

Dear friends,

I am doing two things differently this week in an attempt to insure that you don't have trouble getting this. If they work, I will continue to send them this way hereafter. One is that I am sending it rich text format. I am assured that you should have no trouble getting it in that format. Also I am using the blind carbon copy system for the addresses. That way, my friends tell me, your computer won't think it is a mass mailing and treat it as trash. I hope this works for you. Thanks to each of you for answering my questions last week. I really appreciate it.
Thank you for being my friends
LeGrand

28 November 2004

Dear friends,

I'm sure you will all be delighted to know that Dil Rust was recently ordained a stake patriarch. Congratulations Dil.

Next week we will do Mosiah 26:1-13.

Two weeks ago I promised you I would discuss the word "comfort" as it is sometimes used as a scriptural code word to mean the blessings associated with sacral kingship and priesthood. Again I thank Bruce for editing this for me before I send it to you.
My love to each of you
LeGrand

Isaiah 61:3 includes the phrase
to comfort all that mourn;

This is the passage in Isaiah that the Saviour paraphrased in the Beatitudes when he said: "Blessed are all they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." The reason the dead "mourn" is because they "had looked upon the long absence of their spirits from their bodies as a bondage." (D&C 138:50)

So one would expect that to "comfort" them, would be to give them all the ordinances of the temple with the attendant promise of a glorious resurrection.

and that is the comfort that is promised in this chapter of Isaiah. Some of those ordinances are described in the next verse which is introduced by the phrase: "To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion,...." That is, the way to provide the comfort is to make them a part of Zion – and that idea is more complex than it may appear at first glance.

"Zion" is one of those words we use so frequently that one might easily become numbed to the upper nuances of its meaning. The point of view we take most often is that Zion is a

congregation or community of Latter-day Saints. That use has become so common that it is almost elevated to the status of Mormon joke where “Zion” denotes Utah – often only “Happy Valley” – or else the whimsical rebuttal, “Zion is really only in California.” The quips work because they are apt. For example, the Lord used “Zion” to denote the Saints who were in Kirtland.

13 For I have consecrated the land of Kirtland in mine own due time for the benefit of the saints of the Most High, and for a stake to Zion.

14 For Zion must increase in beauty, and in holiness; her borders must be enlarged; her stakes must be strengthened; yea, verily I say unto you, Zion must arise and put on her beautiful garments.

15 Therefore, I give unto you this commandment, that ye bind yourselves by this covenant, and it shall be done according to the laws of the Lord. (D&C 88: 13-15)

It is difficult to know, from the Old Testament, exactly what “Zion” meant then. At one time, it was clearly the name of a geographical place, perhaps the location of the “old city” of Jerusalem. Two scriptures which suggest that are:

Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion : the same is the city of David.(2 Samuel 5:7)

and

Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel, unto king Solomon in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the city of David, which is Zion . (1 Kings 8:1)

However, after the Temple was built, the scriptures suggest that “Zion” referred specifically to the Temple itself, and often more explicitly to the Holy of Holies which was God’s throne room.

Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings. (Psalms 9:11)

and

Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion; (Psalms 20:2)

and

In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion . (Psalms 76:2)

and

O Zion , that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! [If one is to symbolically “Behold your God,” one would have to be in the Holy of Holies to do it.] (Isaiah 40:9)

Another important such statement is from the same chapter in Isaiah that was quoted by the priests of king Noah:

Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion ; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. (Isaiah 52:1)

That scripture is also quoted by Jacob in 2 Nephi 8:24, and by the Saviour in 3 Nephi 20:36. It is paraphrased by Moroni in a statement which I shall describe below as a part of a highly abridged but remarkably complete review of the entire endowment/enthronement ceremony:

31 And awake, and arise from the dust, O Jerusalem; yea, and put on thy beautiful garments, O daughter of Zion ; and strengthen thy stakes and enlarge thy borders forever, that thou mayest no more be confounded, that the covenants of the Eternal Father which he hath made unto thee, O house of Israel, may be fulfilled. (Moroni 10:31)

Given the subtextual context of that statement, it is apparent that “Zion” meant more than just the physical city or the physical temple, and one is left to wonder why the temple – or the temple site – was called “Zion.” The most likely reason may be deduced from the fact that the word “Zion” originally had nothing to do with Jerusalem at all, but dates back to the time before the Flood.

18 [In the days of Enoch] the Lord called his people ZION, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.

19 And Enoch continued his preaching in righteousness unto the people of God. And it came to pass in his days, that he built a city that was called the City of Holiness, even ZION.

