

What Is the Blueprint of Christ's Church?

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It is a joy to spend this evening with those who are the prospective leaders and parents of this Church. Because of that, I believe the future of this Church is secure and bright. Accordingly, I would like to talk about the Church over which you will one day preside.



In the first section of the Doctrine and Covenants, the Lord makes this bold and significant statement: “[This is] the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth” ([D&C 1:30](#)). What does this mean? It does not mean that other churches do not have some truth, for certainly they do. It does not mean that other churches do not render good, for they render much good. What it does mean is that this is the only church that has all the truth that has been revealed thus far in this dispensation—the only church that has the ordinances necessary for exaltation and the only church that has the priesthood of God to perform those ordinances with divine validity. What evidence do we have of this assertion?

Some years ago my wife and I needed a bigger home for our growing family, so we found a lot on which to build. We spent some time working on a blueprint that would best accommodate the needs of our family. My wife designed a folding door between our family room and living room that could open up for large family and youth activities. With some extra space over the garage, we designed a room where our children could engage in wholesome activities. A small room was built behind the garage to allow for food and other storage. These and other design elements were incorporated into a blueprint. The home was then built pursuant to these plans.

As the home was being constructed, we occasionally submitted to the builder a change order that revised the blueprint. When the home was finally completed, it was in exact conformity with our blueprint as revised from time to time. If you took our blueprint and matched it against every home in the world, how many homes would it perfectly match? Only one—our home. Oh, there might be an occasional resemblance here and there—a room the same size, some similar windows—but foundation for foundation, room for room, and roofline for roofline, there would only be one home that perfectly matched the blueprint—our home.

In a similar way Christ built a home to best accommodate the spiritual needs of His children. It was called His Church. The spiritual blueprint for this Church can be found in the New Testament. Occasionally the Savior made a “change order” to the blueprint. Such a change order came in the form of a revelation. For example, the Savior initially commanded His Apostles to preach the gospel to the house of Israel but *not* to the Gentiles (see [Matthew 10:5–6](#)). After the Savior’s Ascension, however, He gave Peter a spiritual change order—a revelation by way of a vision—that the gospel should now be taught also to the Gentiles (see [Acts 10](#)). This experience of Peter taught at least two important governance principles in Christ’s Church: one, the blueprint could be changed, but only by revelation from Christ, and second, such revelation would come to the prophet who was God’s spokesman on earth. In other words, God’s Church would be governed by divine revelation and by order.

If one desired to discover Christ’s Church today, he would want to match the spiritual blueprint found in the New Testament against every Christian church in the world until he discovered a church that matched the blueprint—organization for organization, teaching for teaching, ordinance for ordinance, fruit for fruit, and revelation for revelation. In doing so, he might find some churches that had some similarities—a teaching or two that overlapped, an ordinance that is the same, some offices that bear common names—but he will only find one church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, that matches the blueprint in every material respect. Now I would like to put that assertion to the test.

Let us turn to the first page of the blueprint and discover what was the “Organization” of Christ’s Church as revealed

therein.

First, Christ's Church was founded on apostles and prophets. When Paul was writing to some new members of the Church, he said that they were now "*built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets*, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" ([Ephesians 2:20](#); italics added).

The Apostles understood the imperative need to keep the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles intact. When one Apostle, such as Judas, died and a portion of the foundation was "chipped away," the other 11 Apostles gathered together and chose a successor so that the foundation would be whole again (see [Acts 1:22–25](#)).

This pattern evidenced the importance of maintaining a quorum of twelve Apostles. So important were these Apostles to the well-being of the Church that Paul declared how long we needed them: "Till we all come in the unity of the faith" ([Ephesians 4:13](#)). And then he explained why: So we would not be "carried about with every wind of doctrine" ([Ephesians 4:14](#)). Accordingly, the Apostles were critical to keeping the doctrine pure.

Suppose for a moment I were to tell a story to someone on one end of the row in front of me, and then he were to share it with the person next to him, and so on until it were to work its way down the rows to the end of the section. What would happen to that story? It would change. It always changes; that is human nature. So it was with the doctrine taught by the Apostles as they went out to the various towns and villages. As the doctrine went from one person to another, it started to change. As long as the Apostles were available, they could correct the doctrine by way of epistles or personal sermons. But when the Apostles were gone, there was no longer any check-and-balance system, no longer any correcting hand, and soon the doctrines became distorted or lost.

