

Chapter 24: This is Life Eternal

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- 5. The Intercessory or High Priestly Prayer
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1. Wednesday Evening, April 5, A.D. 30 Continued

While there are many who support the position that the events, we shall address in this chapter occurred on Thursday evening rather than on Wednesday evening, we will follow the position taken by Monte S. Nyman.

Monte S. Nyman states,

“Most harmonies and commentaries list Wednesday as a day of ‘no record.’ This listing probably comes because of the traditional ‘Good Friday’ as the day of Christ’s crucifixion. However, in this harmony, the traditional events of Thursday of the last week of the Savior’s life are listed under Wednesday, and the traditional events of Friday are listed on Thursday. Some Bible scholars consider this listing because of there being a double Sabbath in certain years of the Jewish calendar. They consider John 19:31 as a reference to such a day, ‘for that Sabbath day was a high day.’ James E. Talmage suggests this as a possibility in his great work, *Jesus The Christ*, 618-619.

“Another consideration was the prophecy of Christ concerning the prophet Jonah being ‘three days and three nights in the whale’ as a sign of Christ being ‘three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.’ (Matt. 12:39-40, see also JST, Mark 8:12, the Prophet Joseph’s addition to the text). The Book of Mormon also strongly implies three full days of his being in the spirit world (see 1 Nephi 19:10; 2 Nephi 25:13; 3 Nephi 8:19-23; 10:9). The crucifixion on Friday evening and the resurrection on Sunday does not fulfill the prophecies of the Savior or of the Book of Mormon. While the time period is not as significant as the events themselves, an explanation for the departure from the usual time table is given.”¹

This dating will continue throughout the remaining three chapters. It is, however, understood that while this chronology seems to best convey the dating of the last events in the Savior’s life, it is the events themselves that are of greatest importance.

2. Before Leaving the Upper Room

While one might draw the conclusion that the following events occurred after Jesus and His Apostles had departed from the upper room, the rationale that they occurred prior to their leaving as offered by Alfred Edersheim who wrote the classic reference *"The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah,"* in 1883, seems to be more plausible.

Alfred Edersheim states,

"The Discourse of Christ recorded in St. John 16, and His prayer (John 17), were certainly uttered after they had risen from the Supper, and before they crossed the brook Kidron (John 18:10). In all probability they were, however, spoken before the Saviour left the house. We can scarcely imagine such a Discourse, and still less such a Prayer, to have been uttered while traversing the narrow streets of Jerusalem on the way to Kidron."²

3. Persecution of the Apostles to Follow the Savior's Death

Jesus had taught His disciples previously in His ministry regarding His pending death and subsequent resurrection; however, they had not fully understood. Some have suggested that they were not able to fully understand because they did not yet have the gift of the Holy Ghost to enlighten their minds regarding spiritual truths. Others have suggested their understanding was impeded because they did not believe He could ever be killed nor did they want to consider He could be put to death. Thus, based on their own denial, they blocked any consideration regarding His death. In their own minds, they believed He would live forever. They may also have been concerned about their own lives. Had not Thomas stated when Jesus was going to return from Perea to Jerusalem in order to attend to Lazarus, "Let us go that we may die with him?" (John 11:16), for these reasons, and possible others, Jesus now approaches the subject of His impending death with them and their subsequent persecution.

John 15:20-21

20 Remember the word that I said unto to you, The servant is not greater than the lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

Jesus continues His warning,

John 16:2

2 They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

3 And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.

John 16:5-7

5 But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?

6 But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.

7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.

Jesus could not linger with them. He had come to earth in order to bring about the salvation of all His Father's children. This required that He voluntarily forfeit His life. He was, however, concerned about those whom He loved and the hardships and persecution they would experience. It was for this reason that He taught them regarding the Comforter He would send to them.

