

The Greatest Possession

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Each of us is to come to Christ with uncompromised commitment to His gospel.

This one sentence alone contains three key components of truth that aren't complicated yet we as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have done our darndest to mingle the fear of the Lord with the precepts of men and the fear of men. So let's breakdown these three concepts before going into this talk so as to best understand what is going to be said in the talk.

1. Each of us is to come unto Christ:

John 3:16, 33-36

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

33 He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.

34 For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.

35 The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

John 17:3

3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

John 14:6

6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Article of Faith 3

We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved...

2. With uncompromised commitment

Matthew 7:21

21 ¶ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Luke 9:62

62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Matthew 8:21-22

21 And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.

22 But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.

JST Matthew 10:28-35

28 Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father who is in heaven.

29 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven.

30 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

31 For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.

32 He who loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

33 And he who taketh not his cross and followeth after me is not worthy of me.

34 He who seeketh to save his life shall lose it; and he who loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

35 He who receiveth you, receiveth me; and he who receiveth me, receiveth him who sent me.

Matthew 5:13

13 ¶ Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Elder Carlos E. Asay (1926–99) of the Presidency of the Seventy explained that salt loses its savor by contamination and that we keep our “savor” by avoiding spiritual contamination. Though directed specifically to priesthood holders, Elder Asay’s words have application to each of us:

“A world-renowned chemist told me that salt will not lose its savor with age. Savor is lost through mixture and contamination. Similarly, priesthood power does not dissipate with age; it, too, is lost through mixture and contamination.”

Hugh Nibley taught:

“Whether or not this is the state of the present world, it is important before it is too late to point out that there are alternatives to Babylon. We should not be condemned because they are so different from what we've been accustomed to. There is an unbridgeable gap between Zion and Babylon. We cannot compromise on the two ways, because the two ways lead in opposite directions. In recent years, the course of the whole world has suddenly and dramatically vindicated the position taken by the early saints and largely forgotten by their descendants. We are discovering that there really are two worlds; that the one leads to sure destruction written in capital letters on everything we behold, as Joseph Smith put it,²² and only the other offers salvation. This is the ancient doctrine of the "Two Ways" taught in the early church -- the way of darkness and the way of light. ²³ It was impossible to try to compromise between them because they led in opposite directions. Yet in the ancient church, it was the compromisers, the dyophysites, who won.²⁴ When we try to mix Zion and Babylon, Babylon has already won the game. (chapter one)

What makes Zion? God has given us the perfect definition: Zion is the pure in heart -- the pure in heart, not merely the pure in appearance. It is not a society or religion of forms and observances, of pious gestures and precious mannerisms: it is strictly a condition of the heart. Above all, Zion is pure, which means "not mixed with any impurities, unalloyed"; it is all Zion and nothing else. It is not achieved wherever a heart is pure or where two or three are pure, because it is all pure -- it is a society, a community, and an environment into which no unclean thing can enter. "Henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean" (3 Nephi 20:36). It is not even pure people in a dirty environment, or pure people with a few impure ones among them; it is the perfectly pure in a perfectly pure environment.

Though Babylon is vividly described by the prophets, the best way to define her is as the exact opposite of Zion in all things. Babylon is just as pure in its way as is Zion; it is pure evil -- for even good, when it becomes contaminated and perverted, becomes an evil. The main thing is that Babylon and Zion cannot mix in any degree; a Zion that makes concessions is no longer Zion.

One may well ask if it is necessary to choose between such absolute extremes, and wonder if there is not some more moderate approach to the problems. By the very nature of things, there is no third way -- as the early Jewish and Christian writers remind us repeatedly in their doctrine of the Two Ways. According to this oldest and best-established of teachings (though quite unpopular with the conventional Christianity and Judaism of our time), there are Two Ways

lying before every person in this life, the Way of Light and the Way of Darkness, the Way of Life and the Way of Death; and every mortal every day of his life is required to make a choice between them. Unfortunately for our peace of mind, any compromise between the Two Ways is out of the question, since they lead in opposite directions. As the wise Heraclitus pointed out long ago, "The up-road and the down-road are one and the same."⁷ Which one you are on depends entirely on the way you are facing. To go off at an angle is to get nowhere; if you find the road to Zion, the Heavenly City, too steep, you may mitigate the climb by striking off on a more level course -- but in that case you will never, never reach Zion. The only road to Zion is the shortest road, for to take any other shows a lack of faith and zeal, which will exclude you from the city.

As there is no compromise between the Two Ways, so there is no mixing of Babylon and Zion; God will not tolerate any concessions by Zion

And so we have Zion and Babylon, and never the twain shall meet. That is, they wouldn't if we did not take human nature into account, for how many humans have ever succeeded in renouncing the world completely? The separation of the Saints from the world was, in most cases, not a matter of choice -- it was forced on them; God is constantly driving wedges between the Church and the world, or in Brigham Young's vivid terms, there are always cats coming out of the bag to put us at odds with the world, whether we want it that way or not. "The brethren and sisters came across the plains because they could not stay; that is the secret of the movement." ²²

"Do you think we came here of our own choice? No; we would have stayed in those rich valleys and prairies back yonder." ²³ When the first revelation was given to prepare for Zion by the gathering of Israel, "when the people came to Jackson county, . . . they were as far from believing and obeying that revelation as the east is from the west." ²⁴ "And so we have got to continue to labor, fight, toil, counsel, exercise faith, ask God over and over, and have been praying for thirty odd years for that which we might have received and accomplished in one year." ²⁵ That complete break between the Saints and the world that must precede the coming of Zion has not yet taken place.

"They have not learned 'a' concerning Zion; and we have been traveling now forty-two years, and have we learned our a, b, c's? . . . I will say, scarcely. Have we seen it as a people? How long shall we travel, . . . how long shall God wait for us to sanctify ourselves and become one in the Lord, in our actions and in our ways for the building up of the kingdom of God, that he can bless us?" ²⁶ "How long, Latter-day Saints, before you will believe the Gospel as it is? The Lord has declared it to be his will that his people will enter into covenant, even as Enoch and his people did, which of necessity, must be before we shall have the privilege of building the Center Stake of Zion." ²⁷

This was one of the last public addresses of the prophet Brigham, and the people were still not ready to go all the way. They still wanted to mix Babylon and Zion; or, as he put it, "Some of the Latter-day Saints had an idea that they could take the follies of the world in one hand and the Savior in the other, and expect to get into the presence of the Lord Jesus." ²⁸ Such heaping up gold and silver would prove their destruction. ²⁹

This, then, is how things stand: (1) We know what Zion is, (2) we know what Babylon is, (3) we know that the two can never mix, and (4) we know that the Latter-day Saints, against the admonitions of their leaders, have always tried to mix them. (Chapter two)

-Hugh Nibley, Approaching Zion

This once again seals the coffin on Satan unites (Babylon and Zion) while Jesus divides (Babylon and Zion); for in order to be Zion there has to be a complete separation, and if there is any mixture i.e. uniting, Satan automatically wins for as soon as Zion makes concessions to Babylon, Zion ceases to be Zion. We have to have uncompromised commitment for anything short of that will fail.

