

## THE TREE OF LIFE, LeGrand Baker

There is significant scriptural evidence that the kings not only presided at, and had free access to the Temple, but they also wore the temple clothing. For example, Saul apparently had the Urim and Thummim. Since they were kept in the breastplate, it is reasonable to assume that he wore that then. (1 Samuel 28:6)

When David brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, he led the procession, dressed in the ephod and apparently the temple robes also.

And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen. . . David also had upon him an ephod of linen.(1 Chronicles 15:27)

The ephod was an important part of the temple clothing. It looked like an apron worn backwards, and served as a kind of harness that held the breastplate in place. Its straps that went from back to front, over the shoulders. The breastplate was fastened at the top to the straps of the ephod, and at the bottom to its belt that was tied in front. The breastplate folded to make a pocket that held the Urim and Thummim. If David wore the ephod, it is likely he wore the breastplate, and had the Urim and Thummim also.<sup>1</sup> Paul describes it as part of the “whole armor of God.”

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness. (Ephesians 6:14)

Other evidences that David held the priesthood are that he built altars and offered sacrifices.(1 Chronicles 21:26; 2 Samuel 24:25). With the prophet Samuel, King David ordained priests to their responsibilities. (1 Chronicles 9:22)

There can be little question but that Solomon, David’s son and successor, held the priesthood. Early on in his reign, Solomon offered sacrifices to the Lord, then the Lord appeared to him.

4 And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place: a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar.

5 In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. (1 Kings 3:4-5)

Only one who has the Melchizedek Priesthood can see God.<sup>2</sup> When the Temple was dedicated, Solomon officiated in performing the offerings and sacrifices.

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1 See Exodus 28.

219 And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holds the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God.

20 Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.

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. (D&C 84:19-22)

63 And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered unto the Lord, two and twenty thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the Lord.

64 The same day did the king hallow the middle of the court that was before the house of the Lord: for there he offered burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings: because the brasen altar that was before the Lord was too little to receive the burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings. (1 Kings 8:63-64)

The king also officiated at the Temple dedication. In every way he acted with priesthood authority as the nation's chief high priest. He raised his hands toward heaven and offered the dedicatory prayer, then he blessed his people. The following day, he offered sacrifices and presided at the great feast on the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

22 And Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven:

23 And he said, Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart. . . .

54 And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the Lord, he arose from before the altar of the Lord, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven.

55 And he stood, and blessed all the congregation of Israel with a loud voice, saying, . . . .

62 And the king, and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before the Lord.

63 And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered unto the Lord, two and twenty thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the Lord.

64 The same day did the king hallow the middle of the court that was before the house of the Lord: for there he offered burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings: because the brasen altar that was before the Lord was too little to receive the burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings.

65 And at that time Solomon held a feast, and all Israel with him, a great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt, before the Lord our God, seven days and seven days, even fourteen days.

66 On the eighth day he sent the people away: and they blessed the king, and went unto their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the Lord had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people. (1 Kings 8:22-66)

Widengren calls attention to additional evidence that Solomon was high priest of the Temple.

Solomon at the dedication feast of the newly built Temple celebrated this festival at New Year; he was the possessor of the tablets of the law, which were brought at his orders into the Temple; he recited to his people a prayer in which exhortations to the people to keep the commandments of the law of Yahweh were found.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Geo Widengren, "King and Covenant" (*Journal of Semitic Studies*, vol 2, no. 1, Jan. 1957, 1-32), 9.

Hezekiah, who was one of Judah's greatest kings and a personal friend of the prophet Isaiah, became ill. That story along with Hezekiah's own testimony are found in the book of Isaiah.<sup>4</sup>

1 In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.

2 Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD,  
3 And said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.

4 Then came the word of the LORD to Isaiah, saying,

5 Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years.

6 And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city.

King Hezekiah's own account of what happened is then inserted into the chapter:

9 The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness:

10 I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years.

11 I said, I shall not see the LORD, even the LORD, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world.

The thing that most upset the king was that he has not yet seen the Saviour: "I shall not see the LORD, even the LORD, in the land of the living." Then part of his account is skipped (either he skipped over it himself, or an editor took it out). When it resumes again, Hezekiah is in awe. Implicitly, his prayer had been answered and he had not heard the voice of the Lord, but he had seen that it was he who spoke.

15 What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done. (Isaiah 38:1-15)

In his priesthood capacity, Hezekiah had full access to the Holy of Holies in the Temple. The Lord had promised that he would save Jerusalem from the Assyrians, so when Hezekiah received a threatening letter from the king of Assyria, he apparently took it into the temple, into the Holy of Holies, laid it before the Lord, and essentially said, "Here, read this and tell me what I should do about it."

