
THE

WITNESS

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*He stretched forth His hand
and spake unto the people, saying
Behold, I am Jesus Christ
of whom the prophets testified*

ISSUE 165 / 2019

THE
WITNESS

ISSUE 165/2019

3 The Standard of Truth
by Marlin Guin

10 The Restoration of His People & the Gathering of the Saints
by Rich Rowland

14 Winter Retreat
by Brian & Monica Twombly; Robert Gillam

17 Prophecy Watch
by Dale Godfrey

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(3 Nephi 5:11 RLDS) [3 Nephi 11:10 LDS]

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The Standard of Truth

by Marlin Guin

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. John 14:6

During the 1990's, I worked on the southwest corner of the 21st floor, in downtown Kansas City. My office had a clear view of the street, at the intersection of 12th and Main. It was a typical sunny, summer day as I sat at my desk working on a project. Suddenly, I heard a man speaking with a loud voice from the street below. His voice carried well between the tall buildings and travelled up to where I could actually hear the words being spoken. He stood on the corner with a Bible in his hands. He was preaching about faith, repentance and the coming of Jesus Christ. His voice was loud and assertive, carrying with it deep conviction of the message. I rose from my chair and looked out my window to the street below. Since I was looking down, I could easily see people avoiding any close proximity to his preaching. They would cross the street or alter their path to go around him.

A few years ago, I witnessed a similar experience in an area close to the southwest corner of Central Park, in New York City. There was a building where the corner was open to the street, creating a plaza area. People, by the hundreds, would walk through this plaza area to cut through the corner in route to their destination. It was a very busy place. One morning, I happened to be standing on the sidewalk next to this plaza when I heard a man speaking with a loud voice. He stood, with a Bible in his hands, preaching about faith, repentance and the coming of Jesus Christ. He too reflected a deep conviction of the words being spoken. I noticed, as he started speaking, people no longer cut through this plaza area but took the longer route, around the corner, to avoid him.

These experiences, both then and now, have often caused me to reflect on the prophetic proclamations of Samuel the Lamanite, John the Baptist and others. Samuel was called out of a distant land to stand on the wall of the great city Zarahemla and declare, with a loud voice, faith, repentance and the coming of the Messiah. Many people didn't want to hear it and even sought to kill him. Likewise, John was called out of the wilderness to declare, with a loud voice, the same message. Many people, including leaders of the church in that day, didn't want to hear the message. His conviction of the coming of the Messiah was eventually sealed with his death.

The prophets, past and present, have always spoken of the promise that Jesus would gather all those who hearken unto His voice. To hearken unto the voice of Jesus means we know He is the standard of truth. He simply said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

And he cometh into the world that he may save all men, if they will **hearken unto his voice**; (2 Nephi 6:45 RLDS) [2 Nephi 9:12 LDS] (emphasis added)

Therefore blessed are they who will repent and **hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God**; for these are they that shall be saved. (Helaman 4:70 RLDS) [Helaman 12:23 LDS] (emphasis added)

And whosoever will **hearken unto my words**, and repenteth, and is baptized, the same shall be saved. (3 Nephi 10:31 RLDS) [3 Nephi 23:5 LDS] (emphasis added)

Jesus is the standard of truth, even in a world where truth is often measured by the precepts of men. Think of all the times we have heard something like this: whatever feels right at the time is absolute truth. Unfortunately, this approach to truth has become prominent in our culture and sometimes called “situational ethics.”

I recently read an article by Joseph Farah entitled: *What Happens When You Stop Believing in God?*¹ He emphasizes the effects of moving away from Jesus Christ as “the way, the truth, and the life.” He quotes G.K. Chesterton (English writer from the early 20th century) who states: “When people stop believing in God, they don’t believe in **nothing**—they believe in **anything**.” Notice how accurately this statement describes our world today! Moving away from a belief in God doesn’t necessarily mean we believe in “nothing” (atheist or agnostic) but rather we will believe in “anything” (everything is right). This certainly seems to be reflective of what we are seeing and experiencing in our culture.

When people stop believing in God, they don’t believe in nothing—they believe in anything.

Mr. Farah then quotes from Judges 21:25: “In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was **right in his own eyes**.” Such pride and arrogance! It’s not surprising that we also find the Book of Mormon and latter day revelation warning of this proud downfall.

O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned, they think they are wise, and they **hearken not**

unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves; Wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness, and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish. But to be learned is good, if they hearken unto the counsels of God. (2 Nephi 6:57-61 RLDS) [2 Nephi 9:28-29 LDS] (emphasis added)

Wherefore the voice of the Lord is unto the ends of the earth, that **all that will hear may hear**; prepare ye, prepare ye for that which is to come, for the Lord is nigh; and the anger of the Lord is kindled, and his sword is bathed in heaven, and it shall fall upon the inhabitants of the earth; and the arm of the Lord shall be revealed; and the day cometh that **they who will not hear the voice of the Lord, neither the voice of his servants, neither give heed to the words of the prophets and apostles**, shall be cut off from among the people; for they have strayed from mine ordinances, and have broken mine everlasting covenant; they seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but **every man walketh in his own way, and after the**

