

3 Nephi 20:1*Pray Continually*

1 Prophets have long told us to pray humbly and frequently... Prayers can be offered even in silence. One can *think* a prayer, especially when words would interfere.

Russell M. Nelson, in Conference Report, Apr. 2003, 5: or *Ensign*, May 2003, 7.

2 Learn to pray. Pray often. Pray in your mind, in your heart. Pray on your knees... Prayer is *your* personal key to heaven. The lock is on your side of the veil [see Revelation 3:20]

Boyd K. Packer, in Conference Report, Oct. 1994, 76-77; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 59.

3 Nephi 20: 3-93 *Blessings of the Sacrament*

David O. McKay said that “no more sacred ordinance is administered in the Church of Christ than the administration of the sacrament.

CR, April 1946, p. 112.

4 The sacrament has beautiful symbolism. As we partake of the bread and water physically, it literally becomes a part of who we are. Symbolically through those emblems the Savior himself also becomes a part of our very being. “We partake of physical food that is, we partake of bread and water etc., to nourish the physical body. It is just as necessary that we partake of the emblems of the body and blood of our risen Lord to increase our spiritual strength.”

George Albert Smith, in CR, April 1908, 35.

5 It is plain that the sacrament is administered to commemorate the atonement of the Lord Jesus, as consummated in His agony and death; it is a testimony before God that we are mindful of His Son’s sacrifice made in our behalf; and that we still profess the name of Christ and are determined to strive to keep His commandments, in the hope that we may ever have His Spirit to be with us. Partaking of the sacrament worthily may be regarded therefore as a means of renewing our avowals before the Lord, of acknowledgment of mutual fellowship among the members, and of solemnly witnessing our claim and profession of membership in the Church of Jesus Christ. The sacrament has not been established as a specific means of securing remission of sins; nor for any other special blessing aside from that of a continuing endowment of the Holy Spirit, which, however, comprises all needful blessings. Were the sacrament ordained specifically for the remission of sins, it would not be forbidden to those who are in greatest need of forgiveness; yet participation in the ordinance is restricted to those whose consciences are void of serious offence, those, therefore, who are acceptable before the Lord, those indeed who are in as little need of special forgiveness as mortals can be.

James E. Talmage, *Article of Faith*, p. 175.

6 Any who may have thought it a small thing to partake of the sacrament should remember the Lord’s declaration that the foundation of a great work is laid by small things, for “out of small things proceedeth that which is great” (D&C 64:33). Out of the seemingly small act of consciously and reverently renewing our baptismal covenants comes a renewal of the blessings

of baptism by water and by the Spirit, that we may always have His Spirit to be with us. In this way all of us will be guided, and in this way all of us can be cleansed.”

Dallin H. Oaks, “Always Have His Spirit,” *Ensign*, November 1996, p. 61.

7 To those brothers and sisters who may have allowed themselves to become lax in this vital renewal of the covenants of the sacrament, I plead in words of the First Presidency that you “come back and feast at the table of the Lord, and taste again the sweet and satisfying fruits of fellowship with the saints” (“An Invitation to Come Back,” *Church News*, 22 Dec, 1985, 3). Let us qualify ourselves for our Savior’s promise that by partaking of the sacrament we will “be filled” (3 Nephi 20:8; see also 3 Nephi 18:9), which means that we will be ‘filled with the Spirit’ (3 Nephi 20:9). That Spirit—the Holy Ghost—is our comforter, our direction finder, our communicator, our interpreter, our witness, and our purifier—our infallible guide and sanctifier for our mortal journey toward eternal life.

Dallin H. Oaks, in Conference Report, Oct. 1996, 82; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 61.

8 Attendance at church each week provides the opportunity to partake of the sacrament, as the Lord has commanded us (see D&C 59:9). If we act with the right preparation and attitude, partaking of the sacrament renews the cleansing effect of our baptism and qualifies us for the promise that we will; always have His Spirit to be with us. A mission of that Spirit, the Holy Ghost, is to testify of the Father and the Son and to lead us into truth see John 14:26; 2 Nephi 31:18). Testimony and truth, which are essential to our personal conversion, are the choice harvest of this weekly renewing of our covenants. In the day-to-day decisions of my life and in my personal spiritual growth, I have enjoyed the fulfillment of that promise.

Dallin H. Oaks, in Conference , Apr. 2002, 38; or *Ensign*, May 2002, 34.

3 Nephi 20: 10-14

Gathering

9 This latter-day gathering, Christ testified, would be first spiritual and then temporal. Israel, he said, must return first to their covenants and then to their covenant lands.

Joseph McConkie, *Studies in Scriptures*, ed. by K. Jackson [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978], 8:184.

10 President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876-1972) explained: “The Lord gave... America, as an everlasting possession to Joseph, the son of Jacob. His posterity, when cleansed from sin, and when they come forth in the resurrection, shall inherit this part of the earth. This land shall be theirs forever”

Doctrines of Salvation, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954-56], 1:88.

11 We are to build up and establish Zion, gather the House of Israel, and redeem the nations of the earth. This people have this work to do, whether we live to see it or not. This is all in our hands...

It is obligatory upon us to see that the House of Israel have the Gospel preached to them; to do all that is in our power to gather them to the land of their fathers, and to gather up the fullness of the Gentiles before the Gospel can go with success to the Jews.

We are now gathering the children of Abraham who have come through the loins of Joseph and his sons, more especially through Ephraim, whose children are mixed among all the nations of the earth.

Brigham Young, *Discourses of Brigham Young, Sel. John A. Widtsoe* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954], 437.

