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"This Is the Way"

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Three times Joseph Smith was told in a revelation that “the fulness of the gospel” was to be found in the Book of Mormon.



for all humankind was enticing indeed for many “seekers” who resonated to the claims of early Mormonism.<sup>2</sup>

While the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ are taught throughout the Book of Mormon, three specific passages offer authoritative, complete, and precise definitions of that gospel. Furthermore, each of these is marked off from surrounding text as an *inclusio*, the technique used frequently in the Bible before modern methods of punctuation were available. Ancient writers could signal the beginning and end of a dedicated section of their writing by repeating at the end the same word or phrase used at the beginning. Ancient readers would recognize this as a signal to interpret the text included between these two bookends as a unit in some significant sense.<sup>3</sup> As I have demonstrated in previous publications, these three Book of Mormon passages are set off from the surrounding text in this way by such phrases as “the doctrine of Christ,” or “my gospel.” The first of these is 2 Nephi 31:2–21, written by Nephi at the end of his career as prophet to his people. Nephi’s explanation of the gospel was given to him in a vision and laid the foundation for the teachings of all later Nephite prophets. Two more of these passages were provided by Jesus Christ in person when he first appeared to the Nephite people (3 Nephi 11:31–39) and when he returned later in response to the prayers of his disciples, who wanted his guidance in naming the church he had established among them (3 Nephi 27:13–21).<sup>4</sup> This discussion will focus on the first of these three texts.

Although much remains to be done in the further examination of these passages and their relationship to the rest of the text of the Book of Mormon, this short paper is dedicated to the limited objective of clarifying some of the key terminology used by Book of Mormon writers. In particular, I will show that they used such terms as *gospel*, *doctrine*, *way*, and *word* interchangeably, but that the *plan of salvation* should be distinguished from these. It is probably inevitable that Latter-day Saint scholars will bring assumptions from their academic studies of the Bible and Christian theology to their study of the Book of Mormon. The more I have studied and taught the Book of Mormon, the more suspicious I have become of many of those assumptions. While the Book of Mormon obviously has a great deal in common with the Bible, I am increasingly convinced that Book of Mormon writers had a much richer and more detailed grasp of the basic teachings of Christ’s gospel than has been noticed in studies of the New Testament. This is reflected in their systematic and consistent use of a well-developed terminology throughout the book.

On the other hand, careful study of the Nephite understanding of the gospel may help us see similar teachings in the New Testament that have not been widely recognized by Bible scholars.

## **2 Nephi 31**

Nephi’s original account of the gospel or the doctrine of Christ deserves special attention because it provided the basic pattern followed by all the Nephite prophets in their teaching and writing down to the time of Mormon and Moroni. The importance of this chapter is easily overlooked by readers because 2 Nephi 31 comes almost as an appendix to Nephi’s writings. But reading more carefully, we can see that it is positioned as a final revelation of the central message or theme that has informed and motivated everything that Lehi, Jacob, and Nephi have done since receiving those early visions at the first camp in the wilderness, as reported earlier in the record.<sup>5</sup> Nephi reports that after receiving that vision, Lehi taught his family “concerning the gospel which should be preached among the Jews” (1 Nephi 10:11). Jacob’s teachings also featured an account of the gospel that is clearly derived from Nephi’s and Lehi’s visions (2 Nephi 9:23–24).

This chapter can also be overlooked when we fail to note the authorities that Nephi offers for his presentation of the gospel. We usually remember that the two passages in 3 Nephi quote Jesus Christ exclusively, but we generally miss the fact that in 2 Nephi 31, Nephi quotes the Father three times, and the Son three times as well.<sup>6</sup> As he relates, when he saw the baptism of Jesus in that earlier vision there was much more going on than he had told us previously in that single verse describing that event (1 Nephi 11:27). As the vision unfolded, Nephi reports that he heard the voices of the Father and the Son in turn explain to him the necessity and meaning of repentance, baptism of water, baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost, enduring to the end, and faith in Jesus Christ for all who would receive eternal life. There is no other passage of scripture in which the Father is directly engaged in teaching the gospel. When we realize the full impact of this divine encounter on Nephi (and presumably on his father, Lehi, before him), we can appreciate that this great vision may have served the kind of role for the Nephite dispensation that Joseph Smith’s First Vision has served in the Restoration. And we will better understand that Nephi sees himself marshaling the highest possible authority when he says, “I know by this” in his own explanation of the doctrine of Christ (2 Nephi 31:16).

