

Light of the World

Marlin Guin

"Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John 8:12)

We have all probably read, or at least heard, the scriptural account of the creation in Genesis. We know the familiar list of all that God created on different days. Each day describes the work of God, as recorded inside such bookend phrases as: "And I, God," and "the evening and the morning were the ... day." One aspect of this creation, found on the first day, is the bringing forth of light by the declaration of God. It reads:

"And I, God, said, Let there be light, and there was light. And I, God, saw the light, and that light was good. And I, God, divided the light from the darkness. And I, God, called the light day, and the darkness I called night. And this I did by the word of my power; and it was done as I spake. And the evening and the morning were the first day."

(Genesis 1:6-8 IV, Genesis 1: 3-5 KJV)

An important point to observe is the dividing of light from darkness. Where light is present, that same level of darkness cannot exist. Thus, the brighter the light, the lesser degree of darkness and so on. This is the natural law of God based on the principles of His creation. Since then, light and darkness are found to be opposite and exclusive to one another in reference to both the physical and spiritual laws of God.

The spiritual meaning of this truth is used symbolically throughout the scriptures. In fact, it is used literally hundreds of times. Jesus often used light to describe His relationship with the world and darkness to represent sin and separation from Him. Some examples are:

"I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness." (John 12:46)

"Behold, he is the life and the light of the world. Behold, he is the word of truth and righteousness."

(Alma 18:12 RLDS, Alma 38:9 LDS)

"And now, remember the words of him who is the life and light of the world, your Redeemer, your Lord, and your God. Amen." (D&C 3:18 RLDS, D&C 10:70 LDS)

When thinking of Jesus Christ as the light of the world, I am reminded of the prophecy of Samuel concerning His coming. It is important, as we consider this prophecy, to remember Jesus is the light of the WHOLE world and not just part of it. He came to save ALL who will hearken unto his voice (2 Nephi 6:45 RLDS, 2 Nephi 9:21 LDS). This places a spiritual significance upon the physical fulfillment of the prophecy of Samuel. We read:

"And now it came to pass that Samuel, the Lamanite, did prophesy a great many more things which can not be written. And behold, he said unto them, Behold, I give unto you a sign: for five years more cometh, and behold,

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Light of the World

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THEN COMETH THE SON OF GOD TO REDEEM ALL THOSE WHO SHALL BELIEVE ON HIS NAME. AND BEHOLD, THIS WILL I GIVE UNTO YOU FOR A SIGN AT THE TIME OF HIS COMING; FOR BEHOLD, THERE SHALL NIGHT BEFORE HE COMETH, THERE SHALL BE NO DARKNESS, INSOMUCH THAT IT SHALL APPEAR UNTO MAN AS IF IT WAS DAY; THEREFORE THERE SHALL BE ONE DAY AND A NIGHT, AND A DAY, AS IF IT WERE ONE DAY, AND THERE WERE NO NIGHT; AND THIS SHALL BE UNTO YOU FOR A SIGN; FOR YE SHALL KNOW OF THE RISING OF THE SUN, AND ALSO OF ITS SETTING; THEREFORE THEY SHALL KNOW OF A SURETY THAT THERE SHALL BE TWO DAYS AND A NIGHT; NEVERTHELESS THE NIGHT SHALL NOT BE DARKENED; AND IT SHALL BE THE NIGHT BEFORE HE IS BORN. (HELAMAN 5:54-58 RLDS, HELAMAN 14:1-4 LDS)

Like all prophecies, some people believed and some did not. However, all were aware of its existence and would later remember as the time for fulfillment drew close. It was a time the unbelievers were in power and rebellious toward God. They were ready and willing to kill all those who did believe, should the prophecy not be fulfilled. The faithful had literally put their lives in the hands of God. What a testimony of faith! The account reads:

