

Looking at the doctrine-cross eyed - is the Promise of the Second Comforter within the Doctrine of Christ ?

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Today and tomorrow you will hear lectures on the Doctrine of Christ. The phrase is found in the writings of Paul and John but the meaning of the term is obscure in the New Testament. It was Joseph Smith who taught us the doctrine of Christ in clarity. The culmination of his understanding of the Doctrine of Christ is found in the first 74 pages of the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants. It remained part of that book of scripture until 1921, a period of 86 years.

We call this document, Lectures on Faith a title that was first used in the 1876 edition of the D&C compiled by Orson Pratt under Brigham Young. Until 1876, the document had no title, unless the title of lecture one is considered a title for the whole, namely "On the Doctrine of the Church of the Latter-day Saints". I believe Lectures on the Doctrine of Jesus Christ would be a better title for four reasons:

First, the book in which these lectures were published was called the Doctrine and Covenants, the lectures were **the doctrine**.

2nd, The committee assigned to write the lectures were instructed "to arrange the items of the doctrine of Jesus Christ, for the government of the Church" (HC 2:165). This same language was used *August 17th, 1835 on the day all of the church quorums unanimously accepted the lectures as doctrine.*

3rd The first sentence of the first paragraph of the first lecture in the Lectures on Faith describes the Lectures as "a course of lectures designed to unfold to the understanding the doctrine of Jesus Christ."

If you want to know what Joseph Smith thought about the Doctrine of Christ, the Lectures on Faith are his 74 page commentary on the subject.

Rather than look at the whole of what Joseph taught, the question I will examine today, **is the promise of the Second Comforter within the Doctrine of Christ?** In order to do that we will look at how the doctrine of Christ was revealed to the Prophet by the Lord.

The doctrine of Christ is the most fundamental doctrine. In Nephi's words "there is none other way...man can be saved in the Kingdom of God" than the doctrine of Christ. 2 Nephi 31:21 So this topic is of greatest importance to us all, it is about salvation.

Some have argued that it is not necessary to see the Savior in this life. The argument that salvation and a visit with the Savior only comes after death COULD be understood from this verse.

And now, my beloved brethren, I know by this that **unless a man shall endure to the end**, in following the example of the Son of the living God, **he cannot be saved**.

2 Nephi 31:16.

In other words, men can't be saved in mortality. You have to endure to the end of your life. Only then can you be saved.

The problem with this interpretation is that many receive salvation while yet mortal. Alma for example was told, "Blessed art thou Alma. I covenant with thee that thou shalt have eternal life." Mosiah 26:15 & 20. Others have also been promised eternal life while mortal. Isn't the promise of eternal life what it means to be saved?

So perhaps the **end** Nephi refers to here, the end we must endure to is not just the end of our lives,* perhaps "the End" refers to something else as well.

Let's think about that while ask, **what is the Doctrine of Christ?** Do we understand it well enough to say clearly what it is? We sometimes think we understand this by naming it's parts, but the doctrine as a whole, what is it?

- Is it a curriculum for the 7 year-old primary kids and investigators as they prepare for baptism?
- Is it a catechism of our faith?
- Is it a few landmarks along the path to the tree of life?

Just what is it?

Nephi's answer is that **the doctrine of Christ is the path**, the only way to eternal life.

2 Nephi 31:21 And now, behold, my beloved brethren, **this is the way**; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God. And now, behold, **this is the doctrine of Christ**, and the only and true doctrine of the Father..."

In Algebra we learned the transitive law, If $a = b$ and $b = c$, then $a = c$.
He says, "This is the way. This is the doctrine of Christ." Therefore, the way is the doctrine of Christ. In other words the doctrine of Christ is the way or the path.

So the question is "How far does the doctrine of Christ get you? Does it get you onto the path or all the way to the tree of life?"

Virtually every church teacher I have had has summarized the Doctrine of Christ as ..faith, repentance, baptism, the gift of the Holy Ghost and endure to the end.

