

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



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of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

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When severe illness strikes, Church members should exercise faith in the Lord and seek competent medical assistance. However, when dying becomes inevitable, death should be looked upon as a blessing and a purposeful part of an eternal existence. Members should not feel obligated to extend mortal life by means that are unreasonable. These judgments are best made by family members after receiving wise and competent medical advice and seeking divine guidance through fasting and prayer [*General Handbook of Instruction*, 11-6].

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DONALD B. DOTY

PROMISED LAND, CONCEPT OF A

In the Book of Mormon, the prophet LEHI spoke of a particular promised land as “choice above all other lands; a land which the Lord God hath covenanted with me should be a land for the inheritance of my seed” (2 Ne. 1:5). Because the earth belongs to the Lord (Ps. 24:1), those who inherit a promised land must covenant to “serve the God of the land,” who will then keep them “free from bondage, and from captivity” (Ether 2:12); otherwise they will “be swept off” (Ether 2:10; cf. Deut. 27-28).

From the beginning, the Lord has reserved choice lands for righteous followers. They include the GARDEN OF EDEN for Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:9), a “land of promise” for Enos (Moses 6:17), and Zion for Enoch and his people (Moses 7:19). Notably, God received up Zion’s inhabitants (Moses 7:69), who will return to earth to the NEW JERUSALEM during the LAST DAYS (Moses 7:62-64; Rev. 21:2). Moreover, God gave the land of Canaan “unto [Abraham’s] seed . . . for an everlasting possession” if “they hearken to [God’s] voice” (Abr. 2:6). This promise was partially fulfilled when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt to Canaan.

The BOOK OF MORMON PEOPLES, including the family of Lehi and the JAREDITES, were given a promised land in the hemisphere now called the Americas, on condition of keeping God’s commandments (1 Ne. 2:20; Ether 1:42-43). The prophet MORONI₂ warned future inhabitants of this land: “Behold, this is a choice land, and whatso-

ever nation shall possess it shall be free . . . if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ” (Ether 2:12). This admonition applies to all lands that the Lord has promised to any of his peoples.

Latter-day Zion, a “promised land” for members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, includes the city New Jerusalem that will be built in the Americas (A of F 10) and, in another sense, the STAKES of the Church in all the world. Members also believe that the New Jerusalem is where the “lost ten tribes” will first come (D&C 133:26).

Through the Prophet Joseph SMITH, the Lord promised in 1831 to lead the Saints to a “land of promise” (D&C 38:18; cf. Ex. 3:8). Because of persecution by enemies and sin among Church members, Joseph Smith was unsuccessful in establishing a permanent community (D&C 101:1-8). After his death, the Saints migrated to the Rocky Mountains, “a land of peace” (D&C 136:16), and still anticipate fulfillment of the Lord’s promises to open the way for building New Jerusalem in the designated place (D&C 42:9; 57:1-5; 101:9-22).

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CLARISSA KATHERINE COLE

PROPHECY

Latter-day Saints believe in both ancient and modern prophecy; indeed, continuing prophetic guidance is held to be a characteristic or SIGN OF THE TRUE CHURCH. These concepts were an integral part of the LDS Church’s origin and restoration, and they continue to distinguish the Church from many other religious movements.

The term “prophecy” encompasses the entire range of divinely inspired utterances of a PROPHET, both as a “forth-teller” and as a “fore-teller.” The predominant assumption by many readers is that this term in the scriptures refers usually to foretelling—the prophetic power to reveal events in the future—but it is not so limited. Prophecy is a diverse spiritual gift bestowed by the HOLY GHOST (2 Pet. 1:21; 1 Ne. 22:2; Moro. 10:8; D&C 20:26; 68:4). Prophecy is firmly grounded in

history, and prophets as spokespersons for the Lord have the power to reveal things relevant to the past, present, and future. The gift of prophecy, as demonstrated by Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and others, is not limited to any special ordination in the priesthood (*AF*, pp. 228–29) but can be given to all as Moses understood when he cried: “Would God that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!” (Num. 11:29; cf. 1 Cor. 14:1–5, 29, 31, 39). In the restored Church all are baptized, confirmed, and provided with the gift of the Holy Ghost, through which all can enjoy prophetic gifts pertinent to their STEWARDSHIPS.