14 And Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up into the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD. ["Before the Lord" means either in front of, or on, the Lord's throne in the Holy of Holies.]

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<sup>4</sup>The story, without Hezekiah's diary entry, is told in greater detail in 2 Kings 20.

15 And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said, O LORD God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth.

16 LORD, bow down thine ear, and hear: open, LORD, thine eyes, and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God.

17 Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands,

18 And have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them.

19 Now therefore, O LORD our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD God, even thou only.

20 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, That which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard. (2 Kings 19:14-20)

The Lord kept his promise. A plague wiped out the Assyrian army as it was encamped around Jerusalem. Sennacherib did not pursue the invasion further, but returned to Nineveh where he was murdered in his own temple by two of his sons.

After Hezekiah died, he was followed by his son Manasseh, who murdered Isaiah and was probably the worst king in the history of Judah. The Temple fell into disrepair until Josiah became king. He set workmen to repairing the temple; in process, they discovered a scroll that was taken to the king. This is what happened next.

1 And the king sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem.  
2 And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the LORD.

3 And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all *their* heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant. (2 Kings 23:1-3)

Widengren cites the story, and observes,

We should note in this description, first of all, the fact that it is the king who plays the central role in this act of covenant making. Not only is it he who convokes the assembly, but it is he also who reads out to it the words of the book of the law which is the basis of the covenant. Further it is expressly stated that it was Josiah who made the covenant before Yahweh. Thus the king appears before us here fully exercising his duties as the real High Priest. . . .

In a footnote Widengren quotes North: "It is almost certain that the title 'High Priest' is not original in any text relating to the time of the monarchy," To that, Widengren adds, "Actually there was no real High Priest before the time of the exile." Then he cites several references to

prove his point.<sup>5</sup>

In the Book of Mormon, Lehi and Nephi clearly had the Melchizedek Priesthood, as did Nephi's successor kings. While the Book of Mormon does not actually say that the Nephite kings held the Melchizedek Priesthood, Mosiah I, Benjamin, and Mosiah II obviously did. That is apparent from their actions and from the fact that they received revelations from the Lord. It was Mosiah II who gave Alma the sacred regalia and authorized the prophet to be president of the Church. (Mosiah 28:20)

Significance of anointing with the oil of the tree of life.

A symbol of the waters of life is actually one of the Saviour's names. "Messiah" means the one who is anointed, and may refer to Christ, or to either a king or a priest. The word "Christ" has the same meaning in Greek as "Messiah" does in Hebrew.<sup>6</sup>

The word *messiah* is the Anglicized form of the Hebrew word for "anointed one" and forms the equivalent of the Greek *Christos*, from which we derive the title Christ. In the Old Testament, this term was used for kings when they were anointed with oil. (See Judg. 9:8; 1 Sam. 16:3, 12-13; 1 Kings 1:39; Ps. 89:20; Jac. 1:9; and Eth. 6:22, 27.) The future Messiah or anointed one, then, was described as a king who would rule over the house of Israel and all nations. (See Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-5,10; Hag. 2:22-23; and Zech.9:9.) The same term is also applied to the high priest and other priesthood officials who were anointed in association with their priesthood offices. (See Exod. 28:41, 29:7; Lev. 7:35-36; and Num. 35:25.)<sup>7</sup>

The Saviour's earthly name was Jesus, which is Joshua in Hebrew. Joshua means "Jehovah saves" or "Saviour." So when the angel said to Mary that she should "call his name Jesus," (Luke 1:31) the angel was telling her his name would be "Saviour" or "Jehovah saves."

After the Saviour died, Peter and John exercised their priesthood to heal a man. They were arrested, interrogated by the high priest and his associates, then released. They joined their friends and, in unison, offered a prayer to God. In their prayer, they recited part of the coronation hymn that is Psalm 2. Speaking of the Saviour, they said, About whom, "by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ." (Psalm 2 reads, "against his anointed.") Then they added, "For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed...." (Acts 4:25-27) This assertion that Heavenly Father had anointed the Saviour is not unique to the apostles. Several other scriptures teach the same thing.

The 45<sup>th</sup> Psalm is a scene from the drama of the New Year's festival. It that takes place at the

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<sup>5</sup>Geo Widengren, "King and Covenant" (*Journal of Semitic Studies*, vol 2, no. 1, Jan. 1957, 1-32), p 3. The North citation is: North, Z., *A. W. L* (1932), 21.

<sup>6</sup>See John 1:41, 4:25-26.