20 And it came to pass that Enoch talked with the Lord; and he said unto the Lord: Surely Zion shall dwell in safety forever. But the Lord said unto Enoch: Zion have I blessed, but the residue of the people have I cursed.

21 And it came to pass that the Lord showed unto Enoch all the inhabitants of the earth; and he beheld, and lo, Zion, in process of time, was taken up into heaven. And the Lord said unto Enoch: Behold mine abode forever. (Moses 7:18-21)

After that, as I suggested above, Noah’s son Shem (Melchizedek), reigned in Jerusalem where he built a temple on the same site as Solomon later built his. {1} If that is really what happened, then Jerusalem became a second Zion after the flood, and the designation remained until long after the time of David.

In the Psalms the notion of Zion is sometimes used to mean, not just the temple itself, but also the cultural, social, or personal results of the ceremonies performed there. For example, the coronation psalm which declares, “thou art my son,” also says, “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.” (Psalms 2:6) That may be read as simply the king reigned in Jerusalem, but it is more probably a reference to the king’s sitting on God’s throne in the Holy of Holies. In either case, Zion is not only the cite of the Temple, it is the place where one reigns as king and son of God. It is apparent that anciently, the word “Zion” carried with it, not only the idea of people who worshiped Jehovah, and of the place in Jerusalem where God dwelt and where the king was

coronated, but it also meant the people who participated in the endowment/coronation ordinances and thus who became sacral kings and priests, sacral queens and priestesses.

Given those several definitions of Zion, it would, no doubt, be correct to simply read the statement, “To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion,” to mean that the dead who accept the gospel will become members of the Church. However, it may be more correct to read it differently from that.

“Zion” has a meaning which reaches the beyond the coronation of kings. One remembers that it was Enoch’s “Zion,” that “in process of time, was taken up into heaven. And the Lord said unto Enoch: Behold mine abode forever.” (Moses 7:21b)

Isaiah’s description of Zion is a classic description of eternal kingship and priesthood.

16 And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people. (Isaiah 51:16 & 2 Nephi 8:16)

Lets look at it again:

And I have put my words in thy mouth, [The calling of a prophet: below I have compared *sode* experiences of several prophets and pointed out that in each instance the Lord formally formally and by ordinance, gave the prophet the words he should speak.]

and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, [ordination]

that I may plant the heavens [Usually, in such contexts, “heavens” and “stars” are references to the members of the Council in Heaven.]

and lay the foundations of the earth, [creation]

Notice the sequence so far:

1. Put the words in the prophets’ mouths, that is give them an assignment;
2. ordain them or give them blessings;
3. “plant” them, that is, put them where they belong in the world’s history so they can fulfill those assignments;

and then:

say unto Zion, Thou art my people.

There is a strange passage in Isaiah which is quoted by Jacob in the Book of Mormon. Jacob said that he quoted it “that ye might know concerning the covenants of the Lord,” and it is clearly that. In that same chapter, Isaiah quotes the Lord as saying,

And I have put my words in thy mouth [a usual part of a *sode* experience which

portrays the events of the Council in Heaven], **and have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand** [ordination], **that I may plant the heavens** [members of the Council] **and lay the foundations of the earth** [creation], **and say unto Zion** [those who are pure in heart]: **Behold, thou art my people.** [That verse starts at the Council in Heaven and goes all the way through the history of mankind, up to the time of his exaltation.] **(2 Nephi 8:16 and Isaiah 51:16)**

So that establishes the context of this strange scripture:

1 Hearken unto me, ye that follow after righteousness. Look unto the rock from whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit from whence ye are digged.

2 Look unto Abraham, your father, and unto Sarah, she that bare you; for I called him alone, and blessed him.

The thing that is strange is that it seems to be identifying Abraham as the rock and Sarah as the pit. I now question that interpretation because it does not make sense in light of the next verse.

3 For the Lord shall comfort Zion, he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody. (2 Nephi 8:1-3 and Isaiah 51: 1-3)

It might be said that the Lord could “comfort Zion” by supporting her in her mourning, but the only way he can “comfort all her waste places” is by crowning the land with fruitful fields – an empowerment. As I read those verses, “empowerment” also comes near to describing the way he will comfort Zion. After the king was anointed (and apparently after he received the Melchizedek Priesthood), he sat upon the throne of God in the Holy of Holies, with his feet established on the Ark of the Covenant. The Rock on which the Holy of Holies was built was believed to be the connecting place between heaven and earth, and the Ark was placed *in* a shallow pit cut from that rock, so that the Ark was not sitting on the Rock, but was an extension of it, and the king (whose feet rested under the cherubim wings of the Ark) was thus an extension of both the Ark and the Rock. So the king himself is the connecting place between heaven and earth. The king actually sat there, but symbolically, everyone who watched the ceremony was sitting there also. If that rock is the “rock from whence ye are hewn,” and if the pit which defines the oneness of the Rock and the Ark is the “hole of the pit from whence ye are digged,” then the references to Abraham and Sarah in the next verse are not only references to their parenthood, but also connote the priesthood birthright blessings of Abraham and Sarah that are given to each of their descendants.

