

The Fullness of the Gospel

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The term “the fullness of the Gospel” is often used to refer to the restored church as we now enjoy it, and so we should. However, like most things of divine origin, there are many layers of meaning which are all true, though the higher truths have the potential to transport us further toward exaltation and bestow upon us greater blessings. It is also true that the greater truths bring us greater joy, and greater opportunity, literally opening the heavens to our view.

Most every truth we presently understand and believe was once a mystery to us. Even a knowledge of the existence of God is a mystery until God is revealed to us in some way. The knowledge that Jesus is the Christ is a mystery to most of humanity. A testimony of the restored Gospel is a mystery to someone who does not possess it. There are well-worn pathways among the pillars of divine law that bring these revealed truths into the soul. The pathway to most truths is to obey an associated law, and once obedient, to pray and ask for the gift. Then, and only then, are these “mysteries” revealed. All gospel truths operate this way, and all of them are mysteries until they are obtained this way.

The Mysteries of God

There are greater and lesser mysteries. The lesser mysteries are those things which many mortals understand, which missionaries deliver, and which the scriptures teach with plainness. Most of humanity is exposed to these mysteries throughout their lives, but do not receive what is freely given. The greater mysteries are those truths which are not commonly known, or even spoken of, yet are true. They are held in reverent silence because once obtained, it is generally not allowed for someone so blessed to speak openly of these things.

And now Alma began to expound these things unto him, saying: It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him. (Alma 12.)

These things remain mysteries only because those who have obtained them through diligence and righteous obedience, are commanded to give nothing more than the portion which God has ordained. These things are the “Mysteries of God” of which the scriptures speak, and of which the lives and blessings of the faithful bear witness.

They are grand mysteries for now because one must pass a rigorous process of preparation before the greater light of the gospel is even visible to the mortal eye. The fact that they are mysteries in the beginning is the divine order of growth. But, they must not forever remain a mystery. The door must open and the light of revealed glory must be fully received in this life.

We have at times heard that we should leave the mysteries alone. Yet, such a statement is not scriptural. The scriptures specifically instruct us to seek the mysteries, and promise that these

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are the very truths which bring eternal life. In fact, eternal life comes in no other way. This isn't a way to immortal glory, it is *the* way.

Consider these scriptures:

7 Seek not for riches but for wisdom, and behold, the mysteries of God shall be unfolded unto you, and then shall you be made rich. Behold, he that hath eternal life is rich. (*D&C 6:7*)

11 And if thou wilt inquire, thou shalt know mysteries which are great and marvelous; therefore thou shalt exercise thy gift, that thou mayest find out mysteries, that thou mayest bring many to the knowledge of the truth, yea, convince them of the error of their ways. (*D&C 6:11*)

5 For thus saith the Lord—I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

6 Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory.

7 And to them will I reveal all mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom from days of old, and for ages to come, will I make known unto them the good pleasure of my will concerning all things pertaining to my kingdom.

8 Yea, even the wonders of eternity shall they know, and things to come will I show them, even the things of many generations.

9 And their wisdom shall be great, and their understanding reach to heaven; and before them the wisdom of the wise shall perish, and the understanding of the prudent shall come to naught.

10 For by my Spirit will I enlighten them, and by my power will I make known unto them the secrets of my will—yea, even those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man. (*D&C 76:5-10*)

61 If thou shalt ask, thou shalt receive revelation upon revelation, knowledge upon knowledge, that thou mayest know the mysteries and peaceable things—that which bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal. (*D&C 42:61*)

10 And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. (Luke 8:10)

(The Triumph of Zion, John M. Pontius, Unpublished manuscript page 104.)

Within the body of Gospel truth there are two distinct levels of understanding, or portions of the truth. There is the lesser portion and the greater portion. Let us come to understand the terms, the lesser and greater portion, then we will discuss what it has to do with the fullness of the Gospel.

The Lesser Portion

To those who harden their hearts, which is another way of saying, to those whose minds are darkened by unbelief, (*D&C 84:53*), God gives the “lesser portion of the word.”

10 And therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word; and he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word, until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until he know them in full.

11 And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries; and then they are taken captive by the devil, and led by his will down to destruction. Now this is what is meant by the chains of hell. (Alma 12:10-11.)

Notice that the “greater portion” is enshrined within the mysteries, and the lesser portion is to know nothing of the mysteries. This is not to say those individuals know nothing of the truth, or nothing of the gospel, or do not have a testimony; it is merely to know nothing beyond that. The grand dividing line is that those with the greater portion have not hardened their hearts. Those who harden their hearts eventually know nothing of the mysteries until they are in fact “taken captive by the devil, and led by his will down to destruction,” after which they find themselves bound by “the chains of hell.”

The scriptures inform us that there is one great hallmark of those who harden their hearts, which is that they shut out the voice of the Master.

