

1 The Threshing Floor

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Anciently the Threshing Floor was a considered a central and sacred place that became important for the sustaining of both the physical life as well as the spiritual well-being of mankind. The most simple and practical purpose of the Threshing Floor was a place where the harvested grain would be broken down by animals that would tread on the collected grain separating the inedible chaff from the life-giving protein and sustenance of the grain. The animals would not only tread on the grain but drag wooden sleds impregnated with pieces of flint to cut and break away the undesirable and useless stems and chaff. Once broken apart, the chaff and grain would be thrown into the air together. The lighter chaff would be blown away in the winds while the heavier and more important grain would fall to the bedrock or stone floor for gathering. This process of separating of the grain from the chaff on the threshing floor, is often used today to symbolize a separation of the good from the bad.

Life, in and of itself is similar to a Threshing Floor, with the destructive sledges and pounding hoofs of trials and tribulations that separate many from their religious faith that at one time may have provided a purpose of life and a belief in a loving God. Because the Threshing Floor is the place where the useful and useless are separated from each other, this common metaphor may be offensive to those who consider the choice to separate themselves from the faith of their fathers to be an "enlightened" one. Therefore, the real symbol of the Threshing Floor should be viewed objectively and briefly discussed.

Anciently, threshing floors were usually found on a hill or high place where the wind could catch the chaff. They were usually round in shape, with pounded earth or flat stones making up the floor of the interior of the circle. The circular threshing floor was defined by a raised stone rim that held the grain and chaff together. Because of its location at a high, prominent spot, the Threshing Floor became a central place for sacrifice, and a sacred site where the creation of the world by the gods was acted out, the purpose of which was to explain the cultural beliefs and myths of the people and the community. Creating a perfect stage, the first theaters of Greece and Rome were fashioned around, and evolved from, the ancient Threshing Floors where the myths were acted out in the form of a creation drama.

The sacred nature of the Threshing Floor was so prevalent that altars were erected at the threshing sites and temples were often constructed near or over the Threshing Floors themselves. It was on the threshing floor that the battle of good and evil was acted out in the metaphor of threshing the grain. Sometimes the animals that worked on the threshing floor were sacrificed as they played the part of evil, symbolically trying to destroy the continuity and securities of life. The floor represented the place of good versus evil, death and resurrection, and the primal creation of the world. The circle of the Threshing Floor epitomized the world, and the rim around the edge symbolically represented the waters of creation surrounding the primordial mound of the hill and

the stone floor.¹ This same example is seen on Mt. Carmel when Elijah builds the altar and surrounds it with water. This event in Biblical history no doubt took place at a Threshing Floor.

The spiritual drama of the creation was acted out on the circular floor so that the inhabitants of the local community could learn and actively participate in the creation drama. This was done to facilitate an understanding of their relationship with their God and their fellow man. The Temple of Solomon was built on the Jebusite Threshing Floor, it being the place that David offered a sacrifice of the animals that helped in the threshing of the grain (2 Samuel 24:14-25; 1 Chronicles 21:13-30).

The Threshing Floor became a place of education and understanding rather than a simple place of separation of good and bad. It was a place to understand the plan of God for the life and salvation of mankind, assisting all to faithfully endure mortality to the end. The threshing floor represented a place of learning and understanding, rather than separation; a place where truth and error might be discovered, and a place where an understanding of the sacred might be obtained. Ancient cultures believed that *Reality* existed only in the realm of the sacred. To emphasize this *Reality* and the connection between the world of the living, the world of the Gods, and the world of the dead, people would gather at the Threshing Floor to participate in an endowment of knowledge that would provide a personal power over the trials of life and a faith to endure to the end, as they would establish through drama and doctrine the relationships between God, mankind and the environment in which man must live.

Only those who have a broken heart and contrite spirit may be taught or instructed by the spirit. All the words in the world will not change the mind of those who do not want to know or understand. The best and most important decisions in life are made by being objective and impartial, looking at all points of view without preconceived notions or preferences. However, this objective mindset is often difficult to acquire or instill in another because of personal desires, education, and the filters of prejudices that have been learned through education or experience. One cannot teach the person who doesn't want to know.

The information in this book is not meant to be comprehensive in its scope, nor is it expected that it will change the mind and hearts of those who have chosen to separate themselves from the faith of their fathers. That choice belongs solely to the individual and their agency. The faith and testimonies of parents, loved ones, friends, leaders, prophets, (modern day and those found in the scriptures) serve as righteous examples, but have no power to change the minds and hearts of those who have chosen to fall away. To a loving and faithful parent, the falling away of their child is akin to the child's death. In life someone else exercising his or her agency, over which we have no control, generates almost all of the emotional pain that one suffers. Nevertheless, no human spirit may be condemned by God or themselves until they know and understand the plan of salvation and the gospel of God perfectly.

