

How Do the Serpent and the Shewbread Symbolize Christ?

An Old Testament KnoWhy¹ relating to the reading assignment for Gospel Doctrine Lesson 15: “Look to God and Live” (Numbers 11-14; 21:1-9) (JBOTL15A)



Figure 1. *Moses and the Brazen Serpent*, ca. 1866. Photograph by Mike Young²

Question: Though the importance of the need generally for all of us to “look to God and live”³ is easily apparent to modern readers, the specific choice of a brazen serpent on a pole as a symbol of Christ is difficult to understand. How does the brazen serpent symbolize Christ? And, in addition, does the symbolism of the temple shewbread relate in any way to the modern LDS sacrament?

Summary: The serpent raised by Moses is cited more than once in the Book of Mormon as a type of Christ. Moreover, Jesus Christ Himself cites this story to explain His mission, but the imagery would have been much better understood by His disciples than it is to people today. In this article, we will draw out some of the ancient meanings of the serpent that was “lifted up”⁴ as they are found in the New Testament and the Book of Mormon. Less well known than the story of the brazen serpent is the symbol of the temple shewbread. Although reminiscent in some ways of the emblems of the Lord’s death that are administered in our weekly sacrament meetings, this article will explain how the symbolism of the shewbread builds upon and extends the significance of sacrament in ways that were meaningful in the time of Moses and continue to be so in our day.

The Know

Searching the scriptures can require a significant effort at interpretation.⁵ As Richard Palmer observed:⁶ “Ancient texts are, for moderns, doubly alien: they are ancient and they are in *another language*.”

Obviously, the more we can know about the ancient context of scripture for ourselves, the better prepared we are for a “meeting of minds”⁷ with those who produced them. Because it is difficult to translate the subtleties of expressions from foreign languages and times into English, we would do well to “translate” *ourselves*, insofar as possible, into the language and world of scripture writers.

To sound the depths of scripture as the Savior has commanded us,⁸ it is not enough to be able to grasp the basic sense of a passage word-by-word in the original tongue. Each word, each phrase, and each passage is laden with the history, culture, and worldviews of antiquity — subjects that cannot be learned by rote but must be absorbed by frequent immersion in old books.⁹ Once we begin to recognize and master the vocabulary, basic context, and the presence of allusions to previous texts within a given passage, we must then engage with the pervasive symbolism, typologies, and poetic imagery of scripture. These are bolstered in turn by an impressive scaffolding of rhetorical structures and devices at various scales, both large and small, with which we must become acquainted.

In all this, we must never lose sight of the most rigorous requirement of all: namely, that we cannot “receive the word of truth” except “by the Spirit of truth.”¹⁰ Sometimes instead of focusing on the ancient application of a particular passage of scripture, the Spirit may direct us instead to “reinterpret it radically for a new context.”¹¹

In this article, we will look more closely at two prominent symbols in the books of Exodus and Numbers: the serpent and the shewbread.

The Serpent As a Symbol

Below we will discuss three aspects of the serpent symbolism:

1. As a symbol of healing in the ancient Near East;
2. As a symbol of “opposition in all things”¹² on the pathway of exaltation;
3. As a symbol of being “lifted up.”¹³

A symbol of healing in the ancient Near East. The role of serpents in Egyptian magic has already been touched upon in a previous article in this series. Here, we should add that worship practices associated with snakes were already well-established in Canaan in the Bronze Age, long before the Israelites of the Exodus arrived. These earlier practices have been generally, but not exclusively, associated by scholars with fertility cults.¹⁴ With respect to the story of the brazen serpent itself, Maciej Münnich observes¹⁵

Throughout the entire Near East the snake was considered a symbol of health and even immortality. This was usually connected with snakes shedding their skins, which made a semblance of rebirth into eternity; cf. Gilgamesh Epic 11:287-289, where a snake eats the herb of life and immediately rejuvenates, shedding its skin.

Independently of the character of the snake cult, there is no doubt that snakes were venerated by the Hebrews. This is clearly indicated in another place in the Bible that is very interesting for us: “He [King Hezekiah] removed the high places, and broke the pillars, and cut down the Asherah. And he broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had burned incense to it; it was called Nehushtan.”¹⁶



Figures 2a, b, c, d, e. a. Copper snake with gilded head made during later Midianite occupation of the site of the Egyptian Temple of Hathor at Timnah, Israel, 1300-1150 BCE;¹⁷ b. Detail of Canaanite serpent goddess standard from Hazor, Israel, ca. 1300 BCE;¹⁸ c. Bronze serpent from Gezer, Israel, 1100–900 B.C.E;¹⁹ d. Rod of Asclepius, a Greek deity associated with healing and medicine;²⁰ e. Caduceus, a wand associated with mythological Greek heralds such as Hermes (Mercury);²¹ The juxtaposition of these images provides a good illustration of the wide variants of meaning and appearance that sometimes adhere to visually similar images over time and across cultures. The lack of written descriptions and the very nature of these variants make it difficult or impossible to tease out whether a given symbol derives from a common source or has arisen independently. Confusion propagates itself not only in the long, dusty history of ancient symbols but also through lack of consistency in modern usages. For example, “it is relatively common, especially in the United States, to find the caduceus[, a symbol of commerce], with its two snakes and wings, used as a symbol of medicine instead of the Rod of Asclepius, with only a single snake. ... One survey found that 62% of professional healthcare associations used the rod of Asclepius as their symbol. The same survey found that 76% of commercial healthcare organizations used the Caduceus symbol. The author of the study suggests the difference exists because professional associations are more likely to have a real understanding of the two symbols, whereas commercial organizations are more likely to be concerned with the visual impact a symbol will have in selling their products.”²²

Münnich draws attention to the identification of the Phoenician-Punic god Eshmun with the Syro-Canaanite god Horon, whose first documented reference is in texts from Mari in the second millennium BCE.²³ Noting that Horon is sometimes depicted as a hawk with a snake in its claws, Münnich further elaborates:

What is particularly interesting for us is the fact that Horon is also perceived as a healer in incantations against serpents. Two Ugaritic texts, KTU 1.100 and 1.107,⁴⁹ perfectly present this function of Horon. In the first text, the deity proves to be a successful help against venom, though before him eleven other gods or pairs of deities had not been able to cope

with the poison (KTU 1.100:61–69). In the other text, Horon is mentioned in first place together with El, the main god of the Ugaritic pantheon (KTU 1.107:38), preceding such great deities as Baal and Anat. This clearly indicates that Horon was considered to be an effective god against serpent bites. The function of the Lord of Demons, who could cure illnesses caused by evil spirits, was connected in the beliefs of Western Semites with the possibility of a cure after being bitten by poisonous animals. After all, as was shown above, the serpents themselves were associated with demonic beings. In text KTU 1.169, mentioned above, the demon driven away was to run away from the incantation “like a snake” (KBTN , line 3). So it seems that Horon is the ruler of forces that are threatening to human beings: demons and poisonous snakes. ... The supposed identification of Horon with Eshmun—a Sidon deity/healer—seems to confirm the association of Horon with the biblical healing bronze serpents. ...

[However], it has to be admitted that the hypothesis presented above, which associates the cultic Canaanite serpents with Horon (Eshmun?), has its weak point. The problem is a lack of any textual source that would directly connect Horon with the bronze serpents. ... Until such a text is found, the above identification has to be treated as ... hypothetical.



Figure 3. Benjamin West (1738–1820): The Brazen Serpent

A symbol of “opposition in all things”²⁴ on the pathway of exaltation. The theme of opposites is apparent in this painting of the story of those who either looked or refused to look at the brazen serpent and be healed. Moses and the righteous depicted above and to the left in contrast to the suffering Israelites below. Despite “the simpleness of the way, or the easiness of it, there were many who perished.”²⁵

Of greatest significance to this article is the general idea of the serpent as a symbol of Christ.²⁶ In the Garden of Eden, Satan appeared in a form that symbolized the Savior’s life-giving power, yet deceptively brought death. In other Old Testament references, Hugh Nibley has observed that the serpent also had “a strangely ambivalent significance. ... As it was by a serpent that the children of Israel were smitten in the desert, so it was by a serpent that they were healed.²⁷ It is the serpent who defeats the serpent. ... The Caduceus, the sign of the two interlaced serpents [which is often used today as a symbol of the medical profession], was the sign of Aesculapius, who healed the dead, one signifying death, the other life.”²⁸ More generally, the Caduceus signifies “that all things have their opposites.”²⁹



Figure 4. Fu Xi with His Consort Nü Gua, ca. 689 CE

With regard to the theme of opposition on the pathway to exaltation — and though there is no known connection at all to the symbology of the brazen serpent in the ancient Near East — this depiction of Fu Xi and Nü-Gua is of interest. Many images similar to this one have been found in tombs dating back to the second century BCE. Fu Xi and Nü Gua, are shown measuring the “squareness of the earth’ and the ‘roundness of heaven’ with their implements, the square with the plumb bob hanging from it, and the compass.”³⁰

With their human torsos and serpentine lower bodies “rotating around the invisible vertical axis mundi,”³¹ “Fu Xi and Nü Gua are ... hybrids who embody the division of the universe into ... three distinct levels and at the same time demonstrate the links between them. The paired deities move between the three realms, embody two of the three levels of the Han world, and lead upward to the third”³² realm of exaltation. Such figures depict “a final stage in the journey” where, at the destination and “in the company of the hosts of heaven,” the individual sloughs off his or her “mortal coil as easily as a snake sheds the skin that he discards.”³³

This particular figure comes from a banner found by Stein in central Asia and dated to the late seventh century. It was, according to Nibley, “found in position suspended from pegs on a north wall ... near the body of a man dressed in Sassanian style. ‘Near the head lay also the crown-shaped paper hat.’ ... A mixture of cultures is apparent—the Sutras, Sassanian art and Chinese elements (the Chinese having moved in quite recently — 640 CE) and the ritual with which the parties are so much concerned may have been somewhat eclectic, with a foundation of Nestorian Christianity.”