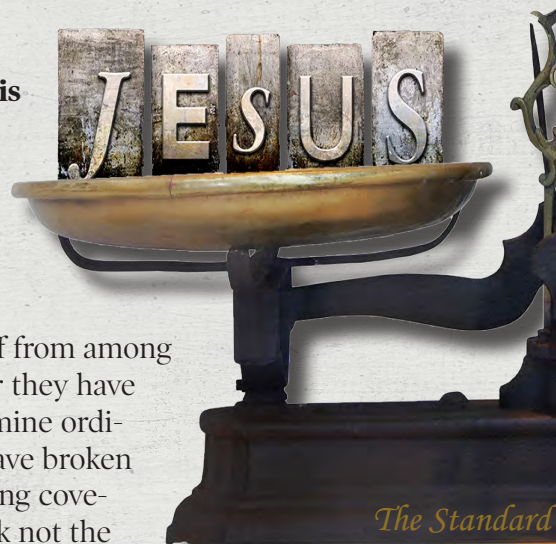


image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol, which waxeth old and shall perish in Babylon, even Babylon the great, which shall fall. (D&C 1:3a-e RLDS) [D&C 1:11-16 LDS] (emphasis added)

One reason there is so much conflict today is because people use different standards of truth. We see this daily on the news, in public places and in our personal lives. We witness people endlessly argue, con-

tend, discuss and debate the truth surrounding hot topics such as abortion, LGBTQ, marriage, morality and other subjects. These confrontations, even between those who identify as Christians, never seem to end with a common agreement. This process is described

Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth

as a latter day sign in 2 Timothy 3:7 (IV/KJV): “Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” In other words, always seeking ways to prove the correctness of our position but never totally submitting to Jesus Christ as “the way, the truth, and the life.”

In reference to Mr. Chesterton’s comment, what’s the result of no longer believing in God? What happens when Jesus Christ is not used as the standard of truth? With the absence of the divine standard, it



becomes inevitable for our human nature, the natural man, which is an enemy to God, to become the new standard of truth for our beliefs and actions in life. This carnal standard of truth has proven itself, from the beginning, to be one that changes truth like the waves of the sea because it is founded upon the vain and foolish precepts of men (traditions, opinion and own desires). It’s like building a foundation on sand.

Since the sum total of our individual choices flows over into our society, let’s boldly and honestly discuss our nation. America, established by those with a belief in God, today finds itself wondering to and fro, because truth is being defined by many standards. The Book of Mormon warns us of this downfall, based on the choices of the people to serve God.

And now we can behold the decrees of God concerning this land, that it is a land of promise, and whatsoever nation shall possess it, shall serve God, or they shall be swept off when the fullness of his wrath shall come upon them. And the fullness of his wrath cometh upon them when they are ripened in iniquity; for behold, this is a land

which is choice above all other lands; wherefore he that doth possess it shall serve God, or shall be swept off; for it is the everlasting decree of God. And it is not until the fullness of iniquity among the children of the land,

that they are swept off. And this cometh unto you, O ye Gentiles, that ye may know the decrees of God, that ye may repent, and not continue in your iniquities until the fullness come, that ye may not bring down the fullness of the wrath of God upon you, as the inhabitants of the land have hitherto done. **Behold, this is a choice land, and whatsoever nation shall possess it, shall be free from bondage, and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ who hath been manifested by the things which we have written.** (Ether 1:31-35 RLDS) [Ether 2:9-12 LDS] (emphasis added)

Restoration believers know America is the mighty nation established upon the land of promise. A nation called apart for the righteous purposes of God in the latter days. Even knowing this, we sometimes forget the constitution of this nation was established by wise men raised up by God for this very purpose. Sadly, after a relatively short history, our constitution is now under attack by those who do not accept it as the law of the land or choose to ignore the will of God when interpreting or modifying it.

Therefore, it is not right that any man should be in bondage one to another. And for this purpose **have I established the constitution of this land, by the hands of wise men whom I raised up unto this very purpose**, and redeemed the land by the shedding of blood. (D&C 98:10g-h RLDS) [D&C 101:79-80 LDS] (emphasis added)

In this same light, America is mentioned by Hal Lindsey in an article entitled: *Republic or Monarchy?*²² where he states:

Just after he and his colleagues had hammered out an agreement on the US Con-

stitution, a woman came up to Benjamin Franklin and asked, “Well, Doctor, what have we got, a republic or a monarchy?”

He answered, “**A republic**, Madam, if you can keep it.”

And that has been the question ever since. **Can we keep it?**

Alexis de Tocqueville was a French aristocrat who traveled extensively in the United States as he studied American democracy in the 1830s. As an aristocrat, he feared the volatility of a government vulnerable to the whims of the masses. He was also a religious skeptic. But in America, he found a force that calmed democracy’s inherent instability. **That steadying influence was Christianity.** He called America’s religious faith, “the great counterbalancing force to the instability and tyranny of democracy.”

John Adams’ famous quote on the same topic. “**Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.**”

Will America endure as a land of reliance on God?

The nation is spiritually ill. Therefore, the solution is also spiritual. We need a revival among Christians and a great awakening to the Gospel among the rest. God gave us this amazing land. Only He can repair it. But don’t look for a miracle imposed from the outside. God’s repair will only come when we invite the miracle into our own hearts.

The voice of the people determines our national spiritual health, at all levels of society. The prophets have always spoken of this truth. The Book of Mormon especially speaks clearly on the subject.