{2}

In Section 76, among the statements describing those who will be in the Celestial Kingdom, the Lord said,

These are they who are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all. (D&C 76:66)

The reason that is true, and the key to understanding the ultimate meaning of “Zion” is found in

logic trail that begins with Section 97:

Therefore, verily, thus saith the Lord, let Zion rejoice, for this is Zion --THE PURE IN HEART; therefore, let Zion rejoice, while all the wicked shall mourn. (D&C 97:21)

With that definitive statement, one can return again to the Beatitudes to note the sequence:

7 And blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. [The quality of sacral kingship]

8 And blessed are all the pure in heart ["Zion"], **for they shall see God.** [as shown in the scriptures just quoted]

9 And blessed are all the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. [receive the covenant/king name: son or daughter of God]

Nephi wrote the same thing, but explained that more fully:

And blessed ["in the state of the gods" {3}] **are they who shall seek to bring forth my Zion** [the pure in heart] **at that day, for they shall have the gift and the power of the Holy Ghost** [note there are two: the "gift" which comes after baptism, and the "power" which, I presume, comes later]; **and if they endure unto the end they shall be lifted up at the last day, and shall be saved in the everlasting kingdom of the Lamb; and whoso shall publish peace** [be a peacemaker], **yea, tidings of great joy, how beautiful upon the mountains shall they be** [– that is, they will sit upon the throne of God in the Holy of Holies]. (1 Nephi 13:37)

So that brings us full circle, back to Isaiah 52 and the scriptures with which Abinadi met the challenge of the priests of Noah. It also brings us back where we were to the passage in Isaiah 61 which 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;

2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;

3 To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.

The reason we had to spend so much time defining “Zion” is because of the pairing:

**to comfort all that mourn;
To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion,**

In that relationship, to comfort them, and to make them a part of Zion, are the same thing.

“Comfort” is one of the most important code words we will examine, and it must be examined within the framework of the sacral kingship which is asserted in making one a part of Zion. But the word “comfort” presents an intriguing problem.

There are many places in the scriptures where comfort implies a lessening of grief or misery by trying to calm someone or by trying to inspire them with happiness or hope. But there are other scriptures which imply ordinances, and suggest empowerment – that is, they use “comfort” very differently from our modern sense.

In the Elizabethan English of the King James Old Testament, to “comfort” meant to empower, coming from the Latin roots meaning “with strength.” The word “comfort” as it is used in several places in the scriptures has caused me a good deal of tizzy about its meaning. My frustration comes from the fact that, in context, the translation in Elizabethan English seems to be a better word than the modern understanding of the Hebrew original. In modern Hebrew lexicons the concept of giving strength is in the form that means to nurture– the way we usually read “comfort” to mean to console, or to ease physical or mental pain. But in the Old Testament (and therefore in the Beatitudes) it seems to have a much stronger meaning than that. If there were just this one example where to comfort was juxtapositioned with the ideas of enthronement it could be easily ignored, but as I will point out, in at least Psalm 23, Isaiah 40 and Isaiah 61, “comfort” is used in conjunction with symbols that denote the ceremonies of endowment/enthronement – which is ultimate empowerment, as it is also ultimate nurture.

My unanswered question was: “What was there about the Hebrew word, as it was understood in England almost 500 years ago by the scholars who translated the King James Bible, that caused them to use an English word which carried such strong connotations of empowerment. The answer is, I don’t know, and I can’t find anyone who does. I’m not going to trouble you any more with the problem, unless you want to read the long footnote I have attached, but you need to know that I am going to treat “comfort” as though the English translators knew what they were doing – because they did it consistently – and discuss “comfort” as though it meant empowerment – and specifically the kind of empowerment that is implied in the coronation of kings, and the anointing of sacral kings and priests.

Unfortunately there is no such thing as a pre-exilic Hebrew dictionary, so there is no ultimate source one can check to ask what Isaiah meant when he used the word which is translated “comfort.” The late 19th century lexicon at the back of Strong’s *Concordance* defines the word essentially the same as the larger and more detailed ones I consulted. It says the Hebrew means, 5162 nacham naw-kham' a primitive root; properly, to sigh, i.e. breathe strongly; by implication, to be sorry, i.e. (in a favorable sense) to pity, console or (reflexively) rue; or

(unfavorably) to avenge (oneself):--comfort (self), ease (one's self), repent(-er,-ing, self).