“In the veil in question,” continues Nibley, “what first catches the eye are the signs of the square and the compass, boldly drawn as they are held up in the right and left hands respectively of the lady and her husband.³⁴ To quote the official description: ‘Silk ... perhaps originally white ... The bodies rise from a continuous flounce-like short white skirt’ — an apron, ‘their two inner arms stretched stiffly and horizontally towards each other ... the hand of each appearing under the opposite armpit of the other shows that they are embracing... From below issue two intertwined serpentine bodies which coil around each other’³⁵ — the well-known caduceus of life and death, signifying that all things have their opposites.”³⁶ Their shapes also recall the form of the multiply-entwined tree in the center of the paradisiacal garden of K’un-lun.³⁷

Nibley noted that “the garment draped over the coffin and the veil hung on the wall had the same marks; they were placed on the garment as reminders of personal commitment, while on the veil they represent man’s place in the cosmos.”³⁸ “The whole design is completely surrounded with diagrams of the constellations[—including the Big Dipper³⁹], while above the heads of the two figures ‘is the sun disc, white with red spokes,’ surrounded by twelve smaller circles,⁴⁰ each connected to the next by a straight line to form an unbroken circle except at the very top where it is left open—plainly the circle of the months of the year”⁴¹ — “meaning ... the navel of the universe.”⁴² The moon disk appears beneath the entwined bodies, also surrounded by twelve smaller circles. In the late Babylonian period, intertwining serpents represented the union of the sun and moon.⁴³



Figure 5. Giovanni Fantoni: The “Serpentine Cross” atop Mount Nebo (Khirbet as-Sayagha), Jordan, 1984. The sculpture is distant from the place where the serpent story in Numbers occurred. Instead, it was placed on Mount Nebo where Moses was once granted a view of the Promised Land.⁴⁴ Photograph by Jeffrey M. Bradshaw⁴⁵

As a symbol of being “lifted up.”⁴⁶ As Jesus spoke with Nicodemus in John 3, He illustrated His mission with reference to the story of the brazen serpent. In doing so, He made it clear what it was to be “lifted up” with power to traverse the veil in both directions as the “Son of man.”⁴⁷ As elsewhere in his conversation with Nicodemus, the Lord’s elaboration simultaneously disclosed and obscured⁴⁸ His meaning:⁴⁹

And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,⁴² even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

To comprehend the meaning of “lifted up” (from the Greek verb *hypsōō*) in Jesus’ words, we must first realize that, in the story of Moses,⁵⁰ neither the serpents that bit the Israelites nor the figure on the standard that was “lifted up” by Moses were meant to be seen only as ordinary desert snakes. Rather, they are described in the rich language of Old Testament symbolism with the same Hebrew terms used elsewhere in scripture to refer to the glorious seraphim — divine messengers, proximal attendants of God’s throne,⁵¹ and preeminent members of the divine council. If we fail to connect the “fiery flying serpents”⁵² that were both the plague and the salvation of the children of Israel with the burning, godlike seraphim of the heavenly temple, we will lack the interpretive key for Jesus’ central teaching to Nicodemus.

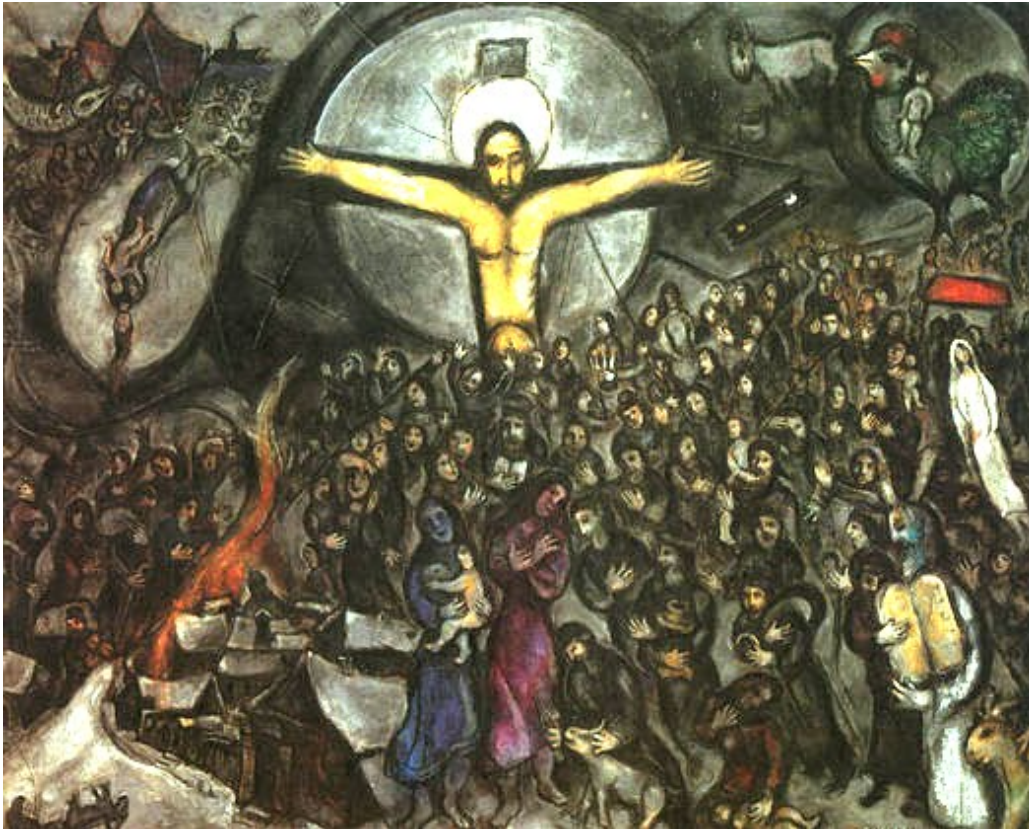


Figure 6. Marc Chagall (1887–1985): *L'Exode*, 1952–1966. “If I Be Lifted Up from the Earth, [I] Will Draw All Men Unto Me” (John 12:32).

Once we realize that, with a double meaning,⁵³ Jesus has not only prophesied His atonement and death but also has compared Himself, as the “Son of Man,”⁵⁴ to the seraphim that surround in intimate proximity the throne of the Father, the meaning of His statement that He was to be “lifted up” becomes apparent. In temple contexts, the essential function of the seraphim was similar to the role of the cherubim at the entrance of the Garden of Eden:⁵⁵ they were to be sentinels or “keep[ers] [of] the way,”⁵⁶ guarding the portals of the heavenly temple against unauthorized entry, governing subsequent access to increasingly secure compartments, and ultimately assisting in the determination of the fitness of worshipers to enter God’s presence.⁵⁷ Thus Jesus, “lifted up” to God’s throne as the better of all the seraphim and the innermost “keeper of the gate,”⁵⁸ could literally and legitimately assert: “no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”⁵⁹



Figure 7. Harry Anderson (1906–1996): *The Ascension of Jesus*

Jesus’ application of the phrase “lifted up” to Himself is appropriate for other reasons. For example, the idea of His being “lifted up” ties back to Isaiah 52:13, a passage from a messianic “servant song”: “Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be *exalted* and extolled, and be *very high*.” Isaiah’s language in this chapter describes both the suffering and the exaltation of Jesus Christ. Significantly, however, in the Book of Mormon the resurrected Jesus Christ Himself applies Isaiah’s description of a “suffering servant” to the Prophet Joseph Smith, and the book of Moses applies similar language to Enoch.⁶⁰ Consequently, it is clear that others in addition to Jesus Christ can be “lifted up” — becoming *sons of Man*⁶¹ and receiving “everlasting life”⁶² — through unwavering faithfulness in “the trial of [their] faith.”⁶³ This is consistent with the explicit teaching in the first chapter of John that “as many as received [Christ], to them gave he power to become the sons of God”⁶⁴ — in other words, to be *born of God* in the ultimate sense.

