

The First Shall be Last and the Last Shall be First



Gospel dispensations,
the fullness of the times of the gentiles,
and other keys to understanding the
purposes and design of God in our time

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The Last shall be First, and the First shall be Last

In the Lord's plan there is a pattern repeated over and over again in all of the standard works, and there is a phrase repeated over and over in connection with prophecies, but few understand it. It is that "the first shall be last and the last shall be first".

In this booklet we will explore this pattern into which all prophecies fit, and the way it has been applied by God in our dispensation to give us a witness and warning about God's plan in our day.

The phrase: "The first shall be last and the last shall be first" is used in scripture to describe the pattern through which the Savior reveals Himself and His gospel. When He came to earth, He came among the Jews, or His original covenant people, and later the gospel was preached to non-Jews (Gentiles). With the Restoration, He revealed the gospel first among the Gentiles, and it will eventually go to the Jews (see 1 Nephi 13:42; Jacob 5:63; Ether 13:4-12).

Consider 1 Nephi 13:42 "And the time cometh that he shall manifest himself unto all nations, both unto the Jews and also unto the Gentiles; and after he has manifested himself unto the Jews and also unto the Gentiles, then he shall manifest himself unto the Gentiles and also unto the Jews, and the last shall be first, and the first shall be last."

In that verse, we are told that Christ will manifest or present himself to the Jews and then to the Gentiles after which He will manifest Himself to the Gentiles and then to the Jews.

This can be broken down into four events:
Christ manifest to the House of Israel
Christ manifest to the Gentiles
Christ manifest to the Gentiles
Christ manifest to the House of Israel.

The first three have happened and can be explained by scripture references to follow. The last is happening now but insight into our situation today can be found by looking to the words of the prophets about this transition as foretold in the scriptures. We will now examine these four events. Let's follow the sequence.

Christ is manifest to Israel

In the meridian of time, Christ was born and raised among the Jews. He stated in Matthew, Chapter 15:

"22 And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.

23 But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.

24 But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Christ's message was exclusively for Israel. In this above instance early in His ministry, he declined to help the Canaanite woman because she was not of the house of Israel. The terms 'Jews' and 'house of Israel' can be used interchangeably as found in the 15th Chapter of 1st Nephi which states:

"17 And this is what our father meaneth; and he meaneth that it will not come to pass until after they are scattered by the Gentiles; and he meaneth that it shall come by way of the Gentiles, that the Lord may show his power unto the Gentiles, for the very cause that he shall be rejected of the Jews, or of the house of Israel.

18 Wherefore, our father hath not spoken of our seed alone, but also of all the house of Israel, pointing to the covenant which should be fulfilled in the latter days; which covenant the Lord

made to our father Abraham, saying: In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

19 And it came to pass that I, Nephi, spake much unto them concerning these things; yea, I spake unto them concerning the restoration of the Jews in the latter days.

20 And I did rehearse unto them the words of Isaiah, who spake concerning the restoration of the Jews, or of the house of Israel; and after they were restored they should no more be confounded, neither should they be scattered again. And it came to pass that I did speak many words unto my brethren, that they were pacified and did humble themselves before the Lord."

That dispensation fulfills the first segment of the phrase. Christ did initially come to the Jews. His message was received by many, but rejected by many more, the apostasy was the result.

Christ is manifest to the Gentiles

The Jewish people, or the house of Israel, had received every chance to receive the Fullness of the Gospel. Following Christ's resurrection, the apostles were still focused on the Jewish nation for converts until Peter encountered Cornelius. The work was then opened up to the Gentiles. Christ foreshadowed this transition in a parable presented in Matthew, Chapter 21:

"33 ¶ Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:

34 And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.

35 And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

36 Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

37 But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

38 But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.

39 And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

40 When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

41 They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

42 Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?

43 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

44 And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

45 And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.

46 But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet."

Christ tells the priests and Pharisees that the kingdom of God would be taken from them and given to another. This represents the transition from the Jewish dispensations to the Gentiles. This idea is stated explicitly in the 13th Chapter of Acts where Paul explains why the Gentiles are allowed to receive the message of the kingdom:

"44 And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

So Israel was given the first opportunity to accept the message of Christ. When they fell into apostasy, the Gentiles were then the focus of the good news. This sequence is also captured in the following scripture found in Romans, Chapter 2:

"9 Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;

10 But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:"

Following the pattern identified above, the sequence is now reversed with the Gentiles first and then the Jews.

