

October 2-8, 2023

Ephesians

“FOR THE PERFECTING OF THE SAINTS”

Summary: *Ephesians 1. The Saints are foreordained to receive the gospel—The gospel is to be restored in the latter days—The Saints are sealed by the Holy Spirit of Promise—They know God and Christ by revelation.*

Ephesians 2. We are saved by grace through faith—The blood of Christ saves Jew and Gentile alike—The Church is built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets.

Ephesians 3. The Gentiles are fellow heirs with Israel—The love of Christ surpasses all understanding.

Ephesians 4. There is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism—Apostles and prophets are essential to the Church—The Saints are exhorted to live righteously—They are sealed unto the day of redemption.

Ephesians 5. The Saints are exhorted to avoid uncleanness and walk uprightly—Husbands and wives should love each other.

Ephesians 6. Children should honor their parents—Servants and masters are judged by the same law—Saints should put on the whole armor of God.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

Who is included in the gospel plan?

“Ephesians is an epistle for all the world, for Jew and

Gentile, for husband and wife, for parent and child, for master and servant. It was the mind and will of God in Paul's day; it is the voice of inspiration in our day; it is an epistle of universal appeal and application. Ephesians proclaims the supremacy of God, the glory of his gospel, the dignity and identity of the Church through which salvation is offered to man. It contains some of Paul's best writing, and is a document that deals with fundamentals, with the gospel of God in all its saving glory.” “In it, among other things, the Apostle teaches: That the saints of God are foreordained to receive the gospel with all of its ordinances, glories, and blessings; That the same gospel had in his day shall be restored in the dispensation of the fulness of times;

That through obedience to the gospel the saints receive the Holy Spirit of Promise and are sealed up unto eternal life; That God and Christ and the gospel are known only by revelation; That salvation comes by the grace and goodness of God and is for all men, Jew and Gentile alike; That the gospel is administered through one true Church, the Church which receives revelation, the Church directed by living apostles and prophets; and that because of gospel law Christ's people live righteously, perfect their families, and qualify for exaltation.” (Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, Vol.2, p.489*)

How did other religions creep-in and take-over?

As mentioned previously, the challenges in Ephesus included the religion of worshiping false Gods like Diana, the goddess of fertility. The tradition of the burial of Mary the mother of Jesus in

Ephesus, and subsequently the veneration of Mary beginning in Ephesus became a counterfeit substitute for the true religion. Satan's efforts to thwart Jesus' restoration of true religion became the "business" of religion that eclipsed the "essence" of religion.

What may be the Significance of Seven?

Each dispensation of time had its challenges. Latter-day Saints believe that, like the creation periods, there are seven dispensations of time often referred to as seven-thousand-year periods. Seven is a prime number and is very symbolic in the Bible. The two annual holy seasons that celebrate the deliverance of Israel, *Pesach* or Passover (in the Spring) and *Sukkoth* (in the Fall) are seven days in length. "The idea of orderliness is also conveyed by a fascinating use of numbers, especially the number seven. The first verse of Genesis in the Hebrew text contains seven words, the second verse, fourteen. The word Elohim (God) is mentioned 7 x 5 (35) times; "earth" 7 x 3 (21) times; "good" seven times. The section on the seventh day consists of 7 x 5 (35) words and the term "seventh day" is mentioned in each of three seven-word phrases." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) "Non-LDS Bible scholars (e.g., Fensham) usually arrange the principal biblical covenants into a fivefold sequence (Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and the New Testament covenant), but Latter-day Saints follow a sequence of seven main dispensations (Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Christ and his apostles, and Joseph Smith) . . ." (**Encyclopedia of Mormonism , Vol.1, Covenants in Biblical Times**) The symbol of seven also applies to purification. It took seven days of rain to cover the earth to cleanse it in Noah's time. Lepers, priests, women, and sacrifices required seven days of purification. It may be considered that the seven dispensations are a type of

purification to prepare for the Lord's arrival in the last days. Seven was symbolic in ancient Israelite culture and writings. It conveyed a sense of "fullness" or "completeness" the Hebrew word "seven" (*Sheva*) uses the same consonants as the word "complete/full"). (see **Maurice H. Farbridge's book, Studies in Biblical and Semitic Symbolism, 134-37**)

What does the term "Latter-day" imply?

Paul speaks of the last days and today, modern religious feelings indicate that the last days are at hand. Rabbi Abraham Cohen Kook, the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi in *Erez* (land of) Israel noted the arrival of the beginning of the last days. "It was here that he began to identify with the Zionist ideal and, in opposition to most other rabbis, joined the political movement. This combination of orthodoxy and political Zionism seemed almost a contradiction-in-terms in those days. The majority of religious leaders believed that there could be no return to Zion before the coming of the Messiah; and the active Zionists were mostly those who had abandoned their traditional religious roles and replaced them with secular, political activities. Rabbi Kook, on the other hand, believed that the return to *Erez* Israel marked the beginning of divine redemption (*athalta dige'ullah*)."

(**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) Bright yellow banners in Israel's Orthodox community urge "Prepare for The Imminent Arrival of The Messiah." Various leaders of Islam have proclaimed the imminent return of Mohammed along with Jesus in what they sense are the "last days." Christianity is generally geared to the imminent return of Jesus.

What happened to "just the Jews?"

Even though God in His wisdom chose a particular family to lead His children on this planet, to understand His plan of our gaining experience, to making choices

and an get the opportunity for an ultimate redemption, the plan is available for ALL people. "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." (**Genesis 12:1-3**) Jesus taught; "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." (**Matthew 21:43**) Paul teaches the Jews that an update in their responsibility came through Jesus, the Messiah, the Christ. "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." (**Ephesians 2:13-16**) A partition, a wall has been removed! More than just the Jews, all people can be covenant people.

Where is the Chief Cornerstone or Head of the Corner?

It is interesting to note that the metaphor of a building was used in ancient times to denote the structure and stability of the Lord's organization in the "last days." "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner." (**Psalms 118:22**) "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." (**Isaiah 28:16**) "Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?" (**Matthew 21:42**) "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the

household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (**Ephesians 2:19-22**) Since this is a visual image, picture a building fitly framed with all parts of it functioning and without apparent holes or breaks in it. From a western building style architectural view, a cornerstone really cannot be removed and the building still remain "fitly framed." Therefore, picture an eastern building style, a pyramid. Its chief cornerstone is the capstone. It can be removed, and the building is still "fitly framed." A U.S. one dollar bill has that image with the top, cap or chief cornerstone shown with rays beaming forth from an all-seeing eye. The pyramid also has twelve blocks as its foundation.

How am I separated, yet together?

The imagery continues into the family. As the children start their own family, the parents are "removed" from their former role yet still maintain a spiritual influence through their previous teaching and subsequent prayers and spiritual influence on their children. The unity of the family can still be imaged as "fitly framed." As with any home, protection from unwarranted outside influence is necessary. Security systems or defensive armor are part of the proper stewardship of the family's leaders. With the Lord as the Chief Cornerstone and following His instructions to defend ourselves with truth, righteousness, preparation, faith, spirit, prayer, and perseverance, we can protect our families inside or outside of the home. Paul's family teachings include sexual purity and propriety as a piece of righteous armor. In previous discussions we stated that "Latter-day Saint doctrine is more definitive in that any sexual contact or activity with anybody including our own,

and when that leads to improper sexual emotions it is simply unwarranted." The constant perfecting of ourselves and the

family members around us spreads to the community around us. It establishes a ripple that affects all the world.