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## How "Come unto Me" fits in the Nephite Gospel"

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## ***How come unto me fits into the Nephite gospel***

Part One

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Over the last several decades, Latter-day Saints have learned to rely primarily on the Book of Mormon for basic and extended explanations of the gospel of Jesus Christ. While several of its authoritative passages provide comprehensive definitions of the gospel, these are not matched with comparable passages in the New Testament or in the revelations received by Joseph Smith. In this paper I will extend previous work with an analysis of six brief passages in which Mormon and Moroni record short statements of the gospel by Jesus Christ—all of which employ exactly the same distinctive rhetorical pattern and terminology. But each of these also features at least one instructive variation, and a much richer understanding emerges when these variations are examined together.

In all the revelations received by Joseph Smith as he led the founding of the last dispensation of the gospel, including the restoration of the original gospel of Jesus Christ, there is nowhere a straightforward presentation of the basic content of that gospel. Rather, Joseph and his followers were referred repeatedly to the Book of Mormon, “in the which is the fulness of the gospel.”<sup>1</sup> Over the last few decades,

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<sup>1</sup> *Doctrine and Covenants* 42:12. The same point is articulated in D&C 10:46, 20:9,

numerous passages have been identified in the Book of Mormon which present that gospel in one way or another, including three key passages that quote Jesus himself presenting the same authoritative definition of the gospel with some explanation.<sup>2</sup>

It is these passages that have taught us that the gospel message has six basic elements:

1.                   **Faith** or trust in Jesus Christ, whose atonement made salvation possible, and who leads and guides his followers to eternal life.
2.                   **Repentance** is often presented in the Book of Mormon as the starting point for those who will receive the gospel. It consists of humbling oneself before God and turning away from one's own paths or the ways of the world to walk with him with a covenant to obey him always.
3.                   **Baptism** in water is the prescribed means by which the repentant person publicly witnesses to the Father that he or she has repented with a covenant to obey his commandments, take the name of Christ upon him/her, and remember the Lord always.

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27:5, and 135:3.

<sup>2</sup> See any of the three articles by Noel B. Reynolds that analyze and summarize those passages for different audiences: "The gospel as taught by the Nephite Prophets," *BYU Studies*; "The gospel of Jesus Christ," *EOM*, ; and "The gospel according to Mormon," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 2015.

4.                   The **Baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost** will be sent by the Father to every sincerely repentant and baptized person, bringing: the remission of sins, a testimony of the Father and the Son, and providing individual spiritual guidance day by day.
5.                   As followers of Christ faithfully **Endure to the End**, they grow stronger in faith, hope, and charity and are prepared to enter the presence of the Father and the Son.
6.                   **Eternal Life** is the reward for every person that faithfully follows Christ in this gospel process that he has provided and taught.

### **The complexities of gospel terminology in the Book of Mormon**

One possible explanation for the late recognition and understanding of all elements of this gospel message in LDS publications<sup>3</sup> is that the Book of Mormon writers used a variety of terms and rhetorical conventions when referring to the gospel and its elements. The term *gospel* itself is a prime example. By my count, it is referred to as “the gospel” only 42 times in the Book of Mormon. It is called

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<sup>3</sup> *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2004), 60–70, was the first official publication of the Church to include *enduring to the end* as a basic gospel principle. For an account of this principle in LDS teaching and in the Book of Mormon, see Noel B. Reynolds, “The Fifth Principle of the Gospel,” *Religious Educator*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 2014, 117–127.

“the doctrine of Christ” 25 times. Another 26 references to “the (straight and narrow) path” point to the gospel. In a variation of the same metaphor, it is called “the way,” 82 times. And it is labeled “the word” explicitly 79 times and implicitly another 278 times! And that is just the beginning. The six basic elements of the gospel also appear with a rich variety of nomenclature, and some are lumped together in groups of two or three with some compound term labeling the combination. For example, Nephi calls repentance and baptism together “the gate by which ye should enter” (2 Nephi 31:17).

The fifth principle of the gospel (*enduring to the end*) may be the most difficult of the six to recognize in the wide variety of terms that Nephite prophets developed to refer to it. The gospel process can be helpfully understood as a dialogue between God and individual men and women in this world. God initiates the dialogue by calling on people to repent and be baptized as a witness of that repentance. Those who respond by making and witnessing a covenant with the Father to keep the commandments are promised the gift of the Holy Ghost, which brings the remission of sins as another response from the Father. At this point, the new convert is required to endure to the end in a life-long dialogue with the Lord as mediated by the Holy Ghost that guides and helps the person to know “all things

what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:5) and to have the strength to do them. The process of conversion so described can take place in days or even hours. Enduring to the end takes the rest of one’s life. And it can take on many aspects that attract different descriptive labels.