The possession of spiritual gifts, including the gift of prophecy, is one of the vital means of guiding the true Church (A of F 7; *see GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT*). Paul elaborated upon the gift of prophecy in the early Church (1 Cor. 12, 14). Moroni₂ similarly explained, “All these gifts of which I have spoken, which are spiritual, never will be done away, even as long as the world shall stand, only according to the unbelief of the children of men” (Moro. 10:8–19); and the Lord included the gift of prophecy among the spiritual gifts in the restored Church as declared in a revelation to Joseph SMITH (D&C 46:7–29).

Through his prophets the Lord reveals the plan of salvation and the gospel, full appreciation of which requires a correct understanding of significant events from the past as well as the present and future. Thus, prophetic guidance provides the eternal perspective necessary for individuals to understand their roles in the time in which they live and urges all to repent and prepare for what lies ahead. It is when people need hope that prophets become predictive.

Because knowledge of God’s gracious plan of redemption has been so helpful to all mortals, all of the prophets have spoken about the coming of Christ (Luke 24:44–48; Jacob 4:4; Mosiah 13:33; D&C 20:26), and ancient prophecies demonstrate that people before his advent had a detailed knowledge of the events of the mission of Christ as well as a profound doctrinal understanding of his atonement (2 Ne. 2, 9; Mosiah 3; Alma 34; *see also JESUS CHRIST: PROPHECIES ABOUT JESUS CHRIST*). Enoch, for example, foresaw the coming of the Messiah, his death on the cross, and his resurrection and ascension into heaven (Moses 7:53–59); Isaiah described Christ as a suffering servant (Isa. 53; cf. Abinadi’s explanation in Mosiah 14–15);

Lehi saw Christ’s coming and noted the meaning of his baptism (1 Ne. 10:4–11); Nephi₁ prophesied that Christ’s mother would be a virgin from Nazareth (1 Ne. 11:13–20); and both king Benjamin and Alma₂ noted that her name would be Mary (Mosiah 3:7; Alma 7:10). In addition, Nephi cited prophecies of Zenos, Zenock, and Neum, ancient prophets whose works are not extant in the Old Testament, giving details of the Crucifixion and Resurrection and the events that would accompany his death along with a foretaste of the atoning benefits to humankind wrought thereby (1 Ne. 19:10–21).

Many biblical prophets, including Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Malachi, and Christ himself, foresaw events in fulfillment of the Lord’s plan for the latter days. The Pearl of Great Price and the Book of Mormon contain prophecies from the biblical and Book of Mormon periods specifically preserved to give hope and guidance in later times. For example, “The Lord showed Enoch all things, even unto the end of the world” (Moses 7:67), including the restoration of the gospel, the building of Zion, the coming of Christ, and the ushering in of the Millennium (Moses 7:62–66); Nephi and Moroni foresaw the spiritual conditions of pride, wickedness, unbelief, and false doctrine prevalent in the world at a time propitious to the restoration of the gospel, with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon as an instrument in the ensuing conversion and gathering of Israel (2 Ne. 26–30; Morm. 8–9).

The Doctrine and Covenants, like the ancient scriptures, contains divine admonitions, instructions, and reproofs, and also gives guidance through many prophetic predictions of events yet to transpire. A prophecy of civil war in the United States and of ultimate worldwide strife has already been partly fulfilled (D&C 87; 130:12–13; *see also CIVIL WAR PROPHECY*). Other prophecies still to be fulfilled include predictions of the signs of ultimate times (D&C 29:14–21; 45:16–47; 88:86–93), the preparatory preaching of the gospel to all nations, the latter-day gathering of Israel (D&C 133), the building of Zion (D&C 84:1–5), the second coming of Christ (D&C 45:48–53; 133:17–25), the Millennium (D&C 63:49–52; 101:22–31), and the resurrection of the dead and final judgment (D&C 29:22–30; 76; 88:95–116). The stated purposes of such prophecies are to warn and inform the inhabitants of the earth of the urgent need to repent and to share the gospel in all the earth and thus: “Be

prepared in all things against the day when tribulation and desolation are sent forth” (D&C 29:8); therefore, “labor ye, labor ye in my vineyard for the last time—for the last time call upon the inhabitants of the earth” (D&C 43:28–29; cf. 133:4–5).

