Introduction

Let’s recall the Joseph Smith addition to Luke 3, and the purpose of Jesus Christ’s earthly mission—that is, fulfilled in His mortal life and during the Millennium. The bullets in red are those aspects of His mortal mission related to the Gospel being taken to the Gentiles, which is the beginning of the fulfillment of the promises made to Enoch and Abraham that all the posterity of Noah would be taught the Gospel.

Look through what the Savior’s mission was regarding that—

The Savior’s Mortal Mission

- to take away the sins of the world, (vs 5)
- and to bring salvation unto the heathen [or Gentile] nations, (vs 5)
- to gather together those who are lost, who are of the sheepfold of Israel; yea, even the dispersed and afflicted; (vss 5-6)
- and also to prepare the way, and make possible the preaching of the gospel unto the Gentiles; (vs 6)
- and to be a light unto all who sit in darkness, unto the uttermost parts of the earth; (vs 7)
- to pass the resurrection from the dead, (vs 7)
- and to ascend up on high, (vs 7)
- to dwell on the right hand of the Father, until the fullness of time, and the law and the testimony shall be sealed, and the keys of the kingdom shall be delivered up again unto the Father: (vss 7-8)

The Savior’s Millennial Mission

- to administer justice unto all; (vs 9)
- to come down in judgment upon all, (vs 9)
- and to convince all the ungodly of their ungodly deeds, which they have committed; and all this in the day that he shall come; (vs 9)

The focus of this reading assignment concern the blessings of the Gospel being extended to the Gentiles and the apostasy from the original Church of Jesus Christ.

Gospel Extended to Gentiles

1. Gospel Must First Be Extended to the House of Israel

It is the goal of Heavenly Father that He restores the whole of His family—both Israel and Gentile—back to His presence as the Royal Family ready to acquire full equality with Him (see D&C 76:95; 88:107). Though all the roles fulfilled by Jesus Christ are to that end, yet the role of Christ as the Good Shepherd explicitly states this:

Read Ezekiel 34:23-24
Read 1 Nephi 22:25

We must keep in mind the promises made to the fathers when dealing with the Gospel being extended to the Gentiles.

Remember—

To Enoch—God promised to Enoch by covenant that the posterity of Noah would be taught the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Moses 7:51).

To Abraham—The promises made to Abraham all focused on the fulfillment of God’s promise to that all of Noah’s posterity would be taught the Gospel. Recall, (1) God promised that Abraham’s posterity would become a great (large) nation (Abr. 2:6, 9); (2) they would receive the Gospel (Abr. 2:9) and (3) the land of Canaan (Abr. 2:6; Gen. 12:6-7; 13:14-16; 15:7-17) where they would be free to live the Gospel. (4) Through obedience to the covenant (the ten commandments with the statutes and judgements relative to those commandments) the kingdom of Israel would become a righteous people and become “a light to the Gentiles [nations of the earth other than Israel], that [Israel] mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth” ( Isa. 49:6; Deut. 4: 5-8; 28:1, 9-10). Through the house of Israel, the Gentiles [all other people of the world] would be blessed, with “the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal” (Abr. 2:11).

Summation: Abraham’s posterity, the house of Israel, will be a means of blessings the Gentiles—those who are not of the house of Israel. For Israel to accomplish this, they must first receive and live the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The intent was, that by living the Gospel and receiving both temporal and spiritual blessings, they would become a light to the Gentiles in hopes that they would become interested in their belief in Jehovah.

This is a very important point that must be understood in the fulfillment of the promises made to the fathers!

The goal of God’s work is to restore his whole family back to his presence as a royal family. This is the particular role that Jesus Christ
2. Gospel Extended to the Jews in Judaea at the Time of Christ

Context: The house of Israel became God’s nation on earth in the days of Moses and Joshua. The house of Israel struggled through the next several hundred years to keep the commandments of the covenant, and God mercifully work with them. But it was to no avail.

The ultimate curse of the broken covenant was finally levied. The ten tribes that formed the northern kingdom of Israel began to scatter Israel among surrounding ations of the earth beginning about 740. By 720 B.C. Israel was destroyed and the survivors were scattered as well. They have continued to scatter through the normal process of migrations throughout all the nations of the world. Of course, they lost their identities and have mixed with Gentiles living in Gentile nations.