Like the Bible, the Book of Mormon has many authoritative statements that only explicitly mention one or some subset of these elements as necessary for salvation. For example, Nephi quotes the Father teaching him in his first great vision that “he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.” But as I have also shown, this should not be read as evidence that repentance and baptism are not necessary for those who can “endure to the end.” Nor are these passages to be read as relaxations of the full set of gospel requirements. Rather, they should be seen as abbreviations of the full gospel definition. They exemplify a common biblical form of abbreviation labeled *merismus* by rhetoricians.

The most common form of *merismus* is the abbreviated list wherein a statement of some of the elements of a known list is intended to invoke the full list as context in the reader’s mind, thereby avoiding a tedious or clumsy listing of all its elements. *Merismus* is just another rhetorical technique in which the part stands for the whole. The frequent use of the biblical rhetorical device of *merismus*

successfully avoids the monotony of repeatedly listing all the gospel elements together. But in so doing, it also makes it difficult for modern readers to recognize when the full panoply of gospel principles has been invoked. A biblical writer uses *merismus* when he mentions two or more items from a known list with the intention that the reader will call the entire list to mind. This list form of *merismus* is the most frequently used in the Hebrew Bible and is perfectly suited for gospel references in the Book of Mormon. Understanding how *merismus* works (the part standing for the whole) allows readers to recognize hundreds of Book of Mormon passages that only mention a few of the gospel principles as implicit references to the full gospel message.<sup>4</sup>

But these abbreviated statements of the gospel also introduce another linguistic complication. Book of Mormon writers frequently used synonyms or even combined two or more gospel elements under another label. For example, in the very sentence in which Nephi introduces the requirement of faith in Christ, he refers to it again as “relying wholly” upon Christ: “For ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken *faith* in him, *relying* wholly upon

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<sup>4</sup> For a more complete explanation illustrated with 79 meristic statements of the gospel, see Noel B. Reynolds, “Biblical *merismus* in Book of Mormon gospel references,” scheduled for publication in the Spring 2017 issue of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, and available in the meantime in a pre-publication format at <http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/facpub/1681/>.

the merits of him who is mighty to save” (2 Nephi 31:19).<sup>5</sup> Similarly, faith is referred to elsewhere as “trust.”<sup>6</sup>

In this same chapter where the gospel elements are most authoritatively and fully articulated, Nephi also introduces another term for repentance and baptism as a pair when he says “*the gate* by which ye should enter is repentance and baptism by water” (2 Nephi 31:17). Having introduced this new terminology in support of his metaphor of the gospel as a path that leads to eternal life, Nephi can then go on to simply refer to “the gate” (2 Nephi 31:18), without specifying repentance or baptism again, knowing his readers will understand the compound reference.

After Nephi was blessed to receive the same great vision seen by his father in which he was taught the gospel by the Father and the Son, Nephi reports a session with his brothers, in which he explains some things they had heard about that vision from Lehi. Referring to their future descendants, Nephi explains that this same gospel of Jesus Christ will show them “*how to come unto him* and be saved” (1 Ne 15:14). This looks like one of dozens of gospel merisms, with *come*

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<sup>5</sup> Readers will notice that all Book of Mormon quotations, including punctuation, are taken from the critical text prepared by Royal Skousen. Now that we have a critical text, I share the view of most scholars that it should be the primary resource used in scholarly writing. See Royal Skousen, *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, Yale University Press, 2009. Throughout the paper I have introduced italics in these quotations to help readers focus on key words and phrases.

<sup>6</sup> See, *e.g.*, 2 Ne 4:19, 34; 22:2; Jac 7:25; Mosiah 4:6.

*unto me* calling to mind all the five unnamed gospel elements. In many longer gospel merisms, *come unto me* is listed with some other gospel elements, but nowhere do we get a clear explanation of how we should interpret that phrase as a part of the gospel process. This paper presents an examination of selected occurrences of *come unto me* in an effort to bring clarity and precision to an understanding of this usage in the Book of Mormon.

