

## CFM John 14-17 – Ep 205



In this outline are a few links to some of my favorite books that have really helped me understand the context and content of the scriptures. [Click here to see all of my favorite books on Amazon](#). As an Amazon Affiliate, I do earn a small commission from qualifying purchases (at no extra cost to you).

### The Last Week of the Savior’s Mortal Ministry

We will cover John 13-16 (we covered John 17 in Episode 104)

Focus: Thursday

#### 10 Events

1. Jesus washes the feet of the Twelve, “do as I have done” (John 13.2-17).
2. “A new commandment I give you: Love one another” (John 13.31-35).
3. Jesus discusses the Two Comforters (παράκλητος), telling the Twelve that he is going to prepare a place for them (John 14).
4. “I am the vine, you are the branches!” (John 15.1-11).
5. Jesus tells the Twelve to love one another, and that the world will hate them (John 15.12-25).
6. The Spirit of Truth, the Comforter will come (John 15.26-27).
7. Jesus warns the Twelve (John 16.1-6)
8. The Comforter will come (John 16.7-16).
9. Jesus speaks of his death, resurrection, and about prayer (John 16.7-33).
10. Jesus’ suffering in Gethsemane (Matt. 26.36-46; Mark 14.32-42; Luke 22.40-46; John 18.1; 2 Ne. 9.21-22; Mosiah 3.5-12; D&C 19.1-24).

#### 5 Themes

1. Jesus comforts his apostles, and he speaks of the “Comforter.”
2. Jesus is the Messiah.
3. Jesus speaks of the two loves.
4. Jesus prepares his apostles for what is to come.
5. He institutes the Sacrament.

In order to faithfully adhere to the chronological order of events as presented in the gospel narratives, we made the deliberate decision to structure our podcast recordings accordingly. We acknowledge that this deviation from the prescribed lesson plans outlined in the Come Follow Me format may pose challenges for those using our podcasts for personal study or lesson planning. Please accept our apologies for any inconvenience. We appreciate your listenership.

**1. Jesus washes the feet of the Twelve, “do as I have done” (John 13.2-17).**

### Historical Setting: Filth in Hellenistic cities

Many ancient Eastern streets must have been “unpaved, narrow, badly crowded,” and some “would have been choked with refuse and frequented” by dogs and other sources of excrement.<sup>1</sup> Hellenistic cities required proper sanitation in their main streets, prohibiting discarding refuse there,<sup>2</sup> but it would have been widely known that such sanitation was more available in some locations than others. In Rome running water was available only for the ground floors of buildings, so that poorer tenants who lived higher in the building often allowed filth to accumulate; wealthier persons on ground floors built latrines that emptied into cess trenches managed by manure merchants.<sup>3</sup> One would expect upper-city Jerusalem, which included private *mikvaot* in most of its wealthy homes and would have preserved the highest of Hellenistic-Roman standards, to have been much cleaner; any home large enough to house Jesus’ disciples as guests, especially if an upper room is envisioned (Mark 14:15; Luke 22:12; Acts 1:13), would probably lie in a more well-to-do and sanitary part of town.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the common practice and image would be clear enough. If nothing else, dust would rapidly accumulate on feet.<sup>5</sup>

### The Suffering Servant

As well-to-do hosts provided water and sometimes servants to wash a guest’s feet, they rarely engaged in the foot washing themselves. Washing feet was a menial task, and one who sought to wash another’s feet normally took the posture of a servant or dependent. From an early period Greek literature depicted servants washing the feet of strangers as an act of hospitality,<sup>6</sup> as well as washing their masters’ feet.<sup>7</sup>

By the foot washing Jesus prefigures his impending glorification, which is the theological subject of most of the context (12:16, 23, 28, 41; 13:31–32). This act identifies Jesus as the Suffering Servant and defines

<sup>1</sup> Richard L. Rohrbaugh, “The Pre-industrial City in Luke–Acts: Urban Social Relations.” Page 135 in [The Social World of Luke–Acts: Models for Interpretation](#). Edited by Jerome H. Neyrey. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991. See also: Jeffers, James S. [The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity](#). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Avi-Yonah, Michael. *Hellenism and the East: Contacts and Interrelations from Alexander to the Roman Conquest*. Jerusalem: Institute of Languages, Literature and the Arts, Hebrew University; University Microfilms International, 1978, p. 124.

<sup>3</sup> Carcopino, Jérôme. *Daily Life in Ancient Rome: The People and the City at the Height of the Empire*. Edited by Henry T. Rowell. Translated by E. O. Lorimer. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940, p. 39–40. The saying in Lucian *Demonax* 4 also may correlate unwashed feet with ignorance (hence perhaps with lower-class status).

<sup>4</sup> The tradition that Jerusalem’s streets were swept daily (b. *Pesah*. 7a) may nostalgically exalt old Jerusalem (cf. tamer epideictic representations of cities such as Isocrates *Panathenaicus*; *Panegyricus*; Aelius Aristides *Oration to Rome*); Jerusalem is idealized as early as utopian imagery in *Let. Aris*. 116 and, eschatologically, Tob 13:9–18; 5Q15 (see Licht, “Town Plan”).

<sup>5</sup> Keener, *Gospel*, p. 903. He continues: Thus people often washed their feet when returning home; washing one’s feet was common enough that “unwashed feet” became proverbial in some places for “without preparation.” The face, hands, and feet seem to have been the most critical parts of the body to wash. Hospitality included providing water for guests to wash their feet (Gen 18:4; 19:2; 24:32; Luke 7:44) or providing servants to wash their feet; wives (1 Sam 25:41) or children might also adopt this servile posture toward the pater familias. **Only a document honoring a host’s extreme humility might portray that host honoring an esteemed visitor by washing his feet himself.**

<sup>6</sup> Homer *Od.* 19.344–348, 353–360, 376, 505.

