

The Gospel According to

SAINT MATTHEW

SAINT MARK

SAINT LUKE

SAINT JOHN

CHAPTER 11:2-30

NOTHING RECORDED

CHAPTER 7, VERSES 18-35

NOTHING RECORDED

11:2 - Now when John¹ had heard in the prison² the works of Christ³, he sent two¹³⁰ of his disciples⁴,

11:3 - And said unto him, Art thou he that should come⁵, or do we look for another⁶?

11:4 - Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew⁷ John¹ again those things⁸ which ye do hear⁹ and see¹⁰:

11:5 - The blind receive their sight¹¹, and the lame walk¹², the lepers are cleansed¹³, and the deaf hear¹⁴, the dead are raised up¹⁵, and the poor have the gospel preached to them¹⁶.

11:6 - And blessed¹⁷ is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me¹⁸.

11:7 - And as they departed¹⁹, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes²⁰ concerning John²¹, What went ye out into the wilderness to see²²? A reed²³ shaken with the wind²⁴?

11:8 - But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed²⁵ in soft raiment²⁶? Behold³², they that wear soft clothing²⁷ are in kings' houses²⁸.

11:9 - But what went ye out for to see? A prophet²⁹? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet³⁰.

11:10 - For this is he, of whom it is written³¹, Behold³², I send³³ my messenger³⁴ before thy face³⁵, which shall prepare thy way³⁶ before thee.

11:11 - Verily³⁷ I say unto you³⁸, Among them that are born of women³⁹ there hath not risen⁴⁰ a greater⁴¹ than John¹ the Baptist⁴²: notwithstanding⁴³ he that is least⁴⁴ in the kingdom of heaven⁴⁵ is greater than he⁴⁶.

11:12 - And from the days⁴⁷ of John¹ the Baptist⁴² until now the kingdom of heaven⁴⁵ suffereth violence⁴⁸, and the violent⁴⁹ take it by force⁵⁰.

11:13 - For all the prophets⁵¹ and the law⁵² prophesied⁵³ until John¹.

11:14 - And if ye will receive⁵⁴ it, this is Elias⁵⁵, which was for to come⁵⁶.

11:15 - He that hath ears to hear⁵⁷, let him hear⁵⁸.

11:16 - But whereunto shall I liken⁵⁹ this generation⁶⁰? It is like unto children⁶¹ sitting⁶² in the markets⁶³, and calling⁶⁴ unto their fellows⁶⁵,

11:17 - And saying, We have piped unto you⁶⁶, and ye have not danced⁶⁷; we have mourned unto you⁶⁸, and ye have not lamented⁶⁹.

11:18 - For John¹ came neither eating⁷⁰ nor drinking⁷¹, and they say, He hath a devil⁷².

11:19 - The Son of man⁷³ came eating⁷⁰ and drinking⁷¹, and they say, Behold³² a man gluttonous⁷⁴, and a winebibber⁷⁵, a friend⁷⁶ of publicans⁷⁷ and sinners⁷⁸. But wisdom⁷⁹ is justified⁸⁰ of her children⁸¹.

7:18 - And the disciples⁴ of John¹ shewed him of all these things¹²⁹.

7:19 - And John¹ calling unto him two¹³⁰ of his disciples⁴ sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come⁵? or look we for another⁶?

7:20 - When the men were come unto him, they said, John¹ Baptist⁴² hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come⁵? or look we for another⁶?

7:21 - And in that same hour¹³¹ he cured many of their infirmities¹³² and plagues¹³³, and of evil spirits¹³⁴; and unto many that were blind he gave sight¹³⁵.

7:22 - Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John¹ what things⁸ ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see¹¹, the lame walk¹², the lepers are cleansed¹³, the deaf hear¹⁴, the dead are raised¹⁵, to the poor the gospel is preached¹⁶.

7:23 - And blessed¹⁷ is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me¹⁸.

7:24 - And when the messengers¹³⁶ of John¹ were departed¹⁹, he began to speak unto the people concerning John²¹, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see²²? A reed²³ shaken with the wind²⁴?

7:25 - But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed²⁵ in soft raiment²⁶? Behold³², they which are gorgeously apparelled¹³⁷, and live delicately¹³⁸, are in kings' courts¹³⁹.

7:26 - But what went ye out for to see? A prophet²⁹? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet³⁰.

7:27 - This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.

7:28 - For I say unto you³⁸, Among those that are born of women³⁹ there is not a greater prophet⁴⁰ than John¹ the Baptist⁴²: but he that is least⁴⁴ in the kingdom of God⁴¹ is greater than he⁴⁶.

7:29 - And all the people that heard him¹⁴², and the publicans⁷⁷, justified God¹⁴³, being baptized¹⁴⁴ with the baptism¹⁴⁵ of John¹.

7:30 - But the Pharisees¹⁴⁶ and lawyers¹⁴⁷ rejected¹⁴⁸ the counsel of God¹⁴⁹ against themselves¹⁵⁰, being not baptized of him¹⁵¹.

7:31 - And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken⁵⁹ the men of this generation⁶⁰? and to what are they like?

7:32 - They are like unto children⁶¹ sitting⁶² in the marketplace⁶³, and calling⁶⁴ one to another¹⁵², and saying, We have piped unto you⁶⁶, and ye have not danced⁶⁷; we have mourned to you⁶⁸, and ye have not wept¹⁵³.

11:20 - Then began he to upbraid⁸² the cities⁸³ wherein most of his mighty works were done⁸⁴, because they repented not⁸⁵:

11:21 - Woe unto thee⁸⁶, Chorazin⁸⁷! woe unto thee⁸⁶, Bethsaida⁸⁸! for if the mighty works⁸⁹, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre⁹⁰ and Sidon⁹¹, they would have repented⁹² long ago⁹³ in sackcloth⁹⁴ and ashes⁹⁵.

11:22 - But I say unto you³⁸, It shall be more tolerable⁹⁶ for Tyre⁹⁰ and Sidon⁹¹ at the day of judgment⁹⁷, than for you.

11:23 - And thou, Capernaum⁹⁸, which art exalted unto heaven⁹⁹, shalt be brought down to hell¹⁰⁰: for if the mighty works⁸⁹, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom¹⁰¹, it would have remained until this day¹⁰².

11:24 - But I say unto you³⁸, That it shall be more tolerable⁹⁶ for the land of Sodom¹⁰¹ in the day of judgment⁹⁷, than for thee.

11:25 - At that time¹⁰³ Jesus answered and said, I thank thee¹⁰⁴, O Father¹⁰⁵, Lord of heaven and earth¹⁰⁶, because thou hast hid these things¹⁰⁷ from the wise and prudent¹⁰⁸, and hast revealed¹⁰⁹ them unto babes¹¹⁰.

11:26 - Even so, Father¹⁰⁵: for so it seemed good in thy sight¹¹¹.

11:27 - All things¹¹² are delivered unto me¹¹³ of my Father¹⁰⁵: and no man knoweth¹¹⁴ the Son¹¹⁵, but the Father¹⁰⁵; neither knoweth¹¹⁴ any man the Father¹⁰⁵, save the Son¹¹⁵, and he to whomsoever the Son¹¹⁵ will reveal¹¹⁶ him.

11:28 - Come unto me¹¹⁷, all ye that labour¹¹⁸ and are heavy laden¹¹⁹, and I will give you rest¹²⁰.

11:29 - Take my yoke upon you¹²¹, and learn of me¹²²; for I am meek¹²³ and lowly in heart¹²⁴: and ye shall find rest¹²⁵ unto your souls¹²⁶.

11:30 - For my yoke is easy¹²⁷, and my burden is light¹²⁸.

7:33 - For John¹ the Baptist⁴² came neither eating⁷⁰ bread¹⁵⁴ nor drinking⁷¹ wine¹⁵⁵; and ye say, He hath a devil⁷².

7:34 - The Son of man⁷³ is come eating⁷⁰ and drinking⁷¹; and ye say, Behold³² a gluttonous man⁷⁴, and a winebibber⁷⁵, a friend⁷⁶ of publicans⁷⁷ and sinners⁷⁸!

7:35 - But wisdom⁷⁹ is justified⁸⁰ of all her children⁸¹.

CHRONOLOGY: After April 30, 28CE, In the Spring of 28CE

LOCATION: Jesus was in the **Province of Galilee, possibly in Nain**. John was in the prison of **Machærus** just east of the Dead Sea.

COMMENTARY: Jesus' cousin John the Baptist is being held in the Herodian fortress called Machærus. He had been confined to a horrible prison beneath the fortress for preaching repentance to the adulterous and incestuous Herod Antipas and his partner and sister Herodias. Ancient prisons required that the prisoners receive their care from friends on the outside. No food or necessities were provided by the jailors. A prisoner without friends would surely die. The conditions would have been deplorable. While in prison, John called for two friends. This would have been normal for a prisoner who relied on their care. His call was not selfish. These friends were disciples of His who had not progressed spiritually enough to leave John and follow the Messiah as John had directed. As John's days were numbered, it makes sense that John worried about those disciples who had not moved on to following Jesus. Consequently, John sends the disciples to seek out Jesus and ask questions that would provide answers necessary to changing their devotion to Jesus; "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" The disciples complied. They traveled about 100 miles to Galilee and found Jesus. When they asked Him their crucial questions, He withheld verbal response. He responded by performing miracles, raising the dead, and healing the sick. They received a special witness of Jesus' divinity. They knew for a fact that Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus, seeing the testimony they had received, sent them back to John to bear testimony of the things they had heard and seen. After their departure, Jesus bore witness of John and His divine call. He explains why John was in prison, revealing that the young church was expected to face opposition, violence, and force. All the prophets in the Old Testament had foretold of this time. Jesus explains that John was the promised Elias. He teaches that the rejecting Jews were like children playing games in the market, getting angry when the other kids wouldn't play their games. So it is with the Jews response to John and Jesus. Jesus taught that the Jews living in the towns of Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida had been privileged to witness incredible miracles and yet they were largely disbelieving. He cites Gentile towns that would have been converted with the same experience; one of these towns was the famed sinful city of Sodom. Furthermore, Jesus teaches that the Jewish cities had received greater witness and therefore will be held in greater condemnation. Jesus closes this chapter with a prayer to His Father. He then invited all men to come unto Him, to repent, and pattern their lives after His. In this manner, we can rid ourselves of the yoke or burdens of mortality. He asks that we take upon us His yoke, and become yoked with Him, doing this will allow Him to lead and do all the heaving lifting. At the same time, we will become trained by Him so that our capacity and ability grow.

FOOTNOTES:

- 1- **John** – The name “John” is translated from the Greek word “Ἰωάννης” or “Iōannēs”. Literally, it means “Jehovah is a gracious giver”.

John was a blood relative of Jesus. John’s mother, Elizabeth, is recorded as Mary’s cousin, though some records would indicate that Elizabeth was actually Mary’s aunt. The Greek word used for cousin can be translated as simply “relative”. It is believed that John’s mother was either the first cousin of Joseph and Mary, or their Aunt. That would make John Jesus’ first cousin or His first cousin once removed.

John was the son of Zacharias. Zacharias was a worthy Priesthood holder, through the proper lineage. This gave John the legal right to the priesthood of Aaron. This is significant because his call to be the forerunner of Jesus required that he be able to administer the first ordinance of the Gospel; baptism. Consequently, he is known as John the Baptist. President John Taylor wrote, “I have heard the Prophet Joseph quote from the German Bible in support of our method of baptism by immersion, showing that the German Translation of the New Testament favored this idea, and that the word “Taufen” in that language means “to dip;” the same as our term immersion does; and that when John the Baptist was spoken of as John the Baptist it was “Johannes der Tauffer,” or John the Dipper, which is correct.” (Journal of Discourses, Volume 25, John Taylor, June 29, 1884, page 213). John brought people unto Jesus by administering a covenant ordinance that committed them to the ideal and standards of Jesus.

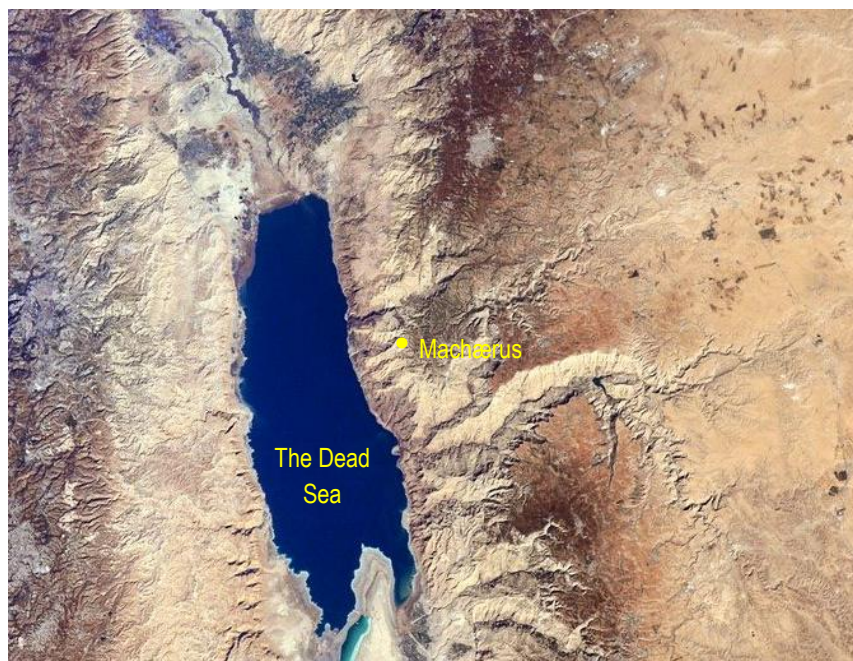
John was born just six months before Jesus. The six month gap was significant. Jewish law required a man to be thirty years of age before he could publically preach or serve in an ecclesiastical role. This qualified John six months before Jesus. During those six months, John was able to prepare the people for the coming of their Messiah. By preaching faith, repentance, and baptism, John prepared the people for Jesus who would teach the fullness of His gospel.

Once Jesus started His ministry, John was directed by heaven to diminish his role. In fact, John was removed from the public eye and finally died; sealing his testimony of the Savior with his own blood. Talmage wrote, “John thoroughly understood that his own work was that of preparation; he had so testified and had openly borne witness that Jesus was the One for whom he had been sent to prepare. With the inauguration of Christ’s ministry, John’s influence had waned, and for many months he had been shut up in a cell, chafing under his enforced inactivity, doubtless yearning for the freedom of the open, and for the locusts and wild honey of the desert. Jesus was increasing while he decreased in popularity, influence, and opportunity; and he had affirmed that such condition was inevitable.” (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 188).

We have no recorded record that would indicate the relationship that existed between John and Jesus. We do not know if they had opportunity to interact in their youth, or if they discussed their missions with each other prior to engaging in them. We do know that prior to the start of Jesus’ ministry, Jesus sought out John in order to receive the ordinance of baptism. Prior to the contents of this chapter, Jesus had been baptized by John. John had directed his disciples to follow Jesus, and John had been imprisoned for preaching repentance to Herod Antipas. Elder McConkie wrote, “Our last report on the life and ministry of the one sent to prepare the way for Him by whom salvation comes; our last account relative to the blessed Baptist, who immersed the Son of God in Jordan’s waters; our last record told of his imprisonment by Herod Antipas in a dungeon at the impregnable fortress at Machærus.” (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 127). It is here that John sat and spoke with his visiting followers about Jesus.

- 2- **in the prison** – The word “prison” is translated from the Greek word “δεσμητήριον” or “desmōtērion”. It means a prison or a jail.

Herod Antipas, like many of the Herods, adopted a highly immoral lifestyle. He was a married man, who entered into an adulterous relationship with his brother’s wife; Herodias. To make matters worse, Herodias was his sister. John condemned this behavior. The behavior of the king was likely to set an example for the people, and John understood the need for the people to understand the wicked nature of Antipas’ relationship. This angered Antipas, but infuriated Herodias. Antipas was hesitant to act against John, believing him to be a prophet. Herodias was not so cautious. Herod imprisoned John, but would not kill him. Herodias wanted John dead. Knowing Antipas’ immoral nature, Herodias asked her daughter; Salome, to dance for Antipas. She knew that he would be seduced by the dance. Consequently, he was willing to do anything to be with her. When the question was asked, Salome was prepared with the answer. She wanted the head of John the Baptist on a platter.



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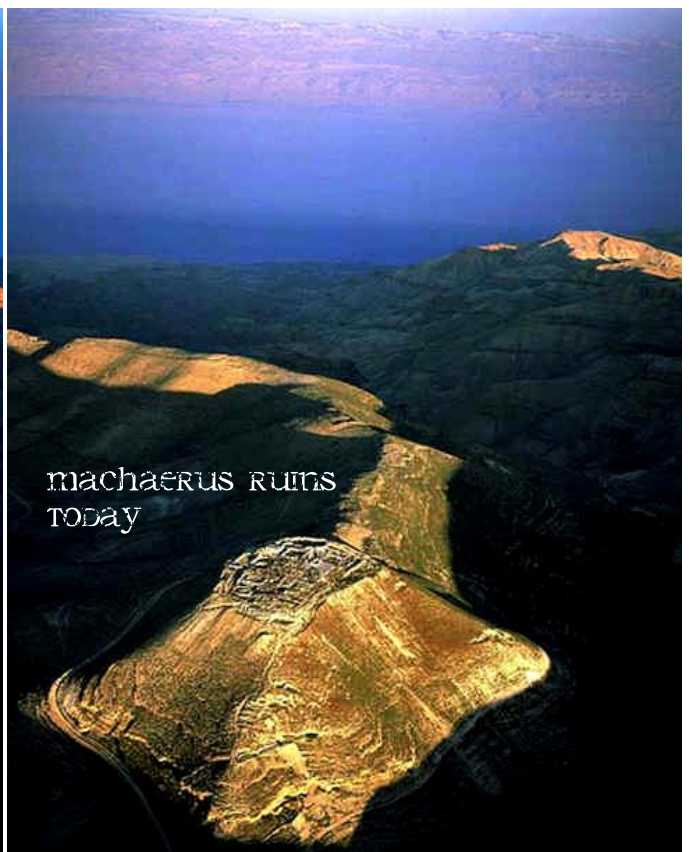
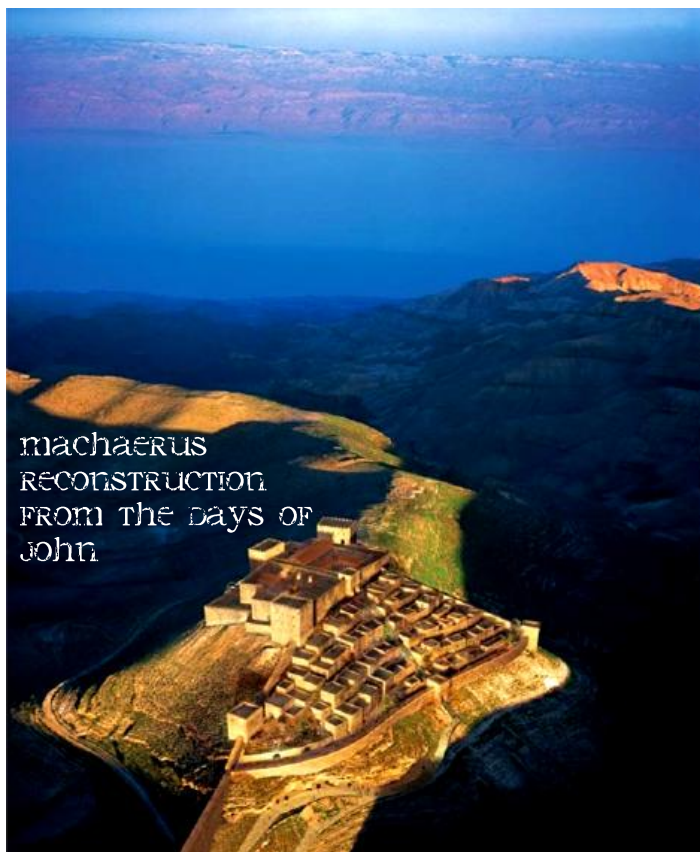
The contents of this chapter take place while John is in prison under Herod Antipas’ order. He was taken to the desert strong hold of Machærus. It was undoubtedly chosen because of its remote location. Antipas wanted to silence John. Machærus was the perfect location for this. It lies just East of the Dead Sea, on the top of a tall hill. There is nothing but desert surrounding the fortress. It was here that John was imprisoned. “Josephus tells us that this prison was the fortress of Machærus, or Maker, a strong and gloomy castle, built by Alexander Jannæus and strengthened by Herod the Great – on the borders of the desert, to the north of the Dead Sea, and on the frontiers of Arabia. We know enough of solitary castles and Eastern dungeons to realize what horrors must have been involved for any man in such an imprisonment; what possibilities of agonizing torture, what daily risk of a violent and unknown death. How often often in the world’s history have even the most generous and dauntless spirits been crushed and effeminate by such hopeless captivity! When the first noble rage, or heroic resignation, is over – when the iron hearted endurance is corroded by forced inactivity and maddening solitude – when the great heart is cowed by the physical lassitude and despair of a life left to rot away in the lonely

darkness – who can be answerable for the level of depression to which he may sink? ” (The Story of a Beautiful Life: Farrar’s Life of Christ, The New 20th Century Edition, 1900, Canon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., pages 190-191).

On the surface, the fortress or castle Machærus, might have been seen as a palace. Indeed it was. Herod the Great had renovated the castle, and fortified it. In his paranoia, Herod the Great was constantly worrying about being overthrown. Consequently, He designed and built strongholds in various parts of the land that could protect him from siege and attack. They were equipped with all the comforts he was accustomed to. They had Roman baths, spacious bedrooms, large water and grain cisterns, servant quarters and quarters for soldiers. The Castle of Machærus was no different. It would have had beautifully adorned rooms and spacious courtyards. Archeologist have provided enough data to allow for some fairly accurate reconstructions.

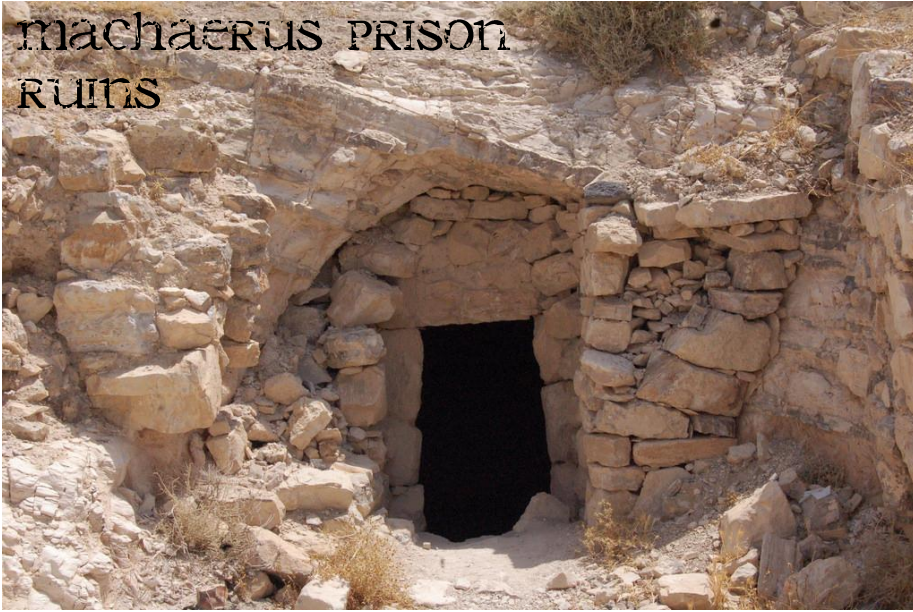


RECONSTRUCTIONS OF machaerus



John had crossed a dangerous line by speaking out against Herod Antipas. **“It was never safe to rebuke an eastern despot and Herod took his revenge; John was thrown into the dungeons of the fortress of Machærus in the mountains near the Dead Sea.”** (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 1). This statement by Barclay is more revealing than one might think. John was not sequestered to the palace’s conveniences and luxury. He was cast into the prison of Machærus; which literally lied in the mountain beneath the palace. The prison was not much more than a cold, dark cave. The cave was small, and did not afford John the luxury of movement. Traditionally, prisoners were chained to the walls, though we do not know John’s circumstances. If tradition applies, and it most likely did, John would have been chained so that he could not lay down to sleep. This was part of the designed torture for a prisoner. Additionally, prisoners were not provided food or clothing. It was expected that the prisoner’s friends and family would provide for the prisoner or they would simply die. Perhaps this is why John’s disciples were regularly visiting him. In addition, the prisoners were required to defecate in the same place they stood and ate. The conditions soon became deplorable. Riddled with fecal matter, prisons were places of disease. Most didn’t survive imprisonment. Elder McConkie wrote, **“We know little of what went on in the walled and barred place where the Baptist languished, only that**

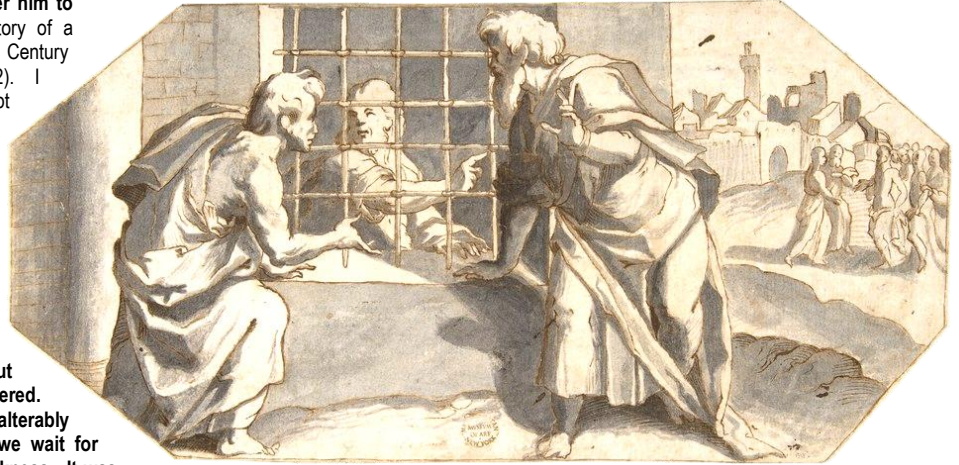
MACHAERUS PRISON RUINS



the prisons of that day were places of unbearable torture and evil and heartless imposition. John did have visitors, however; there were times and circumstances when news from the outside could be spoken in his ears.” (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, pages 127-128).

On the side of the mountain of Machærus is a cave with a once secure entrance believed to be the ancient prison of Machærus. “To a child of freedom and of passion, to a rugged, passionate, untamed spirit like that of John, a prison was worse than death.” (The Story of a Beautiful Life: Farrar’s Life of Christ, The New 20th Century Edition, 1900, Canon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., page 191). This prison would have been isolated from the people John was used to teaching, and from the Master that he followed. He was cut off from the work. “During the subsequent months of our Lord’s activities, in preaching the gospel, teaching the true significance of the kingdom, proving sin, healing the afflicted, rebuking evil spirits and even raising the dead to life, His forerunner, the God-fearing, valiant John, had lain a prisoner in the dungeons of Machærus, one of the strongest of Herod’s citadels.” (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 187).

Many speculate regarding John’s attitude and mental state while in prison. Farrar speculates that John’s imprisonment led to doubt and hopelessness. He records, “Oh, why did his Father in heaven and his Friend on earth suffer him to languish in this soul-clouded misery?” (The Story of a Beautiful Life: Farrar’s Life of Christ, The New 20th Century Edition, 1900, Canon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., page 192). I would assert that there were no feelings of doubt exhibited by John. He knew and understood the meaning of life and the reason for trials. He had endured hardship his whole life with unwavering faith. He parents died in the cause of faith. He was raised in the desert, and there learned heavenly perspective. He may very well have despaired at his living conditions, but his faith and knowledge of the Savior never wavered. Edersheim wrote, “In that terrible conflict John overcame, as we all must overcome, His very despair opened the door of hope. The helpless doubt, which could solve but One, he brought to Him around Whom it had gathered. Even in this there is evidence for Christ, as the unalterably True One. When John asked the question: Do we wait for another? Light was already struggling through darkness. It was



incipient victory even in defeat. When he sent his disciples with this question straight to Christ, he had already conquered; for such a question addressed to a possibly false Messiah has no meaning.” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 668).

JOHN THE BAPTIST IN MACHAERUS PRISON





3- **works of Christ** – The phrase “the works” is translated from the Greek word “ἔργον” or “ergon”. It means business, employment, that which one undertakes to do, an act or a deed. The title “Christ” is translated from the Greek word “Χριστός” or “Christos”. The title, translated literally, means “anointed”. It is the Greek form of the Hebrew word for Messiah. **“The messianic interpretation might suit the Matthean form of this episode, where the Baptist is said to have heard of “the deeds of the Messiah” (11:2). Yet that is almost certainly a Matthean redaction of “Q” (in view of 11 :19).”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 666).

The works of the Messiah are always associated with the salvation of mankind. In all He does, He seeks to bring to pass His Father’s work; the immortality and eternal life of man. John had prepared the hearts of man for the works of salvation. He prepared them to receive the Christ. He must have eagerly awaited the Messiah to come forth upon the scene

of mortality and begin His ministry. The long awaited day had arrived, and Jesus was actively ministering among men. I would imagine that John longed to be part of the work. Even as a bystander, his heart must have desired to watch the many miracles, and hear the words of heaven. Even so, such was not his calling in life. **“For though his Friend and his Savior was living, was at no great distance from him, was in the full tide of His influence, and was daily working the miracles of love which attested His mission, yet John saw that Friend and Savior on earth no more.”** (The Story of a Beautiful Life: Farrar’s Life of Christ, The New 20th Century Edition, 1900, Canon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., page 190).

John was dependent upon his friends for food and water while in prison, but he also depended upon them for information regarding Jesus. They were his lifeline to the works of Jesus. **“In the course of his long imprisonment John had heard much of the marvelous preaching and works of Christ; these things must have been reported to him by some of his disciples and friends who were allowed to visit him. Particularly was he informed of the miraculous raising of the young man at Nain; and forthwith he commissioned two of his disciples to bear a message of inquiry to Jesus.”** (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 187).

4- **disciples** – The word “disciples” is translated from the Greek word “μαθητής” or “mathētēs”. It means a learner, pupil, or disciple. The Codex Sinaiticus translated “he sent two of his disciples” as “sent by his disciples”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 11, Verse 2, page 27).

Great rabbis had disciples. Disciples were students who adhered themselves to a specific teacher, to learn of him and serve him. The concept of discipleship is somewhat foreign in the modern world, but should not be to a true believer in Jesus. True believers follow the ancient pattern. They commit themselves to the Master, covenant to follow Him, learn of His ways, and then emulate Him as they serve Him.

Early in John’s ministry, many came to John to learn of him and partake of the baptism he offered. A group of faithful followers became his disciples. They would have called him master, and followed his direction and counsel. When John baptized Jesus, he did something outside of tradition. He announced that Jesus was the Son of God, and asked his disciples to follow Jesus. He, a great rabbi, was directing his disciples to forsake him and follow another. Many did.

