



# THE ZARAHEMLA RECORD

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"And he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word . . ." Alma 9:18

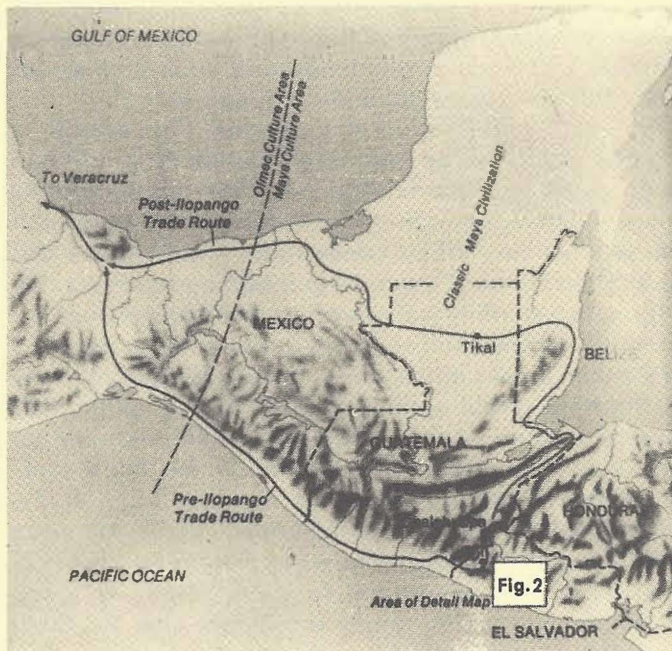


Fig. 1—Southern Mesoamerica showing location of Fig. 2 (after Sheets 1981).

This article discusses two ancient volcanic eruptions in El Salvador and their significance to the Book of Mormon (Fig. 1).

We will begin with the eruption of the Laguna Caldera volcano in about A.D. 600 (Fig. 2). This eruption covered about eight square miles with a deep layer of ash. Archaeologists like to find volcanically buried sites, the most famous being Pompeii, because of the excellent preservation of these sites. Archaeologist Payson Sheets (see *Volcanoes and the Maya* by Payson D. Sheets, *Natural History*, Vol. 90, No. 8, August 1981, pp. 32-41) has discovered what he calls a Pompeii-like site buried under the ash from the Laguna Caldera volcano. This site, named Ceren, is Pompeii-like only in its preservation. Ceren is not a city like Pompeii but is a rural village of cornfields and scattered houses.

The preservation is said to be even better than at Pompeii because of the nature and sequence of the deposited material. The landscape was first covered by six inches of a fine-grained ash which had enough moisture in it to allow it to pack around the four to six inch high corn plants as well as other plants. This layer was followed by a thinner layer of cinders and lava bombs at a temperature of over 1000°F. Thus much of the vegetation was carbonized and therefore preserved. "What is left is a cast

## VOLCANOES, ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BOOK OF MORMON

By Raymond C. Treat

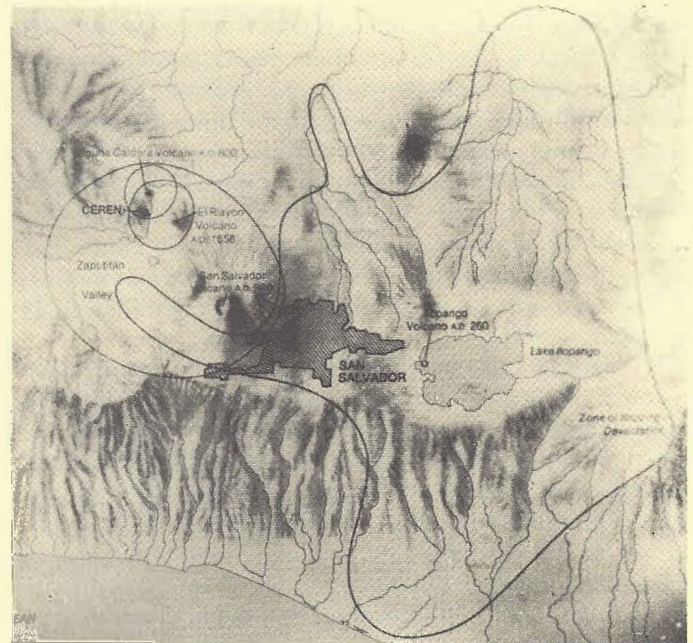


Fig. 2—Portion of El Salvador showing area of devastation for Laguna Caldera volcano (small circle upper left - note location of Ceren) and area of devastation for Ilopango (large area to the right). The other two circles show later volcanoes (after Sheets 1981).

of the vegetation, and preservation is so detailed that even cellular structures in the corn plants can be observed under a microscope (Sheets 1981:36)." Finally, more ash accumulated to a depth of twelve to twenty feet.