12 3 Nephi 20:29 was spoken by the Savior in 34 A.D.; the Book of Mormon was published in 1830; the modern state of Israel was established in 1948.

Until June 5, 1967, the dominant theme of Jewish theology was the same as it had been for the last 1,897 years—wandering and exile. Since June 5, 1967, the dominant theme has been HOMECOMING. [June 5 was the date when the war broke out between Israel and the Arab states.]

Rabbi Richard L. Rubenstein (as quoted on the *Church News*, Mar. 9, 1968).

13 The gathering of Israel is first *spiritual* and second *temporal*. It is *spiritual* in that the lost sheep of Israel are first “restored to the true church and fold of God,” meaning that they come to a true knowledge of the God of Israel, accept the gospel which he has restored in latter-days, and join The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is *temporal* in that these converts are then “gathered home to the *lands of their inheritance*,” and... established in *all their land of promise*” (2 Nephi 9:2; 25:15-18; Jer. 16:14-21), meaning that the house of Joseph will be established in America, the house of Judah in Palestine, and that the Lost Tribes will come to Ephraim in America to receive their blessings in due course. (D&C 133).

Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 305-6; emphasis in original.

14 Every person who embraces the gospel becomes of the House of Israel. In other words, they become members of the chosen lineage, or Abraham’s children through Isaac and Jacob unto whom the promises were made. The great majority of those who become members of the Church are literal descendants of Abraham through Ephraim, son of Joseph. Those who are not literal descendants of Abraham and Israel must become such, and when they are baptized and confirmed they are grafted into the tree and are entitled to all the rights and privileges as heirs. President Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:244-46.

15 According to the dynamics of the grand covenant enterprise, the Lord scatters and gathers His people for the ultimate blessing of mankind. The scattering process may serve to protect (as with Lehi’s emigrating colony), correct (because of iniquity or wickedness), or connect (as with the modern-day dispersal of missionaries throughout the world to spread the gospel message among the honest-in-heart).

The gathering process is much the same: to protect the Saints by bringing them to holy places of refuge within the stakes of Zion where houses of the Lord abound (sacred temples, as well as

chapels and righteous homes), to correct the Saints in an ongoing way through inspired instruction by the prophets of God, and to connect the Saints one with another and with the Holy Spirit.

Pinegar & Allen, *Teachings and Commentary of Book of the Mormon*, p. 458

16 When the Lord is speaking of his covenants, he is not confining them to the descendants of Lehi, but applies them to all the house of Israel. “And verily, verily, I say unto you, that when they [the covenants as recorded by Isaiah] shall be fulfilled then is the fulfilling of the covenant which the Father hath made unto his people, O house of Israel. And then shall the remnants, which shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth, be gathered in from the east and from the west, and from the south and from the north; and they shall be brought to the knowledge of the Lord their God, who hath redeemed them. And the Father hath commanded me that I should give unto you this land, for your inheritance.” [3 Nephi 20:15-18.]

Much of our misunderstanding, however, seems to come out of the interpretation placed upon the succeeding verses: “And I say unto you, that if the Gentiles do not repent after the blessing which they shall receive, after they have scattered my people—Then shall ye, who a remnant of the house of Jacob, go forth among them; and ye shall be in the midst of them who shall be many; and ye shall be among them as a lion among the beasts of the forest, and as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he goeth through both treadeth down and teareth in pieces and none can deliver. Thy hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off. And I will gather my people together as a man gathereth his sheaves into the floor.” [3 Nephi 20: 15-18.]

Are we justified in applying this merely to the Lamanites and saying that they are to go forth as a young lion pouring out vengeance upon the gentiles? Also does the phrase, “Ye who are a remnant of the house of Jacob,” in verse 16, have reference just to the Lamanites? The verses which follow indicate that it has reference to the remnants of Israel, which had been scattered in all lands. To apply it to the Lamanites in face of the entire theme of this discourse, in my judgment, narrows it too greatly. Then again, this prophecy was also given to Micah and has reference to “many people,” not merely to the gentiles on this land.

Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2:249-50.

17 Now, the gathering of Israel consists of joining the true church and their coming to a knowledge of the true God... Any person, therefore, who has accepted the restored gospel, and who now seeks to worship the Lord in his own tongue and with the Saints in the nations where he lives, has complied with the law of the gathering of Israel and is heir to all of the blessings promised the Saints in these last days.

The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball, ed. Edward L. Kimball [1982]. 439.

18 In the early days of the Church, leaders encouraged converts to join with the Saints in central places, such as Ohio, Missouri, Illinois, and Utah. Today the Saints are instructed to build up the Church where they live. President Dieter R. Uchdorf of the First Presidency explained:

“In our day, the Lord has seen fit to provide the blessings of the gospel, including an increased number of temples, in many parts of the world. Therefore, we wish to reiterate the long-standing counsel to members of the Church to remain in their homelands rather than immigrate to the United States...

“As members throughout the world remain in their homelands, working to build the Church in their native countries, great blessings will come to them personally and to the Church collectively.”

Dieter F. Uchdorf, in Conference Report, Oct. 2005, 106; or *Ensign*, Nov. 2005, 102.

19 Our present gathering is primarily spiritual, not geographic. Christ declared that in the latter-days He would “establish [His] church, “establish [His] people,” and “establish... among them [His] Zion” (3 Nephi 21:22; 3 Nephi 20:21; 3 Nephi 21:1). As He establishes His Church in our day, people can be taught the gospel and be “brought to the knowledge of the Lord their God” (3 Nephi 20:13) without leaving their homes. In contrast to the pronouncement during the early days of the restored Church, our leaders have decreed that now the gathering should take place within each land and among every tongue. Our need to be physically near large numbers of Saints is less than it was a century ago because Church magazines and satellite transmissions bridge distance and time, creating a sense of oneness throughout the entire Church. All have access to the same keys, ordinances, doctrine, and spiritual gifts.