Note that the Greek phrase for “sons of God” used here, *tekna theou*, as well as its Hebrew equivalent, *bēnê (hā-)’ēlōhîm*, are gender neutral in this and similar contexts. Although it would be possible to substitute the neutral term “children of God” in its place, we prefer to use the term “sons of God” — or exceptionally, when citing the discourse of King Benjamin, “sons ... *and daughters*”⁶⁵ of God. Although the Church teaches that *every* mortal, “in the beginning,”⁶⁶ was a child “of heavenly parents,”⁶⁷ there is a distinction made in the Gospel of John and elsewhere in scripture in which only the most faithful of God’s “offspring” are given “power to *become* the sons of God.”⁶⁸

In short, whereas some readers equate the lifting up of Christ exclusively with His suffering in Gethsemane and His death on the cross, the means by which “whosoever believeth in him”⁶⁹ may be sanctified and receive “everlasting life” through the shedding of His blood, a more careful examination of the passage makes it clear that John is exploiting a double meaning in the term “lifted up.” Should there be any doubt about the presence of subtle literary artistry in

John's account, consider the explicit confirmation of similar, deliberate wordplay in 3 Nephi 27. Within two verses, the resurrected Savior shifts aptly and seemingly effortlessly among multiple senses of "lifted up," including "lifted up upon the cross,"⁷⁰ "lifted up by men"⁷¹ in unrighteous judgment, "lifted up by the Father"⁷² in righteous judgment, and, ultimately, "lifted up at the last day" in exaltation.⁷³

Similarly, in John 3 the "lifting up" of Jesus has as much to do with His heavenly ascent and glorious enthronement as it does with his ignominious death.⁷⁴ Hence, according to Herman Ridderbos, "the crucifixion is not presented [by John] as Jesus' humiliation but as the exaltation of the Son of Man,"⁷⁵ a "birth from above" that He intended to share with His disciples. Thus, those who "look" and "begin to believe in the Son of God"⁷⁶ as He is typologically revealed in the seraphic figure that has been "lifted up" will themselves, if they "endure to the end," receive "eternal life,"⁷⁷ being "lifted up" — in other words, exalted — with their Lord.

The Symbolism of the Shewbread

The sacrament and the temple shewbread. The sacrament, like every ordinance, is retrospective.⁷⁸ It looks back on all the covenants one has already made and, in addition, invites one to remember the unleavened bread of the Passover,⁷⁹ the manna from heaven,⁸⁰ and, most pointedly, the life and atonement of Jesus Christ, the "Lamb of God."⁸¹ He was born at Bethlehem ("the house of bread") and called Himself the "*true* bread from heaven."⁸² Less recognized and discussed than the role of the sacrament as a memorial is the fact that the it is also anticipatory, looking forward to the bounteous table of the heavenly feast that someday will be shared by sanctified souls.⁸³ This feast has been the subject of prophecy from Old Testament times to the present.⁸⁴

The bread and wine that will be shared at this end-of-times event were symbolized in the furniture of Israelite temples. On the table of the shewbread or "bread of the presence [of the Lord],"⁸⁵ twelve loaves of unleavened bread and utensils for libations of wine and offerings of frankincense were continually set out within the Holy Place of the temple. A meal of this sacred bread and wine, anticipating a future feast that will take place in the full glory of the "presence" of God,⁸⁶ was consumed each Sabbath by the temple priests.⁸⁷

In contrast to the bread offered at the altar of sacrifice in the temple courtyard,⁸⁸ which John S. Thompson views as a preparatory, *Aaronic* ordinance,⁸⁹ the offering of shewbread and wine set out in the temple proper, though apparently administered by the Melchizedek priesthood, emulates the *Melchizedek* feast of bread and wine provided by the priest and king of that name when Abraham received the fulness of the high priesthood at his hands.⁹⁰

It is likely that the feast shared by Moses and his companions when he was called to meet Jehovah face to face at the top of Mount Sinai was seen as the literal equivalent of the meal that was later ritually typified at the table in the Holy Place. In Exodus, we read that Moses took with him "Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel," and that together they saw "the God of Israel" and "ate and drank" with Him.⁹¹

According to Brant Pitre, who has ably summarized the current scholarly consensus that the descriptions of Jesus' actions in the Gospels mirror the profile of the long-awaited new "prophet-like-Moses" who was described in Deuteronomy 18:15,⁹² Jesus' blessing of the bread and wine at the Last Supper did not merely follow the pattern of Passover traditions but also paralleled in significant ways the experience of Moses and his fellows in their ascent of Sinai to

feast at the divine table.⁹³ Note that in contemporaneous Jewish writings, Moses was described not only as a prophet, priest, and king, but also (like Jesus) as a god, having been “changed into the divine” through his initiation into the “mysteries.”⁹⁴ Like Jesus, Moses was described as one who leads his disciples through these same mysteries so that they could also see God.⁹⁵



Figure 8. Mount Sinai and the Christianized Tabernacle, ca. 600/96

Sacrament and shewbread among some early Christians. The deliberate identification of the offerings on the temple table of shewbread with the sacrament of the Lord's supper by the early Christian church is depicted in this image. The three registers represent respectively the temple courtyard (bottom), the Holy Place (middle), and the Holy of Holies (top). The ostensible subject of this illustration is Moses (shown as a type of Christ) who, in the top register, “accompanied by Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu [shown as types of Peter, James, and John⁹⁷], approaches the Lord, whose head appears in a cloud at the top of Mount Sinai.”⁹⁸ Within the cave in the middle scene, is a gathering of Christians who, following the pattern of ancient Israel, hear a reading the law and make covenants under the direction of Christ, shown here as the new Moses.⁹⁹ The “items on the altar clearly indicate a Christian Eucharist,” which is here equated to the offerings on the table of shewbread.¹⁰⁰

In the bottom register, a Christianized version of the Tabernacle courtyard is shown.¹⁰¹ Note the prominent *gammadia* (squares) at the corners of the altar cloth, and its central, circular rosette. The same rosette with a border matching the *gammadia* is repeated on the parted veil. The pattern of the cloth strongly resembles depictions of altar cloths in two sixth-century Ravenna mosaics.¹⁰² In Roman Catholic tradition, the cloth used for church altars is said to have been patterned after the burial garment of Christ, and garments with similar motifs have been found in Christian burial grounds in Egypt.¹⁰³ In the scene shown here, the Christian leaders of the new Israel part the outer veil, earnestly inviting all those outside the covenant to enter and begin their ascent.

A possible connection between the shewbread and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper appears earlier in the Gospels as part of a passage where Jesus "speaks explicitly about the bread of the presence with reference to His disciples' act of plucking and eating grain on the Sabbath."¹⁰⁴ According to Pitre, Jesus' words explicitly linked "the priestly identity of Himself and His disciples with the sacrificial bread of the presence,"¹⁰⁵ just as He later equated His body and blood with the bread and wine He blessed in the Upper Room.¹⁰⁶

Sacrament and shewbread among the Latter-day Saints. In light of these considerations, we conclude tentatively that the symbolism of the bread and wine blessed by the Lord at the Last Supper, while not inappropriately taken up in the modern LDS sacrament administered by those holding the Aaronic priesthood, might also be studied in connection with ritual practices at the temple table of shewbread and its symbolic association with the priesthood of Melchizedek.

In the early years of the restored Church, the symbolism of the eschatological heavenly feast typified by the priestly meal of the temple shewbread seems to have been carried forward in priesthood gatherings where the portions of bread used for the sacrament were sometimes large enough to constitute a meal. For example, Zebedee Coltrin stated that at meetings of the School of the Prophets in Kirtland:¹⁰⁷

the sacrament was also administered at times when Joseph appointed, after the ancient order; that is, warm bread to break easy was provided and broken into pieces as large as my fist and each person had a glass of wine and sat and ate the bread and drank the wine; and Joseph said that was the way that Jesus and his disciples partook of the bread and wine. And this was the order of the church anciently and until the church went into darkness.

When the Salt Lake Temple was dedicated in 1893, one witness recorded in his journal that "Each participant was given a large tumbler with the Salt Lake temple etched into it and a napkin. Presiding Bishop Preston blessed the bread and 'Dixie' wine [from southern Utah], and the brethren were invited to eat till they were filled¹⁰⁸ but to use caution and not indulge in wine to excess."¹⁰⁹

There are other reasons, besides the substantial meal of bread and wine that was sometimes consumed for the sacrament on sacred occasions, to believe that Joseph Smith might have viewed the administration of the ordinance of the sacrament in temple contexts under the direction of the presiding high priest of the modern Church as part of what Ugo A. Perego calls a "pre-sanctification experience."¹¹⁰ Such experiences were meant to resemble in additional respects the events of the Last Supper. Elaborating on this point, Perego notes that:¹¹¹

in the Kirtland Temple and in the School of the Prophets, the ordinance of washing of feet was accompanied by the partaking of the sacrament, just like the events that took place in the Upper Room as recorded in the New Testament.¹¹² The partaking of the bread and wine in remembrance of the Savior could not therefore be extrapolated as a stand-alone ritual but as an intrinsic and vital component with all other rites introduced while "feasting" on that last meal.

