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The Judgment Seat of Christ

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Monte S. Nyman

In the New Testament we read the promise given to the Twelve Apostles by Jesus: “Ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt 19:28). This promise to the Twelve is verified in both the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi 12:9; Mormon 3:18) and the Doctrine and Covenants (29:12). However, only the Book of Mormon clarifies and enlarges the doctrine of the judgment by the apostles.

The word *judgment* may be misleading. The usual meaning of the word to us in the twentieth century is to pass sentence or determine innocence or guilt. This interpretation, however, gives only half of the broader meaning as used in the Book of Mormon concerning the judgment of Christ. It speaks of the judgment of Christ as a time of reward as well as a time of accountability for the acts of mortals. It is similar to the biblical injunction of “being weighed in the balances” (Dan 5:27), where consideration is given to both the positive and the negative acts of the individual. It further clarifies that there will be apostles or special witnesses at the judgment seat of Christ to testify in behalf of or against the persons being judged.

In his great sermon on the atonement of Christ, Jacob warned his brethren of reviling against the truth and then invited them to “come unto the Lord, the Holy One. Remember that his paths are righteous. Behold, the way for man is narrow, but it lieth in a straight course before him, and the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there; and there is none other way save it be

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by the gate; for he cannot be deceived, for the Lord God is his name” (2 Nephi 9:41). Jacob’s warning is consistent with Jesus’ declaration at the pool of Bethesda during his earthly ministry, “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22). Jacob went on to testify: “O, my beloved brethren, remember my words. Behold, I take off my garments, and I shake them before you; I pray the God of my salvation that he view me with his all-searching eye; wherefore, ye shall know at the last day, when all men shall be judged of their works, that the God of Israel did witness that I shook your iniquities from my soul, and that I stand with brightness before him, and am rid of your blood” (2 Nephi 9:44). Jacob’s testimony is significant in understanding the role of the apostles at the judgment bar. His testimony to those listening to his sermon will not only rid him of his accountability for their sins, but it will make them accountable for the testimony he has borne. He will stand as a witness of God and they will be judged either positively or negatively by their response in word and actions to his declaration of truth. Just as Jacob will stand as a witness for or against his people at the day they stand at the judgment bar of Christ, the Twelve Apostles will be witnesses for or against all people at the judgment bar of Christ.

The apostles are “special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world—thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling” (D&C 107:23). Thus, they are Christ’s representatives, and all people who hear their testimony or have an opportunity to hear it will be responsible for accepting what they were taught and will be blessed or held accountable at the judgment bar or judgment-seat of Christ for what they do with it. Understanding the apostles’ roles in various times and places enables us to know how they will serve as judges of the house of Israel and all the world.

The Jerusalem Twelve

Mormon addressed his writings “unto all the ends of the earth; yea, unto you, twelve tribes of Israel, who shall be judged according to your works by the twelve whom Jesus chose to be his disciples in the land of Jerusalem” (Mormon 3:18). As already noted, Jesus had said that his Twelve Apostles chosen in Jerusalem would judge the

twelve tribes of Israel (Matt 19:28). The Doctrine and Covenants notes that they will judge the whole house of Israel.

And again, verily, verily, I say unto you, and it hath gone forth in a firm decree, by the will of the Father, that mine apostles, the Twelve which were with me in my ministry at Jerusalem, shall stand at my right hand at the day of my coming in a pillar of fire, being clothed with robes of righteousness, with crowns upon their heads, in glory even as I am, to judge the whole house of Israel, even as many as have loved me and kept my commandments, and none else. (D&C 29:12)

This says the same thing in another way because the twelve tribes are the whole house of Israel.

The ending of the above verse may also be misleading. Why will the Twelve judge only “as many as have loved me and kept my commandments, and none else”? The answer to that question is given in the following verse: “For a trump shall sound both long and loud, even as upon Mount Sinai, and all the earth shall quake, and they shall come forth—yea, even the dead which died in me, to receive a crown of righteousness, and to be clothed upon, even as I am, to be with me, that we may be one” (D&C 29:13). In this context, the Twelve are to be with Christ at his second coming. Those who are called forth by the trump of God to be resurrected and come forth to meet Christ at his coming (45:44–46) will be judged by the Twelve at that time. They will later judge others of the house of Israel who are not worthy to be raised up at Christ’s coming and those of the world who would not come to him. Those who have accepted and followed the testimony or witness of the Twelve will be raised at the time of Christ’s coming and will thus receive the blessing of the resurrection.