In this chapter, however, we learn that John still had disciples. This seems somewhat out of place, given John’s clear direction to his disciples to follow Jesus. The truth is, we do not know why some disciples stayed with John and failed to follow the Messiah. Perhaps they were not spiritually prepared, or their spiritual development was still under construction. Whatever the case, these disciples lacked a testimony and understanding of Jesus. They did however recognize enough truth to follow his forerunner; John.

I would imagine that John was thankful for his disciples. They provided him food and water in prison. In fact, they were his lifeline. Even so, I could imagine that he was worried about them spiritually. When would they see that Jesus was the Messiah, and that there was one greater than John. Elder McConkie wrote, **“Apparently some of the Baptist’s disciples desired not only to minister to his needs in the prison, not only to bring him news of the religious movement that was sweeping the land, but also to look to him, rather than to Jesus, as the prophet whom they should follow.”** (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 128).



This chapter poses some interesting speculation. As John’s disciples visit him in prison, they are apparently sent by John to find Jesus. The scriptures are unclear how this played out, but we assume that John sent the disciples to Jesus to ask two specific questions; (1) Art thou he that should come? and (2) or do we look for another? The speculation centers around John’s motivation for the questions. Different theories have been set forth as follows;

1. **John was wavering in his faith and questioning Jesus as the Messiah.** In my opinion this is a false theory, but nevertheless one found in many Bible commentaries. Barclay explains, **“Some few have thought that this question was nothing less than the question of dawning faith and hope. He had seen Jesus at the Baptism; in prison he had thought more and more about him; and the more he thought the more certain he was that Jesus was he who was to come; and now he put all his hopes to the test in this one question. It may be that this is not the question of a despairing and an impatient man, but the question of one in whose eyes the light of hope shone, and who asked for nothing but confirmation of that hope.”** (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 3).
2. **John was struggling in prison and asking Jesus to use His powers to save him.** The inference is that John felt like Jesus had forgotten him and sent his disciples to remind the Savior of his plight. Talmage wrote, **“It may have been a part of John’s purpose to call Christ’s attention to his pitiable plight; and in this respect his message was rather a reminder than a plain inquiry based on actual doubt. Indeed, we have good grounds for inference that John’s purpose in sending disciples to inquire of Christ was partly, and perhaps largely, designed to confirm in these disciples an abiding faith in the Christ. The commission with which they were charged brought them into direct communication with the Lord, whose supremacy they could not well fail to comprehend. They were personal witnesses of His power and authority.”** (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 188). There is no doubt that John suffered in prison. However, the implication that John wanted to change the direction of heaven and alter his fate is unproven and unreasonable. John was a faithful soul. Enduring trials is the fruit of a true testimony.
3. **John loved his disciples and knowing that his days were numbered sent them to gain their own testimony of Jesus.** The forerunner had already directed his disciples to follow Jesus. Unfortunately, some lingered behind not being able to see beyond John. John must have recognized that his days were numbered, and his disciples needed to be under the tutelage of the true Master. Elder McConkie taught, **“Why did John send two of his disciples to Jesus to ask if he were the promised Messiah? Any inference that the Baptist was uncertain or doubtful in his own mind, as to the identity and mission of the Master, is totally unwarranted. In reality, the imprisoned Elias and forerunner of our Lord was using this means to persuade his disciples to forsake him and follow Jesus.”** (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1: The Gospels, Bruce R. McConkie, page 261).
4. **John wanted Jesus to become the Messiah that people expected and posed the questions to motivate Jesus.** This is a horrible theory, and would place John at total odds with the will and desires of God. It as though John would be trying to force Jesus to conform to his will. In spite of its obvious falsehood, even the famed Canon Farrar seems to like this theory. He wrote, **“It was about this time, possibly even on this same day, that our Lord received a short but agitated message from His own great Forerunner, John the Baptist. Its brevity added to the sense of**

doubt and sadness which it breathed...Some have indeed imagined that the message was merely intended to satisfy the doubts of the Baptist's jealous and disheartened followers; some, that his question only meant, 'Art Thou indeed the Jesus to whom I bore my testimony?' Some, that the message implied no latent hesitation, but was intended as a timid suggestion that the time was now come for Jesus to manifest Himself as the Messiah of His nations theocratic hopes – perhaps even as a gentle rebuke to Him for allowing His friend and forerunner to languish in a dungeon, and not exerting on his behalf the miraculous power of which these rumors told." (The Story of a Beautiful Life: Farrar's Life of Christ, The New 20th Century Edition, 1900, Canon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., pages 189-190).

5. **John was impatient and wanted to hurry along Jesus' work.** While it is true that the scriptures speak of the Lord hastening His work, it is always done according to His time table. This theory would imply that John wanted to force the Lord's time table. This is not the behavior of a true prophet, and John was a true and faithful prophet. Barclay wrote, "It may be that John's question was the question of impatience. His message had been a message of doom (Matthew 3:7-12). The axe was at the root of the tree; the winnowing process had begun; the divine fire of cleansing judgment had begun to burn. It may be that John was thinking: 'When is Jesus going to start on action? When is he going to blast his enemies? When is the day of God's holy destruction to begin?'" (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 3).

Most of these theories are incorrect and are based on a poor understanding of the gospel plan. John never wavered in his faith. He was a prophet. He saw things that were often outside of our vision. Consequently, he knew the reason for things and why they were unfolding the way they were. He had accepted that he must diminish, and was willing to die in the cause of salvation. He also saw the Savior in his divine role, and would not have desired Him to change in any way. John understood that man is expected to bend to the gospel plan, and that the gospel plan does not bend to the desires and appetites of man.

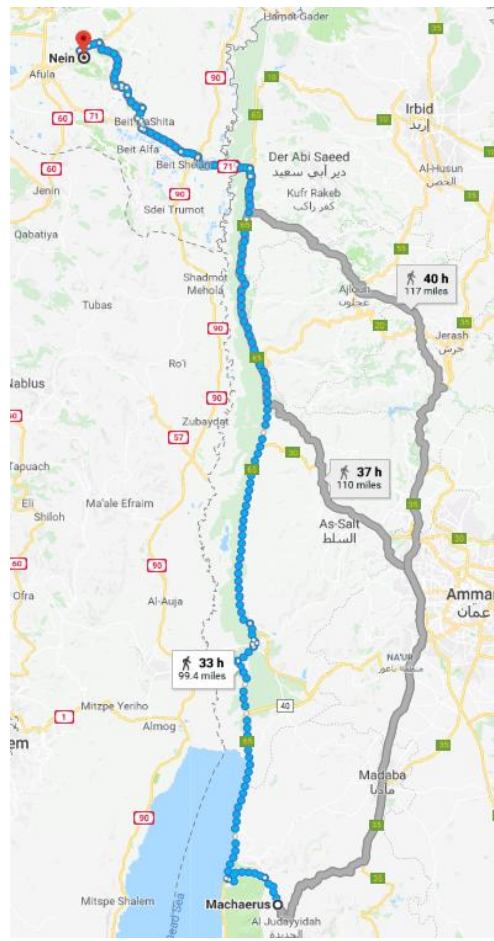


- 5 - **Art thou he that should come** – The phrase "he that should come" is translated from the Greek word "ἐρχομαι" or "erchomai". It means to come from one place to another, to appear, to make one's appearance, or to come before the public. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the phrase "Art thou he that should come" as "Art thou he that comes" (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 11, Verse 3, page 27). Fitzmyer translates this passage as "the 'One who is to come.' Lit, "the coming one" (ho erchomenos), clearly used here as a title. The question refers to John's statement in 3:16, "is coming" (erchetai, the same as the verb in the LXX of Mal 3:1)." (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 666). Most would assume that the "One" is a reference to the Messiah. While I believe that it is a clear reference to the Messiah, others have a slightly different take on the matter. Edersheim wrote, "Thus viewed, the question: 'Art thou the Coming One, or do we wait for another?' indicated faith both in the great promise and in Him to Whom it was addressed. The designation 'The Coming One' (habba), though a most truthful expression of Jewish expectancy, was not one ordinarily used for the Messiah. But it was invariably used in reference to the Messianic age..." (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 668). This may just be a matter of semantics.

Because most of the Christian world lacks a proper understanding of the Godhead, and the identity of Jehovah, the concept of the Messiah becomes confused. Fitzmyer offers an explanation that represents the confusion of the world. It is riddled with false understanding. He wrote that the chosen one "is scarcely used of the coming of Yahweh himself, in a sense found in Zech 14:5 (LXX, hexei). It could, of course, refer to a regal figure, whose coming is mentioned in Zech 9:9 (LXX erchetai). It could also have been understood of the coming of a prophet (like Moses) and the Messiahs, as in 1QS 9:11 ('d bw' nby' wmsyhy 'hrwn wysr'l, 'until the coming of a prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel'; see further 4QP Bless 3 ('d bw' msy h hsdq smh dwyd, "until the coming of the messiah of righteousness, the scion of David" (J.M. Allegro, JBL 75 [1956] 174-176); 4QTestim (4QJ75) 1-8, which quotes Deut 18:15-18 of the coming prophet (reflected in the NT in John 6:14). It could also refer to the coming of Yahweh's "messenger" (mal'iiki, LXX ton angelon mou) of Mal 3:1, who is eventually identified as Elijah, to be sent before "the great and awesome day of the Lord" (Mal 3:23 [4:5E]). Whether it may refer to the coming of an individual, apocalyptic Son of Man is a matter of no little dispute, since it is far from clear that there was a belief in such a figure in pre-Christian Palestinian Jewish tradition. Much of the dispute hangs on how one assesses the so-called parables of I

Enoch.” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 666). It is very apparent that the modern day Christians and the ancient Jews confused the Messiah with Elijah, the prophet of the restoration, John the Baptist, Jehovah and Jesus.

So, why did John’s disciples pose this question about the chosen One? **“John’s disciples have zeroed in to the heart and core of revealed religion.”** (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 129). The Messiah is the center of God’s plan for His children. Before the foundations of the earth, the great Jehovah accepted the role of Savior and Redeemer. Jehovah, the God of the Old Testament, is the Son of God, the Father. In a selfless act of free will, Jehovah offered to be the Savior of all mankind. He was chosen or anointed to that end. Hence the Jewish word “Messiah” means “anointed one”.



From the time of Adam, mortal men have looked forward to the coming of the chosen One. Prophets and inspired men have spoken of the time when the Messiah would come into mortality and bring salvation to all mankind. The great Jehovah came in the meridian of time, and was given the mortal name Joshua or Jesus. Jesus is the One promised to come. Knowing that Jesus is the promised Messiah is the center of our religion and salvation. It is a question that all men and women need to ask at some point in life. Is Jesus the Son of God? Is He the promised Redeemer? The answer is the foundation to a testimony and conversion. Barclay wrote, **“Some people think that the question was asked, not for John’s sake at all, but for the sake of his disciples. It may be that when John and his disciples talked in prison, the disciples questioned whether Jesus was really he who was to come, and John’s answer was: ‘If you have any doubts, go and see what Jesus is doing and your doubts will be at an end.’ If that is the case, it was a good answer. If anyone begins to argue with us about Jesus, and to question his supremacy, the best of all answers is not to counter argument with argument, but to say, ‘Give your life to him; and see what he can do with it.’ The supreme argument for Christ is not intellectual debate, but experience of his changing power.”** (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, pages 2-3)

“The question has been asked: it is a fair and proper inquiry; the issue is before the whole multitude; and Jesus will answer it – answer it in a way that no mortal impostor could. He will in word and in deed that he is indeed the One of whom they speak.” (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 128). Imbedded in Jesus’ example is a pattern for our own testimony. Building faith in Jesus and the doctrines He teaches requires more than talk. We must act upon the word. In other words, a testimony comes after we have acted upon the word. Jesus answered the disciples question with action. He didn’t just declare Himself to be the Messiah, He performed the works of the Messiah.

John had spoken of the Messiah. He had surely bore testimony of Jesus, but his disciples still lacked their own spiritual confirmation. **“What can John do more than he has done? What more can he say than to them he hath said? Clearly there is only one remaining hope. John’s disciples must come under the spell of Jesus’ voice; they must feel the sweet spirit that comes forth from him; they must see his works, hear him teach the gospel, hear his voice testify of his own divine Sonship. They have heard John; let them now hear Jesus.”** (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 128). We too must walk in His path in order to truly know him. We must seek Him out and receive our own witness. John’s disciple were evidently unable to believe in Jesus solely because of John’s word. They needed to know for themselves. Consequently, the two disciples journeyed 99.4 miles from Machærus to Nain, the presumed location of Jesus at the time. **“Finding Jesus and the throngs who hear his words and whose sick he heals, they identify themselves; ‘John Baptist hath sent us unto thee,’ they say. Then comes the great question, the question upon which their salvation rests, the question that all investigators must answer for themselves: ‘Art thou he of whom it is written in the prophets that he should come, or do we look for another?’ ‘Art thou the Son of God who shall atone for the sins of the world, as promised by all the holy prophets since the world began – including John who sent us – or is our Messiah, yet to come in another**

day to another people? We have heard John’s witness.’ ” (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 128).

6 - do we look for another – The phrase “do we look” is translated from the Greek word “προσδοκᾶω” or “prosdokaō”. It means to expect, to look for, or wait for. The phrase “for another” is translated from the Greek word “ἕτερος” or “heteros”. It means the other, another, or other. Fitzmyer’s analysis of the translation is worth looking at. He translated the passage as “do we look for someone else. The preferred reading (of mss. D, N, and the Koine text tradition) is *allon*, meaning “another” of the same kind. Some mss. in Hesychian tradition read rather *heteron*, which, strictly speaking, would mean “another” of a different kind. The latter is suspect, however, because of its possible harmonization by scribes with Matt 11: 3. In this period of Greek the two words were often used indiscriminately.” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 667). We might infer that the question is “do we look for a different kind of Messiah, or are you the kind of Messiah we should have expected?”



The disciples of John were seeking truth, but had not yet fully found it. **“Two followers of John the Baptist were apparently having a difficult time shifting over to their new Master, so John sent them to watch Jesus and return and report to him what they had seen and heard. This was likely an object lesson to help those who disciples find their Savior. ‘While in prison, John sent two of his disciples to inquire of Jesus to reassure their faith.’ ”** (The Four Gospels - Verse by verse, D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, pages 257-258). They obeyed John, which is not surprising since they were bound to him. They traveled a long distance to Jesus in order to ask Him the simple question; Are you the Messiah? Or should we be seeking out another? **“Jesus did not directly answer the question. He showed the messengers. He let them see with their own eyes, some of the works of which hitherto they had only heard by the hearing of the ear. And then, with a reference to the 61st chapter of Isaiah, He bade them take back to their master the message, that blind men saw, and lame walked, and lepers were cleansed...”** (The Story of a Beautiful Life: Farrar’s Life of Christ, The New 20th Century Edition, 1900, Canon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., page 192). One of the signs of the

Messiah, as prophesied by ancient prophets, was the manner of miracles He would perform. Isaiah recorded, “**The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound**” (Isaiah 61:1). The disciples recognized the signs and knew that they need not seek another. They had found the Messiah.

- 7- **Go and shew** – The word “Go” is translated from the Greek word “πορεύω” or “poreuō”. It means to lead over, carry over, or transfer. The word “shew” is translated from the Greek word “ἀπαγγέλλω” or “apaggellō”. It means to bring tidings, bring word, report, proclaim, to make known openly, or declare. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the phrase “Go and shew” as “Go and tell” (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 11, Verse 4, page 27).

With great compassion, Jesus inherently understood the needs of those around Him. He knew why John had sent his disciples to Him, and He knew what was needed. He acted with inspiration and authority. **“The abrupt query of John’s disciples is left unanswered for the time being as far as spoken words are concerned. Jesus lets them listen to his sermons and see his miracles.”** (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 129).

Jesus healed the sick, caused the blind to see, made the lame walk, raised the dead, and defied mortal understanding with miracles. This He did in their sight. The disciples of John stood witness. They must have marveled at the first miracle, and then stood amazed as His works continued seemingly without end. Then came the question from the master, **“What think ye, am I not he? Return and tell John what you have seen, and buoy up his spirit, in the prison of his depression, with the assurance that you now believe him because ye have seen the works I do.”** (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 129).

- 8- **things** – The phrase “those things which” is translated from the Greek word “ὅς” or “hos”. It means who, which, what, or that.

These ‘things’ refer to the mighty works, words and miracles that Jesus performed. The use of the word “things” is a seeming gross understatement for the majesty of Jesus’ actions.

- 9- **which ye do hear** – The phrase “ye do hear” is translated from the Greek word “ἀκούω” or “akouō”. It means to hear.

We often focus on the miracles of Jesus, but what is even more important are the words He spoke. While His healings, as miraculous as they were, brought relief to the recipients mortal existence, they were not so great as His spiritual healing which is eternal in nature. The words of Jesus, when heard with spiritual faculties, brings salvation to the soul. This is the greatest miracle of all. This is why the doctrines of Christ are referred to as the “Gospel”, or “Good News”. All our souls are lost without His help. The “Good News” is that He exists and is mighty to save. Salvation is the greatest of His miracles. Perhaps that is why the records included the preaching or “evangelizing” of the poor in the list of miracles. Edersheim wrote, **“The messengers came just as He was engaged in healing body and soul. Without interrupting His work, or otherwise noticing their inquiry, He bade them tell John for answer they had seen and heard, and that ‘the poor’ are evangelized.”** (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 669). Once the good news of Jesus is heard, and spiritually confirmed, miracles are made possible.

- 10- **see** – The word “see” is translated from the Greek word “βλέπω” or “blepō”. It means to see or discern of the bodily eye.

The disciples of John personally experienced the works of Jesus. They were witnesses of who He is and His great work. They were privileged to be special witnesses of the work of salvation. They saw with their own eyes.

- 11- **The blind receive their sight** – The word “blind” is translated from the Greek word “τυφλός” or “typhlos”. It means physically blind or mentally blind. The phrase “receive their sight” is translated from the Greek word “ἀναβλέπω” or “anablepō”. It means to look up or to recover (lost) sight. Fitzmyer translated this passage as, **“blind people recovering their sight. Interpreters debate whether Jesus’ words here allude to Isa 61:1 or 35:5. Luke writes typhloi anablepousin, ‘(the) blind see again.’ These words are close to the LXX of Isa 61:1; typhlois anablepsin, ‘sight for (the) blind,’ a phrase that is not found in the MT. Some think that Jesus’ words allude rather to Isa. 35:5, which agrees with them in sense, but not in exact terminology, tote anolchithisontai ophthalmal typhon, ‘then the eyes of (the) blind will be opened.’ In either case the Isaian allusion would express the divine favor manifested toward the physically blind in the deeds of Jesus. But since Isa 61:1 has been quoted in a form somewhat like the LXX in 4:18, it should be so understood here.”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 668).



There are several Old Testament prophecies that tell of the Messiah restoring the sight of the blind. Below are a couple of examples;

“Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.” (Isaiah 35:5).

“And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.” (Isaiah 29:18).

“The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind: the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down: the Lord loveth the righteous:” (Psalms 146:8)

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

- 12 - the lame walk** – The word “lame” is translated from the Greek word “χωλός” or “chōlos”. It means lame, deprived of a foot, or maimed. The word “walk” is translated from the Greek word “περιπατέω” or “peripateō”. It means to walk, to make one’s way, progress, or to make due use of opportunities.

Though this passage is quite literal, as Jesus did cause the lame to walk, there is a symbolic message as well. Walking is symbolic of our ability to act and do. It symbolizes our freedom to choose and perform. Being lame symbolizes restrictions to these abilities and freedoms. Our freedoms are suppressed or restricted when we sin. We become spiritually lame. Jesus has the unique ability to forgive sins, and restore spiritual freedom.

- 13 - the lepers are cleansed** – The word “lepers” is translated from the Greek word “λεπρός” or “lepros”. It means scaly, rough, leprous, or affected with leprosy. The word “cleansed” is translated from the Greek “καθαρίζω” or “katharizō”. It means to make clean, cleanse, or cure.

Lepers are symbolic of sin, and more especially the fall of Adam, which brought about the deterioration and eventual death of the body. The scriptures teach that **“Adam fell that men might be... And the Messiah cometh in the fulness of time, that he may redeem the children of men from the fall.”** (2nd Nephi 2:25-26). Christ literally healed lepers, a disease that the Jews had no cure for. It was miraculous. In like fashion, Jesus has redeemed all mankind from physical death. Through Him all mankind shall be resurrected, overcoming death.

- 14 - the deaf hear** – The word “deaf” is translated from the Greek word “κωφός” or “kōphos”. It means blunted, dull, dumb, lame in tongue, dull in hearing, or deaf. The word “hear” is translated from the Greek word “ἀκούω” or “akouō”. It means to be endowed with the faculty of hearing, or not deaf. Fitzmyer translates this passage as the **“deaf hearing again. Jesus’ words seem to allude to Isa 35:5, which in the LXX reads, kai ota kophon akousontai, ‘and the ears of (the) deaf will hear.’ Luke has not yet reported the cure of a deaf person.”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 668).

Being deaf is symbolic of not being able to hear the Holy Ghost. As we rely on the arm of flesh, and our own intelligence, we reject the notion that spiritual things even existed. We become deaf to the spirit. As we humble ourselves, and seek the Lord, our ability to hear the spirit is increased. Through Christ the deaf can hear.



- 15 - the dead are raised up** – The word “dead” is translated from the Greek word “νεκρός” or “nekros”. It means one that has breathed his last breath, lifeless, deceased, departed, or dead. The word phrase “are raised up” is translated from the Greek word “ἐγείρω” or “egeirō”. It means to arouse from sleep, awake, or to arouse from the sleep of death; recall the dead to life. Fitzmyer translates this passage as the **“dead being raised to life. These words allude to Isa 26:19, which in the LXX reads, anasthsontai hoi nekroi, ‘the dead will rise.’ Luke’s form of the saying uses the verb egeirontai. This verse explains in part the introduction of the raising of the son of the widow of Nain (7:11-17).”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 668).

The New Testament has relatively few accounts of Jesus raising someone from the dead. **“Apparently many dead were raised, not just the three mentioned in the gospels.”** (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1: The Gospels, Bruce R. McConkie, page 262). The fact that Jesus raised people from the dead appears to be far more common than the record shows. There are several passages that indicate, like this passage, that the dead were raised; an implication that there were many. Some scholars minimize this fact. Albright, a renowned biblical scholar, wrote, **“In the Old Testament and the Orient generally, the expression ‘dead’ can often mean ‘dying.’”**

(Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 136). Jesus' ability to raise the dead is evident and certain. There is no need to understate this fact.

Jesus' ability to raise the dead, is a foreshadowing of His ability to offer resurrection to all who have died. Through Jesus, all mankind will live eternal lives.

- 16 - the poor have the gospel preached to them** – The word “poor” is translated from the Greek word “πτωχός” or “ptōchos”. It means reduced to beggary, begging, or asking alms. It also means to be destitute of wealth, influence, position or honor. The phrase “have the gospel preached to them” is translated from a single Greek word “εὐαγγελίζω” or “euaggelizō”. It means to bring good news, or to announce glad tidings. Fitzmyer translates the passage as “good news being preached to the poor. Lit. ‘the poor are evangelized.’ The words are a clear allusion to Isa 61:1, *euangelisasthai ptochoi* (LXX). The favor of which Isaiah spoke is being realized in the preaching and teaching of Jesus.” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 668).



For man to fully partake of the atonement of Jesus Christ, he must humble himself and learn of the doctrines and ordinances associated with salvation. The poor are generally synonymous with the humble. It is of little wonder that Jesus was teaching the doctrines of salvation to the humble poor.

It is interesting that one of the prophecies of the second coming of Jesus is the teaching of the gospel to the poor. Modern day revelation teaches, “**And the poor and the meek shall have the gospel preached unto them, and they shall be looking forth for the time of my coming, for it is nigh at hand—**” (Doctrine and Covenants 35:15).

- 17 - blessed** – The word “blessing” is translated from the Greek word “μακάριος” or “makarios”. It means blessed and happy.

An ancient form of Hebrew writing called a “Beatitude” generally starts with the word blessed. Typically, it describes a condition that qualifies a person for a blissful consequence. Fitzmyer explained, “**Blessed, indeed, is... Lit. ‘And blessed is...’ Of the sixty-five beatitudes in the Greek Bible, only this one and that in 14:14 are introduced by kai, “and.” Cf. Job 5:17, makarios de. Whereas a beatitude normally has a certain independence as an exclamation, the connection provided by “and” in this case makes Jesus’ comment about John all the more significant.**” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 668).

- 18 - not be offended in me** – The term “be offended” is translated from the Greek word “σκανδαλίζω” or “skandalizō”. It means to put a stumbling block or impediment in the way, upon which another may trip and fall. Fitzmyer translates this passage as “**who is not shocked at me. The beatitude is formulated in the singular, not in the plural, as is more usual; so too in Matt 11:6. It is, however, intended to be generic, as is made clear by the conj. hos ean. Jesus thus utters a beatitude over the person who properly understands his real identity and finds no “stumbling block” (skandalon) in him because of preconceived ideas.**” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 668). Similarly, Albright translates this passage as “**Literally, an occasion of offense, by misunderstanding Jesus’ Messianic work.**” (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 136).

The scriptures teach of offences as a sign of the coming of the Messiah. Isaiah describes the Messiah as a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. He wrote, “**And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.**” (Isaiah 8:14-15).

A rock is used as a symbol for firmness, strength, and hardness. Repentant souls are often described as having a soft heart, while unrepentant souls are said to have hard hearts or hearts of stone. Ezekiel wrote, “**And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh:**” (Ezekiel 11:19). One’s heart represents a person’s desires and wants. A stony heart is one that cannot be changed. Offenses are closely related to this concept of stony hearts. When we are set on our own desires and wants, we are easily offended by anything that is contrary to us. This even applies to things that are actually in our best interest. When our hearts are hardened it is difficult to listen to reason or the truth.



The ancient Jews thought they knew who the Messiah was. In their infinite wisdom, they had defined the Messiah according to their own expectations and desires. They grossly misunderstood the words of the prophets, and expected something quite different than Jesus. Elder Talmage taught, “**Misunderstanding is the prelude to offense. Gaged by the standard of the then current conception of what the Messiah would be, the work of Christ must have appeared to many as failure; and those who were looking for some sudden manifestation of His power in the conquest of Israel’s oppressors and the rehabilitation of the house of David in worldly splendor, grew impatient, then doubtful; afterward they took offense and were in danger of turning in open rebellion against their Lord. Christ has been an offender to many because they, being out of harmony with His words and works, have of themselves taken offense.**” (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 188). The pride of man leads to anger and frustration with anything contrary to their own beliefs and desires.

John the Baptist set a beautiful example of obedience to the will of the Lord. He accepted the fact that he was confined to prison, and took no offence to the fact that it was the will of God. In fact, he continued to serve in his capacity by sending his disciples to Jesus to complete their conversion. Many of us become offended when trials and difficulties enter into our lives, and God

seemingly allows our suffering. Many blame God for the difficulties in their lives, others become so offended that they deny His very existence.



In this chapter, Jesus teaches that we should be like John and not take offense to Him or His teachings. McConkie taught, “**You yourselves also will be blessed with the saints if ye believe my words and are not offended by the strong doctrine that I teach.**” (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 129).

Talmage gives a nice conclusion, “**The concluding part of our Lord’s message to the imprisoned Baptist, in answer to the latter’s inquiry, was, ‘Blessed is he whosoever is not offended in me.’** In passing it may be well to observe that whatever of reproof or rebuke these words may connote, the lesson was given in the gentlest way and in the form most easy to understand. As Deems has written, Instead of saying ‘Woe to him who is offended in me,’ He puts it in the softer way ‘Blessed is he who is not offended.’ In our English version of the Holy Bible the word ‘offend’ and its cognates, are used in place of several different expressions which occur in the original Greek. Thus, actual infractions of the law, sin, and wickedness in general are all called offenses, and the perpetrators of such are guilty offenders who deserve punishment. In other instances even the works of righteousness are construed as causes of offense to the wicked; but this is so, not because the good works were in any way offenses against law or right, but because the law-breaker takes offense thereat. The convicted felon, if unrepentant and still of evil mind, is offended and angry at the law by which he has been brought to justice; to him the law is a cause of offense. In a very significant sense Jesus Christ stands as the

greatest offender in history; for all who reject His gospel, take offense thereat. On the night of His betrayal Jesus told the apostles that they would be offended because of Him (Matt. 26:31; see also verse 33). The Lord’s personal ministry gave offense not alone to Pharisees and priestly opponents, but to many who had professed belief in Him (John 6:61; compare 16:1). The gospel of Jesus Christ is designated by Peter as “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient” (1 Peter 2:8; compare Paul’s words, Romans 9:33). Indeed blessed is he to whom the gospel is welcome, and who finds therein no cause for offense.” (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 196).

The Book of Mormon teaches that there is opposition in all things. The greater the righteousness, the greater evil will oppose. We see this in the lives of all the prophets. We see it in our own lives, and those who strive to be like Jesus. It is this way by design. As opposition comes, we choose to become better for it or bitter over it. Jesus knew and understand this principle well. He even warned those of us living in the days following the restoration. Jesus taught of our day, “**And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.**” (Matthew 24:10).

19 - departed – The word “departed” is translated from the Greek word “πορεύω” or “poreuō”. It means to lead over, carry over or transfer. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the phrase “as they departed” as “as these were going away” (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 11, Verse 7, page 27).

If the two disciples of John were converted to Jesus, why did they depart and return to John? Why not stay with the true Master? First of all, Jesus directed them to return to John. A true disciple would follow His Masters direction. They were to go and tell John of their conversion. Second, it could very well be that Jesus understood that John depended on his friends for food and water. These two disciples were quite probably part of the circle of friends that sustained John. He may also have understood that John needed more than just food and water. These disciples would provide John with physical and spiritual fellowship; righteous friends on dark days. Elder McConkie wrote, “**With this, the two disciples – who we must believe were now fully converted – left to make their wearisome way back to the south of Perea where an evil Antipas held John as a prisoner in the cause of righteousness. We cannot but feel that their return southward was attended with a spirit of rejoicing that had not manifested itself in the long journey to see Him of whom the meridian Elias so fervently testified.**” (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 129).

We must also assume that Jesus didn’t just dismiss these two disciples without direction or encouragement. We would also assume that He took opportunity to send word to John. They loved each other, and they were cousins. Of course, the scriptural record is silent on this matter. Farrar wrote, “**We may easily suppose, though nothing more is told us, that the disciples did not depart without receiving from Jesus other words of private affection and encouragement for the grand prisoner whose end was now so nearly approaching – words which would be to him sweeter than the honey which had sustained his hunger in the wilderness, dearer than water springs in the dry ground.**” (The Story of a Beautiful Life: Farrar’s Life of Christ, The New 20th Century Edition, 1900, Canon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., page 193).

We know that the disciples of John departed with the direction to “shew” that which they saw. In other words, bear testimony of the works of Jesus and the divinity of His nature. Chrysostom wrote, “**For the matter indeed of John’s disciples had been ordered well, and they were gone away assured by the miracles which had just been performed; but there was need after that of remedy as regarded the people. For although they could not suspect any thing of the kind of their own master, the common people might from the enquiry of John’s disciples form many strange suspicions, not knowing the mind with which he sent his disciples.**” (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 531).