And if the time comes that the **voice of the people** doth choose iniquity, then is the time that the judgments of God will come upon you; (Mosiah 13:37 RLDS)

[Mosiah 29:27 LDS] (emphasis added)

Yea, well did he say, that if the time should come that the **voice of this people** should choose iniquity; that is, if the time should come that this people should fall into transgression, they would be ripe for destruction. (Alma 8:28 RLDS)

[Alma 10:19 LDS] (emphasis added)

But behold, the time cometh, saith the Lord, that when **ye shall cast out the righteous** from among you, then shall ye be ripe for destruction; (Helaman 5:18 RLDS) [Helaman 13:14 LDS] (emphasis added)

Let’s boldly consider the division of our nation because the voice of the people is not consistently founded upon the truth of Christ, even among many Christians. Too many Christians have become deeply attached to political parties, political correctness, philosophies, social causes and personal perspectives not centered on the truth of Christ. This seems to be true even when the word of God speaks clearly on some of the “hot topics” that divide us. We only have to observe the results of elections, polls, judicial actions, legislative solutions and personal choices concerning the great iniquities among us, to arrive at this conclusion. These great iniquities can only exist in a democratic nation, containing a Christian majority, with the permission of the Christian church.

One of the results of this separation is described by Charles R. Kesler (Professor of Government at Claremont McKenna College and editor of the *Claremont Review of Books*) in an article entitled *America’s Cold Civil War*³ :

[W]e have described our current political scene as a cold civil war. A cold civil war is better than a hot civil war, but it is not a good situation for a country to be in. Underlying our cold civil war is the fact that America is torn increasingly between two rival constitutions, two cultures, two ways of life.

[T]wo contrary visions of the country.

One vision is based on the original Constitution as amended. This is the

Constitution grounded in the natural rights of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution written in 1787 and ratified in 1788. It has been transmitted to us with significant Amendments—some improvements and some not—but it is recognizable still as the original Constitution. . . .

The other vision is based on . . . “the living Constitution.” This term implies that the original Constitution is dead—or at least on life support—and that in order to remain relevant to our national life, the original Constitution must be infused with new meaning and new ends and therefore with new duties, rights, and powers.

[W]hile keeping the outward forms of the old Constitution, the idea of a **living Constitution would change utterly the spirit in which the Constitution was understood.** The resulting Constitution. . . is not a constitution of natural rights or individual human rights, but of historical or evolutionary right . . . would be easily amenable to experimentation and adjustment. To paraphrase the late Walter Berns, the point of the old Constitution was to keep the times in tune with the Constitution; the purpose of the new is to keep the Constitution in tune with the times.

As a result, the gap . . . became a gulf, to the extent that today we are two countries—or we are fast on the road to becoming two countries—each constituted differently. There is, of course, also a big difference between . . . freedom **from** religion and freedom **of** religion.

Under present circumstances, the American constitutional future seems to be approaching some kind of crisis—a crisis of the two Constitutions.

We find a similar description in the Book of Mormon. Laws are interpreted, created or altered to justify sin. In America, it goes even further as laws are altered to declare certain sins to be a constitutional right. The purpose of these alterations is to relieve sinners from the weight of guilt and the fear of justice. This is the social and political environment in which

we currently live.

For as their laws and their governments were established by the **voice of the people**, and they who chose evil were more numerous than they who chose good, therefore they were ripening for destruction, for **the laws had become corrupted.** Yea, and this was not all; they were a **stiff-necked people**, insomuch that they **could not be governed by the law nor justice**, save it were to their destruction. (Helaman 2:64-65 RLDS) [Helaman 5:2 LDS] (emphasis added)

Corruption of law is accomplished, in a Christian nation, because creation of, interpretation of and changes to law are no longer based on Christ, who is the standard of truth. This corruption allows a nation to degenerate into total rebellion against God and promotes active participation in the great iniquities that eventually bring His judgements. Here are a few of the great iniquities and abominations listed in the scriptures:

And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you, At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fullness of my gospel, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, and of secret abominations; (3 Nephi 7:34 RLDS) [3 Nephi 16:10 LDS]

These six things doth the Lord hate; yea, seven are an abomination unto him; A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren. (Proverbs 6:16-19 IV/KJV)

Where is the prophetic voice of the Samuel's and John's today? I believe one person, among many, has emerged as a prophetic voice to latter day America and Israel. His name is Rabbi Jonathan Cahn. He writes and speaks about the historical and spiritual connection between ancient Israel and America today. In his

book, *The Paradigm*, he presents insights identifying three great iniquities and abominations that caused God's judgements to be poured out on ancient Israel. Israel, the northern kingdom, had rebelled against God and began to worship the pagan god, Baal. They no longer followed the laws of the God of Abraham but accepted the altered laws based on other gods. In their rebellion and under the guidance of the laws of Baal, the people began to engage in these three great abominations:

- 1) Sacrificing of their children
- 2) Sexual perversions (every imagination of the heart)
- 3) Worship of idols (all kinds)

These three great abominations, perhaps more than any others, angered God. America seems to be following the same pattern today. Our laws are systematically being altered based on the worship of other gods. These three great abominations, in all their forms, are being protected by altered law, diverse interpretations, sanctioned and encouraged among the people. All Christians should know with surety, based on the words of the prophets, the end result will be the same for America except we repent and return to "the way, the truth and the life." Jesus Christ is the standard of truth! There is mercy and forgiveness for those who do and He will remember our sins no more. What happened yesterday and before is history and what happens today and beyond is ours to determine. God always loves us, even in our rebellion!

The good news is, regardless of poor choices, God's purposes for America will be accomplished. God will establish Zion, preserve, restore and gather His people to one fold and one Shepherd. His people will gather from the nations and shall flow unto it. His kingdom will come upon the earth and no power, choices or otherwise, will prevent His will from being accomplished. Watch therefore, and pray always!