It is also worth noting that each of these three passages gives the same definition presented in the same cumulative way. However, rather than giving a straightforward statement of the principal meaning such as a modern dictionary might offer, each passage outlines the gospel or doctrine of Christ several times in different ways: each statement including two or more of the basic elements of the gospel message is related in a variety of ways. By accumulating the repeated elements, the reader could ascertain that they were six in number and could grasp the rich fabric of meanings embedded in these definitional passages. The occurrences of these six elements in the three passages can be summarized as follows:<sup>7</sup>

Element	Occurrences
Faith in Jesus Christ	13
Repentance	18
Baptism of Water	22
Baptism of the Holy Ghost	13
Enduring to the end	12
Eternal life	18

What is clear is that the gospel or doctrine of Christ is a complex message—the “good news” that fallen men and women can in fact be raised again to be with their Father in Heaven eternally if they will trust in Christ (faith) and follow in sequence the four steps (repentance, baptism of water, baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end)<sup>8</sup> that he has outlined for them and exemplified in his own life.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Gospel and Doctrine as Synonyms***

The suggestion from these three passages that *doctrine of Christ* and *gospel of Jesus Christ* were used synonymously with essentially the same meaning in Book of Mormon discourse is borne out by an analysis of other passages. While the English terms *gospel* and *doctrine* have somewhat different ranges of meaning, they are used interchangeably by Book of Mormon writers. Nephi’s younger brother Jacob is described in his own record as going about, preaching what he calls “the gospel, or the doctrine of Christ” (Jacob 7:6). Nephi himself only uses *doctrine* to describe this teaching of Christ in this

definitional chapter, but seems to refer to it as “the gospel of Jesus Christ” in the preceding chapter (2 Nephi 30:5).

The only hint of different meanings occurs in 3 Nephi 27:13–21, which begins its account of the gospel by referring to the ministry and atonement of Christ. However, as will be shown below, the ministry and atonement of Christ are consistently presented in Book of Mormon accounts as parts of the “plan of salvation,” which provides the context for understanding the necessity of the gospel. And just as Nephi closes his exposition of the *doctrine of Christ* in 2 Nephi 31:21 by labeling it “the way,” Jesus similarly concludes his presentation of *my gospel* in 3 Nephi 27 by referring to it as “the way” (3 Nephi 27:33). Further, just as Nephi presents “the doctrine of Christ” as what he learned from his vision of the baptism of Christ, Lehi could say that “the gospel . . . should be preached among the Jews,” after seeing the baptism of Christ in his version of the same vision (1 Nephi 10:11).

### The Way

These two terms, *gospel* and *doctrine*, are the most likely to catch the attention of modern readers. By my count, *doctrine* only occurs in this context 25 times in the text of the Book of Mormon, and *gospel* only occurs 42 times. The much less conspicuous term, *the way*, which is also used as a synonym for these, occurs 82 times when referring to this same teaching. While we are more likely to recognize *the way* as a New Testament term, it is also frequently used for *the gospel* in the Book of Mormon.<sup>10</sup> It is introduced quite deliberately in two different ways by Nephi in his presentation of the doctrine of Christ in 2 Nephi 31. Most obviously, Nephi’s conclusion uses *the way* and *the doctrine of Christ* in explicit parallel declarations—equating the one to the other in successive sentences: “*And now, behold, . . . this is the way; and there is none other way nor name given under heaven whereby man can be saved in the kingdom of God. And now, behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*” (2 Nephi 31:21; emphasis added).