Why would these Twelve Apostles judge all of the tribes of Israel when they primarily ministered to the Jewish people? The answer is that they were special witnesses of the ministry, atonement, crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Their written testimonies, like Mormon’s, were to go to all the world, and recorded the events of Christ’s coming to earth to redeem his people, the house of Israel, and all who would accept his gospel. These Twelve Apostles were chosen from among those disciples who responded to Jesus’ invitation to follow him to be eye witnesses from the beginning of his ministry (Matt 4:18–22; John 1:35–51). Being such witnesses was important because when Judas, one of the original Twelve, apostatized, Peter instructed the other apostles concerning Judas’

replacement: “Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection” (Acts 1:21–22). Thus these twelve men were eye witnesses of his earthly ministry from the beginning to the end. They stood as special witnesses of Christ to the whole house of Israel and to all the world, in life to many and in writings to many, many more.

Although the New Testament does not tell us the lineage of the Twelve Apostles, it is possible they represented all the twelve tribes. All but one of the Jerusalem Twelve were from the area of Galilee which was earlier occupied by the northern 10 tribes of Israel. The people of Galilee claimed to be Israelites although they had intermarried with Gentiles (2 Kings 17:24; John 4; Jacob 5:7–14). The Lord gave the commandment to harvest these souls (John 4:35–45) long before he gave the revelation to go to the Gentiles (Acts 10). It is possible that the Twelve came from those remnants of the lost tribes who had not been taken captive by the Assyrians. Whatever their lineage, the twelve tribes will eventually receive the testimony of the Jerusalem Twelve (2 Nephi 29:12–13) and at the judgment bar will be accountable for and blessed by the degree of their acceptance of that testimony.

The Nephite Apostles

In vision, Nephi saw his people at the meridian of time, and part of what he saw was the calling of the Nephite Twelve Disciples (apostles) by Christ as he walked among them: “And I saw the heavens open, and the Lamb of God descending out of heaven; and he came down and showed himself unto them. And I also saw and bear record that the Holy Ghost fell upon twelve others; and they were ordained of God, and chosen” (1 Nephi 12:6–7).¹ Nephi also saw that these Nephite Twelve Apostles were chosen to minister to the seed of Nephi and his brethren or to be special witnesses to them (v 8). In their role as special witnesses, they would be judges of the Nephite

¹ Although the Book of Mormon calls the Nephite Twelve “disciples,” the Prophet Joseph Smith declared that they were ordained “apostles” (*History of the Church* 4:538).

people: “And these twelve ministers whom thou beholdest shall judge thy seed. And, behold, they are righteous forever; for because of their faith in the Lamb of God their garments are made white in his blood” (1 Nephi 12:10). What Nephi saw in vision did take place when the resurrected Jesus Christ called and ordained twelve apostles among the Nephites as he ministered among them, and admonished and promised blessings if they would give heed to their words (3 Nephi 11:18–12:2).

The Lord commanded Mormon to “stand as an idle witness to manifest unto the world the things which [he] saw and heard, according to the manifestations of the Spirit which had testified of things to come” (Mormon 3:16). As shown by the following verse, his being an idle witness was through his writing: “Therefore I write unto you, Gentiles, and also unto you, house of Israel, when the work shall commence, that ye shall be about to prepare to return to the land of your inheritance” (v 17). Mormon’s words were addressed to people in the latter days, when the gathering of Israel would be beginning.

