching the world, and finding the elect of God who embrace his law. It is bringing souls to the Temple.
GARNER	Symbolizes the Presence of God, or the Holy Temple



- 27 - **preached** – The word "preached" is translated from the Greek word "κηρύσσω" or "kēryssō". It means to be a herald, or officiate as a herald. It means to publish or proclaim publically. Luke 3:18 translated the word preached from the Greek word "εὐαγγελίζω" or "euaggelizō". It means to proclaim good news or announce glad tidings. Elder Talmage wrote, **"The spirit of his demands was that of a practical religion, the only religion of any possible worth--the religion of right living. With all his vigor, in spite of his brusqueness, notwithstanding his forceful assaults on the degenerate customs of the times, this John was no agitator against established institutions, no inciter of**

riot, no advocate of revolt, no promoter of rebellion. He did not assail the tax system but the extortions of the corrupt and avaricious publicans; he did not denounce the army, but the iniquities of the soldiers, many of whom had taken advantage of their position to bear false witness for the sake of gain and to enrich themselves by forcible seizure. He preached, what in the now current dispensation we call the first or fundamental principles of the gospel--"the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," comprizing faith, which is vitalized belief, in God; genuine repentance, which comprizes contrition for past offenses and a resolute determination to turn from sin; baptism by immersion in water at his hands as the hands of one having authority; and the higher baptism by fire or the bestowal of the Holy Ghost by an authority greater than that possessed by himself. His preaching was positive, and in many respects opposed to the conventions of the times; he made no appeal to the people through the medium of miraculous manifestations; and though many of his hearers attached themselves to him as disciples, he established no formal organization, nor did he attempt to form a cult. His demand for repentance was an individual call, as unto each acceptable applicant the rite of baptism was individually administered." (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 116).

- 28 - **latchet** – The word "latchet" is translated from the Greek word "ἰμάς" or "himas". It is a thong or tie was the means by which sandals were fastened to the feet. **"To unfasten the sandal-strap was the task of a slave, forbidden by the rabbis in later rabbinical tradition as a service to be done by a disciple for his master. The image that John uses thus emphasizes his lowly rank in relation to Jesus, the more powerful one."** (The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, The Anchor Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 473).

The fastening of the sandal to one's feet was a symbol of preparation and readiness. The prophet Isaiah wrote, **"None shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken:"** (Isaiah 5:27, 2nd Nephi 15:27).

- 29 - **stoop** – The word "stoop" is translated from the Greek word "κύπτω" or "kypō". It means to stoop down, bend forward, or to bow the head. This posture was a sign of humility and submission.

- 30 - **down** – The word "down" was translated as part of a phrase derived from the Greek word in footnote #29.

- 31 - **unloose** – The word "unloose" is translated from the Greek word "λύω" or "lyō". It means to loose or free any person or thing that is tied or fastened. The verbiage of the New Testament translation in the King James Version would lead one to believe that there was a buckle or latchet on the ancient sandals. This was highly unlikely that there were any such accessories on ancient footwear. Based on the information we have available to us today, ancient sandals were held onto the foot with leather straps that were tied.

The feet of ancient Israelites were typically dirty, calloused, and undesirable. A man of respect and regard was often honored by followers by the offering of service. The disciple could perform all manner of service to the master, but the removal of the sandals was beneath the disciple. It was considered a **"slave's task...a rabbinic axiom that a disciple might offer to do any service for his teacher which a slave did for his master, except that of the unfastening his sandals."** (The Gospel According to John (i-xii), The Anchor Bible, Raymond E. Brown, S.S., page 44). This is made clear in a passage in the Talmud, which reads, **"Our Rabbis taught: How [is a heathen slave acquired] by hazakah? If he unlooses his shoes for him [the purchaser], or carries his baggage after him to the baths; if he undresses, washes him, anoints, scrapes, dresses him, puts on his shoes, or lifts him, he acquires him. R. Simeon said: Let hazakah not be greater than lifting, for lifting acquires everywhere. What does he mean? — Said R. Ashi: [The first Tanna implies,] if he [the slave] lifts his master, he acquires him; if his master lifts him, he does not acquire him. Thereupon R. Simeon observed: Hazakah should not be greater than lifting, seeing that lifting acquires everywhere."** (Talmud, Mas. Kidduschin 22b, page 70).