Secondly, Nephi also uses the image of a “straight<sup>11</sup> and narrow path” as the way to visualize how the doctrine of Christ functions in our lives. His father had done the same thing earlier when he reported a rod of iron along a straight and narrow path that led to the tree laden with the fruit which “was desirable above all other fruit” (1 Nephi 8:12, 19–20). Jacob offered a somewhat rearranged version of Nephi’s image with the gate being placed at

the end of the straight path: “Remember that his *paths* are righteous. Behold, *the way* for man is narrow, but it lieth in *a straight course* before him, and the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; . . . and there is *none other way* save it be by the gate” (2 Nephi 9:41; emphasis added). Alma combined these understandings of the way back to God with the function of the compass that was heaven-sent to Lehi, which showed them *a straight course* to the promised land:

For behold, it is as easy to give heed to the word of Christ, which will point to you *a straight course* to eternal bliss, as it was for our fathers to give heed to this compass, which would point unto them *a straight course* to the promised land.

And now I say, is there not a type in this thing? For just as surely as this director did bring our fathers, by following its *course*, to the promised land, shall the words of Christ, if we follow *their course*, carry us beyond this vale of sorrow into a far better land of promise.

O my son, do not let us be slothful because of the easiness of *the way*; for so was it with our fathers; for so was it prepared for them, that if they would look they might live; even so it is with us. *The way* is prepared, and if we will look we may live forever. (Alma 37:44–46; emphasis added)

### The *Word(s)* of Christ or God as a Synonym for *Gospel*

Another even more frequently used surrogate term for “gospel” or “doctrine” is “the [his] word.” While the revelations of the Doctrine and Covenants follow the New Testament pattern in using variations of the phrase “preach my/the gospel” more than twice as frequently as “preach my/the word,” the Book of Mormon exhibits a dramatically reversed preference, using “word” almost ten times as frequently as “gospel” in these constructions.<sup>12</sup> That “the word[s] of Christ” and “the gospel of Christ” are interchangeable terms is clear in several Book of Mormon passages.<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, it does not appear to ever follow the Johannine model of referring to Christ himself as “the word.”

In the Book of Mormon both singular and plural forms of “word” are used frequently (962 occurrences) to refer to the contents of speeches, conversations, books, and letters—as well as to prophecies and to the gospel. Of particular interest is the technical meaning given to the term “word(s) of Christ” by Nephi in 2 Nephi 31–32. In this passage Nephi quotes the Son to explain that after receiving the Holy Ghost, men “can speak with . . . the tongue of angels” and to urge his readers to “press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ” that they might “have eternal life” (2 Nephi 31:14, 20). Perhaps sensing a need to connect the dots more clearly for his readers, Nephi

Gary L. Kapp, *The Three Nephites*, © Intellectual Reserve, Inc.



“I have given unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you.”

goes on to explain that we could not “speak with the tongue of angels save it were by the Holy Ghost” (2 Nephi 32:2). He had therefore instructed us to “feast upon the words of Christ” because they “will tell you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:3). In a final effort to make his point perfectly clear, he simply states, “If ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do.”<sup>14</sup> Nephi seems to understand the iron rod described in Lehi’s version of this vision as serving this same function when he says, “The rod of iron, which my father had seen, was the word of God, which led to the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life” (1 Nephi 11:25).

In addition to the kind of private or individual guidance described in this passage, the Book of Mormon writers speak of prophecies and revelations as the “words of Christ” or the “words of God.” And frequently, “the word” refers specifically to the basic six-element gospel message. By my count, this more restricted meaning is indicated explicitly in 79 different passages. In another 199 passages, this same meaning seems to me to be implicit. Even more numerous are the other references that seem to refer to specific prophecies or

divine actions that evidence God's power in this world—without suggesting a focus on this central gospel message.

One clear example of this explicit equation of “the word” with the gospel occurs in the last speech of Jesus to his Nephite disciples in 3 Nephi 27:16–18, which is preceded by the prefatory statements that “I have given unto you my gospel, and this is the gospel which I have given unto you,” in verse 13: “And it shall come to pass, that whoso repenteth and is baptized in my name shall be filled; and if he endureth to the end, behold, him will I hold guiltless before my Father at that day when I shall stand to judge the world. . . . And this is *the word* which he hath given unto the children of men” (emphasis added). Other examples include different combinations of the six elements.<sup>15</sup>

Typical examples of implicit reference to the six-element gospel message include the following:

Alma 17:12: “The sons of Mosiah . . . took courage to go forth unto the Lamanites to declare unto them the word of God.”

Alma 31:11: “Alma and his brethren went into the land to preach the word unto them.”

