

Alma 13:1-2***Holy Order***

1

The holy priesthood is administered to the children of men according to different orders. As Joseph Smith taught, "All priesthood is Melchizedek, but there are different portions or degrees of it" (*Teachings*, p. 180). The preparatory gospel (law of Moses) operates under that order we know as Aaronic. The fullness of the everlasting gospel operates under different orders. The Church operates under an ecclesiastical order of offices, quorums, and councils. In our day one enters into the patriarchal order in holy temples through entering into the new and everlasting covenant of marriage (see D&C 131:4; Bruce R. McConkie, CR, October 1977, p. 50). In addition, one enters into the holy order of God through proving worthy of all the blessings of the temple, through eventually receiving what the scriptures call the fullness of the priesthood. President Ezra Taft Benson thus explained: "To enter into the order of the Son of God is the equivalent today of entering into the fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood, which is only received in the house of the Lord. (Ensign, August 1985, p.8)

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millett, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987-1992], 3:94

2

The common people, the people generally, did not exercise the functions of priesthood in its fullness, but were confined in their labors and ministrations very largely to the Aaronic Priesthood. The withdrawal of the higher priesthood was from the people as a body, but the Lord left among them men holding the Melchizedek Priesthood, with power to officiate in all its ordinances, so far as he determined that these ordinances should be granted unto the people. Therefore, Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Elijah, and others of the prophets held the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines*, 3:85

3

God's chief representative on earth, the one who holds the highest spiritual position in [the Lord's] kingdom in any age.... This special designation of the chief spiritual officer of the Church has reference to the administrative position which he holds rather than to the office to which he is ordained in the priesthood.

McConkie, *Mormon* p. 355-56

4

Alma 13:3***Called & Prepared***

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that "Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the grand council of heaven before this world was." [*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 365.] So likewise declared the Apostle Paul, "For whom he did foreknow... them he also called." (Romans 2:29-30.) But do not misunderstand that such a calling and such foreordination pre-determined what you must do. A prophet on this western continent has spoken plainly on this subject, "Being called and prepared from the foundation of the world, according to the foreknowledge of God on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil." (Alma 13:3.) This last passage makes the others preceding more understandable. God may have called and chosen men in the spirit world or in their first estate to do a certain work, but whether they will accept that calling here and magnify it by faithful service and good works while in mortality is a matter in which it is their right and privilege to exercise their free agency to choose good or evil.

... I fear there are many among us who because of their faithfulness in the spirit world were "called to do a great work here, but like reckless spendthrifts they are exercising their free agency in riotous living and are losing their birthright and the blessings that were theirs had they proved faithful to their calling. Hence as the Lord has said, "there are many called but few are chosen."

Harold B. Lee, *Decisions for successful Living*, pp. 168-69.

5 *Prepared from foundation of the world*

The Doctrine of a Premortal Life, once common to the faith of Jews and Christians alike, is now the exclusive province of Latter-day Saints. We alone bear witness that the God of heaven is actually the Father of our spirits, that we are his sons and daughters, sired in his image and likeness. We alone possess the faith that as children of divine parentage we have the capacity to become as God is and that the text declaring Adam and Eve to be in his image and likeness is literally true. We accept the plain meaning of the psalmist's words: "Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High" (Ps 82:6). We believe ourselves to be children of destiny who in principle and intent have claim upon the words uttered by the Lord to Jeremiah: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jer. 1:5). Extending this principle to all who are of the household of faith, the Prophet Joseph Smith said, "Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven" (*Teachings of Prophet Joseph Smith*, 365).

In our premortal estate not only were we taught the gospel but we made covenants to accept and live it when we came to earth. President Spencer W. Kimball said: "We made vows, solemn vows, in the heavens before we came to this mortal life [ABR. 3:22, 24-26].

"We have made covenants. We made them before we accepted our position here on earth. Now we made this **commitment** ... all things whatsoever the Lord our God shall command us. We committed ourselves to our Heavenly Father, that if He would send us to the earth and give us bodies and give us the priceless opportunities that earth life afforded, we would keep our lives clean and would marry in the holy temple and would rear a family and teach them righteousness. This was a **solemn oath, a solemn promise**. He promised us an eventful mortal life with untold privileges and providing we qualified in the way of righteousness, we would receive **eternal** life and happiness and progress. There is no other way to receive these rewards" ("Be Ye Therefore Perfect," 2)

Thus as Latter-day Saints we believe ourselves to have been foreordained to receive all spiritual blessings, meaning all the ordinances of salvation, long before being born into mortality (see Eph. 1:1-4).