Andrew C. Skinner states,

“One by one the Apostles chosen by Christ were killed, as he had predicted (see John 16:1-4). James the brother of John, was the first member of the Quorum of the Twelve that we know of to be executed, sometime around A.D. 44 (see Acts 12:1-2). Others followed. James the Just, the brother of the Lord, may have been martyred in A.D. 62. And then during the Neronian persecutions of Christianity in Rome (A.D. 64-67), ‘the Church suffered the greatest loss it had yet sustained in the death of the apostles Peter and Paul.’ Thus, as scholars point out, no tradition about the early Church is more firmly held than that ‘all the Apostles except John were martyrs.’ The Apostolic Age came to an end, and the keys of the kingdom were gone.”³

4. The Comforter and His Mission

There may be those who do not understand fully the meaning of Jesus' reference to “the Comforter” whom He would send to His Apostles and subsequently to all other worthy individuals who choose to follow Him and keep His commandments.

The Comforter is the Holy Ghost. He along with God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, constitute the Godhead. He differs from the Father and the Son in bodily form.

Doctrine and Covenants 130:22

22 The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost could not dwell in us.

In the spring of 1820, when Joseph Smith saw both God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, he was only able to be in their divine presence as he had been sanctified (purified) by the power of the Holy Ghost. Otherwise he would not have been able in his natural physical body to be in the presence of divine beings.

Some have wondered why it was necessary for Jesus to leave before His Apostles and others could receive the Holy Ghost.

Robert L. Millet states,

“For reasons that are not completely clear in the New Testament, the full power and gifts of the Holy Ghost were not given in the Old World meridian Church until the day of Pentecost. ‘He that believeth on me,’ Jesus stated, ‘as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was promised unto them who believe, after that Jesus was glorified)’ (JST, John 7:38-39). While the Bridegroom was present with the disciples in the flesh, he was their Comforter, their Revelator, their Testator. He was their Life and Light, their source of power and might. ‘Hence, as long as Jesus was with the disciples in person, there was not the full need for them to have the constant companionship of the Spirit that there would be after Jesus left.’ But because of the vital role that Spirit would play thereafter in the growth, development, and expansion of the early Christian Church, Jesus said, ‘It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you (John 16:7).’⁴

In conclusion, it appears that while Jesus was with His Apostles and disciples, He provided for them the gifts the Holy Ghost would later provide in His absence. It was, therefore, not necessary for the Holy Ghost to also be present.

Bruce R. McConkie states as if Jesus were speaking to his Apostles,

"When you receive the companionship of the Spirit, so that you speak forth what he reveals to you, then your teachings will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. The **world will be convicted of sin for rejecting me**, for not believing your Spirit-inspired testimony that I am the Son of God through whom salvation comes. They will **be convicted for rejecting your testimony of my righteousness**--for supposing I am a blasphemer, a deceiver, and an imposter--when in fact I have gone to my Father, a thing I could not do unless my works were true and righteous altogether. They will **be convicted of false judgment for rejecting your testimony against the religions of the day, and for choosing instead to follow Satan**, the prince of this world, who himself, with all his religious philosophies, will be judged and found wanting."⁵

In other words, the Apostles will now stand as witnesses to the world regarding Jesus Christ. They would testify of His divinity, His mission, and teach the message of salvation to all who would listen. Given their increased responsibility, the Holy Ghost would be a source of continued comfort and support enabling them to deliver their divine message to a world of sin. Jesus continues His teachings to them.

John 16:13-15

13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

15 All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine and shall shew it unto you.

The New Testament Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual lists seven qualities of the Holy Ghost as taught by Jesus:

Qualities of the Holy Ghost	Scripture
1. Comforter: Comforts	John 14:26
2. Inspires: Teaches truth	John 14:26
3. Enlightens: Brings truths to our remembrance	John 14:26
4. Testator: Testifies of the Savior	John 15:26
5. Directs: Guides us to all truth	John 16:13
6. Revelator: Shows us things to come	John 16:13
7. Glorifies the Savior	John 16:14

Reference ⁶

Parley P. Pratt offers further clarity regarding the effects of the Holy Ghost upon an individual,

“The gift of the Holy Ghost...quickens all the intellectual faculties, increases, enlarges, expands and purifies all the natural passions and affections; and adapts then, by the gift of wisdom, to their lawful use. It inspires, develops, cultivates and matures all the fine-toned sympathies, joys, tastes, kindred feelings and affections of our nature. It inspires virtue, kindness, goodness, tenderness, gentleness and charity. It develops beauty of person, form, and features. It tends to health, vigor, animation and social feeling. It invigorates all the faculties of the physical and intellectual man. It strengthens, and gives tone to the nerves. In short, it is, as it were, marrow to the bone, joy to the heart, light to the eyes, music to the ears, and life to the whole being.”⁷

