

LESSON 1
“That Ye Might Believe That Jesus Is The Christ”
Isaiah 61:1-3; JST Luke 3:4-11, John 1:1-14, 20:31

OVERVIEW:

Prophecies of Christ and His mission. Jesus is the Christ.

The New Testament is divided into 4 parts.

The Gospels – which are a record and witness of Jesus Christ’s life, mission and teachings.

Book of Acts – An account of the ministry of the Apostles, mainly Paul among the Gentiles and Peter among the Jews.

Epistles – Letters of Paul and other Church leaders to instruct and edify.

The Lord’s revelation to John on the Isle of Patmos.

Using our calendars, Jesus lived 12,053 days – 33 full years. The New Testament only documents a record of 31 days of His life.

Keep in mind that many plain and precious things have been taken out of the writings in the gospels. Gospel writers had different approaches to describing Jesus’ life.

Matthew wrote either in Hebrew or Aramaic, because the Church had not yet spread to Greek speaking areas around Palestine. The sayings written by Matthew were recorded during Jesus’ lifetime. Matthew was a publican and spoke both Greek and Aramaic. He became an Apostle. He tried to convince his fellow Jews that Jesus Christ was the Messiah. He cited the Old Testament more than the others and that Jesus was the fulfillment of prophecies.

Mark was the interpreter of Peter. He neither heard the Lord, nor followed him, but wrote what he heard Peter say of his experiences with Jesus. It is believed that Mark wrote mainly to the Romans or Gentiles, stressing the deeds and miracles of Jesus. Mark’s given name was John and his Latin surname was Marcus, or Mark. Acts 12:12-13:13. He was the son of a woman named Mary in whose Jerusalem home the early disciples met. He also accompanied his cousin, Barnabas and the Apostle Paul on some of their missionary journeys. Mark’s work was probably the first written and was used as a source by Matthew and Luke. It is believed by some that the last supper was held in the home of John Mark.

Luke, the physician, was well educated. Luke gives full detail on the psychological reactions of the apostles and the physical proof of the resurrection. Luke was converted by those who walked with Christ. Luke may have met with many of the women mentioned in his Gospel while waiting for Paul to be released from prison. These interviews were the source regarding the birth of Jesus. Luke wrote mainly to the Greeks. Luke was companion to Paul on some of his missionary travels.

John’s purpose is to explain WHAT He is and begins by describing Him as the WORD. John’s book has 21 chapters that deal with the period before and during Jesus’ mortal life. The last chapter is after His resurrection. Of the first 20 chapters, half are devoted to His last six days in mortality. John was the last writer and had the benefit of having copies of the other three Gospels. He added, what the others lacked,

an account of what had been done by Jesus first of all and at the beginning of the preaching. His writings were as an intimate eye-witness of Jesus' life. John tells what it was like to be with the Master privately. John is in part the Gospel of the personal conversations of the Savior. John's main objective is to bear witness that Jesus is the Christ. John's account is written to the saints.

Perhaps nothing we do can have a more profound effect on our lives than to study the life of Christ. If we immerse ourselves in the mission of the Savior and learn from his example and his words, we cannot help but feel the purifying influence of his character.

There are four keys to gaining the most from reading the Gospels. 1 – Study the Gospels in light of gospel truth that has been revealed in modern times. 2 – Rely upon the Holy Ghost. 3 – Learn how the ancient writers expressed themselves. 4 – Understand the Gospels within their own context.

SCRIPTURES:

ISAIAH CHAPTER 61

Isaiah speaks Messianically—Messiah shall have the Spirit, preach the gospel, and proclaim liberty—In the last days the Lord will call his ministers and make an everlasting covenant with the people.

1 THE ^aSpirit of the Lord ^bGOD (Heb Jehovah) is upon me; because the LORD hath ^canointed me (Messiah means “anointed one.”) to ^dpreach ^egood tidings (that we can be delivered from sin and death.) unto the ^fmeek; he hath sent me to ^gbind up the brokenhearted, (the Lord will heal all emotional and spiritual wounds) to ^hproclaim ⁱliberty to the ^jcaptives, and the opening of the ^kprison to *them that are bound*; (Those in spirit prison will be set free. Christ quoted this scripture and said it had been fulfilled in him that day. Luke 4:16-21 16 16 ¶ And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, 18 The ^aSpirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath ^banointed me to ^cpreach the ^dgospel to the ^epoor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to ^fpreach ^gdeliverance to the ^hcaptives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at ⁱliberty them that are bruised,19 ^aTo ^opreach the acceptable year of the Lord. 20 And he closed the book, and he gave *it* again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture ^afulfilled in your ears.)

2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, (God's grace will not end.) and the day of ^avengeance (His vengeance is an occasional judgment.) of our God; to ^bcomfort all that ^cmourn; (This refers to the Second Coming.)

3 To appoint (give the blessing) unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them ^abeauty for ashes (mourning), the oil of ^bjoy (it was the custom to anoint oneself with oil before festivities) for mourning, the garment of praise (worn for festivals and rejoicing) for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called ^ctrees of ^drighteousness, the ^eplanting of the LORD, (men of righteousness) that he might be glorified.