Joseph Fielding McConkie, *Answers: Straightforward Answers to Tough Gospel Questions* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book. 1998], 80

6 **Alma 13:3-5**
Agency in Premortal Life

God gave his children their free agency even in the spirit world, by which the individual spirits had the privilege, just as men have here, or choosing the good and rejecting the evil, or partaking of the evil to suffer the consequences of their sins. Because of this, some even there were more faithful than others in keeping the commandments of the Lord. Some were of greater intelligence than others, as we find it here, and were honored accordingly...

The spirits of men had their free agency, some were greater than others, and from among them the Father called and foreordained his prophets and rulers. Jeremiah and Abraham were two of them.... The spirits of men were not equal. They may have had an equal start, and we know they were all innocent in the beginning; but the right of free agency which was given to them enabled some to outstrip others, and thus, through the eons of immortal existence, to become more intelligent, more faithful, for they were freed to act for themselves, to think for themselves, to receive the truth or rebel against it.

Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:58-59

7 During the ages in which we dwelt in the pre-mortal state we not only developed our various characteristics and showed our worthiness and ability, or the lack of it, but we were also where such progress could be observed. It is reasonable to believe that there was a Church organization there. The heavenly beings were living in a perfectly arranged society. Every person knew his place. Priesthood without any question had been conferred and the leaders were chosen to officiate. Ordinances pertaining to the pre-existence were required and the love of God

prevailed. Under such conditions it was natural for our Father to discern and choose those who were most worthy and evaluate the talents of each individual. He knew not only what each of us *could* do, but also what each of us *would* do when put to the test and when responsibility was given us. Then, when the time came for our habitation on mortal earth, all things were prepared and the servants of the Lord chosen and ordained to their respective missions. Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection*, [1970], 50-51.

8 **Alma 13:3-5**
Foreordination

The mightiest and greatest spirits were foreordained to stand as prophets and spiritual leaders, giving to the people such portion of the Lord's word as was designed for the day and age involved. Other spirits, such as those who laid the foundations of the American nation, were appointed beforehand to perform great works in political and governmental fields. In all this, there is not the slightest hint of compulsion; persons foreordained to fill special missions in mortality are as abundantly endowed with free agency as are any other persons. By their foreordination the Lord merely gives them the opportunity to serve him and his purposes if they will choose to measure up to the standard he knows they are capable of attaining.

Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966], 290.

9 We received the priesthood first in the premortal existence and then again as mortals.... All of us who have calls to minister in the holy priesthood were foreordained to be ministers of Christ, and to come here in our appointed days, and to labor on his errand.

Bruce R. McConkie, in Conference Report, Apr. 1982 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1982], 48

10 Our privilege to bear the priesthood of God tonight has its beginnings in our premortal existence.... The Lord has long intended you to be a creator or a continuer of the chain of faithful bearers in your priesthood family. It was your faith and wise exercise of free agency—in the premortal existence and here in mortality—which permitted you to receive the “holy calling” of the priesthood....

We have each come to earth with a personal heritage of faithfulness and foreordination.

Keith K. Hilbig, *Ensign*, Nov. 2001 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001], 45.

11 Approximately 2,500 years before there were any children of Israel, God had divided Adam's sons into families to reflect the coming destiny of those same children of Israel, Jesus Christ himself came through definite lineage lines. Thus there was, and is, planning for the preservation of priesthood lineage. Alma made this clear when he said of men holding the high priesthood that they were “called and prepared *from the foundation of the world* according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works. (Alma 13:3; italics added)....

It is a sobering and humbling thought then to realize that we have been chosen beforehand and reserved for a special purpose—to use that priesthood for the benefit of others and not for our own aggrandizement.

Theodore M. Burton, in Conference Report, Oct. 1974 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1974], 75-76.

12 Joseph Smith was ordained before he came here, the same as Jeremiah was. Said the Lord unto him, “Before you were begotten I knew you” etc.

So do I believe with regard to this people, so do I believe with regard to the apostles, the high priests, seventies and the elders of Israel bearing the holy priesthood, I believe they were ordained before they came here; and I believe the God of Israel has raised them up, and has watched over them from their youth, and has carried them through all the scenes of life both seen and unseen, and has prepared them as instruments in his hands to take this

kingdom and bear it off. If this be so, what manner of men ought we to be? If anything under the heavens should humble men before the Lord and before one another, it should be the fact that we have been called of God.

Journal of Discourses, 26 vols. [London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854-1886], 21:317.