<sup>7</sup> Craig S. Keener, [The Gospel of John](#), Baker Academic, 2010. See also: Homer *Od.* 19.388–393; for compulsory servitude, e.g., Apollodorus *Epitome* 1.2.

his passion as an act of loving service. At the same time, however, it also summons Jesus' followers to imitate his model, serving and loving one another to the extent of laying down their lives for one another (13:14–16, 34–35).<sup>8</sup>

“When I am tempted to listen to hot, egotistic voices within my own heart; when it seems that love can never win but always loses; when it seems as though humility is ruthlessly trodden down by those who pass over it on their way to their own selfish ambitions; when it seems as though God cannot possibly triumph; when pity and love and mercy and kindness and tenderness are weakness; when it seems as though greatness is only possessed by those who know how to grab, and have the power to snatch at it, no matter what the cost to others—ah, yes, when the voices sound in my own heart which say you must play for your own hand, you must think of number one, you must not let yourself be trodden down—when I am thus tempted, my God! May I hear in imagination the tinkling of water, poured into a basin, and see, as in a vision, the Son of God washing the disciple's feet.”<sup>9</sup>

Elder McConkie explains this ordinance in a latter-day context:

"Washing of feet is a gospel ordinance; it is a holy and sacred rite, one performed by the saints in the seclusion of their temple sanctuaries. It is not done before the world or for worldly people. For his day and dispensation Jesus instituted it in the upper room at the time of the Last Supper.

...December 27, 1832, this command was given to 'the first laborers in this last kingdom': 'Sanctify yourselves; yea, purify your hearts, and cleanse your hands and your feet before me, that I may make you clean; That I may testify unto your Father, and your God, and my God, that you are clean from the blood of this wicked generation.' (D&C 88:74-75.) On that same occasion the command came to organize the school of the prophets, with the express stipulation that 'ye shall not receive any among you into this school save he is clean from the blood of this generation; And he shall be received by the ordinance of the washing of feet, for unto this end was the ordinance of the washing of feet instituted.' (D&C 88:127-141.)

In the case of this school the ordinance is to be performed by the President of the Church. In compliance with this revelation the Prophet on January 23, 1833, washed the feet of the members of the school of the prophets. 'By the power of the Holy Ghost I pronounced them all clean from the blood of this generation,' he recorded."<sup>10</sup>

## **2. “A new commandment I give you: Love one another” (John 13.31-35).**

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another (John 13.34).

"It is a time-honored adage that love begets love. Let us pour forth love-show forth everlasting increase; cast our bread upon the waters and we shall receive it after many days, increased to a hundredfold.

<sup>8</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John*, Baker Academic, 2010, p. 899.

<sup>9</sup> Leslie D. Weatherhead, *Eternal Voice*, New York: Abingdon Press, 1940, pp. 81–82.

<sup>10</sup> Bruce R. McConke, , *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* 3 vols. Bookcraft, 1965-1973, 1: 708-709. Joseph Smith gave this explanation: "...we must attend to the ordinance of washing of feet. It was never intended for any but official members. It is calculated to unite our hearts, that we may be one in feeling and sentiment, and that our faith may be strong, so that Satan cannot overthrow us, nor have any power over us here." Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 Vols. 2:308-9.

Friendship is like Brother Turley in his blacksmith shop welding iron to iron; it unites the human family with its happy influence."<sup>11</sup>

President Hinckley taught:

"Love is the only force that can erase the differences between people, that can bridge chasms of bitterness. I recall these lines by Edwin Markham:

Hate drew a circle that shut me out-

Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.

But Love and I had the wit to win:

We drew a circle that took him in.

"He who most beautifully taught this everlasting truth was the Son of God, the one perfect exemplar and teacher of love...To all of us who would be his disciples, he has given the great commandment, 'A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.' (John 13:34.)<sup>12</sup>

### **3. Jesus discusses the Two Comforters (παράκλητος), telling the Twelve that he is going to prepare a place for them (John 14).<sup>13</sup>**

#### **I go to prepare a place for you (John 14:1-6)**

#### **Many mansions (John 14.2)<sup>14</sup>**

#### **An Ascent to God**

John 14.2 is a well-known verse from the New Testament where Jesus states, "In my Father's house are many mansions," suggesting that there is plenty of room for all who choose to trust in Jesus.<sup>15</sup> This idea of multiple dwelling places in heaven has been a subject of interpretation and discussion among theologians and scholars. In the context of the Hekhalot tradition of apocalyptic literature, this idea of

<sup>11</sup> *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 316.

<sup>12</sup> Gordon B. Hinckley, *Faith: The Essence of True Religion*. Deseret Book, 1989, p. 48-49.

<sup>13</sup> παράκλητος - from παρα- (para-, "beside") + κλητός (klētós, "called, invited [one]"). This word signifies a legal advocate, one who speaks on your behalf, an intercessor, or a mediator. Also translated as a helper, or a comforter.

<sup>14</sup> ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς μου μοναὶ πολλαὶ εἰσιν "In my Father's house there are many staying places" (my translation). The Greek μονή can mean an abode or residence. The Greek doesn't necessarily convey the idea of "mansions" in the sense that moderns would think of the term. Many translations read as follows: "In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?" See: Brettler and Levine, *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, p. 185. My father's house implies that eternal life pertains to another realm. There may be an allusion here to the Jewish "Hekhalot" ("palaces") tradition, involving stories in which a seer visits the heavenly realm and explores its different rooms (based on the chariot vision in Ezek 1, and in such works as 1 En. 17, 18). More immediately, the verse also alludes to the Temple, which Jesus called his Father's house in 2.16.

<sup>15</sup> This is a common theme throughout John's narrative, that those that will believe in him should have eternal life. That word, believe, comes from the Greek word πιστεύω (from πίστις, commonly translated as "faith") denoting trust.

"many mansions" could be seen as stopping places along the way to the ultimate goal of experiencing the divine presence.

The Hekhalot tradition is a genre of Jewish apocalyptic literature that emerged in the time period after the destruction of the First Israelite Temple, and proceeded through the centuries into the time period of Christ and beyond.<sup>16</sup> It focuses on the heavenly journeys of visionary mystics who sought to experience the divine presence. These visionary experiences often involved mystical ascent through the seven heavens or levels of spiritual ascent. The ultimate goal of these ascents was to reach the highest level of heaven and experience the divine presence. However, the journey to the highest level was often challenging and required stops at various levels along the way. One of the things the visionary had to do was provide "passwords" to the guardians at each of the levels of heaven as he ascended to the Throne of God.<sup>17</sup>

The idea of "many mansions" (μοναὶ πολλαί) in John 14.2 could be interpreted as these stopping places along the way to the ultimate goal of experiencing the divine presence in the heavenly temple.<sup>18</sup> Each level or mansion represents a new stage in the spiritual journey, with its unique challenges and rewards. These mansions could also be seen as places of rest and refreshment, where the visionary could pause and reflect on their progress before continuing on their journey.