¹ <https://www.wnd.com/2019/02/what-happens-when-you-stop-believing-in-god/>

² <https://www.hallindsey.com/ww-1-30-2019/>

³ https://imprimis.hillsdale.edu/americas-cold-civil-war/?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=paid&utm_campaign=americanmedinsurance

*Our Constitution was made only for
a moral and religious people.
It is wholly inadequate
to the government
of any other.
John Adams*

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THE RESTORATION OF HIS PEOPLE & THE GATHERING OF HIS SAINTS

by RICH ROWLAND

The word of the Lord concerning his church, established in the last days for the restoration of his people, as he has spoken by the mouth of his prophets, and for the gathering of his Saints

to stand upon Mount Zion, which shall be the city New Jerusalem;

(D&C 83:16 R.L.D.S.) [D&C 84:2 L.D.S.]

Throughout the whole history of mankind, it seems there are two overarching thematic principles that characterize the relationship between man and God. It is no surprise that these principles are also firmly entrenched in virtually all accounts in scripture. The first principle is man is a creature of rebellion. To be specific, man is a creature of rebellion—against God! We don't often think of ourselves as rebels against God. It is easy to think about the children of Israel or the Lamanites of the Book of Mormon as being rebellious against God. Perhaps it is even easy to think of people living today as rebellious against God, but when we think of our own lives or the lives of our loved ones, it seems difficult to see ourselves as rebellious. I think that is why we find comfort in camouflaging our rebellion in terms that sound less harsh. We like to use terms like straying, lost or stubborn to describe ourselves and our loved ones, because it sounds kinder and gentler. The stark reality is we are in rebellion, open rebellion against God. Sin is open rebellion against God. The sooner we come to see ourselves as rebels against God, the sooner we can begin to seek Him out and change our lives.

The second principle is really God's response to the first principle. Despite our rebellion, God seeks to gather his people and restore them back into His presence. All of scripture is a testament to how God has reached out to His rebellious people. From Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to John on the isle of Patmos in the book of Revelation, this expression of God's love is apparent. From Lehi being called out of Jerusalem to Moroni sealing up the records of the Book of Mormon, God's call to His people to be gathered and restored is apparent. Latter day prophets revealed to mankind God's desire to gather and restore them into His presence. Man's open rebellion against God and God's unceasing attempt to gather and restore His people is the record of the whole history of mankind. In spite of our rebellion God had a plan.

THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION

Perhaps there is no better place in scripture to understand how God would accomplish His desire to gather and restore His people than in the Alma 19. In this chapter, Alma provides a clear explanation of God's plan of redemption. It is important to understand the groundwork upon which Alma's explanation is built. Alma suggests the two fundamental characteristics of God are love and justice. It is easy for us to embrace the love of God, but we often want to distance ourselves from the justice of God. Some might think, "If God really loves me, why would He ever punish me?" Alma points out both, God's love and God's justice must be taken together. One cannot override the other; otherwise "God would cease to be God." With this foundational understanding in mind, Alma starts his explanation in the beginning. Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, where they walked and talked with God. God gave them free dominion over the garden with one exception. They were not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Everything was perfect until Satan, in the form of a serpent, began to whisper in Eve's ear. Ultimately, Adam and Eve willingly chose to disregard God's instruction, and rebellion was born. Because rebellion, or sin, had entered the picture, God could no longer allow Adam and Eve in His presence. Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden, and most importantly, from God's presence. God never desired to be separated from his children, so He had to create a way for them to be restored. This plan would have to respect both of His fundamental characteristics, love and justice. Because God's commandment had been broken, justice required that an atonement must be made. Adam and Eve, as well as you and me, had no capacity to atone for their own sin. The guilty cannot absolve themselves of the demands of justice. Therefore, if the demands of justice were to be met, God Himself would have to offer the infinite and eternal atoning sacrifice, and He did in the form of His Son, Jesus Christ. Because of Jesus' perfect life and willing sacrifice on the cross, the demands of jus-

tice would be forever satisfied. With the demands of justice forever satisfied, God could then offer grace and mercy to Adam and Eve. Since Jesus' atoning sacrifice was infinite and eternal, God could also extend the offer of grace and mercy to you and me. The plan of redemption was perfect in every way except one—us. We are the imperfection in the plan. God is a perfect gentleman, and though He extends His grace and mercy to us, He will never force it upon us. Grace and mercy is a gift from God that must be received to complete the plan of redemption. The Doctrine and Covenants makes this point very clear.

For what doth it profit a man if a gift is bestowed upon him, and he receive not the gift? Behold, he rejoices not in that which is given unto him, neither rejoices in him who is the giver of the gift.

(D&C 85:7 RLDS) [D&C 88:33 LDS]

We receive His grace and mercy by repenting and coming unto Christ. With the demands of justice being satisfied, and grace and mercy being extended and received, mankind can then, and only then, be gathered and restored back into the presence of God.

THE CALLING OF EZEKIEL

While there are many places in scripture that demonstrate the great lengths to which God has gone to reclaim His people, the account of the calling of the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel is one of my favorites. Ezekiel lived during the early days of the Babylonian captivity. In fact, he was among the first group of the Israelites taken from Jerusalem and sent to Babylon. It is important to remember it was Israel's rebellion against God that led to the Babylonian captivity in the first place. God refers to the people as "rebellious" or "in rebellion" over 17 times in the book of Ezekiel. Even as Israel endured the consequences of her rebellion against God, God chose to call a prophet to be with them.