For this and other reasons, the blueprint reveals that the apostles and prophets constituted the foundation of Christ's Church. Do you know of any change order in the New Testament, any revelation that revised the blueprint and states that apostles are no longer needed? I don't. If that is the case, then Christ's true Church today should have apostles and prophets as its foundation.

In order to assist the Savior and His Apostles in preaching the gospel to the world, the Savior chose other men, called Seventy, to prepare the way. We read of these Seventy in [Luke, chapter 10](#). Do you know of a church today that matches this blueprint—that has the office of Seventy?

The sixth article of faith of the Church makes reference to this blueprint: "*We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church*, namely, apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, and so forth" ([Articles of Faith 1:6](#); italics added). In other words, we believe the current Church of Jesus Christ should have the same organization as existed in Christ's original Church, subject only to revelatory changes. Therefore, each of these offices is present in our Church today.

How were Christ's Apostles and other officers chosen? Did the Savior go to the finest theological schools of the time and select the highest-ranking students? He did not. Instead, the blueprint tells us that He chose Peter, a fisherman, and Matthew, a tax collector, and later Paul, a tentmaker. Each was chosen from the rank and file—in essence, it was a lay ministry. Today the Church has a quorum of twelve Apostles who are likewise chosen from the rank and file of the Church. One may be a teacher, another an engineer, another an attorney, and so on.

Did Christ's Apostles and other officers make application for the ministry? They did not. The blueprint tells us how Christ selected His officers: "*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you*" ([John 15:16](#); italics added). When Christ ordained His Apostles, what did He give them? Matthew and Luke record the answer: "He gave them power" ([Matthew 10:1](#); see also [Luke 9:1](#))—the priesthood power to act in His name and to do His work. That is why the blueprint tells us "the Son of man ... gave authority to his servants" ([Mark 13:34](#)). Why? So they could act in His name with His endorsement. Every man who holds the priesthood of God in this Church today can trace his priesthood authority back to Jesus Christ, the source of all authority and power, so that he, likewise, is entitled to Christ's endorsement—His stamp of approval—as is required by the blueprint.

What was the name of the church organized by Christ? If we are baptized in the name of Christ, if we pray in the name of Christ, if we are saved in the name of Christ, and if He is the founder and chief cornerstone of His Church, what would you expect the name of His Church to be? The Church of Jesus Christ. The Savior, when speaking to the people in Book of Mormon times, taught the underlying rationale as to why the Church needed to bear His name: "*And how be it my church save it be called in my name?* For if a church be called in Moses' name then it be Moses' church; or if it be

called in the name of a man then it be the church of a man; but if it be called in my name then it is my church, if it so be that they are built upon my gospel” (3 Nephi 27:8; italics added).

It is for this reason that Paul reprimanded some of the early members of the Church—because they called themselves after certain disciples rather than after the name of Christ. Accordingly, Paul wrote:

“Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

“Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Corinthians 1:12–13).

In other words, we do not take upon us any other name than Jesus Christ.

Accordingly, the blueprint teaches us that Christ’s Church should bear His name. It has always seemed miraculous to me that the Reformation had been in existence for over 300 years before the time of Joseph Smith and no one thought to name his church after Jesus Christ. Of course, since the time of Joseph Smith, others have followed suit, but in some marvelous way the Lord preserved the use of His name until the time of Joseph Smith and the Restoration of Christ’s Church.

Now, let us turn to the second page of the blueprint. What were the “Teachings” of Christ’s Church? Let us examine a few:

Is God solely a spirit, or does He also have a body of flesh and bones? What does the blueprint teach?

After Christ’s Resurrection, He appeared to His disciples, who mistakenly thought He was a spirit (see Luke 24:37). To correct their misimpression, He said, “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; *for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have*” (Luke 24:39; italics added).

To eliminate any doubt about the corporeal nature of His resurrected body, He inquired of His disciples, “Have ye here any meat?” (Luke 24:41). Then the scriptures record:

“And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb.

“And he took it, and did eat before them” (Luke 24:42–43).

With that glorified, resurrected body of flesh and bones, Christ ascended into heaven (see Acts 1:9),³ where He sits on the right hand of God the Father and is, as the scriptures declare, in “the express image of his person” (Hebrews 1:3). This is the exact truth taught by Joseph Smith as part of the Restoration of Christ’s Church: “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s; the Son also” (D&C 130:22).