- 32 - **people** – The word "people" is translated from the Greek word "ὄχλος" or "ochlos". It means a crowd. It is generally used to imply a multitude or a casual collection of people. Luke 3:15 translates the word "people" from the Greek word "λαός" or "laos", meaning people from the same tribe, nation, stock or language. Isaiah wrote, **"For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people."** (Isaiah 28:11).

- 33 - **What shall we do then?** – The phrase "What shall we do then?" is translated from the Greek phrase "τί οὖν ποιήσωμεν" or "tis oun poieo". It means "what shall we make?". Luke 3:14 translates the same Greek phrase from "τοῖς ὑμῶν οὖν" or "tis hemeis poieo", meaning the same thing with an apparent emphasis on "we". **"The people were astonished; and many, seeing themselves in their actual condition of dereliction and sin, as John, with burning words laid bare their faults, cried out: "What shall we do then?" His reply was directed against ceremonialism, which had caused spirituality to wither almost to death in the hearts of the people. Unselfish charity was demanded."** (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 115). The people could feel the spirit that John brought as he taught. They felt the spirit of conversion, and subsequently asked "what now?" **"It is expressive of a popular eagerness for salvation."** (The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, The Anchor Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 469).

- 34 - **two coats** – The word "coats" is translated from the Greek word "χιτών" or "chiton". It means a tunic, an undergarment, usually worn next to the skin, a garment, or a vestment. **"The tunic-coat or Ketonet was a close-fitting shirt-like garment which was the most frequently worn garment in the home and on the street. In ancient times it was frequently of one solid color, but at the present it is more often made of a gaily-colored striped cotton material which among the Arabs is often called 'the cloth of seven colors' because of the narrow vertical stripes of green, red, yellow, blue, and white which alternate."** (The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, Edited by Merrill C. Tenney, page 115).



"Even the essentials of life, a tunic to wear and food to eat, are to be shared with one's less fortunate neighbor. Such a mode of preaching fits in with Luke's counsels in general on the use of material goods." (The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, The Anchor Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 469). Such counsel of consistent with God's teachings throughout the ages and in different cultures. In a world that is set upon materialism and wealth, the Lord asks that we set our priorities on charity and compassion. King Benjamin taught the Lamanites, **"And also, ye yourselves will succor those that stand in need of your succor; ye will administer of your substance unto him that standeth in need; and ye will not suffer that the beggar putteth up his petition to you in vain, and turn him out to perish."** (Mosiah 4:16). The latter day saints received similar counsel from the Lord when he said, **"I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, my very handiwork; and all things therein are mine. And it is my purpose to provide for my saints, for all things are mine. But it must needs be done in mine own way; and behold this is the way that I, the Lord, have decreed to provide for my saints, that the poor shall be exalted, in that the rich are made low. For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves. Therefore, if any man shall take of the abundance which I have made, and impart not his portion, according to the law of my gospel, unto the poor and the needy, he shall, with the wicked, lift up his eyes in hell, being in torment."** (Doctrine & Covenants 104:14-18).

- 35 - **impart** – The word "impart" is translated from the Greek word "μεταδίδωμι" or "metadidōmi". The word means "impart". **"In 1831, the Lord said: 'Remember the poor. ... Inasmuch as ye impart of your substance unto the poor, ye will do it unto me.'** (Doctrine & Covenants 42:30–31.) A little later, he again declared, **'Visit the poor and the needy and administer to their relief.'** (Doctrine & Covenants 44:6.) Later the same year, he warned: **'Wo unto you rich men, that will not give your substance to the poor, for your riches will canker your souls.'** (Doctrine & Covenants 56:16.)" (General Conference, "In the Lord's Own Way", Neal A. Maxwell, April 1986). This seems to be the same direction John was giving to the converts of his time. In fact, this is the basic precepts of the Gospel. Jesus imparted all He had for our salvation, and subsequently we are required to impart of what we have been given. The Apostle James wrote, **"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."** (James 2:14-17). The true test of our