In contrast, the first and oldest English definition in the OED is to strengthen, and the nearest example the OED gives to the time of the translation of the King James Bible suggests a military support.

... strengthening, encouragement, excitement, aid, succour, support, countenance.... 1622.
Bacon, Henry VII, "The comfort that the rebels should receive underhand from the earl of Kildare." {4}

In the Bacon quote, "comfort" is clearly about empowerment rather than consolation.

The difference between the Hebrew and English definitions is that in the 1622 citation, when the English word was nearer in time to its Latin origins, the first definition of "comfort" meant what the Latin said: "with strength." or to strengthen. It still meant that in 1787 when the American Constitution was written, and treason was defined as "giving aid and comfort to the enemy." I found the key I was looking for in a little book by Gary Anderson. {5}

This verb "to comfort" (*n-h-m*) does not connote a simple act of emotional identification. Comfort can imply either the symbolic action of *assuming the state of mourning* alongside the mourner, or it can have the nuance of *bringing about the cessation of mourning*. In grammatical terms, the former usage reflects a *processual* usage of the verb, while the latter usage would be *resultative*. {6}

He goes on to explain:

The latter usage, to bring about the cessation of mourning, is very common in prophetic oracles of deliverance. The famous exhortation of Isaiah 40:1, "Comfort, comfort, my people," comes to mind immediately. As Westermann noted, the term conveys "God's intervention to help and restore." Indeed, the term has this meaning in most of Isaiah. {7}

Anderson's definition can account for the way the English translators used the word "comfort" to mean the bestowal of authority or power, and it also adds substantial depth to the meaning of some scripture. For example, a scripture where "comfort" might be read as "to give consolation" can also be read "to give power or authority":

31 O Lord, my heart is exceedingly sorrowful; wilt thou comfort my soul in Christ. O Lord, wilt thou grant unto me that I may have strength, that I may suffer with patience these afflictions which shall come upon me, because of the iniquity of this people.

32 O Lord, wilt thou comfort my soul, and give unto me success, and also my fellow laborers who are with me – yea, Ammon, and Aaron, and Omner, and also Amulek and Zeezrom and also my two sons – yea, even all these wilt thou comfort, O Lord. Yea, wilt thou comfort their souls in Christ. (Alma 31:31-32)

In that passage, one may read "comfort" as making the missionaries feel better, or one may read the request, "wilt thou comfort their souls in Christ" as a prayer asking for their actual

redemption, or at least for the spiritual power to exercise priesthood authority.

But there are some scriptures where “comfort” clearly means a great deal more than a pat on the head or an understanding hug.

For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody. (Isaiah 51: 3 and 2 Nephi 8:3)

We will discuss this verse in a fuller context below. For the present it is sufficient to say that Zion is comforted by being redeemed – returned as to Eden in the presence of God, because her land is to be comforted by turning her wilderness into a garden of Eden. At a minimum, both ideas suggest the fulfillment of the promises of the endowment/coronation ordinances, and therefore are an important key to the meaning of “comfort.” {8}

As one would expect, in modern revelation the Lord uses that word in the same way it is used in the ancient scriptures. A simple, but telling example is in the story of the birth of Noah.

8 And Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and begat a son,

9 And he called his name Noah, saying: This son shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed. (Moses 8:8-9)

There “comfort” means empowerment in the most practical possible way. Noah’s father is a man of the fields. Times are hard, and the harvests are bad, and he sees in the birth of this child a son who “shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands.” There the anticipated comfort is that the boy will help the family by performing hard manual labor.

In the Doctrine and Covenants, “comfort” is used to describe what appears to be a coronation ordinance.

53 Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, and Methuselah, who were all high priests, with the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing.

54 And the Lord appeared unto them, and they rose up and blessed Adam, and called him Michael, the prince, the archangel.

55 And the Lord administered comfort unto Adam, and said unto him: I have set thee to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of thee, and thou art a prince over them forever.

56 And Adam stood up in the midst of the congregation; and, notwithstanding he was bowed down with age, being full of the Holy Ghost, predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation. (D&C 107:53-56)

I suppose verse 55 could be read that Adam wasn't feeling very good that day, and the Lord patted him on the head and assured him that things would be OK. But that seems like a terribly weak way of reading it. Rather, the way I would choose to read it is:

And the Lord administered [that word denotes an ordinance] **comfort** [that describes the nature of the ordinance – he is making Adam the king of the world] **unto Adam, and said unto him:** [and what follows is the blessing of his endowment/coronation ordinance] **I have set thee to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of thee, and thou art a prince over them forever.**

That sheds an interesting light on Alma's words at the Waters of Mormon. Here again, the word "comfort" can be read as just making someone feel better, but it can be read differently as well.