Moroni 9:4: “When I speak the word of God with sharpness they tremble and anger against me.”

Clearly, different forms of the phrase “the word(s) (of Christ or God)” are frequently used to signify the doctrine or the gospel of Christ.

### **The Gospel and the Plan of Salvation**

Because Latter-day Saints sometimes equate the gospel of Jesus Christ with the plan of salvation, it may be helpful to clarify the distinction between these two concepts. This common confusion arises because the preaching of the gospel is one part of the plan of salvation and because the gospel message is only possible because of the plan of salvation. It does not stand independently from it, but the plan of salvation features all those things that God has done for his children. It includes an account of the pre-earth life and the planning for this earth as a probation for God's spirit children; the Creation; the Fall; the Atonement of Christ, which makes humanity's redemption possible; the preaching of the gospel in this world and in the spirit world; the final judgment of all God's children according to their responses to the gospel; and the final state of his children after that judgment, whether they have received eternal life or some lesser reward. The gospel, on the other hand, features those things that mortals must do as they respond to God's invitation to repent and

come unto him if they would be saved in the kingdom of God. Understood in this way, the plan of salvation provides the context that makes the gospel both meaningful and important. As I have argued elsewhere, “The gospel message makes no sense apart from an understanding of the historical reality of the fall, the atonement of Christ, and a final judgment for each person.”<sup>16</sup>

### The Two Ways

Both the Old and New Testaments feature the image of the two ways: one leads to heaven, peace, and life; and the other leads to hell, misery, and death.<sup>17</sup> The Old Testament prophets proclaimed “the way of the Lord,” which the New Testament writers found fulfilled in Jesus Christ.<sup>18</sup> Proverbs invokes this image relentlessly as in this example from Proverbs 4:18–19: “But the *path* of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. *The way* of the wicked *is* as darkness: they know not at what they stumble” (emphasis added). Jesus himself expands on this description of the two ways in Matthew 7:13–14: “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”

While the New Testament uses all three terms—*gospel*, *doctrine*, and *way*—it never links them together as clearly or deliberately as does the Book of Mormon. *Gospel* was an English neologism created to translate the Greek *euangelion*, which means simply “good news.” *Doctrine* means “teaching” and can be translated as *didaskalia* in Greek. *The way* is a translation for *hodos*, and a variety of other terms referring to roads, paths, courses of travel, or manners of thinking or acting. The Book of Mormon characterizes the gospel as the guide for all men who wish to live this life in such a way that they can receive eternal life. Because of this it can easily be equated with the teaching or doctrine of Christ or more graphically as the road or path that leads to eternal life—without any necessity to accommodate differences in meaning.

The idea of *the way* is explicitly drawn from Isaiah 40:3, when the gospels describe John the Baptist as the one prophesied to “prepare . . . the way of the Lord.”<sup>19</sup> Luke in particular referred to the early Christian movement as “the way,” as can be seen in Acts 24 and other references, “However, I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. . . . Then Felix, who was well acquainted with the Way, adjourned the proceedings” (Acts 24:14, 22, NIV).<sup>20</sup> This terminology for referring to the

Christian movement was used widely in the first Christian centuries as its common name or nickname. It is generally assumed by scholars that it derives from Jesus's own self-description: "I am the way" (John 14:6).

### The Gospel and the Everlasting Covenant

Finally, it should also be pointed out that in the revelations of the Restoration, the gospel is referred to as the "everlasting covenant." This equivalence of terminology is stated clearly in a revelation received October 25, 1831: "Verily I say unto you, blessed are you for receiving *mine everlasting covenant*, even *the fulness of my gospel*, sent forth unto the children of men, that they might have life and be made partakers of the glories which are to be revealed in the last days, as it was written by the prophets and apostles in days of old" (D&C 66:2; emphasis added).

A few days later, the "Lord's preface," received on November 1, 1831, explained the purpose of the Restoration with the same language: "That *mine everlasting covenant* might be established; That *the fulness of my gospel* might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world" (D&C 1:22–23; emphasis added).