Elder Douglas L. Callister, “Book of Mormon Principles: The Gathering of the Lord’s Faithful,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2004, 59.

3 Nephi 20: 15-20

Warning

20 If the gentiles on this land reject the word of God and conspire to overthrow liberty and the Constitution, then their doom is fixed, and they “shall be cut off from among my people who are of the covenant. (1 Nephi 14:6; 3 Nephi 21:11; 14, 21; D&C 84; 114-115, 117.)

Ezra Taft Benson, *God—Family—Country*, p.345.

21 This is a sober warning, a warning directed fairly specifically to the Gentiles in America, including the members of the Church. At that point in time when pride, deceit, hypocrisy, priestcraft, whoredoms, secret abomination and murder proliferate in America—and to some degree even among the Latter-day Saints then the Lord’s judgments will be poured out upon the land. That the Saints will be involved in the abominations of the land is frighteningly evident in the Savior’s careful use language. He states that if “the Gentiles will repent and return unto me, saith the Father, behold they shall be numbered among my people, O house of Israel” (verse 13). One cannot return to a place where he has not been; this seems to be a reference to a return to the faith. In addition, the Master warns that those who sin against the light “shall be as salt that hath lost its savor” (verse 15, italic added). A modern revelation specifies clearly that it is only those who have received the covenant gospel who can become the salt of the earth (D&C 101:39-40). Perhaps this is what the Lord meant when he spoke through Joseph Smith in 1837: “Behold, vengeance cometh speedily upon the inhabitants of the earth, a day of wrath, a day of burning, a

day of desolation, of weeping, of mourning, and of lamentation; and as a whirlwind it shall come upon all the face of the earth, saith the Lord. And upon my house shall it begin, and from my house shall it go forth, saith the Lord; first among those among you, saith the Lord, who have professed to know my name and have not known me, and have blasphemed against me in the midst of my house, saith the Lord.” (D&C 112:24-26, italics added.) “God will have a humble people,” President Ezra Taft Benson warned. “Either we can choose to be humble or we can be compelled to be humble. (CR, April 1989, p.6).

Millet & McConkie, *Book of Mormon Commentary*, Vol.4, p. 110.

3 Nephi 20: 21-22

- 22 The building up of Zion is a cause that has interested the people of God in every age; it is a theme upon which prophets, priests, and kings have dwelt with peculiar delight;... it is left for us to see, participate in and help to roll forward the Latter-day glory, “the dispensation of the fullness of times...” A work that is destined to bring about the destruction of the powers of darkness, the renovation of the earth, the glory of God, and the salvation of the human family. Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:609-10.

3 Nephi 20: 22

New Jerusalem

- 23 The New Jerusalem is a center place, a center city which shall be built up and established as the headquarters of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Its location will be Independence, Jackson County, Missouri (see D&C 57:3). “We believe... that Zion (the New Jerusalem will be built upon the American continent” (Articles of Faith 1:10). “Zion, the New Jerusalem, on American soil! And we hasten to add, so also shall be Zions in all the lands and New Jerusalems in the mountains of the Lord in all the earth. But the American Zion shall be the capital city, the source whence the law shall go forth to govern all the earth. It shall be the city of the Great King. His throne shall be there, and from there he shall reign gloriously over all the earth.

Bruce R. McConkie, *Millennial Messiah*, pp. 301-2.

- 24 That the remnants of Joseph, found among the descendants of Lehi, will have part in this great work is certainly consistent, and the great work of this restoration, the building of the temple and the City of Zion, or New Jerusalem, will fall to the lot of the descendants of Joseph, but it is Ephraim who will stand at the head and direct the work.

Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 2: 251.

Old Jerusalem

- 25 Judah will gather to old Jerusalem in due course... The present assembling of people of Jewish ancestry into the Palestinian nation of Israel is not the scriptural gathering of Israel or of Judah. It may be prelude thereto, and some of the people so assembled may in due course be gathered into the true church.... And they may then assist in building the temple that is destined to grace Jerusalem’s soil.

Bruce R. McConkie, *New Witness for the Articles of Faith*, 519

3 Nephi 20:25-27*Becoming Children of the Covenant*

26 Every person who embraces the gospel becomes of the House of Israel... The great majority of those who become members of the Church are literal descendants of Abraham through Ephraim, son of Joseph. Those who are not literal descendants of Abraham and Israel must become such, and when they are baptized and confirmed they are grafted into the tree and are entitled to all the rights and privileges as heirs.

President Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3:244-46.

27 The gospel covenant, the new and everlasting covenant, has been in existence from the days of Adam. Its rights and privileges and responsibilities continued from Adam through the antediluvian patriarchs-Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, and Noah. From Noah the blessings of the gospel continued-albeit through periods of apostasy and restoration-through ten generations until the days of Abraham. God renewed his covenant, the gospel covenant, with Abraham. Because Abraham was a restorer; because he was a dispensation head; because more scriptural information regarding the terms and conditions of the covenant are given on God's dealings with Abraham than elsewhere in holy writ; and because Abraham received the covenant and lived worthy of its consummate privileges, even exaltation and godhood-because of these things we have come to call the covenant which God makes with his people the Abrahamic covenant. In that covenant God promises Abraham four things: (1) the gospel (2) the priesthood and its ministry; (3) eternal life and the continuation of the family unit; and (4) a land of inheritance.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols. 4:143.