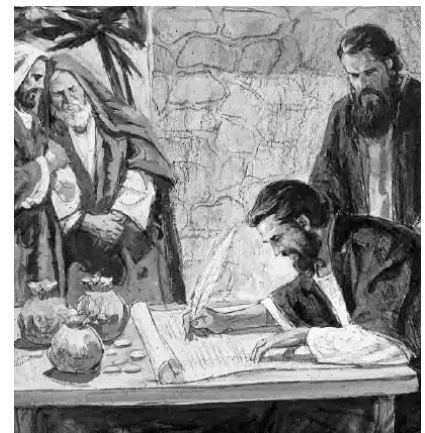
discipleship revolves around this concept. When we are truly converted, we will impart all that we have in the building of the Lord's kingdom and assisting in bringing souls unto Christ. "...Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth..." (1st John 3:14-23).

- 36 - **none** – The word "none" is translated from the Greek word "μή" or "mē". The word means no or not lest.
- 37 - **meat** – The word "meat" is translated from the Greek word "βρωμα" or "brōma". It means that which is eaten. In other words, food. Herein is a reminder that all things are made possible by the grace of God, even the food we eat. If we find ourselves blessed with ample food, it is our obligation to share with those that are not so blessed.
- 38 - **likewise** – The word "likewise" is translated from the Greek word "ὁμοίως" or "homoīōs". The word means likewise, equally or in the same way. Luke 3:14 translates the word "likewise" from the Greek word "καί" or "kai", meaning and, also, even, indeed, or but.
- 39 - **publicans** – The word "publicans" is translated from the Greek word "τελώνης" or "telōnēs". The term is used to refer to a tax gatherer, collector of taxes or tolls, one employed by a publican or farmer of the collection of taxes. The tax collectors were of a class, detested not only by the Jews, but by other nations also, both on account of their employment and of the harshness, greed, and deception, with which they did their job. Among the Romans, a tax collector was usually a man of equestrian rank.



There was a time when the Roman's operated a tax system similar to modern day futures trading. The Roman Caesar would auction off the taxes for a given province over a specified time period to the highest bidder. The bidders were from a specified class of wealthy Romans, 'Societas Publicanorum', only the elite men of this class had a right to bid. The bidders would speculate as to the actual taxes revenue that might be collected from the province and try to purchase the taxes at a rate that would allow them a sizable profit. Caesar would provide a census to assist in the process, but a census didn't always translate into a specific revenue. Even so, it gave the 'Societas Publicanorum' a means of calculation. Of course, there was risk involved, but not for the Roman Caesar. The Roman Caesar was able to collect the income from each province immediately, without being bothered with the collection process. This kept the government cash flow current. Caesar controlled the opening bid and therefore guaranteed that he collected the necessary taxes. Those that purchased the taxes from a region, were empowered under Roman law to collect the taxes. Fitzmyer records, "Neither 'publican' nor tax-collector is an accurate translation of the Greek term, which technically designates 'toll-collectors', i.e. those engaged in the collection of indirect taxes (tolls, tariffs, imposts, and customs). The collection of taxes in the Roman provinces had at one time been handled by a *societas publicanorum*, wealthy Romans of the equestrian class who usually exploited the provinces and often ruined them. However, Julius Caesar broke their power (see Appian *Bella civilia* 5.4,19; J. Caesar *Bellum civile* 3.3,31 § 103). The publican system seems to have been used in Palestine from the time of Pompey's conquest (63 B.C.), but in 47 B.C. Caesar modified the taxation of the Jews, reducing their taxes considerably and making the Sabbath years tax-free, and in 44 B.C. abrogated the system entirely so that publicans ceased to function in Palestine. Subsequently, in areas subject to Roman prefects and procurators (Judea, Samaria, Idumea) the direct taxes (poll tax, land tax) were taken up by 'tax collectors' (Greek *demosiones* [a word never used in the New Testament]; Hebrew *gabba'im*), directly employed by the Roman occupiers. The collection of other taxess (tolls, tariffs, imposts, and customs) was auctioned off to the highest bidder, who became the 'chief toll-collector' (*architelones*, Luke 19:2) and had agents (Greek *telonia*; Hebrew *mokesin*), usually employed in local tollhouses, e.g. at Capernaum. In Galilee, however, both the 'tax-collectors' and the 'toll-collectors' were less under Roman control than elsewhere because of Herod Antipas' lengthy financial administration of his tetrarchy. Jews were often engaged in the collection of both direct and indirect taxes; they were in the direct employ of Roman occupiers and were used as tax-farmers in the indirect taxation system." (The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, The Anchor Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 469-470).