Matthew 6:24

24 ¶ No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Hugh Nibley in the same book, Approaching Zion, teaches that the word mammon literally means “any financial dealings”.

3. To His gospel

Article of Faith 3

...by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.

Introduction to the Book of Mormon

We invite all men everywhere to read the Book of Mormon, to ponder in their hearts the message it contains, and then to ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ if the book is true. Those who pursue this course and ask in faith will gain a testimony of its truth and divinity by the power of the Holy Ghost. (See Moroni 10:3–5.)

Those who gain this divine witness from the Holy Spirit will also come to know by the same power that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, that Joseph Smith is His revelator and prophet in these last days, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the Lord’s kingdom once again established on the earth, preparatory to the Second Coming of the Messiah.

Joseph Smith was asked,

"Will everybody be damned, but Mormons?"

And Joseph Smith’s response was,

“Yes, and a great portion of them, unless they repent, and work righteousness.” (TPJS Section Three 1838-39, p.119)

JST Ephesians 4:4-6, 11-14

4 In one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we, in the unity of the faith, all come to the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

Doctrine and Covenants 1:16

16 They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol, which waxeth old and shall perish in Babylon, even Babylon the great, which shall fall.

Doctrine and Covenants 1:16. “Every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god”

As recorded in this inspired preface to the revelations contained in the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord described some of the unrighteous and apostate conditions that exist in the world because “every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god” (D&C 1:16). Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles illustrated how people today do that:

“The societies in which many of us live have for more than a generation failed to foster moral discipline. They have taught that truth is relative and that everyone decides for himself or herself what is right. Concepts such as sin and wrong have been condemned as ‘value judgments.’ As the Lord describes it, ‘Every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god’ (D&C 1:16).

“As a consequence, self-discipline has eroded and societies are left to try to maintain order and civility by compulsion” (“Moral Discipline,” Ensign or Liahona, Nov. 2009, 106).

Doctrine and Covenants 1:16. “Babylon the great”

The Lord referred to the wicked world as “Babylon the great” (D&C 1:16). Because of the worldliness and corruption of ancient Babylon, and because it was a place to which the children of Israel were carried away and held captive, Babylon is often used figuratively in the scriptures to represent the sin and wickedness of the world and the spiritual captivity it can impose upon God’s children (see D&C 133:14).

Elder David R. Stone of the Seventy described Babylon and its pervasive influence today:

“There is no particular city today which personifies Babylon. Babylon was, in the time of ancient Israel, a city which had become sensual, decadent, and corrupt. The principal building in the city was a temple to a false god, which we often refer to as Bel. ...

“However, that sensuality, corruption, and decadence, and the worshipping of false gods are to be seen in many cities, great and small, scattered across the globe. ...

“Too many of the people of the world have come to resemble the Babylon of old by walking in their own ways, and following a god ‘whose image is in the likeness of the world’ [D&C 1:16]” (“Zion in the Midst of Babylon,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2006, 90–91).

D&C 1:15—16. Existing Conditions in the World Anger the Lord

Elder Spencer W. Kimball dispelled the notion that idolatry is a sin of the past that must involve some kind of image or figure.

“Idolatry is among the most serious of sins. There are unfortunately millions today who prostrate themselves before images of gold and silver and wood and stone and clay. But the idolatry we are most concerned with here is the conscious worshipping of still other gods. Some are of metal and plush and chrome, of wood and stone and fabrics. They are not in the image of God or of man, but are developed to give man comfort and enjoyment, to satisfy his wants, ambitions, passions and desires. Some are in no physical form at all, but are intangible.

“Many seem to ‘worship’ on an elemental basis— they live to eat and drink. They are like the children of Israel who, though offered the great freedoms associated with national development under God’s personal guidance, could not lift their minds above the ‘flesh pots of Egypt.’ They cannot seem to rise above satisfying their bodily appetites. As Paul put it, their ‘God is their belly.’ (Phil. 3:19.) “Modern idols or false gods can take such forms as clothes, homes, businesses, machines, automobiles, pleasure boats, and numerous other material deflectors from the path to godhood. What difference does it make that the item concerned is not shaped like an idol? Brigham Young said: ‘I would as soon see a man worshipping a little god made of brass or of wood as to see him worshipping his property.’ “Intangible things make just as ready gods.

Degrees and letters and titles can become idols. Many young men decide to attend college when they should be on missions first. The degree, and the wealth and the security which come through it, appear so desirable that the mission takes second place. Some neglect Church service through their college years, feeling to give preference to the secular training and ignoring the spiritual covenants they have made.

“Many people build and furnish a home and buy the automobile first—and then find they ‘cannot afford’ to pay tithing. Whom do they worship? Certainly not the Lord of heaven and earth, for we serve whom we love and give first consideration to the object of our affection and desires. Young married couples who postpone parenthood until their degrees are attained might be shocked if their expressed preference were labeled idolatry.” (Miracle of Forgiveness, pp. 40—41.)

Doctrine and Covenants 38:27-28

27 ...I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine.

28 And again, I say unto you that the enemy in the secret chambers seeketh your lives.

1 Corinthians 1:9-11

9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

11 For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.

President Nelson (Pure Truth, Pure Doctrine, and Pure Revelation, October 2021)

In that spirit, I invite you to listen for three things during this conference: pure truth, the pure doctrine of Christ, and pure revelation. Contrary to the doubts of some, there really is such a thing as right and wrong. There really is absolute truth—eternal truth. One of the plagues of our day is that too few people know where to turn for truth.² I can assure you that what you will hear today and tomorrow constitutes pure truth.

Elder Boyd K. Packer (Principles, 1985):

Procedures, programs, the administrative policies, even some patterns of organization are subject to change. We are quite free, indeed, quite obliged to alter them from time to time. But the principles, the doctrines, never change.

1 Corinthians 14:32-33 (check out all the verses up to verse 40 later on your own)

32 And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.

33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

Doctrine and Covenants 1:38

38 What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.

Mosiah 26:33-34, 39

33 And it came to pass when Alma had heard these words he wrote them down that he might have them, and that he might judge the people of that church according to the commandments of God.

34 And it came to pass that Alma went and judged those that had been taken in iniquity, according to the word of the Lord.

39 And they did admonish their brethren; and they were also admonished, every one by the word of God, according to his sins, or to the sins which he had committed, being commanded of God to pray without ceasing, and to give thanks in all things.

Hugh Nibley (Approaching Zion chapter 3):

All knowledge is the gospel, but there must be a priority, "proper degrees," as the Prophet says, in the timing and emphasis of our learning, lest like the doctors of the Jews, we "strain at a gnat and swallow a camel" (Matthew 23:24). Furthermore, since one person does not receive revelation for another, if we would exchange or convey knowledge, we must be willing to have our knowledge tested. The gifted and zealous Mr. Olney was "disfellowshipped, because he would not have his writings tested by the word of God," according to Joseph Smith. (TPJS pg 215)

3 Nephi 11:22-41

22 And again the Lord called others, and said unto them likewise; and he gave unto them power to baptize. And he said unto them: On this wise shall ye baptize; and there shall be no disputations among you.