28 The covenant that the Lord first made with Abraham and reaffirmed with Isaac and Jacob is of transcendent significance...

We are also children of the covenant. We have received, as did they of old, the holy priesthood and the everlasting gospel. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are our ancestors. We are of Israel. We have the right to receive the gospel, blessings of the priesthood, and eternal life. Nations of the earth will be blessed by our efforts and by the labors of our posterity. The literal seed of Abraham and those who are gathered into his family by adoption receive these promised blessings—predicated upon acceptance of the Lord and obedience to his commandments.

Russell M. Nelson, *Conference Report*, Apr. 1995, 42-43; or *Ensign*, May 1995, 33.

3 Nephi 20: 27-28

29 But in 1830, they were still calling the United States "that great and foolish American experiment." Europe didn't even give us the status of a nation... Chicago was known as little Ft. Dearborn, way out on the western frontier, with sixty-five inhabitants, most of them military men who slept with their rifles within reach for fear the savage Indians would scalp them in their sleep. We had only three miles of steam railway. We were so poor as a nation that the president and his cabinet had to borrow on their personal finances to pay the cost of government in the year of 1830...[It was not until] 1917 before we stepped into first place as [the wealthiest] nation

of the earth. The statement that it was “a land and choice above all other lands” sounded fantastic in 1830. Today we know it is absolutely true.

Jack West (as quoted in *Book of Mormon Prophecies*, Warner, pp. 87-88.

3 Nephi 20: 29-31

Judah returns to Jerusalem

30 Judah must return, Jerusalem be rebuilt, and the temple, and water come out from under the temple, and the waters of the Dead Sea be healed. It will take some time to rebuild the walls of the city and the temple, &c.; and all this must be done before the Son of Man will make His appearance.

History of the Church, 5:337.

31 These verses pertain to the ultimate gathering of the Jews, who are also the Lord’s covenant people, a fathering, which shall not take place on a grand scale until the Savior’s second coming (see Zechariah 12:9-10; Zechariah 13:6; D&C 45: 58-53). “When the Savior visits Jerusalem,” President Brigham Young observed, “and the Jews look upon him, and see the wounds in his hands and in his side and in his feet, they will then know that they have persecuted and put death the true Messiah, and then they will knowledge him, but not until then. They have confounded his first and second coming, expecting his first coming to be as a mighty prince instead of as a servant. They will go back by and by to Jerusalem and own their Lord and Master.” (JD 11:279.)

“The Jews “shall begin to believe in Christ” (2 Nephi 30:7) before he comes the second time. Some of them will accept the gospel and forsake the traditions of their fathers; a few will find Jesus the fulfillment of their ancient Messianic hopes; but their nation as a whole, their people as the distinct body that they now are in all nations, the Jews as a unit shall not, at that time, accept the world of truth. But a beginning will be made; a foundation will be laid; and then Christ will come and usher in the millennial year of his redeemed.” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Millennial Messiah*, pp. 228-29.) As to the gathering of the Jews to the land of Israel since the end of the nineteenth century, Elder McConkie has written, “Judah will gather to old Jerusalem in due course; of this, there is no doubt. But this gathering will consist of accepting Christ, joining the Church, and receiving anew the Abrahamic covenant as it is administered in holy places. The present assembling of people of Jewish ancestry into the Palestinian nation of Israel is not the scriptural gathering of Israel or of Judah. It may be prelude thereto, and some of the people so assembled may in due course be gathered into the true church and kingdom of God on earth, and they may then assist in building the temple that is destined to grace Jerusalem’s soil. But a political gathering is not a spiritual gathering, and the Lord’s kingdom is not of this world.” (*New Witness*, pp. 520-21 see also pp. 511, 564-65; *Millennial Messiah*, p. 229)

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, 4 vols., 4:144.

3 Nephi 20:29-33*Jews believe and gathered*

32 When the Savior visits (Old) Jerusalem, and the Jews look upon him, and see the wounds in his hands and in his side and in his feet, they will then know that they have persecuted and put to death the true Messiah and then they will acknowledge him, but not till then.

Brigham Young, *Discourses*, 122.

33 As all the world knows, Many Jews are now gathering to Palestine, where they have their own nation and way of worship, all without reference to a belief in Christ or an acceptance of the laws and ordinances of his everlasting gospel. Is this the latter-day gathering of the Jews of which the scriptures speak? No! It is not; let there be no misunderstanding in any discerning mind on this point. This gathering of the Jews to their homeland, and their organization into a nation and a kingdom, is not the gathering promised by the prophets. It does not fulfill the ancient promises. Those who have thus assembled have not gathered into the true Church and fold of their ancient Messiah.

Bruce R. McConkie, *Millennial Messiah*, [1982], 229.

3 Nephi 20: 32*Watchmen lift up their voice*

34 When the day of the Gentiles has been fulfilled, that is, when the gospel will be taken from them because of their iniquities, the Savior will remember the covenant he made with those of Judah to return them to their ancient covenant land. Of this yet future day, he said, “The fulness of my gospel shall be preached unto them; and they shall believe in me, that I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and shall pray unto the Father in my name.” After their conversion to Christ, after that time when their “watchmen “ come to see “eye to eye” with their Savior, “then will the Father gather them together again, and give unto them Jerusalem for the land of their inheritance” (3 Nephi 20: 29-33).

Joseph F. McConkie, *Studies in Scripture*, ed., Kent Jackson [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988], 8:189-190.