"AND BEHOLD, THE TIME IS AT HAND, AND THIS NIGHT SHALL THE SIGN BE GIVEN. AND IT CAME TO PASS THAT THE WORDS WHICH CAME UNTO NEPHI WERE FULFILLED, ACCORDING AS THEY HAD BEEN SPOKEN: FOR BEHOLD AT THE GOING DOWN OF THE SUN, THERE WAS NO DARKNESS; AND THE PEOPLE BEGAN TO BE ASTONISHED, BECAUSE THERE WAS NO DARKNESS WHEN THE NIGHT CAME. AND THERE WERE MANY WHO HAD NOT BELIEVED THE WORDS OF THE PROPHETS, FELL TO THE EARTH, AND BECAME AS IF THEY WERE DEAD, FOR THEY KNEW THAT THE GREAT PLAN OF DESTRUCTION WHICH THEY HAD LAID FOR THOSE WHO BELIEVED IN THE WORDS OF THE PROPHETS, HAD BEEN FRUSTRATED, FOR THE SIGN WHICH HAD BEEN GIVEN WAS ALREADY AT HAND; AND THEY BEGAN TO KNOW THAT THE SON OF GOD MUST SHORTLY APPEAR; YEA, IN FINE, ALL THE PEOPLE UPON THE FACE OF THE WHOLE EARTH, FROM THE WEST TO THE EAST, BOTH IN THE LAND NORTH AND IN THE LAND SOUTH, WERE SO EXCEEDINGLY ASTONISHED, THAT THEY FELL TO THE EARTH; FOR THEY KNEW THAT THE PROPHETS HAD TESTIFIED OF THESE THINGS FOR MANY YEARS, AND THAT THE SIGN WHICH HAD BEEN GIVEN, WAS ALREADY AT HAND; AND THEY BEGAN TO FEAR BECAUSE OF THEIR INIQUITY AND THEIR UNBELIEF. AND IT CAME TO PASS THAT THERE WAS NO DARKNESS IN ALL THAT NIGHT, BUT IT WAS AS LIGHT AS THOUGH IT WAS MIDDAY. AND IT CAME TO PASS THAT THE SUN DID RISE IN THE MORNING AGAIN, ACCORDING TO ITS PROPER ORDER;

AND THEY KNEW THAT IT WAS THE DAY THAT THE LORD SHOULD BE BORN, BECAUSE OF THE SIGN WHICH HAD BEEN GIVEN."

(3 NEPHI 1:15-22 RLDS, 3 NEPHI 1:14-19 LDS)

God spared them as promised and delivered them from destruction as a great astonishment fell upon all the face of the earth. Remember, Samuel said there would not be darkness on the night before the Savior is born. This is miraculous enough alone, but think of the larger picture in the context of Jesus Christ being a light to the WHOLE world. Notice that the sun would set on this continent and yet there would be no darkness in all the land. Think of it for a moment. The sun setting with no darkness means the sun was also rising on the other side of the earth to provide light there. How perfect, that on the day Jesus Christ was born, there was NO darkness upon all the face of the whole earth. This means all sides. This sign matches exactly the words of Jesus in 1 John 1:5, which say: "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." There is no darkness in Him and there would also be no darkness on the earth at His coming, just as the scriptures testify.

With the coming of our Savior, people experienced the presence of light upon all the face of the earth. This physical light bore witness of the spiritual light that came into the world. This has profound meaning for us now as we receive the call of God to be a light to the world, that is, to be a reflection of Jesus Christ in our lives. In us is to be "no darkness at all," for where there is light, no darkness can dwell. Some verses expressing this expectation are:

"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1:6-7)

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, I give unto you to be the light of the world; a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." (Matt 5:16 IV, Matthew 5:14 KJV)

"AND IF YOUR EYE BE SINGLE TO MY GLORY, YOUR WHOLE BODIES SHALL BE FILLED WITH LIGHT, AND THERE SHALL BE NO DARKNESS IN YOU, AND THAT BODY WHICH IS FILLED WITH LIGHT COMPREHENDETH ALL THINGS."

(D&C 85:18A RLDS, D&C 88:67 LDS)

God had taken care of every detail. The true light has come into the world and will come again. The signs are again pointing to the fulfillment of this prophecy for the latter days. Until then, a covenant people is being called to be the light of Christ for our time. My prayer is for us to be such a people.

THE Perfect Tree!

Dayn Cederstrom

For many of us at Christmas time, the Christmas tree is the center of our decorations and activities. Today our family uses an artificial tree, but I remember in my youth when we had a real one. When we would select one, it had to be just right. It had to be not too tall and not too short; not too wide and not too slender. We searched for the "perfect tree." When we were satisfied that we had found it, we took it home and decorated it.

At Christmas time, we employ many symbols in our decorating. Some of these have lost their meaning and significance to us. At Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus. But this celebration can never be complete without fully understanding why Jesus came and the theology of Christianity.

THE WAGES OF SIN

The writings of Alma in the Book of Mormon, make our relationship with God very clear. Alma writing to his youngest son in the 19th chapter of Alma makes the following points:

1. All mankind is fallen.

2. Because of their fallen state, they are subject to the justice of God.

3. Justice demands death because God is holy.

The scriptures are clear about sin and the nature of man. "The wages of sin is death" declares the Apostle Paul. King Benjamin tells us "the natural man is an enemy to God." Alma, speaking to the people of Ammonihah, emphatically states "whosoever dieth in his sins, as to a temporal death, shall also die a spiritual death." The Apostle John defines sin as the transgression of the law.