And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me; they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day. For they are impudent children and stiff-hearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them,

Thus saith the Lord God. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them. (Ezekiel 2:3-5 IV/KJV)

In Ezekiel's experience, God went on to unroll a scroll before Ezekiel. The scriptures indicate that upon the scroll was written "lamentations, mourning and woe." Ezekiel was told to eat the scroll and go speak it unto the house of Israel. Ezekiel did as commanded and ate the scroll. He said it was "in my mouth as honey for sweetness." Upon first reading about this scroll of "lamentations, mourning and woe," I couldn't help but wonder what words God might have written. In the context of many Old Testament prophets, I thought it might be a list of the grievances God had against the house of Israel, perhaps a listing of all the times Israel had broken the law and commandments of God. I suspect that might have been a very long scroll. Ezekiel said the scroll was "in my mouth as honey for sweetness." How could a list of grievances be sweet to the taste? I was pondering and praying for understanding about this seeming disconnect while at prayer service one night. During the service, a good sister stood to offer her prayer. As I listened she said, "Lord, help me to be heartbroken about the things that break your heart." Her words struck me with great force and immediately my mind was filled with the sense that I had my answer. Ezekiel's scroll wasn't a scroll of grievances, it was an expression of God's broken heart. It was God telling Israel, "My children, your rebellion has broken My heart!" Because Israel had chosen a path of rebellion against God, they had to endure the consequences of their choices. God was lamenting and



mourning Israel's place in captivity, because it didn't have to be this way. Time after time, God reminded the house of Israel how He had delivered their fathers from slavery in Egypt, led them through the wilderness and settled them in the choice land of Canaan. They were His chosen people; yet instead of choosing Him, they chose rebellion. The consequence of their rebellion was separation from God. Because of their rebellion, Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden and could no longer walk and talk in the presence of God. Israel would suffer a similar consequence by being separated from the house of God, the temple in Jerusalem. No longer would they be able to commune with God by participating in the temple feasts and festivals.

In the first 12 chapters of the book of Isaiah, God spelled out very specifically the grievances He had against Israel. In almost every case, He followed up the grievance with the phrase, "yet my hand is stretched out still." Although Israel would not respond to God's call, He wanted them to know that He had not forgotten them. Ezekiel was called to speak the words of God's broken heart, words of lamentations, mourning and woe, to a rebellious people. Even in Babylonian captivity, God was reaching out to Israel, trying to gather and restore them back into His presence.

Reflecting on Ezekiel's experience makes me wonder if God has a similar scroll for me. I must ask myself if I'm any less rebellious than Israel? While I do not like to admit it, I know the answer is no. Do I not bear the consequences of my rebellion just as Israel did? Has God not extended His grace and mercy on

my behalf? Surely, He laments and mourns as I bear the consequences of my rebellion.

A SCROLL FOR THE LAST DAYS

It is not unexpected that the Book of Mormon also contains accounts of God's great and numerous attempts to gather and restore His people. One great example pertaining to both the house of Israel and the Gentile world is found in 3 Nephi. Jesus tells the people of Nephi what will happen to their future generations. He tells of the Nephite rebellion against God that will come, and the consequences of judgment that will fall upon them. Jesus also explains how the gospel would go to the Gentile world, but they too would one day reject the word of God.

And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you, At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fullness of my gospel, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, and of secret abominations; And if they shall do all these things, and shall reject the fullness of my gospel, behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fullness of my gospel from among them; And then will I remember my covenant which I have made unto my people, O house of Israel, and I will bring my gospel unto them; (3 Nephi 7:34-36 RLDS)
[3 Nephi 16:10-11 LDS]

I find Jesus' descriptive list of the Gentiles' rebellion in the last days to be very interesting. One could very easily view it as a list of grievances God would have against the Gentiles of the latter days. On the surface, that seems to be a perfectly acceptable understanding. But what if, considering our understanding of Ezekiel's scroll, it is something more? What if it is a list of the ways the Gentiles would break the heart of God? The history of the Gentiles of this land is very similar to that of the house of Israel. Just as God led the Israelites out of physical bondage in Egypt, He also led the early Gentiles of this land out of spiritual bondage in England. God led Israel to the valley of Canaan, a land of milk and honey, and settled them there. He protected them and

allowed them to grow in the shadow of His blessing. The early Gentiles of this land were also led by God and settled into a land of bounty. They too relied upon His protection and grew in the shadow of His blessing. The fundamental histories of Israel and America are so similar. Just like Israel, America, the Gentiles of this land, would one day rebel against God. Just like Israel, America, the Gentiles of this land would suffer the consequences of their rebellion. As God had lamented and mourned Israel's rejection and suffering, He too must lament and mourn the rejection and suffering of the Gentiles of this land. Though God has lamented and mourned for both Israel and the Gentiles of this land, His marvelous promise of gathering and restoration is found in the final portions of 3 Nephi.

And I will shew unto thee, O house of Israel, that the Gentiles shall not have power over you, but I will remember my covenant unto you, O house of Israel, and ye shall come unto the knowledge of the fullness of my gospel. But if the Gentiles will repent, and return unto me, saith the Father, behold, they shall be numbered among my people, O house of Israel; And I will not suffer my people, who are of the house of Israel, to go through among them, and tread them down, saith the Father. (3 Nephi 7:37-39 RLDS) [3 Nephi 16:12-14 LDS]

Not only would God remember His covenants with Israel and restore her through the fullness of His gospel, but if the Gentiles of this land will repent, they too can be numbered among the house of Israel.