- 13 We are quite well aware that Joseph Smith and Jeremiah and the apostles and prophets... were foreordained to particular ministries. But that is only a part of the doctrine of foreordination. The whole House of Israel was foreordained... millions upon millions—comparatively few compared to the total preexistent host—but millions of people were foreordained.
Bruce R. McConkie, 1969 *Speeches of the Year*, p. 6.
- 14 Every... [person] who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was. I suppose I was ordained to this very office in that Grand Council.
Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 365
- 15 Remember, in the world before we came here, faithful women were given certain assignments while faithful men were foreordained to certain priesthood tasks. While we do not now remember the particulars, this does not alter the glorious reality of what we once agreed to.
Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, p. 316
- 16 Our young people are among the most blessed and favored of our Father's children. They are the nobility of heaven, a choice and chosen generation who have a divine destiny. Their spirits have been reserved to come forth in this day when the gospel is on earth, and when the Lord needs valiant servants to carry on his great latter-day work.
Joseph Fielding Smith (*Improvement Era*, June 1970, p. 3.
- 17 For nearly six thousand years, God has held you in reserve to make your appearance in the final days before the Second Coming of the Lord.... God has saved for the final inning some of His strongest and most valiant children, who will help bear off the kingdom triumphantly. That is where you come in, for you are the generation that must be prepared to meet your God.... Make no mistake about it—you are a marked generation. There has never been more expected of the faithful in such a short period of time than there is of us. Never before on the face of this earth have the forces of evil and the forces of good been so well organized.... The final outcome is certain—the forces of righteousness will finally win. But what remains to be seen is where each of us personally, now and in the future, will stand in this battle—and how tall we will stand. Will we be true to our last days and fulfill our foreordained mission?
Ezra Taft Benson, Dedication of the Boise Institute of Religion, Nov. 20, 1983.
- 18 **Alma 13:6**
To teach Commandments
Joseph Smith taught: "The duty of a High Priest is to administer in spiritual and holy things, and to hold communion with God.... And again, it is the High Priests' duty to be better qualified to teach principles and doctrines, than the Elders." (*Teachings*, p.21.)
Thus the primary charge of the high priest—indeed, the primary responsibility of all who hold the high priesthood—is teaching the doctrines of salvation. A revelation of our day states that the "greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God" (D&C 84:19). The Melchizedek Priesthood, Joseph Smith taught, "is the channel through which all knowledge, doctrine, the plan of salvation and every important matter is revealed from heaven" (*Teachings*, pp. 166-67).
Millet & McConkie, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol 3 pp. 96-97.

19 **Alma 13:7***Priesthood after the order of the Son*

Christ is the pattern, the standard, the example in all things. In heavenly councils he was called and ordained to his earthly ministry on account of his exceedingly great faith and good works in that first estate. He complied fully with the discipline and order of that heavenly kingdom. All who held the priesthood before the day of his mortal ministry were to be types and shadows of what he would be and do as he labored in mortality. Their ordination and ministry were to be living prophecies of his own. In like manner, all who have been called to the holy priesthood since the day of his coming in the flesh are to serve as he served, imitating his example in all that they do; they are to be living witnesses of what he was.

Ibid. p. 97

20

Joseph Smith declared: "The Priesthood is an everlasting principle, and existed with God from eternity, and will to eternity, without beginning of days or end of years" (TPJS 157). In the words of President George Q. Cannon, the priesthood "had no beginning; [it will have] no end. It is [as] eternal as our Father and God, and it extends into the eternities to come, and it is as endless as eternity is endless, and as our God is endless: for it is the power and authority by which our Father and God sits upon His throne and wields the power He does throughout the innumerable worlds over which He exercises dominion".

JD, 26:245

21 **Alma 13:9***High Priests forever*

I had reorganized the presidency of the Ensign Stake. We had named the bishop of one of the wards as stake president...

Six weeks after they were sustained, the stake president suddenly passed away.

Then I began to receive a barrage of letters. Where in the world was the inspiration for you to call a man whom the Lord was going to let die in six weeks? They invited me to talk at his services, and some seemed to be expecting me to try to explain why I had appointed a man that the Lord was going to take home in six weeks.

President Joseph Fielding Smith sat on the stand and heard my attempt to satisfy these people, and he said to me, "Don't you let that bother you. If you have called a man to a position in this church and he dies the next day, that position would have a bearing on what he will be called to do when he leaves this earth."

I believe that. I believe that every President of this church, every apostle of this church, every bishop, every stake president, every presiding position will have a bearing on what one is called to do when he leaves this earth.

Harold B. Lee, Conference Report, Oct. 1972, 129-30; or *Ensign*, Jan. 1973, 107.