Seldom mentioned are these elements of the doctrine of Christ

---baptism by fire and of the Holy Ghost

---a remission of sins

---come unto Christ

---the gates of hell not prevailing

---the warnings associated with the doctrine

---and what of the Second Comforter--is it there, imbedded in the doctrine?

If faith, repentance, baptism and the ordinance of laying in of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost done at our confirmation is how you see the Doctrine of Christ then you see it as little more than an initial launch into the world of the gospel and instructions to keep your nose clean after baptism

... This view focus only on what men do

...men exercise faith

...men repent and are baptized

.. Men lay on hands and say, "receive the Holy Ghost"

..this view ignores God's role in the doctrine of Christ

...God must act for a baptism by fire and of the Holy Ghost
...God must act for our sins to be forgiven
...Only He can open the gates of hell-
...God must act for a man to receive a visit from Christ

In Joseph's life every part of the Doctrine of Christ had God revealed.

It was James direction to ask "in faith nothing wavering" that Joseph reflected on again and again. Repentance was on his mind as he saw God in vision. God sent an angel to give priesthood for Joseph's baptism. Joseph and Oliver received the Holy Ghost as they emerged from the Susquehanna. Joseph's view of the doctrine of Christ was shaped by his encounters with the divine.

The doctrine of Christ was revealed to Joseph Smith through revelation in three stages and the way in which it was revealed tells us something very important about how God reveals truth.

In 1828 Joseph first learned of the doctrine of Christ in a revelation that summer.

- ◆ this was very early in the restoration
- ◆ before any portion of the BofM had been translated
- ◆ but after the book of Lehi had been translated
- ◆ before Joseph met Oliver Cowdery
- ◆ before baptism, before Joseph would receive the Holy Ghost

Here's how the doctrine of Christ was explained

Behold, this is my doctrine—whosoever repenteth and cometh unto me, the same is my church. (Not in His church—they are His church)

Whosoever declareth more or less than this, the same is not of me, but is against me; therefore he is not of my church.

D&C 10:67-68

Where is baptism? I don't see it here?

Where is the Holy Ghost? Isn't baptism part of the doctrine of Christ? Yet it's not here! Where is baptism by fire? Where is the remission of sins? Why can't I find them?

They are there, imbedded in the phrase **cometh unto me**. Jesus was giving Joseph the doctrine line upon line in this 1st phase. Baptism would not be taught for nearly a year, so rather than introduce it out of season, it was imbedded in the phrase, **come unto me. So We have learned that the Lord can embed or hide within the words of his revelation important doctrines even doctrines of which are necessary for salvation.**

Is the promise of the Second Comforter also there, We wonder? Is it hidden in the command, "come unto me", as well.

I have learned the formula for a miracle.

1st-a promise from God

2nd-faith in that promise

3rd-an impossible situation

This is why I want to know if the Promise of the Second Comforter is within the Doctrine of Christ. If it is, and we have been commanded to follow the doctrine, then we also have Gods promise of the Second Comforter, no matter how impossible that may seem, because every command from God has a built in promise that "he will prepare a way for them to accomplish" His command.

Continuing with this earliest revelation..

69 And now, behold, whosoever is of my church, and **endureth of my church to the end**, (there's the enduring to the end) him will I establish upon my rock, and the **gates of hell shall not prevail against them**. (we are in hell you see (despite what the Boise Chamber of Commerce would have you believe) and we are not getting out of here until Someone opens the gates)

The translation of the Book of Mormon began slowly, beginning with the sermon of King Benjamin. It really picked up steam in April of 1829 with Oliver Cowdery as scribe. In May the book of 3rd Nephi was translated and baptism was taught in

chapter 11 along with an expanded teaching of the doctrine of Christ. Joseph and Oliver, now ready for baptism and the Holy Ghost were taught the Doctrine of Christ a second time.

32 And this is my doctrine, . . .whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God.

Baptism by fire is taught and the need to become as a little child 35-37
the gates of hell verse 39
Warning in verse 34, 40

And what is at the end of the doctrine of **inheriting the kingdom of God.** " Verse 38

In the earlier revelation being his church was the culmination the doctrine, here it is inheriting the kingdom of God. Are they the same thing? If so his church may be something more than an earthly organization. His church may be within the kingdom of God. Is the promise of the Second Comforter here? Is it imbedded in the words he taught?