It would appear that the process of selling the taxes of a region was abolished by the time of John the Baptist. Originally, "Men who bought or farmed the taxes under the Roman government were called publicani. The name is also used to describe those who actually collected the money, and who were properly called portitores. Both classes were detested by the Jews, and any Jew who undertook the work was excommunicated. Many of the tax-gatherers in Galilee would be in the service of Herod and not of Rome." (LDS Bible Dictionary, "Publican"). Even though the process of selling taxes may have been replaced by a different system, the name 'Publicani' was still used, though its meaning was altered. Originally a 'publicani' or 'publican' was the one who bid and bought the taxes. The name was later used to refer to a tax collector in general. Zondervan writes, "Publican, an under-collector of Roman revenue. Of these there appear to have been two classes: 1. The 'chief of the publicans' of whom Zacchaeus is an example. 2. The ordinary publican, the lowest class of the servants engaged in the collecting of the revenue, and of whom we have an instance in Levi, who was afterwards the Apostle Matthew. The publicans were hated as the instruments by which the subjection of the Jews to the Roman emperor was perpetuated, and the paying of tribute was looked upon as a virtual acknowledgment of his sovereignty. They were noted for their imposition, rapine and extortion, to which they were tempted to oppress the people with illegal taxes that they might more quickly enrich themselves. The publicans of the New Testament were regarded as traitors and apostates, defiled by their frequent intercourse with the heathen, and willing tools of the oppressor. Hence, they were classed with sinners, harlots and the heathen." (The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, Edited by Merrill C. Tenney, page 598).



- 40 - **Master** – The word "Master" is translated from the Greek word "διδάσκαλος" or "didaskalos". It refers to a teacher. Typically, a teacher who teaches the things of God. Zondervan records, "MASTER, a term used to render a dozen Hebrew and Greek words in the Bible". They include, "ruler, lord, prince, chief, owner, teacher, sovereign master, overseer, guide, leader, shipmaster, and rabbi." (The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, Edited by Merrill C. Tenney, page 515).
- 41 - **exact** – The word "exact" is translated from the Greek word "πράσσω" or "prassō". It means to exercise, practice, to be busy with or carry on. It means to accomplish or perform. The Joseph Smith Translation of a similar passage reads, "For it is well known unto you, Theophilus, that after the manner of the Jews, and according to the custom of their law in receiving money into the treasury, that out of the abundance which was received, was appointed unto the poor, every man his portion; And after this manner did the publicans also, wherefore John said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you." (Joseph Smith Translation of Luke 3:19-20). The word exact has been translated as extort, demand, or take. It is used here to convey the idea that money was being taken from individuals beyond that which was lawful or approved through an abuse of power.
- 42 - **no more** – The word "no" is translated from the Greek word "μηδείς" or "mēdeis", while the word "more" is translated from the Greek word "πλείων" or "pleiōn". The resulting phrase, when joined together, is "nobody, no one, nothing" of "greater quantity, or quality".
- 43 - **appointed** – The word "appointed" is translated from the Greek word "διατάσσω" or "diatassō". It means to arrange, appoint, ordain, prescribed, or ordered. Taxes were ordered; however, only within the guidelines for which they were approved. Greed and selfishness often result in abuses of power causing man to go beyond the authority "appointed" to them.