Two days later, this equivalence was stated clearly again: "And for this cause, that men might be made partakers of the glories which were to be revealed, the Lord sent forth *the fulness of his gospel*, his *everlasting covenant*, reasoning in plainness and simplicity" (D&C 133:57; emphasis added). Two months later, James Covill was told in another revelation that he should "preach *the fulness of my gospel*, which I have sent forth in these last days, *the covenant* which I have sent forth" (D&C 39:11; emphasis added). The connection was articulated in a slightly different way two years later: "When men are called unto *mine everlasting gospel*, and covenant with *an everlasting covenant*, they are accounted as the salt of the earth and the savor of men" (D&C 101:39; emphasis added). These passages and others<sup>21</sup> clearly indicate the covenantal focus of the gospel message, the way back to our Father in Heaven, that was promised to all men "before the world began" (Titus 1:2).

### Conclusion

The Book of Mormon contains the fulness of the gospel, which is understood as the good news or teaching that through faith in Jesus Christ, men and women can come unto Christ by repenting of their sins and being baptized in water. For all who do this sincerely, the Father will send a remission of sins

and many spiritual gifts by the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, which will provide them with the guidance and strength necessary to endure to the end and receive eternal life. Following Nephi, the Book of Mormon writers consistently used a handful of interchangeable terms to refer to this gospel. They sometimes refer to it as the doctrine of Christ or the gospel of Jesus Christ, but even more often as “the way” or as “the word.” While Latter-day Saint writers sometimes equate the gospel with the plan of salvation, Book of Mormon writers reserve this latter term to invoke the full list of things God has done to make salvation possible. They use these interchangeable gospel terms to indicate that one part of the plan of salvation that is preached to God’s children so that they can know what they must do to qualify for this salvation. In the revelations of the Restoration, the gospel is also called the everlasting covenant and is recognized as the only means by which mortals can take full advantage of the Atonement and the plan of salvation and return to dwell in heaven with their Eternal Father. **RE**

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## Notes

1. See D&C 20:9; 27:5; 42:12; compare D&C 135:3.

2. See Mario S. De Pillis, “The Quest for Religious Authority and the Rise of Mormonism,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 1 (Spring 1966): 66–88. Using the clarification of the gospel provided in the Book of Mormon as a guide, we can go back to the New Testament and find the fulness of the gospel there as well, though not so clearly and authoritatively defined. An example of how this works can be seen in Noel B. Reynolds, “Understanding Christian Baptism through the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (2012): 4–37, especially 17–26.

3. *Inclusio* is used here in the sense developed by biblical scholars and defined by David Ulansey as “the narrative device common in biblical texts in which a detail is repeated at the beginning and the end of a narrative unit in order to “bracket off” the unit and give it a sense of closure and structural integrity.” See David Ulansey, “The Heavenly Veil Torn: Mark’s Cosmic *Inclusio*,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 110, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 123. Literary scholars also refer to the *inclusio* as an “envelope structure—in fact a structure popular in many biblical genres—in which significant terms introduced at the beginning are brought back prominently at the end.” See an account of how these structures are used prominently in the Psalms in Robert Alter, “Psalms,” in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Boston: Harvard University, 1987), 255ff.

4. See especially Noel B. Reynolds, “The Gospel of Jesus Christ as Taught by the Nephite Prophets,” *BYU Studies* 31, no. 3 (1991): 31–50, for the original exposition of these three passages. The article is also available online: <https://byustudies.byu.edu/showTitle.aspx?title=6054>.

5. See 1 Nephi chapters 8 and 11–14 and commentary in chapters 10 and 15. Lehi reports in 1 Nephi 10:11 after his vision, telling his sons about “the gospel” that would be

preached among the Jews. In 2 Nephi 9:25–26, Jacob is shown teaching the same gospel message that Nephi will later explain and document in 2 Nephi 31.

6. The Father is quoted in verses 11, 15, and 20. The Son is quoted in verses 10, 12, and 14.

7. The basic rationale for this count was presented in my first paper on this topic. See Reynolds, “Gospel of Jesus Christ,” 31–32.

8. As Nephi makes clear, faith in Jesus Christ is not one of the steps, but is the foundation that underlies each of these four steps (2 Nephi 31:19–20).