As indicated by the word “yea” in the beginning of the next verse, Mormon apparently understood that his words would go forth in conjunction with the records of the Twelve Apostles chosen in Jerusalem. “Yea, behold, I write unto all the ends of the earth; yea, unto you, twelve tribes of Israel, who shall be judged according to your works by the twelve whom Jesus chose to be his disciples in the land of Jerusalem” (Mormon 3:18). The second use of the word “yea” indicates a knowledge that the twelve tribes of Israel had been scattered to the ends of the earth. The above verse also gives another testimony of the judgment of the twelve tribes by the Jerusalem Twelve. Mormon also wrote to the remnant of the Nephites and testified that they would be judged by the Twelve Apostles among them: “And I write also unto the remnant of this people, who shall also be judged by the twelve whom Jesus chose in this land” (v 19).

He further declared that the Nephite Twelve “shall be judged by the other twelve whom Jesus chose in the land of Jerusalem” (Mormon 3:19). Nephi was also told by the angel as he saw his seed in vision, “Thou rememberest the twelve apostles of the Lamb? Behold they are they who shall judge the twelve tribes of Israel; wherefore, the twelve ministers of thy seed shall be judged of them; for ye are of the house of Israel” (1 Nephi 12:9). The Nephites had been taught of Christ’s coming ministry, crucifixion, atonement and resurrection

(Mosiah 3:5–11; Alma 7:10–13). The witness of the Jerusalem Twelve was verified in person to the Nephites, among whom were the Nephite Twelve Apostles, when Christ ministered among them. He testified that he was the light and life of the world, that he had drunk of the bitter cup (made the Atonement), and that he had been resurrected (3 Nephi 11:11). Those who accept or reject this testimony of Jesus' Jerusalem ministry to the Nephites will be accountable at the judgment seat of Christ and will be blessed to the degree they have merited. Thus the Nephite Twelve and the people will be judged by the testimony of the Twelve in Jerusalem that Christ came to the earth, ministered, was crucified and resurrected, and atoned for the sins of all mankind.

The people to whom Mormon wrote will also be accountable when they appear at the judgment bar for what he recorded on the plates that were translated into the Book of Mormon. Mormon continued to testify: "And these things doth the Spirit manifest unto me; therefore I write unto you all. And for this cause I write unto you, that ye may know that ye must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, yea, every soul who belongs to the whole human family of Adam; and ye must stand to be judged of your works, whether they be good or evil; And also that ye may believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, which ye shall have among you" (Mormon 3:20–21). All will be judged by the words written by Mormon.

Three Nephite Apostles

Three of the Nephite Twelve had their ministry extended until the second coming of Christ (3 Nephi 28:4–9). Their ministry was to all nations:

And it shall come to pass, when the Lord seeth fit in his wisdom that they shall minister unto all the scattered tribes of Israel, and unto all nations, kindreds, tongues and people, and shall bring out of them unto Jesus many souls, that their desire may be fulfilled, and also because of the convincing power of God which is in them. And they are as the angels of God, and if they shall pray unto the Father in the name of Jesus they can show themselves unto whatsoever man it seemeth them good. Therefore, great and marvelous works shall be wrought by them, before the great and coming day when all people must surely stand before the judgment-seat of Christ; Yea even among the Gentiles shall there be a great and marvelous work wrought by them, before that judgment day. (3 Nephi 28:29–32)

Having been on the earth for approximately 2,000 years, working among all nations, these three disciples will have done extensive work, although many may not recognize the source of the miracles they performed. This teaching is strongly implied by the declaration “when all people must surely stand before the judgment seat of Christ” that people who witness any part of the three transfigured Nephites’ great and marvelous ministry will be accountable for that part of the work.

The Four Nephite Abridgers

Mormon also wrote in order that “the Jews, the covenant people of the Lord, shall have other witness besides him whom they saw and heard, that Jesus, whom they slew, was the very Christ and the very God” (Mormon 3:21). The other witness to the Jews would in general be the Book of Mormon and the yet to come forth record of the lost tribes which Nephi foretold would come to the Jews (2 Nephi 29:13). But the Book of Mormon promises final witnesses in addition to the written word. Nephi concluded his record upon the small plates with this testimony:

And if they are not the words of Christ, judge ye—for Christ will show unto you, with power and great glory, that they are his words, at the last day; and you and I shall stand face to face before his bar; and ye shall know that I have been commanded of him to write these things, notwithstanding my weakness. And I pray the Father in the name of Christ that many of us, if not all, may be saved in his kingdom at that great and last day. And now, my beloved brethren, all those who are of the house of Israel, and all ye ends of the earth, I speak unto you as the voice of one crying from the dust: Farewell until that great day shall come. And you that will not partake of the goodness of God, and respect the words of the Jews, and also my words, and the words which shall proceed forth out of the mouth of the Lamb of God, behold, I bid you an everlasting farewell, for these words shall condemn you at the last day. For what I seal on earth, shall be brought against you at the judgment bar; for thus hath the Lord commanded me, and I must obey. Amen. (2 Nephi 33:11–15)

The Book of Mormon will go to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people (Rev 14:6–7; D&C 88:103–04). Every nation that possesses it will be judged by it (2 Nephi 25:22; D&C 5:4–10). The individuals of those nations who accept Nephi’s words will see him at the judgment bar as a confirmation of his writings, and he bade them

farewell until that day. Those who reject his words will be judged and condemned by them, and Nephi bade them an everlasting farewell.

After recording the great allegory of the destiny of the house of Israel (Jacob 5), Jacob also bore his testimony of a final meeting with the readers of the Book of Mormon: "I bid you farewell, until I shall meet you before the pleasing bar of God, which bar striketh the wicked with awful dread and fear. Amen" (Jacob 6:13). Jacob had previously invited his brethren to come through the narrow way and obtain eternal life. There will be both joy and fear at the judgment bar.

Mormon does not say he will see his readers at the judgment bar, but he does "write unto you, that ye may know that ye must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ" (Mormon 3:20). He also wrote that they might "believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, which ye shall have among you" (v 21). Their opportunity to believe the gospel will come through their reading the Book of Mormon, which will go to all the ends of the earth. Mormon's final plea to the reader speaks again of the judgment bar: "And I would that I could persuade all ye ends of the earth to repent and prepare to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ" (v 22). Since Nephi and Jacob say they will be at the judgment bar, Mormon's two references to the judgment-seat are strong indications that he will be there as well. This is more evident from Moroni's testimony. As he abridged the Jaredite record, he foretold of meeting his readers at the judgment bar: "And now I, Moroni, bid farewell unto the Gentiles, yea, and also unto my brethren whom I love, until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ, where all men shall know that my garments are not spotted with your blood. And then shall ye know that I have seen Jesus, and that he hath talked with me face to face, and that he told me in plain humility, even as a man telleth another in mine own language, concerning these things" (Ether 12:38–39).

By fulfilling his mission, Moroni was no longer held accountable for his reader's sins; neither was Jacob (2 Nephi 9:44). Moroni bore his testimony to the principle that the messenger must give his message as he concluded his father's record (Mormon 9:35–37), and at the close of his own book he gave this exhortation: "Remember these things; for the time speedily cometh that ye shall know that I lie not, for ye shall see me at the bar of God; and the Lord God will say unto you: Did I not declare my words unto you, which were written by this man, like as one crying from the dead, yea, even as one

speaking out of the dust?” (Moroni 10:27). His cry from the dust will continue to go to the earth’s inhabitants as long as the earth remains in its mortal state. When people leave this mortal probation, they will meet Moroni personally: “And now I bid unto all, farewell. I soon go to rest in the paradise of God, until my spirit and body shall again reunite, and I am brought forth triumphant through the air, to meet you before the pleasing bar of the great Jehovah, the Eternal Judge of both quick and dead. Amen” (v 34).

Thus three of the major contributors to the Book of Mormon record bear witness that they will be at the judgment bar of God, and the implication is that the fourth will be there, too. These men are also special witnesses of Christ, prophets and apostles of their own day and eternal judges of the dead as they meet them at the bar of Christ (see 3 Nephi 5:13).