20 - multitudes – The word “multitudes” is translated from the Greek word “ὄχλος” or “ochlos”. It means a crowd, or a casual collection of people who have flocked together in some place. It is typically used in reference to common people. As a rule of thumb, the ancient Jews used the term multitudes to refer to thousands, rather than hundreds. It would have been a rather large group.

After John’s disciples left, Jesus turned to the multitude and bore testimony of John and His sacred role. Farrar wrote, “**And no sooner had the disciples departed, than He who would not seem to be guilty of idle flattery, but yet wished to prevent His hearers from cherishing one depreciatory thought of the great prophet of the Desert, uttered over His friend and forerunner, in language of rhythmic and perfect loveliness, the memorable eulogy, that he was indeed the promised Voice in the new dawn of a nobler day, the greatest of all God’s herald messengers – the Elias who – according to the last word of ancient prophecy, was to precede the Advent of the Messiah.**” (The Story of a Beautiful Life: Farrar’s Life of Christ, The New 20th Century Edition, 1900, Canon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., page 193).



21 - **concerning John** – The word “concerning” is translated from the Greek word “περί” or “peri”. It means about, concerning, on account of, because, around, or near.

Perhaps there were people who questioned John’s role. He was imprisoned, and deemed a criminal. I suppose that there may have been those who questioned if he was a prophet after all. The Jews had experienced several false prophets and false Messiahs in their recent past. They had each disappointed many followers with deadly consequences. Jesus took time to assure the multitude that John was the real deal. Elder McConkie explains, “**Did the winds of false doctrine, and the hurricanes of disbelief of your rulers, cause him to so much as sway like a reed before them? And they answered him, No.**” (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 129).

22 - **went ye out into the wilderness to see** – The word “wilderness” is translated from the Greek word “ἐρημος” or “erēmos”. It means solitary, lonely, desolate, or uninhabited. Fitzmyer translates this passage as “**What did you go out to the desert to look at? The reference to the desert recalls 1:80; 3:2.7. Here the first question uses *theasthai*, ‘look at’ (as in Matt 11 :7); the verb in the two following questions will simply be *idein*, ‘see.’ It is possible to take the first word if in each of the questions in the sense of ‘why’ and to punctuate the question differently: ‘Why did you go out to the desert? To look at a reed ...?’ This is, in fact, the way the sayings of Jesus preserved in Gos. Thom. § 78: ‘Why did you go out into the field? To see reed shaken by the wind? To see a man clothed in soft garments? [Look, your] kings and your great one (*megistanos*) are the ones clothed in soft [garments], and they [shall] not be able to know the truth.’ The saying preserved in the Coptic Gospel thus eliminates all reference to John, reduces the questions to two, and adds an obviously later Gnostic ending.” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 673).**

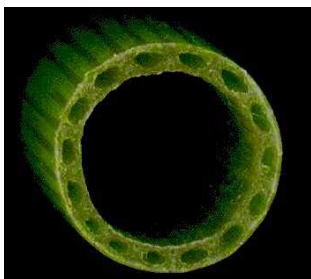


Albright points out that the word “see” is not translated from the traditional Greek word for “see”. “**The Greek word (*theasthal*), from which the word “theater” is derived, means to gaze at a show or demonstration.**” (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 136). It is almost as if Jesus was asking if they went into the desert to see John put on a show. Or, did they go into the desert for other

reasons. Did they go to be spiritually fed? “**Whatever else the people flocked out to the desert to see, they certainly did not go to see an ordinary person. The very fact that they did go out in their crowds showed how extraordinary John was, for no one would cross the street, let alone tramp into the desert, to see a commonplace kind of person. Whatever else they went out to see, they did not go to see a weak vacillator.**” (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 5).

Symbolically, the people had left the world, and all that it stands for, to go into the desert; a place of solitude. They were seeking the peace that comes from God, and it was not found in their world. The symbol of the wilderness is interesting. “**In Jewish tradition, the wilderness has been both a positive and negative symbol. On the one hand, it has represented freedom from Egyptian slavery, the revelation at Sinai, the covenant with God...On the other hand, the desert represents danger and vulnerability. It is a place ruled by thirst, beasts, and outlaws. The Torah describes it as ‘an empty howling waste’.**” (Encyclopedia of Traditional Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, page 192).

23 - **reed** – The word “reed” is translated from the Greek word “κάλαμος” or “kalamos”. It means a reed, or something made from a reed. “**‘Reed’ is a general term for any tall, hard, hollow-stemmed grass or cane that grew along bodies of water in the Holy Land.**” (The Four Gospels - Verse by verse, D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, page 258).



Jesus, who was a master teacher, frequently used familiar items from the local culture to convey ideas and precepts. In this case, Jesus uses a reed. Reeds had a thick stem that appeared strong, but in reality they were hollow inside. They were consequently flexible and readily swayed in the wind, bending to the pressures placed upon it. The people were familiar with reeds and their symbolism.

Jesus, therefore, asks the question, “You people traveled into the desert, at great distance, to see John. Why?” “**Did they go out to see a reed shaken by the wind? That can mean one of two things: (a) Down by the banks of the Jordan the long cane grass grew; and the phrase a shaken reed was a kind of proverb for the commonest of sights. When the people flocked to see John, were they going out to see something as ordinary as the reeds swaying in the wind on Jordan’s banks? (b) A shaken reed can mean a weak vacillator, one who could no more stand foursquare to the winds of danger than a reed by the river’s bank could stand straight when the wind blew.**” (The Gospel of Matthew,

Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 5). In other words, was John just another man doing what other men have done, or was he an imposter who would be toppled at the first sign of pressure. John was neither, and the people knew it. “**Surely it was, that he was the opposite of one swayed by popular opinion, ‘a reed shaken by the wind’.** And when they had come to him, what had they witnessed. Surely, his dress and food betokened the opposite of pampering or care of the body, such as they saw in the couriers of a Herod.” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 669).

John was faithful and firm in his faith in Jesus. Neither had Jesus forgotten John, as many Biblical scholars speculate. “**John knew who Jesus was; the Baptist was not wavering as a reed in the wind. While in Herod’s prison, angels sent by Jesus had ministered comfort and assurance to John, and immediately after John’s disciples left to report back to the Baptist, the Lord was to speak eloquently of the integrity and stability of the one who had baptized him. This act of sending his disciples to Jesus was in effect a final great testimony on John’s part that Jesus was the Lamb of God, for the Baptist knew that his disciples, seeing the Master personally and hearing his teachings, could not help but follow the greater light.**” (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1: The Gospels, Bruce R. McConkie, pages 261-262).



24 - shaken with the wind – The word “shaken” is translated from the Greek word “σαλεύω” or “saleuō”. It means a motion produced by winds, storms, or waves. It also means to agitate, or shake. The word “wind” is translated from the Greek word “άνεμος” or “anemos”. It means wind; a violent agitation and stream of air. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the phrase “shaken with the wind” as “shaken by the wind” (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 11, Verse 7, page 27). “The Hebrew word for wind, ruah, also means ‘spirit,’ ‘ghost,’ ‘enthusiasm,’ And ‘breath.’ It refers to natural forces as well as divine.” (Encyclopedia of Traditional Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, page 193). Fitzmyer translates this passage as “A reed swaying in the wind? I.e. something quite ordinary, not really worth so long a trip; something frail and fickle. That implies that John is in prison precisely because he was not such. This and the following contrast undoubtedly play on John’s relation to the tetrarch Herod (3: 19).” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, pages 673-674).



The wind symbolizes “The spirit, messengers from God, and the sustaining life of the spirit.” (An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, J.C. Cooper, page 192). The introduction of this symbol creates a total contrast to the reed. A reed sways under any influence, while the wind is not controlled or influenced by mortal men. We cannot dictate when it blows or its direction. This is controlled only by heaven and earth. A weak reed is especially affected, even unto breaking. This was not John. He was the messenger of the Almighty. He was the forerunner of the Messiah, and was chosen for his firmness. Though he was acted upon by heaven and man alike, he did not falter or weaken under the weight of his circumstances.

Barclay theorizes that the swaying by the wind is a symbol for being fickle. The word “fickle” means changing frequently, especially as regards one’s loyalties, interests, or affection. It is a word that indicates being unsure. John was anything but fickle. Barclay wrote regarding John that there was “no vacillating, swaying character men went out to see like a swaying reed, but a man immovable as a mighty tree. They had not gone out to see some soft effeminate soul, like the silk-clad courtiers of the royal palace. What then had they gone to see?” (The Gospel of Luke, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 90). They went anticipating a prophet of God. They expected a mighty man of Israel.

25 - A man clothed – The word “clothed” is translated from the Greek word “ἀμφιέννυμι” or “amphiennymi”. It means to put on, or to clothe. “As the expression goes, clothes make the man – and woman. A person’s clothing symbolizes vocation and material circumstances, and in many traditional societies, religious affiliation, nationality, ritual status, age, and marital status as well.” (Encyclopedia of Traditional Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, pages 34-35).

In the days of Jesus, there was a definite separation between casts. The rich dressed in materials that were unaffordable to the average man. They wore imported linens and elaborately woven fabrics. They preferred the soft and comfortable clothing. The richer one become, the more expensive his attire became. The poor on the other hand, wore the cheap fabrics. They wore rough and coarse fabrics because they could afford them. They generally lacked color and surely lacked intricate detail.

Jesus turns the conversation regarding John’s divine call to the subject of cast. The world sees power and authority in the form of worldly status. The Lord on the other hand doesn’t see it that way at all. His authority has nothing to do with money or wealth. In fact, most prophets have only the worldly means to accomplish the work assigned to them by heaven. Jesus seems intent to point out that John came poor in worldly wealth, but rich spiritually. “Was John clothed in the princely garments of Antipas, and Philip, and Archelaus, the royal sons of the wretched man who sat on the throne of Israel in the day I made flesh my tabernacle, which sons thereafter reigned in their father’s stead? Or did he come in the rough and prophetic garb of an Elijah, from the peasant home of poor Judean folk, to whom all the graces of a kingly court were foreign?” (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 130). Jesus helped the people see that John fit the pattern of the Old Testament prophet. He quickly helped them recognize the similarities between John and Elijah, one of the most revered prophets by the Jews.



Centuries later, people haven’t changed much. We still tend to gauge people by their attire and material possession. Often we make unwarranted parallels between material wealth and spirituality. We assume that the rich are somehow blessed because of righteous doing. While it is true that God may bless a man with material possessions, this is not necessarily the norm. Riches, when bestowed by heaven, come when there is divine purpose. The poor are generally deprived because those that have material wealth fail to share it. They stockpile more than they need, while others struggle. Part of our mortal experience is to overcome selfishness. Apparently, John the Baptist figured this out. President George Albert Smith taught, “There is yet in the hearts of our people, although the reformation has done a great work, a spirit of selfishness. We have got to divest ourselves of this principle; we have got to become so perfectly stript of it that we will love the Lord our God with all our hearts and our neighbours as ourselves,

that our hearts will not be set upon our own property or upon the property of others, so as to covet the things that pertain to this world, and that, with our whole soul, mind, and strength, we will desire to serve the Lord our God, – that we would just as soon set fire to our own dwellings, sacrifice our property, and flee into the mountains, to dwell there in dens, caves, and holes, as did the ancients, as dwell in palaces and enjoy the soft raiment of kings.” (Journal of Discourses, Volume 5, George Albert Smith, November 1, 1857, pages 366-367).

- 26 - **soft raiment** – The word “soft” is translated from the Greek word “μαλακός” or “malakos”. It means soft, or soft to the touch. The word “raiment” is translated from the Greek word “ἱμάτιον” or “himation”. It means a garment, a cloak, a mantle, a tunic, or upper garment.

Soft raiment, or luxurious clothing, was a sign of wealth and power. When the people sought out John the Baptist in the wilderness, “Did they go out to see a man clothed in soft and luxurious garments? Such a man would be a courtier; and, whatever else John was, he was not a courtier. He knew nothing of the courtier’s art of the flattery of kings; he followed the dangerous occupation of telling the truth to kings. John was the ambassador of God, not the courtier of Herod.” (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 6). Humble clothing was a sign of a servant of God. In our day, the Lord directed, “And above all things, clothe yourselves with the bond of charity, as with a mantle, which is the bond of perfectness and peace.” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:125).

- 27 - **soft clothing** – The word “clothing” is translated from the Greek word “εἶς” or “eisi”. It means are, be, or were. It seems to indicate identity. Fitzmyer translates this passage as “A man dressed in fine robes? I.e. something perhaps worth the trip, but not usually found in the desert; something at any rate worth gazing at.” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 674). Albright translates it as “expensive clothing” (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 136).

John wore the clothing of a man living in the wild. He wore the clothing of a poor man. They consisted of camel skin, sackcloth, and leather. John’s lifestyle created circumstances conducive to humility and meekness. Chrysostom wrote, “For that he did not make himself a slave to luxury, his garb shews, and the wilderness, nor in the prison. Since, had he been minded to wear soft raiment, he would not have lived in the wilderness, nor in the prison, but in the king’s court: it being in his power, merely by keeping silence, to have enjoyed honour without limit.” (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 533).



- 28 - **kings’ house** – The word “kings” is translated from the Greek word “βασιλεύς” or “basileus”. It means leader of the people, prince, commander, lord of the land or king. The word “house” is translated from the Greek word “οἶκος” or “oikos”. It means a house, or any dwelling place. Fitzmyer translates this passage as “are found in palaces. Lit. ‘among royal (things),’ The neut. adj. with the art. (to basileion, either sg. or pl.) came in time to mean ‘the royal palace.’ It is supposed to connote the extreme of luxury, not usually associated with a desert. The phrase has been thought to be a reference to Essenes; but that is farfetched.” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 674).

The Palaces and Kings of the earth place themselves above others. Such circumstances lend themselves to pride and sin. Unfortunately, the Jews were not immune from these conditions. “The wealth of the rulers was displayed most conspicuously to the populace of Jerusalem in the glitter of the court.” (Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament period, Joachim Jeremias, page 87).

- 29 - **a prophet** – The word “prophet” is translated from the Greek word “προφήτης” or “prophētēs”. It means one who, moved by the Spirit of God and hence his organ or spokesman, solemnly declares to men what he has received by inspiration, especially concerning future events, and in particular such as relate to the cause and kingdom of God and to human salvation. Prophets are authorized representatives of God. They speak for Him, and act in His behalf. Prophets are called by divine means, and are never self proclaimed. Prophets speak as directed by God, regardless of the messages popularity. Most often, the word of God is unpopular with the world.

- 30 - **more than a prophet** – The word “more” is translated from the Greek word “περισσότερος” or “perissoteros”. It means exceeding some number or measure or rank or need. “But John was something more than a prophet. The Jews had, and still have, one settled belief. They believed that before the Messiah came, Elijah would return to herald his coming. To this day, when the Jews celebrate the Passover Feast, a vacant chair is left for Elijah. ‘Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes’ (Malachi 4:5). Jesus declared that John was nothing less than the divine herald whose duty and privilege it was to announce the coming of the Messiah. John was nothing less than the herald of God, and no man could have a greater task than that.” (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 6).

- 31 - **whom it is written** – The word “written” is translated from the Greek word “γράφω” or “graphō”. It means to write, with reference to the form of the letters. This phrase “whom it is written” is a declaration that prior prophecy has been issued on the matter.

- 32 - **Behold** – The word “behold” is translated from the Greek word “ἴδου” or “idou”. It means behold, lo, or see. It is a directive to give great attention to or observe with care. What follows, by definition, is of great importance to the listener.

- 33 - **I send** – The word “send” is translated from the Greek word “ἀποστέλλω” or “apostellō”. It means to order (one) to go to a place appointed. It means to send away or dismiss.

- 34 - **my messenger** – The word “messenger” is translated from the Greek word “ἄγγελος” or “aggelos”. It means a messenger, envoy, one who is sent, an angel, a messenger from God. “The words ‘my messenger’ in Hebrew are *malach-i*; the name of the prophet is one of his main messages.” (The Four Gospels - Verse by verse, D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, page 268). In a sense of sacred irony, the prophet Malachi (my messenger) declared several prophetic messages regarding none other than the Lord’s special preparatory messenger – John the Baptist. Malachi declared that John would prepare the way for the Promised Messiah. He wrote, “Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.” (Malachi 3:1). Malachi taught that John the Baptist would help fulfill the law and all the prophecies of the Old Testament. He wrote, “For the priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.” (Malachi 2:7).

So important was John’s role as the Lord’s messenger that the prophet Nephi even saw him in vision, nearly 600 years prior to John’s birth. Nephi recorded, “And I looked and beheld the Redeemer of the world, of whom my father had spoken; and I also beheld the prophet who should prepare the way before him. And the Lamb of God went

forth and was baptized of him; and after he was baptized, I beheld the heavens open, and the Holy Ghost come down out of heaven and abide upon him in the form of a dove." (1st Nephi 11:27).

It goes without saying that a messenger is one who carries a message. What specifically was John's message? Repent and be baptized for the Messiah is among us. He brings with Him salvation. John prepared those who demonstrated enough faith to listen for further light and knowledge. He helped them make and keep the covenant of baptism, preparatory to the gift of the Holy Ghost and additional covenants. John's work prepared men for the everlasting covenants that the Messiah would restore to the earth. The Lord taught Joseph Smith, "And even so I have sent mine everlasting covenant into the world, to be a light to the world, and to be a standard for my people, and for the Gentiles to seek to it, and to be a messenger before my face to prepare the way before me." (Doctrine & Covenants 45:9).

So how do you distinguish between a true messenger and a false one? A true messenger will always be true to his words, and his actions will always align with heaven. The Old Testament records, "A wicked messenger falleth into mischief: but a faithful ambassador is health." (Proverbs 13:17). John's trials, imprisonment, and suffering are a tribute to the fact that he was indeed a true messenger of the Lord. Perhaps his fate was required as a testimony to all the things he taught. They bear testimony that he was the messenger of the Lord.

35 - before thy face – The word "face" is translated from the Greek word "πρόσωπον" or "prosōpon". It means the face, the front of the human head, countenance or look. "Although Judaism has long subscribed to the principle of an invisible God...God's face symbolizes grace, favor, and glory." (Encyclopedia of Traditional Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin, Teutsch, pages 52-53). The restored gospel teaches that God is a celestial, holy man with an exalted body. We were created in His image, with the potential to become as He is. Therefore, we know that He has a face. Being before the face of God is an indication that what is transpiring is done with His express knowledge. This chapter says that His messenger, John the Baptist, was sent from before His face. This would mean that John was not only acting before God, but send under direction from Him. He was commissioned by God to perform his work. It doesn't necessarily mean that he had seen God the Father while in mortality.

36 - prepare thy way – The word "prepare" is translated from the Greek word "κατασκευάζω" or "kataskeuazō". It means to furnish, equip, prepare, or make ready.

People of all ages should listen to this plea, to prepare the way of the Lord. Though John was literally preparing for the Messiah's mortal ministry, we are all preparing for the day when we are called to leave this mortal sphere and progress towards our reunion with Deity. Preparations are similar no matter when you live. They consist of humility, faith, repentance, covenants and corresponding ordinances. Isaiah prophesied that John the Baptist would come into the desert preaching these concepts. He wrote, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." (Isaiah 40:3).

As Joseph Smith continued the work of restoration the Lord told him, "Thou art blessed, for thou shalt do great things. Behold thou wast sent forth, even as John, to prepare the way before me, and before Elijah which should come, and thou knewest it not." (Doctrine and Covenants 35:4). As Joseph served to prepare the earth for the Lord's second coming, we should all prepare ourselves, our children, and our friend to meet God.

37 - Verily – The word "verily" is translated from the Greek word "ἀμῆν" or "amēn". At the beginning of a discourse it means; surely, truly, or of a truth. Albright translates the word as "Truly (Gr, amen). A solemn affirmation of validity. It is common, in repetitive form, in John's gospel." (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 137). The word is used in association with covenants and oaths. When used at a beginning of a thought, it indicates that the contents are given under oath. When used at the end of a thought, it indicates that the thoughts are being sealed by an oath.

38 - I say unto you – The word "say" is translated from the Greek word "λέγω" or "legō". It means to say, speak, teach, exhort, advise, command or direct.

39 - Among them that are born of women – The word "born" is translated from the Greek word "γεννητός" or "gennētos". It means begotten or born. "This is a Semitic way of saying John the Baptist was one of the greatest prophets that ever lived." (The Four Gospels - Verse by verse, D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, page 258). "Born of a Jewish mother (1:57), John belongs to Israel of old and had no peer in it. 'Born of a woman' is an OT expression for pertinence to human race (see Job 14:1; 15:14; 25:4; the expression is also used in Qumran literature, IQS 11:21; IQH 13:14; 18:12-13,16,23-24). It is used of Jesus in Gal 4:4. For a reflection of this verse, see Gos. Thom. § 46a." (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 675).

40 - hath not risen – The word "risen" is translated from the Greek word "ἐγειρω" or "egeirō". It means to arouse, cause to rise, arouse from sleep, to awake, arouse from the sleep of death or to recall the dead to life.

In reference to this chapter, the phrase "hath not risen" refers to being raised from childhood or birth. No other person born on earth, to this point in history, has risen to such greatness as John. We believe the Savior's words because we know that He cannot lie, but we have no information that would support John's greatness. We understand that the call to be the forerunner of the Messiah was a great call by its very definition. Even so, we have no stories or recorded history on the life of John. We know that He baptized Jesus, and preached the good word to many. One would suspect that there is more to John's ministry than we have in our record. Orson Pratt taught, "Then there is still another record to come forth. John the Baptist is said by the highest authority to be one of the greatest Prophets ever born of a woman; but we have very little written in the Jewish record concerning him. We have a revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants concerning the record of John, that great Prophet. And we are promised that if we were faithful as a people, the fullness of the record of John shall hereafter be revealed to us. When we get this, I think we shall have still more knowledge in regard to doctrine and principle, and things that are great and marvelous, of which we know very little, if anything about." (Journal of Discourses, Volume 19, Orson Pratt, December 9, 1877, pages 219).



41 - a greater – The word “greater” is translated from the Greek word “μεῖζων” or “meizōn”. It means greater, larger, elder or stronger.

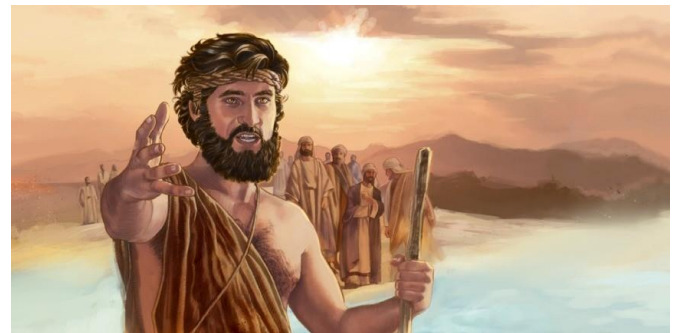
There may be many definitions of greatness. The world has its own slanted view of greatness, which typically includes wealth, fortune, and fame. Students of the gospel may have different values they would apply to defining greatness. Such values might be service, self sacrifice, spirituality, miracles, and calling. In the case of a prophet, many might expect that greatness would apply to the magnitude of miracles. Joseph Smith explained how John’s greatness is defined when he said, “**The question arose from the saying of Jesus—Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. How is it that John was considered one of the greatest prophets? His miracles could not have constituted his greatness.**

First, He was entrusted with a divine mission of preparing the way before the face of the Lord. Whoever had such a trust committed to him before or since? No man.

Secondly, He was entrusted with the important mission, and it was required at his hands, to baptize the Son of Man. Whoever had the honor of doing that? Whoever had so great a privilege and glory? Whoever led the Son of God into the waters of baptism, and had the privilege of beholding the Holy Ghost descend in the form of a dove, or rather in the sign of the dove, in witness of that administration? The sign of the dove was instituted before the creation of the world, a witness for the Holy Ghost, and the devil cannot come in the sign of a dove. The Holy Ghost is a personage, and is in the form of a personage. It does not confine itself to the form of the dove, but in the sign of the dove. The Holy Ghost cannot be transformed into a dove; but the sign of a dove was given to John to signify the truth of the deed, as the dove is an emblem or token of truth and innocence.

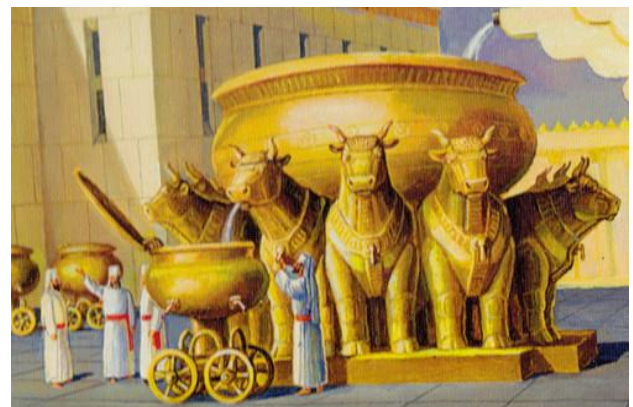
Thirdly, John, at that time, was the only legal administrator in the affairs of the kingdom there was then on the earth, and holding the keys of power. The Jews had to obey his instructions or be damned, by their own law; and Christ Himself fulfilled all righteousness in becoming obedient to the law which he had given to Moses on the mount, and thereby magnified it and made it honorable, instead of destroying it. The son of Zacharias wrested the keys, the kingdom, the power, the glory from the Jews, by the holy anointing and decree of heaven, and these three reasons constitute him the greatest prophet born of a woman.” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Selected and arranged by the Historian of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints - Joseph Fielding Smith, pages 275-276).

It could very well be that John’s greatness is measured by his calling rather than the acts he performed. This is not to minimize the faithful execution of that call, but rather to acknowledge that the call was actually greater than any other because it was the forerunner of Jesus. Chrysostom wrote, “**For as with kings, they who ride near the chariot, these are more illustrious than the rest, just so John also appears in his course near the Advent itself. See how He signified John’s excellency by this also; and not even here doth He stop, but adds afterwards His own suffrage as well.**” (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 534). Perhaps when we consider the greatness of John we focus too much on John himself and not the fact that it was Jesus that made him great. Like John, the closer we draw ourselves to the Savior, the greater we become; in ability, knowledge, and strength. “**To proclaim the Messiah’s advent is to make John’s ministry and vocation unique. But those who are incorporated into the Messiah’s Kingdom will be greater than John, who will not live to see that Kingdom’s inauguration.**” (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 137).



42 - Baptist – The word “Baptist” is translated from the Greek word “βαπτιστής” or “baptistēs”. It means a baptizer, or one who administers the rite of baptism. The word has its origin from the Greek word for “baptism”. The word “baptism” in Greek is “βάπτισμα” or “baptisma”. The Greek word means to immerse or submerge. By its very definition, baptism is not sprinkling or pouring water on someone. The symbolism for immersion is significant. Baptism is the symbolic burial of the natural man, who is brought forth as a new man dedicated to following Jesus. In similar fashion, it symbolizes the rebirth of the person being baptized. Like a physical birth, where a baby comes forth from their mother’s water (embryonic fluid), when a person is baptized he is symbolically reborn out of water. Symbolically, the baptized person is reborn as a son or daughter of Jehovah or Jesus. It also symbolizes the death and resurrection of Jesus, and the fact that we will all live again. These symbols are connected to eternal doctrines and principle. It would be difficult to think that baptism was introduced by John the Baptist.

Baptism was an ordinance established in the beginning. Adam was baptized, and all of his righteous posterity through the ages sought the ordinance of Baptism. “**It is true that in the translations of the books of the Old Testament, the ordinance of baptism is not clearly defined as an ordinance of the gospel. However in the writings of Moses found in the Pearl of Great Price, we discover that baptism was one of the first commandments given to Adam after he was driven from the Garden of Eden. We read in the Book of Moses that after Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden they were instructed by an angel who taught them the need of repentance and the remission of sins and that in due time the Savior would come to atone for their transgressions.**” (Answers to Gospel Questions, Joseph Fielding Smith, Book 5, Section 3, pages 10-11). Though we do not readily see the ordinance of baptism in the Old Testament, there is evidence of it throughout its history. The ancient Israelites were instructed of the Lord to construct a large brazen sea (or font) supported by twelve brazen oxen. This large font was placed in the temple courtyard, and served as a font for washing. This is another word for baptism. President Joseph Fielding Smith taught, “**There are several reasons why baptism would not be mentioned in the Old Testament. First, baptism is a Greek word meaning to dip or immerse. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, therefore the word baptism would not be found in the original writings. There are some passages in the Old Testament that could be interpreted to refer to baptism such as washing and cleansings. The font in the temple of Solomon was evidently used for this purpose.**” (Answers to Gospel Questions, Joseph Fielding Smith, Book 2, Section 13, page 65).



By the time of Jesus, the Jews practiced baptism, but it was an apostate form of the original ordinance. They built fonts called “Mikvahs” that they used to ceremonially wash in. This was done by immersion. They washed frequently as they became ritually impure. Coming in contact with a dead body required immersion in a Mikvah. Touching a Samaritan, or another unclean person also required immersion. In fact, there is a complicated list of things that require washing. The Essenes became so enamored by baptism, or cleansing, that they were baptized before every meal. They also baptized themselves for other matters. Cleansings or washings became so frequent that the rich even built private Mikvahs in their own homes. The Jews required all gentiles who wished to convert to Judaism to be baptized or washed by immersion. What the Jews had lost by the time

of Jesus was the true manner of the ordinance, and the proper authority to baptize. John the Baptist restored the proper manner of baptism and the associated ordinance. He held the Aaronic Priesthood, and was authorized by heaven to baptize. The ordinance of baptism is the gateway to all the blessings of the gospel. By offering baptism, John prepared men and women for the Messiah. This significant role qualified John to be called “the Baptist”.

- 43 - **notwithstanding** – The word “notwithstanding” is translated from the Greek word “ὅτι” or “de”. It means but, moreover, or and. **“There is more than a touch of irony here. As to John, the people honored him as a prophet; but as to Jesus, there was no such unreserved acceptance, even though John testified of him.”** (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector’s Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 130).
- 44 - **is least** – The phrase “he that is least” is translated from the Greek word “μικρός” or “mikros”. It means small, or little.

This phrase “is least” has been the subject of some confusion. Many see it as a comparison between John the Baptist and Jesus; with John being greater and Jesus being least. Since this goes against modern understanding, scholars have come up with some interesting explanations. Chrysostom wrote that it is a reference to being



being **“less in age, and according to the opinion of the multitude, since they even called Him a gluttonous man and a winebibber; and, is not this the carpenter’s son? And on every occasion they used to make light of Him.”** (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 535). In similar fashion, Fitzmyer wrote, **“Jesus would be ‘less’ than John either as ‘younger’ (in age) or because he has just asserted that John is the greatest of those born of a woman. In this interpretation ‘in the kingdom of God’ is less closely associated to the comparison, and it would imply that John too is part of it. It is hard to say which is better.”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 675). While it is true that John was six months older than Jesus, this is not at all what is being referred to here. Albright wrote, **“The suggestion has been made that this expression refers to the difference in age between Jesus and John, and that Jesus here describes himself. This seems to be somewhat forced, and it is better to take the expression as meaning the newest neophyte in the Kingdom.”** (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 137). A neophyte is reference to the new comer or newest convert. Of course this misses the mark as well.