<sup>7</sup>S. Kent Brown & C. Wilfred Griggs, "The Messiah and the Manuscripts," *Ensign*, Sept 1974, 69

temple on Kolob (We can know that from the reference to God's throne in verse 6.) Heavenly Father has just given a wonderful blessing to the man who is to preside as a king in Israel. To Jehovah, the king says,

7 Thou [Jehovah] lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, [the God of Jehovah is his Father, Elohim] hath anointed thee [Jehovah] with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

8 All thy [Jehovah's] garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad. (Psalm 45:7-8)

From the context, it is apparent that Jehovah had just been anointed to be the eternal King of Israel. Jehovah's garments still smell of the fragrant perfumes of the anointing oil. We are even given the formula by which that sacred oil was perfumed: "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia." This is a very meaningful formula. The oil is, of course, olive oil, the product of the fruit of the olive tree, which in Israel represented the Tree of Life. Myrrh is a perfume made from the sap of a small tree. Aloes is a perfume made from the heartwood of another tree, and cassia is a perfume made from the bark of still a different tree. So Jehovah had been anointed with a sacred oil that represented all the parts of a tree—confirmation or acknowledgment that Jehovah is the Tree of Life.

Paul quoted those verses in the first chapter of Hebrews. To those verses, Paul added, "And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: (Hebrews 1:8-10) That appears to be a paraphrase from Isaiah.<sup>8</sup> Paul's joining those two scriptures with the phrase "in the beginning" seems to confirm that Paul also understood that Psalm 45 depicted a scene in the Council in Heaven where Jehovah was anointed by his father Elohim.

The first verse of Isaiah 61 reads: 1

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; (Isaiah 61: 1)

President Joseph F. Smith clarified its meaning when he named some who were present to greet the Saviour when he visited the spirit world before his resurrection. President Smith wrote:

And Isaiah, who declared by prophecy that the Redeemer was anointed to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound, were also there. (Doctrine and Covenants 138:42)

When the Saviour read that to the people in the synagogue at Nazareth, he interpreted it the same way.

17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had

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<sup>8</sup>That seems to be a paraphrase of Isaiah 48:13. "Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens"

opened the book, he found the place where it was written,  
18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, (Luke 4:17-18)<sup>9</sup>

Jesus said to his listeners, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." They understood his meaning, so they tried to murder him.

Peter's description of the Saviour's baptism gives an interesting insight on the significance of an anointing.

36 The word which *God* sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)  
37 That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;  
38 How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. (Acts 10:36-38)

A more complete explanation reads,

11 And I, John, bear record that I beheld his glory, as the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, even the Spirit of truth, which came and dwelt in the flesh, and dwelt among us.  
12 And I, John, saw that he received not of the fulness at the first, but received grace for grace;  
13 And he received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness;  
14 And thus he was called the Son of God, because he received not of the fulness at the first.  
15 And I, John, bear record, and lo, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove, and sat upon him, and there came a voice out of heaven saying: This is my beloved Son.  
16 And I, John, bear record that he received a fulness of the glory of the Father;  
17 And he received all power, both in heaven and on earth, and the glory of the Father was with him, for he dwelt in him.  
18 And it shall come to pass, that if you are faithful you shall receive the fulness of the record of John. (D&C 93:11-18)

The Tree is the Cross

Some early Christians believed that the Saviour's cross was made of olive wood;<sup>10</sup> that the olive

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<sup>9</sup>The other scripture the Saviour is paraphrasing in this verse is Isaiah 42:7.

<sup>10</sup>There are two reasons to believe that the cross was probably made of olive wood. (1)Olive

wood cross represented the tree of life; the Saviour's body is the fruit of the tree; and his blood is the waters of life. That is easy to understand if one associates the imagery with the sacrament.

Griggs explained,

The New Testament also alludes to the cross of Jesus as a tree. (See Acts 5:30; Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 2:24.) Some have noticed that the Greek word used in these passages is the same as that used for the tree of life in the Septuagint, different from the usual New Testament word for *tree*. According to a number of sources, some early Christians thought of the cross as a tree of life.<sup>11</sup>

One of the early Christian writings that most emphasizes the idea that the cross represented the tree of life is *The Gospel of Philip*. It is one of the Nag Hammadi gnostic manuscripts found in Egypt. There is a tradition that Philip was the apostle who wrote the Saviour's teachings after his resurrection.<sup>12</sup>

Philip the apostle said: "Joseph the carpenter planted a garden, because he needed wood for his trade. It was he who made the cross from the trees which he planted. And (so) his seed hung on that which he planted. His seed was Jesus, but the planting was the cross." But the tree of life stands in the midst of paradise. And indeed (it is) the olive-tree. From it came the chrism [anointing oil]. Through it came the resurrection.<sup>13</sup>

In *The Acts of Thomas*, it implies that the oil and the cross are "related," that is, of the same substance. This prayer is part of a description of the anointing of some women disciples.