22 **Alma 13:10-13***Many were called*

God may have called and chosen men in the spirit world or in their first estate to do a certain work, but whether they will accept that calling here and magnify it by faithful service and good works while in mortality is a matter in which it is their right and privilege to exercise their free agency to choose good or evil.

...I fear there are many among us who because of their faithfulness in the spirit world were "called" to do a great work here, but like reckless spendthrifts they are exercising their free agency in riotous living and are losing their birthright and the blessings that were theirs had they proved faithful to their calling. Hence as the Lord has said, "there are many called but few are chosen".

Decisions for Successful Living [1973], 169.

23 Alma 13:12 *Abhorrence of Sin*

The prophet Alma discourses on the mercies of the Lord through the cleansing power wherein repentance has purged sin, and joy leads toward “rest” or exaltation:

Therefore they were called after this holy order [of the high priesthood], and were sanctified, and their garments were washed white through the blood of the Lamb.

Now they, after being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, having their garments made white, being pure and spotless before God, could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence; and there were many, exceeding great many, who were made pure and entered into the rest of the Lord their God. (Alma 13:11-12)

This passage indicates an attitude which is basic to the sanctification we should all be seeking, and thus to the repentance which merits forgiveness. It is that the former transgressor must have reached a “point of no return” to sin wherein there is not merely a renunciation but also a deep abhorrence of the sin—where the sin becomes the most distasteful to him and where the desire or urge to sin is cleared out of his life.

Surely this is what is meant, in part at least, by being pure in heart! And when we read in the Sermon on the Mount that the “pure in heart” shall see God, it gives meaning to the Lord’s statement, made through the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1832, that presently impure people can perfect themselves and become pure.

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, according to his own will (D&C 88:68) Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, (1969), 35-355.

24 Alma 13:11-12 *Sanctification*

President Brigham Young (1801-77) defined sanctification as follows:

“I will put my own definition to the term sanctification, and say it consists in overcoming every sin and bringing all into subjection to the law of Christ. God has placed in us a pure spirit; when this [the spirit] reigns predominant, without let or hindrance, and triumphs over the flesh and rules and governs and controls... this I call the blessing of sanctification. Will sin be perfectly destroyed? No, it will not, for it is not so designed in the economy of heaven.

“Do not suppose that we shall ever in the flesh be free from temptations to sin. Some suppose that they can in the flesh be sanctified body and spirit and become so pure that they will never again feel the effects of the power of the adversary of truth. Were it possible for a person to attain to this degree of perfection in the flesh, he could not die, neither remain in a world where sin predominates. Sin has entered into the world, and death by sin. [Rom. 5:12] I think we shall more or less feel the effects of sin so long as we live, and finally have to pass the ordeals of death” Daniel H. Ludlow, *A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon* [1976], 2:248-49.

25 The Holy Ghost is a sanctifier. One of the primary assignments of this member of the Godhead is to burn dross and iniquity out of the repentant soul as though by fire. One who lives worthy of the guidance and cleansing influence of the Spirit will, in process of time, become sanctified. Sanctification is the process whereby one comes to hate the worldliness he once loved and love the holiness and righteousness he once hated. To be sanctified is not only to be free from sin but also to be free from the *effects* of sin, free from sinfulness itself, the very desire to sin. One who is sanctified comes to look upon sin with abhorrence.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millett, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987], 1:263.

26 **Alma 13:12-13**
Entering into God's Rest

The ancient prophets speak of "entering into God's rest"; what does it mean? To my mind, it means entering into the knowledge and the love of God, having faith in his purposes and in his plans, to such an extent that we know we are right, and that we are not hunting for something else, we are not disturbed by every wind of doctrine, or by the cunningness and craftiness of men who lie in wait to deceive. We know of the doctrine that is of God, and we do not ask any questions of anybody about it; they are welcome to their opinions, to their ideas and to their vagaries. The man who has reached that degree of faith in God that all doubt and fear have been cast from him, he has entered into "God's rest," and he need not fear the vagaries of men, nor the cunning and craftiness, by which they seek to deceive and mislead him from the truth. I pray that we may all enter into God's rest—rest from doubt, from fear, from apprehension of danger, rest from the religious turmoil of the world; from the cry that is going forth, here and there—lo, here is Christ; lo, there is Christ; lo, he is in the desert, come ye out to meet him. The man who has found God's rest will not be disturbed by these vagaries of men, for the Lord has told him, and does tell us: Go not out to seek them. Go not out to hunt them; for when Christ shall come, he will come with the army of heaven with him in the clouds of glory, and all eyes shall see him. We do not need to be hunting for Christ here or Christ there, or prophets here and prophets there. [Conference Report, Oct. 1909, 8]

27 **Alma 13:14-19**
Melchizedek

How great was the prophet Melchizedek?