The famed St. Jerome, speaking of the “least”, wrote, **“Many will understand this of the Saviour; that he who is less in time is greater in dignity. But let us simply understand, that every saint who is already with God, is greater than he whose post is yet in the battle. – St. Jerome.”** (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page



535). At least Jerome dismissed the age theory, but even so, he missed the true meaning of the teaching Jesus was issuing.

Perhaps a more thorough evaluation of the phrase will shed some light on the subject. **“The meaning and function of this saying has always been a matter, of much discussion. Its meaning is controverted because of two Greek comparative adjs. in it, *ho mikrottos*, ‘the one who is less,’ and *meizon*, ‘greater.’ That the second is intended as a real comparative. It is clear from the dependent genitive (of comparison) that follows. Many commentators take the first in the sense of a superlative, ‘The least in the kingdom of God is greater than be.’ This is justified because of the waning use of the superlative degree in Koine Greek and the use of the comparative degree in its stead. The saying would thus assert the difference between status in the kingdom and one’s natural status: ‘the least in the kingdom is greater’ even than John, the greatest of human beings.”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 675).

In the ancient world, there was a social hierarchy established. The lower social status belonged to slaves and servants. These individuals did the heavy lifting and performed the undesirable tasks. They were the feet washers. They performed the least desired jobs in the society. They were considered the least, and were alienated from the greater class of the rich and renowned. In the Lord’s kingdom, the least are the greatest, meaning those that serve the most are those that the Lord considers greatest. The Lord taught in the modern day scripture, **“He that is ordained of God and sent forth, the same is appointed to be the greatest, notwithstanding he is the least and the servant of all.”** (Doctrine and Covenants 50:26). Heavenly greatness is established when we help others. Though John devoted his life to serving God’s children, his service (as monumental as it was) wanes when compared to the service Jesus offered. Jesus took upon himself the sins of the whole world. Though I do not fully comprehend how, through divine power Jesus was able to serve every soul who would ever live on earth in a way that no one else could, and in the process saved us all. He truly descended below all things. This qualified Him as greater than John. Joseph Smith taught, **“Whom did Jesus have reference to as being the least? Jesus was looked upon as having the least claim in God’s kingdom, and [seemingly] was least entitled to their credulity as a prophet; as though He had said—‘He that is considered the least among you is greater than John—that is I myself.’”** (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Selected and arranged by the Historian of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints - Joseph Fielding Smith, page 276).

We all need to recognize the service that Jesus performed on our behalf. In so doing, we will see the lowly sins he took upon Him, and the servant like way that He submitted to the task. We will also see the greatness that is His. **“As Bilney, the martyr said, ‘When I read that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, it was as if day suddenly broke on a dark night.’”** (The Gospel of Luke, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 91).

45 - the kingdom of heaven – The word “kingdom” is translated from the Greek word “βασιλεία” or “basileia”. It means royal power, kingship, dominion, or rule. 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. The Greek word is also used to describe the region above the sidereal heavens, the seat of order of things eternal and consummately perfect where God dwells and other heavenly beings.

This is an interesting qualifier. Jesus is the least in the sense that He lowered Himself to serve us all. In the eyes of the world, His services are insignificant. In the kingdom of heaven, they are the greatest.

46 - greater than he – The word “greater” is translated from the Greek word “μεῖζων” or “meizōn”. It means greater, larger, elder or stronger.

At the time of John the Baptist's birth, it was prophesied, “**For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.**” (Luke 1:15). John would be later characterized as the greatest prophet up to that point in history. None were greater, or even equal to John. That is significant considering that the list of previous prophets were among others; Enoch, Noah, Moses, Elijah, and Isaiah. President George Q. Cannon, “**John the Baptist, it is said was a mighty prophet. Jesus said no greater prophet had been born of woman. Yet did no miracles, but he was attended by great power. One reason why he was called the greatest prophet ever born of woman was that he had the privilege of baptizing the Son of God, a privilege that no other human being had, and it was so great a privilege that doubtless it distinguished him above all the prophets that had preceded him or that followed him. But he had revelation from God, though he did no miracle, yet he was a prophet. He was filled with the spirit of prophesy and of revelation, and he declared in great plainness to the people who lived in Judea, that the coming of the Messiah was near at hand, and when he baptized him, he bore testimony that he was the veritable Son of God, the Messiah, and he was greatly endowed by the Almighty, as were all his servants of whom we have any account in the scriptures.**” (Journal of Discourses, Volume 22, George Q. Cannon, July 24, 1881, pages 360-361).

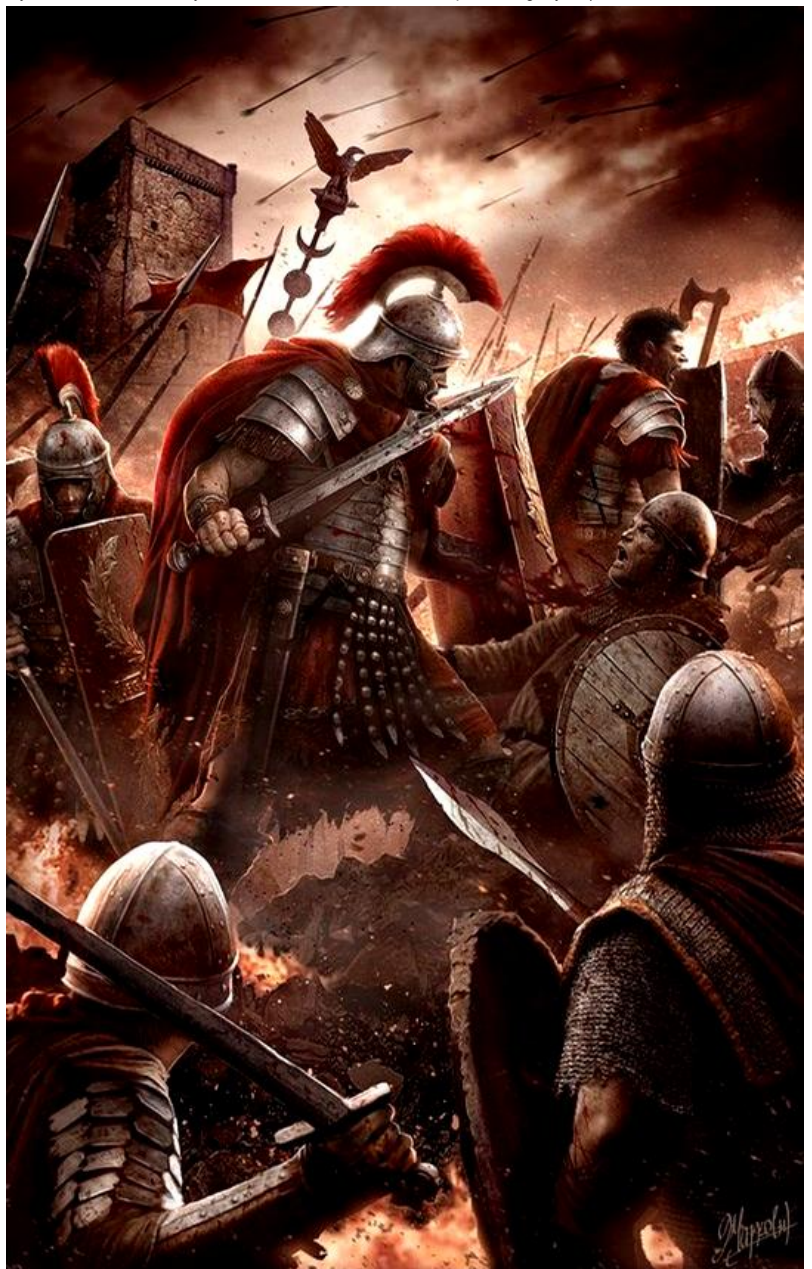
47 - from the days – The word “from” is translated from the Greek word “ἀπό” or “apo”. It means of separation, as in departing or fleeing.

48 - suffereth violence – The phrase “suffereth violence” is translated from the Greek word “βιάζω” or “biazō”. It means to use force, apply force, or inflict violence on. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the passage “suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force” as “is taken by force, and men of force seize upon it eagerly”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 11, Verse 12, page 27). “**What Jesus may well have said is: ‘Always my Kingdom will suffer violence; always savage men will try to break it up, and snatch it away and destroy it; and therefore only the man who is desperately in earnest, only the man in whom the violence of devotion matches and defeats the violence of persecution will in the end enter into it.’ It may well be that this saying of Jesus was originally at one and the same time a warning of violence to come and a challenge to produce a devotion which would be even stronger than the violence.**” (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 9).

Righteousness will always face opposition, and the greater the righteousness the greater the opposition. It stands to reason that the kingdom of God would suffer all manner of opposition, including; martyrdom of the saints, laws designed to suppress religious freedom, false preacher, prophets and even messiahs, evil being presented as good, and all manner of torture and abuse of those that believe in Jesus. These are all classified as forms of violence against the kingdom of God. These acts of violence continue today. Some of these acts are disguised and don't appear violent on the surface. President John Taylor taught, “**I will take it in another point of view. We pay our tithing and we pay Temple donations, we attend to the duties of the House of the Lord; we go forth and proclaim the Gospel of peace to the nations of the earth; we convert people, under the blessing of God, and they come to a knowledge of the principles of the Gospel, and we continue our labors to build up Zion; looking at it in this light, would it be just, after we have laid out our means, would it be in accordance with the principles of equity to grant this privilege to such men, a privilege which we have earned and, in a certain sense, paid for? It is generally the case that they are the first to rush forward and want certain blessings without earning them. Jesus said in His day that the ‘kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.’ These are some of that class who crowd in where they are not worthy to tread. These temporal matters they assume are of very little importance, they are of very little importance judging from the way that many of us labor; but they are of very great importance when weighed in the balances of truth, the principles of eternal life which God has revealed are of the utmost importance to the Saints, both to the living and the dead, to the myriads of men that have lived and that may live, these things are of vast importance.**” (Journal of Discourses, Volume 22, John Taylor, January 9, 1881, page 15).

49 - violent – The word “violent” is translated from the Greek word “βιαστής” or “biastēs”. It means strong, forceful, using force, or violent.

If one were to look at history, one can see the kingdom of heaven, as restored to the earth by Jesus, being forcibly taken by mortal men. The Romans, who killed the apostles and issued a death sentence on all Christians, assumed the kingdom of God and placed its emperor as the



Lord's anointed. They formed the Roman Catholic church after the violent destruction of the Lord's church.

The Catholic church then violently and forcibly expanded its kingdom. The crusades required people to convert or die. Millions were killed in the name of God. This pattern continued for centuries. Those that opposed the apostate kingdom were labeled heretics and killed. This process resulted in plain and precious truths of God's kingdom being lost. There was no way to reconstruct the kingdom from the ashes of violence and corruption. When mortal men again desired to find the true God of Heaven a total restoration was necessary.

Even after the restoration of the gospel, the law of opposition still stood. The restored church endured violent acts of opposition. Elder McConkie wrote, "Under the law of Moses a lower standard of personal conduct was required of members of the kingdom than become the case when the gospel fullness was restored. In the old kingdom violent and carnal men exercised undue influence, but in the new kingdom their power was diminished. But the millennium itself must arrive before 'the violent shall have no power.'" (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1: The Gospels, Bruce R. McConkie, page 262).

50 - take it by force – The term "by force" is translated from the Greek word "ἄρπάζω" or "harpazō". It means to seize, carry off by force, to claim for one's self eagerly, or to snatch out or away.

The God of Heaven will never force His children into heaven. Such behavior would violate His very character. We must choose to follow God of our own free will and choice. Our ability to choose is a gift from God which we have come to call agency. It is through agency that we learn, grow and develop. By design, God attached consequences to our wrong choices, and blessings to our correct choices. Through this process we are humbled and chastened to be better and make righteous decisions.

Lucifer sought, and continues to seek, to destroy our agency. He seeks to force us to make poor decisions teaching that there is no consequence for such behavior. He uses many means to force his will upon us. Violence, pleasure, vanity, pain, and loss are just some of his tools. As we seek to make correct decisions, opposition is increased so as to deter us from God. Elder McConkie wrote, "The hosts of hell oppose every investigator who comes near to the truth; the scribes and Pharisees, the priests and Levites – they being the false prophets of the day – marshal their forces. Violence is the result, violence that will mount in intensity until the Elias of preparation is beheaded in Machaerus and the Prophet whose way he prepared is crucified on Calvary. And even then it shall not cease. Violence, born of Beelzebub, ever was and ever will be manifest against the saints until the millennial day 'when the violent shall have no power.'" (The Mortal Messiah: Volume 2, Collector's Edition, Bruce R. McConkie, page 131). At some point, the spirit of the Lord will overcome all things contrary to Jesus. He will redeem even the children of those to do evil.

In a twist of irony, those men of centuries past who took the Lord's kingdom by force and then led it deep into apostasy have descendants who founded the restored Gospel. Many of their descendants participated in the restoration itself. All of the original leaders of the restoration, including Joseph Smith, have their origins in Europe. It is quite possible that their forefathers actively participated in the apostate church. In my own family history, I have discovered very similar connections. My ancestors come from Denmark. I am related to a very famous man who served as the sheriff of Jutland. He was appointed by the King of Denmark and served directly under him. His sole responsibility was to seek out heretic women, try them, and then burn them at the stake. There are murals in Danish churches that show him with a pitchfork casting women into the fire. I am not proud of this part of my family history, but it does illustrate an interesting fact. In spite of the sins of our fathers, the restoration occurred so that we might be saved regardless of our ancestors. Edersheim wrote, "An yet there was an election according to grace; the violent, who had to fight their way through all this, and who took the Kingdom by violence – and so Heaven's Wisdom (in opposition to the children's folly) is vindicated by all her children." (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 671).

51 - For all the prophets – The word "prophets" is translated from the Greek word "προφήτης" or "prophētēs". It means one who, moved by the Spirit of God and hence his organ or spokesman, solemnly declares to men what he has received by inspiration, especially concerning future events, and in particular such as relate to the cause and kingdom of God and to human salvation.

The Lord has always protected His children from folly and violence by sending authorized representatives called prophets. They bring the word of the Lord to His children. By listening and following, we protect ourselves. Thus begs the question, why then do we not listen to every word that proceeds from the prophet's mouth? Though the answers may vary, they all seem to be centered in selfishness, sin, and pride. We become hardened to the spirit, and consider the messenger's words worthless. Zechariah wrote, "Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts." (Zechariah 7:12).

Prophets are sons of God by virtue of the covenants that they have made and kept. The Book of Mosiah teaches, "Yea, and are not the prophets, every one that has opened his mouth to prophesy, that has not fallen into transgression, I mean all the holy prophets ever since the world began? I say unto you that they are his seed." (Mosiah 15:13). Their purpose is to lead each one of us to enter into the same covenants, and consequently adopt us into the household of faith making us sons and daughters of Jesus; the Father of the Covenant.



52 - the law – The word “law” is translated from the Greek word “νόμος” or “nomos”. It means anything established, anything received by usage, a custom, a law or a command.

Part of the restoration of all things in the latter days was the formation of the United States of America. America created a government that has been a model for democracy ever since. Part of America’s system is a separation of church and state. That doesn’t mean that American was not formed on Biblical principles, but rather it denies men the ability to dictate the religion beliefs of another through the laws of government.



The ancient Jews had a different form of government. Their government was entirely based on scriptural record. In fact, when the Jews refer to the law, they are generally referring to the first five books of Moses. When the Jews were righteous, they used living prophets to interpret the Law. As the Jews apostatized, they killed the prophets and relied on their own wisdom to interpret the Law. Their interpretations became known as the Mishnah or the Oral Law. They even started to revise the Law to accommodate their own desires and lifestyles. Albright wrote, “It is possible to the Law in the sense of oral law as distinct from the Torah. Equally it is at least possible that we have even in the present order of the words a Baptist sentiment. The discovery of the so-called “Temple scroll” confirms the evidence already available, and held by many Jewish and Christian scholars, that the Essene community was formulating a Torah of its own, providing a canon of recognized scripture. The halakah of the Damascus Covenant was as rigorous as any Pharisaic teaching. It must be admitted, however, that this order in Matthew, followed by eprophiteusan (prophesied), makes very odd Greek.” (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 139).

Jesus taught that the prophets and the Law had been given under inspiration of heaven to guide and direct God’s children. Had they approached the revelations with humility and spiritual worthiness, they would have seen that the “Law” told of the coming of John the Baptist and Jesus the Messiah.

53 - prophesied – The word “prophesied” is translated from the Greek word “προφητεύω” or “prophēteuō”. It means to prophesy, to be a prophet, speak forth by divine inspirations, or to predict. The events surrounding Jesus’ life and the ministry of John the Baptist were all divinely predicted through living prophets. In reference to this verse in Matthew, “**Verse 13 is not made easier by Luke’s ‘The Law and the prophets were until John’ (xvi 16). Not only is there a reversal of the traditional order in Matthew (the prophets, and the Law), but the verb prophesied abruptly ends the phrase and makes it almost meaningless.**” (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 138). With deeper study one realizes that the spirit of the Lord is required to understand all prophetic utterances, even if they are seemingly clear and easy to understand. The things of the spirit are to be understood by the spirit.

The prophesies regarding John the Baptist can be confusing given the fact that he served as an Elias, or forerunner, two times. The first was preparing the way for the Messiah’s mortal ministry, and the second was preparing the way for the restoration of the gospel in the latter days. He appeared to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery on the banks of the Susquehanna River prior to the formation of the Church of Jesus Christ and gave them the Aaronic Priesthood so that baptisms under the authority of heaven could once again be performed. Parley P. Pratt wrote, “**Now it is evident that the kingdom of God was to be set up twice – at two distinct times, or else the whole matter is a mistake from the beginning to the end, because John the Baptist said it was at hand in his day, Jesus Christ said the same, the Apostles and Seventies said, in their days, that it was right at the door. And then Jesus Christ predicted a whole string of events, including the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jews. He then predicted signs that were to be seen in the sun, moon, and stars, and said, lo! ‘the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.’ Just as sure as the sun shines, the kingdom had to be set up twice, or there is no meaning to the Book**” (Journal of Discourses, Volume 1, Parley P. Pratt, January 30, 1853, page 179). John was called to be the forerunner of both events.

54 - if ye will receive – The word “receive” is translated from the Greek word “δέχομαι” or “dechomai”. It means to take with the hand, to take up, or receive.

55 - Elias – The name “Elias” is translated from the Greek word “Ἠλίяс” or “Eliās”. It is a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew name “Elijah”. Translated literally, it means “my God is Jehovah”. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the name “Elias” as “Elijah”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 11, Verse 14, page 28).



John has many similarities to the Old Testament prophet Elijah. They both wore the attire of the poor desert nomads. Rough clothing of camel skin and woven camel’s hair became their trademark. Elijah was called as a special messenger of the Lord to warn the Israelites of invading armies if they would not repent. Consequently, a price was placed on his head and he fled to the desert for refuge. John the Baptist was called to preach repentance in preparation of the Messiah. Word of his birth resulted in his father’s death and his mother fleeing with him into the desert where he was raised in refuge. Surely, this is not happenstance.

The ancient Jews heard the name “Elijah” and recalled prophecies that they failed to understand, but were very familiar with. They believed that the ancient prophet ‘Elijah’ would return prior to the Messiah’s coming. “**The coming of Elijah to ‘restore’ the tribes of Jacob is found in Eccles. [Sirach] xlviii. 10, 11, and the idea was common in later Judaism.**” (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 139). Though Elijah would return and restore the sealing power in the latter days, the Jews were somewhat confused regarding the various prophecies associated with others who bore the title Elias. “**John was the Elias who was to prepare all things, not the one who was to restore all things.**” (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1: The Gospels, Bruce R. McConkie, page 263). **It is important to know that the designation, Elias, here applied by Jesus to the Baptist, is a title rather than a personal name, and that it has no reference to Elijah, the ancient prophet called the Tishbite.**” (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 189).

There have been many prophets throughout the dispensations that share the title “Elias”. “**The term Elias means forerunner. Noah, Elijah, John the Baptist and John the Revelator have been referred to as Elias in scripture, though, the references to Elijah by this name are mistranslated. Summarizing the facts – Joseph Smith revealed that Gabriel was Noah; Luke declared that it was the angel Gabriel who appeared to Zacharias and Mary; and the Lord has declared that Elias appeared to Zacharias and Joseph Smith.**” (Answers to Gospel Questions, Joseph Fielding Smith, Book 3, Section 34, pages 140-141). Any prophet sent to prepare the way for the Lord’s work, in any dispensation, is an Elias. This even applies to Joseph Smith. President Joseph Fielding Smith wrote, “**This name (Elias) is the title which is applied to several prophets, and has reference to their office as messengers sent to prepare the way for a greater work. John the Baptist is spoken of as Elias, because he prepared the way before the ministry of the Lord. Joseph Smith is an Elias because he was sent to prepare the way for the second coming of our Lord.**” (Answers to Gospel Questions, Joseph Fielding Smith, Book 4, Section 38, page 194).

56 - **which was for to come** – The phrase “to come” is translated from the Greek word “ἐρχομαι” or “erchomai”. It means to come from one place to another, and used both of persons arriving and of those returning.

57 - **hath ears to hear** – The word “hear” is translated from the Greek word “ἀκούω” or “akouō”. It means to be endowed with the faculty of hearing, not deaf, or to hear. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the phrase “He that hath ears to hear” as “He that has ears”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 11, Verse 15, page 28).



Symbolically, the ears represent our ability to learn, understand, and perceive. One dictionary of symbols records, “Ears hear the word of creation and so is associated with the breath of life.” (An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, J.C. Cooper, pages 38-39). The breath of life is a term used for the Holy Ghost. When Jesus invites those with ears to hear, He is asking those who are spiritually inclined to listen to the words of the spirit as He speaks. It is an invitation to be spiritually nurtured. Those who are not spiritually minded, or lack faith in God, cannot perceive or hear the things of the spirit. Paul taught the Hebrews, “Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.” (Hebrews 5:11). Also speaking of spiritual hearing, the prophet Jacob taught, “And wo unto the deaf that will not hear; for they shall perish.” (2nd Nephi 9:31).

Being spiritually deaf is not necessarily a permanent condition, though some will maintain it as one by their own choices. Being able to hear spiritually starts by listening to the words of eternal life physically, and then giving them room in one’s heart. During the days of our mortal probation, we will have time to hone our spiritual ears. Once we give place to spiritual things in our hearts, we must follow them in action for us to continually hear the spirit. The prophet Ezekiel taught, “And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.” (Ezekiel 33:31). This

lack of doing results is spiritual deafness. Many of us seemingly enjoy being spiritually deaf, but we should not be deceived. The day will come when those that cannot hear spiritual cannot return home to their Father in Heaven. The Doctrine and Covenants teaches, “And the arm of the Lord shall be revealed; and the day cometh that they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles, shall be cut off from among the people;” (Doctrine and Covenants 1:14).

In this chapter, Jesus is speaking to the spiritually minded. These are they who are in tune with the spirit. They will know of the truthfulness of His words. He was testifying of John and his divine mission. Edersheim wrote, “John, then, was the last link; and, if they would but have received it, he would have been to them the Elijah, the Restorer of all things. Selah – ‘he that hath ears, let him hear.’” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 670).

58 - **let him hear** – The word “hear” is translated from the Greek word “ἀκούω” or “akouō”. It means to be endowed with the faculty of hearing, not deaf, or to hear. This is an invitation to listen to the spirit.

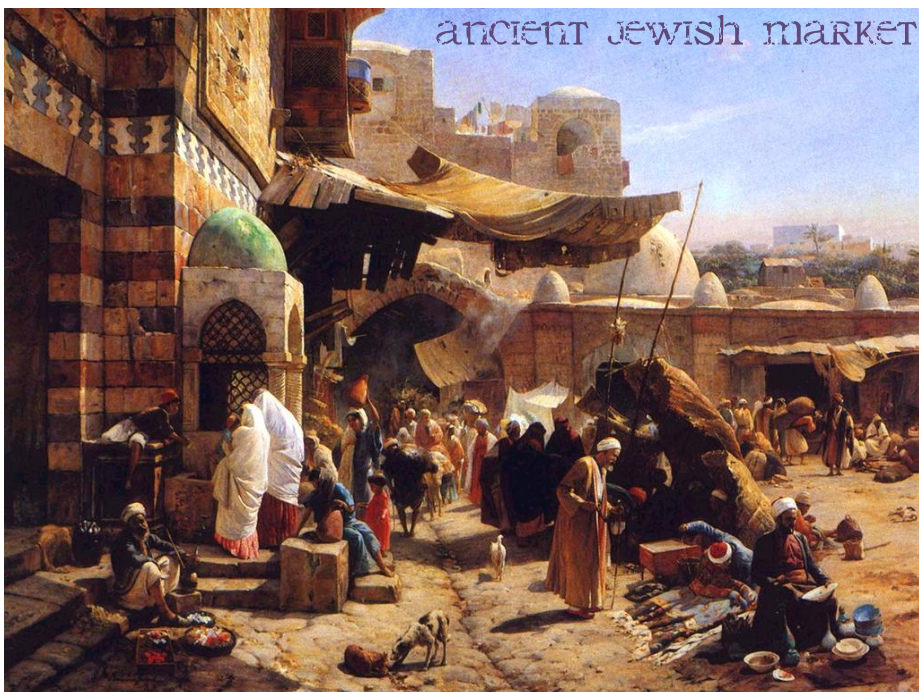
59 - **whereunto shall I liken** – The word “liken” is translated from the Greek word “ὁμοίω” or “homoioō”. It means like, similar, or resembling. This small passage is direction from Jesus that the information that follows will be figurative or symbolic in nature.

60 - **this generation** – The word “generation” is translated from the Greek word “γενεά” or “genea”. It means fathered, birth, nativity, that which has been begotten, family, or a generation (30-33 years). The children of the generation being referenced are literally the people of Jesus and John’s generation. “The children of that generation expected quite another Elijah and quite another Christ, and disbelieved and complained, because the real Elijah and Christ did not meet their foolish thoughts.” (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, page 670). This is the premise of the following analogy.

61 - **like unto children** – The word “children” is translated from the Greek word “παιδάριον” or “paidarion”. It means a little boy or a lad. “At this point the Master resorted to analogy to make His meaning clearer. He compared the unbelieving and dissatisfied generation to fickle children at play, disagreeing among themselves. Some wanted to enact the pageantry of a mock wedding, and though they piped the rest would not dance; then they changed to a funeral procession and essayed the part of mourners, but the others would not weep as the rules of the game required. Ever critical, ever skeptical, by nature fault-finders and defamers, hard of hearing and of heart, they grumbled.” (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 189).

Children represent those that are inexperienced, unlearned, and simple. They often lack understanding of things that may seem common or basic. The people at the time of Jesus were living in an apostate society. It made them like children spiritually. Children generally learn by emulating the adults they see and interact with. Such emulation becomes their play. As they play, they gather friends to fill the various role of their play. Children often have pre-conceived notions of the play. Should the other children not act according to the play, they often become upset and frustrated. The adage, “I’ll take my ball and go home!” is indicative of a child who doesn’t get his way during play and takes the ball home so others can’t play.

In Jesus’ account, the children are wanting to play marriage and funeral; acting out the events of both. Albright writes, “Just as in this allegory children wishing to play weddings or funerals find it impossible to evoke any response to either suggestion from their fellows, so neither the severe asceticism of John (cf. iii 4) nor the more flexible and humane approach of Jesus produces any response. These verses appear to be addressed to the self-conscious rectitude of the Pharisees, and Luke indicates this by his inserted verses in the parallel context (Luke vii 29-30).” (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 139). In other words, the people of John’s generation had a pre-conceived idea as to how God’s plan would unfold and when the prophets and even the Messiah didn’t play along. They were not interested in participating.



62 - sitting – The word “sitting” is translated from the Greek word “κάθημαι” or “kathēmai”. It means to sit down, seat one’s self, to be seated or a place occupied. Children were often brought to the town or village market place while their parents conducted business. The markets were the center of life for most people. The children would sit and play while the parent traded. In Jesus’ analogy, sitting sends a symbolic message of idleness and being disengaged.

63 - markets – The word “markets” is translated from the Greek word “ἀγορά” or “agora”. It means any assembly, a place of assembly, a market place or a street.

The market place in the ancient Jewish society is not only a place for the purchase of goods, it is also a place for the people to gather for many other purposes. It is one of the most popular places in an Oriental city. The gate of the city typically opened into the market place. It was at the city gate that village elders would gather to hear cases of offense and dispute. The market place was also a place where friends would meet and socialize. The markets or bazaars of the East were the resort of the idle and news-mongers. Hence, “agoraioi” or “market frequenters,” is another name for “fellows of the baser sort”.

In ancient Israel, children always loved to go to the market place, where so many interesting things happened. They watched with keen interest everything that happened there. They may have played pranks, and of course they had their games. The market was a great symbol for the Jewish society as a whole.

In Jesus’ analogy, the market represented their society. The people should be engaged in the business at hand, but as children they spent their time executing meaningless play that they had observed in the others around them.

64 - calling – The word “calling” is translated from the Greek word “προσφωνέω” or “prospōnēō”. It means to call to, to address by calling, to call to one’s self, or to summon.

Like children expecting the other children to engage in their game, the Jews expected their fellow Jews to march to their established belief. **“They were like children in a market-place, who expected their fellows to adapt themselves to the tunes they played. It was as if they said: We have expected great Messianic glory and national exaltation, and ye have not responded (‘we have piped unto you, and ye have not danced’); we have looked for deliverance from our national sufferings, and they stirred not your sympathies nor brought you help (‘we have mourned to you, and ye have not lamented’). But you thought of the Messianic time as children, and of us, as if we were your fellows, and shared your thoughts and purposes!”** (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Volume 1, Alfred Edersheim, pages 670-671). The term “calling” symbolizes the vain invitations of men to act as they do and believe likewise.

65 - their fellows – The word “fellows” is translated from the Greek word “ἑταῖρος” or “hetairos”. It means a comrade, mate, or partner. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the phrase “calling unto their fellows” as “who call to the others”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 11, Verse 16, page 28).

We mortals are an interesting sort. We are often more interested in being like our fellow man than we are in becoming like our God. We imitate imperfect beings, while the perfect example lies before us. We will even defend the imperfect and mock the heavenly. Freeman explained, **“There is allusion here to the habits of children, who, in the East as elsewhere, imitate in sport what they see performed in sober earnest by adults. The public processions and rejoicings on Oriental wedding occasions, and the great lamentations at funerals, make such an impression on the young mind that children introduce imitations of them into their plays. Some of them play on imaginary pipes, while others dance, as at weddings. Again, some of them setup an imitation of a mournful wail, to which others respond in doleful lamentations, as at funerals. Then at times there will be found some stubborn little ones, of perverse spirit, who will not consent to take part in any play that may be proposed. They will not dance while others pipe, neither will they lament when others mourn. They are determined not to be pleased in any way; they will play neither wedding nor funeral. Thus it was that the people would receive neither Jesus nor John; but, like perverse children, they refused to be satisfied with any proposition made to them. Travelers have noticed that children in Palestine, at the present day, keep up this ancient custom of playing weddings and funerals.”** (Manners and Customs of the Bible, James M. Freeman, page 354-355).