The Law demands justice! The Law condemns man in that he has fallen short of God's glory. This fallen nature of man subjugates him to the demand of justice. This justice relegates them to be cut off from the presence of God. Being cut off from the presence of God is death.

THE PUNISHMENT OF SIN

Under the Mosaic law, people who had committed sins punishable by death were hung upon a tree. The guilty, who had committed atrocities worthy of this punishment, were

considered cursed by God. Usually offenders were stoned to death, and then the corpse was hung on a tree. This punishment was the ultimate in humiliation. In the 4th century BC, Alexander the Great introduced crucifixion to the Jews. The origins of crucifixion are not known, but its use was meant to humiliate the victim. The crucified were stripped of clothing and their hands and feet fastened to either a crossbeam or upright using either rope or nails. Oftentimes, when uprights were not available, trees would be used. The punishment of crucifixion was meant to shame and humiliate the condemned, and it was death by torture.

When Jesus was brought before Pilate, his accusers demanded his death from the Roman governor. The charge against Jesus was blasphemy, and the punishment for this was

death.8 For common criminals, the method of execution used was crucifixion. For the Jewish leaders in Jesus' time, they associated the curse of the Mosaic law, the hanging on a tree, upon those condemned by this method of execution.

THE TREE OF LIFE

Provisions within the Mosaic law allowed Israel to make sin offerings with bullocks,

lambs, goats, doves and pigeons.

Despite the devotion and piety of those making this offering, this act did not bring perfection and was a shadow of things to come.⁹

The law pointed toward a great and final sacrifice that would be made to atone for the sins of man. Alma addresses the sacrifice for sin. "For it is expedient that there should be a great and last sacrifice; yea, not a sacrifice of man,

neither of beast, neither of any manner of fowl; for it shall not be a human sacrifice: but it must be an infinite and eternal sacrifice." This sacrifice would fulfill the law

of Moses. It would be the Son of God satisfying the demands of justice while giving mercy and salvation to those that will believe and repent.

The Son of God was that sin offering. Isaiah foresaw that this would be the plan of God. "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; when thou shall make his soul an offering for sin." Upon Jesus was laid the sins of man to make atonement to a holy God. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." The prophets foresaw the method of punishment and the stigma that it placed upon the condemned.

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¹ Romans 6:23

² Mosiah 1:119 RLDS, Mosiah 3:19 LDS

³ Alma 9:29 RLDS, Alma 12:16 LDS

41 John 3:4

⁵ Romans 3:23

6 Alma 19:96 RLDS, Alma 42:14 LDS

Deuteronomy 21:22

8 Leviticus 24:16

9 Hebrews 10:1

10 Alma 16:210 RLDS, Alma 34:10 LDS

11 Isaiah 53:10 IV

12 2 Corinthians 5:21

The Perfect Tree

Continued from page 3

By the law, we cannot be justified and by it we are condemned.¹³ Jesus was cursed, made to be a sin offering for us and hung upon a tree. Yet through this cursing that was placed upon Jesus, we have hope as the Apostle Paul declares, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.'"¹⁴ This act of atonement, Christ's crucifixion upon the cross, has become the means to eternal life to those who believe and repent of their sins. The atonement of Christ is the "tree of life"!

SYMBOLISM

In the Scandinavian countries, the Christmas tree is symbolic of the tree of life. At this time of year, we may seek the "perfect" tree for our Christmas celebration. Yet, in the meridian of time, God gave us the perfect tree. Upon this tree was placed the most precious gift, His only begotten Son. This tree, upon which hung this offering, is the tree of life to all who believe! It is the "perfect tree."

In Nephi's vision, he is given the meaning and understanding of the tree of life. "Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?

And I answered him, saying, Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore it is the most desirable above all things.

And he spake unto me, saying, Yea, and the most joyous to the soul.

And after he had said these words, he said unto me, Look! And I looked, and I beheld the Son of God going forth among the children of men: And I saw many fall down at his feet and worship him.

And it came to pass that I beheld that the rod of iron, which my father had seen, was the word of God, which led to the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life; which waters are a representation of the love of God; And I also beheld that the tree of life was a representation of the love of God.

And the angel said unto me again, Look and behold the condescension of God!