44 - **soldiers** – The word "soldiers" is translated from the Greek word "στρατεύω" or "strateuō". The word is used in reference to a military expedition, leading soldiers to war or battle, and is used when speaking of a military commander. It can also be used in simpler terms referring to military service, or a soldier in general. Zondervan defines a soldier as follows; **"Soldier, one engaged in military service, and receiving pay for his services. In the earlier times, every man above the age of 20 was a soldier (Numbers 1:3); and each tribe formed a regiment, with its own banner and its own leader (Numbers 2:2; 10:14). Up until the time of David, the army consisted of entirely infantry (I Samuel 4:10; 15:4), the use of horses having been restrained by divine command (Deuteronomy 17:16). The Jews had experienced the great advantage to be obtained by chariots, both in their encounters with the Canaanites and at a later period with the Syrians, and hence much importance was eventually attached to them by the Hebrews."** (The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, Edited by Merrill C. Tenney, page 600). The initial thought would be that John was speaking to Roman soldiers; which would be a poor assumption, as these were **"enlisted soldiers. These were not Roman soldiers, since there were no legions stationed in Palestine in this time, nor auxiliaries from other provinces. They should be understood as Jewish men enlisted in the service of Herod Antipas, of whose troops Josephus gives testimony (Antiquities of the Jews, Flavius Josephus, 18.5.1 § 113). Palestinian Jews were exempt from service in Roman armies since the time of Julius Caesar (Antiquities of the Jews, Flavius Josephus, 14.10.6 § 204); some of them, however, did serve as mercenaries. Some of these could have been among the strateuomenoi, lit. 'men on military duty'."** (The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, The Anchor Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 470).

45 - **demanded** – The word "demanded" is translated from the Greek word "ἐπερωτάω" or "eperōtāō". It means to accost one with an enquiry, to interrogate, or demand. This word implies an aggressive and threatening form of questioning.

46 - **violence** – The word "violence" is translated from The Greek word "διασεύω" or "diaseiō". It means to shake thoroughly, to cause to tremble, to terrify, to agitate, or to exhort money or property by threat.

47 - **no man** – The phrase "no man" is translated from a single Greek word "μηδείς" or "mēdeis". It means nobody, no one, or nothing.

48 - **accuse** – The phrase "accuse falsely" is translated from a single Greek word "συκοφαντέω" or "sykophanteō". It means to accuse wrongly, to attack by malicious devices, to exact money wrongly or defraud.

49 - **falsely** – The word falsely is part of the Greek Translation in footnote #49 of this Chapter.

50 - **be content** – The phrase "be content" is translated from a single Greek word "ἀρκέω" or "arkeō". It means to be possessed of unfailing strength, to be strong, to suffice, to be enough, to be satisfied or to be contented. Fitzmyer says that the phrase means to **"be content with your pay. Or 'with your rations/provisions'. The Greek word opsonion originally referred to the cook rations of the soldiers, but it came in time to denote the money given for the purchase of such rations."** (The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, The Anchor Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 471).

51 - **wages** – The word "wages" is translated from the Greek word "ὀψώνιον" or "opsōnion". It means a Soldier's pay or allowance. It can also be used metaphorically as the wage or pay from sin. See footnote #50 of this chapter. A soldier's wages were little more than a minimum of money necessary to meet the soldiers basic needs. It was a meager wage.

