

forting assurance, which comes to those who recognize the signs, that God's plans will not be frustrated (D&C 3:1; 10:43)

In addition to manifesting God's power, signs have been given as a witness of the coming of Christ to earth. Latter-day Saints believe that signs were given to prepare the people for his coming in the MERIDIAN OF TIME. King BENJAMIN declared, "And many signs, and wonders, and types, and shadows showed he unto them, concerning his coming" (Mosiah 3:15). MORMON reports that among the Book of Mormon people, signs and wonders abounded prior to the birth of Christ in the Holy Land (3 Ne. 1:4–22) and before his visit to the Western Hemisphere (3 Ne. 8–10).

Of particular interest in the present DISPENSATION OF THE FULNESS OF TIMES are signs pertaining to the second coming of Christ (*see* SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST). The Lord has revealed the SIGNS OF THE TIMES (1 Thes. 5:1–2) to guide the faithful in their preparation for the "great and dreadful day of the Lord" (D&C 110:14)—that is, for Christ's second coming to the earth. Thus, the faithful watch for the signs so that when the hour comes, it will be great, but not dreadful to them (*cf.* 1 Thes. 5:2–4).

Elder Bruce R. McConkie noted at least fifty-one different signs, many of which pertain to natural phenomena, that have been foretold, pointing to the second coming of Christ. These include earthquakes, famines, depressions, economic turmoil, strikes, anarchy, violence, disasters, calamities, disease, plague, and pestilence. At the same time, both worldly knowledge and gospel knowledge increase, holy temples are built throughout the earth, Israel is gathered, and the true gospel is preached in all the world (*MD*, pp. 715–34).

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SIGN SEEKING

Signs are greeted by the faithful with reverence and appreciation (*see* SIGNS AS DIVINE WITNESS). On the other hand, a sign can become a condemnation to an unbeliever (D&C 63:7–11). Skeptics may rationalize the signs as aberrations of nature,

harden their heart, and not recognize or acknowledge God's "hand in all things" (D&C 59:21). When an unbeliever seeks for a sign he is tempting God and subjects himself to possible condemnation and the WRATH OF GOD. Two vivid Book of Mormon cases illustrating the consequences of unholy sign seeking are Sherem (Jacob 7:13–14) and Korihor (Alma 30:43–56). Furthermore, Jesus said to the Jewish rulers, "a wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign" (Matt. 16:4). And in the latter days, Jesus explained that "he that seeketh signs shall see signs, but not unto salvation" (D&C 63:7). There is a great difference between signs to confirm or reward faith and the seeking of signs as an excuse for not exercising faith or as a substitute for faith.

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SIGNS OF THE TIMES

The phrase "signs of the times" was used by Jesus Christ when he reproved certain antagonists for not recognizing earlier prophecies relative to his second advent. He said they understood signs pertaining to the weather, but did not understand the "signs of the times" (Matt. 16:3). Recognizing such signs will enable discerning individuals to understand the unfolding of prophetic events in the final phase of the earth's history. Prophets before and after Christ have prophesied that there would be signs pertaining to events occurring prior to Christ's second coming (Joel 2:30–31; Amos 8:11–12; 2 Thes. 2:1–3; *TPJS*, pp. 286–87).

These signs include the coming of false Christs and false prophets and the deception of many who believe in them (Matt. 24:11, 23–24). Included also are wars, rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes, pestilence, and other natural calamities (Matt. 24:6, 27; Mark 13:5–8). Latter-day revelation provides additional insights concerning these eschatological catastrophes and the consequences of them for those who are unprepared (D&C 29:13–21; 45:25–45). The gospel of Jesus Christ will be preached throughout the earth as a sign that the Lord's coming draws near (JS—M

1:31), and for those who believe and obey, his coming will be glorious. Even though no one on earth knows the exact time of Jesus' return (D&C 49:7), those who recognize the signs and prepare themselves by "treasuring up [his] word, shall not be deceived" (JS—M 1:37). These shall be as the "wise virgins" of Jesus' parable and shall profit from the signs of the times (Matt. 25:1–13; D&C 45:56; 53:54).

[See also Jesus Christ: Second Coming of Jesus Christ.]

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SIGNS OF THE TRUE CHURCH

The New Testament shows that in the MERIDIAN OF TIME Jesus Christ established his Church with definite doctrines, principles, and ordinances, and specifically ordained officers, giving the Church recognizable features by which it could be known. Many of the signs or essential features evident in Christ's New Testament Church are also recognizable in the Church he restored to the earth through the Prophet Joseph SMITH.

FAITH, REPENTANCE, BAPTISM, AND THE HOLY GHOST. One sign of Christ's Church is its insistence on the basic principles and ordinances of the gospel. Membership in the New Testament Church was obtained by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, repentance from sin, baptism in water, and the LAYING ON OF HANDS for the GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST (Acts 2:37–38). Baptism was by immersion administered by one having authority, just as Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:11–16). Jesus said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

The gift of the Holy Ghost was bestowed through the laying on of hands by one having authority, as exemplified at Samaria when Peter and John encountered some newly baptized persons: "For as yet [the Holy Ghost] was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost" (Acts 8:16–17). The same procedure is demonstrated by Paul at Ephesus (Acts 19:1–6). These same ordinances are required for membership in the Church today (cf. A of F 4).

CHURCH ORGANIZATION. Certain presiding officers, such as APOSTLES and PROPHETS, are characteristic of the Church of Jesus Christ. Paul states that Christ "gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body [church] of Christ" (Eph. 4:11–12; cf. 2:20). The Church of Jesus Christ was restored to the earth in the early nineteenth century through the Prophet Joseph Smith with "the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth" (A of F 6; see also ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES; QUORUM OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES; SEVENTY).

MIRACLES AND GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT. Jesus and the apostles performed miracles by faith and the power of God. Latter-day Saints believe that where there are apostles and prophets the gifts and signs of the Spirit will be present (Matt. 11:5). Where there is true faith, there will be miracles, and God's power will be manifest (Morm. 9:7–25). Bruce R. McConkie, an apostle, wrote, "Miracles wrought by the power of God are the perfect proof of pure religion. They are always . . . without fail, found in the true Church. Their absence is conclusive, absolute, and irrefutable proof of apostasy" (pp. 374–75).

CONTINUED REVELATION. The New Testament Church of Jesus Christ experienced frequent revelation, such as the visits of angels (Acts 4:5–19; 10:3; 27:23), visions (Acts 9:3–8), and the workings of the Holy Ghost (cf. John 15:26–27; 16:7–15). Through these means, knowledge was received from heaven. Continued revelation from God is necessary for the leaders of the Church and its members to learn the mind and will of the Lord and how to proceed from day to day. This view of revelation is stated thus in the latter-day Church: "We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God" (A of F 9).

PERSECUTION. The New Testament shows that true followers of Jesus Christ were inevitably persecuted. Jesus said to his apostles, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own, . . . but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19). Paul said that "all