A portion of a farmhouse was excavated in 1978. Four large pottery storage jars were found in the pantry area. Two were empty or had contained liquid and two contained small beans. A pottery-making area was found in one room. A lump of potter's clay and a lump of hematite (red iron oxide used for paint) were found along with an andesite flake used as a pottery smoother. Another part of the house had been destroyed by modern construction in 1976. Local observers said they saw a number of bodies on the floor of the house with some polychrome pottery vessels. According to Sheets, if this description is correct, it appears that the family was

gathered around the pottery they used in their religion in an attempt to save themselves from the catastrophe. In this farmhouse scene we have a unique glimpse of a Lamanite family some 200 years after the destruction of the Nephite nation. The excavation of this partial farmhouse seems to be only the beginning:

Given our knowledge of Maya settlement patterns, we are virtually certain that a small city or large town also lies entombed somewhere under the Laguna Caldera tephra (ash), whose maximum depths have yet to be probed. Such a site should have a pyramid-plaza complex at its center, with palaces and possibly a marketplace and areas for craft specialists. The excavation of such a site would add immeasurably to our knowledge of the Classic Maya, given the sudden and detailed preservation caused by the eruption of Laguna Caldera (Sheets 1981:39-40).

Removing 12 to 20 feet of ash from a large area is too expensive so Sheets has worked out a method for locating buried structures using a resistivity device to measure the passage of electricity through the ground, a ground-penetrating radar and a seismograph. These instruments locate unusual underground formations. A core-drilling rig then determines if these formations represent man-made structures or not. So far, Sheets has examined an area of a little over two acres and has found two ancient structures, one 14 feet deep and the other 20 feet deep. However, excavation will have to wait until the warfare in El Salvador is over.

The second ancient volcanic eruption with significance to the Book of Mormon occurred about A.D. 260. The eruption from the Ilopango volcano in El Salvador (Fig. 2), was one of the world's largest in the past few thousand years. By way of contrast, the amount of Ilopango ash was probably ten times greater than the ash of the Mount St. Helens eruption in 1980. The ash was three feet deep 45 miles from Ilopango. Closer, the ash layer varied from 6-145 feet deep. The zone of complete devastation extended to at least eighteen miles down-wind from the volcano. Beyond this zone more than a thousand square miles were rendered unliveable by the ash. While Dr. Sheets is expecting to find a preserved city or town under the A.D. 600 ash of the Laguna Caldera eruption, it would seem just as logical to find several sites under the much more extensive A.D. 260 Ilopango ash.

What is the significance of this work in El Salvador to the Book of Mormon? It is archaeological evidence pointing toward the existence of volcanically buried well-preserved Book of Mormon cities which we already knew by faith were there.

As you recall there was a great storm at the time of the crucifixion of Christ which included hurricanes, tidal waves, earthquakes and volcanoes. The following quote gives evidence of volcanic activity:

... there was darkness upon the face of the land. And it came to pass that there was thick darkness upon all the face of the land, insomuch that the inhabitants thereof who had not fallen, could feel the vapor of darkness; And there could be no light,

because of the darkness; neither candles, neither torches; neither could there be fire kindled with their fine and exceeding dry wood, so that there could not be any light at all; And there was not any light seen, neither fire, nor glimmer, neither the sun, nor the moon, nor the stars, for so great were the mists of darkness which were upon the face of the land. And it came to pass that it did last for the space of three days, that there was no light seen; III Nephi 4:17-21

Since the Book of Mormon includes less than one percent of the recorded history of the Nephites (see Words of Mormon 1:8) there should be several Book of Mormon cities still well preserved under volcanic ash.

The work in El Salvador is a reminder that a Book of Mormon city buried by volcanic ash during the crucifixion storm could be discovered at any time. Since volcanic preservation far exceeds the preservation of archaeological sites not covered by volcanic ash, the discovery and excavation of one of these cities would no doubt provide information startling to those who do not believe in or are not aware of the Book of Mormon. Some things the Book of Mormon speaks of that are not known archaeologically in the New World are several Old World grains and animals such as wheat, barley, sheep and goats. We do not know when these things became extinct but it could have been during the crucifixion storm, at least for the animals. Critics of the Book of Mormon ridicule the claim that these items were ever in the New World prior to Columbus. The discovery of these items in good archaeological context would completely alter the main premise of New World archaeology, namely that civilization was independently invented in the New World. It would also focus attention on the Book of Mormon.