23 Verily I say unto you, that whoso repenteth of his sins through your words, and desireth to be baptized in my name, on this wise shall ye baptize them—Behold, ye shall go down and stand in the water, and in my name shall ye baptize them.

24 And now behold, these are the words which ye shall say, calling them by name, saying:

25 Having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

26 And then shall ye immerse them in the water, and come forth again out of the water.

27 And after this manner shall ye baptize in my name; for behold, verily I say unto you, that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one; and I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one.

28 And according as I have commanded you thus shall ye baptize. And there shall be no disputations among you, as there have hitherto been; neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there have hitherto been.

29 For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another.

30 Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another; but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away.

31 Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will declare unto you my doctrine.

32 And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me.

33 And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God.

34 And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned.

35 Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and I bear record of it from the Father; and whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also; and unto him will the Father bear record of me, for he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost.

36 And thus will the Father bear record of me, and the Holy Ghost will bear record unto him of the Father and me; for the Father, and I, and the Holy Ghost are one.

37 And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things.

38 And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God.

39 Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them.

40 And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them.

41 Therefore, go forth unto this people, and declare the words which I have spoken, unto the ends of the earth.

3 Nephi 11:27–30. Sources of Contention and False Doctrine

“Among the Latter-day Saints, the preaching of false doctrines disguised as truths of the gospel, may be expected from people of two classes, and practically from these only; they are:

“First—The hopelessly ignorant, whose lack of intelligence is due to their indolence and sloth, who make but feeble effort, if indeed any at all, to better themselves by reading and study; those who are afflicted with a dread disease that may develop into an incurable malady—laziness.

“Second—The proud and self-vaunting ones, who read by the lamp of their own conceit; who interpret by rules of their own contriving; who have become a law unto themselves, and so pose as the sole judges of their own doings. More dangerously ignorant than the first. “Beware of the lazy and the proud; their infection in each case is contagious; better for them and for all when they are compelled to display the yellow flag of warning, that the clean and uninfected may be protected” (Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine*, p. 373).

3 Nephi 11:28–40. Jesus Spoke of His Doctrine

The phrase “my doctrine” can be found eight times in verses 28–40 of 3 Nephi 11. The Lord described His doctrine as repentance and baptism. In similar language in 2 Nephi 31, Nephi spent considerable time describing what he called “the doctrine of Christ.” Nephi included faith, repentance, baptism, the Holy Ghost, scripture study, and enduring to the end in his list of the doctrines of Christ. Later in His visit to the Book of Mormon people, the Lord repeated these same principles (see 3 Nephi 27) and labeled them “my gospel.” These principles remind us of Articles of Faith 1:4: “We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

2 Nephi 28:14-17, 2 Nephi 27:25-26, 35

They wear stiff necks and high heads; yea, and because of pride, and wickedness, and abominations, and whoredoms, they have all gone astray save it be a few, who are the humble followers of Christ; nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because they are taught by the precepts of men. Forasmuch as this people draw near unto me with their mouth, and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their hearts far from me, and their fear towards me is taught by the precepts of men— Therefore, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, yea, a marvelous work and a wonder, for the wisdom of their wise and learned shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent shall be hid. O the wise, and the learned, and the rich, that are puffed up in the pride of their hearts, and all those who preach false doctrines, and all those who commit whoredoms, and pervert the right way of the Lord, wo, wo, wo be unto them, saith the Lord God Almighty, for they shall be thrust down to hell! Wo unto them that turn aside the just for a thing of naught and revile against that which is good, and say that it is of no worth! For the day shall come that the Lord God will speedily visit the inhabitants of the earth; and in that day that they are fully ripe in iniquity they shall perish. But behold, if the inhabitants of the earth shall repent of their wickedness and abominations they shall not be

destroyed, saith the Lord of Hosts. They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.

In conclusion, “Each of us is to come to Christ with uncompromised commitment to His gospel.” That is what this statement means and it is the foundation that we have to understand and accept for this talk to make any sense to us. And anything short of that understanding is to “follow after your own gods”:

Doctrines and Covenants 76:50-55, 60, 66-71, 75-79

50 And again we bear record—for we saw and heard, and this is the testimony of the gospel of Christ concerning them who shall come forth in the resurrection of the just—

51 They are they who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name and were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in the water in his name, and this according to the commandment which he has given—

52 That by keeping the commandments they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power;

53 And who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true.

54 They are they who are the church of the Firstborn.

55 They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things—

60 And they shall overcome all things.

66 These are they who are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all.

67 These are they who have come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of Enoch, and of the Firstborn.

68 These are they whose names are written in heaven, where God and Christ are the judge of all.

69 These are they who are just men made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood.

70 These are they whose bodies are celestial, whose glory is that of the sun, even the glory of God, the highest of all, whose glory the sun of the firmament is written of as being typical.

71 And again, we saw the terrestrial world, and behold and lo, these are they who are of the terrestrial, whose glory differs from that of the church of the Firstborn who have received the fulness of the Father, even as that of the moon differs from the sun in the firmament.

75 These are they who are honorable men of the earth, who were blinded by the craftiness of men.

76 These are they who receive of his glory, but not of his fulness.

77 These are they who receive of the presence of the Son, but not of the fulness of the Father.

78 Wherefore, they are bodies terrestrial, and not bodies celestial, and differ in glory as the moon differs from the sun.

79 These are they who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus; wherefore, they obtain not the crown over the kingdom of our God.

The scriptures speak of a rich young ruler who ran to Jesus, knelt at His feet, and, with genuine sincerity, asked the Master, “What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” After reviewing a long list of commandments this fellow had faithfully kept, Jesus told the man to sell all his belongings, give the proceeds to the poor, take up his cross, and follow Him. The boldness of this directive caused the young ruler—in spite of his expensive sandals—to get cold feet, and he went away sorrowing because, the scripture says, “he had great possessions.”¹

I’ve read and heard a lot of members quote this who really enjoyed this choice of language- I myself had a good chuckle because this to me encapsulates boomer dad humor to a tee. Expensive sandals are not designed to make one’s feet warm, thus the expensiveness of the sandals would have no relevance to the temperature of his feet. There’s so much good doctrine to tie into this story-

1. The similarities between the ancient Jews (and this individual) at Jesus’ time and the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints today
2. The parable of the Nobleman and His Olive Trees and the servants choosing money over the tower
3. Boldness in commitments
4. The law of consecration
5. The power of the sin of idolatry

All of these things have been talked about often in our book club reading Hugh Nibley’s *Approaching Zion*. Two quote that come to mind though as being pertinent and revelatory are as follows:

“A favorite trick is to put the whole blame on sex. Sex can be a pernicious appetite, but it runs a poor second to the other. For example: We are wont to think of Sodom as the original sexpot, but according to all accounts “this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom”: that great wealth made her people cruel and self-righteous.⁹⁸ The worst sinners, according to Jesus, are not the harlots and

publicans, but the religious leaders with their insistence on proper dress and grooming, their careful observance of all the rules, their precious concern for status symbols, their strict legality, their pious patriotism. Longhairs, beards necklaces, LSD and rock, Big Sur and Woodstock come and go, but Babylon is always there: rich, respectable, immovable, with its granite walls and steel vaults, its bronze gates, its onyx trimmings and marble floors (all borrowed from ancient temples, for these are our modern temples), and its bullet-proof glass -- the awesome symbols of total security.” (Hugh Nibley, *Approaching Zion*, Chapter 2)

.....

