

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! In this edition I'll be discussing ... Jesus -- AGAIN!

I would encourage you to go to <https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info> as I continue to update the site. I have links to several specific features below. Let me know what you think, whether you have any suggestions, or any requests.

As always, I'm extending an invitation for submissions to be published in The Gospel Notes Newsletter (TGNN). Additionally, if you have a subject or a question that you would like to have covered in a future edition of TGNN, feel free to send me a note and I'll do my best to address it.

The primary criteria for inclusion of articles are these:

1. It should be oriented towards the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
2. It should use the scriptures as a source of information.
3. It should include references for any quoted 3rd party sources.
4. It should not be political.

If you have a testimony to share, please send that to me and let me know if you would like it to be included in a future edition of the newsletter. Please keep in mind the four criteria listed above where applicable.

You can view previous editions of The Gospel Notes Newsletter (TGNN) in PDF (Portable Document Format) at <https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info/TheGospelNotesNewsletter>

Or you can access other educational/informational/inspirational resources at <https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info/Resources>

You can find the current preaching schedule for the Springfield, Missouri Restoration Branch at https://thechurchofjesuschrist.info/Resources/Service_Schedule.php

If you do not wish to receive the newsletter, please let me know. All responses to me will be treated confidentially unless you tell me otherwise.

In the previous newsletter I discussed the name of Jesus, but in this one I would like to discuss his life. So much of what surrounds Jesus is based on his mission, how he was born and how he died and arose from the dead. Those describe what he did **for** us as the Messiah, the Savior of the World. What he taught and how he lived provides another layer of intrigue to this individual that changed how people live nearly 2,000 years after the events of his ministry in Jerusalem.

I might dare to suggest that many of the people who heard Jesus speak in the synagogues, in the streets, and even in an upper room may not have appreciated at that time just how much his doctrine and teachings would alter the way that people view life, religion, eternity, or even God himself. What Jesus spoke were words that made people then and now think about **why** they do what they do and **why** they believe what they believe. The doctrine Jesus taught was not one of obedience out of ignorance, but one of obedience with understanding and faith.

The modern world has altered this view to suggest that faith in God is one of accepting the impossible without any reason to believe it might be true. Jesus clearly did not suggest that. His admonition to “seek”, “ask”, and “knock” directly opposes the modern idea that faith is one of blind acceptance.

One of the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants tells us the following,

D&C (RLDS) 90:6a **The glory of God is intelligence or, in other words, light and truth**; and light and truth forsaketh that evil one.

As an intelligent being himself, filled with glory, or as it says here, “intelligence”, “light” and “truth” it would seem contradictory for God want us to live in foolishness, darkness, and untruths. How we worship God should reflect something of his nature and character.

During his ministry Jesus spent a lot of time walking from one place to another. One can imagine those dusty or muddy roads in Israel in daylight and in rain, in heat and in cold, going from one place to the next to perform his ministry. As the disciples would crowd near him to hear what he would tell them next about the kingdom of God and explain the kind of people they should be if they want to enter into it, we can imagine them reasoning – sometimes foolishly – about what they were hearing. This teacher whom they followed confounded the leading experts in the law, not realizing that it was he who gave the law to them. By his knowledge he could do wondrous things because it was founded in truth.

The things Jesus did as miracles punctuated what he taught them – making sure they understood that these were not done as mere parlor tricks, but miracles that brought a truth to light about what he could do for their lives if they understood the doctrine he taught them.

- Healing the blind to give them sight showed not only his compassion for those with infirmities, but also showed that by his word alone he could make people see the truth of the mysteries of God if they asked him to.
- Turning water into wine brought relief to a wedding party, but it also showed that he could turn something common into something precious and wonderful.

- Casting devils out of men and women certainly saved those individuals from the torments they suffered in this life, but it also showed that he was the one with power over all things, and that all things would be subject to him including their greatest adversary, Satan.
- Healing those with diverse infirmities and afflictions most certainly demonstrated his pure love for each one, yet the greater healing is the restoration of spiritual life to those that struggle with belief and faith and hope.

The lessons he gave through his ministry were points that would be brought to the remembrance of the disciples by the Holy Ghost once they received it. Then they had understanding opened to them, just as it is available for us today.