El Salvador is at the southeastern edges of Mesoamerica and the Book of Mormon land of Nephi. Archaeologists have known of these volcanic eruptions for over 50 years. Why has it taken this long for excavations to begin? The answer to this question lies in the shift in emphasis which has occurred in Mesoamerican archaeology since World War II. For many years prior to World War II the interest was in the large ceremonial centers and the hieroglyphic stelae. This was logical as it was believed they held the key to understanding the ancient Maya. Later it became obvious that the centers with their glyphs represented only a part of Maya life and it was clear that information was also needed from villages and rural areas. In other words, the large centers did not exist in a vacuum but were part of the total pattern of Maya life. Archaeologists started using terms like cultural ecology, that is, man's relationship to his environment, and settlement patterns which is concerned with how man arranges himself on the total landscape and what this pattern of settlement can tell us about the society in question. The understanding grew that every aspect of Maya life was important. Attention turned to studies of population, food production and natural resources. This shift in emphasis from a part (ceremonial centers) to the whole coupled with advances in technology has provided an explosion of new information about the Maya,

(continued on page 8)

# THE FOUR LEVELS

By Raymond C. Treat

The Book of Mormon is an excellent source for spiritual insights. No doubt some of these are found only in the Book of Mormon and others are first discovered there because of its plainness. One of these insights deals with the process leading to sanctification (Fig. 1) which is

## SIX STEPS TO SANCTIFICATION

HELANAN 2:31—Nevertheless, they did fast and pray oft, and did wax stronger and stronger in their humility, and firmer and firmer in the faith of Christ, unto the filling their souls with joy and consolation, yea, even to the purifying and the sanctification of their hearts, which sanctification cometh because of their yielding their hearts unto God.

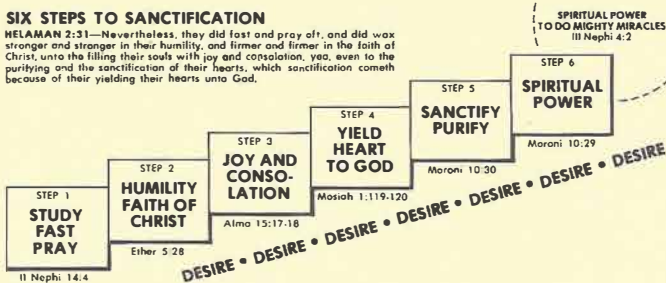


Fig. 1

clearly spelled out in Helaman 2:31. Since sanctification is our goal, according to Helaman 2:31, and is on the celestial level, we need to have a working knowledge of all four levels in order to recognize the celestial level.

We must first realize that God has a four level system (Fig. 2) for classifying all life. We normally think of only the three levels of the star, moon and sun but there are actually four levels as we see from D&C 85:5bc:

For he who is not able to abide the law of a **celestial** kingdom, can not abide a celestial glory; and he who can not abide the law of a **terrestrial** kingdom, can not abide a terrestrial glory; he who can not abide the law of a **telestial** kingdom, can not abide a telestial glory; therefore, he is not meet for a kingdom of glory. Therefore, he must abide a kingdom which is **not** a kingdom of glory.

These verses tell us then that we have four levels, a celestial (sun) level, a terrestrial (moon) level, a telestial (star) level and a no glory level.

Next, we must realize that these four levels are not only part of life after death but are actually part of life now. Notice that if you can not abide the law of a celestial kingdom, you can not abide a celestial glory. We all agree that celestial glory is part of life-after-death, but what about the celestial kingdom? When does it operate? Note that in the verse quoted above the word kingdom comes before the word glory implying that it comes before death. Thus we see the kingdom relates to life on earth. For example, we know that Zion is on the celestial level and is the kingdom of God on earth:

and Zion can not be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom, otherwise I can not receive her unto myself; D&C 102:2c

The Book of Mormon gives additional insight that the life style (kingdom) we choose in this life will be the life style (glory) we inherit in the next life:

... that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world. Alma 16:232

Accordingly, if there are four spiritual categories (glories) after we die then there must be four corresponding categories (levels) in operation while we are on the earth.