And ye are called to bring to pass the gathering of mine elect; for mine elect hear my voice and harden not their hearts; (Doctrine and Covenants 29:7)

And even so will I cause the wicked to be kept, that will not hear my voice but harden their hearts, and wo, wo, wo, is their doom. (Doctrine and Covenants 38:6)

Anyone who inhibits the revelatory voice, or even who filters it through incorrect beliefs, is by definition “hardening their hearts”. In this condition they cannot even see, much less understand, the exalting “mysteries” of godliness. They who are caught in this hardened condition, who do not repent, cannot become the “elect of God”. They will never learn the exalting mysteries, reach their fullest potential, or become a part of the latter-day Zion.

These unfortunate folks are left with the non-mysterious, the saving but less-exalting, the commonly known, the oft-spoken and commonly understood “portion of the word.” All of us begin there, but must not remain throughout our lives. As a matter of divine law, the “lesser portion of the word” is the only portion that is spoken out loud; it is the portion which God grants “unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him.” (Alma 12:9) This is the gospel portion which we have been taught all of our lives. Very little of the “greater portion” has entered our ears, and if it did, we most probably were unprepared to comprehend it.

There must be an evolution toward spiritual maturity, and the promised blessings flowing from the “greater portion” of the gospel. We all start as spiritual babes, performing our labors and services for service’s sake. We naturally believe what we see and feel, and enjoy the fellowship and rewards of membership. These are glorious things, true things; saving things! Nothing being observed here is meant to denigrate or lessen the power of these things. However, it is not the purpose of the gospel that we should remain in an infant state. We are to become god-like men and women, to company with angels, to have miracles and visions and godly powers commonplace among us. Clearly, we must catch the vision of who we can truly become, the vision of Zion, and pray with all fervency that we can evolve beyond the “lesser portion of the word,” or we shall ever remain outside of the embrace of the vast blessings.

As the latter-day holy scriptures sadly accuse, our minds are (not were—are) darkened by unbelief (which means, among other things, that we have not yet begun to believe in our greater potential), and hence, we are not seeking and finding the greater portion of the word, which is to say, the mysteries of Godliness.

Without these mysteries, these great blessings cannot come, miracles are haphazardly received, the heavens do not open, angels do not descend, the higher ordinances and promises are seen through a glass darkly, and relative darkness settles upon the minds of mankind. It is “relative” because there is the full light of the “lesser portion”, but in the absence of the greater light and glory that is being rejected because of unbelief, that which remains is only a dusky portion of the brighter light that should have been.

The Greater Portion

To those who will not harden their hearts, to them is given the “greater portion of the word,” until they know the mysteries in full. This greater portion of the word constitutes those things which are vast and true, but which are not commonly taught within the standard programming of the Church, but which are essential to exaltation nonetheless. As a point of fact, when someone obtains a mystery for themselves, by obedience and personal revelation, they are generally not permitted to openly discuss what they have learned.

9 And now Alma began to expound these things unto him, saying: It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God; nevertheless they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him. (Alma 12:9.)

These are not just interesting principles and doctrines we receive during some divine bonus round, these are the very truths which have catapulted the righteous of every dispensation into the great blessings which they record in the scripture.

These mysteries unveil the “rights of the priesthood” in the sense that they open our view to the greater blessings and privileges that flow from the priesthood. These rights, as we observed earlier, are “inseparably connected with the powers of heaven.” (D&C 121:36) In other words, the fullness of the rights of the priesthood are only to be found within the “greater portion of the word,” which are called “mysteries” because so “few are chosen” (D&C 121:34) to receive them. It may be more accurate to say, because so few choose to receive them.

Additionally, the mysteries are that which “bringeth joy, that which bringeth life eternal.” (D&C 42:61) For those who obtain these “hidden mysteries of my kingdom” in full, their “wisdom shall be great, and their understanding reach to heaven.”

7 And to them will I reveal all mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom from days of old, and for ages to come, will I make known unto them the good pleasure of my will concerning all things pertaining to my kingdom.

8 Yea, even the wonders of eternity shall they know, and things to come will I show them, even the things of many generations.

9 And their wisdom shall be great, and their understanding reach to heaven; and before them the wisdom of the wise shall perish, and the understanding of the prudent shall come to naught.

10 For by my Spirit will I enlighten them, and by my power will I make known unto them the secrets of my will—yea, even those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man. (Doctrine and Covenants 76:7-10.)

Why will their understanding reach to heaven? Because they will see into heaven. “The wonders of eternity shall they know, and things to come will I show them, even the things of many generations.” (v8) These mysteries are by very definition, the “greater portion of the word”. (Alma 12:10) These are the things of the Spirit, and cannot be known any other way than by revelation. For he or she who refuses to reach beyond sight, into faith and into the grand mysteries, the mysteries of godliness are the things which “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” (v10)

Tragically, this defines the vast majority of us; we whose hearts are so set upon our worldly labors.