Are God and Jesus the same Being, as taught by much of the Christian world, or two separate Beings? What does the blueprint say?

The number of references in the Bible to the separate identity and separate roles of the Father and Son is staggering. In the Garden of Gethsemane, recognizing the excruciating pain that was yet to be His, the Savior declared, “Not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). This is the grandest act of submission the world has ever known. But what submission would there have been if there was no other Being to whom He could submit—if He and the Father were one and the same Being? Why does the Savior pray to the Father or cry out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34). How could He be forsaken if there was no separate Being to forsake Him? How did Stephen see Jesus standing on the right hand of God if They are not two persons (see Acts 7:55–56)?

When Joseph Smith emerged from the grove of trees, he had learned for himself the truth. He had seen God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, standing side by side; he had heard the Father refer to the other as His “Beloved Son” (Joseph Smith—History 1:17). On that glorious day the heavens shattered the man-made myths of the past about the nature of God and revealed and confirmed the simple truth as originally taught in the blueprint: that God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, have a oneness of goals and will but a separateness of identity.

What does the blueprint say about those who never had a fair chance to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ while on the earth? Are they damned? Are we without revealed knowledge as to their spiritual condition?

This is a monumental question affecting billions of lives. Certainly God has spoken on this point. And in truth, He has. The blueprint contains the answer.

Peter wrote, “For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit” (1 Peter 4:6). This doctrine was lost in the Apostasy following the death of Christ’s Apostles, but it was restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Are there three heavens or one heaven? For years the Christian world has taught there is one heaven and one hell, but what does the original blueprint teach?

Paul taught, “There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars” (1 Corinthians 15:41). Paul subsequently confirmed the truth of this three-tiered heaven when he recounted the vision of a man “caught up to the third heaven” (2 Corinthians 12:2). Could there be a third heaven if there was no second or first heaven? Again, this doctrine restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith is in exact accord with the original blueprint.

Does marriage continue for eternity or end at death? What does the blueprint say?

In accordance with the power given to the Apostles that whatsoever they should bind on earth should be bound in heaven (see Matthew 18:18), Paul declared, “Neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:11), meaning that the ideal is for the man and woman to be bound together forever in God’s presence. Peter confirmed this truth. Referring to husbands and wives, he stated that they should be “heirs together of the grace of life” (1 Peter 3:7)—not individually, but jointly walking the path as inheritors of eternal life. That is the doctrine taught in the blueprint, and that is the doctrine taught in Christ’s Church today.

The third page of the blueprint reads, “Ordinances in Christ’s Church.” The blueprint is very specific in this regard. For example, do we bless or baptize infants and little children? What does the blueprint teach?

The Savior gave the clear example for us. Speaking of little children, the scriptures read, “And he [Jesus] took them up in his arms, *put his hands upon them, and blessed them*” (Mark 10:16; italics added). Matthew confirmed, as to little children, the Savior “laid his hands on them” (Matthew 19:15). The blueprint teaches that infants and little children are blessed, not baptized. In fact, there is not one account of an infant baptism occurring anywhere in the entire New Testament. Why? Because it was not an ordinance in Christ’s Church. Someone looking for Christ’s Church today would look for a church that blesses infants, not baptizes them.

Is baptism essential for salvation? What does the blueprint teach?

After Christ set the example by being baptized, He declared in unequivocal terms, “Except a man be *born of water* and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5; italics added). Peter taught similarly, “Repent, and be baptized *every one of you* in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38; italics added). What is taught in the blueprint is exactly what is taught in Christ’s Church today.

Is baptism to be done by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion? The blueprint gives at least four evidences that baptism is to be done by immersion:

First, the Savior, our great Exemplar, came up “straightway out of the water” (Matthew 3:16), indicating He must have first gone down into the water.

Second, John the Baptist “was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was *much water* there” (John 3:23; italics added). Why would he travel to a place of “much water” if sprinkling or pouring were accepted modes of baptism?

Third, Paul tells us that baptism is symbolic of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (see Romans 6:3–5). As the new convert stands in the waters of baptism, he represents the old man about to die. As he is immersed in the water, his sins are “buried” and forgiven by the symbolic cleansing power of the water. Then, as he rises from the water, he stands as a representative of the new or resurrected man in Jesus Christ. All of that symbolism underlying baptism is consistent with baptism by immersion, but it is lost—totally lost—with sprinkling and pouring.