The Why

For many Jews throughout the centuries, the dual, anticipatory roles of David, the anointed king who had eaten the priestly shewbread and later was made “a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek,”¹¹³ were to be actualized in the coming Messiah. For Christians, this long-awaited Messiah had already appeared in the person of Jesus Christ, the long looked-for “Root of David”¹¹⁴ who was also the “Son of David,”¹¹⁵ the kingly “Lion of the tribe of Judah”¹¹⁶ and the “high priest after the order of Melchisedec,”¹¹⁷ whose body and blood, typified in bread and wine, would sanctify not only His disciples but also the very earth.¹¹⁸

It is this same Jesus Christ who is destined to “come quickly,”¹¹⁹ “in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.”¹²⁰ May we keep every ordinance and covenant we have received, that when that time comes we may be numbered with the sanctified¹²¹ who will “drink of the fruit of the vine,” the emblems of His blood, “with [Him] on the earth.”¹²²

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Further Study

For other scripture resources relating to this lesson, see The Interpreter Foundation Old Testament Gospel Doctrine Index (<http://interpreterfoundation.org/gospel-doctrine-resource-index/ot-gospel-doctrine-resource-index/>) and the Book of Mormon Central Old Testament KnowWhy list (<https://knowwhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/tags/old-testament>).

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Endnotes

1 Used with permission of Book of Mormon Central. See <https://knowhy.bookofmormoncentral.org/reference-knowhy>.

2 Stained glass window at St Mark's Church, Gillingham, England, 2006. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:MosesandSnake.JPG> (accessed April 18, 2018).

3 Alma 37:47.

4 John 3:14.

5 For a description and in-depth example of the difficulties that modern students encounter even in their efforts to understand Joseph Smith, a prophet from relatively recent times, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Now That We Have the Words*.

6 R. E. Palmer, *Liminality*.

7 Hugh Nibley observed that a “translation must ... be not a matching of dictionaries but a meeting of minds” (H. W. Nibley, *Message* (2005), p. 52). Ideally, with respect to scripture, this meeting of minds must include the “mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16).

8 3 Nephi 23:1.

9 As C. S. Lewis advised (H. W. Nibley, *Message* (2005), p. 202):

It is a good rule, after reading a new book, never to allow yourself another new one till you have read an old one in between. If that is too much for you, you should at least read one old one to three new ones.

Every age has its own outlook. It is specially good at seeing certain truths and specially liable to make certain mistakes. We all, therefore, need the books that will correct the characteristic mistakes of our own period. ... None of us can fully escape this blindness, but we shall certainly increase it, and weaken our guard against it, if we read only modern books. Where they are true they will give us truths which we half knew already. Where they are false they will aggravate the error with which we are already dangerously ill. The only palliative is to keep the clean sea breeze of the centuries blowing through our minds, and this can only be done by reading old books. ... Two heads are better than one, not because either is infallible, but because they are unlikely to go wrong in the same direction.

Elsewhere, Lewis elaborated (C. S. Lewis, *Learning*, pp. 58–59):

Most of all, perhaps we need intimate knowledge of the past. Not that the past has any magic about it, but because we cannot study the future, and yet need something to set against the present, to remind us that periods and that much which seems certain to the uneducated is merely temporary fashion.

A man who has lived in many places is not likely to be deceived by the local errors of his native village: the scholar has lived in many times and is therefore in some degree immune from the great cataract of nonsense that pours from the press and the microphone of his own age.

10 D&C 50:19. “To put it bluntly,” writes Nibley, “short of revelation, no real translation of [scripture — or, for that matter, any inspired interpretation or teaching —] is possible” (H. W. Nibley, *Message* (2005), p. 55). The Prophet taught: “Could we read and comprehend all that has been written from the days of Adam, on the relation of man to God and angels in a future state, we should know very little about it. ... Could you gaze into heaven five minutes, you would know than you would by reading all that ever was written on the subject” (J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 9 October 1843, p. 324. Cf. Moroni 7:31–32 and Elder Willard Richards’ original notes of the sermon published in J. Smith, Jr. *et al.*, *Journals*, 1843–1844, p. 109.]

11 B. L. McGuire, 15 August 2017.

12 2 Nephi 2:11.

13 John 3:14.

14 M. Münnich, *Cult of Bronze Serpents*, pp. 42-43.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

16 2 Kings 18:4. Münnich speculates that this worship might have been associated with the Jebusites rather than the Israelites, but little evidence can be brought to bear on this possibility.

17 Radovan/www.BibleLandPictures.com, published in J. H. Walton, *Genesis*, 1:375. See M. Münnich, *Cult of Bronze Serpents*, p. 41.

18 Radovan/www.BibleLandPictures.com, published in J. H. Walton, *Genesis*, 1:375. See M. Münnich, *Cult of Bronze Serpents*, p. 40.

19 M. Münnich, *Cult of Bronze Serpents*, Figure 7. See also p. 41.

20 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Rod_of_Asclepius2.svg (accessed April 18, 2018).

21 <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/57/Caduceus.svg/860px-Caduceus.svg.png> (accessed April 18, 2018).

22 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caduceus> (accessed April 18, 2018).

23 M. Münnich, *Cult of Bronze Serpents*, pp. 46-49.

24 2 Nephi 2:11.

25 1 Nephi 17:41.

26 Numbers 21:8-9; John 3:14-15; 2 Nephi 25:20; Alma 33:19; Helaman 8:14-15.

27 Numbers 21:4-9; cf. Exodus 7:8-12; John 3:14-15. See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, Endnote 4-75, p. 319. For a comprehensive study of the ambivalent symbolism of the serpent, see J. H. Charlesworth, *Serpent*.

28 H. W. Nibley, *Message* (2005), p. 314. See also A. C. Skinner, *Serpent*.

29 H. W. Nibley, *Prayer Circle*, p. 74.

The serpent is not only a symbol of life, but also of revealed wisdom. Jesus instructed his disciples to be “wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (Matthew 10:16. See also Alma 18:22, D&C 111:11, J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 29 January 1843, p. 276) and there is archaeological evidence from iron age temples that these two motifs had been associated for centuries (Skinner, 2000 #783}, pp. 381-382). Biblical or mythological trees of immortality (see, e.g., D. E. Wirth, *Guide*, pp. 80-83) are not infrequently depicted with a serpent or dragon at the bottom and one or two birds at the top. Sometimes the bird is a dove (see J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, Figure 3-8, p. 145 and Figure 6-14, p. 473.), but often it is a hawk, falcon, or eagle — occasionally described as the serpent’s adversary (see, e.g., P. Alexander, 3 Enoch, 2:1, p. 257; E. R. Goodenough, *Dura Symbolism*, 9:91-92; E. Isaac, 1 Enoch, 96:2, p. 76; G. R. S. Mead, *Mandaean John-Book*, 35, pp. 65-67; J. Priest, *Moses*, 10:8-10, p. 932; M. D. Rhodes, *Hor*, p. 20; E. A. Speiser, *Etana*; F. Wisse, *Apocryphon of John*, 20:26-35, p. 118; book of Abraham Facsimile 2, figure 7; Deuteronomy 32:11; Isaiah 40:31; Revelation 4:7, 8:13, 12:14).

Ephrem the Syrian portrays Eve in the Garden of Eden as a dove that is deceived by Satan’s appearance as a dove (Ephrem the Syrian, *Fall*, 4, p. 101). In the Gnostic *Apocryphon of John*, Christ- Sophia, “the other side of the serpent, personified in an eagle,” is made to say: “I appeared in the form of an eagle on the Tree of Knowledge ... that I might teach them and awaken them out of the depth of sleep” (F. Wisse, *Apocryphon of John*, 23:26-31, p. 118. See G. Lettieri, *Ambiguity*, p. 47). In connection with a portrait of an eagle — the symbol of Zeus — positioned behind a head of Orpheus in the Jewish synagogue at Dura Europos, Goodenough gives the bird the same meaning “that it frequently had in the east, when it symbolized divine inspiration, just as it continues to do in Christianity when connected with John the Evangelist,

and when used on the lectern for the Bible in Christian Churches” (E. R. Goodenough, *Dura Symbolism*, 9:92).

In Joseph Smith-Matthew 1:27 the gathered elect are likened to eagles, and in the parable of the mustard seed, birds are portrayed as lodging in the branches of the full grown tree of the kingdom of God (Matthew 13:32; Mark 4:32; Luke 13:19; H. Koester *et al.*, *Thomas*, 20, p. 128). Significantly, Daniel 4:20-22 makes it clear that such a tree can represent, not only the kingdom of God, but also an individual who has grown to full perfection (Cf. G. R. S. Mead, *Mandaean John-Book*, 35, pp. 65-67; *Commentary* 3:9-g, p. 163). The birds, representing “powers, gifts and angels” (J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, December 1835, p. 98), mediate access to divine knowledge and healing power by such a person, either bringing it down from heaven or carrying the visionary upward on their wings (Cf. J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, *Commentary* 1:1-b, p. 42; *Figure* 3-8, p. 145; *Figure* 6-14, p. 473; *Figure* E53-13, p. 684; M. E. Lewis, *Early*, pp. 191-192; G. R. S. Mead, *Mandaean John-Book*, 35, pp. 65-67. See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, *Endnote* E-204, p. 754). Just as Noah was informed by the dove who brought an olive branch from “beyond the gates of the Garden of Eden” to the ark (J. Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah* 1, 33:6, p. 351, *Genesis* 8:11), so the Prophet Joseph Smith compared one of his revelations to an “olive leaf... plucked from the Tree of Paradise” (J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 14 January 1833, p. 18; cf. J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, *Commentary* 3:9-g, p. 165).