"They have cast an obnoxious young lightweight (a very minor devil) to the role of the Evil One while the one most qualified to play it prefers to take the part of a dignified, upright, mature, and often charming gentleman. It was clever to put a pathetic, long-haired, dirty, neurotic, mixed-up, idealistic, sex-hungry fool in the role of the heavy while an actor of infinitely greater skill and experience takes the highly respectable part of the archpillar of society.” (Hugh Nibley, *Approaching Zion*, Chapter 2)

.....

“Brigham Young has this to say on the Puritan ethic, which shifts the burden of guilt from wealth to sex:

When the books are opened, out of which the human family are to be judged, how disappointed the professedly sanctified, long-faced hypocrites and smooth-toned pharisees will be, when the publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before them; people that appeared to be full of evil, but the Lord says they never designed to do wrong; the Devil had power over them, and they suffered in their mortal state a thousand times more than you poor, miserable, canting, cheating, snivelling, hypocritical pharisees; you were dressed in purple and fine linen, and bound burdens upon your weaker brethren that you would not so much as help to lift with your little fingers. Did you ever go without food, suffer with tooth-ache, sore eyes, rheumatism, or the chills and fever? You have fared sumptuously all your days and you condemned to an everlasting hell these poor harlots and publicans who never designed an evil. Are you not guilty of committing an evil with that poor harlot? Yes, and you will be damned while she will be saved.” (Hugh Nibley, *Approaching Zion*, Chapter 2)

What is the entire purpose of the story of the rich young ruler? What is the reason for it being included in our standard works? What in the story was deemed so important that the apostles recorded it and our modern day apostles repeat it? “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:23-25).

Matthew 19:24. A Camel through the Eye of a Needle

Some have asserted that the eye of the needle was a small door in the Jerusalem city wall, requiring a camel to be stripped of its load in order to enter. There is no evidence that such a door ever existed. Others have proposed that altering one letter in the Greek text would change the scripture to mean that a rope, not a camel, would have to pass through the eye of a needle.

However, when Jesus Christ referred to a camel passing through the eye of a needle, it was likely an example of hyperbole, an intentional exaggeration to teach “that a rich man shall hardly [with difficulty] enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:23). The Joseph Smith Translation adds, “With men that trust in riches, it is impossible; but not impossible with men who trust in God and leave all for my sake, for with such all these things are possible” (Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 10:26 [in Mark 10:27, footnote a]).

President Brigham Young (1801–77) spoke of the difficulty people face when they accumulate riches: “The worst fear that I have about this people is that they will get rich in this country, forget God and His people, wax fat, and kick themselves out of the Church. ... This people will stand mobbing, robbing, poverty, and all manner of persecution, and be true. But my greater fear for them is that they cannot stand wealth” (quoted in James S. Brown, *Life of a Pioneer* [1971], 122–23).

Every example we have of the Savior encountering gross sexual sin there was repentance and forgiveness- the same cannot be said for those that loved Babylon and their pious traditions.

This story is a reminder that this idolatry is more addictive than any of the other sins, for this young ruler was obedient to all of the other commandments but could not separate mammon from God, for he had, despite his life of obedience, served mammon (i.e. financial exchanges) and that was his true love as he unwittingly or not learned to despise the other (Matthew 6:24).

Obviously, this is an important cautionary tale about the uses of wealth and the needs of the poor.

Mosiah 4:11-28

11 And again I say unto you as I have said before, that as ye have come to the knowledge of the glory of God, or if ye have known of his goodness and have tasted of his love, ***and have received a remission of your sins***, which causeth such exceedingly great joy in your souls, even so ***I would that ye should remember, and always retain in remembrance***, the greatness of God, and your own nothingness, and his goodness and long-suffering towards you, unworthy creatures, and humble yourselves even in the depths of humility, calling on the name of the Lord daily, and standing steadfastly in the faith of that which is to come, which was spoken by the mouth of the angel.

12 And behold, I say unto you that if ye do this ye shall always rejoice, and be filled with the love of God, and ***always retain a remission of your sins***; and ye shall grow in the knowledge of the glory of him that created you, or in the knowledge of that which is just and true.

26 And now, for the sake of these things which I have spoken unto you—that is, ***for the sake of retaining a remission of your sins from day to day, that ye may walk guiltless before God—I would that ye should impart of your substance to the poor***, every man according to that which he hath, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and administering to their relief, both spiritually and temporally, according to their wants.

We are baptized for the remission of sins and are given the gift of the Holy Ghost which purges us and turns us into a new creature. King Benjamin teaches us that in order to retain a remission of sins one must impart of their substance to the needy and poor. This is why/how the harlots and publicans will get into heaven before the rich, long-faced hypocrites. And to wrap up everything we have learned from this point in time and to prove Hugh Nibley and Brigham Young correct about us shifting the burden of us taking care of the poor as well as shifting all the blame from Babylon to sex, I give you exhibit A from the student manual for Mosiah 4:26:

Mosiah 4:26-29 “Walk Guiltless before God”

“As we travel and visit the people throughout the world, we recognize the great temporal needs of our people. And as we long to help them, we realize the vital importance of their learning this great lesson: that the highest achievement of spirituality comes as we conquer the flesh. WE build character as we encourage people to care for their own needs.” (Spencer W. Kimball, in Conference Report, Oct. 1977, pp.123-24; or Ensign, Nov. 1977, p.77)

But ultimately it is a story about wholehearted, unreserved devotion to divine responsibility. With or without riches, each of us is to come to Christ with the same uncompromised commitment to His gospel that was expected of this young man. In the vernacular of today’s youth, we are to declare ourselves “all in.”²

I thought the reference here would take you to some recent talks that were given including the talk “Essential Conversations” by Sister Jones where she shared the following story:

One young mother and father sat at their kitchen table reviewing their day. From down the hall, they heard a thud. The mother asked, “What was that?” Then they heard a soft cry coming from their four-year-old son’s bedroom. They rushed down the hall. There he was, lying on the floor next to his bed. The mother picked up the little boy and asked him what had happened.

He said, “I fell out of bed.”

She said, “Why did you fall out of bed?”

He shrugged and said, “I don’t know. I guess I just didn’t get far enough in.”

It is about this “getting far enough in” that I would like to speak this morning. It is our privilege and responsibility to help children “get far enough in” to the gospel of Jesus Christ. And we cannot begin too soon.

Our Discord group is named after a similar motto: “Zion or Bust”. President Taylor was known to say, “The Kingdom of God or nothing!” For a multitude of awesome “all in/Zion or Bust” quotes, join The Archives Discord server and check out the Zion or Bust thread.