8 And it came to pass that he said unto them: Behold, here are the waters of Mormon (for thus were they called) and now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called his people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light;

9 Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life –

10 Now I say unto you, if this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before him that ye have entered into a covenant with him, that ye will serve him and keep his commandments, that he may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you? (Mosiah 18:8-10) .

A usual way of reading verse 9 is that "to mourn with those that mourn" means the same as to "comfort those that stand in need of comfort." However, what follows "comfort" suggests something quite different from that. Anciently, one would stand to make or give assent to a covenant. {9} If that is the meaning of "stand" in this scripture, then "to stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life," may suggest that to "comfort those that stand in need of comfort" may imply the giving and receiving of ordinances and of the powers attendant thereto. That notion is made stronger by the fact that this baptismal ordinance was not a token for the remission of sins (Unless these people had completely abandoned all pretense of living the religion Nephi taught, they would have already been baptized for the remission of sins.), but that it is a token of the covenant that they would support each other and the church – it was a baptism into an order they would live in the wilderness that looks very much like they were living the law of consecration. {10}

In Isaiah 61, in the statements which immediately precede the coronation ceremony, we have read: "...to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion" I have tried to

establish that “to comfort” means to empower (in this instance to empower by enthronement), and that Zion is a society of redeemed saints.

There are two other important examples where “comfort” is used in about the same way as it is in Isaiah 61. One is in the first two verses of Isaiah 40.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. (Isaiah 40:1-2)

Here again, Isaiah used the same code words as he did in chapter 61.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

These are the beginning words of Isaiah’s commentary on the temple drama which begins with chapter 40 and continues through the end. It begins with the deliberations of the Council in Heaven. We can know that because the word “ye” is plural. Frank M. Cross has shown that the persons whom God is addressing are the members of the Council. {11} In this verse, “God” is translated from the word “Elohim.” Whenever Elohim is represented as speaking to a group of people in the Old Testament, it is always to the Council, just as it is in this instance. {12} His instructions are “Comfort ye my people.” Just as in Isaiah 61, where Isaiah follows “comfort” with instructions to wash, anoint, clothe, crown and give a new name – the entire coronation ceremony – so it appears that his instructions to the Council in Heaven have to do with making his people kings and priests. That meaning is made clear in the next verse.

2 Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

The codeword “double” is used twice in Isaiah 61 the same way it is used in chapter 40. It is a reference to birthright blessings. In ancient Israel a double portion was given to the heir who had the birthright. For example, if one had four children, he would divide his property into five parts, giving the birthright son the double. That is why there is no tribe of Joseph. He had the birthright and received a double portion, so he is represented by two tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh. In terms of the priesthood, the “double” is the birthright blessings of Abraham which one receives in conjunction with other priesthood blessings. Here, in Isaiah 40, as in Isaiah 61, “double” is the double portion given to the birthright “son” (the name-title of the anointed king). So in this instance it would be the priesthood birthright blessings of Abraham, which one receives from “the Lord’s hand.” If one reads that phrase to be a precise description of how one receives the “double” – the birthright blessings of Abraham – then the meaning of to “comfort” the people takes on great significance because it is about conferring the powers of sacral kingship and priesthood. That description could not be more explicit – but then, if one does not know how to read the code – neither could it be much more obscure.

The other example where comfort is used with an endowment /enthronement connotation is Psalm 23:4. I will discuss that in greater detail later on, but will now only note the phrase “...thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” In the context of that psalm, the rod a symbol of kingly authority, and of Priesthood authority – as in the rod of Moses and the staff of Aaron.

{13} So what the verse says is “I am empowered by the symbols of kingship and priesthood.”