52 - **expectation** – The word "expectation" is translated from the Greek word "προσδοκᾶω" or "prosdokaō". It means to look for, wait for, or expect (whether in thought, in hope or in fear). The Jews were expecting a Messiah. The thoughts were turning to John. Could he be the one? **"Luke's comment implies that there were Palestinian Jews who awaited the coming of a messiah, i.e. and 'anointed' agent of Yahweh sent for the restoration of Israel and the triumph of God's power and domination. From at least the beginning of the second century B.C. there had crystallized in Palestinian Judaism such an expectation. It developed out of the David-tradition in Israel..."** (The Gospel According to Luke I-IX, The Anchor Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 471). John had no desire to masquerade as the promised Messiah. He was a true prophet of God and therefore held true to his mission. He was prepare the way for the Messiah.

53 - **mused** – The word "mused" is translated from the Greek word "διαλογίζομαι" or "dialogizomai". It means to bring together different reasons, to reckon up the reasons, to reason, revolve in one's mind, or deliberate.

54 - **hearts** – The word "hearts" is translated from the Greek word "καρδία" or "kardia". It means the heart. It can be used figuratively as the center of physical and spiritual life. It represents our physical and spiritual desires. The ancient Israelites would have understood this symbol. The law prescribed, **"But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."** (Deuteronomy 4:29). The Lord requires that we serve him in deed and heart. Even our repentance must include the offering of our hearts. **"And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines."** (1st Samuel 7:3).

The new followers of John were deliberating in their hearts, or with their desires and wishes, as to who John was. They were willing to offer their hearts, but were obviously unclear if he was the Messiah or not.

55 - **John** – The name "John" is translated from the Greek word "Ἰωάννης" or "Iōannēs". The English equivalent is actually Johannes. The name literally means "Jehovah is a gracious giver". John the Baptist was the son of Zacharias and Elisabeth, the forerunner of Christ. We know very little of his upbringing other than he was raised in the desert. He wore the clothing of an Essenes, but we do not know if he was a member of their community. He wore clothing made of camel's wool. He ate locust and wild honey which were staples of the poor. He was called to be the great frontrunner to prepare the way of the Messiah. He fulfilled his call. By order of Herod Antipas, he was cast into prison and afterwards beheaded.

56 - **Christ** – The word "Christ" is a title taken from the Greek word "Χριστός" or "Christos". The Greek word means "anointed". **"The anointed (Greek) or Messiah (Hebrew). Jesus, who is called Christ, is the firstborn of the Father in the spirit and the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh. He is Jehovah and was foreordained to His great calling**

A plate of armor made of metal strips tied together with leather straps protected the upper body. Although this metal jacket was heavy, the metal strips allowed the soldier some free movement. Soldiers had to help each other put on and lace up their armor.



Under his metal jacket, the soldier wore a tunic of wool.

Soldiers carried metal-tipped throwing spears, short, double-edged swords, and daggers.

This belt, or apron, of leather strips protected the lower body. Heavy weights on the bottom of each strip kept the strips in place.

To improve the sandals, nails were driven into the underside of the grip of his heavy sandals, and broken into studs.

The soldier's rectangular shield was made of many layers of thick wood wrapped in leather with an iron rim at the top and bottom. The soldier's heavy pack held his personal gear, enough grain for about 15 days, a pick, axe, or saw, cooking utensils, and the stakes needed to build a camp.

in the Grand Councils before the world was. He was born of Mary at Bethlehem, lived a sinless life, and wrought out a perfect atonement for all mankind by the shedding of His blood and His death on the cross. He rose from the grave and brought to pass the bodily resurrection of every living thing and the salvation and exaltation of the faithful. He is the greatest Being to be born on this earth—the perfect example—and all religious things should be done in His name. He is Lord of lords, King of kings, the Creator, the Savior, the God of the whole earth, the Captain of our salvation, the Bright and Morning Star. He is in all things, above all things, through all things, and round about all things; He is Alpha and Omega, the first and the last; His name is above every name and is the only name under heaven by which we can be saved. He will come again in power and glory to dwell on the earth and will stand as Judge of all mankind at the last day." (LDS Bible Dictionary, "Christ").