### **Six more invitations to his gospel by Jesus Christ**

Well over half (28) of the Book of Mormon invitations to “come unto me/him” are attributed to Jesus Christ as direct quotations. Six of these are particularly striking because they share the same basic rhetorical pattern and terminology. The simplest example is from Mormon’s sermon as compiled in Moroni 7:34: “And he [Christ] hath said: *Repent* all ye ends of the earth, and *come unto me*, and *be baptized in my name*, and *have faith* in me, *that ye may be saved.*” The repeated pattern I see in this and in the five other examples is the beginning three-fold invitation or commandment to (1) repent, (2) come unto me, and (3) be baptized in my name, always in that order, which is then followed by (4) a fourth distinctive imperative and (5) some concluding promise or consequence. In

addition, each is addressed to a specific audience.

I found it surprising at first to see the commands *to repent* and *to be baptized* separated by the command *to come unto me* being inserted consistently between them. But then I realized that this seeming awkwardness could be fully resolved and the meaning of *come unto me* potentially clarified simultaneously if these one-sentence statements of the gospel could be read as Hebrew doublets of the kind we see hundreds of times in Isaiah, Psalms, and other books of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>7</sup>

Reformatting this same example in that pattern, we can read it as follows:

**Moroni 7:34**

And he [Christ] hath said:

A (1) *Repent*, all ye ends of the earth, and (2) *come unto me*,

B and (3) *be baptized in my name* and (4) *have faith in me*,

Ballast: (5) that ye may *be saved*.

This reading only works if B can be read as parallel to or as restating A in an intensified or specifying way. In other words, there must be a substantial linkage

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<sup>7</sup> Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, provides numerous examples and observes on pages 62–63 that, “in the case of biblical poetry, the two basic operations of specification and heightening within the parallelistic line lead to an incipiently narrative structure of minute concatenations, on the one hand, and to a climactic structure of thematic intensifications, on the other hand.” He also recognizes that poems can use thematic key words as in biblical prose narrative for different effects (p. 60).

between elements 1 and 3, and between elements 2 and 4 that would support a parallelistic reading. The connection between elements 1 and 3 is easy to see given that the Book of Mormon consistently treats repentance as turning to God's way with a promise or covenant to keep his commandments—and baptism as the prescribed witnessing to God that one has repented.<sup>8</sup> Neither one makes sense without the other, and baptism is the prescribed completion of the repentance process. With that promising beginning, we would then want to find a way that *have faith in me* specifies or completes the meaning of *come unto me*. That seems plausible on the face of it, but we will be able to explain that connection in much richer detail after comparing all six of the phrases that will be placed in parallel with *come unto me* in these examples.

Before proceeding to the other five passages, I will note two more features of this passage that will also be replicated in the others. While it is not as obvious here as in the rest of these passages, this one is addressed to a specific, though not exclusive audience. Verse 32 makes it clear that the invitation framed in verse 34 is extended “unto the children of men” who are addressed in the sentence under examination as “all ye ends of the earth.” And like the others, this one ends by

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<sup>8</sup> See Noel B. Reynolds, “Understanding Christian Baptism through the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 51, No. 2 (2012), pp. 8–9.

pointing to the consequences of responding positively to imperatives 1–4 in a concluding and heightening affirmation that is not itself part of the parallel structure, but which does bring them together by specifying their joint implication. Such an affirmation would not be expected from the standard doublet pattern found in the Bible, but it does fit perfectly with the “ballast lines” that students of Hebrew rhetoric find frequently at the end of a variety of rhetorical structures—and that serve to round out a passage in one way or another.<sup>9</sup>

With that introduction using Moroni 7:34 as a model, I will now proceed to a similar examination of the other five passages. Given the process Mormon and Moroni describe in their assemblage of these texts, it would seem highly unlikely that their order in the sequence of presentation could have any importance. For that reason, I felt free to use the last example in the book as the introductory model. I will look next at the other three examples that follow the model pattern most closely. It should be kept in mind as stated earlier, that all of these passages are presented as quotations of words Jesus Christ said to someone somewhere. In some cases this context is clear as in 3 Nephi 21:6, where Jesus is speaking to the

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<sup>9</sup> See my recognition and explanation of ballast lines in the Book of Mormon in “Chiastic structuring of large texts: Second Nephi as a case study,” publication pending with *Interpreter*, p. 21. The pre-publication version is available online at <http://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2699&context=facpub>.