30 G. d. Santillana *et al.*, *Hamlet's Mill*, 20, p. 272; cf. E. S. Bradshaw, , August 9, 1985; J. S. Major, *Heaven*, p. 27; H. W. Nibley, *Prayer Circle*, pp. 74-75. See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, *Figure* 4-2, p. 217, *Excursus* 18: Kolob, p. 565, and *Excursus* 20: The Circle and the Square, p. 571.

31 H. W. Nibley, *Vestments*, p. 115. See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, *Endnote* E-196, p. 755.

32 M. E. Lewis, *Early*, p. 128. Cf. M. E. Lewis, *Construction*, p. 126.

33 M. Loewe, *Ways*, p. 59.

34 See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, *Endnote* E-202, p. 756.

35 S. M. A. Stein, *Innermost Asia*, 2:665-667. For an illustration of the burial room layout, see H. W. Nibley, *Sacred*, p. 575 *Figure* 47. See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, *Endnote* E-203, p. 756.

36 H. W. Nibley, *Prayer Circle*, pp. 73-74. See, e.g., *John* 3:14.

37 A. Birrell, *Mythology*, p. 233. See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, *Excursus* 25: The Tree of Life as the Hidden Throne of God, p. 591.

38 H. W. Nibley, *Vestments*, p. 112.

39 *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112; J. E. Talmage, *House of the Lord*, pp. 83, 108.

40 See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, *Endnote* E-204, p. 757.

41 H. W. Nibley, *Prayer Circle*, pp. 73-74; cf. R. Whitfield, *Textiles*, *Description of Plate* 86.

42 H. W. Nibley, *Vestments*, p. 111.

43 J. E. Seach, *Ancient Texts* 1995, p. 997.

44 *Deuteronomy* 34:1-3.

45 DSC01677, 14 May 2014.

46 *John* 3:14.

47 *John* 3:14. There is a distinction that might be made between being “born of water and the spirit” —the essential steps of justification and sanctification that bring the disciple to the threshold of exaltation — and being “born of God,” wherein one may become His son or daughter. (By way of contrast, 1 *John* 3:9 and 5:1 seem to use the term “born of God” in a more general fashion.)

In describing what it meant to be “born of God” in the specific sense of the term, Jesus showed not only what had been required of Himself as the Only Begotten, but also of every child of God who would later “come unto Christ, and be perfected in him” (Moroni 10:32) as He Himself became “perfect” in likeness of the Father (Matthew 5:48; 3 Nephi 12:48).

More particularly, in John 3:13 Jesus linked His identity as the “Son of man” to His having descended from and ascended to heaven. The author of Hebrews describes “Jesus the Son of God” as “a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens” (Hebrews 4:14). Specifically, Jesus, “an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” “entereth ... within the veil” of the heavenly temple as a “forerunner” for all disciples (see Hebrews 6:11–20. Cf., e.g., Psalm 2:7; 110:4; Matthew 25:21, 23; Revelation 4:1; 11:12; 2 Nephi 31:20; D&C 84:40. See J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 60–62).

48 For an excellent discussion of the topic of simultaneous revelation and concealment generally as it relates to the Gospel of John, see S. Hamid-Khani, *Revelation*.

49 John 3:13–15. Samuel Zinner points out the linkage of “new spirit birth with the ascent of the Son of man to heaven” is also found in “John 6:62, immediately before verse 63’s teaching on the flesh and spirit, which as we have seen is related to Thomas logion 53 as well” (S. Zinner, *Gospel of Thomas*). He further observes:

The joining of the two tropes of new birth and the ascent of the Son of man is intriguing. The implication in John 3:12–13 seems to be that the Son of man’s ascent would cause a greater wonder or marvel than the new spirit birth. Similarly John 6:62–63 seems to imply that the Son of man’s ascent is a greater wonder or marvel than the bread of life discourse. And since verses 62 and 63 seem to constitute a unitive block, the verses naturally suggest that the ascent of the Son of man and the teaching on the flesh that profits nothing and the spirit which is life (which alludes to the same teaching on new spirit birth as we find in John 3) represent equivalent entities.

50 See Numbers 21:4–9.

51 See Isaiah 6. The Hebrew verb *saraph* means “burn.” Most commentators on Numbers 21 associate this description with the serpent’s deadly poison, but in context it seems more fitting to apply the term to describe their fiery *appearance* (i.e., they are “burning” with celestial glory), as references to the seraphim that guard the Divine Throne make clear (J. H. Charlesworth, *Serpent*, pp. 444–445). See pp. 30, 87, 220, 258, 332, 426 and, especially, K. R. Joines, *Winged Serpents*, cited in J. H. Charlesworth, *Serpent*, p. 444.

Ezekiel 1 and Revelation 4:6–9 describe beings with a similar function. Charlesworth comments: “The seraphim have wings, faces, feet, and human features; these characteristics have confused some scholars who assume they thus cannot be serpents. Near Eastern iconography ... is replete with images of serpents with faces, feet, wings, and human features” (*ibid.*, p. 444).

The only explicit references in the Bible to seraphim in the Holy of Holies are in Isaiah 6:2, 6. However, Nickelsburg suggests, based on a midrash on Genesis 3:24 that cites Psalm 104:4 (H. Freedman *et al.*, *Midrash*, 1:178) that the “flaming sword” of Genesis 3:24 (Moses 4:31) might be associated more correctly with seraphim rather than cherubim (G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, p. 296 n. 7). He also sees the “those who were there ... like a flaming fire” in 1 Enoch 17:1 and the “serpents” of 1 Enoch 20:7 as good candidates for the appellation of seraphim (*ibid.*, 17:1 p. 276; 20:7, p. 294).

Of course, the serpent is an ambivalent symbol, as James H. Charlesworth captured in the title of his book *The Good and Evil Serpent*. Not only does the serpent sometimes represent evil, it also impersonates the good, as it apparently did in the Garden of Eden.

52 1 Nephi 17:41. Cf. Numbers 21:6. See also Isaiah 14:29; 30:6; 2 Nephi 24:29.

53 In the Bible, the term is used in two different ways, one stressing the humanity of the referent as a “son of man,” i.e., an ordinary human being (e.g., Numbers 23:19; Job 25:6; 35:8; Psalm 8:4; 146:3; Isaiah 51:12 (cf. 2 Nephi 8:12); 56:2; Jeremiah 49:18; Ezekiel 2:3; Daniel 8:17), and the other clearly signifying the divinity of the Son of the “Man of Holiness” (Moses 6:57) or the Son of God (John 3:13; see the following endnote. See also, e.g., Matthew 25:31–46; Mark 14:61).

In the Doctrine and Covenants, the term “Son of Man” is consistently used, with only one exception (D&C 122:8), in passages referring to the coming of Jesus Christ in His glory (D&C 49:22; 58:65; 61:38; 63:53; 64:23; 65:5; 68:11; 109:5; 130:12, 14, 15, 17).

In the book of Moses, the term “son of man” is used in its first sense by Satan to refer to the mortal weakness of Moses (Moses 1:12) and elsewhere to refer to Jesus Christ, who descended below all things (D&C 122:8) and is made glorious in heaven (Moses 7:24) and at His coming (Moses 7:24, 47, 54, 56, 59, 65; cf. JS–Matthew 1:26, 36, 37, 41, 43, 48). This recalls the prominent use of the title “the Son of Man” in the Book of Parables within 1 Enoch (G. W. E. Nickelsburg *et al.*, 1 Enoch 2, 46:2–4, p. 153; 48:2, p. 166; 60:10, p. 233; 62:5, 7, 9, 14, p. 254; 63:11, p. 255; 69:26–27, 29, p. 311; 70:1, p. 315; 71:14, 17, p. 320), consistent with the density of its appearances in the vision of Enoch in the book of Moses. The related titles of “Chosen One” (Moses 7:39. Cf. Moses 4:2. See *ibid.*, 39:6, p. 111; 40:5, p. 130; 45:3–4, p. 148; 49:2, 4, p. 166; 51:5a, 3, p. 180; 52:6, 9, p. 187; 53:6, p. 194; 55:4, p. 198; 61:5, 8, 10, pp. 243, 247; 62:1, p. 254. See Isaiah 42:1, Luke 9:35 (best manuscripts have “chosen” rather than “beloved”), 23:35), “Anointed One” (i.e., Messiah. See Moses 7:53. See *ibid.*, 48:10, p. 166; 52:4, p. 187. Cf. Luke 23:35: “the Christ [Messiah], the chosen of God”), and “Righteous One” (Moses 6:57; 7:45, 47, 67. See *ibid.*, 38:2, p. 95; 53:6, p. 194. The term also appears by implication in 39:6, p. 111; 46:3, p. 153; 49:2, p. 166; 62:2–3, p. 254) each appears prominently in both the 1 Enoch Book of Parables and the LDS Enoch story.