The realization that these levels are in existence now is one of the first steps toward devising a practical plan for personal spiritual growth. The four levels actually serve as a spiritual roadmap helping us to see where we are and where we want to go. This is a very exciting endeavor. Every decision we make can be accurately assigned to one of these four levels once we have gained a working knowledge of the life style represented by each level. The recognition that something that we are in the habit of doing does not measure up to the celestial or Zion level is the first step toward replacing this activity with a celestial level activity. A good way to begin understanding the life style represented by each level is to look at the four responses to the word of God as found in Lehi's vision of the rod of iron (1 Nephi 2:41-85), the parable of the

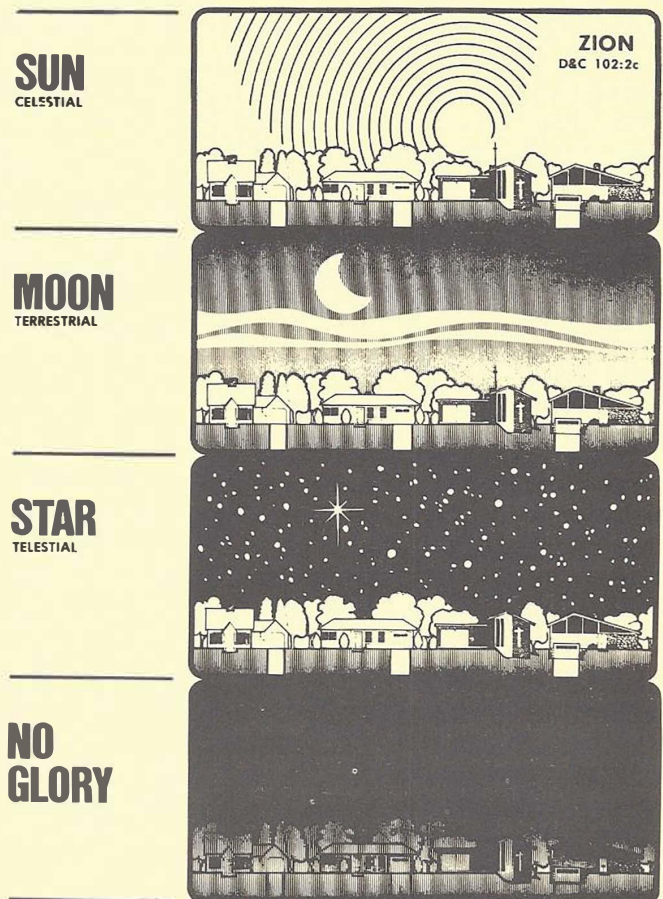


Fig. 2

THE FOUR LEVELS | KINGDOMS, LIFE STYLES | D&C 85:5bc

sower (Matthew 13:3-7; 17-21) and Alma's parable of the seed (Alma 16:152-173). We are indebted to John McDonnell for this enlightenment (see Lehi's Vision and the Parable of the Sower, **Zarahemla Record #11**).

In his vision Lehi saw a large and spacious field with a tree having fruit desirable above all other fruit. There was a rod of iron and a straight and narrow path which led to the tree. He saw that Laman and Lemuel would not come and partake of the fruit. He saw many people starting on the path but a great mist of darkness arose. They wandered off and were lost. Others clung to the rod of iron making it through the mist of darkness until they reached the tree and partook of the fruit. Then they became ashamed because well-dressed people in a great and spacious building were mocking them. As a result they fell away into forbidden paths and were lost. Finally there were those who ate the fruit and heeded not the people in the great and spacious building. We see then that Lehi witnesses four responses to the word of God (the rod of iron) in his vision.

These four responses are given in order beginning with the no glory level (Fig. 3) as are the four responses to the seed (the word of God) in the parable of the sower. As you recall, in the parable of the sower the kind of environment the seed fell upon is a symbol of our response to the word of God. The wayside is a symbol of the no glory level, the stony places the star level, the thorns the moon level and the good ground the sun level.