Christ is manifest a second time to the Gentiles

This, of course, is the restoration of the gospel in our dispensation. In 1830, the Book of Mormon was published and sent to the world with the message of the restored Gospel. All people were to be invited into the kingdom but there was a sequence that is exhibited in the scriptures. The following is found in Doctrine and Covenants, Section 107:

"33 The Twelve are a Traveling Presiding High Council, to officiate in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Presidency of the Church, agreeable to the institution of heaven; to build up the church, and regulate all the affairs of the same in all nations, first unto the Gentiles and secondly unto the Jews.

34 The Seventy are to act in the name of the Lord, under the direction of the Twelve or the traveling high council, in building up the church and regulating all the affairs of the same in all nations, first unto the Gentiles and then to the Jews;

35 The Twelve being sent out, holding the keys, to open the door by the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and first unto the Gentiles and then unto the Jews."

The Church, the gentiles, are presented with the opportunity to accept and promulgate the gospel just as the Jews were given the first opportunity in the meridian of time. What shall we do with it?

Christ is manifest a second time to the literal blood of Israel

As we have seen from the scriptures above, the Lord has established a sequence of events leading up to His return in glory. The gentiles now have been given the opportunity to individually

and collectively accept the gospel of Jesus Christ. The scriptures are replete with prophecies explaining how this was to unfold.

First, the gentiles would receive the fullness of the gospel, and restore the Church based on that gospel. Second, the gentiles, or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, would then in time reject the fullness of the gospel, build a church based on the works of men, and find themselves rejected. This is the sword that now hangs over our individual and collective heads.

We know that this transition will occur with the message going to the literal seed of Israel. The Book of Mormon repeatedly encourages us, the gentiles, to repent and come unto Christ and be numbered with the house of Israel. We, individually, have a choice to make.

Let's examine the scriptures that predict this outcome.

In the parable of the wicked husbandman found in Matthew 21 Christ warned the Pharisees that they were to lose the kingdom of God. In the Joseph Smith translation of Matthew, additional information was presented regarding the gentiles 'opportunity.' Here is the text found in the JST Matthew Chapter 21:

"50 And now his disciples came to him, and Jesus said unto them, Marvel ye at the words of the parable which I spake unto them?

51 Verily, I say unto you, I am the stone, and those wicked ones reject me.

52 I am the head of the corner. These Jews shall fall upon me, and shall be broken.

53 And the kingdom of God shall be taken from them, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof; (meaning the Gentiles.)

54 Wherefore, on whomsoever this stone shall fall, it shall grind him to powder.

55 And when the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, he will destroy those miserable, wicked men, and will let again his vineyard unto other husbandmen, even in the last days, who shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

56 And then understood they the parable which he spake unto them, that the Gentiles should be destroyed also, when the Lord should descend out of heaven to reign in his vineyard, which is the earth and the inhabitants thereof."

Here is a warning to the Gentiles that the same rock upon which the Jews were broken, would grind them to powder. Who are the husbandmen in these last days who were tasked with keeping the vineyard? These will find the same fate as the scribes and Pharisees.

In the 45th Section of the Doctrine and Covenants we find the word of the Lord to His apostles in the meridian of time:

"24 And this I have told you concerning Jerusalem; and when that day shall come, shall a remnant be scattered among all nations;

25 But they shall be gathered again; but they shall remain until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

26 And in that day shall be heard of wars and rumors of wars, and the whole earth shall be in commotion, and men's hearts shall fail them, and they shall say that Christ delayeth his coming until the end of the earth.

27 And the love of men shall wax cold, and iniquity shall abound.

28 And when the times of the Gentiles is come in, a light shall break forth among them that sit in darkness, and it shall be the fulness of my gospel;

29 But they receive it not; for they perceive not the light, and they turn their hearts from me because of the precepts of men.

30 And in that generation shall the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

Here we have another reference to the Gentiles being presented with the fullness of the gospel but not accepting it. The message I have for you is that the times of the Gentiles are now fulfilled, just as the scriptures said they would. Like a flickering ember that fails to ignite, the gospel was not able to take hold.