JOSEPH SMITH TRANSLATION

LUKE 3: 4-11

Christ shall come to fulfill prophecy, take away sins, bring salvation, and be a light, and he shall come in the day of power and the fulness of times. (compare Luke 3: 4-6) 4 ^aAs it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The ^bvoice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 5 Every ^avalley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways *shall be* made smooth; 6 And all flesh shall see the ^asalvation of God.

JST: The inspired version clarifies that John the Baptist claimed to be the promised forerunner in times meridian.

4 As it is written in the book of the *prophet* Esaias; (Isaiah 40:3-5) *and these are the words*, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, (John the Baptist) Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight.

5 *For behold, and lo, he shall come, as it is written in the book of the prophets, to take away the sins of the world, and to bring salvation unto the heathen nations, to gather together those who are lost, who are of the sheepfold of Israel;*

6 *Yea, even the dispersed and afflicted; and also to prepare the way, and make possible the preaching of the gospel unto the Gentiles;*

7 *And to be a light unto all who sit in darkness, unto the uttermost parts of the earth; to bring to pass the resurrection from the dead, and to ascend up on high, to dwell on the right hand of the Father,*

8 *Until the fulness of time, and the law and the testimony shall be sealed, and the keys of the kingdom shall be delivered up again unto the Father;*

9 *To administer justice unto all; to come down in judgment upon all, and to convince all the ungodly of their ungodly deeds, which they have committed; and all this in the day that he shall come;*

10 *For it is a day of power; yea,* every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; (This part of Isaiah refers to the Second Coming.)

11 And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. (John was claiming to be the promised forerunner of time's meridian and Isaiah's quotation about the mountains being brought low and all flesh seeing the salvation of God, had reference not to the first but to the Second Coming of the Lord.)

Isaiah 40:3-5: 3 ¶ The ^avoice of him that crieth in the wilderness, ^bPrepare ye the ^cway of the LORD, make straight in the desert a ^dhighway for our God. 4 Every ^avalley shall be ^bexalted, and every ^cmountain and hill shall be made ^dlow: and the ^ecrooked shall be made straight, and ^fthe rough places plain: 5 And the ^aglory of the LORD shall be ^brevealed, and all flesh shall ^csee *it* together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST JOHN CHAPTER 1

Christ is the Word of God—He created all things and was made flesh—John baptizes Jesus and testifies he is the Lamb of God—John, Andrew, Simon, Philip, and Nathanael believe in Christ and follow him.

1 ^aIN the ^bbeginning was the (JST: gospel preached through the Son. And the gospel was the) Word, and the ^cWord was with (the Son, and the Son was with) God, and the ^dWord (Son) was (of) ^eGod. (Christ's pre-existent position as God)

2 The same was in the ^abeginning with God. (In these first two verses, John wants to establish three things: 1) Jesus Christ was to be the outward and dynamic expression of both his Father's essence and

his Father's will, 2) Jesus was eminently suited to this task, for he had developed the very same character and attributes as His Father, 3) The Father and the Son are two distinct persons.)

3 All things were ^amade by him (Jesus Christ is Jehovah); and without him was not any thing made that (which) was made.

4 In him was (the gospel and the gospel was the) ^alife; and the life was the ^blight of men.

5 And the ^alight shineth in (the world) ^bdarkness; and the (world) darkness ^ccomprehended (perceiveth) it not. (V 3-9: The existence of light as a fundamental part of the Word, which he shares freely with all who come into the world. This verse encapsulated the drama of good versus evil. The effect of this contrast is to say that this dispelling of darkness is an inherent and enduring quality of light and of the One who is personified as light. On the other hand, there was a time when the darkness, or the one of whom it is a personification, attempted to seize and overcome the light. It refers to a specific attempt, a single occurrence, not an ongoing timeless quality. John was foreshadowing a main theme of his Gospel: a record of the specific time when, as the light shone in the darkness that had come upon this world, the Prince of Darkness attempted and failed to overcome and extinguish that light. A major effort of his Gospel is to mirror and witness the dynamic conflict between light and dark which was to culminate in the Savior's dynamic victory.)

D&C 93:6-9 reveals the author of these 5 verses:

6 And ^aJohn saw and bore record of the fulness of my ^bglory, and the fulness of ^cJohn's record (It appears that the record being spoken of was written by John the Baptist. Similarities between this revelation and the testimony of the Gospels, especially that of the apostle John, indicate that the Gospel writers may have included some of John the Baptist's record with their own. Bruce R. McConkie noted: "From latter-day revelation we learn that the material in the forepart of the gospel of John (the Apostle, Revelator, and Beloved Disciple) was written originally by John the Baptist. By revelation the Lord restored to Joseph Smith part of what John the Baptist had written and promised to reveal the balance when men became sufficiently faithful to warrant receiving it (D&C 93: 6-18) Revelations of the Restoration, p. 669) is hereafter to be revealed. (In this revelation John the Baptist tells of a vision in which he was shown the power, acts, and glory of Christ in the premortal realms. Likewise, Abraham saw in vision the noble and great spirits whom God appointed to be his rulers "and there stood one among them that was like unto God" (Abraham 3:24). Christ was the most intelligent of all of the heavenly hosts of our Father's children. Indeed, he was like unto God the Father in intelligence and glory, knowing all truth. His knowledge extended to comprehending "things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come" (v. 24). Revelations of the Restoration, p. 668-69) 7 And he bore record, saying: I saw his glory, that he was in the ^abeginning, before the world was; 8 Therefore, in the beginning the ^aWord was, for he was the Word, even the messenger of salvation— 9 The ^alight and the Redeemer of the world; the Spirit of truth, who came into the world, because the world was made by him, and in him was the life of men and the light of men.