There is one more important idea that I think needs to be expressed here: To be comforted may not mean to bring about an end to sorrow, but it may mean to bring about an end to one’s vulnerability to sorrow. To explain that, I need to try to tie a bunch of ideas together by relying on the sequence found in the Beatitudes:

- 1) Those who are comforted are Zion
- 2) Zion is the pure in heart
- 3) The pure in heart see God (are redeemed)
- 4) Those who have seen God are peacemakers (have received, and therefore can give, peace)
- 5) Peacemakers receive the new name: child of God (that is the conclusion of the coronation rites)
- 6) Theirs is the kingdom of heaven (It is theirs – they are its kings and queens, not its subjects.)
- 7) What follows is
 - a) persecution but the persecution cannot bring one to mourning,
 - b) become a missionary (salt)
 - c) become a blessing to the Kingdom of God (a light to this people) {14}

It seems to me that it is not until one has worked one’s way through that sequence that one can come to understand the relationship between: “comfort,” “Zion,” and “*bringing about the cessation of mourning*.” In other words, as I read the scriptures, the ones that use “comfort” in the strongest possible way, use it to indicate the fulfillment of promises one received during endowment/enthronement ceremonies of the ancient temple. {15} As I understand those scriptures, they teach that when one reached that end, one had not reached a place where the world is a bed of roses – and the cessation of mourning does not imply that there is nothing left to be sad about. Rather, it means one had a *hope* {16} that would override uncertainty, which is the foundation of one’s sorrows, and replaces it with a reality that moderated mourning. Perhaps it would be better to say that “comfort” was to bring about the cessation of one’s being subject to mourning. Given the context in Psalms 23 and Isaiah 40 and 61, but more especially the Beatitudes, “comfort” could not mean the cessation of sorrow, but it could mean a cessation of being incapacitated by grief. But it seems to be a bigger idea that: it suggests an ordinance enabling one to transcend pain and hurt to achieve serenity and peace.

So, assuming consistency in the use of the word (I assume the words in the scriptures mean the same thing in similar contexts in all the scriptures. If that were not true one would float about the texts without a sail or a rudder), “comfort” in Isaiah 40:1-2, 61:1-3, and Psalm 23:4 would all mean empowerment through the endowment/coronation rites, to bring about the cessation of one’s vulnerability to mourning. {17}

It may be important to note that the same scholars who used “comfort” to suggest coronation and empowerment in the Old Testament, used “comforter” to mean the Holy Ghost, and “another comforter” to mean the Saviour himself. In that instance, “comforter” could – in fact does – imply consolation, but it also means to achieve that end through eternal ordinance:

Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away. [And the Lord adds,] I, even I am he that comforteth you: (Isaiah 51:11-12a)

It seems to me that when one receives all the blessings associated with baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost, the empowerment one receives is that which is symbolized by Paul's "whole armor of God." {18} This would be so because the Spirit is an armor against sin, and therefore against the sorrow that results from sin. Another example would be the mourning that comes as a result of the death of a loved one. The Spirit can bring one's thinking to an eternal perspective, and laterally free one from the sense of mourning altogether (I know that, first hand.)

And it seems reasonable for me to suppose that in the case of the Second Comforter one's worldview would change so completely that not only would one have a better understanding about what things were really important, and what were not, but that one's sense of reality would also change, so one would understand what is real and what is only ephemeral. In such a reality, one would rejoice in that which is real, but would not be weighted down with mourning because of things which were not real.

I'm not expressing these ideas very well, because I don't know how. But I know three scriptures that say what I want to say. The first is one of Jim Cannon's favorites, because it describes Amulek's sense of what is important, and because of what it says about Alma and Amulek's friendship.

16 And it came to pass that Alma and Amulek, Amulek having forsaken all his gold, and silver, and his precious things, which were in the land of Ammonihah, for the word of God, he being rejected by those who were once his friends and also by his father and his kindred;

7 Therefore, after Alma having established the church at Sidom, seeing a great check, yea, seeing that the people were checked as to the pride of their hearts, and began to humble themselves before God, and began to assemble themselves together at their sanctuaries to worship God before the altar, watching and praying continually, that they might be delivered from Satan, and from death, and from destruction –

18 Now as I said, Alma having seen all these things, therefore he took Amulek and came over to the land of Zarahemla, and took him to his own house, and did administer unto him in his tribulations, and strengthened him in the Lord. (Alma 15:16-18)

The second is one of everyone's favorites, because it expresses the Saviour's understanding of reality just before he was arrested and taken to the cross.

31 Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?

32 Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. (John 16:31-33)

And the third is one of my favorites, because it expresses Joseph Smith's understanding of reality just before he died, and because of what it says about Jesus' friendship, and therefore the ultimate meaning of "comfort." I read it to say:

Joseph leaped from the window, and was shot dead in the attempt, exclaiming [to the Saviour who had come to be with him in his moment of triumph] *O Lord my God!* (D&C 135:1)

In Isaiah 61:3 there is a sequence of promises which follows the words, "to comfort all that mourn." That sequence constitutes the best description of the ancient Israelite coronation ceremony that can be found in the Old Testament. Non-Mormon scholars who do not understand the concept of salvation for the dead, and therefore cannot understand the overall meaning of Isaiah 61. Consequently they do not know why the coronation ceremony is in that chapter, but they recognize it for the ceremony that it is. Even though the context of verse 3 is about salvation for the dead, I wish to analyze the ceremony separately, as a description of the ancient royal temple coronation rites.