In 3rd Nephi, Chapter 16, there is a passage regarding the Gentiles. We read in verse 6 that they are blessed because of their belief in God given them of the Holy Ghost. We read in verse 7 that 'in the latter day shall the truth come unto the Gentiles, that the fulness of these things shall be made known unto them.' In verse 8, we find that the 'unbelieving of the Gentiles' scatters the house of Israel. The assumption is that if there needed to be a designation of unbelievers among the Gentiles, we have to assume that there were believers also.

The following is found in verses 10 through 12:

"10 And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you: At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, and of secret abominations; and if they shall do all those things, and shall reject

the fulness of my gospel, behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fulness of my gospel from among them.

11 And then will I remember my covenant which I have made unto my people, O house of Israel, and I will bring my gospel unto them.

12 And I will show unto thee, O house of Israel, that the Gentiles shall not have power over you; but I will remember my covenant unto you, O house of Israel, and ye shall come unto the knowledge of the fulness of my gospel."

Here we find, again, that the fullness of the gospel is rejected by the Gentiles and extended to the house of Israel. This scripture speaks of the Gentiles collectively and, as shown above, includes the LDS Church.

Again, in the next verse, we see the Lord reaching out to the Gentiles:

"13 But if the Gentiles will repent and return unto me, saith the Father, behold they shall be numbered among my people, O house of Israel."

We have the opportunity to repent and return to God. How does one return to a place that they have never been? This implies that we once embraced the gospel but then rejected it. God is asking us to return. Several times President Ezra Taft Benson told us that the condemnation found in section 84, verses 54 through 57, of the Doctrine and Covenants still applied to us because we took lightly the Book of Mormon. Has this condemnation ever been lifted? As discussed, we need to accept the fullness of the gospel which requires us to repent and be baptized both by water and by fire and the Holy Ghost in order receive a remission of our sins.

The Lord also warns us what will happen if we do not return:

"15 But if they will not turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, I will suffer them, yea, I will suffer my people, O house of Israel, that they shall go through among them, and shall tread them down, and they shall be as salt that hath lost its savor, which is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of my people, O house of Israel."

We do not know if this treading will only be of a spiritual nature or also physical, but we can take a clue from the effect the rejection of the gospel had upon Jerusalem at the time of Christ. It is also important to note the reference to the salt and savor. In Doctrine and Covenants, Section 101, we find this reference:

"39 When men are called unto mine everlasting gospel, and covenant with an everlasting covenant, they are accounted as the salt of the earth and the savor of men;

40 They are called to be the savor of men; therefore, if that salt of the earth lose its savor, behold, it is thenceforth good for nothing only to be cast out and trodden under the feet of men."

So there it is... We are all called to embrace the fullness of the gospel - to repent and be baptized, to receive a remission of our sins through the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, to be sanctified and made holy. By so doing, we can establish Zion, the pure in heart and prepare for the return of our Lord and Savior. Such is the whole message of the gospel.

But how can the house of Israel receive the fullness of the gospel if the gentiles have lost it? They cannot therefore pass it on in its complete and perfect form. This is further complicated by the prophecies that this dispensation, of which Joseph Smith is the head, is the last dispensation. This means that the transition from the Gentiles to the house of Israel cannot constitute a new dispensation, but must be a form of continuation of it.

The Final Gathering of Israel

We have an example, or type, of how this would occur in the New Testament. It is similar in form to the transition from Judah to the Gentiles, but in our day it has passed from the Gentiles to the literal descendents of Israel. So first, let us take a look at how it happened nearly 2000 years ago:

In the time of Christ, the ancient Church was still on the earth. The elders, the high priest, and the high council, or Sanhedrin, were still functioning. Jesus even taught the people to reverence these church leaders, and give heed to their council in Matthew 23:

1 Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples,

2 Saying, The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:

3 All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.

These Church leaders were still teaching much of the gospel, and encouraging the people to righteousness, but they were also sinning against the gospel. This was not readily apparent to the casual observer. From the outside these seemed to be righteous men. In the same chapter Jesus explained it this way:

27 Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.