In Abraham 1:27 we read: “And the Lord said: Whom shall I send? And one answered like unto the Son of Man: Here am I, send me.” Arguably, the referent could be either the premortal Jesus Christ or the premortal Adam (see J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1, Excursus 23: The Roles of Christ, Adam, and Michael*, pp. 582–584), a reading that has a precedent in the story of Enoch’s exaltation to become a “son of Man” (G. W. E. Nickelsburg *et al.*, 1 Enoch 2, 71:14, p. 321).

54 John 3:13. We capitalize “Man” to be consistent with Moses 6:57.

A disputed phrase in John 3:13 (“which is in heaven”), generally accepted as a late gloss, becomes more intelligible in context if we conjecture the possibility that an editor may have intended its referent to be “Man” rather than “Son of Man.” Note that the referent appears with two definite articles (*ho huios tou anthrōpou*), i.e., “the Son of the Man” (English capitalization added), giving the reading “the Son of the Man which is in heaven,” which can be taken as meaning that “the Man,” rather than “the Son” is the one who is currently “in heaven.” Other scholars who accept the phrase “which is in heaven” (e.g., R. L. Overstreet, *John 3:13, John 3:13*) have interpreted it differently as a witness to the omnipresence of Jesus, i.e., that He is simultaneously on earth and in heaven.

For more on the “Son of Man” in this verse, see M. Barker, *King of the Jews*, Kindle Edition: 4618 of 15473.

55 See Genesis 3:24 and G. W. E. Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1, p. 296 n. 7. The sword mentioned in scripture is described by Sarna as a “separate, protective instrument, not said to be in the hands of the cherubim” (N. M. Sarna, *Genesis*, p. 30). While the function of the cherubim is to selectively admit those authorized to enter, Nibley argues that the fire and steel combined in the sword are specifically meant to repulse the serpent, forever preventing its return to the Garden (H. W. Nibley, *Message* (2005), pp. 319–320). For additional discussion of the sword of the cherubim, see J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1, Commentary Moses 4:31-d*, pp. 280–281. For

related discussion of similar symbolism in the sickle of the laborer (D&C 4:4), the sword of the Spirit (Hebrews 4:12–13. Cf. D&C 6:2; 11:2; 12:2; 14:2; 33:1–2), and the veil of the temple (cf. J. M. Bradshaw, J. M. Bradshaw, *Tree of Knowledge*), see J. M. Bradshaw, *He That Thrusteth in His Sickle*, pp. 174–176. All these symbols share a common feature: they divide the righteous from the unrighteous — saving the former and condemning the latter.

56 Genesis 3:24; Moses 4:31. See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1, Commentary Moses 4:31-e*, p. 282.

57 D&C 132:19; D. W. Parry, *Garden*, p. 139; B. Young, 6 April 1853 - B, p. 31. See also J. Gee, *Keeper*.

58 2 Nephi 9:41. Regarding the significance of the location that is “innermost” to the throne of God and the general symbolism of the sacred center, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Tree of Knowledge*, pp. 50–52. For more on Jesus Christ as the “keeper of the gate” in this sense and Satan’s deception in presenting himself as a glorious serpent (i.e., as Jesus Christ, the most glorious of the seraphim), see *ibid.*, pp. 54–56.

On Jesus as the “better of all the seraphim,” see Hebrews 1:3–8, where He is described as the greatest of the divine attendants of the Father — specifically as the “brightness of [God’s] glory, and the express image of his person,” sitting nearer to the throne than any of the seraphim, i.e., “on the right hand of the Majesty on high,” and, in explicit terms, as having been “made so much better than the angels” (see vv. 3–4).

In LDS theology and scripture, angels are not typically understood as beings of a different race than man. Although “Latter-day revelation has not identified or clarified the nature of seraphim or cherubim mentioned in the Bible” (J. E. Jensen, *Spirit*), the argument of Hebrews 1 is that although the angels spoken of resemble in their various honors God’s preeminent Son, He, through the accomplishment of His unique mission as Savior and Redeemer, has “by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they” (Hebrews 1:4).

59 John 14:6. Margaret Barker sees the Book of Revelation as “a record of [Jesus’] heavenly visions and their interpretations” (see, e.g., M. Barker, *King of the Jews*, Kindle Edition: 4619 of 15473). It must be said that Jesus had not only *seen* the members of the heavenly council, but, of course, was Himself preeminent among them.

60 Regarding the application of this prophecy to Joseph Smith, see 3 Nephi 20:43. Cf. 3 Nephi 21:10. Like Alma, one of the “hidden seed” of the Lord prophesied by Isaiah (see Isaiah 53:8, 10; 54:17), who was the sole individual among Noah’s priests to whom “to whom” or “upon whom” (*al-mî*) the Lord was “reveal[ing]” his arm as Abinadi’s prophetic successor (Mosiah 17:2 and Mosiah 14:1, quoting Isaiah 53:1. See M. L. Bowen, *Alma*; A. P. Schade *et al.*, *To Whom*), Joseph, son of Jacob, (like Jesus Christ Himself) was not known among his brethren for a time, but eventually revealed himself to them as the one that God had sent away in order to assure their (temporal) salvation (Genesis 45:5).

There also seems to be a textual affinity between Isaiah’s prophecy and the story of Enoch in the book of Moses and in the pseudepigraphal book of 1 Enoch. Because of Enoch’s continued “faith” (Moses 7:13) and “righteousness” (Moses 7:19), he was “high and lifted up ... in the bosom of the Father and of the Son of Man” (Moses 7:24). The parallel between Enoch being lifted up in this verse and the Son of Man being “lifted up on the cross, after the manner of men” in Moses 7:55 (cf. Isaiah 52:13; John 3:14; 8:28) is noteworthy. In addition, as we have argued earlier in this article, there may be some connection between the idea of being “lifted up” and initiation into the heavenly mysteries like Enoch (Moses 7:59). In the *Book of Parables* 71:3 Enoch recounts: “And the angel Michael, one of the archangels, took me by my right hand, and raised me up, and brought me out to all the secrets; and he showed me all the secrets of mercy” (G. W. E. Nickelsburg *et al.*, 1 Enoch 2, 71:3, p. 320). Later in the account, Enoch was proclaimed as the

“Son of Man” (ibid., 71:14, p. 321), a concept that may be disconcerting for some readers but which poses no problem for LDS theology (see J. M. Bradshaw *et al.*, *God's Image 2*, Overview Moses 7, p. 117).

Unlike priesthood ordinations performed by men, the ordinance by which one becomes a “son of God” (= son of Man) is administered directly by God Himself (See J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 59–65), just as this status was conferred upon Enoch as part of his heavenly ascent: “And [the high priesthood after the order of the covenant which God made with Enoch] was delivered unto men by the calling of [God’s] own voice” (JST Genesis 14:29).

61 See also Samuel Zinner’s extensive discussion of the plurality of “sons of man” in the mystical sense of the term in *Gospel of Thomas Logion 106* (S. Zinner, *Gospel of Thomas*).

62 John 3:16.

63 Ether 12:6. Cf. 1 Peter 1:7. Here, Moroni is speaking specifically of the sure witness that came when Christ personally “showed himself unto our fathers” (Ether 12:7).

64 John 1:12.

65 Mosiah 5:7, emphasis added.

66 D&C 93:23, 38.

67 G. B. Hinckley *et al.*, *The family: A proclamation to the world*. Proclamation of the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve presented at the General Relief Society Meeting, September 23, 1995, paragraph 2.

68 John 1:12. Cf. Psalm 2:7; 110:4; John 1:12–13; Romans 8:19; Ephesians 4:13; Hebrews 7:3; 1 John 3:1–3; Mosiah 5:7; 3 Nephi 9:17; Moroni 7:48; D&C 128:23; Moses 6:22, 68; 7:1; 8:13. See also Joseph Smith’s description of the “sons of God who exalt[ed] themselves to be gods even from bef[ore] the foundat[ion] of the world” (J. Smith, Jr., *Words*, Thomas Bullock Report, 16 June 1844, p. 381; cf. J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 16 June 1844, p. 375). For additional scriptural references that speak only of *the* Son of God (singular), see Daniel 3:25; Matthew 4:3, 6; 8:29; 14:33; 26:63; 27:54; Mark 1:1; 3:11; 15:39; Luke 4:3, 9, 41; 8:28; 22:70; John 1:34; 5:25; 9:35; 11:4; 20:31; Acts 8:37; 9:20; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 4:13; Hebrews 4:14; 6:6; 7:3; 10:29; 1 John 3:8; 4:15; 5:5, 10–13; 20; Revelation 2:18.