YE SHALL KNOW THAT THERE HATH BEEN A PROPHET AMONG THEM

Ezekiel was sent into Babylonian captivity with Israel because God wanted His people to know He had not forgotten them. Israel would have to live out the consequences of their rebellion against God, but they would know He had not forgotten them. Would it be unfair to compare the Church, restored in these latter days, to Ezekiel? Has God restored the Church, so the Gentiles of the latter days would know He had not forgotten them? As a nation, we seem to be in a period where we are beginning to experience the consequences of our rebellion against God. I don't know how those consequences will manifest themselves in our lives. I do know, however, God wants us to know He has not forgotten us. Doctrine and Covenants 38 gives us a

glimpse of the ultimate purpose of God's restored church.

[T]he word of the Lord concerning his church, established in the last days for the restoration of his people, as he has spoken by the mouth of his prophets, and

for the gathering of his Saints

to stand upon Mount Zion, which shall be the city New Jerusalem; (D&C 83:1b RLDS) [D&C 84:2 LDS]

I love that God's vision for the Church includes both the restoration of the house of Israel and the gathering of the Saints of the latter days. He has forgotten neither the house of Israel nor the Gentiles of the latter days! God laments and mourns our rebellion against Him. His desire, as it was from the beginning, is to gather and restore His people back into His presence. Our job is to accept the gift of grace and mercy by repenting and coming unto Christ.



Yet My hand is stretched out still

From the Directors Brian and Monica Twombly

What would it be like to live among a people who are all converted to our Lord—a place where there are no contentions and disputations? The Book of Mormon tells of a time like this:

“And it came to pass in the thirty and sixth year, the people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land, both Nephites and Lamanites, and there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another; And they had all things common among them, therefore they were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift.” (4 Nephi 1:3-4 RLDS) [4 Nephi 1:2-3 LDS]

This description of the spiritual condition of the Saints in America after Jesus’s ministry among them sets a high standard for us to follow. It is difficult to imagine life like that in our current day, but we know it is possible if we will live the word of God.

The Book of Mormon retreat was held January 25th through 27th at Odessa Hills Campground. We explored the above scripture throughout the weekend and enjoyed the fellowship with one another and with the Holy Spirit.

Elder Eric English taught a class entitled “No Contentions.” He shared many scriptures relating to people-to-people interactions and how important this is to God. The most important thing in our life is our relationship with God, and the second is our relationship with others. This is also reflected in the two greatest commandments Jesus taught. The Scriptures are full of insights on how to communicate properly and show love through our words and actions. There are sinful ways to deal with conflict, and there are God-honoring ways. The Scriptures will guide us how to follow the God-honoring ways. We need to focus on our relationships with God and each other, as we seek to build the kingdom of God.

Elder Robert Gillam was the retreat pastor, and he taught a class entitled “All Things Common.” In this class, we studied passages of Scripture from 3 Nephi, 4 Nephi, Acts, Genesis, and the Doctrine and Covenants to get a better understanding of all things common. To have all things common, it is necessary to have yielded ourselves to one heart, which is God’s heart; and one mind, which is God’s mind.



Alma 12:1-5 (RLDS) [Alma 17:1-3 LDS] gives insight into strengthening our relationship with God. Robert ended the class by challenging us with the following questions based on Alma 12:

- Am I strong in the knowledge of the truth?
- Do I have a sound understanding?
- Do I search the Scriptures diligently to know the word of God?
- Do I give myself to much prayer and fasting?
- Do I want the Spirit of prophecy and revelation?
- Do I teach with the power and authority of God?

In the afternoon, we did teambuilding activities to help us practice working together. One of the activities used a plastic tablecloth spread on the ground. On one side, the campers used a Sharpie to write, “Things to Implement in Our Lives to Get Closer to Christ,” and then the tablecloth was flipped, and the campers wrote, “Barriers to Our Relationship with Christ.” The entire camp stood on the tablecloth with orders to flip the tablecloth while no one stepped off it. It was quite crowded! We were standing on the side that listed all our barriers to our relationship with Christ. The goal was to flip from the bad things in our lives to the Christ-honoring things without losing anyone. This is analogous to working together to reach the kingdom. The tablecloth was crowded, and there seemed to be no room to start flipping it; however, with teamwork and communication, the obstacle was overcome. Some observations from the exercise are that everyone has to do their part, and sometimes it is difficult for the people in the back to see the progress, but with patience and teamwork, we will succeed.

Priest Aaron Jensen taught our third class, entitled “Free Partakers of the Heavenly Gift.” We discussed the Holy Ghost as the heavenly gift referenced. We did a deep dive into the work of the Holy Ghost which includes:

- Comfort
- Wisdom
- Remembrance
- To teach
- Develops the fruit of the Spirit
- Makes intercessions
- Softens our hearts
- Helps us to see eye-to-eye

These were just a few of the aspects of the work of the Holy Ghost we discussed. One camper made the statement that he had never been in a class that looked so deeply at the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is critical for us to have the conditions of Zion.

In the evening, we kept up with the winter retreat tradition of Book of Mormon skits, where each cabin acted out a different Book of Mormon story. We learned about a few new stories and had some unique renditions of some old favorites!

On Sunday morning, we had a wonderful worship of sharing thoughts, testimonies and songs with one another. We are so grateful for the weekend worshipping our Heavenly Father. May we all live converted to the Lord!



From the Pastor, Robert Gillam

I had the pleasure and the privilege to serve as Pastor of the Book of Mormon retreat again this year. I always look forward to a weekend spent at Odessa Hills with my brothers and sisters in study and worship, and this year was no different. The weekend kicked off with a shared meal and some games that allowed us to get to know each other better, renewing many old friendships and building new ones. Friday evening finished with a campfire and small prayer groups, which were a delight to many, as conversations carried on well after the prayers were finished. The theme for this year's retreat came from 4 Nephi 1:3-4 (RLDS) [4 Nephi:2-3 LDS], which also served as the topics for Saturday.