True agency cannot exist without a full and perfect knowledge of how and why, along with the knowledge of options and consequences of the choice. Any judgment without this standard is

1. See B. H. Stricker, "The Origin of the Greek Theatre" in the "The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology," vol 41, December 1955, pp. 34-47

unjust and will compromise the agency of the individual. Parents may be assured that their children or loved ones will not be consigned by God or themselves until they understand the gospel and the plan of salvation perfectly and comprehend the doctrines of exaltation with a perfect knowledge, void of any misunderstandings, misconceptions or misinformation. The required space between death and the resurrection is necessary for the learning and understanding of this gospel plan of salvation. No one in mortality understands it perfectly, thus, a time or “space” (Alma 40:9, 21) must exist to learn and then accept or reject the plan of salvation. It is only with this full and perfect knowledge that any judgment of eternal consequence may take place. Again, if this were not so, one’s agency would be compromised. The time in the spirit world is a time to reflect and repent, to learn and embrace the gospel. A time to come unto Christ as taught by righteous parents in mortality and family members in the spirit world. Nevertheless, each may “choose for themselves” to begin that process of progression and joy or accept a simple and single satisfaction.

Just as families exist here on earth to teach the principles and ordinances of the gospel, the same sociality will exist in the spirit world for the same reason. Who better to teach the gospel, here or there, than those who love and care for each other? Agency cannot be compromised. Everyone will know and understand perfectly before any judgment takes place.

An apostasy and falling away from the faith with eternal consequences cannot take place until a comprehensive knowledge and understanding is acquired. This perfect knowledge and full rejection is not something that will take place in mortality, as Moses was taught:

Wherefore, no man can behold all my works, except he behold all my glory; and no man can behold all my glory, and afterwards remain in the flesh on the earth. (Moses 1:5)

Though this book may not change those who have fallen away, it is hoped that it will arm parents and teachers with an increased vision and understanding of the ideas concepts and scriptures that establish doctrine. Despite the questions and answers or issues surrounding the church and its priesthood organization; each testimony should be centered in Christ and his Atonement. The strength to endure the temptations of faith will be found only in Christ.

And now, my sons, remember, remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ, the Son of God, that ye must build your foundation; that when the devil shall send forth his mighty winds, yea, his shafts in the whirlwind, yea, when all his hail and his mighty storm shall beat upon you, it shall have no power over you to drag you down to the gulf of misery and endless wo, because of the rock upon which ye are built, which is a sure foundation, a foundation whereon if men build they cannot fall. (Helaman 5:12)

It is the gospel of Christ that must be understood, not necessarily the organizational hierarchy of administration. Every home and parent should feel as did Nephi when he discussed the testimonies of their children:

And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins. (2 Nephi 25:25)

This is the faith that should be taught to the youth as they begin to grow in the church. Their faith should be pointed first toward Christ and the gospel rather than focusing on the organization of administration. There is no other name but Christ that has the power to save:

7 Your hearts are changed through faith on his name; therefore, ye are born of him and have become his sons and his daughters.

8 And under this head ye are made free, and there is no other head whereby ye can be made free. There is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives. (Mosiah 5:7, 8)

Because salvation comes only through Christ and the Atonement, the faith that will lead to salvation must be placed in Christ and none else. It is not the power or position of a priesthood leader that can save. Paul taught:

12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were ye baptized in the name of Paul? (1 Corinthians 1:12-13)

As the title page of the Book of Mormon instructs, the text exists for “the convincing of Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” This is the message and witness of all scripture and of the prophets who have recorded their testimonies of Christ. As the Book of Mormon begins, with the dream of Lehi and the Tree of Life, the message of the fruit and pure Love of Christ permeates the text from beginning to end.

My objective as an author and teacher has been to show why our faith and hope should be in Christ, while explaining how the church and priesthood organization has been divinely authorized to administer His gospel, even the gospel of Jesus Christ. My message to those who would seek to separate themselves from the LDS faith would be to remember that the primary purpose of the church organization is to assist the individual in their efforts to "come unto Christ," finding joy in their redemption through a personal relationship with Christ and the Atonement.

Life is a Threshing Floor where choices are made and character is developed, made manifest by the words, works and thoughts of every individual. It is at the threshing floor of life that one learns about their place in creation and their relationship with God and humanity. The goal in life is to create a nature and character worthy to be in the presence of God. Because of the eternal truths learned from an endowment of power in this lone and dreary world, we can ‘act in futurity’. This endowment of knowledge and truth and reality will provide the power to *endure to the end*, overcoming the trials and tribulations of spirit, mind, and body that all must experience and endure.

Eternal joy depends upon the acceptance of Jesus Christ as the redeemer. As we exercise faith unto repentance, we gain access to the mercy guaranteed by the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

Solomon constructed the first temple recorded in scripture on a Threshing Floor, and within the walls of that temple were carved images of the Tree of Life that were overlaid in gold. The sacred spot of the Threshing Floor encased the central message and symbol of the fruit from the Tree of

Life. It was on the Threshing Floor that the chaff was separated from the life-giving grain. Because of position, purpose and place, the ancient Threshing Floor of Faith became the center of spiritual instruction, a place where faith and testimonies could be strengthened. A place where truths were presented to enable the individual to endure mortality, providing an endowment of power for all who will come to the Tree of Life and partake of the fruit of the Pure Love of Christ.