

# 12 The Gospel of Jesus Christ

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There are two recorded earthly ministries of Jesus Christ: one account in the New Testament before His crucifixion and the second account found in the Book of Mormon. Following His resurrection, Christ appeared to the people in Bountiful and ministered to them, teaching the same gospel He had taught in the old world. Each scriptural record clearly shows that Christ did not organize the church while He ministered in Judaea or to the descendants of Lehi. Given that a necessary part of the gospel of Christ is the authority to administer the same, the Savior, during both ministries, taught the gospel and then organized the priesthood, providing the authority and keys required to administer His gospel. The priesthood leadership, then, in both cases, organized the church to effectively facilitate that administration. What is His gospel? According to scripture, the gospel of Jesus Christ is: Faith; Repentance; Baptism; and the Gift of the Holy Ghost.

A reporter once asked President Harold B. Lee, “Why do you claim that the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ was contained in the Book of Mormon when it does not have any information about baptism for the dead, or temple work, or sealings? In fact, it does not contain most of the things you believe as a church about the gospel. Why then do you claim it has the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ?” President Lee answered the reporter's question by quoting modern-day scripture:

11 *Yea repent and be baptized, every one of you, for a remission of your sins; yea, be baptized even by water, and then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost.*

12 *Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, this is my gospel; and remember that they shall have faith in me or they can in nowise be saved;*

13 *And upon this rock I will build my church; yea, upon this rock ye are built, and if ye continue, the gates of hell shall not prevail against you. (D&C 33:11-13)*

The Doctrine and Covenants declare that the gospel of Jesus Christ is Faith, Repentance, Baptism and the Gift of the Holy Ghost.

5 *And verily, verily, I say unto you, he that receiveth my gospel receiveth me; and he that receiveth not my gospel receiveth not me.*

6 *And this is my gospel—repentance and baptism by water, and then cometh the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, even the Comforter, which showeth all things, and teacheth the peaceable things of the kingdom. (D&C 39:5-6)*

The Book of Mormon may not have everything that the Latter-day Saints believe as “doctrine” but it does contain a “fullness of the Gospel,” since by scriptural definition, faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost constitute the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (D&C 20:9; D&C 42:12)

The first instructions Christ gave to the Nephites after his resurrection (3 Nephi 11) was an explanation about His gospel or doctrine. In verses 31 through 40, the Savior makes sure that His gospel would be understood to avoid contention (verse 29). The concluding message of Christ as

his ministry comes to a close is found in 3 Nephi 27. The Savior again reinforces an understanding of the principles and ordinances of the gospel of Jesus Christ in such a way that no mistake should be made. This last sermon was addressed to the priesthood leadership [his General Authorities] where He declared that if the church that they organized was built upon His gospel as explained, *then* the Father would show forth his works in it (3 Nephi 27:10). Everything Christ taught the Nephites in Bountiful is couched between these two discourses about faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Savior's Nephite ministry is structured in such a way that the latter-day reader can make no mistake about what constitutes "the gospel or doctrine" (Jacob 7:6) of Jesus Christ.

### 3 Nephi 11 - The First Gospel Instruction:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 3 Nephi 27 - The Last Gospel Instruction:

13 Behold I have given unto you my gospel, and *this is the gospel which I have given unto you*—that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me.

14 And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil—

15 And for this cause have I been lifted up; therefore, according to the power of the Father I will draw all men unto me, that they may be judged according to their works.

16 And it shall come to pass, that *whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name* shall be filled; and if he *endureth to the end*, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world.

17 And he that endureth not unto the end, the same is he that is also hewn down and cast into the fire, from whence they can no more return, because of the justice of the Father.

18 And this is the word which he hath given unto the children of men. And for this cause he fulfilleth the words which he hath given, and he lieth not, but fulfilleth all his words.

19 And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom; therefore nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood, because of their *faith, and the repentance* of all their sins, and their faithfulness unto the end.

20 Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day.

21 Verily, verily, I say unto you, ***this is my gospel***; and ye know the things that ye must do in my church; for the works which ye have seen me do that shall ye also do; for that which ye have seen me do even that shall ye do;

Christ explains that anyone who declares more or less than “faith, repentance, baptism and the Gift of the Holy Ghost” as His gospel is not of God (3 Nephi 11:40). *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, Page 556; defines “The Gospel of Jesus Christ” in these terms:

Even though Latter-day Saints use the term “gospel” in several ways, including traditional Christian usages, the Book of Mormon and other latter-day scriptures define it precisely as the way or means by which an individual can come to Christ. In *all* these scriptural passages, the gospel or doctrine of Christ teaches that salvation is available through his authorized servants to all who will (1) believe in Christ; (2) repent of their sins; (3) be baptized in water as a witness of their willingness to take his name upon them and keep his commandments; (4) receive the Holy Ghost by the laying-on of hands; and (5) endure to the end. All who obey these commandments and receive the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost and endure in faith, hope, and charity will be found guiltless at the last day and will enter into the kingdom of heaven (Alma 7:14-16, 24-25; Heb. 6:1-2).

The gospel and Atonement of Jesus Christ should be founded on faith and testimony, not necessarily on the organization and administration of the church. The doctrinal concept of testimony will be discussed in more depth below. The relationship that the individual may have with Christ should be the focus of any organized religion. All need to participate in the gospel of Jesus Christ, but the reality of that participation is only accomplished by the relationship of “receiving Him and His Gospel” (D&C 39:5).

The Gospel incorporates two principles—faith and repentance, and two ordinances—baptism and the Gift of the Holy Ghost. Faith, according to scripture, may only be faith if it lies in Jesus Christ and His Atonement. Of the 350 plus times the word faith appears in scripture, only three are not associated with Christ and the Atonement. Amulek explains how to *exercise faith* in Christ and the Atonement using a single phrase multiple times in just a few verses:

15 And thus he shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name; this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have *faith unto repentance*.

16 And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while he that *exercises no faith unto repentance* is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice; therefore only unto him that has *faith unto repentance* is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption.

17 Therefore may God grant unto you, my brethren, that ye may begin to *exercise your faith unto repentance*, that ye begin to call upon his holy name, that he would have mercy upon you; (Alma 34:15-17)

The way to exercise faith in Christ and the Atonement is to change one's character. In other words, faith without the works of *repentance* (the change of character) is dead. (This being the "intent of this last sacrifice" and Atonement: "to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men that they may have *faith unto repentance*." ) The faithful are those who are repenting; the unfaithful are those not repenting. What is repentance? It is the process of changing character, to stop doing one thing and start doing another. It is to take aim again because one has missed the mark. Repentance is not something to be feared, or embarrassed about, it is a recognition of a need for change, and then going through the processes that will help make that change. Repentance is nothing more than the process of changing character with a hope and view of salvation and exaltation through the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ.

Contrary to common belief, every parable taught by Christ was directed to the members of the church—those who knew and understood the law and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, they are directed to us. The inspired messages in the parables were not intended for non-members or non-believers. The normal LDS ego will often project the character and attitudes of those in the parables onto non-members as a way of protecting itself, but all parables are directed to those who have the light and truth of the gospel. They were meant for the saints anciently and for the Latter-day Saint today in the process of likening the scriptures to themselves.