35 As all the world knows, many Jews are now gathering to Palestine, where they have their own nation and way of worship, all without reference to a belief in Christ or an acceptance to a belief in Christ or an acceptance of the laws and ordinances of his everlasting gospel. Is this the latter-day gathering of the Jews which the scriptures speak? No! It is not... It does not fulfill the ancient promises. Those who have thus assembled have not gathered into the true Church and fold of the ancient Messiah. They have not received again the saving truths...

This gathering of the unconverted to Palestine—shall we not call it a political gathering... or shall we not call it a preliminary gathering brought to pass in the wisdom of him who once was their God? –this gathering, of those whose eyes are yet dimmed by scales of darkness and who have not yet become the delightful people it is their destiny to be, is nonetheless part of the divine plan.

Bruce R. McConkie, *The Millennial Messiah* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982], 229.

3 Nephi 20:35*Make Bare His Arm*

36 In ancient times, men prepared for battle by throwing their cloak away from the shoulder of their fighting arm (Ps. 74:11). At the second coming of Christ, God will make bare his arm when he shows forth his power for all to see (D&C 133:2-3).

Donald W. Parry, Jay A. Parry, Tina M. Peterson, *Understanding Isaiah* [1998], 466.

37 Now my brethren, “these are [your] days” (Helaman 7:9) in the history of the Church. Mark well what kind of days they will be, days when, with special visibility, the Lord will “make bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations” (D&C 133:3). God will also “hasten” His work (D&C 88:73). He will also “shorten” the last days “for the elect’s sake” (Matthew 24:22); hence, there will be a compression of events (see Joseph Smith—Matthew 1:20). Furthermore, “all things shall be in commotion” (D&C 88:91). Only those in the process of becoming the men and women of Christ will be able to keep their spiritual balance.

Neal A. Maxwell, *Conference Report*, Apr. 1992, 57; or *Ensign*, May 1992, 39.

3 Nephi 20: 36-38*“Put on thy strength” “Shake Thyself from the Dust”*

38 The first half of the verse is addressed to the Saints of the latter days who will be gathering to America. What does the Lord mean when he says to “put on thy strength”? Joseph Smith said: “He [the Lord] had reference to those whom God should call in the last days, who should hold the power of priesthood to bring again Zion, and the redemption of Israel; and to put on her strength is to put on the authority of the priesthood, which she, Zion, has a right to by lineage; also to return to that power, which she had lost” (D&C 113:8; emphasis added).

The Lord also instructs Jerusalem to put on her “beautiful garments.” This no doubt refers to the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the beautifying of all her suburbs. At the present time the fulfillment of this prediction has almost become an obsession with the Jews. Even though they have been in a state of virtual war or siege ever since Israel became a nation in 1948, the Jews have spent great sums of money and tremendous energy rebuilding Jerusalem. The buildings are constructed out of “Jerusalem stone,” which is white limestone with a pink or beige hue. It is becoming one of the most beautiful cities in the world. However, in this verse the Lord is referring to a yet future time when it will have become sanctified following the great battle of Armageddon and after the sudden appearance of the Savior. It is in that day that it will indeed be a “holy city,” and the Lord declares that “henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.” Those sublime circumstances are far from the situation today. There are many people now treading the streets of that famous city (including Jews, Arabs, and Christians) who live unclean lives and violate the commandments of God continually. These are the uncircumcised of heart whom the Lord has declared he will one day cleanse from the city of Jerusalem in order that it might be prepared for the coming Messiah, who will no longer permit the uncircumcised to pollute its sacred precincts.

W. Cleon Skousen, *Isiah Speaks to Modern Times* [Salt Lake City: Ensign Publishing, 1984], 643-644.

39 We have already seen that Jesus put chapter 52 of Isaiah in a millennial context. In it is found the cry: “Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean.” In the day of which we speak there will be none who are unclean in the telestial sense of the word, for the wicked will be destroyed by the brightness of His coming. And there will be none who are uncircumcised, as it were, for all who seek the blessings of the Holy City will be in harmony with the plans and purposes of Him whose city it is.
Bruce RT. McConkie, *Millennial Messiah*, 315.

40 The... Orientals sitting on the ground with their feet drawn under them, gradually gathering dust on their garments, and rising occasionally to shake it off, and then resuming their seats. This, however, is only a partial explanation of the allusions of the text. The “dust” referred to may be either that in which Jerusalem had been sitting, or that which she had put upon her head. In either case the idea of mourning would be represented. The mourner is exhorted to arise from the dust and take a higher position; not to sit down again in the dust. The language seems to embrace the idea of a throne, a high seat.
James M. Freeman, *Manners and Customs of the Bible* [Plainfield, New Jersey: Logos International, 1972], 273-274.

3 Nephi 20: 40

41 *Beautiful upon the Mountains... Him that Publisheth Peace*

Ultimately it is Christ who is beautiful upon the mountain. And it is His merciful promise of “peace in this world.”...

The search for peace is one of the ultimate quests of the human soul. We all have highs and lows, but such times come and they usually always go. Kind neighbors assist. Beautiful sunshine brings encouragement. A good night’s sleep usually works wonders. But there are times in all of our lives when deep sorrow or suffering or fear or loneliness make us cry out for peace which only God Himself can bring. These are times of piercing spiritual hunger when even the dearest friend cannot fully come to our aid.