- 57 - **standeth** – The word "standeth" is translated from the Greek word "ἵστημι" or "histēmi". It means to cause to make stand, to be firm, or to put in place. It can mean to establish or sustain something. Isaiah, speaking of the covenant's that man has broken with the Lord, said, "And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it." (Isaiah 28:18). Here the word "stand" is used to show that the covenants will not "stand", or maintain their validity, when we fail to keep them. Similarly, those that keep their covenants will stand in Holy places. The Psalmist wrote, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?" (Psalms 24:3). Using the same word, we learn that the Savior will stand by the side of those that follow him. We read, "For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul." (Psalms 109:31).

Unfortunately, the Jews of John's time were lost. Many were looking for a place to figuratively stand. They were hungry for true doctrine, but until the time of John there were few places they could stand to receive it.

- 58 - **whom ye know not** – The phrase "whom ye know not" is translated from the Greek phrase "ὅμοις οὐκ οἶδατε" or "hymeis ouk oidate". It means "whom you have not seen".

- 59 - **Bethabara** – The word "Bethabara" is translated from the Greek word "Βηθαβάρᾱ" or "Bēthabara". It translates literally as "house of the ford". It is believed to be a place beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. This may correspond to Bethbarah (fords of Abarah), the ancient ford of the Jordan on the road to Gilead. Unfortunately, the exact location is unknown. We can with surety say that John was baptizing in "Bethabara", because the Book of Mormon, an unadulterated record, says, "And my father said he should baptize in Bethabara, beyond Jordan; and he also said he should baptize with water; even that he should baptize the Messiah with water." (1st Nephi 10:9).

So, where is Bethabara? There are several theories. They are as follows;

Theory #1 - Beth-Arabah

There are those that believe that the Gospel writer, when referencing Bethabara, was referring to a location south of Jericho called Beth-arabah. "BETH-ARABAH (bēth'ār-ā-bā, house of the desert), a town known also as Arabah (Joshua 18:18), probably located at the northern end of the Dead Sea. It was one of the six cities of Judah on the northern border of that tribe's territory." (The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, Edited by Merrill C. Tenney, page 108). Given the fact that the Jordan river has moved over the centuries, it is possible that Beth-Arabah was once on the banks of the Jordan River. The names are similar, and therefore this theory becomes easy to believe.

Theory #2 - Bethany ?

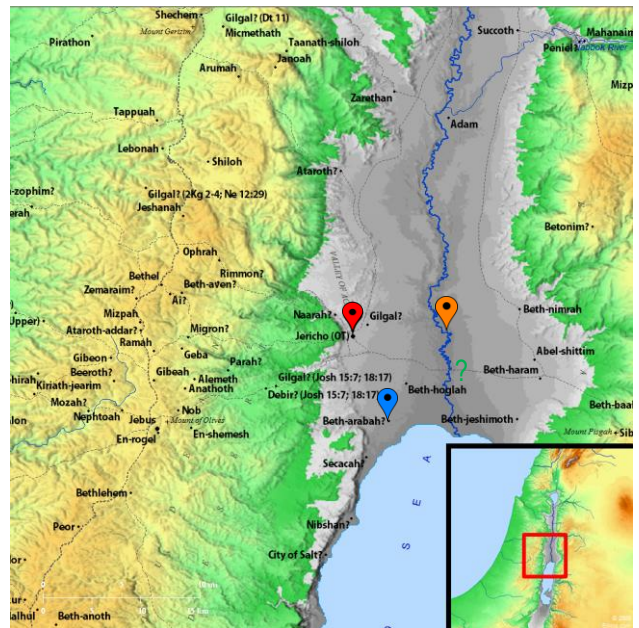
"Even the name Bethany is open to symbolic interpretation; Krieger suggests that it derives from bet-aniyyah, 'house of response/witness/testimony', a derivation which could make the name appropriate for the place where John the Baptist gave testimony to Jesus." (The Gospel According to John (i-xii), The Anchor Bible, Raymond E. Brown, S.S., page 44-45). Many ancient manuscripts actually translated Bethabara as Bethany. It is not the Bethany near the City of Jerusalem, but rather a Bethany in the vicinity of the Jordan River. It's location has been lost. "BETHABARA (bēth'āb-ā-rā, house of the ford), a place on the East bank of the Jordan where John baptized (John 1:28). The later and more reliable Greek manuscripts have rendered this word 'Bethany'. Care must be taken, however, not to confuse this with the city of the same name near Jerusalem, the home of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Its exact location is uncertain. Some identify it with Bethbarah." (The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, Edited by Merrill C. Tenney, page 107).