The no glory response in Lehi's vision is they "would not come." They would not have anything to do with the word of God. They refused to touch the rod of iron. In the parable of the sower we are told that they "understand not." How could anyone be on the no glory level simply because they do not understand? The answer comes to us from Alma's parable of the seed (the word of God). They do not understand because they cast out the word of God by their unbelief and their resistance to the Spirit of God (Alma 16:153). Can we recognize this response in any area of our lives? Is there anything of possible spiritual potential that we refuse to even consider? The following reference talks about unbelief:

And your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received, which vanity and unbelief hath brought the whole church under condemnation. And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, even all; and they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written, that they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father's kingdom, otherwise there remaineth a scourge and a judgment to be poured out upon the children of Zion; for, shall the children of the kingdom pollute my holy land? Verily, I say unto you, Nay. D&C 83:8a-c

These verses identify the Book of Mormon as an object of unbelief. Certainly the world refuses to consider the Book of Mormon. A number of church members have also had

problems with the Book of Mormon but were greatly blessed with testimonies and new insights as they chose not to follow the path of unbelief but to find out for themselves. An example of this is the testimony of Ralph Lesh (see **Zarahemla Record #10**) who was struggling with the question, "is the Book of Mormon historically accurate?" Instead of succumbing to the spirit of unbelief he decided to find out for himself. The end result of his search was the map **Ancient Mesoamerica** which is now playing a major role in the development of a Book of Mormon geography.

Section 83:8 also mentions a star level response in the phrase, "and because you have treated lightly the things you have received." This is the same as saying they neglected the Book of Mormon. Neglect is the star level response in Alma's parable of the seed. If we are interested in spiritual growth this response is a relatively easy one to identify in our lives as is the offended response of the parable of the sower. If, however, we are not interested in spiritual growth then our spiritual eyes become blinded to our true condition and we continue living beneath our potential. According to Lehi's vision, those who do not respond to that portion of the word of God which they receive on the star level eventually wander off and are lost. How do we know if we are neglecting the word of God? We should be studying the scriptures on a daily basis. If not, then we must realize we are neglecting the word of God. In the article **More to Come: Six Steps to Spiritual Power (Zarahemla Record #13/14)** three levels of scripture study were mentioned: 1) the castor oil (star) level, 2) the dry cereal (moon) level, and 3) the peaches and cream (sun) level. On the star level we do not study the word of God unless we are forced to, just as children in days past would not take castor oil until forced to. Some people feel they are not qualified to study. This must be identified as a lie from Satan since the only qualification a person needs to study the word of God is a desire to draw closer to God. We do not learn from scripture the same way we learn from secular textbooks. Our scriptural learning comes from the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit and the timing of this enlightenment is dependent upon our total response to God, or in other words, our desire. As long as we continue to recognize that enlightenment comes from God through the Holy Spirit, we remain humble and there is no temptation to be lifted up in pride as is often the case with the accumulation of great learning through secular textbooks.

The moon level response in Lehi's vision is "ashamed." As you recall, these people made it all the way to the tree of life and actually tasted the fruit. Then they became ashamed because the people in the great and spacious building, which represents the world and the pride thereof, were mocking them. Although these people tasted of the celestial fruit, meaning they knew of the existence of the celestial level, they had not developed the celestial level in their lives well enough to believe this way of life would actually sustain them. They felt more at home on a lesser level. It is on the moon level that we wage the final battle between "the world" and its

philosophy of self sufficiency and self glorification and the kingdom of God (celestial level) and its requirement of complete submission to the will of God. This, of course, requires the exercise of faith, but after our faith has met the test then all the resources of God become available to us—resources which are far greater than anything the world can offer.

The idea of developing the celestial level in our lives to the point where we know this life style will sustain us is an important concept and should be expanded. The first issue of the **Zarahemla Record** contained an article on how science operates. This article discussed the findings of Thomas Kuhn in his book **The Structure of Scientific Revolutions**. Kuhn discovered that science did not progress gradually as was previously thought, but progressed in jumps. Simply put, Kuhn found that as a new general theory was brought forth, each individual scientist had to decide whether he was going to stay with the established theory (in opposition to the new theory) or accept the new theory. To espouse the new theory would mean putting one's reputation on the line. This was not a decision to be made lightly. In order to "jump" or transfer allegiance to the platform represented by the new theory the scientist had to believe the new platform would hold him. The scientist had to decide if the new theory explained the facts (the experimental results) better than the old theory. Strangely enough, it was discovered that this decision had to be made before "all the facts were in." This meant that the decision of each scientist to accept the new theory was partly an act of faith. The following quote from a review of Kuhn's book supports this idea:

The competition between paradigms (general theories) is not the sort of battle that can be resolved by proofs. In fact the transfer of allegiance from one paradigm to another is a conversion experience that cannot be forced. (*Science*, July 8, 1977, p. 144)

Kuhn has found then, that faith plays a deciding role in the operation of science.