Before I do that, I need to explain the phrase, "to give unto them beauty for ashes."

Several scholars have pointed out that the reference to ashes is also a reference to a ceremonial washing.¹⁶ Each year the ancient Israelites would sacrifice a red heifer. They would burn the entire animal and save the ashes so that in the course of that year, whenever anyone seriously repented, or was in great sorrow, that person could get some of that ash and put it on his or her head. Sometimes one would also dress oneself in sackcloth, thus the phrase, "sackcloth and ashes." Later, at the end of the period of repentance or sorrow, the person would remove the ashes with a ceremonial washing. Those scholars assert that this reference in Isaiah 61 to replacing the ashes with "beauty" necessarily presupposes that there has already been a ritual washing.

The Isaiah 61:3 the coronation ceremony itself consists of four steps. They are:

- 1) a washing preparatory to receiving a crown: "to give unto them beauty for ashes,"
- 2) an anointing: "the oil of joy for mourning,"
- 3) ceremonial clothing: "the garment of praise"
- 4) new king name: "that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified."

So in Isaiah 61 and elsewhere, to comfort means to empower, and the kind of power it is referring to is the powers of sacral kingship and priesthood.

It is apparent to me that “comfort” means much more than cessation of sorrow, rather, it means overcoming the sorrow with help from the Lord. As I already observed, it seems to imply an ordinance empowering one to transcend pain and hurt to achieve serenity and peace. I think it is very significant that one of the names of the Holy Ghost is The Comforter, and that one of the names of the Saviour is Another Comforter. In the meaning of those names, I believe, one finds a promise of ultimate peace.

END NOTES

{1} Paul L. Maier, trans. and ed., *Josephus, the Essential Writings*, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1988, p. 367.

{2} The source for the Ark’s sitting in the Rock rather than on it is very credible. It is: Leen and Kathleen Ritmeyer, *Secrets of Jerusalem’s Temple Mount* (Washington D.C. Biblical Archaeology Society, 1998), p. 104.

{3} It comes from a footnote in W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *The Anchor Bible, Matthew* (New York, Doubleday, 1971), p.45. There they say that the word “blessed” in the New Testament’s Beatitudes is a classic Greek word which means “in the state of the gods.” Whatever Egyptian word Nephi used here in this preview of the Beatitudes, and whatever Reformed Egyptian word the Saviour used in Third Nephi, the Prophet Joseph Smith translated them both “blessed” just as the translators of the KJV New Testament translated that Greek word “blessed.” So, I presume, they all mean the same thing, and can all be read the same way.

{4} *Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, 2 vols. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1979), 1:662.

{5} Gary A. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance, The Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion* (University Park, Pennsylvania, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991). In a way, this was an unlikely place to find what I was looking for. Anderson does not believe that Isaiah 61: 3 represents a coronation ceremony, but that it is about a much simpler ritual having to do with formal mourning, as for the death of a loved one. (P.85) His argument is well made, and would be persuasive if it were not for D&C 138 which says the people who are “mourning” were already dead, and that Isaiah’s prophecy has to do with the redemption for the dead. Somehow Anderson sees that, but, of course, understands it to be only symbolic. On page 86 he writes, “In this text, comfort describes the movement from mourning to joy. This process could also be illustrated in the psalms of lamentation.” In footnote #78 he adds,

Note, e.g., Ps 71:20-21. In this text, comfort is equated with the restoration of life and being raised from the netherworld. Psalm 86:17 begins with a petition that God hear the prayer and grant “joy” to the psalmist (v. 4). The psalmist hopes to be delivered from the underworld (v. 13).

{6} Gary A. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance, The Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion* (University Park, Pennsylvania, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), p.84. Italics in the original. In footnote # 74 Anderson says examples of “the resultative state are present (Gen 37:35; 2 Sam 12:24 (for Isa see n. 77); Jer 31:13; Zech 1:17; Ps 71:20-21; 86:17.”