In his characteristically memorable prose, C. S. Lewis imagines the Lord saying to us something like this: “I don’t want ... your time ... [or] your money ... [or] your work [as much as] I [just] want You. [That tree you are pruning.] I don’t want to cut off a branch here and a branch there, I

want ... the whole [thing] down. [And that tooth.] I don't want to drill [it], or crown it, or [fill] it. [I want] to have it out. [In fact, I want you to] hand over [to me your] whole natural self. ... [And] I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you Myself: my ... will shall become [your will].”³

I personally don't understand why apostles choose to quote people like C.S. Lewis over people like the prophet, apostles, scriptures etc. We as members try really hard to source everything back to an authoritative source knowing our words don't mean anything and then authoritative sources put forth the words of people who weren't even members of the Church- it just seems kind of weird if not pointless/fruitless. And based off of how much Elder Holland had to edit that quote it wasn't even a good quote for what he was trying to prove! Here is a quote for example from Elder Neal A Maxwell, “God does not begin by asking us about our ability, but only about our availability, and if we then prove our dependability, he will increase our capability” (Ensign article, July 1975). In this quote Elder Neal A Maxwell is teaching the same principle. If one wanted to teach the principle in a way that the layman would understand using a story/parable would do a better job, a story such as The Plastic Necklace.

“There was a young daughter who was given a plastic necklace when she was very young. And she loved that plastic necklace more than life itself. One night when her father came in to tuck the child into bed he kissed her and said, “I love you” to which the little girl replied, “I love you too, Daddy.” The father responded, “Well if you love me give me your plastic necklace.” The little girl looked shocked as she took in what her father was asking her, but after a moment, to recover she responded, “Oh no Daddy, that necklace was a gift from you, it is one of my most prized possessions!” To which the father hugged his daughter, kissed her lightly on the forehead, told her all is well and bid her goodnight. This process continued for many years with the father going in, telling his daughter that he loved her, the daughter saying she loved him, the father asking for the necklace and the daughter refusing. Some nights the daughter would offer her father her stuffed animals or other toys that she owned but all of which the father refused. This continued until one night, to the father's surprise, when he entered the room he saw his daughter sitting at the edge of the bed with tears in her eyes. The father, quickly coming to her side and wrapping his arms around her, asked her what the matter was. To which the daughter gingerly placed the plastic necklace in her father's hand and whimpered, “I love you Daddy, you can have my necklace.” The father now with tears in his own eyes, took the plastic necklace and put it in his pocket. But much to the daughter's surprise, when her father's hand returned to view, in it was a pearl necklace. “Daughter, I wanted to give you this pearl necklace, but I couldn't give it to you while you were still clinging to childish things.”

Quoting the keys/scriptures gives your teaching authority (Preach My Gospel, Using the Scriptures) and the use of stories/parables helps the layman understand and internalize the principles. Quoting C.S. Lewis or Mark Twain, etc. only has one real purpose and nobody is going to like me calling it out so I won't.

As far as scriptures that also teach this same concept here are a few:

Ezekiel 36:26

26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

John 17:21-23

21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me

For reference, that quote from C.S. Lewis that Elder Holland provided has 6 ellipses and 14 square brackets indicating changes.

All who speak in this general conference will all be saying, one way or another, what Christ said to this rich young man: “Come unto your Savior. Come completely and wholeheartedly. Take up your cross, however heavy it may be, and follow Him.”⁴ They will say this knowing that in the kingdom of God, there can be no halfway measures, no starting and stopping, no turning back. To those who requested permission to bury a deceased parent or to at least say goodbye to other family members, Jesus’s reply was demanding and unequivocal. “Leave that to others,” He said. “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”⁵

Everything I have to say about “uncompromised commitment” I did at the beginning because I felt like that would be easier to do vs. separating it and spreading it throughout the talk breakdown. Elder Holland here is explaining point #2.

When difficult things are asked of us, even things contrary to the longings of our heart, remember that the loyalty we pledge to the cause of Christ is to be the supreme devotion of our lives.

Doctrine and Covenants 136:20

20 Seek ye; and keep all your pledges one with another; and covet not that which is thy brother’s.

D&C 136:18–27. Zion Will Be Redeemed

Smith and Sjodahl wrote that “the members of the Church had been disappointed, if not discouraged, because Zion had not been redeemed. No doubt it was trying to the faith of some to be on the way to the unknown region of the Rocky Mountains. All that they had heard of this territory was discouraging and the redemption of Zion seemed farther away than ever from fulfillment. Now they were to take courage, for the Lord had not forgotten Zion, and it should be redeemed in the due time of the Lord. It was well, therefore, for the members to obey counsel

and not seek to build themselves at the expense of others; should this be done they would lose the reward. The Lord would lead them as he led the children of Israel, and he was just as mindful of the Saints today as he was then. Every man should respect the rights and property of the rest, and all should be wise stewards.” (Commentary, p. 860; see also Notes and Commentary for D&C 103:15–20.)

1 Nephi 17:40-43

40 And he loveth those who will have him to be their God. Behold, he loved our fathers, and he covenanted with them, yea, even Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and he remembered the covenants which he had made; wherefore, he did bring them out of the land of Egypt.

41 And he did straiten them in the wilderness with his rod; for they hardened their hearts, even as ye have; and the Lord straitened them because of their iniquity. He sent fiery flying serpents among them; and after they were bitten he prepared a way that they might be healed; and the labor which they had to perform was to look; and because of the simpleness of the way, or the easiness of it, there were many who perished.

42 And they did harden their hearts from time to time, and they did revile against Moses, and also against God; nevertheless, ye know that they were led forth by his matchless power into the land of promise.

43 And now, after all these things, the time has come that they have become wicked, yea, nearly unto ripeness; and I know not but they are at this day about to be destroyed; for I know that the day must surely come that they must be destroyed, save a few only, who shall be led away into captivity.

Doctrine and Covenants 105:35-37

35 There has been a day of calling, but the time has come for a day of choosing; and let those be chosen that are worthy.

36 And it shall be manifest unto my servant, by the voice of the Spirit, those that are chosen; and they shall be sanctified;

37 And inasmuch as they follow the counsel which they receive, they shall have power after many days to accomplish all things pertaining to Zion.

D&C 90:36–37. The Lord Will Chasten Zion until She Overcomes

Elder Melvin J. Ballard said of the Lord’s promise to see that Zion overcomes and is clean: “That kind of promise entails the necessity of chastisement, when we need to be chastened and corrected and brought to a condition of repentance. I recognize that the Lord cannot fulfil his work nor accomplish his purposes without our willing obedience. He will not use this people unless we are willing to be used; but he has means of correcting, he has means of chastisement, which he will apply from time to time, and the only thing that impedes our progress today is our

own lack of willingness to follow the counsel of those whom God has appointed to lead this people, because of the imagination of our hearts that we are wiser than they are.” (In Conference Report, Oct. 1921, p. 100.)