Perhaps you know... courageous people who are carrying heavy burdens and feeling private pain, who are walking through the dark valleys of this world’s tribulation. Some may be desperately worried about a husband or a wife or a child, worried about their health or their happiness or their faithfulness in keeping the commandments. Some are living with physical pain, or emotional pain, or disabilities that come with age. Some are troubled as to how to make ends meet financially—and some ache with the private loneliness of an empty house or an empty room or simply empty arms...

They are tired in brain and body and heart, they wonder if they can get through another week or another day or sometimes just another hour... We declare to all the world that for real; and abiding peace to come, we must strive to be more like that exemplary Son of God...

In seeking true peace some of us need to improve what has to be improved, confess what needs to be confessed, forgive what has to be forgiven, and to forget what should be forgotten in order that serenity can come to us...

If one of you has made a mistake, even a serious mistake, but you have done all you can according to the teachings of the Lord and the governance of the Church to confess it and feel sorrow for it and set it as right as can be, then trust in God, walk into His light, and leave those ashes behind you...

Closely related to our own obligation to repent is the generosity of letting others do the same—we are to forgive even as we are forgiven. In this we participate in the very essence of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Surely the most majestic moment of that fateful Friday, when nature convulsed and the veil of the temple was rent, was that unspeakably merciful moment when Christ said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). As our advocate with the Father, He is still making that same plea today—in your behalf and in mine...

It is one of those ironies of godhood that in order to find peace, the offended as well as the offender must engage the principle of forgiveness... Life has its moments when uninterrupted peace may seem to elude us for a season. We may wonder why there are such times in life, particularly when we may be trying harder than we have ever tried in live worthy of God’s blessings and obtain His help. When problems or sorrows or sadness come and they *don’t* seem to be our fault, what are we to make o their unwelcome appearance?

With time and perspective we recognize that such problems in life do come for a purpose, if only to allow the one who faces such despair to be convinced that he really does need divine strength beyond himself, that she really does need the offer of heaven’s hand...

Praying for peace, pleading for peace, seeking peace in any way that would not compromise union, Abraham Lincoln said in those dark, dark days of his First Inaugural, “Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory,” he said, “will yet swell... when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.”

The better angels of our nature. That is much of what the Church and general conference and the gospel of Jesus Christ are about. The appeal today and tomorrow and forever... to seek peace and always be believing.

Jeffrey R. Holland, *Ensign*, Nov. 1996 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1996], 82-84.

42 The word *peace* appears frequently in scripture and has many meanings. In classical Greek the word refers to cessation, discontinuance, or absence of hostilities between rival forces. This definition is the antithesis of war and strife. The New Testament, however, has given a far wider range of meaning. This is partly due to the influence of the Hebrew word for peace, which is far more comprehensive of meaning. It was commonly used as a form of greeting when persons met or parted: “May peace be with you” (see Mark 5:34 and John 20:19-21)...

The peace for which the world longs is a time of suspended hostilities; but men do not realize that peace is a state of existence that comes to man only upon the terms and conditions set by God, and in no other way....

Peace can come to an individual only by an unconditional surrender—surrender to him who is the Prince of Peace... One may live in beautiful and peaceful surroundings but, because of inner dissension and discord, be in a state of constant turmoil. On the other hand, one may be in

the midst of utter destruction and the bloodshed of war and yet have the serenity of unspeakable peace...

This peace shelters us from the worldly turmoil. The knowledge that God lives, that we are his children, and that he loves us soothes the troubled heart.

Howard W. Hunter, *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter*, ed. Clyde J. Williams [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 2002], 17-72.

3 Nephi 20:41

43 *Be clean... Vessels of the Lord*

Let me tell you what that phrase “bear the vessels of the Lord” means. Anciently it had at least two meanings, both related to the work of the priesthood.

The first refers to the recovery and return to Jerusalem of various temple implements that had been carried into Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. In physically handling the return of these items, the Lord reminded those early brethren of the sanctity of anything related to the temple. Therefore as they carried back to their homeland these various bowls, basins, cups, and other vessels, they themselves were to be as clean as the ceremonial instruments they bore.

The second meaning is related to the first. Similar bowls and implements were used for ritual purification in the home. The Apostle Paul, writing to his young friend Timothy, said of these, “In a great house there are... vessels of gold and... silver... of wood and of earth”—these means of washing and cleansing were common in the time of the Savior. But Paul goes on to say, “If a man... purge himself [of unworthiness], *he shall be* a vessel... sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.” Therefore, Paul says, “Flee... youthful lusts:... follow righteousness... call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

In both of these biblical accounts the message is that as priesthood bearers, not only are we to *handle* sacred vessels and emblems of God’s power—think of preparing, blessing, and passing the sacrament, for example—but we are also to *be* a sanctified instrument. Partly because of what we are to *do* but more importantly because of what we are to *be*, the prophets and apostles tell us to “flee... youthful lusts” and “call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” They tell us to be clean.

Jeffrey R. Holland, *Ensign*, Oct. 2000 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2000], 39.

44 According to a 1997 nationwide survey, divorce is 32 percent more likely among those who engaged in premarital sex than it is among the general population. And almost three times as many separated or divorced Americans have committed adultery, compared to the general population. Further, 82 percent of adults who rate their marriage as “very strong” (9 or 10 on a 10 point scale) did not engage in premarital sex. This should not surprise us. Immorality is a breach of integrity of the highest order. On the other hand, those who have demonstrated sexual purity are also likely to have cultivated other moral virtues that contribute to the success of any relationship, particularly marriage...

Both experience and divine wisdom dictate that moral virtue and cleanliness pave the way that leads to strength of character, peace of mind and heart, and happiness in life. There is no

question that the way of safety and the road to a sense of genuine fulfillment lie in sexual abstinence before marriage and fidelity following marriage.