The concept of "many mansions" could also be interpreted as an encouragement to persevere in the spiritual journey. The idea that there are many levels or stopping places along the way implies that the journey is not easy, and it may take time and effort to reach the ultimate goal. However, the promise of multiple mansions suggests that there are many rewards along the way, and each stage of the journey is worth the effort.<sup>19</sup>

### **The First Vision as an Ascent and an Esoteric Endowment**

When we read the combined accounts of the First Vision of Joseph Smith, we can see many elements that are associated with visionary accounts found in Enoch literature and other apocalyptic writings. These elements include the encounter with heavenly beings, the ascent to the heavenly realm, and the revelation of hidden knowledge. The First Vision also contains imagery of light and darkness, as well as a sense of awe and wonder at the grandeur of the divine. These themes are consistent with the visionary

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<sup>16</sup> Lehi's vision in 1 Nephi 8 can be read as an ascent, depending on the background of the person reading the text.

<sup>17</sup> Himmelfarb relates, "Christ gives a password to the angelic guardians of the gates of heaven... angelic guardians at the gate demand a password from all who seek to enter appear also in hekhalot literature." Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, p. 57. This author also relates (p. 109) that the visionaries also had to engage in proper songs and passwords in their ascent through the levels of heaven to the deity.

<sup>18</sup> If you were to ask a first-century Jew or Christian where God dwells, they would undoubtedly respond, "in his temple in the sky." The vast majority of modern Christians have lost an understanding of the mythos of the celestial temple, even though it is central to the biblical traditions. In the Hebrew Bible, Psalm 11:4 is explicit: "Yhwh is in his holy temple (*hēkal*); Yhwh's throne is in heaven." The Psalmist likewise tells us that God "has looked down from the height of his holy place/temple (*qodeš*), from heaven Yhwh beholds the earth" (Psalm 102:19). The clear idea behind these passages and related passages is that God dwells in a temple in heaven. Hamblin, p. 66. See also: J. Parry and D. Parry, "The Temple in Heaven: Its Description and Significance," in *Temples of the Ancient World* ed. S. Ricks and D. Parry, Deseret Book, 1994, 515–32.

<sup>19</sup> We see this idea typologically in Israel's journey to the Promised Land, the Brother of Jared's journey to the New World, and of course, Nephi's journey to a land where he could build a temple to God and be a king and priest to his people, establishing truth and justice.

experiences described in other religious traditions, and highlight the importance of personal encounters with the divine as a means of gaining insight and understanding. Additionally, the First Vision is significant in Latter-day Saint theology because it marks the beginning of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and provides a foundation for the unique beliefs and practices of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as it demonstrates the idea that God wants to bring man to where he is.

Indeed, as Don Bradley emphasized, “In Joseph Smith’s First Vision there is an encapsulation of the Gospel. In Joseph Smith’s experience, God came down to earth to take Joseph up to heaven. **God came down to his level in order to lift him up to God’s level. This was not just an experience that taught the Gospel. This was an experience of the Gospel.**”<sup>20</sup>

### **Joseph Smith on “Many Mansions”**

Joseph Smith taught us how we are to understand this verse, “My text is on the resurrection of the dead, which you will find in the 14th chapter of John-‘In my Father’s house are many mansions.’ It should be- ‘In my Father’s kingdom are many kingdoms,’ in order that ye may be heirs of God and joint-heirs with me. I do not believe the Methodist doctrine of sending honest men and noble-minded men to hell, along with the murderer and the adulterer...There are mansions for those who obey a celestial law, and there are other mansions for those who come short of the law, every man in his own order.”<sup>21</sup>

“The age-old concept of heaven and hell is erroneous. It is not true that there is but one dividing line between heaven and hell and that all who barely fail to reach heaven will be doomed to a fire and brimstone hell, and conversely untrue, that all who are just a little better than the condemned ones will go to a common heaven, there equally to play harps or to sing praises eternally. This is a false concept.”<sup>22</sup>

### **Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? (John 14.5)**

In a sense, then, the rest of the last discourse, John 14–17, is an answer to Thomas’s questions, “where are you going?” and “what is the way there?” The answer is that Christ is returning to the presence of his Father in the celestial temple, and the way there is the Christian Way, or *hodos*. Remember that Christianity was originally known as “the Way” in the first decades before non-Christians started calling Jesus’s followers Christians in Antioch (Acts 11:26). The Way of Christ is the Way to the presence of the Father in the celestial temple, as is expressly stated in Hebrews 10:19–20 (cf. Hebrews 9:8). “Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh” (Hebrews 10:19–20).<sup>23</sup>

### **Jesus’ oneness with his Father (John 14.7-15)**

#### **Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me (John 14.11)**

<sup>20</sup> Don Bradley, [Joseph Smith’s First Vision as Endowment and Epitome of the Gospel of Jesus Christ](#), FAIR, August 2019, accessed 2.28.23, emphasis added.

<sup>21</sup> *Discourses of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, compiled by Alma P. Burton, Deseret Book, 1977, p. 157.

<sup>22</sup> *The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p. 47.

<sup>23</sup> William Hamblin, [“I Have Revealed Your Name”: The Hidden Temple in John 17](#), *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* 1 (2012): p. 64.

Without question, Elohim and Jehovah—though separate as personages—are one: one in mind, one in purpose, one in glory. Indeed, **they are infinitely more one than they are separate**. This has properly been referred to as the greatest teaching device ever devised in all eternity.<sup>24</sup> The whole plan of salvation centers in our learning to be one with Christ as he is one with the Father. The doctrine of oneness is the doctrine of salvation!<sup>25</sup>

"So the Son appears and is in all respects like his Father; and conversely, the Father looks and acts and is in all respects like the Son. Their physical appearance is the same, both possess the attributes of godliness in their fulness and perfection; each would do and say precisely the same thing under the same circumstances."<sup>26</sup>

**I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you (John 14.16-21)**

**And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever (John 14.16)**

**The "Comforter" παράκλητον**

In the King James Version of John 14, Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as the "Comforter." However, in its original Greek context, the word used is παράκλητος (*parakletos*), which has a much richer meaning than simply "comforter." This word can be translated to mean "advocate," "helper," or "counselor."