Nephite multitude and in 3 Nephi 27:20 where he is just wrapping up his definition of the gospel in a speech to his assembled disciples. In 3 Nephi 30:2 Mormon addresses the call to *come unto me* to the future Gentiles quoting the command he received from Jesus Christ directly. And in Mormon 3:2, Mormon is quoting again the words that Christ gave him—what “the Lord did say unto me,”—that he was commanded to “cry unto this people.” Though very similar, all four of these appear to be based on different occasions when Jesus gave these commands to Mormon personally or to the Nephites when he appeared to them, as recorded in the record Mormon was abridging. In the example cited above (Moroni 7:34), Mormon quotes Christ again with the same formula for elements 1, 2, and 3. But elements 4 and 5 are different than any of the others, suggesting it may be derived from yet another occasion when Christ had issued the invitation to *come unto me* either to Mormon directly, or to some other prophet in the record he has abridged. Finally, Moroni tells us that the passage in Ether 4:18–19 contains the words that “the Lord said unto me.” Again, elements 1, 2, and 3 from the established pattern are included, although Moroni reports significant variation in the rhetorical structure and in the terminology in elements 4 and 5.

The other three passages that follow precisely the model provided above in



Ballast: (5) and ye shall *be spared*.

The only variations we can observe in the presentation of elements 1, 2, and 3 in these first four examples have been minimal. The manner of addressing the audience varies, and the full phrasing of *be baptized in my name* is abbreviated in Mormon 3:2 by the omission of the last three words. But elements 4 and 5 use completely different terminology in each of the four, even though the sense of each passage seems consistent with the others. In the next example, Mormon claims to be writing the words of Jesus Christ, but may be paraphrasing as considerable additional detail is introduced—much like the way Nephi moved back and forth between direct quotation of the Father and the Son and his own interpretive statements in 2 Nephi 31.

### **3 Nephi 30:2**

In this fourth example, the version of the commandment Mormon was instructed to write to the Gentiles, the form is enriched in both form and content. Elements 1 and 4 are doubled to provide emphasis or reinforcement with a second verbal formulation with the same meaning. And the basic form is expanded to include a long listing of the sins of the Gentiles that makes the need for repentance obvious:

And he commandeth me that I should write saying:

A (1) *Turn*, all ye Gentiles, from your wicked ways and (1) *repent* of your evil doings, . . . , and (2) *come unto me*

B And (3) *be baptized in my name*, that (4) ye may receive a remission of your sins, and (4) *be filled with the Holy Ghost*,

Ballast: (5) that ye may *be numbered with my people* which are of the house of Israel.

The ellipses indicate where I have omitted Mormon's long excursus specifying the varieties of sins from which future Gentiles will need to repent:

of your lyings and deceivings,

and of your whoredoms,

and of your secret abominations and your idolatries,

and of your murders and your priestcrafts

and your envyings and your strifes,

and from all your wickedness and abominations, . . . (3 Nephi 30:2)

While this excerpt appears to have its own internal rhetorical structure listing a concatenation of sins,<sup>10</sup> I have chosen to omit this part of the passage so that the

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<sup>10</sup> Alternatively and more cleanly, see Donald W. Parry, *Poetic Parallelisms in the Book of Mormon: The Complete Text Reformatted*, 2007, p. 496 where he lists and labels all eleven

basic form identified in the previous examples can stand out clearly. This also allows the reader to focus on the creative variation that elements 1 and 4 are stated doubly—using different terminology in each statement. But it is also clear that this doubling simply gives us two common Book of Mormon ways of saying the same thing. *Turning* is just another word for repentance in both the Old Testament and the Book of Mormon. And, as Nephi reported in 2 Nephi 32:17, he had been taught by the Father and the Son that the remission of sins comes “by fire and by the Holy Ghost.” A pleasing balance results from this doubling of the first and fourth elements, even though they are not parallel to each other, but to the third and second elements respectively. The elements that are not parallel in content are made parallel in form.

The sixth and final passage in this set contains all the essential pieces of the basic format exemplified in the first five. But these are enriched and presented with a more complex chiasmic rhetorical structure. And each line in that structure constitutes another meristic statement of the gospel, echoing the approach of the three longer Book of Mormon passages that define the gospel.<sup>11</sup>

### **Ether 4:18-19**

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nouns with their conjunctive *and* as “synonymous words and many ands.”

<sup>11</sup> See 2 Nephi 31:4–21, 3 Nephi 11:32–40, and 3 Nephi 27:13–22.