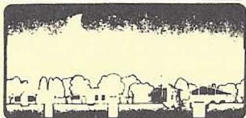


If we find we are living a moon level life style, our goal

is to transfer allegiance to the celestial level life style. This must be a conversion experience through faith. However, just as the scientist is not acting blindly because he is aware of certain experimental results, neither need we act blindly. We have the results of others "experiments" and possibly some of our own. The transfer of allegiance occurs at the point when we realize the celestial platform which we have constructed (spiritually discovered) is able to hold us. This way of looking at preparation for the celestial or zionic way of life helps us to see it in a practical way. We may think it is impossible to understand the whole platform but we can understand and work on one plank at a time. Each plank is put into place on the celestial level as we completely yield (Step 4) that part of our life to God. Refusal to yield keeps us tied to the old theory or, in other words, the lower spiritual level. There is no doubt that Kuhn was inspired in his discovery of how science operates. His work is probably the clearest explanation from the viewpoint of science of how the Spirit of God works. The understanding that science actually works this way should inspire many of us to resolve to begin some spiritual experiments in preparation for constructing some celestial planks in our life style.

Let us assume for the sake of argument that we are on the moon level. However, we know from many scriptures that our lives are never static but are constantly growing or declining spiritually:

It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; Nevertheless they are laid under a strict command, that they shall not impart only according to the portion of his word, which he doth grant unto the children of men; according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him; And therefore he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word; And he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God, until they know them in full; And they that

Fig. 3 THE FOUR RESPONSES TO THE WORD OF GOD

LEVEL	LEHI'S VISION ROD OF IRON 1 NEPHI 2:41-85	PARABLE OF THE SOWER MATTHEW 13:3-7; 17-21 MARK 4:37, 13-17 LUKE 8:5-8, 11-15	ALMA'S PARABLE OF THE SEED ALMA 16:152-173
SUN 	HEEDED THEM NOT	ENDURETH	NOURISH
MOON 	ASHAMED	CARE OF THIS WORLD	LACK OF VISION PARAPHRASE OF ALMA 16:170
STAR 	WANDERED	OFFENDED	NEGLECT
NO GLORY 	WOULD NOT COME	UNDERSTAND NOT	UNBELIEF RESIST

will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word, until they know nothing concerning his mysteries; Alma 9:15-19

For behold, thus saith the Lord God; I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; And blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts, and lend an ear unto my counsel, for they shall learn wisdom; For unto him that receiveth, I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have enough, shall be taken away even that which they have. II Nephi 12:36-38

Just as there are four phases of the moon from the dark of the moon to full moon so there is some variation of spiritual quality within the moon level. Imagine an up and down roller coaster within the moon level representing our spiritual life. Spiritually we are either accepting or rejecting the guidance of the Holy Spirit. When we are accepting, we are rising within the boundaries of the moon level. Let the roller coaster we have imagined represent the boundaries we have set for our own spiritual lives. What happens when we reach the top of our roller coaster curve? We know that after we have successfully taken a spiritual step we are given additional light to see the next step. But we have reached the top of our roller coaster which represents the upper limit we have arbitrarily set on our spiritual growth. We can see the next step but we have decided to reject this step as a result of either tradition or disobedience:

And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of their fathers. D&C 90:6c

Once we make this decision, we begin the downward track of our spiritual roller coaster until we reach the bottom. At this point we are tempted to go one step lower but we refuse. As a result we begin accepting and rising spiritually again.

The first step in getting out of this up and down track is to recognize we do have a spiritual roller coaster in our lives. The next step is to begin some spiritual experiments:

But behold, if ye will awake and arouse your faculties even to an experiment upon my words, and exercise a particle of faith; yea, even if ye can no more than desire to believe, let this desire work in you, even until ye believe in a manner that ye can give place for a portion of my words. Alma 16:151

When we get to the top of our self-defined track, our objective should be to stay there a little longer than usual by experimenting. We can see the light for the next step, a step which we have never taken. We must decide we are going to experiment by taking the step. By treating this new step as an experiment we are perfectly free to return to our starting point if it does not bring the desired results. If the experiment does prove successful:

... ye will begin to say within yourselves, It must needs be that this is a good seed (step) or that the word (step) is good, for it beginneth to enlarge my soul; yea, it beginneth to enlighten my understand-

ing; yea, and it beginneth to be delicious to me.