And I looked and beheld the Redeemer of the world..."15
About ten years ago, I had asked God that I might have a testimony about the atonement. One day, when coming home from work, the Spirit of God rested upon me. The joy that I felt was great, and I began to sing the hymn "Amazing Grace." When I began singing, I was flooded with God's spirit. Tears welled up in my eyes, my voice quivered and, in my mind's eye, I saw a figure of man upon a cross. I knew then that there was a Savior and that His name is Jesus Christ! And I knew that He had died to atone for my sins. Jesus is that fountain of living water that Nephi saw. Jesus is the "tree of life."

For God so loved the world, that he gave his Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish; but have everlasting life.¹⁶

¹³ Romans 3:20 ¹⁴ Galatians 3:13 ¹⁵ 1 Nephi 3:63 – 71 RLDS, 1 Nephi 11:21-27 LDS ¹⁶ John 3:16

Book of Mormon Retreats

The Book of Mormon Foundation has been participating in retreats throughout the United States. In September, we shared with the saints in the north at Chetek, Wisconsin and, in November, with the saints in the south at Lexington, Tennessee. All were well attended, and the fellowship was outstanding. We have also been invited back to the southeast following the retreat in Florida this past March. The upcoming southeast

retreat will be at the Deerhaven Campground, in Florida, on March 4-6, 2005. We always appreciate the strength we receive as we witness the faithful service of our brothers and sisters in outlying areas. We consider it a treasured opportunity to go out into the field to bring ministry and proclaim the importance of the Book of Mormon for our time.





"We attended a weekend retreat in Chetek, WI, where Marlin and Dale presented some great presentations on the Book of Mormon. Thanks for the Book of Mormon Foundation for providing the support for the Saints outside of the Independence area."

Thanks for your support, Fallwell Family

The Christmas Star Genie Simmons

star of wonder, star of night"... is often

sung at Christmas. Our Christmas cards and pictures have a large star over the manger. We put them on the top of our Christmas trees. It is one of the beloved symbols of the season.

When Jesus was born, a new star appeared. So why did the wise men know of it and not Herod? The first time Herod knew was when the wise men said they had seen it in the east. His chief priests and scribes did not know either. All they knew about was a prophecy concerning the Messiah, who was to be born in Bethlehem (Matt 3:1-10 IV/Matt 2:1-10 KJV, Micah 5:2 IV/KJV). It reads:

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is the child that is born, the Messiah of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and have come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard of the child, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests, and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them, saying, Where is the place that is written of by the prophets, in which Christ should be born? For he greatly feared, yet he believed not the prophets. And they said unto him, It is written by the prophets, that he should be born in Bethlehem of Judea, for thus have they said, The word of the Lord came unto us, saying, And thou Bethlehem, which lieth in the land of Judea, in thee shall be born a prince, which art not the least among the princes of Judea; for out of thee shall come the Messiah, who shall save my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had called the wise men privily, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found the child, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and lo, the star which they saw in the east, went before them, until it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

There is no Old Testament reference to the star in relation to the birth of Jesus. A star is mentioned a few times, but not as the Christmas star. This is the reason the people of Jerusalem or Bethlehem were not standing around in awe of the star. They

should have noticed a new star, especially if was as big and bright as we envision it in our Christmas traditions. Their ability to see it was somehow taken from them, perhaps because of a lack of knowledge concerning the prophecy or maybe a spiritual veil covered their eyes because of iniquity. God knew they would reject the coming of the true Messiah.

The only place in the scriptures where a star is mentioned, in conjunction with the birth of Jesus, is Samuel the Lamanite's words in the Book of Mormon (Helaman 5:55-60). Here is the list of signs from Samuel's prophecy:

- five years will pass
- · a great light in the sky
- · one day and a night, and a day, as if it were one day
- · a new star shall arise
- · many signs and wonders in heaven

This is the star in the east that the wise men were following to Bethlehem. Evidently, the nature of the star was such that they would easily see it and be able to follow it to a particular place.

This star, and the prophecy's fulfillment, also saved the lives of the church members in Zarahemla. They were to be executed, because the authorities believed the time for the signs had passed. Jesus' birth saved their lives (3 Nephi 1:9-20 RLDS, 3 Nephi 1:9-18 LDS). The saints' faith was strengthened because Nephi spent the day in prayer, and Jesus spoke to him to say that this is the night the sign shall be given (3 Nephi 1:10-15 RLDS, 3 Nephi 1:10-14 LDS). That same night, when the sun went down and there was no darkness, the unbelievers saw the error of their ways, and many fell to the ground. The signs were all given and the scriptures were fulfilled "every whit." (3 Nephi 1:23 RLDS, 3 Nephi 1:20 LDS)

The star we use as a symbol of Christmas saved the New World saints' lives and led the wise men to Jesus. The infant Jesus, from the moment of His birth, was the savior.