28 Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

The rest of the New Testament shows the aftermath of these leaders' failure to accept this call to repentance: The Gospel went to the Gentiles. Still the Lord was patient with the Jewish people, and many thousands of them accepted the Messiah, but the Church leaders were themselves cut off. After laboring with the

house of Israel exclusively for quite some time, the apostles were sent to the Gentiles. This is recorded in Acts, chapters 10 and 11.

This did not constitute a new dispensation, but a continuation of the dispensation. This did not however constitute a continuation of the same church organization. Not only was Jesus excommunicated at his trial before the high council, he was also crucified. Peter and John were also excommunicated by the High council. (Acts 4) The Church had apostatized and a new church organization had replaced it without them even knowing it. The true priesthood of God was even cast out of the Temple. (Also in Acts 4) This did not mean that the priesthood, the keys, or the ordinances were utterly lost.

Instead the priesthood and keys were only "lost" from among the people of the Church. God is not dependant on men to do his work, it is men who are dependent on God. This was a mystery to the Church at the time of Christ. The leaders of the church repeatedly inquired how Christ and his apostles obtained the authority they exercised, and failed to understand how they obtained the priesthood.

The events of this former dispensation are mirrored in our own. Almost from the beginning of this dispensation there has been disobedience and apostasy from the commandments of God. Kirtland was lost, Zion was not established in Missouri, and this was because of disobedience. (see D&C 101:2, 114:2) In Nauvoo the saints were told that if they failed to build the Lord's house there, and thereby become a Zion people, that they would fail to obtain the fullness of the keys of the priesthood, and that they would be rejected as a people. (D&C 124:31-32) Sadly the saints did fail at that time, the prophet was taken from among them, and the saints scattered into many sects. These events all have their parallel in the New Testament.

In similitude of the former dispensation the apostles continued to attempt to warn the people. Whether they did so with

the fullness of the keys or not is no longer a material question because the times of the Gentiles are now fulfilled and with that fulfillment came a reorganization of the Church, along with an expansion of revelation and the keys of the priesthood. Just as the Gentiles converted by Paul were never under the original Jewish Church. Now the house of Israel is receiving the gospel again and this work is not dependent on the former church either.

The current line of priesthood can be traced through apostles all the way back to through Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery, Peter James and John, and Christ. But this is not the only claim to authority they possess. On April 6th 1830, The Root of Jesse, As spoken of in Isaiah 11, 2 Nephi 21, D&C 113 and Isaiah 4:2, 60, Jer. 23, Zech. 3&6, John 15:2, Rom. 11:16, 2 Ne. 3, 10, and Jacob 5, was called and commissioned. The final gathering began and the first presidency and quorum of the Twelve were reorganized along with all the governing bodies of the Church. From beyond the veil this calling and commission was confirmed by the appearance of all the former prophets and key holders, as well as the personal appearance of Christ and the Father confirming the restoration of the Fullness of the Keys of the Priesthood to Israel.

This was a necessary prerequisite to the establishment of Zion, for Zion cannot be built up except on the principles of the Law of the Celestial Kingdom. (D&C 105:5) This must include the fullness of the Keys of the priesthood. (D&C 132:7) Therefore the priesthood has remained and must needs remain through this dispensation or Zion cannot be brought to pass. Thus if God cannot overcome the loss of priesthood by the church in this dispensation the word of God would be void and his promises fail. But God's promises do not fail. Zion will be built! And it will be built according to all the laws rights and ordinances of the Celestial Kingdom. This is beginning to happen now because the Gospel has been returned to the literal seed of Israel as He promised, and the full ordinances and priesthoods are reunited and restored.

I invite all Israel to come and partake. Let the natural

branches be restored to the tree, and bring forth fruit for the last time. Then will come the end, and the vineyard will be burned. The question then is: Are you of Israel? How can you know? The scriptures tell us that: "Mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts." (D&C 29:7) Therefore if you can hear his voice calling Israel to journey to the fullness today, then you are of Israel. I see that you have heard this call and so I exhort you not to harden your heart against it.

Christ is our only sure rock and salvation. The fullness of the Gospel is necessary for us to come into his presence. Christ warned us: The Stone would grind the Gentiles, who do not repent and join Israel in this final gathering, to powder. (Luke 20:18) The great and terrible day of the Lord is near, let us prepare to meet him and shout with all the saints since the world began:

Praise to the Lord!