As a witness of truth, the spirit of the Holy Ghost will come and bear His witness to the individual who is seeking to know truth, more often by feelings than words, and then depart. This was certainly true during the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus whereby many were convinced of the truthfulness of their message and entered into the waters of baptism after having met the necessary prerequisites. In this manner the sincere investigator may know for themselves spiritual truth. (See **Holy Ghost**. LDS Bible Dictionary in The Holy Bible. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979, 704).

Today individuals may also have the gift of the Holy Ghost as a constant companion. Following their entering into the waters of baptism, through the laying on of hands, authorized holders of the priesthood will lay their hands upon the individual and bestow upon them the gift of the Holy Ghost. This enables the individual, through his/her continued righteousness, to have the influence of the Holy Ghost to guide, direct, and inspire them throughout their lives.

Doctrine and Covenants 9:2-3

2 Yea, behold, I will tell you in your mind and in your heart, by the Holy Ghost, which shall come upon you and which shall dwell in your heart.

3 Now, behold, this is the spirit of revelation; behold, this is the spirit by which Moses brought the children of Israel through the Red Sea on dry ground.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet state,

“Truth is often felt before it is understood. Though the mind and tongue may lack the ability to articulate a principle, it may still be fully understood by the heart (see Matthew 13:15) ...The union of heart and mind is necessary to an understanding of the word of the Lord. Eternal truths cannot be comprehended by the intellect alone, nor on the other hand is gospel understanding to be mindless. By definition revelation is that which comes to the heart and mind by the power of the Holy Ghost (see D&C 8:2-3).”⁸

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet continue,

“Harold B. Lee frequently described the growth of testimony as the process by which a person’s heart tells him things his mind is yet to understand.”⁹

As the sincere seeker of truth seeks to understand spiritual truth, both his/her mind and heart will be enlightened by the spirit of the Holy Ghost.

John 16:16

16 A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.

Bruce R. McConkie clarifies the above verse,

“Jesus’ coming separation from his beloved disciples is to be brief. They shall witness his death; place his body in the tomb; be absent while he visits the spirits in paradise; and then the third day he shall rise again to appear and minister once more to them. They shall sorrow because of the separation, rejoice at the reunion; they shall lament at his death, feel exultation at his resurrection—all of which is a type and shadow of how, for all men, the sorrow and separation of death is swallowed up in the joy of the resurrection.”¹⁰

At this time, His Apostles do not understand His words. Jesus will now instruct them regarding a change in the format of their prayers.

John 16:23

23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“Perhaps as long as Jesus was personally with them many of their petitions were addressed directly to him rather than to the Father. Such was the course followed by the Nephites when the resurrected and glorified Lord ministered among them (3 Ne. 19:17-18, 22). They prayed directly to him and not to the Father.”¹¹

Following His resurrection, no longer will they pray to Him directly, but to the Father in His name.

Bruce R. McConkie continues,

“The Father loves them and they [will now] have direct access to him. Having the Holy Ghost, they then will be able to formulate their own Spirit-guided petitions: then they will feel secure in coming boldly ‘unto the throne of grace, ‘that they ‘may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need’ (Hebrews 4:16).”¹²

Jesus clarifies anew His relationship with His Father.

John 16:28

28 I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and go to the Father.

To these words, the Apostles respond.

John 16:30

30 Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.

Jesus gives them the following words in order to continue to strengthen them for the trial and tribulations that yet lie ahead for them.

John 16:33

33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Jesus' words of comfort and strength spoken to His Apostles also have application to those today who are His disciples. We live in a world that is becoming increasingly wicked. Daily, we experience trials and tribulations due to Satan's expanding influence. As we struggle to walk the path of righteousness, we may turn to the Father, in the name of Christ, to find personal strength and peace.