Theory #3 - East Bank - Bethabara

Bethany was considered the location of John's baptisms until the year 200CE when the Bible scholar Origen could not find it on any maps and revisited the translation. Brown explains, "Bethany. This is not the town near Jerusalem (xi 18), but a site in the Transjordan of which no trace remains...although almost all the manuscripts read Bethany, he (Origen) could find no such town in the Transjordan. (ca. A.D. 200). Therefore he preferred another reading, 'Bethabara', a town whose existence is also attested in the Talmud. If Bethabara, 'the place of crossing over', is the correct reading then John may be calling attention to the Joshua-Jesus parallelism. Just as Joshua led the people across the Jordan into the promised land, so Jesus is to cross over into the promised land at the head of a new people. Pilgrim tradition identifies the same site on the Jordan for both Joshua's crossing and Jesus' baptism." (The Gospel According to John (i-xii), The Anchor Bible, Raymond E. Brown, S.S., page 44). The Origen translation matches the one found in the Book of Mormon, which is absolutely correct. It makes sense that the Lord would choose that locations. When ancient Israel crossed the Jordan River, they entered a covenant to follow Jehovah. This location would have been associated with covenants. It also makes sense that it is on the East side of the Jordan since the Gospel writer says that John was baptizing beyond Jordan. Of course since the Jordan has moved its path it establishes very little.

Theory #4 - Near Jericho

The last theory that we will consider in this work is that Bathabara is located near the city of Jericho. Even the LDS Bible Dictionary makes mention of this theory. It reads, "Place of fording. A place where John baptized in the Jordan River, the exact site of which is



SPECULATED SITE OF BETHABARA
AS SEEN TODAY. VOID OF WATER



unknown today, although traditionally it is near Jericho. It was at this location that John baptized Jesus, beheld the Holy Ghost descend in the sign of a dove, and was interviewed by a delegation of priests and Levites from Jerusalem (John 1:19–34; 1 Ne. 10:7–10). Compare JST John 1:34 (Appendix), which indicates that all of the above events were done at Bethabara, whereas the KJV leaves the matter in question." (LDS Bible Dictionary, "Bethabara"). The city of Jericho would be an odd site symbolically since Jericho represents the world.

- 60 - **Beyond Jordan** – The term "beyond Jordan" is translated from the Greek phrase "πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου" or "peran tou Iordanes". It means on the other side of the Jordan. Presumably, Bethabara is on the east side of the Jordan River. Zondervan gives us a brief description of the Jordan. It says, "**JORDAN RIVER, the only large flowing body of water in Palestine and, as such, it played a significant part in the history of Israel, as well as in the earlier days of our Lord's ministry. The word Jordan derives from a Hebrew word, hayyarden, meaning 'flowing downward' or 'the descender', and one with any knowledge of its course can easily see the appropriateness of the name...the river itself, because of its serpentine curves, is 200 miles in length...in a straight line, a length of 70 miles.**" (The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, Edited by Merrill C. Tenney, page 445).
- 61 - **preferred** – The word "preferred" is translated from the Greek word "γίνομαι" or "ginomai". It means to become, to be made finished, to come upon the stage, or to appear in public. It can also be translated as "to come to pass". The Joseph Smith translation of the Bible preserves the word in the translation which reads, "**He it is of whom I bear record. He is that prophet, even Elias, who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose, or whose place I am not able to fill; for he shall baptize, not only with water, but with fire, and with the Holy Ghost.**" (Joseph Smith Translation of John 1:28). It would appear that this was the Savior's first public appearance in preparation of His ministry.