The Jews, those of the kingdom Judah, were taken to Babylon in 587 B.C. About 70 years later, Babylon was conquered by Persia and the Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem where they rebuilt Jerusalem and the Temple. The Persians were conquered by the Greeks, who were eventually conquered by the Romans. It was in the days when Rome ruled the Mediterranean World that Jesus Christ was born.

Christ began to teach the Jews in Judea and Galilee the Gospel. He called Twelve Apostles to help Him. In training them, He gave them this directive:

Read Matthew 10:5-7. What was the directive?

Teaching the Gospel to the Jews continued through the rest of the Savior’s life. But a major change was about to happen!

3. Gospel Taken to the Gentiles—“Day of the Gentiles” Begins

After the resurrection of Jesus Christ and before He ascended to heaven, the Savior ministered unto the twelve and other members of the Church for “forty days . . . speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.” This forty day ministry took place for the most part in Galilee, some of which was held on a mountain. While there, the Savior gave the Twelve Apostles this commission, which continues to this day:

Read Matthew 28:16-20. What was the commission?

At the conclusion of the 40 day ministry, the Savior met with the twelve on the Mt. of Olives, just east of the Temple in Jerusalem. He was about to ascend to heaven. But before He ascended, He told the Twelve the following:

Read Acts 1:7-8. What were the Twelve told they were to do?

Did you notice the places and the order of the place they were to take the Gospel to? (Sometimes is easier to end a sentence with a preposition! Sorry all you English majors.) First, to Jerusalem, which is the capital of Judea. Then in the regions of Judea and Samaria. After teaching the Gospel in those regions which were mainly Jewish, then the were to take the Gospel to the Gentiles, “unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

But this would take a special revelation to initiate. This is recorded in Acts 10. Read through the following:

Read Acts 10:1-8. Cornelius is a Roman soldier, a centurion, in charge of the garrison of the city called Caesarea on the coastline of Judea.

Read Acts 10:9-18. Peter is the chief Apostle and head of the Church. He is staying with a member of the Church in the coastal city of Joppa, about 30 miles south of Caesarea. In the vision given Peter, the sheet represents the earth and the unclean animals represents the Gentiles. In the law of Moses, unclean animals were forbidden to be eaten as they symbolized things that made one spiritually unclean or sinful.

Read Acts 10:19-48. Peter goes to Caesarea where he teaches and baptizes the first Gentile. The promise to Enoch and Abraham now begins to be fulfilled.

The rest of the Book of Acts is our only record of the Apostles taking the Gospel to the Gentiles. The process was, in every place they went, if their was a Jewish synagogue, they would first preach to them the Gospel. Afterwards they would take it to all the rest in the city.

The Apostasy

The Apostasy

The New Testament tells us little about the various missionary labors of the twelve apostles as they began taking the Gospel to all the world. They lived out the rest of their lives spreading the Gospel. By 70 A.D., all but the Apostle John had died, mainly, if not all, through martyrdom.

Sometime by the end of the first century, or the first half of the second century, the Apostasy took place.

What is the Apostasy? We are going to look at three teachings regarding the apostasy.

[1] From True to the Faith: A Gospel Reference, produced by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (2004), the following is said regarding the apostasy:

After the deaths of the Savior and His Apostles, men corrupted the principles of the gospel and made unauthorized changes in Church organization and priesthood ordinances. Because of this widespread wickedness, the Lord withdrew the authority of the priesthood from the earth. (“Apostasy,” p. 13).

[2] Parable of the Wheat and the Tares

The Savior taught about the apostasy in an important parable known as the Wheat and the Tares. This is important to LDS as it has direct relevance to the promises made to the fathers.

In Matthew 13, a sermon given by the Savior is recorded, that consists of seven parables. The focus of the sermon that was given by the Savior was how were people reacting to the new kingdom that Christ was preaching?

The first parable given by the Savior was the parable of the sower. It revealed that there were four main responses
to the new kingdom presented by Jesus Christ (Matt. 13:1-9).