And Judas took oil in a silver cup and spoke thus: . . . "Jesus, let your victorious power come and rest upon this oil as it once rested upon the wood [the cross] related to it [the oil]."<sup>14</sup>

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was one of the most common trees in the Holy Land and there is historical evidence that it was used to make crosses for crucifixion. (2) The only archaeological evidence of an actual crucifixion still has fragments of olive wood attached to the bone. See, "Crucifixion" in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary Volume* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1991), 199-200.

11C. Wilfred Griggs, "The Tree of Life in Ancient Cultures, in *Ensign*, June 198, 26-31. Griggs's footnote identifies those sources as: "*Epistle of Barnabas* 11-12; Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 73; Tertullian, *Adv. Judaeos* 10."

12 Like most of the other gnostic scriptures, this one is considered, by many modern scholars, to be a forgery—written by someone who put Philip's name on it. Either he wrote it or he didn't. Those are the two extreme ends of the spectrum, so I leave it to you to decide what to believe.

13 *Gospel of Philip*, in Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha, Revised Edition* (Westminster, John Knox Press, 1991), 199. Also see: *Gospel of Philip* in James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (San Francisco, Harper & Roe, 1988), 153.

14 *Acts of Thomas*, in J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford, Clarendon press, 1993), 504-05. Another translation reads: "Jesus, let (thy) victorious power come, and (let it settle) in this oil as then it settled in the wood that is its kin (. . .) and they who crucified thee did not endure its word." (*Acts of Thomas* in Edgar Hennecke, Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed., *New*



The Gospel of Thomas continues.

The chrism [anointing oil] is superior to baptism. For from the chrism [anointing oil] we were called “Christians,” not from the baptism. Christ also was so called because of the anointing. [i.e. “Christ” means “the anointed one”] For the Father anointed the Son. But the Son anointed the apostles. And the apostles anointed us. He who is anointed possesses all things. He has the resurrection, the light, the cross.<sup>15</sup>

(So) it is fitting for those who have not only obtained the names of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, but have obtained these very things for themselves. If anyone does not obtain them for himself, the name also will be taken from him. But one receives them in the chrism [anointing oil] with the balsam of the power of the cross. This (power) the postles called “the right and the left.” Such a one is no longer a Christian, but a Christ. [i.e. His disciples have also received an anointing. So now the name, “one who is anointed,” also applies to them.]<sup>16</sup>

The bread of life is the fruit of the tree.

Of the three sacred items that were kept in the Ark of the Covenant, two represented the Saviour and the tree of life, the third was the tablets on which the Lord had written the Ten Commandments. The Old Testament tells us of only two, the stone tablets and a jar of manna. (Exodus 16:31-35) Paul mentions the third, the staff of Aaron that he put in the ground and the next day it was alive with almond blossoms. (Hebrews 9:4) The staff represented the tree of life. The significance of the manna went far beyond its being the miraculous desert food that kept Israel alive during their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. The manna was an evidence of the power of God to sustain his people—it was symbolic of the fruit of the tree of life, and therefore was representative of the Saviour and his atonement. One of the most amazing of the principles Jesus taught was about that.

32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.

33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

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*Testament Apocrypha*, 2 Vols..[Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1965], 1:524-25.)

*The Acts of Thomas* is another gnostic manuscripts. It claims to be an account of Thomas’s missionary experiences in India. This is the source for the very beautiful Hymn of the Pearl. The same scholars also question its authenticity.

<sup>15</sup>There are two translations readily available. I have chosen to quote from: *Gospel of Philip* in Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha, Revised Edition* (Westminster, John Knox Press, 1991), 200.

The other translation is: *Gospel of Philip* in James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (San Francisco, Harper & Roe, 1988), 153.

<sup>16</sup>*Gospel of Philip*, in Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha, Revised Edition* (Westminster, John Knox Press, 1991), 196. Also see: *Gospel of Philip* in James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (San Francisco, Harper & Roe, 1988), 150.

34 Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.  
35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. . . .  
40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. . . .  
41 The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. . . .  
44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.  
45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.  
46 Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.  
47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.  
48 I am that bread of life.  
49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.  
50 This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.  
51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.  
52 The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?  
53 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.  
54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.  
55 For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.  
56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.  
57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.  
58 This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. (John 6:32-58)

There is one great, but complex, truth taught by those words: The Saviour is the bread of life—symbolized by the fruit of the tree of life—symbolized again by the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper—brought to fruition in the overriding fact that he is the source of all human life, and the origin of all things. The Saviour’s meaning was explained by his beloved apostle, John.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.  
(Revelation 2:17.)