- A     Therefore (1) *repent*, all ye ends of the earth, and (2) *come unto me*
- B                     and (4) *believe in my gospel*, and (3) *be baptized in my name*.
- C                     For he that (4) *believeth and* (3) *is baptized* (5) shall be  
                           *saved*,
- C\*                     but he that (4) *believeth not* (5) shall be *damned*.
- B\*                     And (6) *signs shall follow* them (4) that *believe in my name*.
- A\*     And (6) *blessed* is he that is found (4) *faithful unto my name at the last day*,  
        Ballast: (5) for they shall *be lifted up to dwell in the kingdom* prepared for  
        them from the foundation of the world.

The three basic thematic elements are clearly repeated in the same order in the opening of this example, but the insertion of a new fourth element before the third prepares the way for a longer chiasmic structure with four-fold emphasis on “believing my gospel.” The central lines of C and C\* are simply the positive and negative versions of the requirement that men must believe to be saved and call our attention to the possibility that they may provide the center part of a chiasm. Lines B and B\* repeat the same phrase “in my name” at their ends, which is sufficient for them to constitute parallel lines in a chiasm. Further, they connect “believe in my gospel” to “believe in my name.” The chiasmic structure adds emphasis to this

believing by including it in one way or another in the four consecutive B and C lines. Less obvious is the connection between lines A and A\* until we recognize that *come unto me* in A and *faithful unto my name at the last day* in A\* are both used as substitutes for *enduring to the end*.

We should also notice that this passage is so written that it could be read as a series of three related doublets, reflecting that structural characteristic of the other five passages, as displayed below. The parallel content of the second and third doublets is self evident. If we interpret *come unto me* as a substitute term for *enduring to the end*, then the two elements presented in B are the prerequisites for the two they line up with in A as the gospel requirements are spelled out in Nephite teaching. Repentance presumes belief, and enduring to the end presumes baptism. And there is an important wrinkle in the way belief or faith is taught in the Book of Mormon that presents it both as a prerequisite for repentance and as a basic part of enduring to the end.

In his foundational presentation of the gospel as taught to him by the Father and the Son, Nephi does not mention faith until he undertakes his final exposition of enduring to the end: He asks rhetorically if “all is done” once one has gotten into “this straight and narrow path which leads to eternal life,” through repentance,

baptism, and receiving the Holy Ghost. He answers his own question emphatically: “Nay. For ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is mighty to save. Wherefore ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ” (2 Nephi 31:18–20). Clearly, Nephi does not see faith as merely the first step in gospel acceptance. He here emphasizes the continuing role it plays day by day for those who are enduring to the end or are “faithful to the end.”<sup>12</sup>

A Therefore (1) *repent*, all ye ends of the earth, and (2) *come unto me*

B and (4) *believe in my gospel*, and (3) *be baptized in my name*.

A\* For he that (4) *believeth and (3) is baptized (5) shall be saved*,

B\* but he that (4) *believeth not (5) shall be damned*.

A\*\* And (6) *signs shall follow them (4) that believe in my name*.

B\*\* And (6) *blessed* is he that is found (4) *faithful unto my name at the last day*,

Ballast: (5) for they shall *be lifted up to dwell in the kingdom* prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

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<sup>12</sup> Compare Mosiah 2:41, Alma 5:13, and 38:2.

## Reflections on these six passages as a group

These six examples provide six different phrasings for element #4, which is presented in each as a specification of #2—*come unto me*. It will help to display these six variations of #4 as a list in the same order in which they were presented above:

1. “Have faith in me”
2. “Know of the true points of my doctrine”
3. “Be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost”
4. “Build up again my church”
5. “Receive a remission of your sins, and be filled with the Holy Ghost”
6. “Believe in my gospel” and “be faithful unto my name at the last day”

While I have mentioned some structural reasons above for equating *come unto me* in these passages with *enduring to the end*, I will now show how these six phrasings which were used in parallel to *come unto me* can be understood to refer to *enduring to the end*. In the first of these phrasings, the Savior himself made this linkage between *faith in Christ* and *enduring to the end* in speaking to his Nephite disciples: “And no unclean thing can enter into his kingdom, save it be those who

have washed their garments in my blood because of their *faith* and the repentance of all their sins and their *faithfulness unto the end*” (3 Nephi 27:19). The phrasing in the second example refers directly to Mormon’s earlier statement in his chronicle that in a time of much strife, the brother prophets “Nephi and Lehi and many of their brethren, which *knew concerning the true points of doctrine*, having received many revelations daily, therefore they did preach unto the people, insomuch that they did put an end to their strife in that same year” (Helaman 11:23). Here we have the faithful few receiving daily revelation, as is expected of those who endure faithful, through which they “knew concerning the true points of doctrine.” Only the faithful will have that knowledge.