In a Greek setting, the idea of a παράκλητος would have been very familiar, especially in relation to law. In Greek legal practice, a παράκλητος was a person who provided assistance and counsel to someone who was on trial or dealing with legal issues. They would act as an advocate for the person, representing them in court and arguing on their behalf.<sup>27</sup>

In this sense, the Holy Spirit as παράκλητος takes on a much more significant role than just providing comfort. The Holy Spirit is seen as an advocate and counselor who provides guidance and support in times of trouble. Just as a παράκλητος would help someone navigate the legal system, the Holy Spirit helps the Saints navigate the challenges and difficulties of life.

<sup>24</sup> See: Bruce R. McConkie, *Promised Messiah*, p. 131

<sup>25</sup> Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, Commentary on Mosiah 15, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Bookcraft, 1987. Both authors also expressed it this way: "As Latter-day Saints we go to great lengths to establish that the Father and the Son are separate and distinct personages, that they are not somehow magically intertwined, not merely two manifestations of the same person. And yet, **it is worth stating that our Heavenly Father and his Beloved Son are infinitely more one than they are separate**; they happen to be separate in person. They are one in glory, one in purpose, one in focus and mission, and one in the sense that they both possess all of the attributes of godliness in perfection. The Prophet also taught that they are one in mind, and that their oneness of mind is assured and maintained through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit." [Joseph Smith: The Choice Seer](#), chapter 34. Deseret Book, 2002.

<sup>26</sup> Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, pp. 294-295.

<sup>27</sup> Paraclete occurs in the Gospel of John as a name, or an epithet of the Holy Spirit, and in 1 John as a title of Jesus Christ. Paraklētos is a verbal adjective of parakaleō. In common Greek usage it means 'called to one's aid', 'summoned', and as a substantive 'legal assistant, advocate', or, in a more general sense, 'intercessor'. The reference is nearly almost to human persons, not to divine beings. J. Reiling, "Paraclete Παράκλητος", in: *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible Online*, Edited by: Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, Pieter W. van der Horst. Accessed March 1, 2023.

This understanding of the Holy Spirit as παράκλητος is significant because it highlights the importance of guidance and support in our quest to follow Jesus in this difficult and sometimes confusing world. Prophets have told us that we are not left to navigate the challenges of life on our own, but are provided with a helper and counselor who will guide and support us through any difficulty, the Holy Ghost, Holy Spirit, or the “Comforter.”

Οὐκ ἀφήσω ὑμᾶς ὀρφανούς ἔρχομαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς **“I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you!”**  
(John 14.18, my translation)

Jesus literally says here that he will not leave his followers “orphans.” In the Hebrew Bible, Yahweh is often depicted as the god of widows and orphans. This can be seen in several instances throughout the Old Testament, where Yahweh shows compassion and concern for the vulnerable members of society who have lost their support systems. For example, in the book of Exodus, Yahweh instructs the Israelites to “not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt. Do not take advantage of the widow or the fatherless” (Exodus 22.21-22). In Deuteronomy, Yahweh is described as “a father to the fatherless, a defender of widows” (Deuteronomy 10.18).<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, the prophets frequently spoke out against those who oppressed widows and orphans, calling for justice and righteousness. The prophet Isaiah, for instance, admonished the people of Israel to “learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow” (Isaiah 1.17).

On the whole, Yahweh's concern for widows and orphans demonstrates the compassion and care that lies at the heart of the Hebrew Bible's teachings, and serves as a reminder of the importance of caring for the most vulnerable members of society.<sup>29</sup>

## Two Comforters

There are two Comforters. The first is the Holy Ghost; the second is Jesus Christ. Both are spoken of in this discourse. Both are called “the Spirit of truth.” (John 14.17; 15.26; 16.13; D&C 50.17-21.) Both were promised to the Twelve Apostles.

Joseph Smith taught:

“The other Comforter spoken of is a subject of great interest, and perhaps understood by few of this generation. After a person has faith in Christ, repents of his sins, and is baptized for the remission of his sins and receives the Holy Ghost, (by the laying on of hands), which is the first Comforter, then let him continue to humble himself before God, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and living by every word of God, and the Lord will soon say unto him, Son, thou shalt be exalted. When the Lord has thoroughly proved him, and finds that the man is determined to serve Him at all hazards, then the man will find *his calling and his election made sure*, then it will be his privilege to receive the other Comforter,

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<sup>28</sup> “He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.” Deut. 10.18.

<sup>29</sup> See also: Psalm 68.5 - “A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.” Psalm 10.14 - “But you, God, see the trouble of the afflicted; you consider their grief and take it in hand... you are the helper of the fatherless.” Psalm 146.9 - “The LORD watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.” Jeremiah 49.11 - “Leave your fatherless children; I will keep them alive. Your widows too can depend on me.”



which the Lord hath promised the Saints, as is recorded in the testimony of St. John, in the 14th chapter, from the 12th to the 27th verses."<sup>30</sup>

"Now what is this other Comforter? ***It is no more nor less than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; and this is the sum and substance of the whole matter***; that when any man obtains this last Comforter, ***he will have the personage of Jesus Christ to attend him, or appear unto him from time to time, and even He will manifest the Father unto him***, and they will take up their abode with him, and ***the visions of the heavens will be opened unto him, and the Lord will teach him face to face***, and he may have a perfect knowledge of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God; and ***this is the state and place the ancient Saints arrived at when they had such glorious visions-Isaiah, Ezekiel, John*** upon the Isle of Patmos, St. Paul in the three heavens, and all the Saints who held communion with the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn."<sup>31</sup>

We see these ideas also communicated in D&C 93.1 and 88.68:

Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am (D&C 93.1)

Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will (D&C 88.68).