5. The Intercessory Prayer or High Priestly Prayer

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“The words of the *Intercessor Prayer*, so named because of the intercessory pleadings Jesus makes for his disciples and for all who believe on his name; called also the *High Priestly Prayer*, meaning a prayer by the great ‘High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus’ (Hebrews 3:1), who is about to perform his supreme priest function by sacrificing himself for the sins of the world.”¹³

The Life and Teachings of Jesus and his Apostles (Institute) Manual states,

The High Priestly Prayer was offered, “Once each year, [as] the presiding high priest in ancient Israel entered into the holy of holies, the most sacred place within the tabernacle. There he would perform certain rites in connection with the Day of Atonement, a day set aside for national humiliation and contrition. Having bathed himself and dressed in white linen, he would present before the Lord a young bullock and two young goats as sin offerings, and a ram as a burnt offering in behalf of his sins and those of the people. The high priest's role was that of a mediator, or one who interceded with the Lord in behalf of the people. His role, of course, was but a type of the great mediating role of the Savior in our behalf. Thus, when Jesus pleaded to the Father for all those who believed on him, he did so as our Intercessor, or Great High Priest.”¹⁴

Once again, we learn that the covenant children of Israel were being tutored regarding the coming of the Messiah who would intercede with the Father on behalf of all those who believed in Him.

David O. McKay states,

The great Intercessory Prayer found in John 17, is "one of the most glorious prayers—I suppose the greatest prayer—ever uttered in this world, not excepting the Lord's Prayer. This was Christ's prayer uttered just before he entered the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of his betrayal. It must have been impressive for John to remember so much of it and to write it word for word, as he has here.”¹⁵

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“The prayer itself is one of the greatest ever recorded and is perhaps exceeded only by those which it is beyond the ability of the written word to preserve.”¹⁶

Having introduced the prayer, we now proceed to its examination.

6. The Three Distinct Parts of the Intercessory Prayer

6.1. Part I (John 17:1-3)

Jesus begins His prayer by confirming His offer of Himself as the great sacrifice. It is important to understand that this offer was originally made during the pre-mortal council held prior to world's being created for mortal spirits. The Plan presented by the Father required a Savior. At that time two of the foremost beings stepped forward. One was the Jehovah/Jesus Christ and the other was Lucifer or the Devil as he became known. One

was willing to go to earth and voluntarily surrender their life and the glory would be to the Father. The other, Lucifer, was willing to go to earth but he would force all spirits to be obedient and none would be lost. For his efforts, he wanted the glory the Father held for Himself. The result was that the willingness of Jehovah/Jesus Christ to serve as the designated Savior was accepted by the Father and two thirds of the hosts of heaven. In turn, Lucifer and those who chose to follow him were cast out and now continue their efforts to thwart the Father's Plan. (see Pearl of Great Price, Moses 4:1-4; Revelations 12:7-12).

John 17:1-3

- 1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.**
2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.
3 And this is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

Jesus was about to voluntarily offer up His life on behalf of all His Father's children in order that they would live again after mortal death. Through obedience to His teachings, the opportunity was extended for them to receive eternal life or to return to live with the Father again.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"**It is one thing to know about God and another to know him. We know about him when we learn he is a personal being in whose image man is created; when we learn that the Son is in the express image of his Father's person; when we learn that both the Father and the Son possess certain specified attributes and powers. But we know them, in the sense of gaining eternal life, when we enjoy and experience the same things they do. To know God is to think what he thinks, to feel what he feels, to have the power he possesses, to comprehend the truths he understands, and to do what he does. Those who know God [as Jesus Christ does] become like him, and have his kind of life, which is eternal life."**¹⁷

6.2. Part II (John 17:4-19)

Part II consists of a prayer on behalf of the Twelve Apostles. He was able to intercede on their behalf because He had done all that the Father sent Him to do in order to put the Father's Plan of Salvation into effect. In His prayer to the Father, He spoke "as if" He had already completed His sacrifice.

John 17:4

- 4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.**

He petitioned the Father on behalf of His Apostles.

John 17:6, 8-9, 11-12

- 6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.**
8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.
9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

11 ...I come to thee, Holy Father, [therefore] keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; ...