"[Alma] proceeded to tell more about Melchizedek than is known anywhere else in scriptures....

"He was king over the land of Salem (Jeru-salem).

"His people had waxed strong in iniquity and abomination, had all gone astray....

"He exercised faith in spite of such opposition.

"He received the 'office of the high priesthood according to the holy order of God.'

"He preached repentance unto his people.

"He established peace and was therefore called the prince of peace.

"He reigned under his father.

"Alma noted that there were many prominent figures before and after Melchizedek, 'but none were greater...'

"Surely no greater tribute or more generous adulation could be mentioned that to be so much like the Son of God that one's name could be substituted for his in the title of the most powerful force in the universe—the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God"

Jeffrey R. Holland, *Christ and the New Covenant*, 175.

28 (Hebrew: Melekh=king, tzedek=righteousness)

From the Joseph Smith Translation we learn, and suppose Alma to have known, that Melchizedek was a man of faith who wrought righteousness and who even, as a child, "stopped the mouths of lions, and quenched the violence of fire." He was "approved of God" and was ordained a high priest after the order of the Son of God. Through the teaching of the gospel he obtained peace in Salem and thus merited the title Prince of Peace. He and his people then "wrought righteousness, and obtained heaven," meaning that they were caught up like Enoch and his people and obtained the promise that they would return with them during the millennial day. Thus he was also "called the king of heaven by his people, or, in other words, the King of peace" (See JST, Genesis 14:26-40.)

It was revealed to Joseph Smith that Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek (see D&C 84:14.) Depicting that event, Joseph Smith recounted: "Abraham says to Melchizedek, I believe all that thou hast taught me concerning the priesthood and the coming of the Son of Man; so Melchizedek ordained Abraham and sent him away.

Abraham rejoiced, saying, Now I have a priesthood." (*Teachings*, pp. 322-23.) Joseph Smith also learned by revelation that it was because Melchizedek was such a great high priest—that is, because he so closely emulated Christ—that the priesthood was named after him among the ancient Saints (see D&C 107:1-4). How appropriate that Alma should say of Melchizedek that "none were greater"! (Alma 13:19.)

From the Joseph Smith Translation we learn that Melchizedek was the keeper of God's storehouse and that God had appointed him to receive tithes for the poor. "Wherefore, Abram paid unto him tithes of all that he had, of all the riches which he possessed, which God had given him more than that which he had need" (JST, Genesis 14:37-39).

In these verses Alma establishes Melchizedek as a type for Christ, noting the following parallels: First, like Christ, he was a king. The very name of this great high priest—Melchizedek, "king of righteousness" or perhaps more correctly, "my king is righteousness"—affirms and testifies of the goodness and power of the coming Messiah. Righteousness is also a name-title of Christ (see Moses 7:45). As Melchizedek ruled his kingdom in righteousness, so Christ will eventually rule and reign upon this earth, doing so with the unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth, possessing an everlasting dominion without compulsory means (see D&C 121:46).

Second Melchizedek ruled over the city of Salem (a name which means "peace"). In like manner, Christ will reinstitute the glory of David's day when nought is known but peace among the Lord's people. Third, both Melchizedek and Christ were known as the "great high priest." In Old Testament times the primary duty of the priest was to offer sacrifice at the altar and to act as mediator between God and men. It was by virtue of the priestly functions that the nations of Israel were instructed in the doctrine of sin and its expiation, in forgiveness and worship. In short, the priest was the indispensable source of religious knowledge for the people, and the channel through which spiritual life was communicated." (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* 4:2439).

Fourth, both were men of "mighty faith" who taught "repentance" to their people. Of Melchizedek we read, his people wrought righteousness, and obtained heaven (JST, Genesis 14:34). And of course the same will be true of all who sustain Christ and his teachings in righteousness. Fifth, both bore the title Prince of Peace, being teachers of that gospel by which peace and joy come. Sixth, of Melchizedek we read "and he did reign under his father" as does Christ, who professes no authority save that of his Father (see John 5:30). Seventh, though there were many prophets before Melchizedek and many after him, Alma described the king of Salem by saying "none were greater." Thus this great prophet, priest, and king stood as a classic type of the Promised Messiah, of whom it is true not only that none were greater, but also that none have been as great.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987-1992], 3:101-103.

29 Alma 13:15 *Tithing*

A man who has not paid his tithing is unfit to be baptized for his dead.... It is our duty to pay our tithing. If a man has not faith enough to attend to these little things, he has not faith enough to save himself and his friends.