There is an interesting reference in the Doctrine and Covenants that may possibly apply to these four Nephite abridgers. As Joseph Smith was translating the Bible, he was given several explanations of verses in the book of Revelation of St. John. One of these explanations regarded Revelation 7:1: “And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.” The question and the explanation given to Joseph Smith were as follows:

Q. What are we to understand by the four angels, spoken of in the 7th chapter and 1st verse of Revelation?

A. We are to understand that they are four angels sent forth from God, to whom is given power over the four parts of the earth, to save life and to destroy; these are they who have the everlasting gospel to commit to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people; having power to shut up the heavens, to seal up unto life, or to cast down to the regions of darkness (D&C 77:8).

The eternal role of Nephi, Jacob, Mormon, and Moroni fits the Doctrine and Covenants explanation for the following reasons. First, their message, the Book of Mormon, was to go to all the ends of the world or the four quarters of the earth. Secondly, the mission of the four angels was to save life or to destroy it spiritually through the coming forth of their message. In their testimonies that they will be at the judgment bar, the four abridgers speak of both salvation and condemnation coming from the words they had recorded upon the plates. Furthermore, the Doctrine and Covenants bears testimony that

the Book of Mormon will judge the world, “even as many as shall hereafter come to a knowledge of this work. And those who receive it in faith, and work righteousness, shall receive a crown of eternal life; But those who harden their hearts in unbelief, and reject it, it shall turn to their own condemnation” (D&C 20:13–15). The third reason these four men fit the Doctrine and Covenants explanation is that the four angels have “the everlasting gospel to commit to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.” This is the same message as Revelation 14:6 that there was “another angel fly[ing] in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.” The angel referred to in this verse is not limited to but certainly includes the angel Moroni revealing the Book of Mormon to Joseph. The work of this angel (Moroni) is not completed until the fifth trump is sounded at the Second Coming announcing that the everlasting gospel has been taken to every nation, kindred, tongue and people (D&C 88:103–04). As the last overseer of the Book of Mormon records, Moroni’s assignment was apparently to continue that assignment through the latter days. Therefore, it seems quite evident that Moroni would be one of the four angels. Who would the others logically be other than Mormon, Jacob, and Nephi?

While there may be other interpretations of the Doctrine and Covenants’ explanation of Revelation 7:1, the fact that there were four men who did most of the recording on the plates from which the Book of Mormon was translated, which plates contain the everlasting gospel, forms an interesting parallel. Add to it the fact that four angels would commit the everlasting gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people in the explanation of the verse, and the parallel gets stronger. Suffice it to say that the four abridgers hold an important role in bringing either salvation or condemnation to the inhabitants of the earth depending on how they receive or reject their message. They are special witnesses who will be at the judgment-seat of Christ.

Who Are the Apostles?

As already stated, the Apostles are special witnesses of Christ, called and ordained upon the earth. Their mission began before their mortal probation and extends beyond this world. Lehi saw in a vision a glorified being at the time he was called to warn the inhabitants of

Jerusalem in 600 BC (1 Nephi 1:9). This was obviously the pre-mortal Christ; “And he also saw twelve others following him, and their brightness did exceed that of the stars in the firmament” (v 10). The brightness of the twelve others not only indicates their righteousness in the premortal state, but also that they held important callings and responsibilities there. They were undoubtedly among the noble and great intelligences (spirits) shown to Abraham of whom the Lord said, “These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born” (Abr 3:23). These choice spirits are also Christ’s representatives when they come to earth. They are those against whom the world gathers to fight: “And after he was slain I saw the multitudes of the earth, that they were gathered together to fight against the apostles of the Lamb; for thus were the twelve called by the angel of the Lord” (1 Nephi 11:34). The world is still fighting the apostles of the Lamb because they represent the truth and the world rejects the truth. Even those of the house of Israel at times will gather to fight against the twelve: “And the angel of the Lord spake unto me again saying: Behold the world and the wisdom thereof; yea, behold the house of Israel hath gathered together to fight against the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (v 35). This verse describes the apostasy following Christ’s ministry in Jerusalem. The Apostasy was caused by the pride and wisdom of the world, but it will not stand forever: “And it came to pass that I saw and bear record, that the great and spacious building was the pride of the world; and it fell, and the fall thereof was exceedingly great. And the angel of the Lord spake unto me again, saying: Thus shall be the destruction of all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, that shall fight against the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (v 36). The world still fights the Twelve Apostles and their teaching with its own wisdom, but it will eventually fall, and the pride that motivates the fight will be the cause of that fall.