Temple Recommend Question 4: Do you sustain the president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as the prophet, seer and revelator and as the only person on the earth authorized to exercise all priesthood keys?

President Nelson from *The Future of the Church: Preparing the World for the Savior’s Second Coming*:

"The time is coming when those who do not obey the Lord will be separated from those who do (see Doctrine and Covenants 86:1–7). Our safest insurance is to continue to be worthy of admission to His holy house. The greatest gift you could give to the Lord is to keep yourself unspotted from the world, worthy to attend His holy house. His gift to you will be the peace and security of knowing that you are worthy to meet Him, whenever that time comes."

Doctrines of Salvation Vol 2: pg 246 Sermons and Writings of Joseph Fielding Smith:

“SAINTS TO BUILD TEMPLE IN JACKSON COUNTY. The Latter-day Saints are building temples and believe that the time will come when they will be called on to build the great temple which shall grace the New Jerusalem, or City of Zion, the capital city of God on this continent.

The Lord will not call upon those who are cut off from his people to accomplish his holy work. The temple will not be built by those who say that Joseph Smith was a fallen prophet and who have failed to accept the fulness of the word of the Lord as it came through him.

No people will be commanded and directed by revelation from the Lord to build his temple, when they know nothing of temple building and the ordinances performed in temples. The Latter-day Saints may be assured that when the time comes for the building of the house of the Lord, he will call upon his people who have remained true and have been faithful in the purposes of the Lord in bringing to pass the salvation of the living and of the dead.”

Although Isaiah reassures us it is available “without money and without price”⁶—and it is—we must be prepared, using T. S. Eliot’s line, to have it cost “not less than everything.”⁷

Once again, not sure why T.S. Eliot is being quoted over the pulpit but yet we have removed Joseph Smith’s Lectures on Faith from the Doctrine and Covenants...in Joseph Smith’s Lectures on Faith we read, “Let us here observe, that a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things, never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation;” (Lecture 6).

Joseph Smith further taught,

“You will have all kinds of trials to pass through. And it is quite as necessary that you be tried as it was for Abraham and other men of God . . . God will feel after you and he will take hold of

you, and wrench your heart strings, and if you cannot stand it you will not be fit for an inheritance in the celestial kingdom of God” (Joseph Smith. As quoted by John Taylor, JD, 24:197)

"Men have to suffer that they may come upon Mount Zion and be exalted above the heavens." (Joseph Smith TPJS Section Six 1843-44, p.323)

"God cursed the children of Israel because they would not receive the last law from Moses. The sacrifice required of Abraham in the offering up of Isaac, shows that if a man would attain to the keys of the kingdom of an endless life; he must sacrifice all things. When God offers a blessing or knowledge to a man, and he refuses to receive it, he will be damned." (Joseph Smith TPJS Section Six 1843-44, p.322)

Of course, we all have some habits or flaws or personal history that could keep us from complete spiritual immersion in this work. But God is our Father and is exceptionally good at forgiving and forgetting sins we have forsaken, perhaps because we give Him so much practice in doing so.

No, our Father is a perfected being who would forgive us with or without “the practice.” Elder Holland has attempted to put a clever/witty joke/poetic satire or a reference to some worldly source (i.e., C.S. Lewis and T.S. Eliot) in almost every paragraph- it is completely unnecessary and those members who attack me as being arrogant or opinionated (i.e., not sourcing what I’m presenting with authoritative sources) but who are completely okay with Elder Holland doing this are flaming hypocrites and need to check themselves. I don’t do this, ever, let alone to this extent. And let me be clear, my gripe isn’t with Elder Holland in doing it, my gripe has been and will continue to be with members’ blatant hypocrisy and priestcraft.

In any case, there is divine help for every one of us at any hour we feel to make a change in our behavior.

Doctrine and Covenants 43:24-25

24 O, ye nations of the earth, how often would I have gathered you together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not!

25 How oft have I called upon you by the mouth of my servants, and by the ministering of angels, and by mine own voice, and by the voice of thunderings, and by the voice of lightnings, and by the voice of tempests, and by the voice of earthquakes, and great hailstorms, and by the voice of famines and pestilences of every kind, and by the great sound of a trump, and by the voice of judgment, and by the voice of mercy all the day long, and by the voice of glory and honor and the riches of eternal life, and would have saved you with an everlasting salvation, but ye would not!

2 Nephi 28:32

32 Wo be unto the Gentiles, saith the Lord God of Hosts! For notwithstanding I shall lengthen out mine arm unto them from day to day, they will deny me; nevertheless, I will be merciful unto them, saith the Lord God, if they will repent and come unto me; for mine arm is lengthened out all the day long, saith the Lord God of Hosts.

God gave Saul “another heart.”⁸ Ezekiel called on all of ancient Israel to cast off her past and “make ... a new heart and a new spirit.”⁹ Alma called for a “mighty change”¹⁰ that would cause the soul to expand, and Jesus Himself taught that “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”¹¹ Clearly the possibility of change and living at a more elevated level has always been one of the gifts of God to those who seek it.

This is one of the benefits of working through a talk again from start to finish- you will find that if you are in tune with the Spirit and the speaker, you will both be arriving with the same scriptures, conclusions etc. We went over these very same scriptures above. Elder Holland brought in a couple extras that I didn't bring in earlier including the teaching from the Savior that we must be born again before we can *see* the kingdom of God. Note the difference between seeing the kingdom of God (being born again) and entering into the kingdom of God (being born of water and of the Spirit).

“But all these things are available -- all we need to do is ask. But we must ask for them, and of course if we ask not we receive not. The gifts are not in evidence today, except one gift, which you notice the people ask for -- the gift of healing. They ask for that with honest intent and with sincere hearts, and we really do have that gift. Because we are desperate and nobody else can help us, we ask with sincere hearts of our Lord. As for these other gifts, how often do we ask for them? How earnestly do we seek for them? We could have them if we did ask, but we don't. “Well, who denies them?” Anyone who doesn't ask for them. They are available to all for the asking, but one must ask with an honest heart, sincerely.... Adam himself prayed and prayed, and after many days he finally got an answer. It was the same thing with Abraham, who said, “Thy servant has sought thee earnestly, now I have found thee” (Abraham 2:12). He at last found the Lord. But you must seek first. You must ask with a sincere heart and with real intent. We don't need to go through any other channels. The Lord won't let you starve. Satan puts that fear into us, which is the opposite of faith. I can honestly say that everything that I have asked for with an honest heart, I have received. Hope leads to faith, though it doesn't happen all at once.” (Hugh Nibley, *Approaching Zion*, Chapter 4)

Friends, in our present moment we find all manner of divisions and subdivisions, sets and subsets, digital tribes and political identities, with more than enough hostility to go around. Might we ask ourselves if a “higher and holier”¹² life, to use President Russell M. Nelson's phrase, is something we could seek?

This is the 3rd option I always talk about- many are phrasing the battle as though the battlelines have to be chosen between King Noah and the Lamanites or King Limhi and the Lamanites or the people with desires to overthrow the government vs those united in their hatred toward those who want to overthrow the government etc, etc. There is a third way, i.e., Alma's group, the righteous remnant etc, etc. There is a higher and holier way. And that way can only be obtained

by following the keys of God i.e., Abinadi, Alma, Nephi etc. We went over this earlier in the paper but let's add in another quote to really wrap that concept together.