69 John 3:16.

70 3 Nephi 27:14. Cf. 1 Nephi 11:33; 19:10; Moses 7:24, 47, 55; 3 Nephi 27:14–15; 28:6; Ether 4:1.

71 3 Nephi 27:14.

72 3 Nephi 27:14.

73 3 Nephi 27:22.

74 Compare Isaiah 6:1; John 8:28; 1 Nephi 13:30, 37; 16:2; Alma 13:29; 36:3; 37:37; 38:5; Helaman 8:14–15; 3 Nephi 27:14–15, 22; Mormon 2:19; Ether 4:19; Moses 7:24, 47, 55, 59. It should be noted that the basic Aramaic/Syriac verb meaning “to crucify,”* *zqp*, literally means to “raise,” “lift up,” “elevate.”

75 H. N. Ridderbos, *John*, *John*, p. 137. For more on the double meaning of “lifted up,” see M. Barker, *King of the Jews*, Kindle Edition: 4618 of 15473. Barker also observes (ibid., 4650 of 15473):

The three themes of this chapter — heavenly birth, lifting up, and a snake bite — are all found in Revelation 12:13–17: the Woman in heaven gave birth to her son, the ancient serpent was ready to bite him, about to “devour” him (Revelation 12:4), and the child escaped by being lifted up to the throne of God. The serpent went on to attack the Woman’s other children, those who were keeping the commandments and bearing witness [of] Jesus, and presumably

these were the snake bites that were an ever-present danger to Jesus' followers. Looking to the exalted Jesus would protect them. The mark of the ancient serpent was worn on the right hand and the forehead of his followers (Revelation 13:16), exactly where the observant pro-Moses group wore their phylacteries (Deuteronomy 6:8).

76 Alma 33:19, 22. B. A. Gardner, *Second Witness*, 4:472–473 notes that, by way of contrast to John, Alma 33:19–22 “emphasizes the healing that resulted from looking upon the symbol. He does not emphasize the ‘raising up.’ While the Nephite prophets had [received divine foreknowledge] of the Savior’s crucifixion (1 Nephi 19:13; 2 Nephi 6:9; 10:3; 25:13; Mosiah 3:9), they did not have direct experience with crucifixion or its social implications, unlike John. Alma’s listeners, with their reliance on the brass plates, did not have the Nephite prophets’ understanding of ‘raising up.’ Thus, the symbolic association so important to John is entirely missing in Alma’s analysis.”

77 John 3:15. Cf. John 3:16: “everlasting life.” Nephi clarifies that to receive “eternal life” one must “endure to the end” (i.e., the veil that conceals both the earthly and heavenly Holy of Holies. Cf. 2 Nephi 31:20).

78 Cf. Matthew 20:22–23; Mark 10:38–39. Exodus 12:8, 15, 17, 18, 20, 39.

79 With respect to the drinking of wine at Passover, B. Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, p. 385 notes that the book of Jubilees, “written centuries before Jesus’ day,” claimed “that at the very first Passover in Egypt the Israelites ‘remained eating the flesh of the Passover and drinking wine’ (Jubilees 49:6).” By the time of Jesus, Philo of Alexandria “explicitly states that the Passover sacrifice would be accompanied by the drinking of ‘wine’ and the singing of ‘songs of praise’ to God (Philo, *Special Laws*, 2:146–148).”

80 Exodus 16:14–15. See also John 6:31 where the manna is described as “bread from heaven.”

81 E.g., John 1:29, 36.

82 John 6:32.

83 President John Taylor stated: “In the sacrament we shadow forth the time when He will come again and when we shall meet and eat bread with Him in the kingdom of God” (J. Taylor, 20 March 1870, cited in U. A. Perego, *Changing Forms*, p. 4).

84 The foundational Old Testament reference for this event is Isaiah 25:6–9, which forms a part of longer descriptions of the coming day of the Lord (Isaiah 24–27):

6 ¶ And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.

7 And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations.

8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it.

9 ¶ And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

B. B. Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, p. 449 highlights several aspects of Isaiah’s description:

First, the coming feast is no ordinary banquet; it is an eschatological event. This eschatological dimension is evident from the fact that the banquet culminates in the overthrow of suffering and death: God will “swallow up death for ever” and wipe away “tears” from “all faces.” Indeed, just a few verses after describing the banquet, Isaiah goes on to speak about the resurrection of the “bodies” of the “dead” (Isaiah 26:19). As Joseph Klausner suggests, the overall context of the banquet is Isaiah’s vision of “the cessation of death and the resurrection of the dead in the Age to Come.” Second, the banquet is a feast of

redemption; it will be tied to the forgiveness of sins. At the time of the banquet, God will take away “the reproach of his people” and give them salvation (Isaiah 25:8–9). Third, the coming feast will be a cultic or sacrificial banquet. This is the meaning of the strange imagery of “fat things” and “wine on the lees.” This is technical terminology for sacrificial offerings of the Temple cult, as when Deuteronomy speaks of “the fat of their sacrifices” and “the wine of their drink offering” (Deuteronomy 32:37–38; cf. Leviticus 3:3; 4:8–9). This cultic dimension is important to stress, since Isaiah explicitly states that the banquet will take place on “the mountain of the Lord,” which in context refers to “Mount Zion ... in Jerusalem” (Isaiah 24:23). Fourth, in Isaiah, the eschatological banquet will be an international banquet, which will include both the restored tribes of Israel and the Gentile nations. The feast will be “for all peoples” and will result in the “veil” that is cast over all the “nations” or “Gentiles” (*goyim*) being lifted. This is a startlingly universal vision of salvation, nestled right in the heart of one of the most widely read prophets of the Old Testament.

Fifth and finally, ... it is significant that several scholars have suggested that the banquet in Isaiah 25 alludes to and is modeled on the heavenly banquet of Moses and the elders atop Mount Sinai (cf. Isaiah 24:23). In his commentary on Isaiah, Otto Kaiser writes:

Just as Yahweh once revealed himself on Sinai before the elders of his people in the whole fullness of his light when the covenant was made (cf. Exodus 24:3ff., 9f.), he will once again show himself to the elders of Israel in order ... to ratify the covenant for all time.

Ibid., pp. 448–511 provides an extensive overview of the messianic banquet in early Judaism, in early Christianity, and in the teachings of Jesus. The most extensive description of this divine, sacramental feast in modern scripture is given in D&C 27:5–15.

85 Exodus 25:30. Hebrew *lechem ha-panim*, literally “bread of the faces.” Although the traditional understanding of this general term is that the shewbread “functions as a visible sign of the invisible heavenly ‘face’ (*panim*) of God” (*ibid.*, p. 125. See also p. 124, where it is noted that “in the ancient world, cakes of bread that were offered in temples (and later, in churches), were often stamped with some symbol of the deity (cf. Jeremiah 7:18; 44:19).”), more study of the subject is needed. Elsewhere, I have discussed how temple prayer seems to have been understood by Paul as not only a preparation for beholding the face of God, in likeness of Moses (Exodus 33:11; D&C 84:19–24), but also to enable participants to acquire the glorious likeness of God in their own faces. See J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, Appendix 5: Paul on Women’s Veiling of the Face in Prayer, pp. 111–116.

Stressing the importance of this ordinance, *ibid.*, pp. 128, 132, 133 notes that:

the bread of the presence is not depicted as just any kind of sacrifice, but as the premier sacrifice of the Sabbath. Indeed Leviticus is quite clear that the bread of the presence is to be offered “every Sabbath day” by Aaron the high priest and his descendants (Leviticus 24:8). This link is important to stress, because it reveals an often-overlooked cultic activity that characterizes the biblical Sabbath. Not only is the Sabbath a day of rest, it is distinctively characterized by the weekly offering of the unbloody sacrifice of the bread and wine of the presence, as a “remembrance” of the “everlasting covenant” between God and the twelve tribes of Israel [cf. D&C 59:12]. ...

[T]he bread of the presence was the most holy of all sacrifices, with the possible exception of the Day of Atonement. ...

[Texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls suggest], as Matthew Black has argued, ... that “the sacred meal of bread and/or wine of the Qumran priestly sect was not only an anticipation of the messianic banquet, but also a foretaste of the full Temple rite when that had been fully restored in the New Jerusalem” — a rite that was not just the sacrificial consumption of just any food, but specifically of the bread (and wine) of the presence.

86 The symbolism of the actualization of the eschatological feast (rather than merely the prefiguration in the showbread eaten in the Holy Place) may be represented in the golden pot of manna said to have been kept in the Holy of Holies (Exodus 16:33–34; Hebrews 9:4).

87 Although some scholars argue that the libations were meant merely to be poured out by the priests, B. Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, p. 123 cites “the position of Menahem Haran, who makes a strong case that [Exodus 25:23–30] envisages the wine being drunk by the priests, just as the bread is eaten by the priests, in a sacred banquet of bread and wine (cf. Leviticus 24:5–8).”

B. Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, pp. 133–134 also cites Philo’s account of the Therapeutae, a first-century Jewish sect, “who celebrated a sacred meal of bread and wine directly modeled on the bread of the presence of the Tabernacle of Moses” (Philo, *Contemplative Life*, 81–83, 85–88). Notably, both men and women participated in the feast, with the “male and female leaders of the banquet ... deliberately modeling their actions on Moses and Miriam.”