{7} Gary A. Anderson, *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance, The Expression of Grief and Joy in Israelite Religion* (University Park, Pennsylvania, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), p.85. That statement is very significant. What scholars call “Second Isaiah” is the latter half of Isaiah, usually beginning with chapter 40. (Because it is different from the first half of Isaiah, they argue that it was written by a different person who lived after the Babylonian conquest. However that cannot be true because the Book of Mormon quotes from “Second Isaiah” from the Brass Plates.) Many scholars have observed the close relationship between “Second Isaiah” and the Psalms. It is my view that the last half of Isaiah is a commentary of the New Year festival drama, and is therefore one of the major keys in reconstructing the endowment/enhronement ceremonies and putting the Psalms back in their original order. If that is true, then it is very significant that the word “comfort” as is used in Isaiah does not mean a pat on the head, but to actually “*bringing about the cessation of mourning.*”

{8} This entire chapter of Isaiah is about enthronement and temple rites, so the interpretation of “make her wilderness like Eden” to mean that land will grow plentiful crops does not fit the context at all.

{9} See 2 Kings 23:1-3.

{10} It is relevant to note here that in Brigham Young’s day, people who had already been baptized for the remission of sins were baptized into the United Order.

{11} Frank M. Cross, Jr., “The Council of Yahweh in Second Isaiah,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Jan.-Oct.1953, 12:274-277. See also Christopher R. Seitz, “The Divine Council: Temporal Transition and New Prophecy in the Book of Isaiah,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Summer 1990, vol. 109, no. 2, 229-247.

{12} See:
Stephen A. Geller, “A Poetic Analysis of Isaiah 40:1-2,” *Harvard Theological Review*, v. 77, n. 3-4, 1984, p. 413-420.

Hanson, Paul D., *Isaiah 40-66, Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, John Knox Press, 1995), p. 223 - 226.

Seitz, Christopher R., “The Divine Council: Temporal Transition and New Prophecy in the Book of Isaiah,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, v. 109, n. 2, 1990, p. 229 - 247.

Westermann, Claus, *Isaiah 40-66, Commentary* (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1969) 364 - 367.

{13} B. H. Roberts, “Seventy’s Council Table: Question from One of the Quorums.— ‘Did Aaron hold the Melchizedek Priesthood?’” *Improvement Era*, 1908 Vol. Xi. January, 1908. No. 3. Elder Roberts reasons that:

No man, the revelations of God inform us, can see the face of God and live, without holding this higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood. (Doc. and Cov., 84: 19-22.) Aaron, before being assigned to the duties of the “Aaronic Priesthood,” (Exodus xxiv; compare verses 1 and 11) saw God, and all this happened, as I say, before the “Aaronic Priesthood” was given, an account of the giving of which priesthood is to be found in Exodus, chap. 28: 1, 2, *et seq.*

{14} Those who are comforted are Zion – Isaiah 51: 3, 61:2-3; 2 Nephi 8:3.

Zion is the pure in heart – D&C 97:21

The pure in heart see God – 3 Nephi 12:8

those who see God are redeemed – Ether 3:13; Mosiah 5:7; 2 Nephi 1:15, 2:1-4

Those who have seen God are peacemakers – 3 Nephi 12: 8-9

(have received, and therefore can give, peace) – Moroni 7: 2-4

Peacemakers receive the new name: child of God – 3 Nephi 12:9

receiving the king name “son of God” is the conclusion of the coronation rites – Psalm 2

Theirs is the kingdom of heaven (It is theirs – they are its kings and queens, not its subjects.)

– 3 Nephi 12:3 (to become kings); 12:10 (having been named “children”

What follows is

a) persecution – 3 Nephi 12:10-12

persecution cannot bring one to mourning – they are comforted – 3 Nephi 12:12

b) become a missionary (salt) – 3 Nephi 12:13 (*Ensign*, April 1999, p. 53-54)

c) become a blessing to the Kingdom of God (a light to this people) – 3 Nephi 12:14-16
(menorah – a light in the temple)

{15} That is true even though the Beatitude “Blessed are all they that mourn, for they shall be comforted,” is at the beginning of the sequence. That is true because that Beatitude is a paraphrase of Isaiah 61, so it is also about the need for the living to do vicarious work for the dead. That is, in terms of the living, it is near the beginning of the sequence, but in terms of the dead it represents the coronation promised in Isaiah 61.

{16} I use *hope* the way I read it in Moroni 7. That is, it is nothing like wishing hard, but is having the absolute assurance that the Lord will fulfill his covenants, and therefore being able to live as those covenants were already fulfilled.

{17} In Isaiah 40 “comfort” means receiving the birthright blessings (of Abraham) from the Lord’s hand. In Isaiah 61, “comfort” introduces the coronation sequence itself: to be washed, anointed, clothed, and given a new name. In Psalm 23 one is comforted by God’s rod and staff, which are symbols of kingship and priesthood.

{18} Ephesians 6:11-20, and D&C 27:15-18.