“How Zion may escape the Lord’s scourge. Nevertheless, Zion shall escape if she observe to do all things whatsoever I have commanded her. But if she observe not to do whatsoever I have commanded her, I will visit her according to all her works, with sore affliction, with pestilence, with plague, with sword, with vengeance, with devouring fire.. This way of escape, insuring the protection of the Lord, is a very simple one. Unfortunately, many of the people of Zion have refused to take advantage of this promise. As I observe conditions among the people I cannot see how we are going to escape when the judgements are to pass over the nations, which are promised in this revelation and in others, which I cannot take time to read. Because of our disobedience and our failure to keep the commandments of the Lord, the righteous, as in times past, may be called upon to suffer with the unrighteous.” (President Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation Vol III, chapter 1 page 32)

Those are your three different groups and if Zion does not sanctify herself and obtain faith as the brother of Jared and redeem Zion and build the New Jerusalem the righteous will be caught in the crossfire and will have to suffer with the ungodly among us.

When doing so, we would do well to remember that stunning period in the Book of Mormon in which those people asked and answered that question so affirmatively:

“And it came to pass that there was no contention among all the people, in all the land ... *because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people.*

“And there were no envyings, nor strifes, ... nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God.

“There were no robbers, nor murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites; but *they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God.*

“*And how blessed were they!*”¹³

What is the key to this breakthrough in contented, happy living?

Before Elder Holland gives his answer let me give my answer which is the same answer that Hugh Nibley gave to this question, which is what Nephi pointed out in **Helaman 7:21**

21 But behold, it is to get gain, to be praised of men, yea, and that ye might get gold and silver. And ye have set your hearts upon the riches and the vain things of this world, *for the which* ye do murder, and plunder, and steal, and bear false witness against your neighbor, and do all manner of iniquity.

What does this mean? It means that idolatry, the love of the world, gain, riches, and the praise of the world are the reasons why people murder, plunder, steal, lie etc. So if we find a society that has no robbers, murderers, etc, what do we know about that society? That they are a society

which obey the first great commandment- love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, might, mind and strength. “For many are called and few are chosen and why are they not chosen?” (D&C 121:34) One could also ask why are there robbers, murderers, etc? It’s the same question. And the Lord answers it, “because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world and aspire to the honors of men” (D&C 121:35). You will never get a society like this with one foot in Babylon and one leaning toward Zion. One does not get a society like this by compromising with their Babylonian neighbors. The love of God here spoken that creates this unity isn’t a love towards Babylon and your fellow man, in fact, this Savior teaches us that if we do love Him, love the Master, and we forsake the praise of the world, gain, riches, etc., we will “hate the other.” Meaning to true be possessed with the love of God one also hates Babylon or in other words as the scriptures teach us,

Alma 13:12

12 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, exceedingly great many, who were made pure and entered into the rest of the Lord their God.

Alma 19:33

33 And it came to pass that when Ammon arose he also administered unto them, and also did all the servants of Lamoni; and they did all declare unto the people the selfsame thing—that their hearts had been changed; that they had no more desire to do evil.

Mosiah 5:2

2 And they all cried with one voice, saying: Yea, we believe all the words which thou hast spoken unto us; and also, we know of their surety and truth, because of the Spirit of the Lord Omnipotent, which has wrought a mighty change in us, or in our hearts, that we have no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually.

The bottom line is, the closer we get to God the more we are filled with His spirit and His love, the more repulsed by sin we become. This does not mean that members were perfect, this does not mean that those people who had mighty changes of heart never sinned again. It means that the sins of rebellion were gone, there was no justifying of sin let alone the welcoming of sins into their communities with no cry of repentance or requirement of change.

It is embedded there in the text in one sentence: “The love of God ... did dwell in the hearts of the people.”¹⁴ When the love of God sets the tone for our own lives, for our relationships to each other and ultimately our feeling for all humankind, then old distinctions, limiting labels, and artificial divisions begin to pass away, and peace increases. That is precisely what happened in our Book of Mormon example. No longer were there Lamanites, or Jacobites, or Josephites, or Zoramites. There were no “-ites” at all. The people had taken on just one transcendent identity. They were all, it says, to be known as “the children of Christ.”¹⁵

This is a little bit of a paradox because Elder Holland mentions labels, divisions, distinctions etc all passing away but then goes on to say that they were all labeled as “the children of Christ”.

4 Nephi 1:17

17 There were no robbers, nor murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God.

Mosiah 5:7

7 And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters; for behold, this day he hath spiritually begotten you; for ye say that your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters.

So the covenant people of the Lord are “the children of Christ”, they are a distinct group of people, they are tribe, and they exist in times of wickedness (Mosiah 5) and they also exist in times of universal peace (4 Nephi). The covenant people don’t stop being a peculiar people, a distinct tribe, etc, the people just throw away all other distinctions. As Nephi was so poignantly taught,

1 Nephi 14:10

10 ...Behold there are save two churches only; the one is the church of the Lamb of God, and the other is the church of the devil; wherefore, whoso belongeth not to the church of the Lamb of God belongeth to that great church, which is the mother of abominations; and she is the whore of all the earth.

Simply put, there is the Church of the Lamb, which is singular with a border around it, and then there is the church of the devil which comprises all other identities, “-ites”, etc, and they don’t cease to exist, the people simply refuse to identify themselves with any of those things. This is taught to us also in 4 Nephi:

4 Nephi 1:20

20 And he kept it eighty and four years, and there was still peace in the land, save it were a small part of the people who had revolted from the church and taken upon them the name of Lamanites; therefore there began to be Lamanites again in the land.

So did there cease to be dark skin and light skin? Did there cease to be all of those other identifies? No, they simply chose to not accept any other identity and as soon as they withdrew themselves from the Church they began to immediately self-identify by other labels. Unity is not obtained by getting rid of all tribes, unity is obtained by having only one tribe, and only one tribe leads to peace and salvation, all others lead to destruction.

“And when the spirit of persecution, the spirit of hatred, of wrath, and malice ceases in the world against this people, it will be the time that this people have apostatized and joined hands with the wicked...” (Discourses of Brigham Young, p. 112)

Of course, we are speaking here of the first great commandment given to the human family—to love God wholeheartedly, without reservation or compromise, that is, with all our heart, might, mind, and strength.¹⁶ This love of God is the first great *commandment* in the universe. But the first great *truth* in the universe is that *God loves us* exactly that way—wholeheartedly, without reservation or compromise, with all of *His* heart, might, mind, and strength. And when those majestic forces from His heart and ours meet without restraint, there is a veritable explosion of spiritual, moral power.

Once again, I pulled this into the paper earlier so it’s a good confirmation that we are dancing around the same themes.