The life of Jesus is not just a story that we remind ourselves about in the past-tense, like we might imagine reading about the history of the revolutionary war of the United States against Great Britain or about the actions of the Dutch East India company in their dealings with tea and spices in Asia. Those events had starting and ending points, but the life of Jesus has no beginning nor end. The same Jesus that taught those disciples on those long and winding journeys through the Israelite landscape is living and listening and working today with the same goals today as he did then.

In times to come the world is going to be faced with the reality that Jesus is not the merely human spec of dust in history that they presume him to be. The scriptures that we have are filled with things that are to take place in our day and in our future, things that will amaze and astonish his people and the enemies of his people. The same Jesus is there for us throughout all these events, ready to teach us, give us understanding, and to be with us in the good and the bad times.

In 1984 there was a popular movie called “The Neverending Story,” which was about a boy that is introduced to a book that writes new stories customized for each reader, and for his benefit it introduced him to the idea that his life story is not yet finished despite the loss of his mother. In some ways I see that as an allegory for us because the Lord is the author of the book of our lives, and the way that the plot of that story progresses is up to us.

The idea that the Lord Jesus Christ is alive today is put on the back burner of the minds of many people today because we live in a time of instant information and constant news. We are deluged with fiction at every turn, including the daily news. We see fiction everywhere because it is presented to us in every form, and consequently the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is often viewed with the same doubtful eye. Jesus Christ becomes, to many, just another version of a super-hero or fantasy character that has remarkable talents and origins, but not as a real being who lives today.

That view will ultimately have to change. The very real person of Jesus and his role as king must become a clear truth that cannot be mistaken for a fantasy story. That event will happen in each of our lives, but whether that happens now or at the time when every knee shall bow and every tongue confesses his Lordship over us is something that we can decide upon. Today.

The life of Jesus is something we can participate in today. The promise Jesus made to the disciples, and which he makes to us, is the same. If we follow him, we will be with him, and he will be with us.

John 15:5 I am the vine; ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.

The important thing about becoming a part of his life is that you do not have to be overcome by sorrow or doubt. There are some who feel the need to be filled with sorrow and doubt because of the things they have lost, and like Enoch they may say, “I will refuse to be comforted.”

Genesis 7:51 And as Enoch saw thus, he had bitterness of soul, and wept over his brethren, and said unto the heavens, **I will refuse to be comforted.**

This is not an indulgence that the Lord permitted Enoch to have. God gave him hope and joy, and the same is there for us.

Genesis 7:52 **But the Lord said unto Enoch, Lift up your heart, and be glad, and look.** And it came to pass that Enoch looked, and from Noah he beheld all the families of the earth; and he cried unto the Lord, saying, When shall the day of the Lord come? When shall the blood of the righteous be shed, that all they that mourn may be sanctified and have eternal life?

When shown these events, Enoch was comforted.

Genesis 7

53 And the Lord said, It shall be in the meridian of time, in the days of wickedness and vengeance.

54 And behold, Enoch saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, even in the flesh; **and his soul rejoiced**, saying, The righteous is lifted up; and the Lamb is slain from the foundation of the world; and through faith I am in the bosom of the Father; and behold, Zion is with me!

Jesus didn't indulge his disciples at Jerusalem with such a negative view either. That is the thing about Jesus – he himself was engaged in carrying the sorrows of the world, but he did not let it overtake him.

Isaiah 53

4 **Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows**; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

8 He was taken from prison and from judgment. And who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

9 And he made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death because he had done no violence; neither was any deceit in his mouth.

10 **Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed; he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.**

11 **He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities.**

The incredible thing is that for a being that had to carry such a weight, he had every right to view life in the negative, but he didn't. He took joy in doing this work for us. He carried that weight so that we don't have to.

As Christians, as disciples of Jesus Christ, our duty is not to be sorrowful, but joyful. It is our duty to look up and rejoice. The Gospel of the Kingdom is not a gospel of decay and darkness, but of light and truth. Jesus does not just save us from our sins, he saves us from the darkness of despair and sorrow.