John Taylor; as quoted in Joseph Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974] 7:292-293.

30 Frequently we hear the expression "I can't afford to pay tithing." Persons who make such statements have not yet learned that they can't afford *not* to pay tithing....

The Lord does keep his promises. He truly opens the windows of heaven and pours out his blessings upon those who are faithful and who obey his commandments but it will be done in his own way. These blessings may come in a financial or temporal way or may be realized by a spiritual outpouring, bringing strength, peace, and comfort. His blessings may come in unusual and unexpected ways so that at the time we may not even recognize them as blessings; but the promises of the Lord will be kept.

Henry D. Taylor, *Ensign*, May 1974 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1974], 107-108.

- 31 A tithe is one-tenth of the wage earner's *full income*. A tithe is one-tenth of the professional man's *net income*. A tithe is one-tenth of the farmer's *net income*, and also one-tenth of the produce used by the farmer to sustain his family which is a just and equitable requirement, as others purchase out of their income such food as is needed to provide for their families. A tithe is one-tenth of net insurance income less premiums if tithing has been paid on the premiums.
Joseph L. Wirthlin, in Conference Report, Apr. 1953, 98; as quoted in Henry D. Taylor, *Ensign*, May 1974 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1974], 107; italics added.
- 32 Why should members worldwide, many of whom may not have enough for their daily needs, be encouraged to keep the Lord's law of tithing? As President Hinckley said in Cebu in the Philippine Islands, if members, "even living in poverty and misery,... will accept the gospel and live it, pay their tithes and offerings, even though those be meager,... they will have rice in their bowls and clothing on their backs and shelter over their heads. I do not see any other solution" ("Inspirational Thoughts," *Ensign*, Aug. 1997, 7).
Some may feel that they cannot afford to pay tithing, but the Lord has promised that He would prepare a way for us to keep all of His commandments (see 1 Nephi 3:7)...
We learn about tithing by paying it. Indeed, I believe it is possible to break out of poverty by having the faith to give back to the Lord part of what little we have.
James E. Faust, in Conference Report, Oct. 1998 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1998], 73-74.
- 33 Many years ago John Orth worked in a foundry in Australia, and in a terrible accident, hot molten lead splashed onto his face and body. He was administered to, and some of the vision was restored to his right eye, but he was completely blind in his left. Because he couldn't see well, he lost his job.... He was forced to go door-to-door seeking odd jobs and handouts to pay for food and rent.
One year he did not pay any tithing and went to talk to the branch president. The branch president understood the situation but asked John to make it a matter of prayer and fasting so that he could find a way to pay his tithing. John and his wife, Alice, fasted and prayed and determined that the only thing of value they owned was her engagement ring—a beautiful ring bought in happier times. After much anguish, they took the ring to a pawnbroker, where they learned it was worth enough to pay their tithing and some outstanding bills. That Sunday, John went to the branch president and paid his tithing. As he left the office, he happened to meet the mission president, who noticed his damaged eyes.
Brother Orth's son, now serving as a bishop in Adelaide, later wrote: "We believe that [the mission president] was an eye doctor, for he was commonly called President Dr. Rees. He spoke to Dad and was able to examine him and offer suggestions to help his eyesight. Dad followed his advice,... and in due course sight was restored—15 percent sight to his left eye and 95 percent sight to his right eye—and with the help of glasses he could see again." With his vision restored, John was never unemployed again; he redeemed the ring, which is now a family heirloom, and paid a full tithing for the rest of his life. The Lord knew John Orth, and He knew who could help him.
"President Dr. Rees" was my mother's father, and he probably never knew of the miracle that was wrought that day. Generations were blessed because a family decided they would pay their tithing regardless of the difficulty.
Sydney S. Reynolds, in Conference Report, Oct. 2003 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2003], 79-80.
- 34 I recall sitting in this historical Tabernacle back on October 1948 when ... Elder Matthew Cowley of the Council of the Twelve was speaking While serving as president of the New Zealand Mission he visited a good Maori sister who sincerely believed and observed the principle of tithing. Brother Cowley told of this experience in these words:
" ... When I visited that vicinity, to see this grand little woman, then in her eighties, and blind. She did not live in an organized branch, had no contact with the priesthood except as the missionaries visited there. We had no missionaries in those days. They were away at war.

"I went in and greeted her in the Maori fashion I reached forth my hand to shake hands with her, and I was going to rub noses with her and she said" 'Do not shake hands with me...'

"I said: "Oh, that is clean dirt on your hands. I am willing to shake hands with you. I am glad to. I want to.