The third and fifth phrasings both focus on the role of the Holy Ghost in the lives of those who have received the gospel. In his final sermon, Nephi teaches that sincerely repentant converts will receive a *remission of sins* through the Holy Ghost, and that *the Holy Ghost will then show them “all things what ye must do”* as they endure to the end (2 Nephi 31:17, 32:5). It is then through this process that men and women can be sanctified as they come unto the Savior, one day at a time. The fourth phrasing describes what all faithful converts are called to do as they endure to the end, which is to share the gospel and build up the church. The sixth

phrasing emphasizes faith and belief “at the last day.” Nephi taught that faith, hope, and charity would characterize the lives of those who are enduring to the end (2 Nephi 31:20). And king Benjamin taught his people that if they would hold out faithful to they end, they would be “received into heaven” (Mosiah 2:41). Alma described believers who were “faithful until the end,” who were saved (Alma 5:13). He would later characterize “steadiness and faithfulness unto God” as enduring “to the end” (Alma 38:2). In each of these six passages, we have seen that the fourth element, which is positioned in parallel to the second (*come unto me*) is an established aspect of *enduring to the end*, suggesting strongly that *come unto me* should be read as referring to that life-long process in which the faithful, by keeping the commandments, are prepared for eternal life with Jesus Christ.

This analysis will not be complete without some focus being given to the distinctive ballast-line statements that draw each of the six passages to a conclusion—which I will also list here in the order discussed above:

1. “that ye may be saved”
2. “that they may be numbered among my people”
3. “that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day”
4. “and ye shall be spared”

5. “that ye may be numbered with my people”
6. “for he shall be lifted up to dwell in the kingdom prepared for him from the foundation of the world”

The first of these simply articulates the sixth principle of the gospel—that faithful adherents to the gospel of Jesus Christ will be saved in the next life. The sixth one states this same point just as directly and even more eloquently. The third one refers directly to the judgment day when those who are found spotless will be saved. And the fourth one seems to refer as well to the judgment when the wicked will not be spared. When the Hebrew bible and the Book of Mormon use the phrase “numbered among” the people, as in the third and fifth of these ballast lines, it always seem to refer directly to this life. So in these two it may well be that the explicit reward indicated is to be part of the Church or the faithful House of Israel in this life, with the implicit promise of being included with his people in the next life.

### **Conclusions**

One outcome of this analysis of the six passages that share this same basic rhetorical structure is the recognition that when the Savior issues the invitation to *come unto me* in conjunction with the imperatives to repent and be baptized in his

name, *come unto me* seems to be taking the place of of the command to all those who have received the gospel that they must *endure to the end* to be saved. This calls our attention to the fact it is through the process of enduring to the end, following the direction of the Holy Ghost day by day in facing the challenges of life, that the Lord sanctifies his children and prepares them to enter his presence. And it is a process grounded in continuing belief or faith in him and in a knowledge of “the true points of my doctrine.” Returning to the metaphor of the gospel as *the path* or *the way* that leads to eternal life, with repentance and baptism providing the gate into that path, the invitation to *come unto me* appears to be addressed to those who have entered the path already as encouragement to stay on it or return to it—to follow the Spirit that leads them back to the Lord, day by day, sanctifying them in the process.

Another outcome of this analysis is the recognition that in addition to the three long-recognized passages in which Jesus Christ is quoted at length in defining his own gospel (2 Nephi 31:4–21, 3 Nephi 11:32–40, and 3 Nephi 27:13–22), there is another set of passages in which he briefly defines that gospel in complementary ways. Both groups stand out in that they quote Jesus Christ directly and in that the entire group shares some basic and distinctive rhetorical

features. The longer statements are marked off rhetorically as *inclusios* that contain a series of complementary meristic statements of the gospel which add up cumulatively to a comprehensive definition. The six passages analyzed here are also characterized by a shared, but possibly unique rhetorical structure and by a complete definition of the gospel—at least when considered cumulatively.

In a sequel paper, I hope to consider all the other Book of Mormon passages featuring *come unto me*. That study will also conclude that *come unto me* is used primarily to refer to the *enduring to the end* dimension of the gospel process, but when used meristically can invoke other unmentioned elements of that process in the minds of readers. In all cases, *come unto me* should be read as phrasing that refers to the same gospel process outlined by Jesus Christ in several more expansive passages of the Book of Mormon, and not as a characterization of any different gospel.