66 - piped unto you – The word “piped” is translated from the Greek word “αὐλέω” or “auleō”. It means to play on the flute, or to pipe. Ancient flutes in Israel at the time of Jesus don’t look like the modern flutes of today. Even so, they were a popular instrument and required at weddings. Fitzmyer writes, **“We played on our flutes or pipes as at a round dance during a wedding celebration.”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 680). The idea is that the flute symbolizes the emotion associated with marriage. A dictionary of symbols states, **“The flute is sometimes equated with anguish and the extremes of emotion.”** (An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, J.C. Cooper, page 70). The flute sent a message for celebration, and once heard it welcomed dance and festivities.



The children in Jesus’ analogy represented the people of that generation who had an expectation that when prophets came, and when the Messiah came, that things would unfold a specific way. This is the pattern of a wedding afterall. Farrar wrote, **“The flute and dance of the little ones who played at weddings charmed them as little as the long wail of the simulated funeral.”** (The Story of a Beautiful Life: Farrar’s Life of Christ, The New 20th Century Edition, 1900, Canon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., page 194).

ANCIENT JEWISH WEDDING PROCESSION – NOTE THE FLUTE PLAYERS



67 - **ye have not danced** – The word “danced” is translated from the Greek word “ὀρχέομαι” or “orcheomai”. It means to dance. **“Dance symbolizes creation, and creative strength.”** (An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, J.C. Cooper, page 49).

The ancient Jews believed that when the Messiah came He would respond to them in a very specific way, not unlike the guests at a wedding when the flute is played. They saw themselves as the chosen people and expected the Messiah to save them from their enemies. When Jesus came, as well as His forerunner – John, they didn’t respond as expected. They didn’t dance, so to speak. This upset the children. They felt that it was their game, and they were in charge. Jesus’ response was as if He was saying, **“You are like fickle children playing games; when you hold a mock wedding, your playmates refuse to dance; when you change the game to a funeral procession, your playmates refuse to mourn. In like manner you are only playing at religion. As cross and capricious children you reject John because he came with the strictness of the Nazarites, and ye reject me because I display the warm human demeanor that makes for pleasant social intercourse.”** (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1: The Gospels, Bruce R. McConkie, page 263).

68 - **we have mourned unto you** – The word “mourned” is translated from the Greek word “θρηνέω” or “thrēneō”. It means to mourn, to lament, to bewail, or to deplore. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the phrase “we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented” as “we wailed, and you did not lament”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 11, Verse 17, page 28).



The Jews have a very precise protocol for mourning. They specified the kind of clothing that was worn when one was mourning. One wore a coarse material called sackcloth; the clothing of the poor. One was required to rip or tear one’s clothing as a sign of loss. Additionally, one covered one’s self in ashes and wailed so that all could hear. It was customary for a mourner to cast himself upon the ground, and stay there for a long period of lamenting.

Jewish funerals were so ridden with mourning, that they justified the hiring of professional mourners to amplify the sadness. This was the scene that Jesus is creating in His analogy. The children in His figurative story were acting out a funeral procession in their play. They expected the other children to follow along by mourning **“like the official mourners (usually wailing women) at a funeral or burial. The surface comparison in the two instances is between comedy and tragedy, a portrayal of life’s joys and sorrows. On a deeper level the comparison contrasts ‘this generation,’ childish in its reaction, with children, serious in their play. The sulking of the spoilsports characterizes ‘people of this generation’ in their reaction to John and Jesus, the messengers of God’s plan of salvation. In their**

sulking they have missed the decisive hour.’” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 680).

69 - **ye have not lamented** – The word “lamented” is translated from the Greek word “κόπτω” or “koptō”. It means to cut, strike, smite, to cut off, or to beat one’s breast for grief.

There may be additional symbolism associated with Jesus’ analogy. Some have suggested that Jesus is represented in the children acting out the marriage festivities. In other places in scripture Jesus is described as the bridegroom. We recognize the wedding ceremony as the highest covenants that we can make with God on earth. Jesus is the mediator of these covenants. Without Him, the covenants cannot exist. His mortal mission was to fulfill the laws of justice and make all eternal covenants possible and binding. When He came to earth, He symbolically played to song of redeeming love, but many would not answer because it was not the song they expected.

On the other hand, it is suggested that John is represented by the children acting out the funeral procession. When John came on the scene he cried repentance. The Jews believed that true repentance required a period of ritual mourning. They believed that one could not repent unless one properly mourned. John, however, preached that repentance required more than just mourning, it required a humble approach to Deity, a sincere change of heart, restitution, and making and keeping the covenant and ordinance of Baptism. John was an authorized representative of the Lord and commissioned to hold and exercise the Aaronic Priesthood. When He came as a prophet and called the people unto him many refused because his message was not what they expected. Many did not come forward mourning, the sign of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. They didn’t mourn the way that was expected.

Chrysostom explained, **“This again seems to be unconnected with what came before, but it is the most natural consequences thereof. Yea, He still keeps to the same point, the shewing that John is acting in harmony with Himself, although the results were opposite; as indeed with respect to his enquiry also.”** (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 538).

70 - **eating** – The word “eating” is translated from the Greek word “ἐσθίω” or “esthiō”. It means to eat, or to consume. Symbolically, eating **“imparts the quality of that which is consumed to the consumer.”** (An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, J.C. Cooper, page 59).

John ate the food of the poor and humble. The Gospel of Mark records that John **“did eat locusts and wild honey;”** (Mark 1:6). The Gospel of Matthew records that **“his meat was locusts and wild honey.”** (Matthew 3:4). Locust were a large grasshopper type insect that were roasted, salted, and eaten by the poor. Wild honey is believed to be the sweet sap of palm trees. The sap was mixed with water and used as a drink.

John came to the Jews as a humble servant of the Lord. **“John came, living in the desert, fasting and despising food, isolated from the society of men; and they said of him, ‘The man is mad to cut**



himself off from human society and human pleasures like that.' Jesus came, mixing with all kinds of people, sharing in their sorrows and their joys, accompanying with them in their times of joy; and they said of him, 'He is a socialite; he is a party-goer; he is the friend of outsiders with whom no decent person would have anything to do.' They called John's asceticism madness; and they called Jesus' sociability laxness of morals. They could find a ground of criticism either way." (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 11).



- 71 - drinking** – The word “drinking” is translated from the Greek word “πίνω” or “pinō”. It means to drink. Like the symbolism for eating, “drinking...is symbolic of absorbing divine life and power.” (An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, J.C. Cooper, page 56). John refrained from drinking the beverages common to the society around him. He chose a humble life free of material restraints. “For he did not so much as see any of his fellow-servants, neither was he seen by any one of them; he fed not on milk, he enjoyed not the comfort of bed, or roof, or market, or any other of the things of men; and yet he was at once mild and earnest.” (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 534). Fitzmyer explains that John’s abstinence from regular food may have been a perfect symbol of the message he was preaching. He was asking people to humble themselves, repent and be baptized. He wrote, “**Manifesting no ascetic restraint in taking ordinary sustenance, as a token of the freedom of the kingdom that he was proclaiming. The verse explains Jesus’ presence at meals.**” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 681).



A common drink among the desert nomads was sap collected from date palm trees mixed with water. Many feel that this sap is the wild honey referred to in association with John eating locust and wild honey.

- 72 - He hath a devil** – The word “devil” is translated from the Greek word “δαίμόνιον” or “daimonion”. It means a spirit that is inferior to God, and evil spirit, or the messengers and ministers of the devil. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the word “devil” as “demon”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 11, Verse 18, page 28).

This is sort of an interesting twist. John the Baptist comes preaching repentance and baptism. He came as a humble prophet, free from material wealth or power. The words he spoke were the pure words of salvation. The prideful rejected John’s words and to console their conscience they classified him as a false prophet and one possessed of a devil. This is a common theme among the wicked. Isaiah warned, “**Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!**” (Isaiah 5:20). This is the case with many who viewed John the Baptist as a devil. “**John the Baptist had come amongst them like the eremitic prophets of old, as strict as any Nazarite, refusing to eat with the merry-makers or drink with the convivial, and they had said ‘He hath a devil.’ Now came the Son of Man, without austerity or hermit ways, eating and drinking as a normal man would do, a guest at the houses of the people, a participant in the festivities of a marriage party, mingling alike with the publicans and the Pharisees--and they complained again, saying: ‘Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!’ The Master explained that such inconsistency, such wicked trifling with matters most sacred, such determined opposition to truth, would surely be revealed in their true light, and the worthlessness of boasted learning would appear. ‘But,’ said He, ‘wisdom is justified of all her children.’**” (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 189).

- 73 - Son of man** – The word “man” is translated from the Greek word “ἄνθρωπος” or “anthrōpos”. It means a human being, whether male or female. “**The majority of modern commentators understand it as a messianic title (e.g. Creed, Dibelius, Dupont, Ellis, Ernst, Lagrange, Plumacher, Schneider). This interpretation might seem to find some support in Luke 3:15, where people ask John whether he is the Messiah, and where commentators often conclude from his answer that he is implicitly applying the title to Jesus.**” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 666). Modern day revelation, on the other hand, has helped us understand the term. We know that the term “Son of Man” is in fact a condensed form of the term “Son of Man of Holiness”. Man of Holiness is another name for God the Father. The Pearl of Great Price records, “**Behold, I am God; Man of Holiness is my name; Man of Counsel is my name; and Endless and Eternal is my name, also.**” (Moses 7:35). The title is further clarified with the following passage; “**Wherefore teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence; for, in the language of Adam, Man of Holiness is his name, and the name of his Only Begotten is the Son of Man, even Jesus Christ, a righteous Judge, who shall come in the meridian of time.**” (Moses 6:57).

- 74 - man gluttonous** – The word “gluttonous” is translated from the Greek word “φάγος” or “phagos”. It means a voracious man, or a glutton. This contrasting passage shows the differences between John the Baptist and Jesus. We do not suppose Jesus to be gluttonous or a wino, but he did eat the food of the ordinary man and enjoyed the finer meals and wines. John, on the other hand, abstained from fine foods and wines common to the day. The contrast is important. Many rejected John because he was poor and dressed in simple clothing. They accused him of being a mad man and said he was possessed of a devil. These very same people refused to accept Jesus for opposite reasons. They rejected Jesus because they felt He ate and drank things they believed were too common. So John was too uncommon to be Holy, and Jesus was too common to be Holy.

One might ask why Jesus ate the common food and drank wine when John didn’t. The answer is fulfillment of prophesy. Jesus was required to pass through all the challenges of life, and then triumphantly choose the path that led to His Father. Isaiah prophesied, “**Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.**” (Isaiah 7:15-16). He was not a glutton, but Jesus did experience life as a common man. This allowed Him to understand our plight, and consequently overcome all the temptations associated with mortality.

Gluttony is an interesting term. It means someone who has habitual greed or excess in eating. It is a sin that often leads to other sins. Elder Perry wrote, “**The results of gluttony, drunkenness, and lust are clearly predictable. They will surely destroy the temporal body. We also know of the effects of a weakened physical body on the functions of the mind. The destruction of one clearly has the same effect on the other. The results of stealing, lying and defrauding are also absolute. We know the waste of such activities as they literally rob us of our inheritance.**” (General Conference, “As a Man Soweth”, L. Tom Perry, April 4, 1976). Jesus may have been seen in this light, or even accused of being a glutton; however, He never qualified as such.



- 75 - winebibber** – The word “winebibber” is translated from the Greek word “οἴνοποτης” or “oinopotēs”. It means a winebibber, given to wine, or a wino. The drinking of wine in excess has been against God’s will from the beginning. In our day, the Lord prohibited the drinking of alcohol through the word of wisdom. Anciently, the Lord allowed the drinking of wine since the lack of refrigeration and proper processing techniques fermented most fruit juices in short order. That meant that most sugary fruit juices became a type of wine

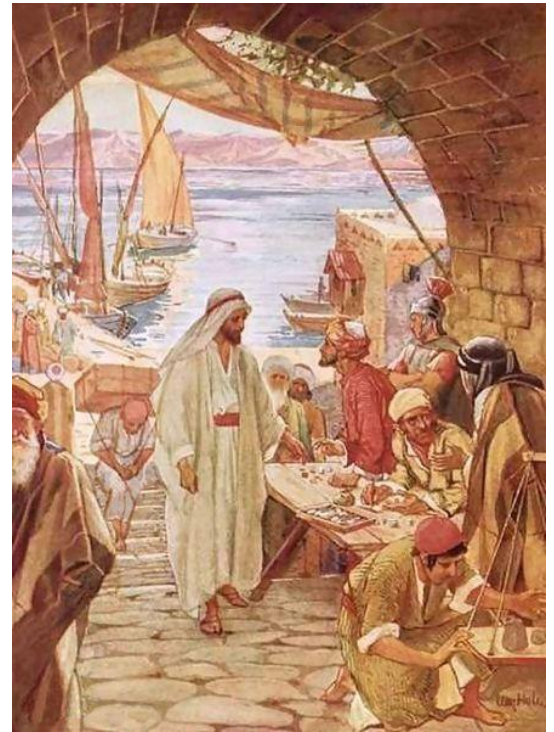
naturally. Prohibiting wine in the ancient world would have created a real survival problem for the people. **“In ancient Israel, wine was valued not only because it ‘gladdens the heart,’ but also because it, along with milk, provided important dietary liquid in a hot region characterized by scare and frequently contaminated water.”** (Encyclopedia of Traditional Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, page 194). The alcohol in wine protected the drink from other bacteria that could be deadly. Even so, the Lord was clear on moderation when drinking wine. The Old Testament teaches, **“Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.”** (Proverbs 20:1). Similarly, the Lord prohibited the sons of Aaron from drinking wine. It is recorded, **“Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations:”** (Leviticus 10:9).

It is evident that even Old Testament prophets drank wine. The prophet Noah grew grapes and drank wine. We read, **“And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.”** (Genesis 9:20-21). So far as I can tell, this was not counted against Noah as a sin. It is apparent that the Lord expected moderation, and freedom from vice. The Book of Proverbs states, **“Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.”** (Proverbs 23:20-21). So why then can we not drink in the latter day, at least in moderation? The Word of Wisdom clearly answers that question. The Lord says that it was **“adapted to the capacity of the weak and the weakest of all saints, who are or can be called saints.”** (Doctrine and Covenants 89:3). Clearly, the fact that Jesus drank wine is not sinful. I would not classify Him as weak of character and could safely declare that He never was a drunk.

76 - friend – The word “friend” is translated from the Greek word “φίλος” or “philos”. It means friend, to be friendly to one, or wish him well.

77 - publican – The word “publican” is translated from the Greek word “τελώνης” or “telōnēs”. It means a tax gatherer, collector of taxes or tolls, one employed by a publican or farmer general in the collection of taxes. The tax collectors were, as 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.

Publicans were considered by the Jews to be the worst of all sinners. The Jews saw them as traitors, taking money away from Jewish families and giving it to gentile oppressors. Publicans were required to deal in foreign currency; which almost always had images of false gods. Consequently, publicans were also seen as idol worshippers. Jesus ministered to publicans. In fact, He called a publican (Matthew) to sit in His inner circle and serve as an apostle. His words were extended to sinners and publican alike. **“Many who heard these words, and especially the publicans and those who were scorned as the ‘people of the earth,’ accepted with joy and gratitude this approbation of their confidence of John. But there were others – the accredited teachers of the written and oral law – who listened to such words with contemptuous dislikes.”** (The Story of a Beautiful Life: Farrar’s Life of Christ, The New 20th Century Edition, 1900, Canon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., page 194).



78 - sinners – The word “sinners” is translated from the Greek word “ἁμαρτωλός” or “hamartōlos”. It means devoted to sin, a sinner, especially the wicked, a heathen or a tax collector. Likely, it is not referring to a tax collector since Jesus mentioned them separately. Sinner, by definition, are those that disobey the commandments of God. The apostate Jews also considered sinners as anyone who disobeyed the Oral Law, which in reality was a set of laws they created themselves. This became a subject of contention, at various times, between Jesus and the Jews.

79 - wisdom – The word “wisdom” is translated from the Greek word “σοφία” or “sophia”. It means wisdom, broad and full of intelligence, or used of the knowledge of very diverse matters. **“Wisdom is the divine wisdom of God (cf. Luke xi 49). If we read deeds, as here in Matthew, then the saying asserts that God is his own Interpreter, and the methods of both John and Jesus have place in God’s providence, for all their seeming disparity and seeming failure.”** (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 139).

80 - justified – The word “justified” is translated from the Greek word “δικαιῶ” or “dikaiō”. It means to render righteous or restore things to the way they ought to be. The word justified can be used in the sense of a person aligning himself with the law; consequently, he is “justified” in his behaviors because he complies with the statutes. It can also be used to excuse poor behavior. Many have warranted a violation of the law because of a loophole or a circumstance in which they feel makes their behavior “justified”. Albright translates this passage as **“wisdom is vindicated by her deeds. This is one of the two verses which the Greek text provides at this point. The other is “children” instead of deeds. Here deeds is the better attested reading, where Luke vii 35 has a better reading of ‘children.’ With these two readings, two interpretations are possible.”** (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 139).

First, being justified by ones deeds seems to be akin to the scripture admonition that says **“Ye shall know them by their fruits.”** (Matthew 7:16). We cannot be truly justified by a law or commandment that we have not kept. In this case, our wisdom is justified by our actions. The true fruits of wisdom are wise actions.

Second, being justified by one’s children may be closer to the first interpretation than one thinks. Our children are typically a byproduct of our behavior. The saying **“the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree”** seems to be very appropriate here. We are often vindicated by the character of our children, such character is greatly influenced by our deeds and our actions. Farrar wrote, **“Yet wisdom has been even justified at her children’s hands. Those children have not disgraced their divine origin. Fools might account their life as madness, and their end to be without honor; but how is the very humblest of them numbered among the children of God, and their lot among the saints!”** (The Story of a Beautiful Life: Farrar’s Life of Christ, The New 20th Century Edition, 1900, Canon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., page 194).

81 - her children – The word “children” is translated from the Greek word “τέκνον” or “teknon”. It means offspring or children. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the term “her children” as “her works”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 11, Verse 19, page 28). Albright translates it as “deeds”. He wrote, **“By our translation here – deeds - we have attempted to do justice to the aorist tense of vindicated (edikaioche). In Matt xi 27 and xxviii 18 Matthew’s use of the tense indicates a pre-temporal ordering of events by divine providence, and here indicates that the wisdom of God is eternally vindicated by the course of history.”** (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 140). Fitzmyer agrees with Albright. Fitzmyer records, **“Matt 11:19 reads rather ‘by her deeds’ (ergon instead of teknon). ‘Deeds’ is almost certainly a Matthean modification, since it picks up the ‘deeds of the Messiah’ in 11:2. Luke has preserved the more original form of the “Q” saying, but has added ‘all,’ as he often does. The saying has been added because of the mention of ‘children’ in v. 32, even though the Greek words are different (paidiois in v. 32, teknon in v. 35); the connection is not by catchword bonding, but by sense, for wisdom’s children in the OT, see Sir 4:11; Prov 8:32.”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 681).

The Book of Proverbs reads, **“Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways.”** (Proverbs 8:32). Obviously, God’s children are justified by obedience to God’s wisdom. **“By reading ‘children,’ as in Luke, several options are open to us. ‘Children of wisdom,’ as an equivalent term for ‘children of**

Israel' is attested in Prov viii 32 and Ecclus iv 11, with which we may compare 'children of the Kingdom' in Matt viii 12 and xiii 38. In so reading, we can interpret the saying as indicating that the true children will, by their response, vindicate the divine wisdom and its messengers." (Matthew: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, page 140).

- 82 - **upbraid** – The word "upbraid" is translated from the Greek word "ὀνειδίζω" or "oneidizō". It means to reproach, upbraid, or revile.
- 83 - **cities** – The word "cities" is translated from the Greek word "πόλις" or "polis". It means a city, one's native city, or the city in which one lives. Several cities are cited by Jesus in this chapter; Chorazin, Capernaum, Bethsaida, Tyre, Sidon and Sodom. This passage refers to cities that received great miracles and works performed by the Savior, namely; Chorazin, Capernaum and Bethsaida, and consequently failed to fully commit themselves to Jesus.
- 84 - **wherein most of his mighty works were done** – The phrase "might works" is translated from the Greek word "δύναμις" or "dynamis". It means strength, power, or ability. It is inherent power, power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature, or which a person or thing exerts and puts forth. It can be used of power for performing miracles, or moral power and excellence of soul. Additionally, it means the power and influence which belong to riches and wealth, power and resources arising from numbers or power consisting in or resting upon armies, forces, or hosts.
- 85 - **repented not** – The word "repent" is translated from the Greek word "μετανοέω" or "metanoēō". It means to change one's mind, i.e. to repent, to change one's mind for better, or heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sins.

"Brigham Young said, 'Pray that you never see an angel.' He was talking historically. Almost everybody who saw an angel left the Church. They came back, but they had these terrible problems. It gave them inflated egos, etc. They thought they were somebody special. They were, but they couldn't take it. It would be very dangerous if we were exposed to the other world to any degree. Only people that are very humble can do that. Not us, we can't do that. We are not that humble." (The Teachings of the Book of Mormon, Lecture 41, Hugh Nibley, page 193). The problem is, without faith even the most miraculous of events will not convince the natural man. The natural man needs absolute proof to believe. He sees faith as very foolish. Those who saw Jesus and witnessed His miracles required the same faith to truly believe in Him. When such manifestations of the divine are shown to the faithful, their faith is strengthened.

At one point in Israelite history, the covenant people became so faithless that even the Gentiles were more susceptible to the workings of the spirit. The prophet Ezekiel wrote, "Not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee." (Ezekiel 3:6). The time of Jesus was very similar to the time spoken of by Ezekiel. The Jews were largely faithless, and therefore failed to recognize the Messiah.

One of the first fruits of faith is repentance. The seed of faith grows a desire to conform to the God's will. This process is called repentance. Those who repent become more susceptible to the workings of the spirit, and consequently believe when angels appear or miracles are performed. Those that saw the living Christ, and had a foundation of faith, recognized Him. Those that had not repented, nor had the faith to do so, failed to recognize even the most obvious and profound things of the spirit.

- 86 - **Woe unto thee** – The word "Woe" is translated from the Greek word "οὐαί" or "ouai". It means alas or woe. It is an exclamation of grief. It is an indication of impending doom or calamity. This was a serious warning being issued by the Savior.
- 87 - **Chorazin** – The name "Chorazin" is translated from the Greek word "Χοραζίν" or "Chorazin". Translated literally, it means "a furnace of smoke". It is a town in Galilee. "Chorazin is modern Khirbet Kerazch ruins about two miles N of Tell Hum, the site of Capernaum. Chorazin is mentioned only in the woes Christ pronounced upon it (Matt. 11:21; Luke 10:13). His condemnation of it, in conjunction with Bethsaida and Capernaum, indicates that Chorazin must have been an important city. It ceased to be inhabited by the time of Eusebius (latter half of the first century). Only a few carved stones remain today." (Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, General Editor Merrill C. Tenney, Page 155). We gather from archeological findings that Chorazin was a town of considerable size. It must have been to have its own synagogue. Berrett and Ogden wrote, "It was a Jewish town of the Talmudic era and is represented by ruins of an old third – or fourth – century A.D. synagogue and surrounding town buildings and habitations. A basalt chair, a 'SEAT OF MOSES', with an inscription was found, and is displayed in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem." (Discovering the World of the Bible, LaMar C. Berrett and D. Kelly Ogden, page 133)



Jesus speaks of Chorazin as having many miracles and manifestation afforded it. It is evident that He spent significant time there. However, the Bible is silent about the city. It mentions no visit by Jesus, and surely no miracles. In fact, there is no other mention of the city. We assume that the times where the gospel account records that Jesus traveled throughout Galilee contained visits to this little known city. Evidently, great miracles and sermons were preached there, but the people failed to truly convert to the ways of God.

88 - Bethsaida – The word “Bethsaida” is translated from the Greek word “Βηθσαιδα” or “Bēthsaida”. Translated literally, it means “house of fish”. Bethsaida is a small fishing village on the west shore of Lake Gennesaret. It was the home of Andrew, Peter, Philip and John. Chrysostom records, “Then, to shew thee that they are not such by nature, He states also the name of the city out of which proceeded five Apostles. For both Philip, and those two pairs of the chief Apostles, were from thence.” (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 540).

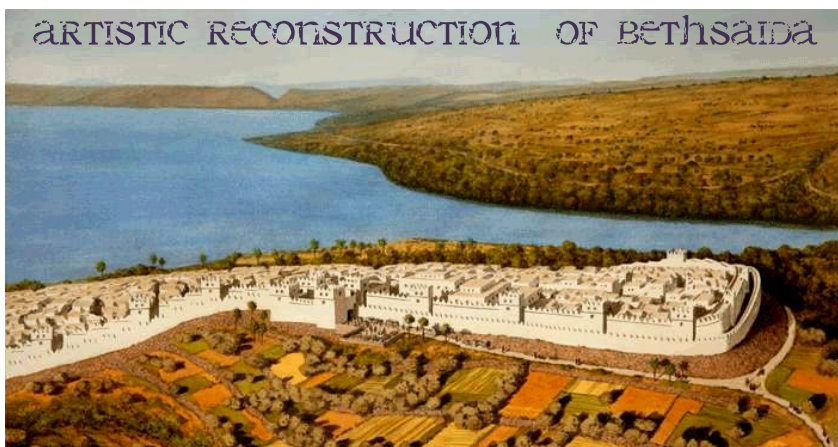
Bethsaida is better known in Biblical record than its counterpart Chorazin. We have record of Jesus performing miracles there, though it is believed that we have only a portion of the works that they witnessed. Bethsaida is very near Chorazin, Berrett and Ogden wrote, “On the east side of the Jordan River, about 1 ½ miles north of the point where the Jordan enters the Sea of Galilee, is Tel Beit Zaida.

The earlier, New Testament period site was probably a small fishing village nearer the shore of the lake. The Plain of Bethsaida was the setting for the feeding of 5,000 men (besides women and children – see Matthew’s account). Luke calls it a ‘desert place’ (Heb. Midbar) and John says there was ‘much grass’ here; the two descriptions are quite compatible by a proper definition ‘desert’ – midbar means a deserted, or solitary, or uninhabited place, a place for pasturing flocks.

- Bethsaida was the birthplace of Peter, Andrew, and Philip (John 1:44; 12:21-22).
- The feeding of the 5,000 was near here (Matt. 14:13-21; Mark 6:31-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14).
- The feeding of the 4,000 was near here (Matt. 15:32-38; Mark 8:1-9).
- The blind man was healed after Jesus led him out of the town (Mark 8:22-26).” (Discovering the World of the Bible, LaMar C. Berrett and D. Kelly Ogden, page 133).



RUINS OF BETHSAIDA



ARTISTIC RECONSTRUCTION OF BETHSAIDA

89 - mighty works – The phrase “mighty works” is translated from the Greek word “δύναμις” or “dynamis”. It means strength, power, or ability. It is inherent power, power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature, or which a person or thing exerts and puts forth. It can be used of power for performing miracles, or moral power and excellence of soul. Additionally, it means the power and influence which belong to riches and wealth, power and resources arising from numbers or power consisting in or resting upon armies, forces, or hosts. In the case of Jesus, the mighty works refer to Him exercising Priesthood power. This power has the ability to do things beyond our mortal comprehension. Such activities are classified as miracles; they include the healing of physical ailments beyond known medical abilities, raising people from the dead, forgiving sins, and doing things that cannot be explained.

Jesus performed mighty works to reinforce the faith of the faithful. Additionally, He performed His works that He might encourage people to repent and follow Him. As part of His Father’s plan, Jesus came and performed mighty works to a people who would reject and crucify Him. The Book of Mormon prophet Jacob wrote, “Wherefore, as I said unto you, it must needs be expedient that Christ—for in the last night the angel spake unto me that this should be his name—should come among the Jews, among those who are the more wicked part of the world; and they shall crucify him—for thus it behooveth our God, and there is none other nation on earth that would crucify their God. For should the mighty miracles be wrought among other nations they would repent, and know that he be their God. But because of priestcrafts and iniquities, they at Jerusalem will stiffen their necks against him, that he be crucified. Wherefore, because of their iniquities, destructions, famines, pestilences, and bloodshed shall come upon them; and they who shall not be destroyed shall be scattered among all nations.” (2nd Nephi 10:3-6).

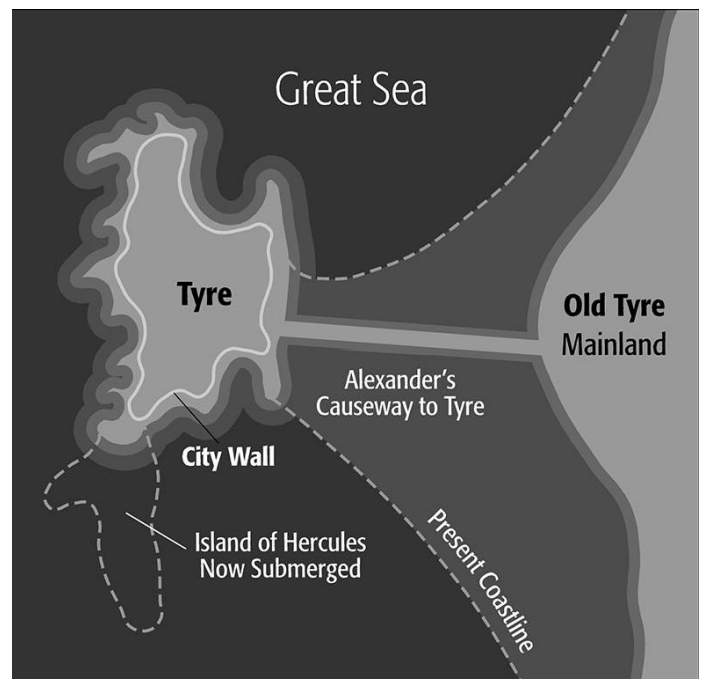
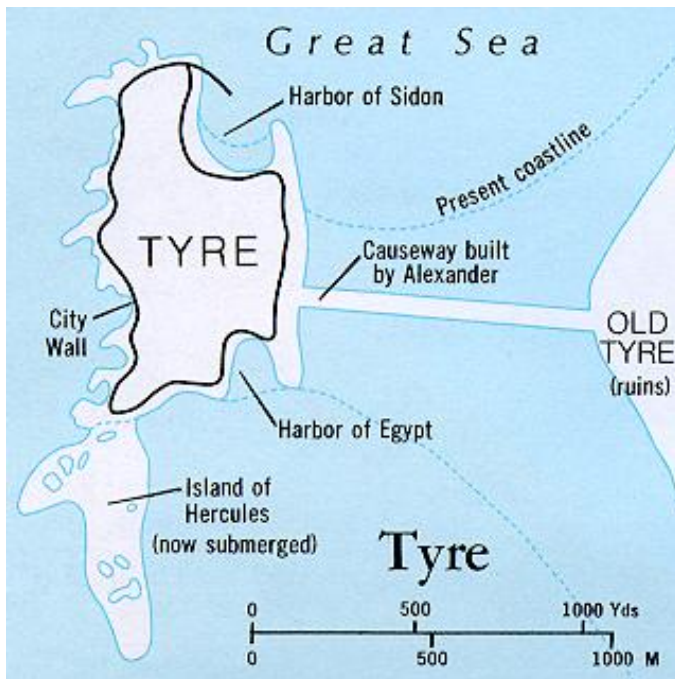
90 - Tyre – The word “Tyre” is translated from the Greek word “Τύρος” or “Tyros”. Translated literally, it means “a rock”. It was a Phoenician city on the Mediterranean; very ancient, large, splendid, flourishing in commerce, and powerful by land and sea. “Tyre is a Phoenician port south of Sidon and north of Carmel. Phoenicia itself is a coastal strip backed by mountains, and Tyre was further defended by rocky promontories (one of them the famous ‘Ladder of Tyre’), which effectively hampered invasion.” (Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, General Editor Merrill C. Tenney, Page 873).