Joseph Smith and the Three Witnesses

Apostles have also been called to be special witnesses in these last days, which Paul calls the dispensation of the fulness of times (Eph 1:10). In a revelation commemorating the organization of the Church on 6 April 1830, the Lord spoke of Joseph Smith as one “who

was called of God, and ordained an apostle of Jesus Christ, to be the first elder of this church” (D&C 20:2). He then revealed that He “gave [Joseph] power from on high, by the means which were before prepared, to translate the Book of Mormon” (v 8).

The translation of the Book of Mormon was Joseph’s primary responsibility in the latter-day restoration. In March 1829, the Lord told him: “And you have a gift to translate the plates; and this is the first gift that I bestowed upon you; and I have commanded that you should pretend to no other gift until my purpose is fulfilled in this; for I will grant unto you no other gift until it is finished. Verily, I say unto you, that woe shall come unto the inhabitants of the earth if they will not hearken unto my words” (D&C 5:4–5).

The warning to the world who will not hearken to “my words” is obviously a reference to the Book of Mormon, which Joseph translated from the plates. As an apostle, Joseph was to be a special witness to the inhabitants of the earth of his translation of the Book of Mormon. The Lord further declared in this same revelation, “But this generation shall have my word [the Book of Mormon] through you” (D&C 5:10). Oliver Cowdery, the scribe for the majority of the translation, also an apostle and the second elder of the Church (20:3), was chosen by the Lord to hold the keys of translation with the Prophet Joseph. “And now, behold, I give unto you, and also unto my servant Joseph, the keys of this gift, which shall bring to light this ministry; and in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established” (6:28). Thus there are at least two special witnesses of the translation of the Book of Mormon. Although there is no specific declaration that these two men will be at the judgment bar, the following verses of the revelation warn against rejecting the Lord’s words they would translate and promise blessings to those who do not reject the Lord’s words from the translation “which shall be established by the testimony which shall be given” (vv 29–31).

The testimony which shall be given undoubtedly has reference to the testimony of the three special witnesses promised in the Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 27:12; Ether 5:4), and to the revelation previously cited, that designates that Joseph is to bring forth the Lord’s word to this generation. On that occasion, the Lord said to Joseph:

And in addition to your testimony, the testimony of three of my servants, whom I shall call and ordain, unto whom I will show these things, and they shall go forth with my words that are given through you. Yea, they shall know of a

surety that these things are true, for from heaven will I declare it unto them. I will give them power that they may behold and view these things as they are. (D&C 5:11–13)

Oliver Cowdery was also one of these three special witnesses along with David Whitmer and Martin Harris. Oliver and David, in a later revelation, are called apostles (D&C 18:9–37, 39) and are commissioned to search out the original Twelve Apostles of this generation and, when found, to show them “these things” (vv 37, 39). The phrase “these things” seems to refer to the things that qualify them to be special witnesses or members of the Twelve as given previously in the revelation (vv 10–36).

The promise given in section five of the Doctrine and Covenants that the three special witnesses would “know of a surety” from heaven and view the things associated with the Book of Mormon (D&C 17:1) was fulfilled, and their testimony to this effect is recorded in every copy of the Book of Mormon. They were indeed apostles and special witnesses of the Book of Mormon. They heard the voice of the Lord declare that it had been translated by the gift and power of God, and they saw the plates and the engravings on them (The Testimony of Three Witnesses). Those who read the Book of Mormon will certainly be held responsible at the judgment seat of Christ for the testimony of Joseph Smith and the three witnesses and be blessed accordingly.