The remaining eleven had been with Jesus throughout His earthly ministry. They had sacrificed greatly, including their vocational pursuits and time with their family, in order to travel with Jesus throughout the land. As Jesus taught the people, He had also given to them the eternal truths of heaven. Each had received a personal testimony as to Jesus' divinity and that He is the Promised Messiah. It was now upon their shoulders the kingdom of God on earth would be built. All, except Judas Iscariot, had been faithful to the calling they had received to be Special Witnesses of Christ to all the world.

John 17:15, 17

15 I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from evil.

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

While it was essential, they be in the world so that they could teach the important truths that would reduce the evil in the world, it was also important that they were protected from the evil influences that existed in the world. Their greatest protection, and ours, from evil was to be sanctified.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"To be sanctified is to be cleansed from all sin; it is to stand pure and spotless before the Lord; it is to overcome the world and be a fit candidate for a celestial inheritance...Sanctification comes only to the obedient."¹⁸

Jesus' concern for His Apostles was based on His own mortal experience as He reported to His Father.

John 17:18

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

6.3. Part III (John 17:20-26)

Jesus' intercession now extends beyond the Apostles to include all those who are converted to His Gospel, including you and me.

John 17:20

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but, for them also which shall believe on me through their word.

Jesus continued His petition to the Father to bless all those who will yet become Saints or members of His Church.

John 17:21

21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

The oneness to which Jesus referred is to become united in thought and desire and action toward one another.

Though the Saints (members) may be numerous or few in number, Jesus seeks that they will be united in their obedience to the principles of the gospel and with one another. Following the visit of the resurrected Savior, to the Nephites achieved a level of unity we would do well to emulate.

B/M, 4 Nephi 1:15, 17, 16 (underline added)

15 And it came to pass that there was no contention among all the people, in all the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people

17 ...they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God.

16 And there were no envyings, nor strifes, nor tumults, nor whoredoms, nor lyings, nor murders, nor any manner of lasciviousness; and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who have been created by the hand of God.

When there is unity among the people in keeping the commandments of God, their actions toward one another are kindness and consideration.

John 17:22-24

22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one.

23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

In order to obtain the glory of the Son and the Father, it is necessary that we be purged from the desires and inclinations toward evil that interfere with our being receptive to the spirit.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

Here Jesus is praying "Father, wilt thou give these my brethren [and sisters] eternal life; may they reign in everlasting glory with me in my kingdom, for they are as I am, and I am as thou art. Thou lovedst me and them before the foundation of the world, and as it was in the beginning so shall it be everlastingly."¹⁹

Jesus concludes His prayer with these words as recorded by John.

John 17:26

26 And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hath loved me may be in them, and I in them.

In the Book of Mormon, Lehi, one of the Prophets in Ancient America, leads his family, under the direction of the Lord, from Jerusalem to the Americas. The record he compiled contains a dream which he was given by

the Lord. In the dream, Lehi saw a tree which was covered with fruit. Lehi partook of the fruit and found that it, "was desirable above all other fruit" (B/M, First Nephi 8:15). He then sought that all members of his family might partake of the fruit of the tree. Nephi, Lehi's youngest son, obtained an interpretation of meaning of the tree and its fruit in his father's dream. He was told, "Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things" (B/M, First Nephi 11:22). Like Father Lehi, Jesus' prayer is that the Saints everywhere might be able to receive in its fullness, the love of God "which is most desirable above all things."

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet state,

“There is no joy in this life which rivals that of partaking of the powers of Christ through the Atonement, no joy which transcends those feelings of purity and peace associated with the Master's redemptive and renovating action upon the human soul.”²⁰

How blessed we are to have this special prayer offered by Jesus on behalf of His Apostles, and us, as recorded by John. As we meditate upon His words and seek to further understand their meaning, we too will be strengthened as we face the challenges of being a disciple and witness of Christ today.

Following the prayer, prior to their leaving the Upper Room, Matthew 26:30 and Mark 14:26, both record the following:

Matthew 26:30

30 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

7. Conclusions

We have addressed the events of the evening of Wednesday, April 5, A.D. 30, that occurred in the Upper Room in Jerusalem prior to Jesus and His Apostles going to the Garden of Gethsemane.