"She said: 'Not yet.' Then she got on her hands and knees and crawled over to her little house.

At the corner of the house there was a spade. She lifted up that spade and crawled off in another direction, measuring the distance she went. She finally arrived at a spot and started digging down into the soil with that spade. It finally struck something hard. She took out the soil with her hands and lifted out a fruit jar. She opened that fruit jar and reached down in it, took something out and handed it to me, and it turned out to be New Zealand money. In American money it would have been equivalent to [about] one hundred dollars.

"She said: 'There is my tithing. Now I can shake hands with the priesthood of God.'

"I said: 'You do not owe that much tithing.'

"She said: "I know it. I do not owe it now, but I am paying some in advance, for I do not know when the priesthood of God will get around this way again."

Then after a brief pause and with considerable emotion Brother Cowley continued: "And then I leaned over and pressed my nose and forehead against hers, and the tears from my eyes ran down her cheeks..."

In Conference Report, Oct. 1948, 159-60; as quoted in Henry D. Taylor, *Ensign*, May 1974 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1974] 108.

35 What does it mean to obey the law of sacrifice? Nature's law demands us to do everything with self in view. The first law of mortal life, self-preservation, would claim the most luscious fruit, the most tender meat, the softest down on which to lie. Selfishness, the law of nature, would say, "I want the best; that is mine." But God said: "Take of the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks" (Deut. 12:6).

The best shall be given to God; the next you may have. Thus should God become the center of our very being.

With this thought in view, I thank my earthly father for the lesson he gave to two boys in a hayfield at a time when tithes were paid in kind. We had driven out to the field to get the tenth load of hay, and then over to a part of the meadow where we had taken the ninth load, where there was "wire grass" and "slough grass." As we started to load the hay, Father called out, "no, boys, drive over to the higher ground." There was timothy and redtop there. But one of the boys called back, (and it was I) "No, let us take the hay as it comes!"

"No, David, that is the *tenth* load, and the best is none too good for God."...

I found later in life, this very principle of the law of sacrifice. You cannot develop character without obeying that law.

David O. McKay, *Cherished Experiences from the Writings of President David O. McKay*, comp. by Clare Middlemiss [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1955], 19-20.

36 Alma 13:20

Wrest

[The Nephite] teachers and leaders had put into the Scriptures, by wresting them, otherwise by twisting and turning them, meanings that were not true.

George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4:206.

37 Alma 13:22-26

Reality of Angels

I am convinced that one of the profound themes of the Book of Mormon is the role and prevalence and central participation of angels in the gospel story...

One of the things that will become more important in our lives the longer we live is the reality of angels, their work and their ministry. I refer here not alone to the angel Moroni but also to those more personal ministering angels who

are with us and around us, empowered to help us and who do exactly that (see 3 Ne. 7:18; Moro. 7:29-32, 37; D&C 107:20)....

I believe we need to speak of and believe in and bear testimony of the ministry of angels more than we sometimes do. They constitute one of God's great methods of witnessing through the veil, and no document in all this world teaches that principle so clearly and so powerfully as does the Book of Mormon.

Jeffrey R Holland, "For a wise Purpose," *Ensign*, Jan. 1996, 16-17.

38 **Alma 13:28**

Not tempted above that which Ye can bear

Be sure you understand that God will not allow you to be tempted beyond your ability to resist. (See 1 Cor. 10:13.) He does not give you challenges that you cannot surmount. He will not ask more than you can do, but may ask right up to your limits so you can prove yourselves.

Joseph B. Wirthlin, *Ensign*, November 1989, 75.

39 The only power the adversary has is power we give him when we sin or break our covenants. And we have not been left to withstand the wiles of the adversary alone, for the power of Jesus Christ is stronger than the power of the devil. Hence we have the promise that Lucifer cannot influence us when we stay on the Lord's side of the line....(D&C 93:49; 87:8).

Very simply, our physical and spiritual safety lies in never even getting close to the line that separates light from dark, good from evil.... How quickly ought we to run for our lives—our eternal lives—when confronted with even the slightest hint of evil.

Sheri Dew, "Living on the Lord's Side of the Line," *BYU Speeches of the Year*, 21 Mar. 2000 [Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 2000], 2

40 President Brigham Young taught of the constant battle we wage against Satan and sin: "The men and women, who desire to obtain seats in the celestial kingdom, will find that they must battle [with the enemy of all righteousness] every day" (*Discourses of Brigham Young, sel. John A. Widtsoe [1954], 3920*). Each of us must actively choose to avoid and to resist temptation.