The beauty of the resurrection is that all of Jesus teachings came to fruition because of his resurrection from the dead. There is light in the world today because Jesus conquered darkness and cast it down. There will be a greater light in the world to come because Jesus will make all things new and full of the glory of his presence.

If we find ourselves falling into sorrow, we can know of a certainty that it is not God who leads us to that condition, and it should serve as a reminder that Jesus carried that weight so that we don't have to. It should remind us to reach out to Jesus in prayer and in worship so that the darkness might be dispersed.

I'm reminded of a passage in the Book of Mormon:

Helaman 2

92 And it came to pass that they were overshadowed with a cloud of darkness, and an awful, solemn fear came upon them.

93 And it came to pass that there came a voice, as if it were above the cloud of darkness, saying, Repent ye, repent ye, and seek no more to destroy my servants whom I have sent unto you to declare good tidings.

94 And it came to pass when they heard this voice and beheld that it was not a voice of thunder, neither was it a voice of a great tumultuous noise--but behold, it was a still voice of perfect mildness, as if it had been a whisper; and it did pierce even to the very soul.

95 And notwithstanding the mildness of the voice, behold, the earth shook exceedingly; and the walls of the prison trembled again as if it were about to tumble to the earth; and behold, the cloud of darkness which had overshadowed them did not disperse.

96 And behold, the voice came again, saying, Repent ye, repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand; and seek no more to destroy my servants.

97 And it came to pass that the earth shook again, and the walls trembled; and also again the third time the voice came and did speak unto them marvelous words which cannot be uttered by man; and the walls did tremble again, and the earth shook as if it were about to divide asunder.

98 And it came to pass that the Lamanites could not flee because of the cloud of darkness which did overshadow them; yea, and also they were immovable because of the fear which did come upon them.

99 Now there was one among them who was a Nephite by birth, who had once belonged to the church of God but had dissented from them.

100 And it came to pass that he turned him about, and behold, he saw through the cloud of darkness the faces of Nephi and Lehi; and behold, they did shine exceedingly, even as the faces of angels.

101 And he beheld that they did lift their eyes to heaven; and they were in the attitude as if talking or lifting their voices to some being whom they beheld.

102 And it came to pass that this man did cry unto the multitude, that they might turn and look.

103 And behold, there was power given unto them, that they did turn and look; and they did behold the faces of Nephi and Lehi.

104 And they said unto the man, Behold, what doth all these things mean? And who is it with whom these men do converse?

105 Now the man's name was Aminadab. And Aminadab said unto them, They do converse with the angels of God.

106 And it came to pass that the Lamanites said unto him, **What shall we do, that this cloud of darkness may be removed from overshadowing us?**

107 And Aminadab said unto them, **You must repent and cry unto the voice, even until ye shall have faith in Christ, who was taught unto you by Alma, and Amulek, and Zeezrom; and when ye shall do this, the cloud of darkness shall be removed from overshadowing you.**

108 **And it came to pass that they all did begin to cry unto the voice of him who had shook the earth; yea, they did cry even until the cloud of darkness was dispersed.**

109 And it came to pass that when they cast their eyes about and saw that the cloud of darkness was dispersed from overshadowing them, behold, they saw that they were encircled about, yea, every soul, by a pillar of fire.

110 And Nephi and Lehi were in the midst of them; yea, they were encircled about; yea, they were as if in the midst of a flaming fire, yet it did harm them not; neither did it take hold upon the walls of the prison; and they were filled with that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory.

111 And behold, the Holy Spirit of God did come down from heaven and did enter into their hearts; and they were filled as if with fire, and they could speak forth marvelous words.

It was no mere coincidence that as the children of Israel were traveling in the wilderness that the Lord gave them a pillar of fire at night. For forty years they lived in the light of the Lord during the darkest of times when they had no home and no inheritance. But the light remained with them so they would not have to be afraid.

The promise of the Lord that he can be a light to us is a real promise, not one to be taken lightly. We must remember that we worship a living God.

During those many miles of walking with his disciples, Jesus made certain that they did not suffer the privations of hunger or thirst, or of dangers. When we walk with Jesus, we have no need to fear anything this world or the adversary of this world may cast at us, and the message we have – which must live within us – is that the love of God is what gives us hope and joy and peace.