And fourth, the Greek word from which *baptism* is translated means to dip or plunge in the water.

Will Durrant, a noted world historian, knew what the blueprint revealed and thus observed, “By the ninth century the early Christian method of baptism by total immersion had been gradually replaced by ... sprinkling—as less dangerous to health in northern climes.”⁴

It should be no surprise that Joseph Smith received a revelation on the manner in which baptism is to be performed that is perfectly consistent with Christ's blueprint (see [D&C 20:73–74](#)).

Was baptism for the dead an ordinance in Christ's original Church? It was.

The members of the Church in Corinth were participating in an ordinance known as baptism for the dead. These people, however, doubted the reality of the Resurrection. Sensing the inconsistency of what they were doing as compared to what they believed, Paul used their participation in the correct ordinance of baptism for the dead to prove the correct doctrine of the Resurrection: "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?" ([1 Corinthians 15:29](#)).

Once someone crosses the doctrinal bridge and acknowledges that baptism is essential for salvation (which it is), then logically he is led to believe in baptism for the dead—there is no escaping it. Otherwise, how does one answer the difficult question "What about those who died without the opportunity to be baptized?" Those confronted with this question have four possible options from which to choose:

First, men and women who have not been baptized will be damned and go to hell. Such an answer, however, is inconsistent with the scriptural truths that "God is no respecter of persons" ([Acts 10:34](#)) and that God desires "all men to be saved" ([1 Timothy 2:4](#)).

Second, perhaps God did not really mean what He said—perhaps baptism is not really essential for salvation. But this is unrealistic because God always means what He says: "What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself" ([D&C 1:38](#); see also [Mosiah 2:24](#)).

Third, some believe that a new condition called "baptism by desire" may be substituted for baptism by water. In other words, if someone desires to follow Jesus but did not have the opportunity to be baptized in mortality, then his worthy desire becomes an acceptable substitute in lieu of water baptism. The problem with this option is that it has no scriptural support. The scripture does not say, "Except a man be born of desire," but rather, "Except a man be *born of water* and of the Spirit, *he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*" ([John 3:5](#); italics added).

The fourth option is that God really meant what He said when He commanded all men to be baptized, and because of this He mercifully provided a way for all men to be baptized even if no opportunity arose in mortal life. That is baptism for the dead. That is the option consistent with the blueprint.

What does the blueprint say about the manner in which the gift—not the temporary presence, but the permanent gift—of the Holy Ghost is given after someone is baptized? Does it automatically descend upon someone following his baptism? Does it come like the rushing of the wind, or is there some divine ordinance, some divine procedure that must be followed to receive this gift? The blueprint gives the answer.

After Philip baptized some new converts in Samaria, Peter and John arrived. The scriptures then reveal the manner in which that ordinance is to be performed: "Then [Peter and John] *laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost*" ([Acts 8:17](#); italics added).

This same procedure was followed after Paul baptized new converts in Ephesus:

"When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

"And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them" ([Acts 19:5–6](#); italics added).

Once again the blueprint and Christ's restored Church are in perfect harmony.

The next page of the blueprint might read: "Fruits of Christ's Church." The Savior gave this test for truth: "By their fruits ye shall know them" ([Matthew 7:20](#)). What were the fruits of Christ's Church as evidenced in the blueprint?

One, those early Saints strove to be a healthy people. Paul taught that our physical bodies are "temples" that house our spirits and, therefore, are to be treated as holy: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" ([1 Corinthians 3:16](#); see also [1 Corinthians 6:19](#)). Because of this, the members of Christ's Church had certain health laws they obeyed, such as certain restrictions on drinking wine, found in [Ephesians 5](#) and [1 Timothy 3](#). In accordance with this divine law of treating our bodies like temples, Joseph Smith received a health law from the Lord for the members of Christ's restored Church, known as the Word of Wisdom. As a result of living this health law, repeated

studies have confirmed that members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are among the healthiest people in the world. This is one of the fruits of living Christ's health law.

