

### We can each stand on Zion's hill

When Emma Smith, wife of the Prophet Joseph, collected hymns for the first hymnbook, she included "Guide Us, O Thou Great Jehovah," which is, in fact, a prayer:

When the earth begins to tremble,  
Bid our fearful thoughts be still;  
When thy judgments spread destruction,  
Keep us safe on Zion's hill.<sup>8</sup>

Every soul who willingly affiliates with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and seeks to abide by its principles and ordinances is standing "on Zion's hill."

Each can receive assurance which comes through inspiration and testifies that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is just as He declared it to be, "the only true and living church upon the

face of the whole earth" (D&C 1:30). In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### NOTES

1. See also Revelation 5:9; 14:6; 1 Nephi 19:17; Mosiah 3:13, 20; 15:28; 16:1; Alma 9:20; 37:4; Doctrine and Covenants 10:51; 77:8, 11; 133:37.
2. In David Daniell, introduction to *Tyndale's New Testament*, trans. William Tyndale (1989), viii.
3. In Daniell, introduction to *Tyndale's New Testament*, ix.
4. See John Foxe, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, ed. G. A. Williamson (1965), 18–20.
5. In Edward Stevenson, *Reminiscences of Joseph, the Prophet, and the Coming Forth of the Book of Mormon* (1893), 6.
6. "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, 102.
7. "The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles," *Ensign*, Apr. 2000, 2.
8. *Hymns*, no. 83.

## Elder Merrill J. Bateman

### The universal nature of the gospel

Recently a participant on a radio program questioned the international appeal of the Church, given its origins in New York, its headquarters in Utah, and the Book of Mormon story of an ancient American people. As I thought of friends in Asia, Africa, Europe, and other parts of the world, it was apparent that the discussant did not understand the universal nature of the restored gospel or the all-encompassing applicability of its ordinances, covenants, and blessings. The worldwide significance of the Prophet Joseph Smith's First Vision and the Book of Mormon are not measured by location but by their message regarding man's relationship to God, the Father's love for His children, and the divine potential within each human being.

The prophetic call through all ages has been, "Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him" (Moroni 10:32; see also Matthew 5:48; John 10:10; 14:6), that salvation is through the Only Begotten Son of the Father (see John 1:14, 18; D&C 29:42). The call is universal and applies to all of God's children, whether African, Asian, European, or any other nationality. As the Apostle Paul declared to the Athenians, all of us "are the offspring of God" (Acts 17:29).

### The Savior was rejected by many

The Father's plan of life, with its central focus on Christ's Atonement, was prepared before the foundation of the world (see Abraham 3:22–28; Alma 13:3). It was given to Adam and Eve, and they were commanded to teach it to their children

(see Moses 5:6–12). Over time the posterity of Adam rejected the gospel, but it was renewed through Noah and then again through Abraham (see Exodus 6:2–4; Galatians 3:6–9). The gospel was offered to the Israelites in Moses's day. But a sterner taskmaster was required to bring them to Christ, given centuries in apostasy (see Exodus 19:5–6; D&C 84:19–24). The fulness of the gospel was finally restored to Israel by the Savior Himself in the meridian of time.

One of the most illuminating passages of scripture regarding this sequence of apostasy and restoration is found in Jesus's parable of the wicked husbandmen (see Mark 12:1–10). In the parable, Jesus reminds the people of the many prophets who have been sent through the ages to raise up righteous nations. He then states how the messengers were rejected again and again. Some were beaten and sent away empty. Others were killed. And then, prophesying about His own ministry, Jesus tells His listeners that the Father decided to send His “one son, his well beloved” (Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 12:7), saying, “They will reverence my son” (Matthew 21:37).

Jesus, however, knowing His own fate, then declared:

“But those husbandmen said . . . , This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.

“And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard” (Mark 12:7–8).

### **Knowledge of God has been restored**

Following the Savior's death and those of His Apostles, doctrines and ordinances were changed, and apostasy set in again. This time spiritual darkness lasted for hundreds of years before rays of light would once more penetrate the earth. The Apostle Peter knew of this Apostasy and prophesied following the Savior's Ascension that the Lord would not return for His Second

Coming until there was a “restitution of all things” (see Acts 3:19–21). The Apostle Paul also prophesied of a time when the members would “not endure sound doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:3–4) and that a “falling away” (2 Thessalonians 2:2–3) would precede the Second Coming of Christ. He too referred to the “restitution of all things,” saying that the Savior “in the dispensation of the fulness of times . . . might gather together in one all things in Christ” (Ephesians 1:10).

The Lord directed the restoration of the gospel through the Prophet Joseph Smith. The “restitution of all things” began in the Sacred Grove with the Father and the Son appearing to Joseph Smith. In vision, Joseph learned of God's personal nature—that the Father and the Son are separate, exalted beings with bodies of flesh and bone.

### **Book of Mormon teaches the Atonement**

At the beginning of most dispensations, a book is given to the newly called prophet. Moses received tablets (see Exodus 31:18). Lehi was given a book to read concerning the destruction of Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 1:11–14). Ezekiel was given “a roll of a book” (Ezekiel 2:9–10) containing the Lord's message for the house of Judah in his day. John the Revelator on the Isle of Patmos was shown a book with seven seals (see Revelation 5; D&C 77:6). Is it any wonder, then, that the Lord would provide a book containing the fulness of the gospel as part of the “restitution of all things”? The Book of Mormon has the power to draw all men and women to Christ. Its references to the Savior's Atonement are the clearest on record with regard to its purpose and powers.