A Broken Heart and a Contrite Spirit

A Righteous Remnant

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints has changed the ordinances and broken the everlasting covenant as prophesied in scripture, (Isaiah 24:5) but a remnant remains. We have been promised that the priesthood will remain on the earth and that Christ will return. On April 6th 1978 Joseph Smith Jr. released all the officers in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (D&C 85:7, 90:3-4, 16) These leaders were replaced with new leaders and the Righteous Branch organized. Gathering the literal blood of Israel for the last time. (D&C 113:5-6, Isaiah 11)

Gathering the Wheat from the Midst of the Tares

These events happened two months prior to the LDS church leaders announcing to the world that they intended to grant the priesthood of God to those who have been restricted until the end of the millennium. (D&C 86:10, Moses 7:22, Abraham 1:26-27) This signified the end of the times of the gentiles. No more was the fullness of the Gospel to the whole world, but now only to

the house of Israel, those who repent and return unto Christ, that they might be numbered among the righteous remnant of the house of Israel. (3 Nephi 16:10-13, Jacob 5:68-72) And are gathered into one place, and in no other place are the blessings appointed. (D&C 45:28-30)

Succession of Keys

The fullness of the keys of the priesthood remain on the earth in spite of apostasy within and without the church. In all cases, ordination is required and the successor is set apart as President of the Priesthood by the preceding key holder. John Taylor ordained John Woolley and others to the highest Council of the Priesthood. When Joseph F. Smith passed on, the highest keys of the Priesthood separated from the Church, being given to John Woolley rather than with Heber J. Grant as many have assumed. They continued external to the Church until 1978.

An unbroken line of apostles have been ordained to preside over the fullness of the keys of the priesthood from the beginning of our dispensation to the present. In 1978, the Priesthood key holder (the Root of Jesse mentioned in (D&C 113:5-6)) was visited by the One Mighty and Strong prophesied in scripture. (Isaiah 28:12, D&C 85:7-8, 90:12-16) This prophecy refers to the resurrected prophet Joseph Smith. Additionally Elijah, Moses, Moroni, Ether, Jesus Christ, and Father Michael, the Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:21-22) have also visited living prophets from that time on, and still visit these prophets and apostles today. Construction immediately began on a new temple. (3 Nephi 16:10-12, Jacob 5:68-72, Daniel 8:14, Zechariah 3rd and 4th Chapters and 14:21)

A New Temple

We bear witness that in 1978 the Church and the Priesthood were reunited. This means that just prior to The changes to temple ordinances, God moved the power of the temple to a righteous man; who he commanded to build a temple. So there has been a righteous temple completed or under construction almost continuously since the time of the prophet Joseph Smith. A place

where we can have the ordinances that are critical for exaltation. The third and fourth chapters of Zechariah speak of this new temple. There are temples today where you can still receive all the ordinances of God according to his commandments and his priesthood. Will you not come and partake of these blessings?

Building Zion

We believe in all the teachings of Joseph Smith Jr. More than just believe, we bear witness of striving to live them. Also, we believe that except a man lives by all the commandments of God, he can in no wise enter into the Celestial glory. God is unchangeable. (D&C 11:20, D&C 14:6-7, D&C 35:24, D&C 42:29, D&C 42:78, JST Genesis 9:21)

Ask yourself:

If this message is true, is it important to me?

Have you ever desired to live the fullness of the gospel? Do you look forward to building the city of the New Jerusalem? If so we invite you to gather with us and establish Zion.

In this little booklet we hope to give you an abbreviated explanation of a few of the prophecies regarding our day. A final gathering has begun, bringing Latter-Day Saints together to establish consecrated communities, build temples, and keep all the commandments of God.

If you will allow the spirit to work in you, you will come to know that this is the work of God. If you have a desire to serve God, then I exhort you to pray fervently to know if this gathering, preparatory to the establishment of the New Jerusalem, is the place God wants you and your family to gather and labor for his kingdom.

For more on this topic read "The Gathering Era of The Root of Jesse"

For further information visit
www.ChristsChurchTheBranch.org

Or please contact the missionaries at:
Right.Branch@Gmail.com
or call 1 (801) 769-6279

If we are too busy meeting with others to meet with you right away, or if the number on the back of this booklet is busy when you call, I hope that you will try again. Please remember: "seek and ye shall find, knock and the door will open."