The scriptures address the problem of distinguishing true and false prophecies (Matt. 7:15–20; *TPJS*, p. 365). The Old Testament criterion, “If the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken” (Deut. 18:22), is of course not always a practicable test for the prophet’s contemporaries to discern the validity of the call and message.

Joseph Smith noted that “a prophet [is] a prophet only when he [is] acting as such” (*TPJS*, p. 278), and Brigham Young taught that the responsibility of discernment lies with individual members of the Church (*JD* 9:150). When Nephi’s brothers wanted to know the truth of his prophecies, he told them that the Lord says, “If ye will not harden your hearts, and ask me in faith, believing that ye shall receive, with diligence in keeping my commandments, surely these things shall be made known unto you” (1 Ne. 15:11). These modes of evaluating a prophet’s teachings are still valid. Jesus promised his disciples, “When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth . . . and he will shew you things to come” (John 16:13). These prophetic gifts of the Holy Ghost have been restored and are available to all worthy individuals. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (1 Cor. 12:3). Indeed, the SPIRIT OF PROPHECY was, and is, “the testimony of Jesus” (Rev. 19:10). Moroni₂ promised all who will believe and partake of the spiritual gifts available that the truthfulness of spiritual things can be ascertained through serious intent, study, reflection, and prayer: “And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things” (Moro. 10:3–5; 1 Ne. 10:17–19; Moro. 7:12–18; D&C 9). The validity and value of prophetic teachings, past and present, may thus be known.

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PROPHECY IN BIBLICAL TIMES

From Adam (Moses 6:8) to John the Revelator, the Lord has revealed his word to prophets: “The Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7; cf. Num. 12:6–8; Jer. 23:18). Prophecy refers to God’s word received by prophets acting as authorized intermediaries between God and humans.

The Lord called men from the course of their normal lives to be prophets and revealed his word in various ways: by face-to-face encounters, his voice alone, divine messengers, dreams, and inspiration. Often prophets received the Lord’s word through symbolic object lessons, visions of councils in heaven and scenes of judgment, and views of past, present, and future events, and hence, they were also called “foretellers” and “forth-tellers.” Occasionally expressed poetically, biblical prophecy is rich in imagery, metaphor, symbolism, allusion, and other literary figures. Besides the prophecies in the Bible, others from the biblical period are preserved in the Pearl of Great Price, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants.

Biblical prophets acted frequently as mediators of covenants. Prophets such as Adam, Enoch, Noah, the BROTHER OF JARED, Abraham, and Moses acted as agents through whom the Lord established his COVENANTS among men and women. These prophets proclaimed the gospel and called their contemporaries to repent and join in a covenantal relationship with the Lord, providing inspired descriptions of future blessings and cursings that depended on obedience to the conditions of the covenants. Prophets who followed, such as Lehi, Ether, Isaiah, Jeremiah, King Benjamin, and John the Baptist, renewed the covenant and warned the covenant people, in varying states of apostasy, that they must repent and keep their covenantal obligations or face the consequences of disobedience—judgment, destruction, and scattering.

Biblical prophets often addressed the present by looking into the future, and prophecies of destruction were balanced by those of hope. Prophets foresaw apostasy and RESTORATION, the scattering and gathering of Israel, the coming of Jesus Christ and his atonement (Jacob 4:4; Mosiah 13:33; D&C 20:26), and times of tribulation preceding his return (Acts 3:21). Along with their indictments of COVENANT ISRAEL, many prophets delivered oracles directed to foreign nations, affirming the universal scope of their message (Amos 9:7). Most