On Saturday morning, we began with devotions from Brian and Monica Twombly, the directors of this year's retreat, keeping our focus on Jesus Christ, as the new day began. Following breakfast, we had our first two classes, taught by Eric English and me. The Spirit was with us in great abundance, and the interaction from the youth was good.



There were great discussions and some excellent questions asked throughout both classes.

After lunch on Saturday, we enjoyed some team-building activities, including an activity where we wrote down specific actions we want to take in our lives that will help us come closer to building the cause of Zion

in our lives, both individually and collectively. We wrote these things down on a large vinyl sheet, turned the sheet over, and wrote specific issues in our lives that are causing us to not do what we want to do. Many of the youth gave a lot of thought to these things, and I believe it was a great exercise for them to actually put those things on paper.

The third class of the day was presented by Aaron Jensen, focusing on the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives, bringing great insight into how the Spirit works in us. Following Aaron's class, Lynn and Sugar Baumgart spoke for a few minutes regarding the Book of Mormon Internship, sharing testimonies with the youth and inviting them to apply for this year's Internship. The rest of the afternoon was a couple hours of free time, where we just enjoyed a nice time of fellowship with each other, playing games, talking, or just relaxing in front of the fire.

On Saturday evening, we had campfire, skits, and then the dedication service. This was a very Spirit-filled time of worship for us, and I could see God working in the lives of those present. Many shared their desires for specific areas of growth, after which someone would pray for the needs and desires shared. It was a very sweet time for each of us, and we followed it up with some small group prayers.

On Sunday morning, we enjoyed devotions, again focusing on Jesus Christ and His love for us, followed by a song service. We then had a season of worship and sharing, with no goal other than to edify one another by sharing our favorite hymns, a Scripture thought, a testimony, or a prayer. There were many great things given for the edification of those present, and a quiet Spirit prevailed throughout. All during the weekend, a very sweet Spirit was present, conversations were very uplifting, and everyone seemed to enjoy their time together. I praise the Lord for His abundant mercy and grace, and for being with us as we spent the weekend with each other.

PROPHECY WATCH

Recent developments in the Middle East have caused some to question whether we are seeing the prelude to a one-world religion.

(1) On Monday, February 4, 2019, Pope Francis and Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb signed a historic interfaith covenant in Abu Dhabi. Pope Francis and Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb arrived at the signing ceremony hand-in-hand, as a symbol of interfaith brotherhood. Pope Francis is the head of the Catholic Church, and Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb is considered to be the most important imam (prayer leader of a mosque) in Sunni Islam. The covenant they signed is a six-page document entitled, “A Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together.”

(2) It does not specifically mention a unification or consolidation of “churches” or religions. It does, however, demonstrate a mutual acceptance of terminology and basic concepts, which could cause one to believe it may lead to greater unity of religious concepts and a commonality of theological understanding. For example, the name “God” appears repeatedly in the document, while the name “Allah” does not appear (at least in the English translation). The document sanctions the existence of the world’s many religions by proclaiming: “The pluralism and the diversity of religions, colour, sex, race and language are willed by God in His wisdom, through which He created human beings.”

(3) The event, witnessed by a global audience of religious leaders from Christianity, Islam, Judaism and other faiths received little attention from media sources in the United States.

Is it possible that this covenant, as well as other covenants which are being made worldwide,

may indeed foreshadow attempts to form a union of many of the world’s religious faiths?

Such a movement would be consistent with Book of Mormon prophecy of the latter days.

And he said unto me, 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; (1 Nephi 3:220-222 RLDS) [1 Nephi 14:10 LDS] (emphasis added)

For the time speedily cometh, that the Lord God shall cause a great division among the people; and the wicked will he destroy; and he will spare his people, yea, even if it so be that he must destroy the wicked by fire.
(2 Nephi 12:90 RLDS) [2 Nephi 30:10 LDS]

Mankind shall be confronted with a choice, either choose to be part of the church of the Lamb of God, or be part of the church of the devil. It does not appear that the “church of the devil” will necessarily be a single unified entity. 1 Nephi 3:222 (RLDS) [1 Nephi 14:10 LDS] makes it clear that all who are not part of the church of the Lamb of God will, by default, regardless of whether they belong to any other religious entity, be part of the church of the devil.

That interpretation is supported by 1 Nephi 7:50-51 (RLDS) [1 Nephi 22:23 LDS] which says:

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; (emphasis added)

The Book of Mormon also makes clear who will be part of the church of the Lamb of God.

And he that will hear my voice, shall be my sheep; and him shall ye receive into the church; and him will I also receive. For behold, this is my church: whosoever is baptized, shall be baptized unto repentance. Therefore I say unto you, that he that will not hear my voice, the same shall ye not receive into my church, for him I will not receive at the last day: (Mosiah 11:128-129, 136 RLDS) [Mosiah 26:21-22, 28 LDS]

And if it so be that the church is built upon my gospel, then will the Father shew forth his own works in it; But if it be not built upon my gospel, and is built upon the works of men, or upon the works of the devil, verily I say unto you, They have joy in their works for a season, and by and by the end cometh, and they are hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence there is no return; (3 Nephi 12:22-23 RLDS) [3 Nephi 27:10-11 LDS]

It is worth noting as a reminder to all those who are part of the church of the Lamb of God that they may, by their choices and actions, become separated and no longer be beneficiaries of the blessing of such membership. They will thus become members of the church of the devil.

