

Dear Non-member Friend,

I feel that I should share a few of my beliefs with you. I thought about it and decided that I should talk to you about God's plan, about prophets and prophecy, about the time after Christ's death called the Great Apostasy, about the Book of Mormon, and about the principle of faith. In doing so, I will quote from the scriptures and from the words of modern apostles and prophets.

1. God loves us and has prepared a way for each of us to be happy. We lived with God, our Heavenly Father, before we came to earth, and we can live with Him again if we live a good life, according to his plan. Our life on earth is a time when we have a chance to learn and grow, to develop good qualities and to learn how to overcome our trials. Heavenly Father has given us commandments to follow, and living these commandments leads to happiness. Failing to follow the plan and disobeying God's commandments is called sin, and leads to unhappiness. Nobody lives a perfect life; everyone sins. God sent His first-born Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to pay for our sins and help us return to God: that is, Jesus took our sins upon Himself and suffered and died for them. We don't have to suffer if we repent, stop sinning, and ask for forgiveness. Isaiah 1:18 says, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Through Jesus Christ, when we repent it can be as though we had never sinned. Elder Neal A. Maxwell said, "for us mistake-prone mortals, this plan of mercy provides for recognition and redress of error and for the resumption of interrupted individual development."¹

2. Jesus Christ has communicated His gospel to men through prophets since the beginning of man on earth. Adam was the first prophet, and the scriptures tell of many other prophets: Abraham, Israel (Jacob), Moses, etc. Prophets are righteous men who speak with God

and share God's word with the people around them. Because God loves us, he sends prophets to continually remind us to repent and do good things, so that we can come back to Him. Prophets can also warn people of future events that they need to prepare for. Amos 3:7 says, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." Joseph Smith, who organized the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was a prophet. There has been an unbroken chain of prophets presiding over our Church since Joseph Smith organized it under the direction of Jesus Christ. Today the prophet and president of our Church is Thomas S. Monson. Elder Robert D. Hales said, "The desire of the prophets is to assist our Father in Heaven and his Son Jesus Christ in bringing about the great objectives of the plan of salvation."²

3. After Jesus Christ came to earth and taught His gospel, His apostles continued to preach the Gospel. But eventually all of the apostles died or were imprisoned. Men began to corrupt the doctrines of the true Church of Jesus Christ. They taught their own ideas and incorrect principles. Elder Dallin H. Oaks said, "In the process of what we call the Apostasy, the tangible, personal God described in the Old and New Testaments was replaced by the abstract, incomprehensible deity defined by compromise with the speculative principles of Greek philosophy."³ Timothy 4:3-4, anticipating this Great Apostasy, says, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." Eventually much of the truth was lost, and the authority to teach the Gospel, baptize, etc. was taken completely from the earth.

4. In 1820, Joseph Smith, a farm boy from upstate New York, went into a grove of trees to pray. There were many churches near where Joseph lived, all claiming to be correct. But they often disagreed with one another. Joseph was worried about his spiritual welfare; he wanted to

know what church he should join. As he prayed, God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, appeared to Joseph and told him that none of them were true, that they were all corrupt. Joseph Smith was told that he had been called to restore the fullness of the Gospel to the earth. In time, he brought forth new scripture and restored the true and complete Church of Jesus Christ to the earth. All of the power and authority that had been lost during the Apostasy was restored to the earth, along with the true doctrines, principles, and ordinances of the Gospel. God had promised that this restoration of all things would come. Acts 3:19-21 says, "...the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things." President Gordon B. Hinckley said, "This transcendent experience opened the marvelous work of restoration. It lifted the curtain on the long-promised dispensation of the fulness of times."⁴

5. When prophets receive revelation from God, they write what they hear. Scriptures are records of preaching, prophecies, revelations, and the history of God's people. The Old Testament records the history and revelations of the Jews in ancient Israel. The New Testament gives an account of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Through Joseph Smith, God has brought forth additional books of scripture that support the Bible and help increase our understanding of Gospel principles and doctrines. Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon, the record of God's people in ancient America, into English. He also translated the record of the prophet Abraham, and he revised incomplete parts of the Bible. Joseph recorded revelations he received, and many of them were put into the book of Doctrine and Covenants. Scriptures are useful for teaching and learning true principles; 2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." President Gordon B. Hinckley said, "I urge our people everywhere to read the

scriptures more – to study all of them together ... for a harmony of understanding in order to bring their precepts into our lives.”⁵

6. Faith is one of the most important principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as, “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” When we have faith in God and in Jesus Christ, we know that they love us and want us to be happy. Subsequently, people with faith want to obey them and follow their commandments, because they know that obedience will lead to happiness – faith makes it easier to live the Gospel. President James E. Faust said, “Simple faith in God the Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost is like a supercharger operating in our lives.”⁶ Faith grows when we act according to what we believe is correct and true, and it gives us spiritual power. Alma 32:21 says, “faith is not to have a perfect knowledge of things; therefore if ye have faith ye hope for things which are not seen, which are true.”

I believe that these things are true. You can know that they are true, if you sincerely pray to find out for yourself. God will answer our prayers, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Sincerely,

Samuel Bradshaw

Endnotes

- ¹ Neal A. Maxwell, “The Great Plan of the Eternal God,” *Ensign*, May 1984, 21.
- ² Robert D. Hales, “Hear the Prophet’s Voice and Obey,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 15.
- ³ Dallin H. Oaks, “Apostasy and Restoration,” *Ensign*, May 1995, 84.
- ⁴ Gordon B. Hinckley, “Four Cornerstones of Faith,” *Ensign*, February 2004, 5.
- ⁵ Gordon B. Hinckley, “Feasting upon the Scriptures,” *Ensign*, December 1985, 42.
- ⁶ James E. Faust, “The Shield of Faith,” *Ensign*, May 2000, 17.