#### **If you love me, keep my commandments (John 14.15)**

"...because our Savior lives, we do not use the symbol of His death as the symbol of our faith. But what shall we use? No sign, no work of art, no representation of form is adequate to express the glory and the wonder of the living Christ. He told us what that symbol should be when He said: 'If ye love me, keep my commandments' (John 14:15)."<sup>32</sup>

#### **Peace I leave with you (John 14.22-31)**

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid (John 14.27).

In an assurance oracle, Jesus provides a promise of peace after his departure (14:27). Jesus reiterates his earlier command not to be afraid (14:1), a theme that also closes his direct discourse to the disciples along with another assurance of peace (16:33). This promise relates to a central motif in Jesus' last discourse, recognizing that after Jesus departed, the disciples would have to confront a hostile world (15:18–16:4). The promise begins to be fulfilled in 20:19, 21.

The language of assurance is standard (e.g., Jdt 11:1; T. Ab. 9:4B). "Peace" applies particularly to war or human relationships, but also (for Stoic thinkers especially) to tranquility in the midst of hardship or to the bliss of the righteous after death; it is also an eschatological hope for Israel. The pacifist Pharisaic tradition that survived in rabbinic literature highly extolled the value of peace. While the emphasis on

<sup>30</sup> [Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith](#), 150, emphasis added.

<sup>31</sup> [Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith](#), 150-151, emphasis added.

<sup>32</sup> President Gordon B. Hinckley, "Our One Bright Hope," *Ensign*, April 1994.

“peace” is not unusual, Jesus’ statement that he “leaves” it with them (ἀφίημι) may sound like a legacy from one departing (cf. 14:18).<sup>33</sup>

#### **I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I (John 14.28).**<sup>34</sup>

Jesus would be in a more pleasant state with his Father, he says, “because the Father is greater than I” (14:28). Elsewhere he speaks of the Father’s greatness (5:36; 10:29); as Jesus is greater than those he sends (13:16; 15:20), so is the Father greater than Jesus as his sender. Ancient Mediterranean culture regarded fathers as greater in rank than sons, and dependence on the abundance of a benevolent father or patron was a far superior state to dependence merely on one’s own lesser means. Those who suggest, on the basis of texts such as 14:28, that John denies Jesus’ deity read them outside the broader context of John’s theological framework. In the whole of his Gospel, John plainly affirms Jesus’ deity (1:1; 8:58; 20:28) but distinguishes Jesus from the Father (1:1b, 2).<sup>35</sup>

#### **4. I am the vine, you are the branches (John 15.1-11).**

In John 15, Jesus uses the metaphor of a vine and its branches to describe the relationship between himself and his disciples. He says, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me, you can do nothing."

This metaphor is meant to illustrate the close and dependent relationship that exists between Jesus and his followers. Just as a branch cannot survive or bear fruit without being connected to the vine, so too, we who follow Jesus cannot live a fruitful and fulfilling life without being connected to the Son of God. The Savior emphasizes the importance of remaining in him and abiding in his teachings in this discourse recorded by John. By loving one another and keeping his commandments, the Saints are promised that they will be nourished and sustained, even as the branches are as they remain connected to the vine. As we stay connected with him and hear him, we are promised that we will bear fruit (Jacob 5.17, 75). This fruit can be manifest in several ways, such as love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (Galatians 5.22-23).

In addition to this teaching, Jesus warns that without remaining in him, we cannot bear fruit. This means that apart from a relationship with Jesus, our efforts to live a good and righteous life will ultimately be fruitless, at least in the gospel sense.<sup>36</sup> We cannot produce the fruits of the Spirit on our own; we need to be connected to the source of life and goodness ([John 6.53](#)).

Basically, when Jesus says, "I am the vine and you are the branches," he is emphasizing the importance of remaining connected to him in order to live a fruitful and fulfilling life, our best life, the one he wants us to experience. Just as a branch cannot survive without being connected to the vine, so too, the Saints of God cannot live a righteous life without being connected to Jesus Christ, the light and life of the

<sup>33</sup> Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John*, Baker Academic, 2010, p. 982-983.

<sup>34</sup> πορεύομαι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα ὅτι ὁ πατήρ μου μείζων μου ἐστίν "I go towards the Father, because my Father is greater than I." (John 14.28, last bit, my translation)

<sup>35</sup> Keener, *The Gospel of John*, p. 983.

<sup>36</sup> I think it is safe to say that all people can live happy lives, regardless of their religious persuasion. This has been my experience in relating to people of all faiths (and those without a religious belief). Happy and productive people are in all countries and speak many languages, and many do not have a belief in Jesus. So, in the sense I am speaking of, I am referring to bearing fruit in the gospel sense of having peace in Christ. [D&C 19.23](#) puts it this way: Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit, and you shall have peace in me.

world.<sup>37</sup> By abiding in him and following his precepts, we will bear much fruit and experience the fullness of life that he has promised.<sup>38</sup>

#### **5. Jesus tells the Twelve to love one another, and that the world will hate them (John 15.12-25).**

"How critical it is that all who serve together in God's kingdom do so from a foundation of love: love for the Lord, love for the work, and love for each other. No matter how intense our effort or how carefully we follow the handbooks and guidelines, if we don't truly love each other we can't possibly hope to convey the full power of the gospel of love. And I can't help but believe that members are more likely to seek counsel from leaders from whom they feel sincere love emanating. Miracles seem to follow after Church leaders who are motivated by a keen feeling of loving devotion to those over whom they preside."<sup>39</sup>

#### **6. The Spirit of Truth, the Comforter will come (John 15.26-27).**

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning (John 15.26-27).

In the podcast, Bryce cited the book [A New Witness for the Articles of Faith](#) by Elder Bruce R. McConkie, where he discussed the three phases of light. There is the light of Christ, which all children of our Heavenly Father have. After this, he discussed the power of the Holy Ghost, likened unto lightning that flashes, giving light, but only for brief periods. Then he discussed the Gift of the Holy Ghost, which is the greater power.

