the day of Pentecost, Peter exhorted them to “repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you shall receive the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). Only with the requisite repentance, symbolized by a “broken heart and a contrite spirit” and the abandonment of former sinful deeds and thought patterns, is one prepared to be baptized, receive the Holy Ghost, and have all previous sins remitted. Through baptism, a repentant person enters the kingdom of God by making covenants to remember Christ always and keep his commandments. The remission of sins comes “by fire and by the Holy Ghost” (2 Ne. 31:17; D&C 20:37).

Since repentance is an ongoing process in the mortal effort to become Christlike, the need for it never diminishes. It requires active, daily application as humans recognize and strive to overcome sin and error and in this way endure to the end. For this reason, the Lord has instituted a means whereby each person who has repented and entered into the baptismal covenant may renew it by partaking of the sacrament in remembrance of him. This time of self-examination allows one to reflect on the promises made at baptism, which were to take Christ’s name upon oneself, to remember him always, and to keep his commandments. Thus, the process of repentance is kept alive by this frequent period of reflection as the participant partakes of symbols of Christ’s body and blood in remembrance of his sacrifice to atone for human sin.

Scriptures inform us that “this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God” and that so-called deathbed repentance is usually not effective:

Ye cannot say, when ye are brought to that awful crisis, that I will repent, that I will return to my God. Nay, ye cannot say this; for that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world. . . . If ye have procrastinated the day of your repentance even until death, behold, ye have become subjected to the spirit of the devil [Alma 34:32–35].

To return to God’s presence, mortals must strive during this life to attain Christlike qualities, which can only be gained by turning from sin. To defer such efforts blocks the exercise of faith essential to repentance, prevents the operation of the Holy Ghost, and retards the development of the personal qualities reflected in the “broken heart and contrite spirit” necessary to live in God’s presence.

Repentance is one of the most powerful redemptive principles of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Without it, there would be no eternal progression, no possibility of becoming Christlike, no relief from the burden of guilt that every human incurs in a lifetime. With it, there is the glorious promise uttered by Isaiah that even for grievous sins there might be forgiveness: “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isa. 1:18).

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JAMES K. LYON

RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

The concept of a restoration of all things is biblical and is frequently spoken of in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Peter spoke of the anticipated “times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21). Latter-day Saints understand this as a prophetic anticipation of a full and final restoration of the gospel in the development and fulfillment of the purposes of God in the last days. The current era is therefore called the dispensation of the fulness of times in which all things will be gathered together in Christ (Eph. 1:10; D&C 27:13). The Church teaches that every gospel truth and blessing, and all priesthood authority, keys, ordinances, and covenants necessary for mankind’s eternal salvation have been, or will be, restored in this dispensation. In this manner, the blessings of dispensations past will “flow into the most glorious and greatest of dispensations, like clear streams flowing into a mighty river” (DS 1:168).

The restoration spoken of in the scriptures involves more than a reestablishment of the
Church and the function of saving ordinances. Scattered Israel will be gathered, the second coming of Christ will occur, the millennium will begin, the kingdom of God will be established worldwide, and "the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory" (A of F 10).

The Prophet Joseph Smith testified that he was visited by divine messengers from former dispensations who conferred upon him priesthood powers and restored ordinances, doctrines, and blessings that existed in their dispensations. A brief outline follows:

1. God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ initiated the restoration when they appeared to Joseph Smith in the spring of 1820. He was told to join none of the churches of the day, and he was also taught important truths about the nature of the Godhead (see first vision).

2. The angel Moroni visited Joseph Smith, revealing the plates of the Book of Mormon, which Joseph Smith translated, restoring gospel knowledge that had been lost to the earth in the centuries since biblical times. Latter-day Saints believe that the canon of scripture is not closed and that God "will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" (A of F 9), including additional volumes of holy scripture.

3. On May 15, 1829, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery were ordained to the Aaronic priesthood under the hands of John the Baptist (D&C 13:1).

4. In 1829 or 1830, three New Testament apostles—Peter, James, and John—confessed the Melchizedek priesthood, including the power of laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, upon Joseph and Oliver and ordained them "apostles and special witnesses" of Jesus Christ. This ordination restored to earth the same authority that existed in the Church during the Savior’s ministry.

5. The restoration includes reestablishment of an organization to teach the gospel and administer its ordinances. The sixth Article of Faith states, "We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth." Formal organization of the Church occurred on April 6, 1830, in Fayette, New York.

6. On April 3, 1836, the prophet Moses came to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery in the Kirtland Temple in Ohio and conferred the "keys of the gathering of Israel from the four parts of the earth" (D&C 110:11).

7. The prophet Elias conferred the keys of the dispensation of the Gospel of Abraham (D&C 110:12), restoring the patriarchal order of marriage and the gifts and blessings given to Abraham and his posterity (DS 3:127; MD, p. 203).

8. Elijah restored authority to bind and seal on earth and in heaven, including the power to seal husbands and wives to each other, and children to their parents (Smith, p. 252). This fulfilled Malachi’s prophecy that Elijah should be sent to "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse" (Mal. 4:5–6; D&C 110:15). The genealogical research of the LDS Church and the temple ordinances performed on behalf of the dead are integral parts of this process (see genealogy).

The restoration will result in the culmination of all of God’s purposes on the earth. The scriptures even speak of a reshaping of the land surfaces, with a coming together of the continents (D&C 133:23–24; cf. Gen. 10:25).

The fundamental purpose of the restoration is to prepare the Church and the world to receive their King, the Lord Jesus Christ. Latter-day Saints view the restoration of all things as the work of God preparatory to the time when all old things shall become new, with a new heaven and a new earth. The restoration will include resurrection, regeneration, and renewal to all life upon the earth and the glorification of the earth itself, when it becomes a celestial sphere (Isa. 65:17; Matt. 19:25; Rev. 21:1; D&C 29:22–25, 88:17–20, 25–26). As explained by Alma, referring in particular to the resurrection, "the plan of restoration is requisite with the justice of God, . . . that all things should be restored to their proper order" (Alma 41:2).

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Cory H. Maxwell