Alma 16:154 (the word step has been added)

If we then decide to make this new step a permanent part of our spiritual lives we have in fact raised the upper limit of our spiritual track. We are then free to continue this process until we reach the point dividing the moon and celestial levels. We are then in a position to yield whatever is left of our moon level life to God. God then completes the sanctification process and we enter into the kingdom of God or the celestial level.

One area of our lives that we can work toward yielding is scripture study. As already mentioned, moon level scripture study has been equated with dry cereal. Dry cereal is alright but nothing really special. We eat it from time to time, it helps keep us going but it's not all that great. This level of scripture study is certainly better than the castor oil attitude of the star level but it still falls far short of the peaches and cream attitude of the celestial level. We can't get enough of peaches and cream. We look forward with great anticipation to such delicious food. We even plan ahead how we can get more. The subject is constantly on our minds:

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. Psalms 1:1-2

Notice the word delight. The word of God is constantly on his mind because it is delightful and delicious to him. This is a characteristic of the sun level response. On the moon level we receive reflected or indirect light. On the sun level we receive direct light which brings real joy. If we do not look forward to scripture study, if we do not look for ways to work in more scripture study and if we are not constantly thinking about the word of God then we can say we have not yet reached the sun level in this area of our lives. We should then try an experiment by setting aside so many minutes a day for scripture study until we begin receiving enlightenment.

The moon level response for the parable of the sower, "care of this world" says the same thing as the ashamed of Lehi's vision. These people have not been converted to the better way so they continue to be hampered by their moon level tradition. However, once they reject the celestial level, it is highly likely that they will not remain on the moon level very long but will begin to decline spiritually as the Holy Spirit gradually begins to withdraw from them. The moon level response is not stated directly in Alma's parable of the seed but "lack of vision" is a negative paraphrase of Alma 16:170. Lack of vision is also a good description of those moon level people who do not have continual spiritual growth as a primary goal in their lives.

The sun level response in Lehi's vision is that they "heeded them not," that is, those who had tasted of the celestial fruit did not pay any attention to the people in the great and spacious building. They chose the celestial level way of life. In contrast to the moon level people they were not ashamed of the celestial level. They were like Abraham, Sarah and Noah:

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were

persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city. Hebrews 11:13, 16

These people confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. They did not feel at home spiritually. These people were seeking a better country. We call this better country Zion. The importance of being a stranger and pilgrim is underscored by the inclusion of this phrase in latter day revelation:

wherefore hearken ye together, and let me show it unto you, even my wisdom, the wisdom of him who ye say is the God of Enoch and his brethren, who were separated from the earth, and were received unto myself; a city reserved until a day of righteousness shall come: a day which was sought for by all holy men, and they found it not, because of wickedness and abominations, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, but obtained a promise that they should find it, and see it in their flesh. D&C 45:2f-h

This then gives us another way to judge our spiritual level. If we feel at home spiritually and do not see the need for further spiritual growth and if we do not feel like a stranger and a pilgrim in this world, then we can conclude that we are not on the celestial level.

The parable of the sower tells us that those that endure bring forth fruit, 30, 60 and 100 fold. This is a much better return on our investment than the world can offer. A good investor on the star or moon level can get 15-20% but the minimum return on the celestial level is 30 fold which is not 30% but 3000%!

Alma tells us that the sun level response is "nourish." To turn to scripture study again we have the following example of a celestial level response:

Feast upon the words of Christ; for behold the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do.  
II Nephi 14:4

Feasting is not nibbling. Do we sit down at a Thanksgiving Day dinner and nibble? To nourish is to constantly choose the celestial level environment. Our spirits will soak up this environment, whether it be from the things we read, the things we look at, the things we hear or the things we think about. As a result, our spirits will become transformed.

The above discussion of the four responses to the word of God is just a very brief introduction and you are encouraged to study Lehi's vision, Alma's parable and the parable of the sower including the other two accounts, Mark 4:3-7, 13-17 and Luke 8:5-8, 11-15, in order to improve your understanding of the life style represented by each level. The emphasis should be to understand the celestial level life style since this is our goal.

One way to help us recognize the celestial level life style in the scriptures is to look for synonyms of words we know to be on that level. For example, sanctified and purified are celestial level words which have a number of synonyms including spotless, blameless, guiltless, perfect,

holy, clean, white, redeemed, transformed and transfigured. Knowing that these words are synonyms allows us to expand our understanding of the celestial condition. This list is not complete. To look for additional synonyms find scriptures that use two or more words to describe the same condition. For example, Alma 10:4 uses the word sanctified along with these three synonyms:

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;

Knowing that this verse describes a celestial level condition gives us another way to judge our own level. According to this verse, celestial level people can not look upon sin except with abhorrence. Therefore, if we can tolerate sin in our lives in any form, then we can know that we have not yet reached the celestial level.