He wrote, "The testimony before baptism, speaking by way of analogy, comes as a flash of lightning blazing forth in a dark and stormy night; it comes to light the path on which earth's pilgrims, far from their heavenly home and lost in the deserts and swamps of the world must walk if they are to return to the Divine Presence. The companionship of the Holy Ghost after baptism is as the continuing blaze of the sun at noonday, shedding its rays on the path of life and on all that surrounds it. If a devout truth seeker receives a testimony before baptism and does not step forward and receive the gospel, the light is soon gone; the testimony fades away, for one flash of lightning does not show the path ahead for any great distance. An enduring continuance of light and guidance comes only from the sun after the truth seeker leaves the darkness and storms of the night and chooses to walk in the light and calm of the gospel day."<sup>40</sup>

#### **7. Jesus warns the Twelve (John 16.1-6)**

**Jesus warns his disciples of the persecution which is to come (John 16.1-4)**

**They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service (John 16.2).**

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<sup>37</sup> In him was life; and the life was the light of men... That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. (John 1.4, 9).

<sup>38</sup> "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10.10).

<sup>39</sup> Elder M. Russell Ballard, [Counseling with Our Councils: Learning to Minister Together in the Church and in the Family](#), Deseret Book, 1997, p. 35.

<sup>40</sup> McConkie, [A New Witness for the Articles of Faith](#), chapter 28 "The Holy Ghost," Deseret Book, 1985.

But these things have I told you, in order that when the hour may come, you all might remember that I told you of them. And these things I did not say to you at the first, because I was surely with you (John 16:4, my translation).<sup>41</sup>

### Roman Persecution of Christians

Rome did not grant the *ius gladii*, the right of the sword, freely to all its subjects; if worshipers of God in the synagogues (16:2) directly killed disciples, it would not be legally sanctioned by Rome. Yet Hare, who doubts that much lynching actually was taking place, suggests that 16:2 may reflect anxiety concerning “Jewish declarations that Christians ought to be lynched.”<sup>42</sup> He notes that Philo advocates the execution of Jewish idolaters without trial, that one Tanna supported executing idolaters, and that 3 Maccabees praises the slaughter of apostate Jews;<sup>43</sup> but given the successful career of the Alexandrian apostate Tiberius Alexander, he doubts that lynching was common.<sup>44</sup> Even in Revelation, we read of only one explicit martyr to date (Rev 2:13), although the writer clearly anticipates others to follow quickly.

Yet John and Revelation hardly would have stressed these warnings unless severe tensions with the synagogue or other reasons led them to believe that such conflicts were on the rise. Conditions may have changed somewhat in the second century; Justin claims that “Jews” kill Christians whenever they are able, specifically noting that Bar Kokhba had ordered the execution of Christians and only Christians (1 *Apol.* 31.6).<sup>45</sup> But atrocity reports were often exaggerated in the course of circulation;<sup>46</sup> **hyperbole was a regular feature of polemic and invective** (generally from both sides). **Some non-Christian Jews actually protected Christians during Roman persecutions;**<sup>47</sup> and in any case, lynchings would have been far less prevalent among Jews under Roman rule than during the Bar Kokhba revolt, when Roman scruples about executions without Roman supervision would have been dismissed.

<sup>41</sup> ἀλλὰ ταῦτα λελάληκα ὑμῖν ἵνα ὅταν ἔλθῃ ἡ ὥρα μνημονεύητε αὐτῶν ὅτι ἐγὼ εἶπον ὑμῖν Ταῦτα δὲ ὑμῖν ἐξ ἀρχῆς οὐκ εἶπον ὅτι μεθ’ ὑμῶν ἦμην (John 16.4). I see the subjunctive use of ἔλθῃ expressing a potential, so I translated this portraying the idea that the hour *may* come. I used a similar approach with the subjunctive use of μνημονεύω, showing that there is a potential here for remembering the words of Jesus when and if the hour comes.

<sup>42</sup> Douglas R. A. Hare, [The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians in the Gospel According to St Matthew](#) (Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series, Series Number 6), Cambridge University Press, 1967, p. 41.

<sup>43</sup> Philo *Spec. Laws* 1.54–55 (the interpretation is debatable); *t. Sanh.* 11:11 (although R. Eleazar ben Zadok’s view was a minority position; see *m. Sanh.* 8:7); 3 Macc 7.

<sup>44</sup> Hare, p. 41.

<sup>45</sup> Amoraic traditions speak of executing Jesus’ disciples (e.g., *b. Sanh.* 43a, in Herford, [Christianity in Talmud and Midrash](#), Ktav Pub & Distributors, 1975, 90–95), but this may reflect rabbinic wish rather than fact. Martyn, *Theology*, 80–81, suggests that Ben Stada, said to be executed in rabbinic literature, was a Jewish-Christian rabbi rather than Jesus; but his evidence does not seem compelling.

<sup>46</sup> Kenneth Bailey, [Poet and Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke](#), Eerdmans, 1983, p. 75.

<sup>47</sup> Edward H. Flannery, [The Anguish of the Jews: Twenty-Three Centuries of Antisemitism](#), Paulist Press, 2004, p. 28–31. Flannery (p. 31) explains, “Jewish anti-Christian hostility in this era was by no means universal. Gamaliel’s neutrality, reported in Acts (5:38–39), was closer to the norm: ““Keep away from these men and let them alone. For if this plan or work is of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow it. Else perhaps you may find yourselves fighting even against God.” His viewpoint epitomized the usual sentiment of Pharisaism toward dissident sects. Toward the end of the first century, Rabbi Eliezer looked benignly on Christianity and voiced his conviction that there was a place for Jesus in the world to come. A century later Tertullian would tell of Jews offering Christians asylum in their synagogues during persecutions. And there were cases, confirmed by archeology, where Christian martyrs were buried in Jewish cemeteries.”