The last part of the Book of Mormon translated was the small plates of Nephi and the Words of Mormon. Here Joseph heard the doctrine of Christ a 3rd time in its most expanded discussion. Here, finally we may get the answer to our question.

Nephi's discussion expands on repentance and baptism to include new points: obedience, following Christ's example, a willingness to take upon us the name of Christ is added to what had earlier been taught and a differentiation is made between receiving the Holy Ghost and being baptized by fire and of the Holy Ghost.

Nephi's discussion of the doctrine of Christ is like an exploded schematic of the Doctrine of Christ with all the parts shown including two references to the knowledge that saves.

"Knowing Christ" is discussed by Nephi as part of the doctrine of Christ. The first reference, is in verse 17 where Nephi tells us his revelation is given that we "might

know the gate". 2nd Nephi 31:17. You will recall that Christ called himself "the gate" (see NIV John 10:7). "Knowing the gate", & "knowing Christ" sound like synonyms to me. Others will disagree and Nephi gives a logical way out of that interpretation by identifying repentance and baptism by water, as the gate. Thus far Nephi has given us no "smoking gun" by which we may conclude that the Second Comforter is part of the doctrine of Christ, but we're not finished yet.

The second reference to "knowing Christ" is in the warning, "and after this should you deny me, it would have been better for you that ye had not known me."

The warning is given only to those who know Him. For those who believe knowing Christ is synonymous with having a visit from him, this verse is convincing, the doctrine of Christ as taught by Nephi, does include the Second Comforter as a point of doctrine, but it is not convincing to anyone else.

Enduring to the end is taught by the voice of the Father, "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved" v. 15

Nephi then reiterates the doctrine of Christ using Lehi's vision language. Nephi doesn't leave us on the path but takes us well beyond the beginning of the path, thru repentance and baptism by water; from a remission sins by fire and by the Holy Ghost. Moving further along the path with unshaken faith in Christ, abandoning self reliance, relying wholly on He who is mighty to save. He takes us to the promise of eternal life, "if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.

What is it that immediately follows the Fathers declaration of eternal life. It is Nephi's statement that this is the way. This is the Doctrine of Christ.

Did you just see it. It's like a 3D stereogram one of those images you can't see unless you go cross eyed. You have one in your program. Sometimes the Scriptures are like that for me. One day I see something in the verses of scripture and the next day I go back and it's just not there because it was taught me by the Holy Ghost.

Nephi tells us that this is the only doctrine we are going to get. This is what we are to live by, what we are to teach. We aren't getting other doctrine until "he shall manifest himself unto you in the flesh" That's 2 Ne 32:6. "In the flesh" as in while we are mortal? Is that a reference to a personal visit from Christ?

I wondered what LDS commentators made of this reference. I did a google search and looked up the top six citations. The only one that looked vaguely official was a BYU publication. Three of the top six were from fellow named Snuffer. He didn't look official. The BYU publication said "...it is ambiguous what Nephi means here by Christ manifesting himself "unto you in the flesh,"..." (The Doctrine of Christ in 2 Nephi 31-32 as an Approach to the Vision of the Tree of Life-Jared Parker).

That's odd. It doesn't seem ambiguous to me. It seems clear. Perhaps I'm looking cross-eyed at the scriptures.

In seminary I was taught that this verse referred to Jesus coming to the Nephites and the old Mosaic law being done away and the new covenant given. I believed that then. Then one day in 2000 I went cross eyed and everywhere I looked in scripture I saw the Lords invitation to come to him, it was everywhere, in the Sermon on the Mount, throughout the Book of Mormon, in the story of every prophet and a major theme of Joseph Smiths Lectures on Faith and Nauvoo sermons. Unlike with the stereogram my eyes have never gone back. I can't see these words "until he shall manifest himself unto you in the flesh" & not see the image of the second comforter. For others it is ambiguous.