A second fruit of Christ's Church was its miracles and gifts of the Spirit. They are recorded on page after page in the New Testament. They were an evidence that the power of God existed in Christ's Church (see [Hebrews 2:4](#)). But unfortunately, with the advent of the Apostasy, the miracles waned—historians readily acknowledged it, and reformers admitted it. Paul Johnson, a noted historian, observed, "It had been acknowledged at least since imperial times [meaning the time of Constantine] that *'the age of miracles' was over*, in the sense that Christian leaders could no longer spread the gospel, like the apostles, with the aid of supernatural power."⁵

Why did the time come when there were no more miracles and gifts of the Spirit? Because the tree that bore the fruit, namely Christ's Church, was no longer on the earth and the faith of the people diminished. John Wesley noted this absence of the gifts of the Spirit from the church in his day: "It does not appear that these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were common in the Church for more than two or three centuries."⁶

Suffice it to say, I can testify, like many of you, that this *is* a day of miracles and gifts of the Spirit in Christ's restored Church, just as it was in His original Church.

There is a third fruit—the blueprint of Christ's Church records many accounts of angels and visions. Some people look with skepticism today at a church that claims angels and visions, but in so doing forget that angels and visions were a critical part of Christ's original Church: the angel announcing the birth of Christ to Mary; the angels coming to Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration; the angel releasing Peter and John from prison; the angel speaking to Cornelius; the angel warning Paul of the impending shipwreck; the angel coming to John the Revelator; Stephen's vision of the Father and the Son; John's vision of the last days; and many more. The question should not be "How can The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints be the true Church with its alleged angels and visions?" Rather, the question should be "How can any church today claim to be Christ's true Church unless it has angels and visions—just as was the case in Christ's original Church, just as it is revealed in His blueprint?"

There are many other fruits consistent with Christ's original Church:

It was a missionary church—the Apostles being commanded to "go ye therefore, and teach all nations" ([Matthew 28:19](#)). Today we have over 80,000 missionaries fulfilling that command and bearing the fruit of doing so.

It was a moral church—the blueprint teaches us that the early Saints in Christ's Church were commanded to dress modestly and to refrain from premarital relations. How many churches not only teach those moral standards but also live them?

Christ's original Church was a family-centered church. Husbands were commanded to love and be true to their wives (see [Ephesians 5:23–25](#)), children were commanded to obey their parents (see [Ephesians 6:1](#)), and bishops were commanded to rule well their own houses (see [1 Timothy 3:4–5](#)). Today our Church, like Christ's original Church, is recognized as a family-centered church. The fruits of Christ's Church are carefully recorded in the Bible and match with Christ's restored Church today.

Christ established His Church on earth, but the final page of the blueprint reveals it had a link to heaven—namely, "Divine Revelation." Without this link the Church would be no more than a man-driven organization governed by the powers of reason. The prophet Amos declared, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" ([Amos 3:7](#)). Paul confirmed that revelation was an integral part of the Church and was meant to be ongoing, for he declared, "I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord" ([2 Corinthians 12:1](#); see also [Acts 1:2](#)).

Consistent with that fundamental doctrine, Christ's Church today is linked to heaven by ongoing revelation. The Church's declaration of belief in this regard, known as the [ninth article of faith](#), reads as follows: "We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God."

If one were to match the blueprint of Christ's original Church against every church in the world today, he would find that point for point, organization for organization, teaching for teaching, ordinance for ordinance, fruit for fruit, and revelation for revelation, it will only match one—The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

If one rejects this Church after studying the blueprint, then it will likely ruin him for any other church because he knows too

much. He will be like Peter, who was asked by the Savior, “Will ye also go away?” ([John 6:67](#)). Peter responded with an answer that should be engraved in every heart and enshrined in every home: “To whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” ([John 6:68](#)).

If someone turns from the Church, where will he go to learn about the restored truths concerning the nature of God as revealed in the Sacred Grove, the preaching of the gospel to the dead, the three degrees of glory, and eternal families? Where will he go to get the ordinances that can save and exalt him? Where will he go to have his wife and children sealed to him for eternity? Where will he go when he wants a priesthood blessing of comfort or healing for a family member? Where will he go to find a prophet of God? He will look in vain for those doctrines and those ordinances and those powers and those prophets, as they are unique to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

One cannot have the doctrines and ordinances as restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith without accepting Joseph Smith and the underlying history that is the basis for such. They are inseparable. They go hand in hand. You cannot call the fruit good and then call the tree bad. The Savior taught that truth long ago: “A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit” ([Matthew 7:18](#)). Accordingly, if the doctrinal fruit we have discussed tonight is good, then the tree from which it sprang—Joseph Smith and the accompanying underlying history of those revealed truths—is likewise good. You cannot have one without the other.