More likely is the proposal that the Jewish Christians felt that their Jewish opponents, by expelling them from synagogues, were deliberately delivering them over to the sword of the Roman governor. Surely in time Christians, once portrayed as apostates no longer welcome in the synagogue community, would face death for their unwillingness to worship Caesar (Rev. 13:15). **Indeed, early-second-century sources testify that some Christians had been executed for such an offense** (Pliny *Ep.* 10.96). Roman prosecution also depended on *delatores*, private accusers, as Pliny's correspondence with Trajan likewise indicates; at a later stage of mutual antagonism, the second-century *Martyrdom of Polycarp* reproaches the Jewish community in Smyrna not for merely expelling the Jewish Christians (cf. Rev 2:9) but for actively supplying the accusers of the Christians (*Mart. Pol.* 17.2).<sup>48</sup>

### **8. The Comforter will come (John 16.7-16).**

**if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you (John 16.7b).**

"For some reason not fully explained in the scriptures, the Holy Ghost did not operate in the fulness among the Jews during the years of Jesus' mortal sojourn (John 7:39; 16:7). Statements to the effect that the Holy Ghost did not come until after Jesus was resurrected must of necessity refer to that particular dispensation only, for it is abundantly clear that the Holy Ghost was operative in earlier dispensations. Furthermore, it has reference only to the gift of the Holy Ghost not being present, since the power of the Holy Ghost was operative during the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus; otherwise no one would have received a testimony of the truths that these men taught."<sup>49</sup>

"In the New Testament, the full powers and gifts of the Holy Ghost were not given in the Old World meridian Church until the day of Pentecost... **While the Bridegroom was present with his disciples in the flesh, he was their Comforter, their Revelator, their Testator.** He was their Life and Light, their source of power and might. 'Hence, as long as Jesus was with the disciples in person, there was not the full need for them to have the constant companionship of the Spirit that there would be after Jesus left.' But because of the vital role that Spirit would play thereafter in the growth, development, and expansion of the early Christian Church, Jesus said: 'It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you' (John 16:7)."<sup>50</sup>

### **9. Jesus speaks of his death, resurrection, and about prayer (John 16.7-33).**

#### **Jesus speaks of his coming death and resurrection (John 16.16-22)**

The apostles were perplexed at what Jesus had just told them about "a little while" not seeing him and then seeing him again. That prophecy would be fulfilled in two senses: He would die, resurrect, and reappear; also, at the end of time, after the "little while" or mortality, they would see him again in a glorious appearance.<sup>51</sup>

#### **He encourages his disciples to pray and be of good cheer (John 16.23-33)**

<sup>48</sup> Keener, *The Gospel of John*, p. 1026-1027, emphasis added.

<sup>49</sup> [Bible Dictionary, "Holy Ghost."](#) Accessed 3.1.23.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Millet, Chapter 16: "The Ministry of the Holy Ghost," [Selected Writings of Robert L. Millet: Gospel Scholars Series](#), Deseret Book, 2000, p. 194.

<sup>51</sup> D. Kelly Ogden, Andrew Skinner, [Verse by Verse: The Four Gospels](#), Deseret Book, 2006, p. 580.

### **“Be confident, I have overcome the world” (John 16.33, my translation)<sup>52</sup>**

In the context of John’s Gospel and early Christian eschatology, this note of triumph is not merely the Stoic notion of being unconquered no matter what the suffering but a promise that evil and suffering do not ultimately prevail for Christ’s followers. Jesus had spoken to them the words of this final discourse to bring them encouragement.<sup>53</sup> Even so, the “peace” he promises here (16:33; cf. 14:27) would become more fully theirs only at Jesus’ resurrection appearances; this “peace” (16:33) would come through Jesus’ defeat in the eyes of the world, through which God brings victory in the resurrection (20:19, 21, 26). The summons to be of good courage, *θαρσεῖτε*, was a general exhortation and comfort, appropriate, for instance, to wish-prayers, exhortations before battle, promises of God’s faithfulness to his people, and burial epitaphs. The disciples would face tribulation in Jesus’ death (16:21) and in sharing his sufferings afterwards (Rev 1:9), but this did not mean defeat.<sup>54</sup>

### **10. Jesus’ suffering in Gethsemane (Matt. 26.36-46; Mark 14.32-42; Luke 22.40-46; John 18.1; 2 Ne. 9.21-22; Mosiah 3.5-12; D&C 19.1-24).**

#### **Crossing Kidron (John 18.1)**

When Jesus had spoken these words (the words in John 17), he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples (John 18.1).

After Jesus offered the Intercessory Prayer, "he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron [or Kidron], where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples" (John 18:1). *Κεδρών* (Hebrew = *קִדְרוֹן*)<sup>55</sup> Kidron means "dark" or "black." The Kidron is also known as the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:2), which means "Jehovah judges"; it is indeed a symbolic place of judgment. It was also a traditional place of burial, a place of mourning. South of the Kidron is the Hinnom Valley. Jeremiah called this valley the "valley of slaughter" (Jer. 7:32). There, apostate Jews sacrificed their children to the false god Molech. During New Testament times the Hinnom Valley was called Gehenna; it became the city's garbage dump. Always burning with fires and filled with stench, it was known as a symbol of hell.<sup>56</sup>

Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. (Matt. 26.36. See also Mark 14.32)<sup>57</sup>

The word "Gethsemane" (*Γεθσημανῆ*) comes from the Aramaic *Gat Shemen* which means "olive press" or "oil press."<sup>58</sup> This is significant because an olive press was a place where olives were crushed and pressed to extract the oil. This process was symbolic of the suffering and sacrifice that Jesus was about

<sup>52</sup> *θαρσεῖτε ἐγὼ νενίκηκα τὸν κόσμον. Θαρσέω* = "I dare," "I am of courage." This here is a 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural imperative, essentially the Savior is telling his disciples to be brave. See: *Pocket Oxford Classical Greek Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 156.

<sup>53</sup> See: "spoken these things" in 14:25; 15:11; 16:1, 4, 6; 17:1.

<sup>54</sup> Keener, *Gospel of John*, p. 1049.

<sup>55</sup> From *qadar* *קָדַר* "to mourn," or "to be dark."

<sup>56</sup> Donald Parry, "Drinking the Bitter Cup: Gethsemane," [\*Symbols and Shadows: Unlocking a Deeper Understanding of the Atonement\*](#), Deseret Book, 2009.

<sup>57</sup> Gethsemane does not appear in Luke or John.