41 Often 1 Cor. 10:13 is quoted to suggest that God will somehow snatch us from any and all circumstances and not permit us to be tempted beyond our ability to withstand. Alma seems to be saying that we have a responsibility in this matter—a responsibility to earnestly strive through prayer and humility to avoid circumstances that may bring overpowering temptations.

Larry E. Dahl, *Studies in Scripture*, ed. By K. Jackson, 7:320

42 All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not. The devil has no power over us only as we permit him. The moment we revolt at anything which comes from God the devil takes power.

Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pp. 181, 187, 189

43 ... sin is intensely habit-forming and sometimes moves men to the tragic point of no return... As the transgressor moves deeper and deeper in his sin, and the error is entrenched more deeply and the will to change is weakened, it becomes increasingly near-hopeless, and he skids down and down until either he does not want to climb back or he has lost the power to do so.

Spencer W. Kimball, *Miracle of Forgiveness*, p. 117

- 44 Some transgressions are so powerful that it is unlikely that you will begin to overcome them without another's help. Seek that help. In time, with the strength that comes from continued use of agency to live truth, you will be healed through the Savior.

Richard G. Scott, *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, p. 62

- 45 [A letter to Gordon B. Hinckley which he shared in General Conference] "I am a 35-year-old male and am a convert to the Church of more than ten years. For most of my adult life I have been addicted to pornography. I am ashamed to admit this. My addiction is as real as that of an alcoholic or a drug addict.... I think it is ironic that those who support the business of pornography say that it is a matter of freedom of expression. I have no freedom. I have lost my free agency because I have been unable to overcome this. It is a trap for me, and I can't seem to get out of it. Please, please, please plead with the brethren of the Church to not only avoid but eliminate the sources of pornographic materials in their lives.... Pray for me and others in the Church who may be like me to have the courage and strength to overcome this terrible affliction."

Gordon B. Hinckley, *Ensign*, Nov. 1992, p. 51

- 46 Satan is still trying to take away our free agency by persuading us to voluntarily surrender our will to his... Some people are more susceptible to some addictions that other people.... One person has a taste for nicotine and is easily addicted to smoking. Another person cannot take an occasional drink without being propelled into alcoholism. Another person samples gambling and becomes a compulsive gambler.... We all seem to have susceptibilities to one disorder or another, but whatever our susceptibilities, we have the will and the power to control our thoughts and our actions.... A person who insists that he is not responsible for the exercise of his free agency because he was "born that way" is trying to ignore the outcome of the War in Heaven. We are responsible, and if we argue otherwise, our efforts become part of the propaganda effort of the adversary.

Dallin H. Oaks, *BYU Devotional and Fireside Speeches*, pp. 44-46

- 47 **Alma 13:29**

President Joseph F. Smith has testified:

"Reference is made to the spiritual rest and peace which are born from a settled conviction of the truth in the minds of men. We may thus enter into the rest of the Lord today, by coming to an understanding of the truths of the gospel. No people is more entitled to this rest—this peace of the spirit—than are member of the Church...

"... he will provide spiritual contentment, a rest which is incomparable with the physical rest that cometh after toil. All who seek have a right to, and may enter into, the rest of God, here upon the earth, from this time forth, now, today; and when earth-life is finished, they shall also enjoy his rest in heaven."

Gospel Doctrine, pp. 126-27

- 48 **Alma 13**

Conclusion

Having delivered one of the most doctrinally profound sermons in all of holy writ, having pointed toward the sacred promises which are available to those who seek the face of the Lord with single-mindedness, having spoken of the mysteries of the kingdom, Alma now comes back to the basics and focuses upon those matters which are foundational and fundamental to sainthood. It is noteworthy that Alma should suggest that the way to enter the rest of the Lord, here and hereafter, is to seek the Spirit and seek those precious gifts—faith, hope, and charity—which bring peace in this world and eternal glory in the world to come.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4 vol. [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987-1992], 3:107

49

“Faith in God—faith in Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world; faith in His Gospel as a guide through life; a faith that springs from the heart and is therefore genuine; a faith that moves to noble and God-like action; such a faith is an anchor to the soul, immovable—infinite!

“Such is the faith that inspired the Apostles of our Lord. Such, the faith that gave strength and peace even in martyrdom to the despised and persecuted early Christians! Such is the faith that opened the heavens to the boy prophet Joseph Smith. Such is the faith that is the uplifting power among the leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ today!

“All who have such faith, though they may be tossed about in a sin-torn, tempestuous world, have nevertheless the safest and most steadfast anchor of the soul. Pray for it; strive for it; there is no salvation without it.”

David O. McKay, *Pathways to Happiness*, [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1957], 79.