And it also came to pass that **whosoever did belong to the church, that did not repent of their wickedness, and humble themselves** before God; I mean **those**

who were lifted up in the pride of their hearts; the same were rejected, and their names were blotted out, that their names were not numbered among those of the righteous; (Alma 4:3 RLDS) [Alma 6:3 LDS] (emphasis added)

And in the fifty and first year of the reign of the Judges, there was peace also, save it were the pride which began to enter into the church; **not into the church of God, but into the hearts of the people who professed to belong to the church of God**; and they were lifted up in pride, even to the persecution of many of their brethren. (Helaman 2:29 RLDS) [Helaman 3:33-34 LDS] (emphasis added)

Interestingly, this recently signed covenant maintains that “The pluralism and the diversity of religions. . . [is] willed by God in His wisdom.”

Certainly, such an understanding is inconsistent with the effect of diverse religions recounted in the Book of Mormon.

For example, in the parable of the olive tree, at one point the grafted branches (modern Christianity) had produced all sorts of fruit, and the Lord of the vineyard, after sampling all the varieties of fruit which had been produced, proclaimed: “it hath brought forth much fruit, and there is none of it which is good. And behold, there are all kinds of bad fruit, and it profiteth me nothing,” (Jacob 3:74-78 RLDS) [Jacob 5:30-32 LDS]

Speaking of the many churches among the Gentiles, we find these words:

And the Gentiles are lifted up in the pride of their eyes, and have stumbled, because of the greatness of their stumbling block, that they have built up many churches; And there are many churches built up which cause envyings, and strifes, and malice; (2 Nephi 11:90; 92 RLDS) [2 Nephi 26:20-21 LDS]

Note in this reference “many churches” are described as a great stumbling block which causes “envyings and strifes, and malice.”

For it shall come to pass in that day, that the churches which are built up, and not unto the Lord, when the one shall say unto the other, Behold, I, I am the Lord's; and the other shall say, I, I am the Lord's. And thus shall every one say, that hath built up churches, and not unto the Lord;
(2 Nephi 12:3-4 RLDS) [2 Nephi 28:3 LDS]

The Book of Mormon makes it very clear that, for our Savior Jesus Christ, there is only one fold and one shepherd. It is incumbent upon each of us to hear His voice and come to that fold.

But I have received a commandment of the Father, that I shall go unto them, and that they shall hear my voice, and shall be numbered among my sheep, that there may be **one fold, and one shepherd**; therefore I go to shew myself unto them.
(3 Nephi 7:26 RLDS) [3 Nephi 16:3 LDS]
(emphasis added)

For behold, the righteous shall not perish; For the time surely must come, that all they who fight against Zion, shall be cut off. And the Lord will surely prepare a way for his people, unto the fulfilling of the words of Moses, which he spake, saying: A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass that all those who will not hear that prophet, shall be cut off from among the people. And now I, Nephi, declare unto you, that this prophet of whom Moses spake, was the Holy One of Israel; Wherefore, he shall execute judgment in righteousness; And the righteous need not fear, for they are those who shall not be confounded. But it is the kingdom of the devil which shall be built up among

the children of men, which kingdom is established among them which are in the flesh:. . . 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:

(1 Nephi 7:41-50, 51-53 RLDS)
[1 Nephi 22:19-23 LDS]

Notably absent from this covenant is any mention of Jesus Christ. If the world is truly seeking to achieve “Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together,” that search will be in vain, absent a belief in and commitment to the Savior Jesus Christ. Many hundreds of years ago, the goal which this covenant professes to seek to accomplish was in fact accomplished. Let's see how it was done.

And as many as did come unto them, and did truly repent of their sins, were baptized in the name of Jesus; and they did also receive the Holy Ghost. . .the people were all converted unto the Lord, upon all the face of the land, . . .and there were no contentions and disputations among them, and every man did deal justly one with another; And they had all things common among them, therefore they were not rich and poor, bond and free, but they were all made free, and partakers of the heavenly gift. And it came to pass that there was no contention in 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 tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, 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; (4 Nephi 1:2-4, 17-20 RLDS) [4 Nephi 1:1-3, 15-17 LDS]

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We live in an amazing time. So much is taking place throughout the world as the Lord moves to fulfill His will in the last days. May we always be watchful and vigilant and prayerfully measure all things by the standard of His word.

And what I say unto one, I say unto all, Watch ye therefore, and pray always, and keep my commandments, that ye may be counted worthy to escape all these things which shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man when he shall come clothed in the glory of his Father.
(Luke 21:36 IV/KJV)

(1) http://prophecynewswatch.com/article.cfm?recent_news_id=2952

<https://www.charismanews.com/opinion/75125-pope-francis-leading-imam-sign-covenant-pushing-us-toward-one-world-religion>

<https://www.zerohedge.com/news/2019-02-07/snyder-one-world-religion-looms-pope-islams-top-imam-sign-historic-covenant>

<http://www.cogwriter.com/news/prophecy/pope-and-muslim-leader-sign-interfaith-agreement-towards-a-one-world-religion-will-this-lead-to-peace-or-the-great-tribulation/>

(2) http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html

(3) http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html (page unknown)

The purpose of Prophecy Watch is to assist in looking for and knowing the signs of the times and the signs of the coming of the Son of Man. The perspectives it contains are not presented as the “only, best or final answer” to their meaning, but rather “to the intent that ye might believe on His name” and more fully participate in their fulfillment. We hope Prophecy Watch will provide a brief glimpse into specific prophetic subjects that will encourage each person to diligently pray, study fast and seek the will of God concerning them.