Tyre was a uniquely fortified city. The city started on the main land, but quickly realized the protective strength of living on the Island just off shore. The Mediterranean Ocean provided a wonderful natural barrier to invading armies. As if that wasn't enough, the Phoenicians added a city wall around their new island city. They fortified a harbor for trade, and built ships that could carry their wares to the rest of the world. The city was ingeniously laid out. It took Alexander the Great months to overthrow Tyre. The island fortress was a difficult challenge. Alexander demolished the old city and used the stones to build a causeway to the island. It was a major victory for Alexander to proclaim the defeat of Tyre.

Tyre was known for glass blowing, purple dye, craftsmanship, and ship building. Their ports brought in great economic wealth.

Tyre was part of Phoenicia, which was a Gentile country that had ancient ties with Israel. The King of Phoenicia, King Hiram, had provided resources to King Solomon to build the temple in Jerusalem. Consequently, many Israelites felt comfortable living in Phoenicia. By the time of Jesus, there were sizable populations of Jews in Sidon and Tyre. Even so, the primary population was non-believing Gentiles.



91 - Sidon – The word “Sidon” is translated from the Greek word “Σιδών” or “Sidōn”. Translated literally, it means “hunting” or “fishery”. The latter seems more fitting given the fact that the city was a coastal town. It was an ancient and wealthy city of Phoenicia, on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea, less than 20 miles (30 km) north of Tyre. Zondervan explains, “**Sidon was a Phoenician city midway between Berytus (Beirut) and Tyre. Small offshore islands made an excellent port. In ancient times they seem to have been linked by moles. Sidon appears in the Old Testament as the chief city in Phoenicia, and the name was applied frequently to the whole nation. The city seems to have been a center of trade and enterprise... Purple dyeing and glass blowing were also Sidonian industries. By an odd chance, the crimson dye which Sidonian inventors found how to extract from the murex shellfish, was called after the name of the other great Phoenician town, ‘Tyrian purple.’**” (Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, General Editor Merrill C. Tenney, Page 792).



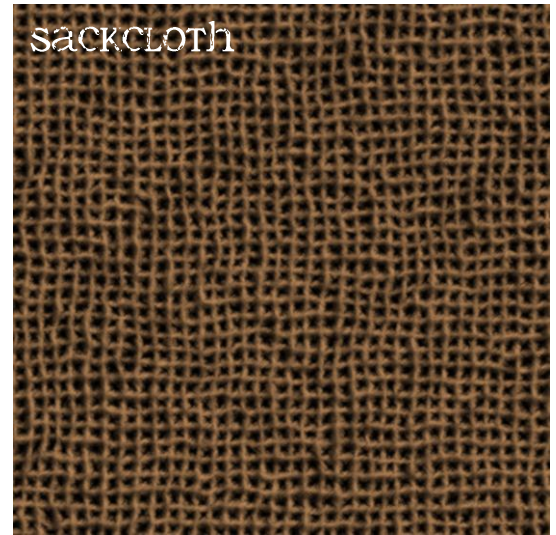
The city is said to have received its name from the Noah's great-grandson, the firstborn of Canaan. It grew in wealth and glory due to its ability to build ships, produce purple dye, and trade. That all changed about the time of King David when Tyre became the favored city. Elijah traveled to Sidon and performed miracles there. Like Tyre, the Israelites had a good relationship with Sidon. There was a considerable population of Jews living in Sidon at the time of Jesus. Being a Phoenician city, the population was Gentile and strangers to the only living God. They worshipped idols and often adopted immoral behaviors.

92 - they would have repented – The phrase “they would have repented” is translated from the Greek word “μετανοέω” or “metanoēō”. It means to change one’s mind; i.e. to repent, to change one’s mind for better, or heartily to amend with abhorrence of one’s past sins.

The cities of Tyre and Sidon were primarily Gentile. They were foreigners to the God of Israel. The commandments of God were unknown to them, and yet Jesus proclaimed that if He had performed the miracles there that some Jewish town experienced, they would have changed their ways and followed Him.

93 - long ago – The word “long ago” is translated from the Greek word “πάλαι” or “palai”. It means of old, former, or long ago.

94 - sackcloth – The word “sackcloth” is translated from the Greek word “σάκκος” or “sakkos”. It means a sack, with reference to a receptacle for holding or carrying various things, as money, food, etc. It also means a coarse cloth, of dark coarse elements made especially from the hair of animals. When the cloth is made into clothing the word refers to a garment of the like material, and clinging to the person like a sack, which was wont to be worn (or drawn over the tunic instead of the cloak or mantle) by mourners, penitents, supplicants and also by those who like the Hebrew prophets, lead an austere life. **“Sackcloth symbolizes mourning, repentance, and humiliation.”** (An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, J.C. Cooper, page 143). Jewish custom required those who have suffered loss to wear sackcloth.



95 - ashes – The word “ashes” is translated from the Greek word “σποδός” or “spodos”. It means ashes. In this case it was ashes placed on sackcloth as a token of grief. **“Ashes symbolizes the transitoriness of human life, the perishable human body, and mortality.”** (An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, J.C. Cooper, page 16). It is also a symbol for extreme sorrow. Another dictionary of symbols defines it as **“the residue of something consumed by fire, are universal symbols for mourning.”** (Encyclopedia of Traditional Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, page 14).



When the prophet Job experienced the various losses he suffered, he wore sackcloth **“And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself with; and he sat down among the ashes.”** (Job 2:8). Though wearing ashes is a sign of loss and sorrow, it can also symbolize someone who is humbling themselves and repenting. Job recorded, **“Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”** (Job 42:6).

Coal is typically black and symbolizes sin. As coal is burned with fire the black is consumed. The fire is a symbol of the purifying power of the spirit. After being purified, the once black coal is ash white, a symbol of purity and repentance. Placing ashes on one’s body is a sign that the mourner is seeking the purifying powers of the spirit.

- 96 - **more tolerable** – The term “more tolerable” is translated from the Greek word “ἀνεκτός” or “anektos”. It means bearable or tolerable. The word tolerable means capable or able to endure. The implication of this passage is that unrepentant sins, and those who refuse to draw upon Jesus for help in the next life, will suffer to the point that it is described as intolerable. Often the heathen or the Gentile are considered more likely to accept the gospel over those that knew the law and failed to comply with it. The Doctrine and Covenants contains similar language;

“And then shall the heathen nations be redeemed, and they that knew no law shall have part in the first resurrection; and it shall be tolerable for them.” (Doctrine and Covenants 45:54).

“And it shall be more tolerable for the heathen in the day of judgment, than for that house; therefore, gird up your loins and be faithful, and ye shall overcome all things, and be lifted up at the last day. Even so. Amen.” (Doctrine and Covenants 75:22).

- 97 - **day of judgment** – The word “judgment” is translated from the Greek word “κρίσις” or “krisis”. It means a separating, sundering, or separation. It can be used in reference to a trial or contest. It is also used to mean judgment.



Though we receive forms of judgment along our earthly journey, much of our actions, behaviors and attitudes go un-judged. The Lord has afforded us a probationary period that allows us time to correct mistakes and change the way we do things. During this time, the Lord’s judgments are designed to correct behavior. Seldom are His earthly judgments irreversible; at least on His part. Repentance is the avenue where with we can remove the consequences of future judgment and change ourselves for the better. Repentant souls are sometimes left with consequences from past errors. This may seem unfair to those that have properly repented; however, the Lord allows this as a deterrent to any later regression to past sins. One should not lose heart from reminders of past repentant sins.

Truly repentant souls are forgiven to the point that the Lord will remember them no more. This is a reference to the “day of judgment” or “final judgment”. Part of God’s plan for His children includes a day when we will be accountable for the things we did during mortality. This day will come after the mortal experience is over. It will come after the millennium and after the resurrection, though some might argue that forms of judgment will be passed at Jesus’ second coming (prior to the Millennium) and at the time of resurrection. The day of judgment might apply to these times or it might apply to the great and final judgment. At this final hour, all men shall stand judged and accountable for their actions. Those that had great witnesses of the truth will be more

accountable than those who did not. The Lord’s measure of judgment shall be fair and just.

This chapter places a great emphasis on the point that just because you consider yourself to be of the covenant doesn’t necessarily grant you entrance into heaven. Those who sinned knowing and witnessing little of the truth may have a better day of judgment than those who knew and witnessed much and sinned anyway. Chrysostom wrote, **“Yea, for it is a very great proof of wickedness, when not only of them that now are, but even of all those that ever were wicked, none are found so bad as they.”** (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 541).

- 98 - **Capernaum** – The word “Capernaum” is translated from the Greek word “Καφαρναούμ” or “Kapharnaoum”. Translated literally, it means “village of comfort”. It was a flourishing city of Galilee situated on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee or Lake of Gennesaret, near the place where the Jordan flows into the lake.

Capernaum was Jesus’ home during His mortal ministry. We believe that His mother and siblings moved to Capernaum after the marriage in Cana, which was at the very beginning of His ministry. We must assume that the people knew Him well. He attended synagogue with them and mingled with them in the market and at the harbor. He surely dined with them and had friendly discussions with them. All this being said, they must have witnessed incredible things from Him, including miracles, heavenly manifestations, celestial discourses, and the dead being raised. They saw things on a daily basis that we could only dream of. They walked with the Savior of mankind.



ARTISTIC RECONSTRUCTION OF CAPERNAUM

- 99 - **exalted unto heaven** – The word “exalted” is translated from the Greek word “ὑψώω” or “hypsōō”. It means to lift up on high, to exalt.

Exalted is an interesting word. It is a state of extreme happiness. We define exaltation as a state where we qualify to live in the presence of God, and inherit all that He has. The conditions under which God lives are a state of absolute and perfect happiness. God and exaltation are mutually exclusive. The Dead Sea Scrolls record a fragmented passage that states, **“My glory is incomparable, and apart from me none is exalted. None shall come to me for I dwell in ... in heaven, and there is no... I am reckoned with the ‘gods’ and my dwelling-place is in the congregation of holiness.”** (The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English, Translated by Geza Vermes, page 396). Another passage records, **“Bless the wonderful Maker of exalted things, Him who proclaims the power of His hand, sealing mysteries and revealing secrets, lifting up those who stumble and fall, [rest]oring the progress of those who hope for knowledge and humbling the meetings of the everlastingly haughty; [seal]ing the mysteries of spl[endor] and establ[ishing] the won]ders of glory.”** (The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English, Translated by Geza Vermes, page 354).

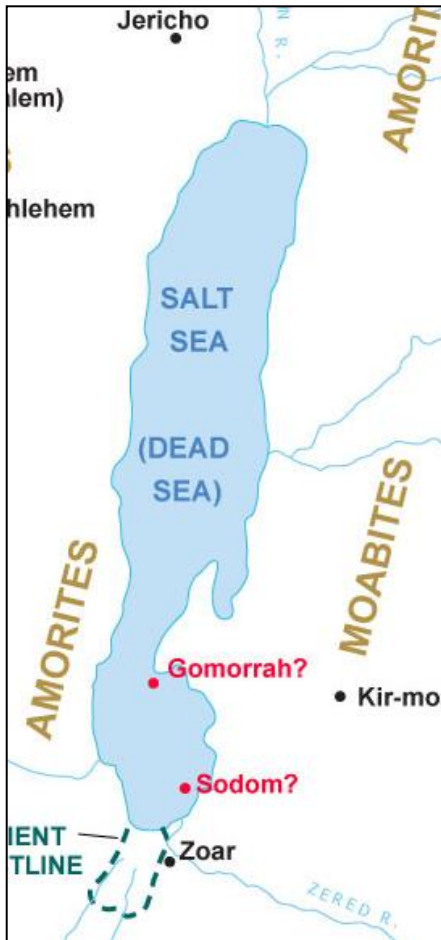
100 - brought down to hell – The term “brought” is translated from the Greek word “καταβιβάζω” or “katabibazō”. It means to cause to go down, to bring down, or to cast or thrust down. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the word “hell” as “hades”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 11, Verse 23, page 28). In the restored Gospel of Jesus Christ, we understand hell differently than most of the Christian world. The traditional view of hell is depicted with fire, flowing lava, brimstone, black molten rock, and eternal suffering. President Joseph Fielding Smith taught, “The Church does teach that there is a place called hell. Of course we do not believe that all those who do not receive the gospel will eventually be cast into hell. We do not believe that hell is a place where the wicked are being burned forever. The Lord has prepared a place, however, for all those who are to be eternally punished for the violation of his laws.” (Answers to Gospel Questions, Joseph Fielding Smith, Book 2, Section 49, page 208).



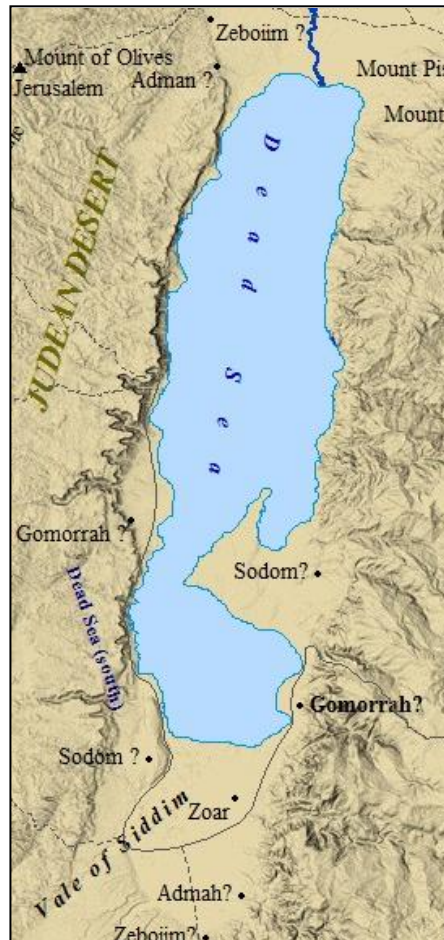
Hell is a state of eternal regret. It is knowing what could have been, and the choices that denied one's exaltation. Hell is not a place of fire and brimstone. References to hell being describes as a place where one is burned forever is most likely referring to the guilt and sorrow that one would bear having failed to partake of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. President Joseph Fielding Smith went on to say, “All those who enter the telestial kingdom, which will be a place, as each of these kingdoms will be, will be punished for their sins. Satan for time will have dominion over them until they have paid the price of their sinning, before they can enter

into the telestial kingdom.” (Answers to Gospel Questions, Joseph Fielding Smith, Book 2, Section 49, page 210).

101 - Sodom – The word “Sodom” is translated from the Greek word “Σόδομα” or “Sodoma”. Translated literally it means “burning”. Sodom was one of five cities located in the plain at the base of the Valley of Siddim. Most scholars have determined that the location of the five cities is at the southern end of the Dead Sea, though the recent archeological finds would support a site north of the Dead Sea. Zondervan explains, “Sodom, one of the so-called ‘Cities of the Plain,’ the others being Admah, Gomorrah, Zeboiim, and Zoar. The site of ‘the plain’ has been variously conjectured... An area around the northern end of the Dead Sea was later favored, mainly on the grounds that this region only is fully within range of vision from Bethel, from which vantage point Lot made his fatal choice. The southern end is shut off by the high country round Engedi.” (Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, General Editor Merrill C. Tenney, Page 800). Sodom and its sister cities are likely to be near the Dead Sea, though some theories would even place it under the Dead Sea. The most popular theories are as follows;



southern theory #1



southern theory #2



northern theory

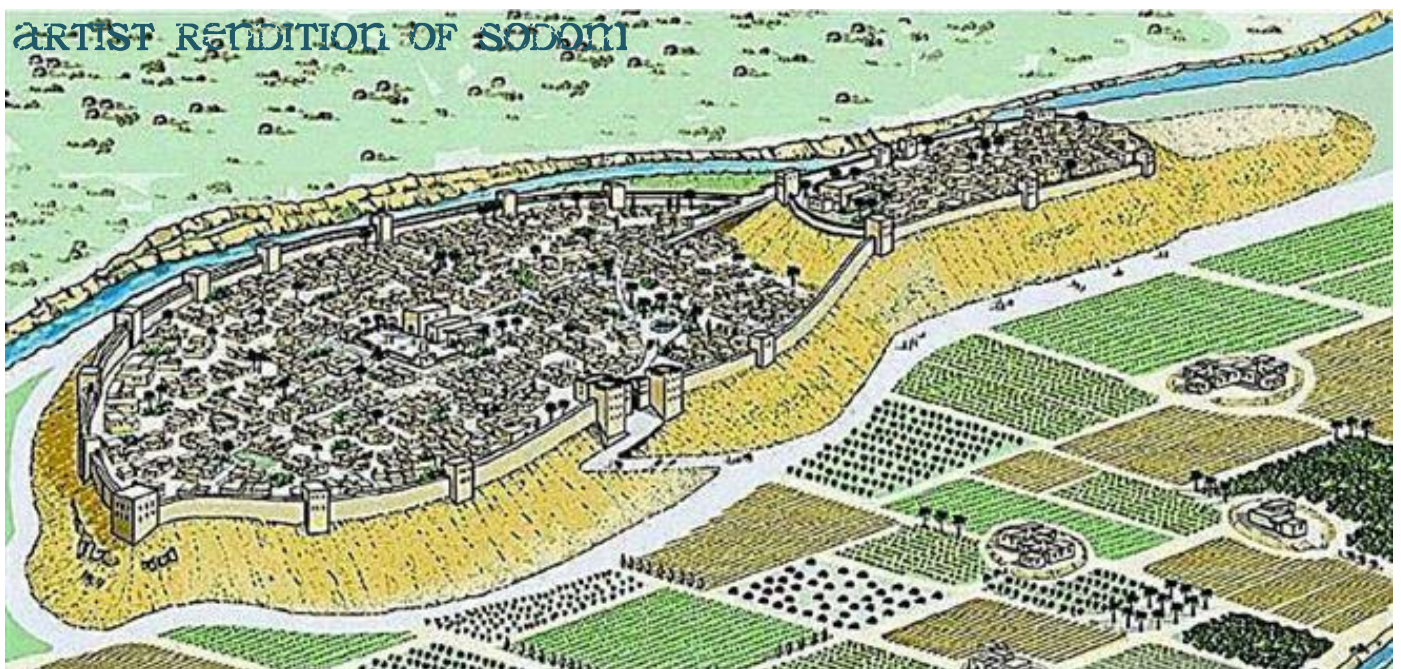
The Northern theory for the location of Sodom is popular due to sulfur hail (brimstone) found imbedded into the rocks in the surrounding area.



Archeologists have placed the date for the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah on June 29, 3,123BCE. The people of the cities became so carnally minded that sin had consumed their very existence. They had totally lost feeling, being incapable of feeling the spirit. The cities were destroyed by the Lord by raining fire and brimstone on them. The “**scriptures describe this region with such terms as brimstone, salt, burning, nothing grows, nettles, salt pits, perpetual desolation, never again to be inhabited, no shepherds, to Arabs to pitch a tent here! The area now has a potash and bromide business that is part of a billion dollar mineral extraction industry. Nor of the chemical plant about three miles, above one of the many salt caves in the area, is a natural stone outcropping that supposedly (with much imagination) has the form of a woman. It is known as LOT’S WIFE.**” (Discovering the World of the Bible, LaMar C. Berrett and D. Kelly Ogden, page 204-205).

As the scriptures record, Abraham was told by the Lord that five wicked cities in the valley of Siddim needed to be destroyed because of their wickedness. He specifically referred to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. We assume that they were chief among the cities in wickedness. Abraham pleaded with the Lord not to destroy the cities if there be any righteous living in them. Genesis records an interesting dialog between Abraham and God where Abraham is seemingly negotiating with God. He asks, “**Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?**” (Genesis 18:24). There were not fifty. Abraham then asks if God would save the city if there were forty, and then thirty, and twenty. He proceeds to ten, but in each case there were not that many righteous to be found. The Lord did not agree to spare the city, but finding that Lot and his family were righteous, the Lord agreed to save them.

In an odd turn of events, the Lord sent angels to Lot to lead him out of the city of Sodom. The people were so wicked that they saw the angels and came to Lot asking him to bring out his visitors so that they might have inappropriate relationships with them. These were extremely sinful people. They focused on selfish pleasures and material gratifications. They built a beautiful city, and sought after physical pleasures. This resulted in the judgment of God.



The scriptural references to Sodom and Gomorrah are many. They became types and symbols for evil. Berrett and Ogden summarize the references as follows;

- **Five wicked cities were in the valley: Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Bela (Zoar), and Zeboiim (Gen. 10:39; 13:10; 14:2-11).**
- **There were destroyed (except Bela), but Lot was saved (Gen. 19; Deut. 29:23; Isa. 13:19; Jer. 50:40; Matt. 10:15; 2nd Peter 2:6; Jude 7; cf. 2nd Nephi 23:19).**
- **Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt (Gen. 19:26; Luke 17:32).**
- **They were used as a warning by Moses.**
- **They were cited as types, or symbols.”**
(Discovering the World of the Bible, LaMar C. Berrett and D. Kelly Ogden, page 204-205).

The Jews would have readily recognized the symbolic overtures of Jesus' reference to Sodom. The rub is that the Jews saw themselves as the covenant people of the Lord and chosen above all others. To have Jesus imply that the people of Sodom were more receptive to the workings of the spirit would have been offensive to the Jews. The people of Sodom were guilty of every conceivable sin, and yet Jesus clearly declares that if He had performed the mighty works and miracles for that city, they would have repented and followed Him. The Jews of Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida had seen such works and yet they dwindled in disbelief. Chrysostom wrote, **“To these same things let us also listen; since not for the unbelievers only, but for us also, hath He appointed a punishment more grievous than that of the Sodomites, if we will not receive the strangers that come in unto us; I mean, when He commanded to shake off the very dust: and very fitly. For as to the Sodomites, although they committed a great transgression, yet it was before the law and grace; but we, after so much care shewn towards us, of what indulgence should we be worthy...”** (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 541).



This is not the only time that the Jews have acted in such outright defiance of the Lord's work. The Lord had performed mighty works at the time of Jeremiah, Lehi, and Ezekiel, and yet Ezekiel declared, **“As I live, saith the Lord God, Sodom thy sister hath not done, she nor her daughters, as thou hast done, thou and thy daughters.”** (Ezekiel 16:48). Sodom was no less wicked, it was the fact that the Jews had refused to harken to the mighty word of God that defined them as “worse” than Sodom.

The Lord follows a specific pattern in redeeming His children. He has followed His pattern consistently from the beginning of time. He sends His words of salvation to His children via Holy Prophets. These prophets perform the works of heaven to help strengthen testimonies. The Lord's authorized representatives contend against evil even unto the taking of their very own lives. This is done that we might be convinced of the truth and follow Him. President Joseph Fielding Smith said, **“Some say the kingdom of God was not set up on the earth until the day of Pentecost, and that John did not preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. But I say, in the name of the Lord, that the kingdom of God was set up on the earth from the days of Adam to the present time, whenever there has been a righteous man**

on earth unto whom God revealed His word and gave power and authority to administer in His name. And where there is a priest of God—a minister who has power and authority from God to administer in the ordinances of the gospel and officiate in the priesthood of God—there is the kingdom of God. And, in consequence of rejecting the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Prophets whom God hath sent, the judgments of God have rested upon people, cities, and nations, in various ages of the world, which was the case with the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, that were destroyed for rejecting the Prophets.” (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Selected and arranged by the Historian of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints - Joseph Fielding Smith, page 271).

102 - remained until this day – The term “this day” is translated from the Greek word “σήμερον” or “sēmeron”. It means this very day, or what has happened today. The message is that if Jesus had performed the mighty works that He had with the Jews, to the people of Sodom, their city would not have been destroyed and you could have even visited it at the time of Jesus.

103 - At that time – The word “time” is translated from the Greek word “καιρός” or “kairos”. It means due measure, opportune or seasonable time, the right time, or a limited period of time. This phrase is a transitional marker. It represents the end of Jesus' sermon on John the Baptist and Jesus' mighty works in the presence of John's disciples and the start of a verbal prayer to His Father in front of the audience He has addressed.

104 - I thank thee – The word “thank” is translated from the Greek word “ἐξομολογέω” or “exomologeō”. It means to confess, or to profess.

Jesus follows a pattern of prayer that modern day missionaries teach investigators of the church today. The pattern is as follows;

1. Address God in respect and reverence, typical using His sacred title of Father.
2. Express Gratitude for the things that He has blessed us with. Specifically acknowledge God's had in the various blessings in your life.
3. Ask God for counsel and assistance in the challenges of life, whether for yourself or on behalf of others.
4. Close in the name of Jesus Christ, who is our mediator before the Father.
5. End with the word Amen, a word that indicates a binding covenant.

While Jesus was worthy to approach the Father, we are not. He is a perfect being, and no unclean thing can be in His presence. In all actuality, we have no right to approach Him for any favors or blessings. Our sins preclude us from such blessings. This is why we come to the Father in the name of the Son. While we are unworthy, He is not. We invoke His name that the Father will listen because of the mediation provided by His atonement. We become worthy through Jesus.

105 - Father – The word “Father” is translated from the Greek word “πατήρ” or “patēr”. It means generator or male ancestor. It is used either the nearest ancestor: father of the corporeal nature, natural fathers, or both parents.

106 - Lord of heaven and earth – The word “Lord” is translated from the Greek word “κύριος” or “kyrios”. It means he to whom a person or thing belongs, about which he has power of deciding; master, or lord. 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; the universe or the world. It also means the region above the sidereal heavens, the seat of order of things eternal and consummately perfect where God dwells and other heavenly beings. The word “earth” is translated from the Greek word “γῆ” or “gē”. It means arable land. It is the land verses the sea. It can be used to refer to a country, or a land enclosed within fixed boundaries. Fitzmyer translates the phrase “Lord of Heaven and Earth” as “**to the Lord of Heaven and Earth**”. **Again, the absolute use of ‘ho kyrios’ in a narrative statement; Some mss. however, read, ‘Jesus’.**” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 665). The prayer may reference both ‘Elohim’ the Father and ‘Jehovah’ the Son in the term “Lord of Heaven and Earth”. The two are often confused in scripture due to the fact that they act so completely as one in mind, action, and deed.

107 - because thou hast hid these things – The word “hid” is translated from the Greek word “ἀποκρύπτω” or “apokryptō”. It means to hid, conceal, or kept secret.

In an act of great mercy, the Godhead has withheld many doctrines and principles from mankind which they were not ready or able to live. In this passage, Jesus is thanking His Father for withholding these things. They are only withheld until such time as we are prepared to live them. They can be obtained as we seek out the mysteries of heaven in faith, and obtain the spirit of truth which reveals the hidden things of heaven. Modern scripture teaches, **“And if thou wilt inquire, thou shalt know mysteries which are great and marvelous; therefore thou shalt exercise thy gift, that thou mayest find out mysteries, that thou mayest bring many to the knowledge of the truth, yea, convince them of the error of their ways.”** (Doctrine and Covenants 6:11).

The thruth or hidden things of heaven have the power to save man, or condemn him. The difference lies in what we do with the truth once received. Chrysostom writes, **“What then? Doth He rejoice in destruction, and in the others not having received this knowledge? By no means; but this is a most excellent way of His to save men, His not forcing them that utterly reject, and are not willing to receive His sayings; that, since they were not bettered by His call, but fell back, and despised it, His casting them out might cause them to fall into a longing for these things.”** (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, pages 548-549). Even so, man cannot be saved in ignorance. At some point, all mankind must receive the truth and choose whether they will act on it unto salvation or deny it unto the loss of exaltation.

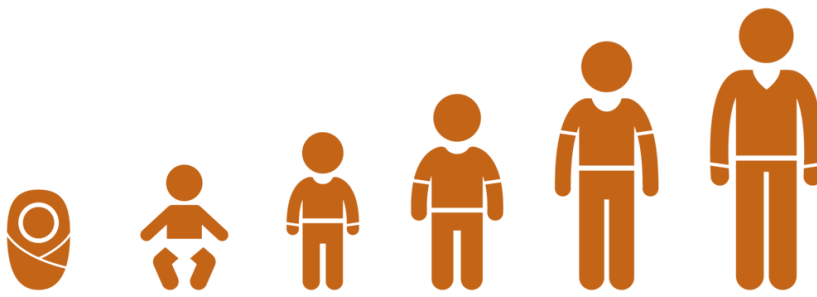
108 - the wise and prudent – The word “wise” is translated from the Greek word “σοφός” or “sophos”. It means wise, as in skilled or expert. The word “prudent” is translated from the Greek word “συνετός” or “synetos”. It means intelligent, having understanding, wise, or learned. These are the prideful, or those that are puffed up in their own knowledge, skill and ability. These cannot learn the mysteries of God because they refuse to even consider his ways.

109 - revealed – The word “revealed” is translated from the Greek word “ἀποκαλύπτω” or “apokalyptō”. It means to uncover, lay open what has been veiled or covered up. The Lord revealed that His gospel is established or revealed **“to prepare the weak for those things which are coming on the earth, and for the Lord’s errand in the day when the weak shall confound the wise, and the little one become a strong nation, and two shall put their tens of thousands to flight.”** (Doctrine and Covenants 133:58). I have always been amazed at the Lord’s missionary program. It is a miracle. He calls young men and women to reveal His truth to the wise men of the world. These young people, and I was one of them, are inexperienced and often have very little gospel knowledge. They enter the mission field with a testimony of the restored gospel and faith in the Lord. They are often weak spiritually, immature and inexperienced. That being said, the Lord uses them because they are humble and willing. And with these weak things He has brought about a great work. With His spirit He enlarges their abilities and knowledge. He makes them mighty in spirit. With them, He reveals Himself to the world.

110 - unto babes – The word “babes” is translated from the Greek word “νήπιος” or “nēpios”. It means an infant, little child, a minor, or not of age.