It has been my privilege on various occasions to converse with five presidents of the United States. At the conclusion of each such occasion, I have reflected on the rewarding experience of standing with confidence in the presence of the acknowledged leader of the free world. And then I have thought, what a wonderful thing, what a marvelous thing it would be to stand with confidence—unafraid and unashamed and unembarrassed—in the presence of God. This is the promise held out to every virtuous man and woman....

Personal virtue is worth more than any salary, any bonus, any position or degree of prominence.

Gordon B. Hinckley, *Standing for Something* [New York: Times Books, 2000], 31, 34, 43-44.

45 Consequently, if we are “raising the bar” for your sons to serve as missionaries, that means we are also “raising the bar” for you. If we expect more of them, that means we expect more of you and your wife as well. Remember, Helaman’s 2000 stripling warriors were faithful because “they had been taught to keep the commandments of God and to walk uprightly before him” (Alma 53:21) and that instruction came in their homes.

Some fathers don’t think they have the right to ask worthiness questions of their children. They think that is the purview of the bishop alone. Fathers, not only do you have the right to know the worthiness of your children, you have the responsibility. It is your duty to know how your children are doing with regards to their spiritual well-being and progression. You need to monitor carefully the issues and concerns they share with you. Ask specific questions of your children regarding their worthiness and refuse to settle for anything less than specific answers.

Too often our bishops have to instruct youth to talk to their parents about problems they are having. That procedure should actually flow the other direction. Parents should be so intimately aware of what is going on in their children’s lives that they know about the problems before the bishop does. They should be counseling with their children and going with them to their bishops if that becomes necessary for complete repentance. As divinely appointed judges in Israel, the bishop and stake president determine worthiness and resolve concerns on behalf of the Church; but, fathers, you have an eternal responsibility for the spiritual welfare of your children. Please assume your rightful place as counselor, adviser, and priesthood leader, in preparing your sons to bear the Melchizedek Priesthood and to serve as missionaries.

Russell M Ballard, *Ensign*, Nov. 2002 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2002], 48.

46 While the power of the priesthood is unlimited, our individual power in the priesthood is limited by our degree of righteousness or purity.

Just as clean wires, properly connected, are required to carry electrical power, so clean hands and pure hearts are required to carry priesthood power. Filth and grime slow or prevent the flow of electrical power. Unclean thoughts and actions interfere with individual priesthood power. When we are humble, clean, and pure of hand, heart, and mind, nothing righteous is impossible. An ancient Oriental saying declares, “If a man lives a pure life, nothing can destroy him.”...

There is no individual power in the priesthood outside of individual purity... Since there is nothing Satan can do about the power *of* the priesthood, he concentrates his energy on trying to limit our individual power *in* the priesthood by attempting to dirty our hands, hearts, and minds through abuse, anger, neglect, pornography, selfishness, or any other evil he can entice us to think or do. He knows if he can sufficiently soil us individually, he can to that degree, keep us from the purity needed to properly exercise the priesthood and thus bring more light, life, and love to this earth and all the inhabitants thereof—past, present, and future.

John H. Groberg, *Ensign*, May 2001 [Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2001], 43-44.

3 Nephi 20: 42

Go Before You... Be Your Rearward

- 47 The Eastern shepherd never drives his sheep as does the Western shepherd. He always leads them, often going before them... This does *not* mean that the shepherd is *always* in front of his sheep. Although he may be usually in that position when traveling, he often walks by their side, and sometimes follows behind, especially if the flock is headed for the fold in the evening. From the rear he can gather any stragglers, and protect such from a sly attack from a wild animal. If the flock is a large one, the shepherd will be in the front, and a helper will follow behind. Isaiah speaks of the omnipresent Lord in a double relationship to His people: “For ye shall not go out in haste, nor go by flight: for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rearward [rear guard]” (Isa. 52:12). (See *Latter-day Commentary on the New Testament*, Pinegar, Bassett, Earl, 241-46.)

Fred H. Wight, *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1953], 157.

- 48 When Israel left Egypt, she did so in *haste* and in *flight* (ex. 12:39; Deut. 16:3). When her people now go forth in the gathering to Zion, leaving Babylon, they will do so in peace and safely, with neither haste nor flight (D&C 133:14-5)....

God will lead those who return to Zion and will also protect them in the rear. The Hebrew makes it clear that Jehovah will lead them and the Father will come behind (Isa. 58:8; D&C 49:27).

Donald W. Parry, Jay A. Parry, and Tina M. Peterson, *Understanding Isaiah* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1998], 467.

3 Nephi 20: 43-45

- 49 *My Servant*

While these verses almost universally accepted as a prophecy of Christ, the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants definitely show it to be a future event. When the Savior visited the Nephites in AD 34 after his ministry and resurrection, he quoted these verses along with others as being fulfilled when the covenant of the father with the house of Israel was to be fulfilled. If they had already been fulfilled, there would have been no reason for him to quote them. He then spoke of the sign which was to be given to the Lamanites when these things were about to take place. The overall sign was the Book of Mormon coming forth from the Gentiles

to the Lamanites in America (3 Ne. 21:1-9). He speaks of the servant who will bring forth this work:

“But behold, the life of my servant shall be in my hands; therefore they shall not hurt him, although he shall be marred because of them. Yet I will heal him, for I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil” (3 Nephi 21:10).