And that, in turn was more fully explained by the Prophet Joseph.

9 This earth, in its sanctified and immortal state, will be made like unto crystal and will be a Urim and Thummim to the inhabitants who dwell thereon, whereby all things pertaining to an inferior kingdom, or all kingdoms of a lower order, will be manifest to those who dwell on it; and this earth will be Christ's.

10 Then the white stone mentioned in Revelation 2:17, will become a Urim and Thummim to each individual who receives one, whereby things pertaining to a higher order of kingdoms will be made known;

11 And a white stone is given to each of those who come into the celestial kingdom, whereon is a new name written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it. The new name is the key word. (D&C 130:9-11)

The sacrament was first instituted as an ordinance to the church by the Saviour at the Last Supper.<sup>17</sup>

26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. (Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:20-26)

Paul quoted the Saviour's words a little differently when he explained the meaning of the sacrament to the Saints at Corinth.

23 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:

24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

The resurrected Lord explained to the Nephites, "He that eateth this bread eateth of my body to his soul; and he that drinketh of this wine drinketh of my blood to his soul; and his soul shall never hunger nor thirst, but shall be filled." (3 Nephi 20:8) By so saying, the Saviour also helped explain the meaning of the Beatitude, "And blessed are all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost." (3 Nephi 12:6)

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<sup>17</sup>There are two suggestions in the Old Testament that suggest the sacrament was also used an anticipatory ordinance. One is (Genesis 14:17-20, when "Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God." The other is Exodus 24:9-12.

9 Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel:

10 And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness.

11 And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.

The Lord explained to Adam:

59 That by reason of transgression cometh the fall, which fall bringeth death, and inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit, which I have made, and so became of dust a living soul, even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water [baptism], and of the Spirit [gift of the Holy Ghost], and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten [both the sacrament water and the anointing oil are symbolic of the Saviour's blood.]; that ye might be sanctified from all sin, and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come, even immortal glory;

60 For by the water ye keep the commandment; by the Spirit ye are justified, and by the blood ye are sanctified;

61 Therefore it is given to abide in you; the record of heaven; the Comforter; the peaceable things of immortal glory; the truth of all things; that which quickeneth all things, which maketh alive all things; that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment. (Moses 6:58-61)

The unifying principle that ties all these ideas together is that the waters of life are not only a cleansing power that comes from without to heal the repentant soul, they are also a power within. Jesus explained to the woman at the well,

If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. . . whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. (John 4:10-14)

The Holy Ghost, is both the cleansing power and the power by which the waters of life become “a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” Moroni explains,

3 And none were received unto baptism save they took upon them the name of Christ, having a determination to serve him to the end.

4 And after they had been received unto baptism, and were wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, they were numbered among the people of the church of Christ. (Moroni 6:3-4)

Perhaps Peter's description of how the Holy Ghost anointed Christ at his baptism may have some relevance here. (see Acts 10:36-38) As the Saviour taught that one could become a well of living water, so Alma also taught that one can become a tree of life—thereby we may also become a living symbol of the Saviour's love.

Becoming a tree

In Alma 32, the prophet begins his sermon by talking about faith, and shows how simply believing, or even desiring to believe in the Saviour, is like a seed, planted in the heart where it may begin to grow. Alma asked, “O then, is not this real? I say unto you, Yea, because it is light; and whatsoever is light, is good, because it is discernible, therefore ye must know that it is good; and now behold, after ye have tasted this light ....if ye nourish it with much care it will get root,

and grow up, and bring forth fruit.” Alma identifies this fruit as “the fruit of the tree of life,” therefore the tree that is growing within us is the tree of life—that “shall be a tree springing up unto everlasting life.” Alma concludes,

And because of your diligence and your faith and your patience with the word in nourishing it, that it may take root in you, behold, by and by ye shall pluck the fruit thereof, which is most precious, which is sweet above all that is sweet, and which is white above all that is white, yea, and pure above all that is pure; and ye shall feast upon this fruit even until ye are filled, that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst. (Alma 32)

To hunger and thirst after righteousness is to seek to come to Christ who is the fruit of the tree of life and “the fountain of all righteousness,” that one may be “filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.” (Philippians 1:11) It is by doing “works of righteousness” that one may come, as Lehi and Nephi came, to behold and partake of the fruit of the tree of life, which is also a tree of anointing.

John, the Saviour’s Beloved Disciple, wrote of the power of that anointing.

But ye have an unction [anointing] from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth....Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life....the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him (1 John 2:20-29).