Once again Jesus sought to prepare His beloved friends of the persecution that they were to experience. He sought to strengthen them and give them comfort that they might be valiant to the teachings that He had given them as they went forth as His Special Witnesses to the World.

While He would not be there to protect them and strengthen them, in His absence, the third member of the Godhead, even the Holy Ghost would come unto them. He would be a comforter, revelator, sanctifier and sealer of their words. He would give unto them the very words that they were to speak as they bore witness of His divinity and of His gospel. Different from previous occasions, when the Holy Ghost came to individuals and bore His witness to them of the truth, and then departed, they would now receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, which meant as they lived righteously, they would have Him to be their constant companion. He would not leave them alone.

Lastly, He offered, on behalf of the Apostles and us, the Intercessory or High Priestly Prayer. The main parts of this prayer included: 1) The confirmation of His voluntarily offering Himself as the great and final sacrifice that would free all mortal men and women from the bonds of death; 2) His words to the Father spoken directly on behalf of His Apostles were they would be strengthened and sanctified and, 3) His petition on behalf of all who would come unto the knowledge of His Gospel, they would continue to walk in obedience to the commandments and covenants that they would make so that in the end they would become united with the Father and the Son and come and dwell with them and enjoy eternal life.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“Eternal life itself is the greatest of all the gifts of God, for it consists of receiving, inheriting, and possessing the same glorious exaltation enjoyed by the Father himself. It is to be like God, to be one with the Father and the Son. But eternal life is gained only in eternity. The greatest gift known to and enjoyed by mortals is the gift of the Holy Ghost, which is the right to the constant companionship of that member of the Godhead based on righteousness. This gift, given by the laying on of hands, is enjoyed by those who love God with all their hearts.”²¹

As we reflect upon the words of Elder McConkie and Parley P. Pratt who note the blessings of the Holy Ghost, we can well understand why Jesus included as part of the final discourse, His teachings regarding the Comforter and His mission. The Comforter or the Holy Ghost was to serve as the constant companion to His Apostles and the conduit whereby the Father and the Son would reveal their will. This inspiration would serve to both nourish the seeds of faith and testimony which Jesus had planted and to strengthen their ability to be true to the mission which Jesus had given to them. This blessing also extends to each of us as we enter the waters of baptism and make and keep sacred covenants. We, too, may have the gift of the Holy Ghost to guide, strengthen, and comfort us as we proceed on our journey toward eternal life.

Footnotes

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- ¹ *New Testament Restoration Harmony: The Complete Guide to the Four Gospels*. Springville, Utah: Cedar Fort, Inc., 2006, 327.
- ² *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah*. 1883.; see also *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah: New Up Dated Edition*. Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1993, [Sixth Printing, November, 2000], Book 5: 829.
- ³ “Apostasy, Restoration, and Lessons in Faith” in *Ensign*, December, 1995.
- ⁴ “The Ministry of the Holy Ghost” in *Selected Writings of Robert L. Millet: Gospel Scholar Series*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2000, 194.
- ⁵ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 754, Bold added.
- ⁶ *New Testament Gospel Doctrine Teacher’s Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997, [2002], 99.
- ⁷ *Key to the Science of Theology*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1965, [Tenth Edition], 101.
- ⁸ *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987, [10th Printing, 1999], 216.
- ⁹ McConkie, Joseph Fielding and Robert L. Millet. *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987, [10th Printing, 1999], 216.
- ¹⁰ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 758.
- ¹¹ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 758-759.
- ¹² *The Mortal Messiah: Book 4*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1981, 103.
- ¹³ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 760.
- ¹⁴ *The Life and Teachings of Jesus and his Apostles (Institute) Student Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978, [Second Edition, Revised, 1979], 171-172.
- ¹⁵ “Unity of Purpose Important to the Accomplishment of God’s Work” in *Conference Report*, October, 1967, 5.
- ¹⁶ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 760.
- ¹⁷ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 762, bold added.
- ¹⁸ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 4*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1981, 114.
- ¹⁹ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 4*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1981, 116.
- ²⁰ *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1987, [10th Printing, 1999], 80.
- ²¹ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 4*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1981, 95-96.