9. A more extensive analysis of each of these six elements as they are understood by Book of Mormon writers has been published previously in Noel B. Reynolds, “The True Points of My Doctrine,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5, no. 2 (1996): 26–56. That Jesus provides the example or shows men the way is a clear theme of 2 Nephi 31. See especially verses 7, 9, 12–13, 16–17. Though sinless, it was necessary for him to humble himself before the Father and witness “unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments” (2 Nephi 31:7). A comprehensive and focused study of baptism of water was published in Reynolds, “Understanding Christian Baptism.”

10. Some of the best New Testament examples (Matthew 3:3, 7:13–14, John 14:6, Acts 24:14, 22) are discussed near the end of this article.

11. See Noel B. Reynolds and Royal Skousen, “Was the Path Nephi Saw ‘Strait and Narrow’ or ‘Straight and Narrow’?” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 10, no. 2 (2001): 30–33, for an explanation of why we believe the original 1830 spelling “straight” should have been retained in later editions. Further, see Royal Skousen’s more detailed exposition of this question in his *Analysis of Textual Variants of the Book of Mormon: Part One (1 Nephi 1–2 Nephi 10)* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2004), 174–81, which articulates what I find to be a convincing argument for “straight” in 1 Nephi 8:20. For a different opinion on this issue, see Paul Y. Hoskisson, “Straightening Things Out: The Use of *Strait* and *Straight* in the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12, no. 2 (2003): 58–71, 114–17.

12. By my count, the Doctrine and Covenants uses variations of “preach my gospel” 41 times and of “preach my word” 15 times. The New Testament ratio is similar—51 to 24—but the Book of Mormon ratio is only 6 to 57.

13. See 3 Nephi 21:22–26; 28:23; 27:13–18.

14. While worded quite differently, this seems to fit perfectly with the Restoration instruction to priesthood holders that they were ordained “to preach my gospel by the Spirit, even the Comforter” (D&C 50:14–20).

15. See 2 Nephi 31:20, Jacob 6:5–8, Jarom 1:9–12, Mosiah 4:2–3, Mosiah 18:7, Mosiah 18:32, Mosiah 25:17–22, Mosiah 26:34, Alma 8:8–10, Alma 8:29–30, Alma 16:13–15, Alma 17:16–18, Alma 24:15, Alma 32:13–14, Alma 42:4–5, Alma 42:31, Alma 48:19, Alma 49:30, Alma 62:45, Helaman 3:27–30, Helaman 6:1–5, Helaman 13:5–8, Helaman 14:8–13, Helaman 16:1–5, 3 Nephi 5:4, 3 Nephi 5:13, 3 Nephi 12:1–2, 3 Nephi 19:21–23, 3 Nephi 21:11, 3 Nephi 21:22–26, 3 Nephi 23:4–5, 3 Nephi 30:1–2, Ether 5:4–5, Moroni 6:4, Moroni 7:25–27, Moroni 7:30–31, Moroni 8:7–10, and Moroni 8:28–29.

16. Reynolds, “Gospel of Jesus Christ,” 33.

17. Compare Psalm 16:11; Proverbs 3:17; 6:23; 8:32; 10:17, 29; 11:5; 12:28; 13:6; 15:24; 16:7, 17; Jeremiah 21:8; Acts 2:28; Romans 3:17; with Proverbs 7:27; 13:15; 14:12; 16:25; 21:16; 22:5, 25; Isaiah 59:7.

18. Compare Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1 with Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:2–3, Luke 3:4, 7:27, John 1:23, and Acts 18:25–26.

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19. Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:2–3; Luke 3:4–6; John 1:23. The contemporary Essenes also referred to their way of life as “the Way.” See Community Rule, 1QS 8.13–16; 9.16–21. For a quick and convenient summary of “the way” as applied to Christianity, see Joseph Pathrapankal, “The Way,” in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 793–94.

20. Compare Acts 9:2; 22:4.

21. See also D&C 22:1–2; 45:8–9; 49:8–14; 66:2; 76:101. For the purposes of this paper, I have not seen a need to make the distinction between “everlasting gospel” and “everlasting covenant” that is frequently made by Latter-day Saint writers. This “eternal covenant” seems to me most easily equated with the covenant we make when we repent and receive the gospel, which covenant we witness to the Father at the time we are baptized. See Reynolds, “Understanding Christian Baptism,” especially 8–9.