The Savior’s comments will be recognized as a paraphrase of Isaiah 52:13-14. The marring of this servant spoken of by Isaiah is shown in the Doctrine and Covenants to be the loss of the first 116 pages of manuscript of the translation of the Book of Mormon. After revealing to Joseph Smith the designs of those wicked men who had obtained the 116 pages he tells the Prophet to translate what we know today as the Small Plates of Nephi. This will confound those who had altered the first 116 pages. He then states: “I will not suffer that they shall destroy my work; yea, I will show unto them that my wisdom is greater than the cunning of the devil” (D&C 10:43). You will note that these are the exact words of 3 Nephi 21:10 spoken by the Savior to the Nephites in AD 34 after his resurrection when he was talking about the great and marvelous work (the Book of Mormon) to come forth. Therefore, the Savior himself, who had already been marred while on earth, identifies the servant spoken of in Isaiah 52: 13-15 as a man to bring forth the Book of Mormon in the latter days. This can be none other than Joseph Smith. This interpretation is not to deny that Christ did fulfill this prophecy, but we must acknowledge that this prophecy is dual. It foretells the marring of Joseph Smith as well as his role in bringing forth the Book of Mormon.

Monte S. Nyman, *Isaiah: Prophecies of the Resurrection* [Salt Lake City: Millennial Press, 1998], 18-19.

50 Many people assume that the servant promised in the last three verses of Isaiah 52 is the same servant described throughout Isaiah 53. If so, these verses describe Christ, his great works, and the persecutions and suffering he endured (see Mosiah 14; compare D&C 19:10-13). However, in the Book of Mormon adaptations of Isaiah 52 and 53, neither Abinadi nor Christ combine Isaiah 52:13-15 with chapter 53. In fact, Christ includes this prophecy of a servant with other promises of the last days...

Unless the Savior is speaking about himself in the last days, he must have had another person in mind as the servant of the last days. Particularly as the Savior comments upon these verses later in 3 Nephi 21: 7-11, it appears obvious that he is not talking about himself, but about his servant. This servant will take God’s word to the Gentiles, and those who will not accept the word will be separated from God’s covenant people (3 Ne. 21:11). Although some people will attempt to harm servant, Jesus promises that he will heal the servant and show that Christ’s power is greater than “the cunning of the devil” (3 Ne. 21:10).

There are several reasons to consider Joseph Smith as this promised servant. This whole series of verses, as quoted by Christ in 3 Nephi, refers to the restoration of the gospel, the revelations of the Lord through his prophets, and the gathering of Israel. It would be natural to mention the servant whom the Lord would employ to carry out this great work.. When Moroni visited Joseph Smith, he told him that the Lord had a great work for him to do and that Joseph’s name would be known for good and ill among all nations (JS—H 1:33). Indeed, no one except

Jesus Christ has been more important in bringing about eternal purposes of the Lord here on earth than the Prophet Joseph Smith (D&C 135:3). The work of Joseph Smith demonstrates that he fulfilled that which the Lord required of him. As prophesied in Isaiah 52:13, on the one hand he has been extolled by the Saints, yet on the other hand, hardly any man has been maligned and misrepresented as much as Joseph Smith. Among other things, he has been called a money-digger, a dreamer, a liar, an imposter, and a lunatic. During his lifetime he hardly knew a period without persecution... Through the work of Joseph Smith, the nations of the earth have been “sprinkled” or blessed with many missionaries and messengers of salvation. Many people, including the great ones of this earth, have heard or will hear the message of the gospel. This “new” or restored gospel is one that the people of the earth have not earlier considered, heard, nor seen. Joseph Smith was the man who made it possible for the Lord to fulfill his commitment to call, restore, and gather the house of Israel in the last days, and thus might easily be the servant promised in Isaiah 52:13-15.

Another modern prophet might be this promised servant. As Christ comments on Isaiah’s words, he says that when the latter-day Lamanites begin to grow in their knowledge of the restored gospel, they will know that the Father’s work is being fulfilled with the house of Israel (3 Ne. 21:7). When that day comes, he continues, kings will be speechless (3 Ne. 21:8; compare Isa. 52:15) at the great work declared by a man to the people (3 Ne. 21:9; compare Isa. 52:13). Christ describes his servant of the last days as one who will be marred, yet hailed by the Lord (3 Ne. 21:10; cf. Isa. 52:14).

This description can easily be applied to President Spencer W. Kimball. Evaluating President Kimball’s inspired leadership, one notes a very dramatic increase in missionary work, especially among the Lamanites. He has no equal in bringing Christ’s to the Gentiles and Abraham’s posterity. Indeed, the gospel *is* being “sprinkled” among many new nations as more countries open their doors and as kings and rulers see and hear things that have not been told them or considered by them earlier (see Isa.52:15). President Kimball has helped “gather many nations” (JST v. 15: emphasis added), as people throughout the world are joining covenant Israel.

It is well known that President Kimball has probably suffered more physical ailments than any other latter-day seer. Yet, in spite of a larynx marred by cancer, boils and sores, and numerous heart attacks, he has always made remarkable recoveries. “Yet I will heal him,” says the Lord (3 Ne. 21:10). God has healed President Kimball many times so that he can visit the many nations of the earth and deliver his message to hundreds of thousands...

In short, the final three verses of Isaiah 52 prophesy of the Lord’s servant in the last days. But one need not feel constrained to identify this servant only with Israel, Christ, Joseph Smith, or Spencer W. Kimball, since Isaiah could be describing any or all of these people. If this prophecy deals with one particular person, the servant might not yet have fulfilled his role. Some future prophet might be the servant who will perform this great work.

Victor L. Ludlow, *Isaiah: Prophet, Seer, and Poet* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1982], 439-441.