

today, and the great God who holds this world in its orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by his power, was to make himself visible,—I say, if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form—like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man; for Adam was created in the very fashion, image and likeness of God, and received instruction from, and walked, talked and conversed with him, as one man talks and communes with another” (*TPJS*, p. 345).

Much of the LDS concept of godhood is expressed in a frequently cited aphorism written in 1840 by Lorenzo SNOW, fifth President of the Church. At the time, Snow was twenty-six years old, having been baptized four years earlier. He recorded in his journal that he attended a meeting in which Elder H. G. Sherwood explained the parable of the Savior regarding the husbandman who hired servants and sent them forth at different hours of the day to labor for him in his vineyard. Snow continued, as recorded in his sister’s biography of him: “The Spirit of the Lord rested mightily upon me—the eyes of my understanding were opened, and I saw as clear as the sun at noonday, with wonder and astonishment, the pathway of God and man. I formed the following couplet which expresses the revelation, as it was shown me. . . . As man now is, God once was: As God now is, man may be” (Eliza R. Snow, p. 46).

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K. CODELL CARTER

GOLD PLATES

On September 21, 1823, the angel Moroni appeared to Joseph SMITH and instructed him about a record engraved on thin goldlike sheets. The record, written by MORONI₂, his father MORMON, and other ancient inhabitants of the Americas, was buried in a stone box in a hill not far from the Smith residence. Moroni eventually delivered these plates to Joseph, who translated and published

them as the Book of Mormon and returned them to Moroni. While the plates were in Joseph’s keeping, others saw them, including eleven witnesses whose testimonies appear in all editions of the book. Various descriptions provided by eyewitnesses suggest that the plates may have been made of a gold alloy, measured about 6 inches by 8 inches (15.2 cm by 20.3 cm), were 6 inches (15.2 cm) thick, and weighed about 50 pounds (22.7 kg).

[See also Book of Mormon Plates and Records; Book of Mormon Translation by Joseph Smith; Book of Mormon Witnesses; Plates, Metal.]

GRANT R. HARDY

GOSPEL OF ABRAHAM

On April 3, 1836, the keys of the “dispensation of the gospel of Abraham” were committed to the Prophet Joseph SMITH and Oliver COWDERY in the Kirtland Temple as part of the RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS in the DISPENSATION OF THE FULNESS OF TIMES (D&C 110:12). It was promised that through latter-day recipients of the gospel and their seed, all generations who accept it shall be blessed (HC 2:434–36). This renewed the promise that was given anciently to Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3; Abr. 2:6, 9–11; cf. Gal. 3:7–9, 29).

Latter-day Saints teach that Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham and many others headed DISPENSATIONS OF THE GOSPEL. Divine blessings and commandments were bestowed appropriate to the circumstances of the faithful people of God in each dispensation.

The gospel dispensation of Abraham includes the PATRIARCHAL ORDER OF THE PRIESTHOOD and the eternal marriage covenant (D&C 131:1–4; 132:28–30; see also MARRIAGE: ETERNAL MARRIAGE), by which the ABRAHAMIC COVENANT is perpetuated from generation to generation among the faithful. Abraham was given a promise of innumerable posterity both in the world and out of the world. This promise is renewed for all who obey the gospel of Jesus Christ and receive the priesthood covenant of celestial marriage, “and by this law is the continuation of the works of [the] Father” among mankind both in time and eternity (D&C 132:31–33). The restoration of all things included the restoration of the KEYS to Joseph Smith to make it possible in modern times for all who do

the works of Abraham to inherit the covenant and blessings of Abraham.

[See also Seed of Abraham.]

JOEL A. FLAKE

GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

[This entry is discussed below under two headings:

The Gospel in LDS Teaching

Etymological Considerations for “Gospel”

The first division outlines the Latter-day Saint conception of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the fundamental teaching of the Church, as it is presented in scripture and in the teachings of the modern prophets. The second explores the complex history of the term and its possible meanings, particularly in Greek-speaking New Testament times.]

THE GOSPEL IN LDS TEACHING

JESUS CHRIST and his APOSTLES and PROPHETS have repeatedly announced the “good news” or “gospel” that by coming to Christ, a person may be saved. The Father is the author of the gospel, but it is called the gospel of Jesus Christ because, in agreement with the Father’s plan, Christ’s ATONEMENT makes the gospel operative in human lives. Christ’s gospel is the only true gospel, and “there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent” (Mosiah 3:17; cf. Acts 4:12).

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 PLAN OF SALVATION. President Brigham YOUNG taught that the “Gospel of the Son of God that has been revealed is a plan or system of laws and ordinances, by strict obedience to which the people who inhabit this earth are assured that they may return again into the presence of the Father and the Son” (JD, 13:233). The gospel of Jesus Christ is a key part of the PLAN OF SALVATION (or plan of redemption), which provides an opportunity for all people to obtain ETERNAL LIFE. Because of the FALL OF ADAM, which has passed upon all individuals by inheritance, all are subject to a PHYSICAL DEATH and a SPIRITUAL DEATH (2 Ne. 9:4–12; D&C 29:39–45; 1 Cor. 15:12–22) and cannot save themselves. God, the loving Father of all spirits, has declared that it is his work and glory “to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). For this purpose he provided a savior, Jesus Christ, who, because of his perfect LOVE, his sinlessness, and his being the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh, was both willing and able to offer himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world (John 3:16). Through his atonement, Christ redeemed all men, women, and children unconditionally from the two deaths occasioned by the transgression of Adam and Eve, and will also redeem them from their own sins, if they accept and obey his gospel (Moses 6:62; D&C 20:17–25; 76:40–53).

BASIC ELEMENTS. Modern revelations state that the Book of Mormon contains “the fulness of the gospel” (D&C 20:9; 27:5; 42:12). Of all the standard works, the Book of Mormon contains the most detailed exposition of the gospel. In three separate passages the basic elements of the gospel are explained by a prophet or by Jesus himself (2 Ne. 31:2–32:6; 3 Ne. 11:31–41; 27:13–21). Each of these passages is framed by the affirmation that “this is my doctrine” or “this is my gospel.” The revelations to the Prophet Joseph SMITH confirm these Book of Mormon statements of the gospel in every detail (see D&C 18:17–23; 19:29–31; 20:25–29).

These core texts repeat the basic elements of the gospel message several times in slightly varied ways. Joseph SMITH referred to them in abbreviated form as “the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel” (A of F 4).