It is very important to understand the proper definition of each of the celestial words. One of the insights that comes from a study of the four levels is that for each word there are four definitions, one for each spiritual level. Therefore, we can have four definitions of the word Zion, each definition depending on the point of view or level of the person in question. This explains why two persons can talk about Zion but never come to an agreement. Each has his own definition of the word. Consider this example using the concept of mass in physics. Under Newton's theories mass was always conserved but under Einstein's theories mass could be transformed into energy. Here we have two different definitions of the same word. Atomic power was not possible under Newton's definition but is possible under Einstein's definition. If your definition of Zion is on the moon level, then like Newton, you can not have any power because the definition does not allow it, but if you have a celestial level definition of Zion then power is available when that level is reached. Moroni tells us "if by the grace of God ye are perfect in Christ, ye can in no wise deny the power of God" (Moroni 10:29).

A good way to understand the celestial level better is to ask questions. As we read scriptures that talk about conditions in the lives of believers that are not a part of our lives we should not put these things out of our minds as not being relevant to modern Christian life but begin asking questions. The reason Peter, James and John were chosen to go with Jesus to the mount of transfiguration was because they asked many questions:

And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, and James, and John, who asked him many questions concerning his sayings; and Jesus leadeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves. And he was transfigured before them. Mark 9:1

One of the main messages of the Restoration was and is that God still speaks today. Those who responded and said that revelation was relevant only to the early Christian days were defending their spiritual level with their own definition of God's dealings which we know to be based primarily on tradition. If we are not careful we can also develop a spiritual level based on tradition. Since there is no real spiritual power on the moon level, any example of power in the scriptures must be classified as

not relevant for our day if we want to justify our moon level life style. We should instead ask God why we do not have spiritual power. It is at this point that God can begin to reveal to us those things in our lives that are keeping us from greater enlightenment and the celestial level.

Our goal is clearly the celestial level. The following verse is only one of many conveying this information:

Ye are therefore commanded to be perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect. Matthew 5:50

Knowing that perfect has many synonyms, all on the celestial level, we therefore see that we are commanded to prepare to live on the celestial level. The celestial level is a life style and an environment. It is not enough to know about the celestial level but we must be converted to it. The key to becoming converted to the celestial level is to improve our spiritual environment. We must realize every decision we make in the use of our time and resources either adds to or subtracts from our spiritual level. Those of us who are interested in spiritual growth must begin comparing each area of our lives with the standards of the celestial level. The classification of the four levels is not man-made but comes from God. He has his own definition of Zion and the celestial level and has set the

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including higher population estimates, new ways of producing food and a better understanding of the extensive trade networks.

This shift has been important to the Book of Mormon. The new information has rewarded the faith of Book of Mormon believers in areas such as population and food (see *Zarahemla Record* Nos. 1, 2 and 3) and has set the stage for further developments in Mesoamerican archaeology.

The timing of the work in El Salvador fits in with the timing of a number of other lines of evidence that have been shaping up for the Book of Mormon, including geography, linguistics, and the Chinese characters. Knowing the Lord is preparing even greater things for the Book of Mormon should motivate us to make sure the timing of our spiritual growth keeps pace with his plan, a part of which has been uncovered in El Salvador.



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requirements for entering therein:

And unto every kingdom is given a law; and unto every law there are certain bounds also, and conditions. D&C 85:9b

If we have a desire to live on the celestial level, God will begin showing us what steps we must take to become sanctified, perfected and spotless.

The Book of Mormon was made available in 1830 to help us prepare for the coming of Christ. It begins and ends with the idea of being spotless:

... condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment seat of Christ. Preface to the Book of Mormon

And again, if ye, by the grace of God, are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father, unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy without spot. Moroni 10:30

These verses provide an additional message from the Book of Mormon that we have been called to live on the celestial level. Most of the information about the Six Steps and the fact that the four levels are in operation now has come from the Book of Mormon. There is much more awaiting us when we decide to put into practice the steps outlined in Helaman 2:31 and begin to dissolve the mist of condemnation that has hovered over us since Section 83:8 was given to us. The Book of Mormon truly is a key to greater spiritual insights for those who desire the celestial level life style.



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