15 And I, ^aJohn, bear record, and lo, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove, and sat upon him, and there came a voice out of heaven saying: This is my ^bbeloved Son.

(Elder Bruce R. McConkie said: "It should be evident that John the Baptist had something to do with the recording of events in the forepart of John's gospel, for some of the occurrences include his conversations with the Jews and a record of what he saw when our Lord was baptized – all of which matters would have been unknown to John the Apostle whose ministry began somewhat later than that of the Baptist's. There is little doubt but that the Beloved Disciple had before him the Baptist's account when he wrote his gospel. The latter John either copied or paraphrased what the earlier prophet of the

same name had written. The only other possibility is that the Lord revealed to the gospel author the words that had been recorded by the earlier messenger who prepared the way before him.” DNTC, p. 71) John the Beloved was a disciple of John the Baptist before following Jesus.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was ^aJohn. (John the Baptist)

7 The same came (into the world) for a ^awitness, to bear ^bwitness of the Light, (to bear record of the gospel through the Son unto all,) that ~~all men~~ through him (men) might ^cbelieve. (Why was John the Baptist’s testimony so important? Joseph Smith said: “Now it was written that the priests’ lips should keep knowledge, and to them should the people seek for understanding [Mal 2:7]. And above all, the law binds them and us to receive the word of the Lord at the hands of the Levites. Therefore, John being lawful heir to the Levitical Priesthood, the people were bound to receive his testimony.” (WJS, 65) “He [John], having received the holy anointing, was the only lawful administrator, and the Jews all knew it... All Jerusalem and all Judea came out to be baptized of John: Saducees, Pharisees, Essenes.” (WJS 235) “All the power, authority, and anointing descended upon the head of John the Baptist... This was virtually acknowledged by all Judea and Jerusalem coming out to be baptized of him.” WJS 236))

8 He was not that Light, but ~~was sent~~ (came) to bear witness of that Light.

9 ~~That~~ (Which) was the true ^aLight, which ^blighteth ^cevery man ~~that~~ (who) cometh into the world. (Elder McConkie said: “Every person born into the world automatically and instinctively knows right from wrong because of the universally bestowed divine endowment called conscience. In other words, “the Spirit of Jesus Christ” or the light of Christ, “giveth light to every man that cometh unto the world.” D&C 84:44-47. “The Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil.” Moroni 7:12-19. J. Phillip Schaelling, an Institute Director in Texas said: “It is as though we are all in a huge arena, in total darkness, searching for a way out. Some panic, some give up, many search aimlessly, all are lost. Suddenly someone opens a door and the light shines in. He is the light that shines in the darkness! Now we can find our way out! Now we can go back home! He shows us the way and helps us be sensitive to the light. He also places within each of us our own little light, so that we can always see in the darkness. But it works only if we follow that light: “And he that repents not, from him shall be taken even the light which he has received.” D&C 1:33. The possession of light gives us the ability to see our way out of the darkness of this world and find our way back to our Father in Heaven.)

10 (Even the Son of God,) He (who) was in the ^aworld, and the ^bworld was ^cmade by him, and the world ^dknew him not.

11 He came unto his own, and his own ^areceived him not. (they did not accept him.)

12 But as many as ^areceived him, to them gave he ^bpower (Gr authority, right, privilege) (power means more than just ability, but also the rightful authority) to become the ^csons (the word used is gender neutral, meaning children) of God, ~~even~~ (only) to them ~~that~~ (who) believe on his ^dname: (This describes what happens when we trust him to such an extent that we simply do whatever he tells us and refuse to do that which he tells us not to do. It is to such people that he gives both the right and the power to become children of God.)

13 ~~Which were~~ (He was) ^aborn, not of blood, (he was born of Heavenly Father) nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (V. 10-13: Our free agency to accept him or reject him, and the right and power given to those who accept him to become children of God.)

14 And the (same) Word was made ^aflesh, and ^bdwelt among us, (and we ^cbeheld his ^dglory, the glory as of the ^eonly ^fbegotten of the Father,) full of ^ggrace and truth. (When John observed that the Savior was full of grace and truth, it of course means that nothing exists in him that is not composed of these elements. There is no untruth in him, and there is nothing that does not partake of grace.)

John 20:31 But these are ^awritten, that ye might ^bbelieve that Jesus is the ^cChrist, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have ^dlife through his ^ename.