We don't all see the same thing in the Scriptures. They are a Urim and Thummim and what we see in them largely depends upon us. After receiving the vision, section 76, Joseph said "I could explain a hundred fold more (of) the vision, were I permitted, and were the people prepared to receive them ". We aren't all prepared to see the same things in the scriptures so the Lord imbeds within His words more than the words themselves. We get imbedded meaning layer by layer as we are prepared receive it. An infinite God is surely capable of communicating more than one meaning in a verse.

I see the promise of the Second Comforter embedded in the doctrine of Christ. To me the doctrine of Christ is the way that begins at the gate of baptism and ends at

of the tree of life as we partake of The fruit of the love of God. We may have felt Gods love to a degree but not to the extent you would in His presence. Lehi tells us that to eat of the fruit of the tree of Life is "most sweet, above all" , it is to feel Gods love as a superlative, the full expression.

The Second Comforter is not the end of the journey but is the end of the doctrine of Christ and there will be no more doctrine given until he shall manifest himself onto you in the flesh. But not all see it that way. The visions of those who see are delusions to those who don't see.

Said the Eye one day, "I see beyond these valleys a mountain veiled with blue mist.
Is it not beautiful?"

The Ear listened, and after listening intently awhile, said, "But where is any mountain? I do not hear."

Then the Hand spoke and said, "I am trying in vain to feel it or touch it, and I can find no mountain."

And the Nose said, "There is no mountain, I cannot smell it."

Then the Eye turned the other way, and they all began to talk together about the Eye's strange delusion. And they said, "Something must be the matter with the Eye."

There is talk of false prophets among us. It is difficult to know what another has experienced. But **I can tell when the word taught by a man opens my eyes.** I can tell when I have received the Word of God . Today, I can see further down the path than ever before. I think I have a faint glimpse at the end. Once you see, you can't un-see. I feel like the blind man who was healed by Jesus who was asked by the authorities to explain how an apostate like Jesus could heal him of his blindness.

He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

John 9:25

So how are we to interpret the command to endure to the end if not to endure to the end of our lives?

What other end could be referred to?

In his last chapter Nephi tells us--"

"endure to the end, which is life eternal"

Alma tells us we "must come to judgment, ...which is the end. "Alma 12:27.

Paul told the Romans 10:4 "Christ is the end of the law"

It seems to me that's Christ is at the end of the path. He is eternal life, which is the end. He is judgement, which is the end. Those who abide the law receive a blessing at His hand because of conditions instituted before the foundation of the world. Isn't Christ the end to which we must endure?

"I am Alpha and Omega the beginning and the end", He tells us. "The end" is one of his names. For those who believe the promise of the second comforter is embedded in the doctrine of Christ, **Christ is the end** that we must endure to. In powerful irony his name is endless and his name is the end.

And what would be the purpose of such a visit? Would it be to bring us into his church as in D&C 10? Would it be to bring us into the kingdom of God as in 3rd Nephi chapter 11? Is it to bring comfort by giving a promise of eternal life as in Nephi's version of the doctrine of Christ?

God hides truths like the one I've taught today. He hides them in His mercy, and like with Joseph Smith, reveals them line by line when we are prepared, that he might judge less harshly as we refuse His invitation . However, there is a time and season for all things and the season is soon upon us when "they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, Jeremiah 31:34

The doctrine of Christ has been obscured over the last 3 to 4 generations . Joseph Smith's clearest explanation was decommissioned 95 years ago. Decommissioned but not lost. The Lectures on Faith can help those of us who desire to "obtain faith" and power "to behold (God) face to face." That from the Second Lecture #55.

The knowledge that saves is being taught again. A light has broken forth among us that sat in darkness, and it shall be the fulness of Christs gospel. D&C 45:28

This time, we just cannot be too busy with our farms and our merchandise to reject the invitation of the King to the wedding of his son. You see it didn't work out so good last time that happened.

We have got to calm our fear with an abundance of faith, and rise up, In order to do that we must fall down in Meekness and in prayer. Josephs counsel for those who seek a knowledge of God is

- ◆ incessant prayer and supplication and
- ◆ by devoting themselves to His service

Lectures on Faith-end of 2nd lecture

(A few Ad Lib comments follow)