Apostles of the Restoration

The original Twelve Apostles in this dispensation have testified and will yet testify of Christ,² and we will be accountable for hearing their testimonies at the judgment bar of Christ. Those apostles who have succeeded them and have testified to us will also be at the judgment bar to testify either for or against us. If we will heed their testimonies and the testimonies of the Jerusalem and Nephite Twelve, we may come under the class of people described by Nephi: “I have

² The question may be raised concerning those of the original twelve who apostatized from the Church being at the judgment bar. It is interesting to note that those who were “appointed to supply the place of those who had fallen,” John Taylor, John E. Page, Wilford Woodruff, and Willard Richards (D&C 118:1, 6), appointed in 1838, had been witnesses of most, if not all, of the events of the Restoration that the original twelve, appointed in 1835, had observed. The Lord will determine which of all those will be witnesses of the Restoration at the judgment bar.

charity for my people, and great faith in Christ that I shall meet many souls spotless at his judgment-seat” (2 Nephi 33:7).

The choice of whether we will become spotless or remain filthy to receive a torment that shall be “as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flame ascendeth up forever and ever and has no end” is ours (2 Nephi 9:16).

Wherefore, we shall have a perfect knowledge of all our guilt, and our uncleanness, and our nakedness; and the righteous shall have a perfect knowledge of their enjoyment, and their righteousness, being clothed with purity, yea, even with the robe of righteousness. And it shall come to pass that when all men shall have passed from this first death unto life, insomuch as they have become immortal, they must appear before the judgment-seat of the Holy One of Israel; and then cometh the judgment, and then must they be judged according to the holy judgment of God. (2 Nephi 9:14–15)

The knowledge of the joy spoken of by Jacob seems to be the knowledge that the Atonement has paid for our sins and cleansed us so that we might return to the presence of God. In contrast, those who have not qualified for the blessings of the Atonement will remember all of their wicked acts, and will know their judgment, for no unclean thing can dwell in His presence (Alma 7:21).

Conclusion

Jacob teaches that the Lord “employeth no servant” at the gate to eternal life (2 Nephi 9:41). He will have his chosen servants, the prophets and apostles, stand as special witnesses for or against us. We will see all of these, perhaps only in vision, but we will have a bright recollection of how we have received or rejected their words. We will see the Jerusalem Twelve and know of Christ’s ministry, atonement, crucifixion, and resurrection. We will see the Nephite Twelve, and Nephi, Jacob, Mormon, Moroni, and perhaps others, and know of Christ’s ministry in America, and of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. We will see Joseph Smith and his original Twelve, and will know of the restoration of the gospel in these latter days through them. Finally, we will see the Twelve of our day and know of their teachings.

When it was decided in 1831 to compile and publish selected revelations of the restoration of the gospel as the Book of Commandments, the Lord revealed to Joseph Smith a “preface to the doctrines, covenants, and commandments given in this dispensation” (Heading

of D&C 1). At the conclusion of this revelation, the Lord declared: “What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38).

The Lord has spoken to us through his servants in this dispensation both by voice and the written word. He has also revealed, through the first apostle of this dispensation, Joseph Smith, the record of the prophets and apostles in the Book of Mormon. We will be accountable for the words of these servants as we come to the judgment bar of Christ and be blessed accordingly. If we have hearkened to these words, we will “have a perfect knowledge of [our] enjoyment” and be clothed “even with the robe of righteousness” (2 Nephi 9:14).

Part of the responsibility of hearkening to these words is to share them with others and testify of their truthfulness. Through our bearing testimony of the words of the prophets and apostles, the “God of Israel [will] witness that [we] shook [the people’s] iniquities from [our] soul[s]” (2 Nephi 9:44). However, we will answer “the sins of the people [our friends and neighbors] upon our own heads if we did not teach them the word of God with all diligence” (Jacob 1:19). The word of God includes the words of the apostles and prophets of all dispensations that are available to us, but particularly our dispensation. As taught by Jacob, we can thus “prepare [our] souls for that glorious day when justice shall be administered unto the righteous, even the day of judgment, that [we] may not shrink with awful fear; that [we] may not remember [our] awful guilt in perfectness, and be constrained to exclaim: Holy, holy are thy judgments, O Lord God Almighty—but I know my guilt; I transgressed thy law, and my transgressions are mine; and the devil hath obtained me, that I am a prey to his awful misery” (2 Nephi 9:46). May we prize the written and spoken words of the prophets and apostles, and so follow them that we may look forward to the day when we will meet them at the judgment bar of Christ.