The Holy Spirit has whispered to my soul that Joseph saw the Father and the Son in the Sacred Grove and that the Book of Mormon is true. I am grateful for the additional knowledge concerning the Savior's Atonement contained in the Book

of Mormon. One of the titles given to the Savior is that of Only Begotten Son of the Father. For example, the Apostle John in his Gospel states that he beheld the majesty and glory of the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration and that His glory was that of the “only begotten of the Father” (John 1:14; see also verse 18). The Book of Mormon likewise uses this title many times.

### **The Savior’s death was voluntary**

Unlike mortals who inherit the seeds of death from both parents, Jesus was born of a mortal mother but an immortal Father. The seeds of death received from Mary meant that He could die, but the inheritance from His Father gave Him infinite life, which meant death was a voluntary act. Thus, Jesus told the Jewish people, “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself” (John 5:26).

On another occasion He stated:

“Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

“No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father” (John 10:17–18).

### **Christ suffered for each of us**

The infinite nature received from His Father gave Jesus power to perform the Atonement, to suffer for the sins of all. The prophet Alma in the Book of Mormon teaches that Jesus not only took upon Himself our sins but also our pains, afflictions, and temptations. Alma also explains that Jesus took upon Himself our sicknesses, death, and our infirmities. (See Alma 7:11–13.) This He did, Alma said, so that His “bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know . . . how to succor his people” (Alma 7:12).

The prophet Abinadi further states that “when his soul has been made an offering for sin he shall see his seed” (Mosiah 15:10). Abinadi then identifies the Savior’s seed as the prophets and those who follow them. For many years I thought of the Savior’s experience in the garden and on the cross as places where a large mass of sin was heaped upon Him. Through the words of Alma, Abinadi, Isaiah, and other prophets, however, my view has changed. Instead of an impersonal mass of sin, there was a long line of people, as Jesus felt “our infirmities” (Hebrews 4:15), “[bore] our griefs, . . . carried our sorrows . . . [and] was bruised for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53:4–5).

### **The Savior knows how to help each of us**

The Atonement was an intimate, personal experience in which Jesus came to know how to help each of us.

The Pearl of Great Price teaches that Moses was shown all the inhabitants of the earth, which were “numberless as the sand upon the sea shore” (Moses 1:28). If Moses beheld every soul, then it seems reasonable that the Creator of the universe has the power to become intimately acquainted with each of us. He learned about your weaknesses and mine. He experienced your pains and sufferings. He experienced mine. I testify that He knows us. He understands the way in which we deal with temptations. He knows our weaknesses. But more than that, more than just knowing us, He knows how to help us if we come to Him in faith. That is why a young Hispanic woman suddenly realized that she was more than a speck in the universe when the Holy Spirit gave her a witness of the Restoration. She felt God’s love, that she was His daughter, and realized that He knew her. It also explains why the plan of salvation seemed familiar to my Japanese friend as the missionaries taught him and as the Holy Spirit confirmed his purposes on earth and his potential.

### The gospel is a pattern for all

I testify that the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is a pattern for all. It is not the location of events that matters; it is the good news—the timeless doctrine and atoning powers of the Lord Jesus Christ. I bear witness that He lives, that He is the Christ. I testify that the gospel restored

through the Prophet Joseph Smith is Peter’s “restitution of all things.” I bear witness that President Gordon B. Hinckley is the Lord’s prophet today. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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The choir and congregation sang  
“Sweet Is the Work.”

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## Sister Cheryl C. Lant

### Delighting in the scriptures

Our beloved prophet has recently asked us to read the Book of Mormon before the end of the year. As I have accepted this invitation, I have found myself discovering new and exciting things in this book even though I have read it many times before. For instance, I rediscovered 2 Nephi 4:15, which reads, “For my soul delighteth in the scriptures, and my heart pondereth them, and writeth them for the learning and the profit of my children.”

This scripture teaches us how to read the Book of Mormon. It mentions three important ideas.

First, “My soul delighteth.” I love this phrase! I have thought about hungering and thirsting after knowledge as I read the scriptures, but delighting in them is something else. I find that what I take away from the scriptures is determined by what I bring. Each time I read them, I am, in a sense, bringing a new person with new eyes to the experience. Where I am in my life, the experiences I am having, and my attitude all affect how much I will gain. I love the scriptures. I treasure the truths I find as I read them. Joy fills my heart as I receive encouragement, direction, comfort, strength, and answers to my needs. Life looks brighter, and the way opens before me. I am reassured of my Heavenly Father’s love and concern for me every time I read. Surely this is a delight to me. As one little boy in a Sunbeam class put it, “I feel happy about the scriptures!”

### Pondering the scriptures

Second, “My heart pondereth them.” How I love to carry the scriptures with me in my heart! The spirit of what I have read rests there to bring me peace and comfort. The knowledge I have gained gives me guidance and direction. I have the confidence born out of obedience.

Sometimes I have the luxury of immersing myself in the scriptures. Sometimes I read them in snatches. However, it doesn’t seem to matter where or when I read the scriptures; I can still carry them in my heart. I have found that by reading them in the morning I am able to carry the influence of the Spirit with me throughout the day. When I read them midday, it is usually because a need has taken me there, where I am able to find answers and directions that influence my decisions and actions. When I read them at night, the sweet, comforting messages from the Lord linger in my subconscious mind as I rest. Many times I awaken at night with ideas or thoughts that originate from the words I read just before drifting off to sleep. My mind may go many places during the day, but my heart securely embraces the words of the Lord found in the scriptures and “pondereth them.”

Through this I have learned that “as [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7). As I ponder the scriptures, something happens to me. I have a stronger desire to live close to my Heavenly Father. I long to serve Him. I want to