In general conference addresses some years ago, Elder B. H. Roberts would speak of the accomplishments of Joseph Smith, and then, as if speaking to Joseph’s critics, he would say: “Match it! Match it, I say, or with hand on lips remain silent when his name is spoken.”⁷

The historical or social concerns that some may have, the alleged scientific conflicts—these are the sideshow; the center stage is the doctrines, ordinances, priesthood power, and other fruits of our Church, many of which have been discussed tonight. But some may respond, “I believe all this, but how do I respond to the critics and their specific questions?”

An attorney knows that after a prosecutor presents his key witness, the case against the defendant has been cast in its worst possible light. Someone quick to render judgment at that point might determine the defendant guilty, but then an interesting phenomenon in the courtroom happens. The defense commences cross-examination of this same witness, and the following frequently occurs: The definitive answers of the witness start to wilt under the pressure of cross-examination. The witness who appeared so unimpeachable now has some inconsistencies, perhaps even glaring holes in his recollection of events. The seemingly rock-solid story of the witness begins to crack and crumble with each new question put to him. The witness was able to handle the softball questions of *his* prosecutor, but when the hardball questions of the opposition came, he could not withstand their intensity or probing nature. When the cross-examination is completed, the witness has been largely discredited. The observer who was previously ready to “hang” the defendant now sees with a different set of eyes the man’s complete innocence.

Likewise, some critics throw one-sided questions at the Church that are intended to put the Church in its worst possible light. *But questions go both ways.*⁸ The prosecutor’s key witnesses are not immune to cross-examination, and neither are the Church’s toughest critics. I have never found any detractors who could give me satisfactory answers on “cross-examination” to the following questions:

First, how did Joseph Smith know to restore the doctrines and ordinances from the Bible, such as the doctrine of the premortal existence, the true nature of God, the gospel being preached to the dead, baptism for the dead, and many others discussed tonight, when such doctrines and ordinances were not being taught by other contemporary churches of his time? Why was Joseph Smith the only one to discover them and restore them? Even if he is considered a theological genius, were there no other such geniuses in the 1,800 years following the Savior’s ministry who could do likewise?

Second, if this Church is not Christ’s Church, then why does this Church have the same fruits as Christ’s original Church, namely, miracles and gifts of the Spirit, current revelation from apostles and prophets, angels and visions, a healthy people, a moral people, a missionary-minded people, and a people who are intensely family centered? Did not the Savior give the test for truth?—“By their fruits ye shall know them” ([Matthew 7:20](#)).

Certainly, many more questions on cross-examination could be asked. There are certain questions, however, that trump and transcend all others—in essence, they form the crux of an issue. Suffice it to say, some questions are simply more important than others in discovering the truth. If you come to know that Joseph Smith restored the biblical teachings and

ordinances discussed tonight, if you come to know that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has the same fruits as Christ's original Church, or if you come to know that the Book of Mormon is of divine origin, then you know that Joseph Smith is a prophet. And if Joseph Smith is a prophet, then this is the only true and living Church upon the face of the whole earth. At that point, all other questions pale in comparison. It is like the Supreme Court ruling on an issue. All decisions of lower courts to the contrary become immaterial. Likewise, all questions of the critics, however probing or puzzling or entertaining they may be, become immaterial in the equation of truth. Why? Because you have already answered the *key* questions—the critical questions, the transcending questions—that are the foundational pillars for knowing the truth.

Suffice it to say, I can live with some human imperfections, even among prophets of God—that is to be expected in mortal beings. I can live with some alleged scientific findings contrary to the Book of Mormon; time will correct those. And I can live with some seeming historical anomalies; they are minor in the total landscape of truth. But I cannot live without the doctrinal truths and ordinances restored by Joseph Smith, I cannot live without the priesthood of God to bless my family, and I cannot live without knowing my wife and children are sealed to me for eternity. That is the choice we face—a few unanswered questions on one hand versus a host of doctrinal certainties and the power of God on the other. And for me, and I hope for you, the choice is an easy one and a rational one.

I bear witness that the Church over which you will one day preside bears Christ's name because it does have His approved organization, His teachings, His ordinances, His powers, His fruits, and His constant revelation, all of which are referred to in His divine blueprint. May we have the spiritual eyes to see the corollary between that blueprint and Christ's restored Church today, for it is one of God's compelling witnesses to us. Of this I so witness and pray in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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Notes

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