<sup>58</sup> Of Aramaic origin, cf *גַּת* (H1660) and *שֶׁמֶן* (H8081)

to undergo in order to bring salvation to humanity in his performances of the Atonement.<sup>59</sup> I can also see this in connection with D&C 19, where we read “which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to trembled because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit” (D&C 19.18).

The name "Gethsemane," therefore, adds a layer of symbolism to the story of Jesus' prayer in the garden. Just as olives are crushed and pressed to produce oil, Jesus will be "crushed" and will suffer in order to bring forth the "oil" of salvation for humanity. In this way, the name of the place where Jesus prayed adds to the profound meaning of his experience in the garden and underscores the sacrificial nature of his mission.

### Luke's account

**And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground (Luke 22.40-44).**

### My responsibility

Elder Faust expressed: “One cannot help wondering how many of those drops of precious blood each of us may be responsible for.”<sup>60</sup>

“The Son of God ... bore the weight, the responsibility, and the burden of the sins of all men, which, to us, is incomprehensible ... Groaning beneath this concentrated load, this intense, incomprehensible pressure, this terrible exaction of Divine justice, from which feeble humanity shrank, and through the agony thus experienced sweating great drops of blood, He was led to exclaim, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' He had wrestled with the superincumbent load in the wilderness, He had struggled against the powers of darkness that had been let loose upon him there; placed below all things, His mind surcharged with agony and pain, lonely and apparently helpless and forsaken, in his agony the blood oozed from His pores.”<sup>61</sup>

### The Atonement

1. Jesus answers the “ends of the law.” (2 Nephi 2.7).
2. The demands of justice require guilt, anguish, and pain (Mosiah 2.38).
3. One person's debt to justice brings about an “awful view of their guilt,” causing “misery and endless torment” (Mosiah 3.25).
4. Jesus has claim upon “his rights of mercy” (Moroni 7.27).

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<sup>59</sup> καταλλαγὴν, a word that denotes a reconciliation, especially in regards to business transactions. It is the settling of the books, so to speak, or a coming and sitting together. From κατά and ἀλλάσσω, *kata* is a common bit in Greek, and usually denotes “according to,” or doing something for or to or towards (in the accusative) something. Allaso has to do with exchange, or transforming something into something else. See: [ἀλλάσσω](#) in *Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon*.

<sup>60</sup> "The Supernal Gift of the Atonement," *Ensign*, Nov. 1988.

<sup>61</sup> John Taylor, *Mediation and Atonement*. Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1882, p. 151.

5. The meaning of the word denotes a covering (*kaphar* כָּפַר) and a reconciliation, or reckoning of the books (*katallagē* καταλλαγή).
6. The word atonement signifies the idea of an embrace.

### **Two Contrasting Embraces in the Book of Mormon: Evidence of Ancient Authorship**

The Book of Mormon describes two contrasting forms of encirclement: one by the arms of Jesus, which represents salvation and atonement, and the other by the chains of death and hell, which symbolize spiritual captivity and destruction. This dichotomy reflects the Hebrew concept of *kaphar*, which means "to cover" and is often associated with atonement. The sacred embrace which comes as a kind of supplement to 1 Nephi is not only symbolic of surety in this life, but also of eternal life:

But behold, the Lord hath redeemed my soul from hell; I have beheld his glory, and I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love (2 Nephi 1.15).<sup>62</sup>

This sacred embrace is the golden thread which is woven throughout the Book of Mormon. It is the prayer of Nephi's psalm, "O Lord, wilt thou encircle me around in the robe of thy righteousness!" (2 Ne. 4.33); and the burden of Mormon's lament, "[Had the Lamanites repented,] they might have been clasped in the arms of Jesus" (Mormon 5.11).

The embrace of Jesus represents a covering of sin through his sacrifice and a restoration of relationship with God. This atonement is possible through faith and repentance, which enable the individual to receive the grace of Christ and be encircled by his love and mercy. This embrace is described as "perfect" and "complete" and brings peace and joy to the individual who experiences it. Alma says this embrace is a powerful gift of the Atonement of the Savior Jesus Christ: "And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice" (Alma 34.16)

In contrast, the counterfeit embrace of the adversary is characterized by bondage, darkness, and destruction. The chains of death and hell are symbolic of the spiritual chains that bind the individual to sin and prevent them from receiving the blessings of atonement. The adversary seeks to ensnare and enslave individuals through temptation, deception, and fear, ultimately leading them to eternal destruction.

Alma warns us of the dangers of the counterfeit embrace and exhorts them to turn to Christ for salvation. He emphasizes that the adversary's chains are not only physical but spiritual, and that the only way to break free from them is through the power of Christ's atonement. The counterfeit has a variety of names, it is called being encircled about "by the everlasting chains of death" (Alma 36.18); "by the bands of death, and the chains of hell" (Alma 5.7, 14.6); and "with everlasting darkness and destruction" (Alma 26.15). Alma's message underscores the importance of choosing the right path and remaining steadfast in faith, even in the face of adversity and temptation.<sup>63</sup>

Overall, the Book of Mormon presents a powerful contrast between two types of encirclement: one by the arms of Jesus, which represents atonement and salvation, and the other by the chains of death and

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<sup>62</sup> This Same promise was given to Oliver Cowdery, D&C 6.20.

<sup>63</sup> Alma describes it as "a snare of the adversary, which he has laid to catch this people, that he might bring you into subjection unto him, that he might encircle you about with his chains, that he might chain you down to everlasting destruction..." (Alma 12.6). See: LeGrand Baker, [Embrace in the Book of Mormon](#), accessed 3.8.2023.



hell, which signify spiritual captivity and destruction. These ideas are all connected to the idea of atonement, or covering, as understood by these ancient Israelites. Joseph Smith, at the time of his translation of the text, had not been exposed to these ancient ideas associated with the Atonement. There is no way he could have written these ideas that are expressed by Nephi and Alma, as they were trained in ways that made it so that they could express these ideas, whereas Joseph was a 19<sup>th</sup> century American who had not had the training needed to compose such an argument.

The message of the Book of Mormon is that the individual has a choice to make between these two paths, and that the path of salvation can only be found through faith and repentance in Jesus Christ. Both embraces are discussed, but only one will lead to life and salvation.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> See: Day, [Temple Imagery in the Book of Mormon](#).