The second parable, the parable of the wheat and the tares, had as its central concern the apostasy and post-apostasy Christianity to the last days.

**Read Matthew 13:24-30 (Note JST change found in footnote 30b)**

When Joseph Smith came to this chapter while producing the Joseph Smith Translation (JST), he asked the Lord for help in understanding this parable.

**Read D&C 86.**

[3] **The Woman and the Dragon**—To understand the meaning of “wilderness” at the end of 86:3, we must read what John said in Revelation 12.

The JST makes a significant reordering of the verses to Revelation 12. The first seven verses of JST Rev. 12 are important in understanding D&C 86:1-3.

**Read JST Revelation 12:1-7.**

Consider the following in understanding these verses:

- **The woman**—Vs. 7 states that the woman represents “the church of God”—The Church of Jesus Christ—with the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles directing it during the first century A. D. But the church established by Christ was not a political organization: when Pilate asked Jesus if He was “the King of the Jews?” the Savior responded, “My kingdom is not of this world” (see John 18:33-37).

- **The child**—Vs. 7 states that the child born to the woman is “the kingdom of our God”—that is, the full implementation of the kingdom, including a political side, as it was in the days of David and Solomon. This will ultimately be fulfilled upon the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The full implementation of the Kingdom of God on earth by Jesus Christ spells an end to Satan’s as “prince” or “god of this world” (John 14:30 and 2 Cor. 4:4), for he and his followers will be bound for a thousand years, and then after a “little season” will be expelled from this world, as we shall see in the last reading assignment.

- **The wilderness**—the church is driven into the wilderness for “a thousand two hundred and threescore years”—note the JST changes “days” to “years”; meaning, a long time. Wilderness represents a place of safety when threatened with danger (see 1 Kgs. 17:2-3; 19:3-4; Isa. 40:3; Jer. 31:22; Ps. 33:7-8; Matt. 24:15-18); similar to what the latter-day church did when leaving United States and going to the wilderness in the west to find safety in the mountains of Utah. The priesthood authority and keys were preserved by God to be given to the latter-day church.

**Read D&C 109:72-73; 1:30; 5:14.**

The final two reading assignments will discuss the church coming “forth out of the wilderness” to eventually “fill the whole earth”—in the dispensation of the fulness of times.

To finish this brief discussion on the apostasy.

Recalling the parable of the wheat and the tares, we are living in the day when the “wheat is being gathered” before the tares are burned.

**Read D&C 101:66.**

Now please note the following statement in D&C 86–

**Read D&C 86:8-10.**

This obviously has reference to the promise in the Abrahamic Covenant that the “right” of priesthood would continue in Abraham’s posterity (Abr. 9, 11). In this month’s Ensign, President Russell M. Nelson cited this verse when saying to us:

> The Lord has reminded you, your children, and your grandchildren that you are lawful heirs, that you have been reserved in heaven for your specific time and place to be born, to grow and become His standard bearers and covenant people. As you walk in the Lord’s path of righteousness, you will be blessed to continue in His goodness and be a light and a savior unto His people (see Doctrine and Covenants 86:8–11). (“The Future of the Church: Preparing the World for the Savior’s Second Coming,” Ensign, Apr. 2020, 17).

**Ancient View of the Apostasy**—The following is a quotation found in the earliest Christian history that has survived to our day. It comes from Hegissipus (c. 110-180 A. D.) who wrote a history of Christianity in the second d Century:

In addition to these things [Hegissipus states], while recounting the events of that period, records that the Church up to that time had remained a pure and uncorrupted virgin, since, if there were any that attempted to corrupt the sound norm of the preaching of salvation, they lay until then concealed in obscure darkness.

But when the sacred college of apostles had suffered death in various forms, and the generation of those that had been deemed worthy to hear the inspired wisdom with their own ears had passed away, then the league of godless error took its rise as a result of the folly of heretical teachers, who, because none of the apostles was still living, attempted henceforth, with a bold face, to proclaim, in opposition to the preaching of the truth, the “knowledge which is falsely so-called.” (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapter 32)