Understanding this passage of scripture requires a broader understanding of the ancient Jewish term “babes”. Edershiem gives a lengthy, but informative summary of its use in scripture. He wrote;

“The tenderness of the bond which united Jewish parents to their children appears even in the multiplicity and pictorialness of the expressions by which the various stages of child-life are designated in the Hebrew. Besides such general words as ‘ben’ and ‘bath’ — ‘son’ and ‘daughter’— we find no fewer than nine different terms, each depicting a fresh stage of life. The first of these simply designates the babe as the newly— ‘born’—the ‘jeled,’ or, in the feminine, ‘jaldah’—as in Exodus 2:3, 6, 8. But the use of this term throws a fresh light on the meaning of some passages of Scripture. Thus we remember that it is applied to our Lord in the prophecy of His birth (Isa 9:6): ‘For a babe’ (‘jeled’) is born unto us, a son (‘ben’) is given to us; while in Isaiah 2:6 its employment adds a new meaning to the charge: ‘They please themselves (or strike hands) with the ‘jalde’—the ‘babes’—of strangers’—marking them, so to speak, as not only the children of strangers, but as unholy from their very birth. Compare also the pictorial, or else the poetical, use of the word ‘jeled’ in such passages as Isaiah 29:23, 57:4; Jeremiah 31:20; Ecclesiastes 4:13; 1 Kings 12:8; 2 Kings 2:24; Genesis 42:22; and others. The next child-name, in point of time, is ‘jonek,’ which means, literally, ‘a suckling,’ being also sometimes used figuratively of plants, like our English ‘sucker,’ as in Isaiah 53:2: ‘He shall grow up before Him as a sucker’—‘jonek.’ The word ‘jonek’ occurs, for example, in Isaiah 11:8, and in Psalm 8:2. On the other hand, the expression in the latter passage, rendered ‘babes’ in our Authorized Version, marks a yet third stage in the child’s existence, and a farther advancement in the babe-life. This appears from many passages. As the word implies, the ‘olel’ is still ‘sucking’; but it is no longer satisfied with only this nourishment, and is ‘asking bread,’ as in Lamentations 4:4: ‘The tongue of the ‘jonek’ cleaves to the roof of his mouth for thirst: the ‘olalim’ ask bread.’ A fourth designation represents the child as the ‘gamul,’ or ‘weaned one’ (Psa 131:2; Isa 11:8, 28:9), from a verb which primarily means to complete, and secondarily to wean. As we know, the period of weaning among the Hebrews was generally at the end of two years (Chethub. 60), and was celebrated by a feast. After that the fond eye of the Hebrew parent seems to watch the child as it is clinging to its mother—as it were, ranging itself by her—whence the fifth designation, ‘taph’ (Esth 3:13, ‘The ‘taph’ and the women in one day’; Jer 40:7; Eze 9:6). The sixth period is marked by the word ‘elem’ (in the feminine, ‘almah,’ as in Isa 7:14, of the virgin mother), which denotes becoming firm and strong. As one might expect, we have next the ‘naari,’ or youth—literally, he who shakes off, or shakes himself free. Lastly, we find the child designated as ‘bachur,’ or the ‘ripened one’; a young warrior, as in Isaiah 31:8; Jeremiah 18:21, 15:8, etc. Assuredly, those who so keenly watched child-life as to give a pictorial designation to each advancing stage of its existence, must have been fondly attached to their children.” (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, page 59).



The Lord teaches His children **“But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.”** (Isaiah 28:13). Those that are infants in a spiritual sense, He gives them spiritual milk or the basic doctrines of the kingdom. He teaches them first faith. Like an infant, once milk is tolerated and growth occurs, the parent (in this case our Father in Heaven) provides food with slightly more substance or spiritual weight. The Lord follows this pattern until His children are ready for the fullness of His spiritual menu. He hides the doctrines and ordinances which we are not ready to receive, so that we do not struggle consuming them and consequently fall away. All things are provided in their own due time and according to the Lord’s pattern. We should rest assured that there will be a time when the fullness is revealed to all mankind, and nothing will be hidden. We live in those times. The Lord taught, **“it is necessary in the ushering in of the dispensation of the fullness of times, which dispensation is now beginning to usher in, that a whole and complete and perfect union, and welding together of dispensations, and keys, and powers, and glories should take place, and be revealed from the days of Adam even to the present time. And not only this, but those things which never have been revealed from the foundation of the world, but have been kept hid from the wise and prudent, shall be revealed unto babes and sucklings in this, the dispensation of the fullness of times.”** (Doctrine and Covenants 128:18).

111 - seemeth good in thy sight – The word “sight” is translated from the Greek word “ἐμπροσθεν” or “emprosthen”. It means in front, or before. It can be used in the connotation of being before; in presence or sight.



The idea that something is good in God’s sight means that it is in line with God’s will. We often struggle following God’s will because our vision of things is often very limited. We see things in a very narrow and limited focus. Like a black and white picture, our perspective often leaves out the fine details that mean everything to the picture. Additionally, like a close up picture, many of the circumstances and surroundings are left out of our vision. Without them, we often fail to understand what is happening in our life and why. God sees everything. Being good in God’s sight means that all things have been taken into account.



112 - All things – The phrase “all things” is translated from the Greek word “πᾶς” or “pas”. Individually, it means each, every, any, all, the whole, everyone, all things, or everything. Collectively, it means some of all types. The message here is that nothing has been left out, missed, or withheld. Jesus received all things necessary from the Father to accomplish His mission here upon the earth.

113 - delivered unto me – The word “delivered” is translated from the Greek word “παραδίδωμι” or “paradidōmi”. It means to give into the hands of another, or to give over into one’s power or use. It can also mean to commit, or to commend. The Father gave the Son (Jesus) all authority and power to accomplish His mission here upon the earth and consequently throughout eternity.

114 - no man knoweth – The word “knoweth” is translated from the Greek word “ἐπιγινώσκω” or “epiginōskō”. It means to become thoroughly acquainted with, or to know thoroughly. This is a reference to the natural man, who doesn’t know the mind and will of God. He doesn’t know the workings of the spirit and consequently is ignorant to the workings of God.

Knowing God requires much more than a study of books and scholastic learning. The spirit of the Lord teaches a man to be obedient to the laws and doctrines of God. It is only by doing the things that the spirit directs that we truly get to know God. Paul taught, **“They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.”** (Titus 1:16). When we emulate Jesus, and deny the natural man, we begin to know the Father and the Son. It is only by serving others that we comprehend the majesty of God. King Benjamin taught, **“For how knoweth a man the master whom he has not served, and who is a stranger unto him, and is far from the thoughts and intents of his heart?”** (Mosiah 5:13).

115 - Son – The word “Son” is translated from the Greek word “υἱός” or “huios”. It means a son. It is rarely used of animals, and is generally used of the offspring of men. In this case, it is a reference to the Son of God or Jesus.

116 - reveal – The word “reveal” is translated from the Greek word “ἀποκαλύπτω” or “apokalypō”. It means to uncover, to lay open what has been veiled or covered up, or to make known.

The Lord reveals Himself to those who seek Him by doing His Father’s will. The Father’s will is perfectly consistent. It always involves the bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of His children. When we are about the Father’s work, He will reveal Himself, His will, and His blessings. The Dead Sea Scrolls record, **“All these he has done wonder[fully with all the eternally hidden things] ... all the words of knowledge; for from the God of knowledge (comes) all that exists for ever, [and from] his [plan]s (come) all the eternally appointed. He produces the former things in their appointed times, and the latter things in their seasons. None among those who know the [wonderfully] revealed things can comprehend them before he makes them. When he makes them, none of [the doers of righteous]ness can understand his plan, for they are his glorious works. Before they come into being, (they derive) [from] his [pla]n.”** (The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English, Translated by Geza Vermes, page 384).

117 - Come unto me – The word “come” is translated from the Greek word “δεῦτε” or “deute”. It means come hither, come here, or come.

The outstretched arms of Jesus displayed in Thorvaldsen’s Kristus statue are the reason that Thorvaldsen named the statue “Kom Følgler Mig” (Come Follow Me) from the scripture where Jesus directs the people to follow Him. The placement of Jesus’ arms by the sculptor was inspired. There are several theories on how the statue ended up with the lower extended arms it has today:

1. According to J.M. Thiele, Thorvaldsen’s biographer, Herman Ernst Freund listened to Thorvaldsen’s complaints with his arms crossed upon his chest and questioned what Thorvaldsen wanted to communicate with the position of Christ’s arms. As Thorvaldsen contemplated an answer, he suddenly exclaimed, **“I have it now! It shall be so!”** Thus, according to Thiele, the conception of the Kristus was nothing short of divine inspiration.
2. Another version claims that while Freund, standing with arms folded across his chest, was listening sympathetically to the discouraged Thorvaldsen, he tried to cheer him up, unfolded his arms, and half-opened them, dropping them slightly downward, palms upward. Thorvaldsen saw his friend pose the posture he desired for his statue of Christ and quickly sketched the idea in his notes.

- One last version of how the arms of Christ came to be positioned deals with one of Thorvaldsen's early clay models. In this version, the raised arms slumped during the night from the higher position above Christ's head to His waist. Thorvaldsen, upon seeing this new pose, quickly made it permanent.

Regardless of how the Kristus statue took its present form, the statue has a divine message. Jesus is standing with His arms outstretched inviting all to come unto Him. In the Book of Mormon, the Lord taught, **"I will be merciful unto them, saith the Lord God, if they will repent and come unto me; for mine arm is lengthened out all the day long, saith the Lord God of Hosts."** (2nd Nephi 28:32). This message seems to be a constant and consistent message from Jesus. He is always inviting people to come unto Him.

This invitation seems so clear and simple, and yet many do not understand what it means to come unto Jesus. To properly understand this principle, we must look at several scriptural passages.

First, coming unto Christ requires that we believe in Him and His power to save. Paul taught the Hebrews, **"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."** (Hebrews 11:6). We will never truly come unto Jesus unless we have a faith in Him strong enough to compel us to change.

Second, coming unto Jesus requires that we act upon our faith and change our ways. We are required to discard our carnal ways and become like Jesus. It requires a change of desires. This process is called repentance. The Lord taught, **"Behold, this is my doctrine—whosoever repenteth and cometh unto me, the same is my church."** (Doctrine and Covenants 10:67). They who attach themselves to the Lord and His organization are in a constant state of change and progression. This change causes them to align themselves with God's will and keep His commandments. The Savior Himself taught, **"Therefore come unto me and be ye saved; for verily I say unto you, that except ye shall keep my commandments, which I have commanded you at this time, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."** (3rd Nephi 12:20).

Third, coming unto Jesus requires that we enter into a covenant with Him. The prophet Isaiah taught, **"Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."** (Isaiah 55:3). This covenant, which ultimately includes all the covenants established by God, starts with the covenant of baptism. The covenant requires that the repentant person desiring to come unto Jesus promises to always remember Jesus and His sacrifice. It also requires a promise to keep His commandments. On the other hand, God promises to **provide the Holy Ghost** and provide a remission of sins. Paul taught, **"Jesus came into the world to save sinners."** (1st Timothy 1:15).

Finally, coming unto Jesus requires that we endure all the trials of life relying on His mighty hand to guide us and save us from the downfalls of this mortal experience. The Psalmist records, **"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved."** (Psalms 55:22). As we strive to endure, we become one with Jesus and others who follow Him. Paul wrote, **"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:"** (Ephesians 4:13).

As one might have deduced, coming unto Jesus follows the first principle and ordinances of the Gospel. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained how we follow the Savior's repeated invitation "Come unto me": **"Just believing, just having a 'molecule' of faith— ... that simple step, when focused on the Lord Jesus Christ, has ever been and always will be the first principle of His eternal gospel, the first step out of despair. Second, we must change anything we can change that may be part of the problem. In short we must repent, perhaps the most hopeful and encouraging word in the Christian vocabulary. ... Anything we can change we should change, and we must forgive the rest. In this way our access to the Savior's Atonement becomes as unimpeded as we, with our imperfections, can make it. He will take it from there. Third, in as many ways as possible we try to take upon us His identity, and we begin by taking upon us His name. That name is formally bestowed by covenant in the saving ordinances of the gospel. These start with baptism and conclude with temple covenants, with many others, such as partaking of the sacrament, laced throughout our lives as additional blessings and reminders... Following these most basic teachings, a splendor of connections to Christ opens up to us in multitudinous ways: prayer and fasting and meditation upon His purposes, savoring the scriptures, giving service to others, 'succor[ing] the weak, lift[ing] up the hands which hang down, ... strengthen[ing] the feeble knees' [D&C 81:5]. Above all else, loving with 'the pure love of Christ,' that gift that 'never faileth,' that gift that 'beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, [and] endureth all things' [Moroni 7:45]. Soon, with that kind of love, we realize our days hold scores of thoroughfares leading to the Master and that every time we reach out, however feebly, for Him, we discover He has been anxiously trying to reach us"** ("Broken Things to Mend," Ensign or Liahona, May 2006, 69–70).

118 - all ye that labor – The word "labor" is translated from the Greek word "κοπιᾶω" or "kopiāō". It means to grow weary, tired, exhausted (with toil or burdens or grief), to labour with wearisome effort, or to toil.

The fall of Adam brought the curse of labor. Adam was told that he was to work by the sweat of his brow all the days of his life. He was to labor to provide food and shelter for his family. The curse of labor was part of God's eternal plan for our happiness. When we focus our labors on God's will, we find rich blessings. The Book of Proverbs records, **"The labour of the righteous tendeth to life: the fruit of the wicked to sin."** (Proverbs 10:16). Righteous labor prepares us for eternal life.

The Lord knew that labor without rest would not accomplish His work in perfecting His children. The goal of the plan of happiness is to bring God's children home to Him. God lives in a place of eternal rest or peace. It is a place of spiritual happiness, without the worries of sin and mortality. This is the peace we all seek. It is no wonder that God commanded that we break from our labors every 7 days. This rest is in similitude of the eternal rest that awaits us. Mortality will traverse 6 dispensations of labor, followed by a dispensation of rest. The Lord commanded, **"Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:"** (Exodus 20:9). We call this day the Sabbath. We should make the Sabbath day a holy day that resembles the rest and peace we will enjoy after we successfully labor through mortality. Paul taught, **"For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."** (Hebrews 4:10-11).

119 - are heavy laden – The term "heavy laden" is translated from the Greek word "φορτίζω" or "phortizō". It means to place a burden upon or to load. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the word "laden" as "burdened". (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 11, Verse 28, page 28).



Mortality will surely be laced with heavy burdens. These burdens may be in consequence to sin, which we will all commit. They may be in consequence of the actions or sins of others, or just as a consequence of living in mortality.

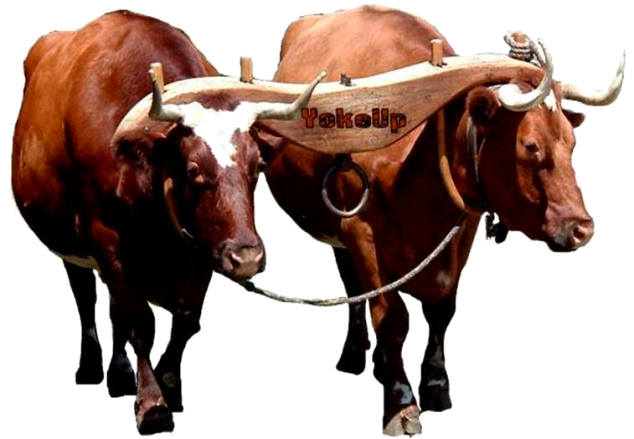
Life is designed to test and try us. Even the faithful will feel the burden of laboring in mortality. One might recall the story of Moses as he led the Israelites in battle against the Gentiles. The battle was long and so long as Moses held his staff (which represented the priesthood) high in the air the Israelites prevailed. When he felt his muscles struggle and lowered his hands, they began to lose. The scriptures record, **“But Moses’ hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.”** (Exodus 17:12). Even the prophets of God will face times that are heavy laden or heavy burdened.

120 - I will give you rest – The word “rest” is translated from the Greek word “ἀναπαύω” or “anapaō”. It means to cause or permit one to cease from any movement or labor in order to recover and collect his strength. It also means to give rest, refresh, to give one’s self rest, or take rest. Finally, it can mean to keep quiet, of calm and patient expectation. When we think of rest, we think of sleep or a period of relaxing. In a spiritual sense, rest represents freedom from sin and all influences thereof. In mortality, we receive a form of this rest when we receive the peaceful influence of the Holy Ghost. We cannot feel the peace that comes with the spirit when we commit sin. Isaiah taught, **“There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked.”** (Isaiah 48:22). On the other hand, the Lord explains to those who are worthy, **“My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.”** (Exodus 33:14).

Mankind has an inherent need for peace and happiness. Many look for it, not knowing where to find it. They often turn to the world which offers false peace in the form of carnal pleasures and sin. Unfortunately, those that seek peace and happiness in the ways of the world find that peace and rest have eluded them. **“But learn that he who doeth the works of righteousness shall receive his reward, even peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.”** (Doctrine and Covenants 59:23).

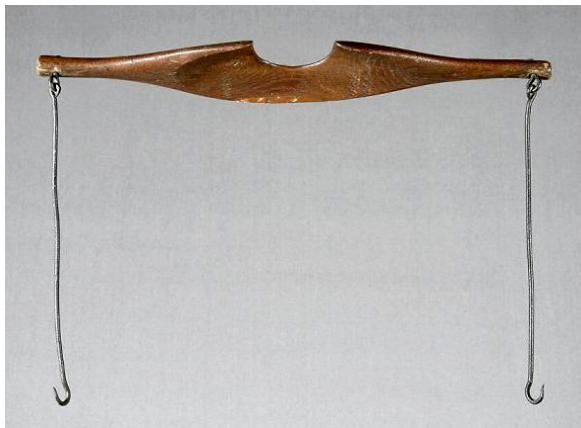
The idea of inheriting the rest and peace associated with God, in its fullness, will not be realized in this life. The Lord counseled, **“Be patient in tribulation until I come; and, behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, and they who have sought me early shall find rest to their souls.”** (Doctrine and Covenants 54:10). The difference between God’s peace while in mortality, and the peace He offers after this life, is a difference of degrees. We enjoy peace in this life as we repent and obey God’s commandments. The Book of Alma teaches, **“Therefore, whosoever repenteth, and hardeneth not his heart, he shall have claim on mercy through mine Only Begotten Son, unto a remission of his sins; and these shall enter into my rest.”** (Alma 12:34). Until the “day of judgment”, we enjoy a portion of that eternal peace by repenting and living the laws of the gospel. **“And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.”** (Isaiah 32:17). There is a calm peace associated with knowing that you are in good standing with God. It also entitles one to the Holy Ghost which also speaks peace to the soul. Isaiah taught that **“the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord;”** (Isaiah 11:2). Until our mortal probation is over, we are admonished to **“Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him”** (Psalms 37:7).

121 - Take my yoke upon you – The word “yoke” is translated from the Greek word “ζυγός” or “zygos”. It means a yoke; generally a yoke that is put on draught cattle. A yoke is a wooden crosspiece that is fastened over the necks of two animals and attached to the plow or cart that they are to pull. The yoke allows a burden to be evenly distributed over the individual animal’s shoulders allowing it to carry a greater burden. It also allows two animals to be “yoked” together. This allows a burden to be born by two animals. In this case, they share the load. **“The yoke symbolizes union, control, balance, discipline, obedience, slavery, humiliation, toil, and patience.”** (An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Traditional Symbols, J.C. Cooper, page 196). **“In an agricultural society, yokes naturally symbolize enslavement and subjugation...they also symbolize commitment, and submission to God’s will”** (Encyclopedia of Traditional Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, pages 196-197).



The yoke was a common instrument at the time of Jesus and has been for centuries. It was common among farmers. When a farmer wanted to train a young ox to pull a plow, he did not put two strong, untrained oxen together in the same yoke. It would be too hard to manage them, and the farmer’s field would not be plowed straight. Instead, he yoked the young ox together with an old, experienced ox. The older ox had long experience serving the farmer and knew how to hear and obey the voice of his master. Through the yoke, the young ox could feel the authority of the older animal and learn how to obey the commands of the master.

It is not hard to see why Jesus used the symbol of the yoke in this teaching episode. In times past, wooden yokes were usually carefully crafted by carpenters to fit the necks of the animals that would wear them. Since yokes were used to bind one animal to another animal, they can be seen as symbolic of the covenant relationship that binds us to the Savior and allows us to “pull together” with Him. President Howard W. Hunter (1907–95) explained: **“In biblical times the yoke was a device of great assistance to those who tilled the field. It allowed the strength of a second animal to be linked and coupled with the effort of a single animal, sharing and reducing the heavy labor of the plow or wagon. A burden that was overwhelming or perhaps impossible for one to bear could be equitably and comfortably borne by two bound together with a common yoke... Why face life’s burdens alone, Christ asks, or why face them with temporal support that will quickly falter? To the heavy laden it is Christ’s yoke, it is the power and peace of standing side by side with a God that will provide the support, balance, and strength to meet our challenges and endure our tasks here in the hardpan field of mortality. Obviously, the personal burdens of life vary from person to person, but every one of us has them. Furthermore, each trial in life is tailored to the individual’s capacities and needs as known by a loving Father in Heaven. Of course, some sorrows are brought on by the sins of a world not following the counsel of that Father in Heaven. Whatever the reason, none of us seems to be completely free from life’s challenges. To one and all, Christ said, in effect: As long as we all must bear some burden and shoulder some yoke, why not let it be mine? My promise to you is that my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”** (See Matt. 11:28–30.) (“Come unto Me,” Ensign, November 1990, page 18).



Yokes are designed to make loads lighter by dispersing the weight of the load evenly over the shoulders. Yokes are even made for a single person. From the ends of the yoke a person can attach a heavy payload. The yokes are typically custom designed for the user, fashioned to conform to the specific person’s neck and shoulders. This allows the person to carry heavier loads than they could otherwise carry by utilizing more of the body’s muscles and frame. Figuratively, the single yoke may represent the fact that the burdens that God places upon our shoulders are designed for us. They are specific to our needs and help us develop spiritually. They also provide external support to assist us in bearing the load. Speaking of our burdens the Lord promised, **“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”** (1st Corinthians 10:13).

One might say that the burdens carried by the Lord's yoke are placed upon us to expand our capabilities and spiritual strength. The Paleo-Hebrew seems to support this statement. The word indicates "watchful teaching". The Paleo-Hebrew is as follows;



J = The Shepherd Staff, to teach, Yoke, Bind, or toward

eye = The eye, watch, know or shade.

Whether Jesus is referring to a single yoke that He places on us or a double yoke where we are paired with Him, the message still carries the idea that He will not over burden us, nor will He withhold assistance to those who faithfully ask. The idea being that the load is easy if Jesus is doing the heavy lifting. Chrysostom wrote, "And if thou art still afraid and tremblest at hearing of the yoke and the burden, the fear comes not of the nature of the thing, but of thy remissness; since if thou art prepared, and in earnest, all will be easy to thee and light." (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, page 553). Additionally, there is inference to the fact that the yoke of Jesus is properly fitted to us and joyful to wear. It only becomes burdensome when the load we are trying to carry is sin. Chrysostom wrote that Jesus' "yoke is sweet and light, is manifest many other ways also; but to conclude, if you please, let us look also at the burdens of sin. Let us then bring forward the covetous, the retailers and second-hand dealers in shameless bargains. What now could be a heavier burden than such transactions? How many sorrows, how many anxieties, how many disappointments, how many dangers, how many plots and wars, daily spring up from these gains? How many troubles and disturbances?" (The Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople on the Gospel of St. Matthew, Part II, Matthew 8-18, Translated from the works of John Chrysostom from the 4th Century C.E., Baxter Printer, Oxford, 1854, pages 555-556).

Taking upon us the yoke of Jesus necessarily requires that the wearer remove the yoke of sin. It would be quite impossible to wear two yokes simultaneously. Many of us seek for the yoke of Jesus, but refuse to remove the yoke of sin. We then question why the yoke is unbearable and the easiness that we may expect is nowhere to be found. It is because we have not allowed Jesus to yoke us. Heber C. Kimball admonished, "Take upon you the yoke of Christ, and wear it, for it is easy, and the path of the righteous is plain. But when a man is wrong and neglects his duty, he is full of sorrow, he is uneasy, and unhappy all the day long. You know this. Peace be with you! and may God help you to do right, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen." (Journal of Discourses, Volume 8, Heber C. Kimball, June 10, 1860, page 91).

122 - learn of me – The word "learn" is translated from the Greek word "μανθάνω" or "manthanō". It means to learn, or to be appraised.



Continuing with the figurative expression of the yoke, a young animal yoked to another learns how to perform his duties by being yoked to a more experienced and obedient animal. The experienced animal teaches the younger animal how to perform its duties and bear up the load properly.

The yoke also teaches and develops by strengthening muscles and capabilities. Young inexperienced animals working under a yoke with a heavy load expand and develop muscles. They learn how to pull and drive the load. They become proficient. Over time the yoke becomes easier and lighter through learning and training. President Brigham Young said, "Now take upon you this yoke; it is a great deal easier than to pay so much more for goods as you have been doing. I say the 'yoke is easy and burden is light' and we can bear it. If we will work unitedly, we can work ourselves into wealth, health, prosperity and power, and this is required of us. It is the duty of a Saint of God to gain all the influence he can on this earth, and to use every particle of that influence to do good. If this is not his duty, I do not understand what the duty of man is." (Journal of Discourses, Volume 12, Brigham Young, April 6, 1869, page 376).

President John Taylor stated that the burden, or yoke, that Jesus requires of all His disciples is the proclaiming of the Gospel and bring souls unto Christ through covenant. That being said, we cannot proclaim that which we do not know. The Lord directed the young saints of the restoration, "Seek not to declare my word, but first seek to obtain my word, and then shall your tongue be loosed; then, if you desire, you shall have my Spirit and my word, yea, the power of God unto the convincing of men." (Doctrine and Covenants 11:21). This explains Jesus admonition to learn of me as He directs them to take His yoke upon the, President Taylor explained, "Jesus says, 'Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest to your

souls.' What was the yoke placed upon the followers of Jesus? Precisely the same as that placed upon you. What did he tell his disciples to do? To go forth and baptize the people in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and it was promised that certain signs should follow them that believed. In his name they should cast out devils, speak with new tongues if they drank any deadly thing it should not hurt them, and if they laid hands on the sick they should recover. The word was – 'Go forth' in my name and with my authority, and my spirit shall accompany you. And it did, and the people became one in faith, doctrine and principle, just as the Scriptures say. 'Take my yoke upon you.' What was it? Said he, 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth; blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God; blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled.' This was the kind of yoke Jesus put upon them, and this is the kind that is put upon you – to love righteousness, keep the commands of God, live your religion and obey the principles of truth, is this a hard yoke? This is what is required of Latter-day Saints. 'Take my yoke upon you and learn of me!' And how did he do it? He obeyed the will of his Father, and then he expected his disciples to obey his will. Said he, 'Father, I pray for them, that they may be one? – a good deal of this one-man power there, was there not? I pray for them, that they may be one, even as the Father and I are one, that they may be one in us;' and in his mind, looking to the universal expansion of this heavenly principle, said he, 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for all them that shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one, even as I and the Father are one, that the world may know that thou hast sent me.' This was the kind of principle the Savior taught to his followers, and this is the kind that is taught to us." (Journal of Discourses, Volume 15, John Taylor, October 7, 1872, page 219).

As members of the Church of Jesus Christ, we must be committed to learning and growing spiritually. We must strive to learn day by day with the hope that one day we might be like the Father, knowing all things. President Joseph Field Smith taught, **“One of the responsibilities which the Lord has placed upon members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is that they search the scriptures and lay up a store of knowledge, otherwise they cannot have the guidance of the Holy Ghost, notwithstanding they have been baptized and confirmed. Those who are ignorant of the gospel truths and unacquainted with the teachings that the Lord gave to the Fathers, cannot have the guidance of the Spirit of the Lord. Such people leave themselves open to temptation and deception by wicked, unscrupulous souls and are in grave danger of being led into folly and forbidden paths because they have no foundation in faith on which to build.”** (Answers to Gospel Questions, Joseph Fielding Smith, Book 5, Section 3, page 12).

123 - I am meek – The word “meek” is translated from the Greek word “πραῶς” or “praos”. It means gentle, meek or mild.

When we consider the yoke, or the burden it represents, it typically brings to mind feelings of discomfort, pain, and suffering. In an interesting twist, Jesus describes Himself, and consequently His yoke, as kind and gentle. Erastus Snow explained, **“If there are any either, within or without the Church of Christ, who feel his yoke to be heavy and galling, and his burden not to be easy, I can inform them that they have not taken upon themselves the yoke of Christ, they are not bearing his burden, for they are not meek and lowly of heart, they have not learned their lessons correctly – how to govern and control their own spirits by the principles and spirit of the everlasting Gospel. There is nothing in its nature that is oppressive, galling or hard to bear. In saying this I give the experience of my life, for it has been devoted from my childhood to the contemplation of these glorious truths, with an earnest endeavor to apply them practically unto myself, and I have demonstrated them, and I speak that which I know and have experienced, and most assuredly believe and testify of them. And many there are who believe this testimony and are able to corroborate it; and those who are not, and have not experienced it in their lives have the privilege of doing so.”** (Journal of Discourses, Volume 15, Erastus Snow, October 7, 1872, page 200).

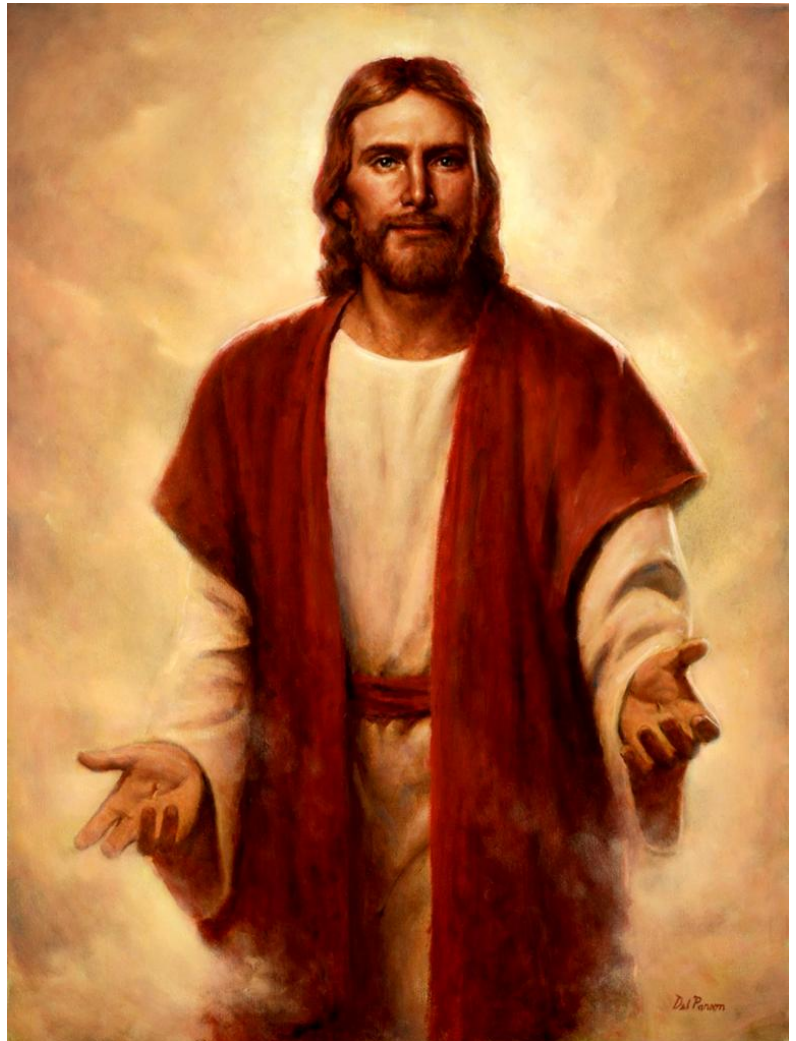
124 - lowly in heart – The word “lowly” is translated from the Greek word “ταπεινός” or “tapeinos”. It means not rising far from the ground. The word “heart” is translated from the Greek word “καρδιά” or “kardia”. It means the heart. **“In traditional cultures, the heart was considered the center of the body... In Jewish tradition, the heart is similarly seen as the center of the inner life, which includes both feeling and thought.”** (Encyclopedia of Traditional Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, page 75).