Then, as Teilhard de Chardin wrote, “for [the] second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire.”¹⁷

Once again, I don’t know why this is in here. It’s a play on words that once again doesn’t make sense (sandals aren’t designed to keep your feet warm and man did not discover fire or the “spiritual” fire of God...) Moving on.

It is then, and really only then, that we can effectively keep the second great commandment in ways that are not superficial or trivial. If we love God enough to try to be fully faithful to Him, He will give us the ability, the capacity, the will, and the way to love our neighbor and ourselves.

Elder Holland’s use of the words ability, capacity etc makes it abundantly clear that he is familiar with Elder Neal A Maxwell’s quote that I shared above. Why he feel comfortable quoting Teilhard de Chardin, C.S. Lewis and T.S. Eliot and not Elder Neal A Maxwell is one of the mysteries of the kingdom. I believe we covered what Elder Holland is teaching here earlier in the paper well enough- that when we love God idolatry flees and when idolatry flees we have no desire to lie, cheat, rob, etc, from/to our neighbors and thus the second great commandment, love thy neighbor as thyself can actually fully be realized.

We did a talk breakdown in which we more fully analyzed why when we understand the love between us and the Father we can then understand the love between us and our fellow man (*Eyes to See* by Sister Craig) so if you would like a deeper breakdown of that see that talk breakdown.

Perhaps then we will be able to say once again, “There could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God.”¹⁸

“One thing is certain—that every nation under the heavens will array itself against the kingdom of God. Inasmuch as some individuals among the nations receive it, they will muster their forces and try to destroy the saints of the living God. To prepare for this, we must increase in the Spirit of God as our enemies increase in the spirit of darkness against us, and by the power of God proclaim in their ears a testimony that will overcome the wicked. There is no possibility of the

wicked triumphing over this Latter-day Kingdom. There may be many who will have to fall—many who will have to suffer materially; but when we get to the home of the Saints of the living God, the wicked will cease from troubling us.” (Testimony of the Spirit, &c, Elder Orson Pratt, Journal of Discourses vol. 8, pp. 44-52)

Some people ask, “When does the tribulation cease? When do we have peace and are found worthy?” or “When will we be once again the happiest people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God?” Once again, I am with Elder Orson Pratt on this one, “when we get to the home of the Saints of the living God, the wicked will cease from troubling us...” and the home of the Saints of the living God is the New Jerusalem in Jackson County, when we get there, by foot or by train or by car or by angel, when we get there, whenever that may be for us- the wicked will cease from troubling you.

Doctrine and Covenants 38:17-22

17 And I have made the earth rich, and behold it is my footstool, wherefore, again I will stand upon it.

18 And I hold forth and deign to give unto you greater riches, even a land of promise, a land flowing with milk and honey, upon which there shall be no curse when the Lord cometh;

19 And I will give it unto you for the land of your inheritance, if you seek it with all your hearts.

20 And this shall be my covenant with you, ye shall have it for the land of your inheritance, and for the inheritance of your children forever, while the earth shall stand, and ye shall possess it again in eternity, no more to pass away.

21 But, verily I say unto you that in time ye shall have no king nor ruler, for I will be your king and watch over you.

22 Wherefore, hear my voice and follow me, and you shall be a free people, and ye shall have no laws but my laws when I come, for I am your lawgiver, and what can stay my hand?

Doctrine and Covenants 45:58-59, 65-71

58 And the earth shall be given unto them for an inheritance; and they shall multiply and wax strong, and their children shall grow up without sin unto salvation.

59 For the Lord shall be in their midst, and his glory shall be upon them, and he will be their king and their lawgiver.

65 And with one heart and with one mind, gather up your riches that ye may purchase an inheritance which shall hereafter be appointed unto you.

66 And it shall be called the New Jerusalem, a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the Most High God;

67 And the glory of the Lord shall be there, and the terror of the Lord also shall be there, insomuch that the wicked will not come unto it, and it shall be called Zion.

68 And it shall come to pass among the wicked, that every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety.

69 And there shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under heaven; and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another.

70 And it shall be said among the wicked: Let us not go up to battle against Zion, for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible; wherefore we cannot stand.

71 And it shall come to pass that the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations, and shall come to Zion, singing with songs of everlasting joy.

3 Nephi 25:1-3

1 For behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

2 But unto you that fear my name, shall the Son of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves in the stall.

3 And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of Hosts.

1 Nephi 22:23-25

23 For the time speedily shall come that all churches which are built up to get gain, and all those who are built up to get power over the flesh, and those who are built up to become popular in the eyes of the world, and those who seek the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world, and to do all manner of iniquity; yea, in fine, all those who belong to the kingdom of the devil are they who need fear, and tremble, and quake; they are those who must be brought low in the dust; they are those who must be consumed as stubble; and this is according to the words of the prophet.

24 And the time cometh speedily that the righteous must be led up as calves of the stall, and the Holy One of Israel must reign in dominion, and might, and power, and great glory.

25 And he gathereth his children from the four quarters of the earth; and he numbereth his sheep, and they know him; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd; and he shall feed his sheep, and in him they shall find pasture.

3 Nephi 21:20-25

20 For it shall come to pass, saith the Father, that at that day whosoever will not repent and come unto my Beloved Son, them will I cut off from among my people, O house of Israel;

21 And I will execute vengeance and fury upon them, even as upon the heathen, such as they have not heard.

22 But if they will repent and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance;

23 And they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob, and also as many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem.

24 And then shall they assist my people that they may be gathered in, who are scattered upon all the face of the land, in unto the New Jerusalem.

25 And then shall the power of heaven come down among them; and I also will be in the midst.

Moses 7:60-62

60 And the Lord said unto Enoch: As I live, even so will I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance, to fulfil the oath which I have made unto you concerning the children of Noah;

61 And the day shall come that the earth shall rest, but before that day the heavens shall be darkened, and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth; and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth; and great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but my people will I preserve;

62 And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men; and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem.

As always, I end the talk with the words/commitment of the speaker and make them my own. Note the word pledge (there is nothing scary about making pledges) and the choice of song, "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing," a song about having one's calling and election made sure. I would commit everyone to check out the Joseph's Boys pledge on Discord as well as take the time to re-read the entirety of that hymn.

Brothers and sisters, I pray we will succeed where that rich young man failed, that we will take up the cross of Christ, however demanding it may be, regardless of the issue and regardless of the cost. I bear witness that when we pledge to follow Him, the path will, one way or another, pass by way of a crown of thorns and a stark Roman cross. No matter how wealthy our young ruler was, he wasn't wealthy enough to buy his way out of a rendezvous with those symbols, and

neither can we. For the blessing of receiving the greatest of all possessions—the gift of eternal life—it is little enough that we are asked to stay the course in following the High Priest of our Profession, our Day Star, Advocate, and King. I testify with obscure Amaleki of old that each of us is to “offer [our] whole souls as an offering unto him.”¹⁹ Of such determined, steadfast devotion, we sing:

Praise the mount; I’m fixed upon it:
Mount of thy redeeming love. ...
Here’s my heart, O take and seal it;
Seal it for thy courts above.²⁰

In the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

[Amen](#)