Book of Mormon Day For Kids Barbara Capps

nthusiastic children in grades 1-6 attended the annual Book of Mormon Day For Kids on August 21 at the South Crysler Restoration Branch. "Live For The Kingdom" was this year's theme. Participants came from the Independence, Missouri area; Wichita, Kansas; and as far away as Miami, Oklahoma. The day began with singing, prayer, and a drama of Abish sharing King Lamoni's conversion experience with a friend. Abish's belief and faithfulness enabled her to witness of God's love and His power.

Class themes were taken from Helaman 2:18-31, showing how we can live for the kingdom today. Through an object lesson and looking at the conversion experience of Alma and the four sons of Mosiah, we learned that we should "Do That Which is Right in the Sight of the Lord" by repenting, making right choices, being obedient, and dedicating ourselves to the Lord's work.

The story of Jacob confounding Sherem let us see the importance of "Believing on the Name of Jesus Christ." Sherem attempted to lead away the hearts of the

people. Because of Jacob's close relationship with the Lord and his knowledge of the scriptures, the Lord poured out His Spirit upon Jacob. Through prayer and searching the scriptures, we are able to enter into a closer relationship with Christ.

By working together and encouraging each other, the children were able to complete an obstacle course. They learned that "Enduring to the End" may require having to suffer persecution, but the kingdom of heaven will be their reward.

After considering the possible weight of The Book of Mormon plates and talking about those in The Book of Mormon who treasured God's word, the children participated in a Book of Mormon trivia

game, encouraging them to "Lay Hold Upon the Word of God." In addition to other classes, each child decorated a frame for a picture taken of them at the beginning of the day. The pictures were taken in front of a tree of life mural to be a reminder of

God's love for them.

Following lunch, everyone came together to focus on the importance of "Calling Upon His Holy Name." In a chalk talk of Enos seeking the Lord through prayer, we saw that Enos not only prayed for himself, but also for his people, his enemies the Lamanites, and the preservation of the records. God covenanted with Enos that He would bring forth the plates to the Lamanites. Enos' soul did rest, knowing that God always remains true to his covenants.

The activities concluded with a puppet play showing that Christ is the key to entering the kingdom, an

overview of the day, and a closing prayer. After the prayer, an energetic youth asked, "When are you having another one of these?" Finding out that it will be next summer, he replied, "I'll be there!" It is our desire that the Book of Mormon Day For Kids will continue to reach out and share The Book of Mormon truths with our youth.





Book of Mormon Retreat

Date: January 28-30, 2005

Theme: Soldiers for the Lord - A special presentation. Alma 12:1-5, Daniel: Chapters 1-3

Ages: 17 through 24

Cost: \$30 if registration is postmarked by January 20th \$35 after the 20th.

Retreat Directors: Val and Anita Brotherton 816-694-6031

2005 Internship

Date: July 5-August 12

Application deadline is February 11.

Ages: 18-24 high school graduate at the beginning

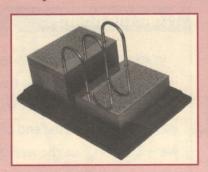
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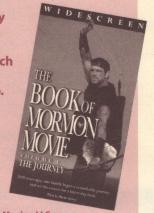
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From The President

We, at The Book of Mormon Foundation, believe one of the great young adult programs in the Restoration is the Internship program. Since the beginning, 119 young adults have completed the internship. Many of them are actively providing leadership and ministry in the church today. We need your financial support to continue this program into the future. The cost to sponsor an intern for the summer program is \$2,000. Please consider, as individuals and branches,

"sponsoring an intern," or send what you can as the Lord directs. <u>Any</u> contribution is greatly appreciated. May God bless you in your considerations.

Wish List

Roof Repair/Replacement Bids being solicited

Sponsor An Intern \$2,000

Any amount appreciated



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From the Board...

In an effort to continually evaluate and improve our programs, we have decided to change the focus of our Thursday night classes. Effective at the end of this year, we will discontinue the weekly classes scheduled on Thursday evenings at the BMF Learning Center. We will, instead, continue to schedule special classes as the opportunities present themselves and as the needs justify. In so doing, we will advertise them to our readers so the date, time and subject will be known well enough in advance for you to plan your schedules. We are confident this will better meet the needs of the people and the teachers. We also trust you will continue your support of the classes.

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