125 - ye shall find rest – The word “find” is translated from the Greek word “εὐρίσκω” or “heuriskō”. It means to come upon, hit upon or to meet with. It can also mean to find a thing after searching for it. The word “rest” is translated from the Greek word “ἀνάπαυσις” or “anapausis”. It means intermission, cessation of any motion, business or labor, rest, or recreation.

Mankind strives for peace and rest in everything they do. We go to work looking forward to vacation. We go to school with hopes of a break. We look for the easy way to do things, and inventions are usually made to ease our life and give us more rest. Even so, no matter how hard we try to find peace from mortal men it will always elude us. True and lasting peace only comes from and through Jesus. President Brigham Young taught, **“The policy of God is not the policy of man: his wisdom and power are above the wisdom and power of man. Be faithful to your calling and magnify it. The kingdom and the greatness thereof under the whole heaven are ours. The yoke is broken, the fetters are burst, and the Lord Almighty will assert his right; and his will be done by the Saints on this the land of Zion, to purify and cleanse it. And those who are expecting to receive the benefit and blessings of Zion never will, but will receive the judgments of Zion, unless their hearts are as pure as the angels. The man that is acting according to his ability, as are the angels, must be pure and holy in heart, must not have an evil wish or desire reigning in his mortal body, but must be sanctified through the truth to the God of heaven. What do you think, Elders, – will any of you receive blessings upon any other grounds? No, not one of you.”** (Journal of Discourses, Volume 8, Brigham Young, October 7, 1860, page 198).

126 - unto your souls – The word “souls” is translated from the Greek word “ψυχή” or “psychē”. It means breath, or the breath of life. It is also used to mean the soul.

This passage defines the kind of rest or peace that Jesus is offering. It is not the rest that we enjoy in mortality, such as a vacation or a long weekend. It is not a quiet house or a work day without crisis. The peace that Jesus is offering is one of spiritual peace. It is an assurance that we are right with God. It is knowing that the saving power of Jesus Christ is in full effect in our lives. It is a peace that comes from repentance and compliance with the commandments, and covenants associated with the gospel of Jesus Christ. President Brigham Young said, **“This Gospel is my glory. Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.’ Why is it so? as brother Taylor has said, it is through the love that the people should have for the Gospel, which ought to be more than their love for fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, wives, children, houses, lands, goods and chattels, or anything that pertains to this earth. The Spirit of revelation, even the Spirit of eternal life, is within that person who lives so as to bear properly the yoke of Jesus. The heavens are open to such persons, and they see and understand things that pertain to eternity, and also the things that pertain to this earth, which will pass away with it; and those who love the things of earth will pass away with it. When death takes them, all is gone. But the person that wears the yoke of Jesus and bears his burden – who loves the cause of truth and righteousness more than all else – ‘Why,’ says he, ‘Eternity if full of fathers and mothers. There is my Father enthroned in glory. He is the Father of my spirit.’ God our Father, who dwells in eternity, is the Father of our spirits and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The man or woman that lives in the revelations of Jesus Christ can see and understand this. Here are our earthly fathers, the begetters of our mortal bodies; but there is the foundation of all the life that I or any other person can possess on the face of the earth, even God my Father who dwells in the heavens. There also is my mother.”** (Journal of Discourses, Volume 8, Brigham Young, October 14, 1860, page 206).



127 - For my yoke is easy – The word “yoke” is translated from the Greek word “ζυγός” or “zygos”. It means a yoke; generally a yoke that is put on drought cattle. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the word “easy” as “good”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Matthew, Chapter 11, Verse 30, page 28). The word “easy” is translated from the Greek word “χρηστός” or “chrēstos”. It means fit, fit for use, useful, or manageable.



The terms yoke and easy seem to be contradictory. What could be easy about any yoke? It was tool used to bear burdens. A passage in the Dead Sea Scroll helps us see how the Jews might have seen the symbol of the yoke. It reads, **“With a heavy yoke and in extreme want, they shall there serve gods made by human hands, of wood and stone, silver and gold. During this time their cities shall become a devastation, a laughing-stock and a wasteland, and their enemies shall devastate them. They shall sigh in the lands of their enemies and scream because of the heavy yoke. They shall cry out but I will not listen; they shall scream but I will not answer them because of their evil doings. I will hide my face from them and they shall become food, plunder and prey. None shall save them because of their wickedness, because they have broken my covenant and their soul has loathed my law until they have incurred every guilt. Afterwards they will return to me with all their heart and all their soul, in conformity with all the words of this law, and I will save them from the hand of their enemies and redeem them from the hand of those who hate them, and I will bring them to the land of their fathers. I will redeem them, and increase them and exult over them. I will be their God and they shall be my people.”** (The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English, Translated by Geza Vermes, pages 258-259). We see that the Jews related the yoke to burdens and sins.

The symbolism of the yoke is part of a covenant that promises us peace and rest. The Dead Sea Scrolls connect the yoke to the burden of keeping the law and the blessings that God bestows on the righteous. **“In the ideology of the Old Testament, to be a member of the chosen people is synonymous with being party to the Covenant. Israel willingly accepts the yoke of the Law given on Sinai, and God in his turn acknowledges her as His ‘special possession’ (Exod. xix, 5).”** (The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English, Translated by Geza Vermes, page 102).

The world would see the yoke as a symbol of oppression, while the scriptural usage in this passage sees the yoke as a symbol teaching, unity, and blessing. In similar fashion, the world sees the commandments of God as restrictive and oppressive. The Gospel teaches that the commandments of God are liberating and beneficial. The Dead Sea Scrolls teach, **“And the sons of Israel will cry because of the heavy yoke in the lands of their captivity and there will be no saviour for them because they despised my decree and their soul loathed my Law ...”** (The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English, Translated by Geza Vermes, page 658).

The yoke of Jesus is easy because it is fitted to us. Our earthly sojourn is individually designed to purify and perfect each one of us. Because we are all different in our needs, our mortal life has been customized with various trials and burdens tailored to remove the character traits that will prohibit us from returning home to our Father in Heaven. The plan for our eternal progress is also designed to be carried out on a pace that we can maintain. Even so, those who refuse to submit to the Lord’s plan, will be frustrated in their progress. Barclay wrote, **“Jesus invites us to take his yoke upon our shoulders. The Jews used the phrase the yoke for entering into submission to. They spoke of the yoke of the Law, the yoke of the commandments, the yoke of the Kingdom, the yoke of God. But it may well be that Jesus took the words of his invitation from something much nearer home than that. He says, ‘My yoke is easy.’ The word ‘easy’ is in Greek *chrestos* (Greek #5543), which can mean well-fitting. In Palestine ox-yokes were made of wood; the ox was brought, and the measurements were taken. The yoke was then roughed out, and the ox wigs brought back to have the yoke tried on. The yoke was carefully adjusted, so that it would fit well, and not gall the neck of the patient beast. The yoke was tailor-made to fit the ox. There is a legend that Jesus made the best ox-yokes in all Galilee, and that from all over the country men came to him to buy the best yokes that skill could make. In those days, as now, shops had their signs above the door; and it has been suggested that the sign above the door of the carpenter’s shop in Nazareth may well have been: ‘My yokes fit well.’ It**



may well be that Jesus is here using a picture from the carpenter’s shop in Nazareth where he had worked throughout the silent years. Jesus says, ‘My yoke fits well.’ What he means is: ‘The life I give you is not a burden to gall you; your task is made to measure to fit you.’ Whatever God sends us is made to fit our needs and our abilities exactly.” (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, page 19).

If we cannot bear the yoke, we are not worthy of the peace, or rest, provided through exaltation. In fact, the ancient Jews believed that someone unwilling or incapable of bearing the yoke of God was spiritually dead. They likened such a person to an ox that refused to wear a yoke. The Dead Sea Scrolls even dictate that such an ox was to be killed, They wrote, **“[a heifer with which] he has not worked, which [has not drawn the yoke. The elders of] that city [shall bring down] the heifer to a ravine with an ever-flowing stream which has never been**

sown or cultivated, and there they shall break its neck.” (The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English, Translated by Geza Vermes, page 262). Similarly, those of us who refuse to submit ourselves to the Lord, will not be counted worthy of heaven or the blessings thereof.

Those who bear the yoke of God bring peace and rest to those around them. Like an experienced oxen who has learned how to work the yoke, we become capable of teaching a younger disciple (oxen) to learn the yoke as well. Only by mastering the laws of God can we find true rest and peace. President Brigham Young said, **“When the law is our master, the yoke is hard to bear; but when it is our servant, it works easy; whereas, if it be our master, we are continually compelled and driven by it.”** (Journal of Discourses, Volume 1, Brigham Young, August 1, 1852, page 364). If the yoke represents the commandments of God, and the trials of mortality, then overcoming or mastering the yoke is the best path to peace. Conversely, fighting against the yoke results in a state of constant struggle and unrest.

Below are two other passages in the Dead Sea Scrolls that reference the yoke;

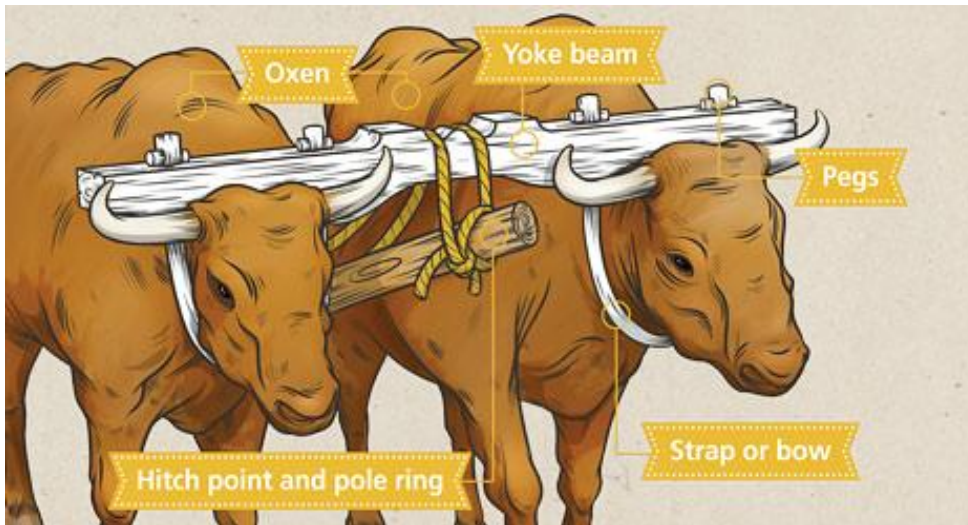
“They who bore the yoke of my testimony have been led astray [by teachers of lies], [and have rebelled] against the service of righteousness. Whereas Thou, O my God, didst command them to mend their ways [by walking] in the way of [holiness], where no man goes who is uncircumcised or unclean or violent, they have staggered aside from the way of Thy heart and languish in [great] wretchedness. A counsel of Belial is in their heart [and in accordance with] their wicked design they wallow in sin.” (The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English, Translated by Geza Vermes, page 326).

“Why should it be a mixture like a mule, and you should be like one dress[ed in mixed materials], in wool and in linen, and you should labour with an ox and an ass (yoked) together. Your produce also would be like that of one who sows mixed seeds. Let the seed and the crop and the produce of the [vineyard] be holy...” (The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English, Translated by Geza Vermes, page 494).



128 - my burden is light – The word “burden” is translated from the Greek word “φορτίον” or “phortion”. It means a burden, or load. The word “light” is translated from the Greek word “ἐλαφρός” or “elaphros”. It means light in weight, quick, or agile.

The preparatory Law of the Old Testament was anything but light. The Law became burdensome, requiring the children of Israel to perform ritual acts as justice for the errors of their lives. By the time of Jesus, the Law developed volumes of Oral traditional. It became so complicated that it required lawyers and doctors of the law to interpret it. Regardless of the effort, the Law was never going to be light or without burden. Barclay explained, **“There is a kind of rueful parable put into the mouth of Korah, which shows just how binding and constricting and burdensome and impossible the demands of the Law could be. ‘There was a poor widow in my neighbourhood who had two daughters and a field. When she began to plough, Moses (i.e. the Law of Moses) said, ‘You must not plough with an ox and an ass together.’ When she began to sow, he said, ‘You must not sow your field with mingled seed.’ When she began to reap and to make stacks of corn, he said, ‘When you reap your harvest in your field, and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it’ (Deuteronomy 24:19), and ‘you shall not reap your field to its very border’ (Leviticus 19:9). She began to thresh, and he said, ‘Give me the heave-offering, and the first and second tithe.’ She accepted the ordinance and gave them all to him. What did the poor woman then do? She sold her field, and bought two sheep, to clothe herself from their fleece, and to have profit from their young. When they bore their young, Aaron (i.e. the demands of the priesthood) came and said, ‘Give me the first-born.’ So she accepted the decision, and gave them to him. When the shearing time came, and she sheared them, Aaron came and said, ‘Give me the first of the fleece of the sheep’ (Deuteronomy 18:4). Then she thought: ‘I cannot stand up against this man. I will slaughter the sheep and eat them.’ Then Aaron came and said, ‘Give me the shoulder and the two cheeks and the stomach’ (Deuteronomy 18:3). Then she said, ‘Even**



when I have killed them I am not safe from you. Behold they shall be devoted.’ Then Aaron said, ‘In that case they belong entirely to me’ (Numbers 18:14). He took them and went away and left her weeping with her two daughters. The story is a parable of the continuous demands that the Law made upon men in every action and activity of life. These demands were indeed a burden.” (The Gospel of Matthew, Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible Series - Revised Edition, William Barclay, pages 18-19)

Many of us want our yoke to be light, but refuse to submit ourselves to change. We have placed burdens upon ourselves by sin and wrong choices. We read this passage and assume that Jesus will help us bear up our sinful lifestyle. In reality, Jesus will not bear us up in sin, but rather help use remove the burden as we come unto Him. We must be willing to bear His yoke, which is repentant and righteous living. This is the load that He will bear along side of us. The son of

Brigham Young, a member of the twelve apostles, once said, **“I can tell you, my brethren and sisters, fathers and mothers in Israel, and all you that feel that you have got an uncomfortable yoke upon you, – it is simply because it is not the yoke of Christ; for Jesus said, when he was here, that his yoke was easy and his burden light. I know by experience that when I have the yoke of Christ upon me, it is light; and what else do I know? I know that there are persons who complain that the Gospel yoke chafes them; and I want you to understand that such persons have not got on the right kind of yoke. [President B. Young: “That is verily true, sir.”] Now, you that have on such a yoke had better pull out the bow-keys, throw off the yoke, and then put one on that won’t chafe you; for I tell you, as the Lord God Almighty lives, it is now or never with the Latter-day Saints.”** (Journal of Discourses, Volume 6, John Young, April 8, 1857, page 230).

129 - shewed him all these things – The word “shewed” is translated from the Greek word “ἀπαγγέλλω” or “apaggellō”. It means to bring tidings (from a person or a thing), bring word, report, to proclaim, to make known openly, or declare. The Codex Sinaiticus translated the phrase “shewed him all these things” as “told John of all these things”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 7, Verse 18, page 117). Fitzmyer translates this passage as “**kept him informed. Lit. ‘and his disciples reported to John about all these things.’ In the Lucan context ‘all these things’ refers to Jesus’ preaching (the sermon on the plain), his teaching, and his miracles (from 3:21 on). Contrast the Matthean formula, ‘the deeds of the Messiah’ (11:2),... This is the occasion for the sending of the emissaries.**” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 665).

The messengers of John the Baptist were directed back to the prison where John was held. This might appear contrary to what has transpired. We suppose that John sent his disciples to Jesus so that they might gain a testimony of Jesus and become His disciples. They were surely converted. They knew that Jesus was the Christ, so why did Jesus direct them back to John? The scriptures are silent on this matter, but perhaps Jesus sent them to strengthen and care for John. Part of bearing the yoke of Jesus is sharing in the burden of saving others. When we bear the yoke of Jesus, we serve those in need, mourn with those that mourn, and strengthen the downtrodden. I think it is a natural progression that the two new disciples of Jesus were directed to go back and serve John.

As we are yoked with Jesus, we will seek to do His work. President Brigham Young said, “**The person that wears the yoke of Jesus, that has communication with the heavens, finds his yoke easy and his burden light; he is master of it. Wear the yoke of Jesus, bear his burden, and the revelations of the Lord Jesus Christ will show to every individual that you are not servants of anything, but that the principles of eternal life give you the mastery – the supremacy over all things in heaven and on earth. As the Apostles has said – ‘Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.’ ‘Therefore let no man glory in men; for all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.’ All this, and all that men can imagine and a million time more, God has in store for us. If we are faithful, all is ours. If we trample sin and iniquity under our feet, then we are the masters, which makes the yoke easy and the burden light.**” (Journal of Discourses, Volume 8, Brigham Young, October 7, 1860, page 207).



130 - two – The word “two” is translated from the Greek word “δύο” or “dyo”. It means two or twain. Fitzmyer translates the phrase “calling unto him two” as “**he summoned two of them. I.e. to the prison where he was being kept... Luke does not mention John’s imprisonment here; again contrast Matt 11:2. Luke has introduced ‘two’ disciples who are sent; most likely as a reflection of Deut 19:15, ‘the evidence of two witnesses.’**” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 665).

John sent two disciples to Jesus. They were followers of John who had not yet progressed to follow the Master. Surely there were others in their same situation, but John sent two. “**The law given to Israel in the beginning was that in the mouth of two or three witnesses all things should be established.**” (Answers to Gospel Questions, Joseph Fielding Smith, Book 1, Section 49, page 204). These two disciples, who returned to John, brought back with them a powerful witness of the promised Messiah. They may have testified to many who would have recognized and followed the law of witnesses.

131 - in that same hour – The word “hour” is translated from the Greek word “ὥρα” or “hōra”. It means a certain definite time or season fixed by natural law and returning with the revolving year. It can be used of a day or any definite time, or moment. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the term “in that same hour” as “in that hour”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 7, Verse 21, page 117). Fitzmyer translates “in that same hour cured” as “**had just then cured. Lit. ‘in that hour he cured.’**” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 667).

132 - cured many in their infirmities – The word “cured” is translated from the Greek word “θεραπεύω” or “therapeuō”. It means to serve, do service, to heal, cure, or restore to health. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the word “infirmities” as “diseases”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 7, Verse 21, page 117). The word “infirmities” is translated from the Greek word “νόσος” or “nosos”. It means disease or sickness.

133 - plagues – The word “plagues” is translated from the Greek word “μάστιξ” or “mastix”. It means a whip, or scourge. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the word “plagues” as “scourges”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 7, Verse 21, page 117).

134 - evil spirits – The word “evil” is translated from the Greek word “πονηρός” or “ponēros”. It means full of labors, annoyances, hardships, bad, or of a bad nature or condition. The word “spirits” is translated from the Greek word “πνεῦμα” or “pneuma”. It means a spirit. Fitzmyer wrote, retranslating this passage as, “**diseases, plagues, and evil spirits. All three are made the object of the prep. apo, ‘from, of.’ The linking of ‘evil spirits’ with ‘diseases, plagues’ as the object of the verb ‘cured,’ reveals the ancient way of thinking that did not distinguish between disease and demon-possession.**” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 667).

135 - many that were blind he gave sight – The word “blind” is translated from the Greek word “τυφλός” or “typhlos”. It means blind or mentally blind. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the term “gave sight” as “gave to see”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 7, Verse 21, page 117). The word “sight” is translated from the Greek word “βλέπω” or “blepō”. It means to see, discern, or of the bodily eye. Fitzmyer translates this passage as “**restored sight to many blind persons. Lit. ‘granted to many blind persons to see.’ Jesus is depicted carrying out the role promised in Isa 61:1, as quoted in 4:18.. Luke is the only evangelist to use the verb charizesthai (see 7:42,43; Acts 3:14; 25:11,16; 27:24). So far Luke has reported no specific cure of a blind person (cf. 18:35).**” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 667).

136 - messengers – The word “messengers” is translated from the Greek word “ἄγγελος” or “aggelos”. It means a messenger, envoy, one who is sent, an angel, or a messenger from God.

The two disciples of John have now received a personal witness from the Messiah. They were then sent as the Lord’s messengers to tell what they had “**seen and heard. Luke has cast this pair in the past tense (aor.); cf. Matt 11:4 (pres.); for he has just recounted miracles that Jesus has been performing ‘at that hour’ (as they arrived). Jesus thus does not answer John’s question directly; instead of admitting or denying that he is erchomenos (in the sense of Elias redivivus), he tells the two messengers to report to John what they have witnessed with their own eyes and ears. Their testimony will depend on their own seeing and hearing. His answer will**

make use of phrases alluding to several Isaian passages, implying that he has come as the embodiment of the blessings promised to human beings by that prophet.” (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 667).

The Lord works through messengers. This is part of His divine plan. In the days of Adam, Enoch was sent as a messenger of God to the wicked descendants of Adam. Likewise, Noah was called as a messenger with his grandfather Methuselah. They served as messengers for 120 years. We can continue through time naming countless messengers like Elijah, Lehi, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, John the Baptist and the twelve apostles. **“Holy messengers of salvation are sent forth by the direction of the God of heaven, through the channel of the holy priesthood that he has revealed and instituted again among men, warning the people to turn from their evil ways, and to become partakers of this great happiness and glory and to sustain his government upon the earth. It is true the impression has gone forth in the midst of the nations, and it is a true impression, that he will establish his government upon the earth. This earth belongs to God, he has a right to rule and govern it, and it is his intention to do so.”** (Journal of Discourses, Volume 15, Daniel H. Wells, June 8, 1872, page 87).

137 - gorgeously appareled – The word “gorgeously” is translated from the Greek word “ἐνδοξος” or “endoxos”. It means held in good or in great esteem, or of high repute. The word “appareled” is translated from the Greek word “ἱματισμός” or “himatismos”. It means clothing or apparel. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the word “gorgeously appareled” as “soft clothing”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 7, Verse 25, page 117). This phrase refers to the expensive clothing worn by the rich and powerful of the earth. Such clothing is often related to pride and sin. The Book of Mormon warns, **“And now my beloved brethren, I say unto you, can ye withstand these sayings; yea, can ye lay aside these things, and trample the Holy One under your feet; yea, can ye be puffed up in the pride of your hearts; yea, will ye still persist in the wearing of costly apparel and setting your hearts upon the vain things of the world, upon your riches?”** (Alma 5:53).

138 - live delicately – The word “live” is translated from the Greek word “ὑπάρχω” or “hyparchō”. It means to begin below, to make a beginning, to come forth, hence to be there, be ready, or be at hand. The word “delicately” is translated from the Greek word “τρυφή” or “tryphē”. It means softness, effeminate, or luxurious living. The Codex Sinaiticus translates the term “live delicately” as “live in luxury”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 7, Verse 25, page 117). A common symptom of wickedness is extravagant living. The king’s of the world are often tempted to use the rich resources afforded them extreme comfort while denying the basic needs to many.



139 - kings' courts – The phrase “kings’ court” is translated from the Greek word “βασίλειος” or “basileios”. It means royal, kingly or regal. It is used substantively of a royal palace. The Codex Sinaiticus translated the word “courts” as “houses”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 7, Verse 25, page 117). The kings’ courts represent the wealth and power of the world.

140 - there is not a greater prophet – The word “prophet” is translated from the Greek word “προφήτης” or “prophētēs”. It means one who, moved by the Spirit of God and hence his organ or spokesman, solemnly declares to men what he has received by inspiration, especially concerning future events, and in particular such as relate to the cause and kingdom of God and to human salvation. **“This clearly shows that John’s role, even in the Lucan Gospel: is not limited to a prophetic ministry; he is not simply part of the Period of Israel. For Conzelmann (Theology, 25), John ‘now becomes the greatest prophet.’ The designation of John used here, however, is not exclusive to the Lucan Gospel; it was already in ‘Q’. Those who went out to the desert were not disappointed; John stood in the line of OT prophets and his. Desert preaching was prophetic. But he was ‘more’ than that, and the more is explained in v. 27-28.”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 674).

This passage has striking similarities to an Old Testament passage which reads, **“That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it is man: neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he.”** (Ecclesiastes 6:10). There is obviously much more to John than is recorded in scripture.

141 - kingdom of god – The word “kingdom” is translated from the Greek word “βασίλεια” or “basileia”. It means royal power, kingship, dominion, rule, a kingdom, or the territory subject to the rule of a king. The word “God” is translated from the Greek word “θεός” or “theos”. It means a general name of deities or divinities.

142 - all the people that heard him – The word “heard” is translated from the Greek word “ἀκούω” or “akouō”. It means to be endowed with the faculty of hearing, or not deaf. **“The Greek text is a bit awkward at this point. Literally, it reads, ‘and all the people having listened and the toll-collectors justified God, being baptized (with) the baptism of John.’ The phrase kai hoi telonai, ‘and the toll-collectors,’ looks like an after-thought, strangely inserted after the sg. collective etc., akousas, ‘having listened.’ In the context, one would think that akousas meant listening to Jesus’ testimony about John, but as the sentence goes on, it can only mean listening to John’s preaching (and accepting his baptism). Though it is hard to think that Luke would have composed ‘such a sentence, it has enough other Lucanisms in it that one has to understand it in this way.’** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, pages 675-676).

143 - justified God – The word “justified” is translated from the Greek word “δικαιώω” or “dikaioō”. It means to render righteous or such he ought to be.

144 - being baptized – The word “baptized” is translated from the Greek word “βαπτίζω” or “baptizō”. It means to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge (of vessels sunk), to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water, to wash one’s self, bathe, or to overwhelm.

145 - baptism – The word “baptism” is translated from the Greek word “βάπτισμα” or “baptisma”. It means immersion, or submersion. See footnote #42 of this chapter.

146 - Pharisees – The word “Pharisees” is translated from the Greek word “Φαρισαῖος” or “Pharisaios”. The Pharisees were a sect that seems to have started after the Jewish exile. In addition to the Book of the Old Testament, the Pharisees recognized in oral tradition as a standard of belief and life. They sought for distinction and praise by outward observance of external rites and by outward forms of piety, and such as ceremonial washings, fastings, prayers, and alms giving. They were comparatively negligent of genuine piety, priding themselves on their fancied good works. They held strenuously to a belief in the existence of good and evil angels, and to the expectation of a Messiah; and they cherished the hope that the dead, after a preliminary experience either of reward or of penalty in Hades, would be recalled to life by him, and be requited each according to his individual deeds. In opposition to the usurped dominion of the Herods and the rule of the Romans, they stoutly upheld the theocracy and their country's cause, and possessed great influence with the common people. According to Josephus, they numbered more than 6000. They were bitter enemies of Jesus and his cause; and were in turn severely rebuked by Him for their avarice, ambition, hollow reliance on outward works, and affection of piety in order to gain popularity. The name is a transliteration of the Hebrew word “פְּרִישִׁי” or “parash”. The Hebrew word means separate.



147 - lawyers – The word “lawyers” is translated from the Greek word “νομικός” or “nomikos”. It is pertaining to the law, or one learned in the law. In the New Testament it is an interpreter and teacher of the Mosaic Law. Fitzmyer says that the “lawyers” spoken of here are actually **“Jewish experts in Mosaic Law.”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 676).

148 - rejected – The word “rejected” is translated from the Greek word “ἀθετέω” or “atheteō”. It means to do away with, to set aside, or disregard. It also means to reject, to refuse or to slight.

The wise and prideful, or in this case the Pharisees and lawyers, had a choice between the religion they had largely created in their own image or the truth that was being restored. They worshipped the Law of Moses, or at least an apostate form thereof. **“Clinging to the Mosaic Law and not recognizing that John's baptism was a way to righteous status before God is seen here as a mode of frustrating God's own providence. Implied, of course, is a further frustration of that to which John's baptism was only leading.”** (The Gospel according to Luke I-IX: A New translation with Introduction and Commentary, The Anchor Yale Bible, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 676).

149 - counsel of God – The word “counsel” is translated from the Greek word “βουλή” or “boulē”. It means counsel or purpose.

The Lord has directed that we **“counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good; yea, when thou liest down at night lie down unto the Lord, that he may watch over you in your sleep; and when thou risest in the morning let thy heart be full of thanks unto God; and if ye do these things, ye shall be lifted up at the last day.”** (Alma 37:37).

150 - against themselves – The word “against” is translated from the Greek word “εἰς” or “eis”. It means into, unto, to, towards, for, or among.

151 - being not baptized of him – The word “baptized” is translated from the Greek word “βαπτίζω” or “baptizō”. It means to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge (of vessels sunk), to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water, to wash one's self, bathe, or to overwhelm. **“For those who would gain salvation, baptism in water is mandatory. No accountable person can be saved without it. Such is the counsel and command of God. To suppose that water baptism is merely an outward sign of some inward grace, or that baptism of the Spirit without prior immersion in water, is all that Deity requires is the purest sectarian delusion. The very baptism by immersion for the remission of sins which John performed (followed, of course, by the baptism of the Spirit which Jesus administered) is the thing which the Almighty has commanded.”** (The Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Volume 1: The Gospels, Bruce R. McConkie, page 263).

152 - one to another – The phrase “one to another” is translated from the Greek word “ἀλλήλων” or “allēlōn”. It means one another, reciprocally, or mutually.

153 - ye have not wept – The word “wept” is translated from the Greek word “κλαίω” or “kaiō”. It means to mourn, weep, or lament. The Codex Sinaiticus translated the term “wept” as “lament”. (Codex Sinaiticus: The H.T. Anderson New Testament, Translated by Henry Tompkins Anderson, Luke, Chapter 7, Verse 32, page 118).

154 - bread – The word “bread” is translated from the Greek word “ἄρτος” or “artos”. It means food composed of flour mixed with water and baked. The Israelites made it in the form of an oblong or round cake, as thick as one's thumb, and as large as a plate or platter hence it was not to be cut but broken. The Greek word can also be used of any kind of food. **“In most of the Western world, bread is the mainstay of the diet. Often referred to as the ‘staff of life’ bread has become a symbol for material, and by extension, spiritual, sustenance.”** (Encyclopedia of Traditional Jewish Symbols, Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Teutsch, pages 24-25). The bread represents the body of Jesus, which He offered so that we might resurrect and live again; breaking the bands of death.



155 - wine – The word “wine” is translated from the Greek word “οἶνος” or “oinos”. It means wine. Wine is a symbol for the blood of Jesus Christ. It represents that blood that He shed so that we might become free from the blood and sins of this generation. Blood is a symbol for sin and death. The symbols of the wine and blood combine to produce a symbol for the Lord's atonement. Consequently, wine was used in the ordinance of the sacrament. Later the symbol was replaced by water; a symbol for the purity and cleanliness that comes from Jesus' atonement.