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“That Ye Might Believe that Jesus is the Christ”

Isaiah 61:1-3; JST Luke 3:4-11; John 1:1-14; 20:31; Isaiah 9:1-7)

By Lenet Hadley Read

(This material helps bridge the gap between the OT and the NT; it shows that Christ’s light *did* come in a time of great darkness as prophesied, and why His Light is eternally essential).

I. The long awaited coming of Christ

A. The events of the Old Testament were a prologue to the drama surrounding the life of Jesus Christ, and are referenced by the New Testament writers to bear witness that He is the Christ. All the important aspects of His life had been foreseen. **Now a deep, a special spiritual purpose behind many Old Testament events would reach fruition – as they would be re-enacted, heightened, and fulfilled by Jesus the Christ.**

1. The long, sorrowful barrenness of Sarah, Rachel, Hannah, waiting for choice seed sent by God, **had foreshadowed Israel’s long wait for the Messiah.** But as those faithful women’s **barrenness ended in joyful birth**, so now did Israel’s long denial of blessing become joy at the coming of God’s promised seed.

2. It has been said that so completely were Jesus’ birth and infancy prophesied, over one third of the verses dealing with them have a direct Old Testament parallel.

II. Furthermore, the title, “the Old Testament” should really be “The Old Covenant;” and the “New Testament” should really be “The New Covenant.”

A. For as Jehovah, through Moses, had established an Old Covenant with Israel, now He came in the flesh to establish a New Covenant with them.

1. Consider how it blesses us to know Christ came to offer us a New Covenant.

III. Isaiah had prophesied of Christ’s New Covenant in Ch. 61:1-11.

A. This is one of the reasons Jesus read these words from Isaiah in his home town of Nazareth (Luke 4:16-29).

B. Consider the various elements of this New Covenant as here given in Luke. For example, what does it mean to “preach deliverance to the captives?”

1. One of the answers should be that Christ came to free the captives held in Spirit Prison. This includes **freeing those captive to sin, which is why we are put in Spirit Prison after death.**
2. **But the horrible truth is that eventually all of mankind would be in Spirit Prison, except for the deliverance by Christ.**
3. Review the last two chapters in Malachi. Remember that *Malachi’s final words before Christ came are also the first words given to Joseph Smith at the beginning of the last dispensation (See JS-History, 36-39), showing how vital they were. After Moroni quotes the need to “turn the hearts of the children to the fathers, he adds, “lest the whole earth be utterly wasted.”*
4. Is it not sobering to realize that without Christ and His fulfillment of His New Covenant, **which includes the restoration of His priesthood keys in the Latter-**

days to perform sacred ordinances for the deceased, all of creation would truly be “wasted?”

IV. Review how Malachi specifically prophesied around 400 years before it happened, that the Lord would send a messenger to “prepare the way” for Christ (Malachi 3:1).

- A. Consider that just as John the Baptist was sent to prepare for Christ at His first coming, so **we are called to prepare the way for His Second Coming.**
- B. Consider whether **we work diligently enough to bear testimony that others “might believe that Jesus is the Christ.”**
- C. Consider specifically what we might do and say more to help others “believe that Jesus is the Christ.”

V. Isaiah, John the Baptist, Luke and John all testify Jesus the Christ would “Be a light unto all who sit in darkness” (Isaiah 9:1-7; JST Luke 3:7; John 1:1-14).

A. in fact, Jesus came to bring Light in a time when the events of the world were particularly dark. Following is **a review of what happened between the time of Malachi and the coming of Christ which caused it to be a time of great darkness.**

1. The Romans had conquered Judah [and all the known civilized world] and were ruling them with an iron fist.

2. A false Jewish King, Herod, ruled under the Romans. He was a cruel king, appointed by the Romans. **(Jesus, as His genealogies deliberately show, should have been Judah’s true King).**

3. Even more, **a false high priest, not in the true line for this role,** [during the reign of the Maccabees, the political leaders had appointed members of their own family as priesthood leaders], **had also obtained his position through bribery, and he oversaw the Jews in matters of religion.**

4. Most Pharisee and Sadducee leaders, many who had also obtained position through improper means, were using their position to enrich themselves, rather than to bless the people. This is why Jesus called them “thieves” when He cleansed the temple. **The thievery was far more grave than just having money-changers in the temple.**

5. Those who had fled to the Dead Sea, eventually leaving The Dead Sea Scrolls, had fled there to escape what they called this “wicked priesthood.”

VI. Isaiah had prophesied that the Savior would come in a time “of great darkness.” (Isaiah 9:1-2). Isaiah saw the hardship and darkness which would be upon Judea before the advent of Christ (v.1). But then he exults, “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.”

- A. Matthew shows this prophecy was of Jesus by writing, “And leaving Nazareth, [Jesus] came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim; That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet... **The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up**” (Matt 4:13-16). (emphasis added).

B. Christ's light would eventually radiate to Gentiles who came to believe in Christ.

1. The following statement was made by Clement, **one of those Gentiles called by the apostles to serve as a bishop in the first century**. What is important is his sincere reflection of the difference Christ made in his and the lives of other believing Gentiles. Note how his words reflect the **change from darkness to light**.

“We were **maimed in our understanding**, worshipping stone, and wood, and gold, and silver, and copper, the works of men, and **our whole life was nothing else than death**. We **were covered with darkness**, and our **eyes were full of mist**; but we have received our sight, and by his will **we have cast off the cloud which covered us**. For he had pity on us and saved us in his mercy, and regarded the great error and destruction which was in us, and our hopelessness of salvation save from him: **For he called us when we were not, and it was his will that out of nothing we should come into being.**” (“Second Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians” from Kirsopp Lake, Translator, *Apostolic Fathers*). pp. 129, 131.

VII. A growing plant, knowing its needs, naturally turns towards the light.

- A. Unfortunately, man is not as sensitive to his need for light.
- B. In spite of all the evidences given that Jesus was the Christ, most of Israel rejected Him and His glorious light.
- C. Thus, too many in the Savior's time preferred to remain in darkness rather than turn to Christ's light. **“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light”** (John 3:19).
- D. Many today reject the further light Jesus has bestowed, as promised repeatedly, in these the Latter-days.
 1. Consider how we can in our daily lives make certain we are turning to Christ's light rather than preferring “darkness.”
 2. The scriptures repeatedly warn of becoming “wise” or “lit by the light of [one's] own conceit” [Proverbs 26:5; Romans 11:25; 12:16].
 3. Consider how we can make sure our light truly comes from Christ, and not our own internal vanities.