88 Leviticus 2:1.

89 J. S. Thompson, *How John’s Gospel*, p. 313. In this study, which compares the structure of the Gospel of John to Israelite temples, Thompson sees Jesus’ sermon on the bread of life (John 6:35, 53–56) as corresponding to this first, preparatory offering and thus also to the modern ordinance that is administered by the Aaronic priesthood each Sunday during LDS sacrament meetings.

90 Genesis 14:18; JST Genesis 14:25–40. See J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 53–58. Genesis Rabbah interprets Melchizedek’s giving of bread and wine to Abraham as follows: “He handed over to him the laws governing priesthood” and “The bread stands for the show-bread, and the wine stands for the offerings” (J. Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah* 2, 43:6, pp. 119–120).

J. S. Thompson, *How John’s Gospel*, p. 314 observes:

The Passover is a small simple meal in the spring at the beginning of the harvest when the first-fruits of barley are also brought to the temple. Starting in chapter 7, John specifically links the next series of events in Jesus’ life to the autumnal festivals, particularly the Feast of Ingathering or Tabernacles, which is a larger more elaborate meal at the end of the harvest. This feast is typically associated with the ascension and coronation of kings, the reestablishment of law, and the dedication of temples (1 Kings 8:2, 63; Ezra 3:1–4; 2 Maccabees 1:9; 2:9–12; G. Yee, *Jewish Feasts and the Gospel of John*, p. 87; M. L. Coloe, *God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 148–149). Similarly, the temple program appears to reflect two meals: small preparatory meals associated with the sacrificial altar in the courtyard and a grander meal represented by the table of shewbread inside the holy place of the temple. [A similar pattern of an initial small meal in connection with being clothed in simple linen followed by a large meal in connection with being clothed in more kingly regalia appears in the earliest rituals of the ancient Egyptians. See J. S. Thompson, *Context*, pp. 176–177.] Whereas the events of Jesus’ life during the Passover in the early chapters of John appear to reflect temple courtyard concepts, John’s record of the events in Jesus’ life during the Feast of Tabernacles and its closely associated Feast of Dedication have greater connection to the symbolism found in the Holy Place of the temple.

91 Exodus 24:1–11.

92 See B. Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, pp. 53–147.

93 *Ibid.*, pp. 122–145. Additional echoes of Moses’ ascent of Sinai can be seen in the experience of Jesus, Peter, James, and John at the Mount of Transfiguration (see *ibid.*).

94 Philo, *Exodus*, p. 70. For more on the specifics of how this description of the deification of Moses might be understood, see J. M. Bradshaw, *Ezekiel Mural*, pp. 41–42, Endnote 68. See also

ibid., pp. 19–21. For an excellent, though now somewhat dated, general overview, see, e.g., W. A. Meeks, *Moses*.

95 Observes C. T. R. Hayward: “Philo saw nothing improper ... in describing Moses as a hierophant: like the holder of that office in the mystery cults of Philo’s day, Moses was responsible for inducting initiates into the mysteries, leading them from darkness to light, to a point where *they are enabled to see* [God]” (C. T. R. Hayward, *Israel*, p. 192, emphasis in original). Hayward’s view is consistent with D&C 84:21–23:

21 And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh;

22 For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.

23 Now this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God.

96 Tours Pentateuch, ca. 600. Public domain,

<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/32/AshburnPenatuchtFolio076rMosesReceivingLaw.jpg>. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, nouv. acq. lat., no. 2334, folio 76 recto.

97 See C. T. R. Hayward, *Israel*, pp. 138–141.

98 D. H. Verkerk, *Pentateuch*, p. 90. See Exodus 24:9–18.

99 Ibid., p. 90. See Exodus 24:4–8. This eucharistic scene takes place in the presence of presbyters [elders], deacons, “the canonical widows, and subdeacons and deaconesses and readers [and] those who have gifts” (J. Cooper *et al.*, *Testament*, 1:23, p. 70; cf. D. H. Verkerk, *Pentateuch*, pp. 90–97.)

100 D. H. Verkerk, *Pentateuch*, p. 90. Note also the square opening for the Christian reliquary beneath the altar table.

101 Ibid., p. 98.

102 For reproductions and descriptions of these two Ravenna mosaics, which depict Abel, Melchizedek, and Abraham simultaneously offering sacrifice at a similar altar, see J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1, Excursus 20: The Circle and the Square*, p. 573.

103 In Roman Catholic tradition, the linen altar cloth, called the corporal (Latin *corpus* = body), is said to be modeled after the burial garment of Christ. Thus, both literally at the Redeemer’s death and figuratively in the sacrament of the Lord’s supper, the cloth was meant “to cover and enfold the Body and Blood of Christ” (H. Thurston, *Corporal*, p. 387).

104 Ibid., p. 141. See Matthew 12:1–8; Mark 2:23–27; Luke 6:1–5.

105 B. Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, p. 142.

106 See Matthew 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:19–20. Note also that, immediately after speaking of the new covenant represented by His blood, Jesus alluded to the wine of the divine feast, saying that He would “drink it new with [His disciples] in [His] Father’s kingdom” (Matthew 26:29. Cf. Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18).

Paraphrasing W. W. Wiersbe, *Bible Exposition*, 1:43, it is of interest that in His response to the Pharisees, Jesus appealed — as a Prophet, Priest, and King Himself — to the actions of a king (Matthew 12:3–4), to the practice of priests (Matthew 12:5–6), and to the words of a prophet (Matthew 12:7). Note, too, Wiersbe’s observations regarding the three “greater than” statements that Jesus made in the same chapter: with respect to the priests, He is “greater than the temple” (Matthew 12:6); with respect to the prophets, He is “greater than Jonah” (Matthew 12:41); and with respect to the kings, He is “greater than Solomon” (Matthew 12:42.) In direct affirmation of these “greater than” statements, Jesus declared Himself “Lord of even of the Sabbath day” (Matthew 12:8), thus unequivocally averring His equality with God.

107 Z. Coltrin, Remarks of Zebedee Coltrin, 3 October 1883.

108 Cf. 3 Nephi 18:4, 5, 9; 19:13, 24; 20:8–9, where the connotation of “filled” might be taken as including both physical and spiritual aspects.

109 John Franklin Tolton, diary, 20 April 1893, as cited in U. A. Perego, *Changing Forms*, pp. 7–8.

110 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

111 *Ibid.*, p. 8. The sacrament that Jesus blessed at the Last Supper (which was prefigured in part by both the Passover and the priestly feast of shewbread) is also given regularly today under the direction of the presiding high priest of the Church. Assuming that the ordinance of the sacrament is still sometimes administered in the temple in the context of additional ordinances, e.g., the washing of the feet (cf. John 13:1–17) and formal, sacred prayer (cf. John 17), enriches its meaning and confirms Perego’s conclusion that the sacrament is not simply a “stand-alone ritual but [is also] an intrinsic and vital component with all other rites [Jesus] introduced while ‘feasting’ on that last meal.”

For a firsthand account describing the purpose of early washings in Kirtland, instituted before the more complete version of the temple ordinances were given to the Saints in Nauvoo, see O. Pratt, 20 May 1877, p. 16. For additional background on the revelation of temple ordinances in Kirtland, see J. M. Bradshaw *et al.*, *How Thankful*.

In 1979, President N. Eldon Tanner of the First Presidency described the continuing place of the sacrament as part of regular temple meetings in his day that included instruction and sacred, formal prayer (N. E. Tanner, *Administration*).

112 K. W. Perkins, *Kirtland Temple*.

113 Psalm 110:4.

114 Revelation 5:5. Cf. Isaiah 11:1–5.

115 Matthew 9:27; 15:22; 20:30; 21:9, 15; Mark 10:47–48; 12:35–37; Luke 18:38–39.

116 Revelation 5:5.

117 Hebrews 5:10; 6:20; 7:11, 21.

118 See Genesis 2:3; D&C 77:1, 12; 130:9; Moses 3:3; 7:45–69; Abraham 5:3; Articles of Faith 1:10.

119 Revelation 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20; D&C 39:24; 41:4; 54:10; 88:26.

120 JS–Matthew 1:36. Cf. Matthew 24:30; Mark 13:26; D&C 45:16, 44.

121 U. A. Perego, *Changing Forms*, p. 15 cites Truman G. Madsen as follows (T. G. Madsen, *Savior, Sacrament, Self-Worth*):

the fullest flow of the Spirit of God comes to us through His appointed channels or ordinances. The sacrament is the central and oft-repeated ordinance that transmits that power to us. Indeed, it is the ordinance that gives focus to all other ordinances. ... Eventually, through a lifetime, His spirit can sanctify the very elements of our bodies until we become capable of celestial resurrection. In baptism we are born once — born of the water and of the spirit. In the sacrament, we are reborn, over and over, of the bread and of the wine or water and we are truly what we eat.

122 D&C 27:5.