But, should we even be trying to rise above the norm? Isn't the revealed portion that we all love and embrace enough? Why press into something that isn't commonly known? Isn't that shooting beyond the mark? Aren't we supposed to adhere to the basics, and leave the mysteries alone?

Alma describes having only the lesser portion of the word and knowing nothing of the mysteries as being "taken captive by the devil, and [being] led by his will down to destruction."

11 And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries; and then they are taken captive by the devil, and led by his will down to destruction. Now this is what is meant by the chains of hell. (Alma 12:11.)

Understanding the Difference

The lesser portion of the Gospel, as noted above, is that which is commonly understood by the faithful. It is that which is published in manuals, taught in church, spoken from the pulpit, and understood through a testimony-adorned mind. There is nothing about this body of truth that is second-class. Everything about it is saving, and brings us to Jesus Christ to partake of His atonement through His grace. This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is what the missionaries bear to the world, and that for which mankind is seeking – though most of them don't recognize it.

So, why refer to such a glorious body of truth as "lesser"? The reason is that there is something far greater which those within the warm embrace of these principles may obtain and aspire towards. It is like calling the second to the last (101st) floor of the Empire State Building "lesser" than the one above it. The fact is, both portions of the Gospel very elevated and saving. The problem is that most people on the 101st floor of the Gospel are unaware that the 102nd floor exists. And to push this metaphor as far as it will go, the 101st floor only has small windows that give us a somewhat limited upward perspective on the Gospel, whereas the 102nd has a clear view of the heavens and the earth.

"Lesser" or not, the fact is that the 101st Gospel floor is absolutely necessary. It structurally supports the one above it. Nothing on the 102nd floor is comprehensible unless you have spent considerable time and effort on the 101st. All of the ordinances necessary for salvation and exaltation are performed on that "lesser" floor. Even the very existence of any floors above us, is true doctrine taught on that level. Worthiness is only obtained by long and faithful obedience, and the illusive diadem of purity first adorns the soul on this so-called lesser level.

Having said all of that, it is still true that there is a "greater portion" and a greater body of truth, and a greater view of the mysteries of the Kingdom. And, it is fully intended that we should progress from the one to the other in this life.

While happily within the "lesser" portion of the Gospel, the "greater" portion is barely visible, at least at first. It is a grand mystery – not because it is incomprehensible, but because it is completely invisible.

An analogy might be like unto a primitive person who has never seen anything more technological than a bow and arrow. The existence of computers, as an example, is a grand mystery because it is invisible to them. No amount of research, or pondering, on their level of understanding, can even suggest that something like that could exist, let alone does. Whereas,

to a person in a somewhat technological society who has heard of a computer, or seen one in a book or on television, a computer is just a puzzling oddity one may unravel with a little effort.

The Fullness of the Gospel

The fullness of the Gospel, then is the embodiment of all of the Gospel truths God reveals to Man. Thus, to obtain a fullness, one must obtain both the lesser, *and* the greater portion of the word. To help us see where the dividing line between these two bodies of truth lies, let us attempt to chart them out as best we may.

The lesser portion, that which is commonly understood, might look like this:

- Faith
- Repentance
- Baptism
- Gift of the Holy Ghost
- Being Born Again
- Priesthood Ordinations
- Temple Ordinances
- Temple Marriage
- Enduring to the End

To most eyes, this looks like the whole of the restored Gospel. And, it is that portion which will bring us to the Celestial Kingdom. It is perfect and complete and divinely ordained.

What follows is some of what falls within the Greater Portion of the Gospel; that which we may read about in the scriptures, but which perhaps few believe are actually available even though they are repeatedly promised to us.

- Justification
- Sanctification
- Calling and Election made Sure
- Fullness of the Priesthood
- Entering the Holy Order of God
- Miracles, Prophecy (and all other gifts of the Spirit)
- Angelic Visitations
- The Second Comforter (a personal visitation of Christ)
- Obtaining a Zion stature (becoming part of the “Church of the Firstborn”)
- Being Translated (as was Enoch and his city)

Under the heading of “The Crowning Revelation of Life” Elder McConkie speaks of obtaining a personal visitation of Christ.

There is a true doctrine on these points, a doctrine unknown to many and unbelieved by more, a doctrine that is spelled out as specifically and extensively in the revealed word as are any of the other great revealed truths. There is no need for uncertainty or misunderstanding; and surely, if the Lord reveals a doctrine, we should seek to learn its principles and strive to apply them in our lives. This doctrine is that mortal man, while in the flesh, has it in his power to see the Lord, to

stand in his presence, to feel the nail marks in his hands and feet, and to receive from him such blessings as are reserved for those only who keep all his commandments and who are qualified for that eternal life which includes being in his presence forever. Let us at least sample the holy word and see what the Lord has promised as to seeing his face and being in his presence while we are yet pilgrims far removed from our heavenly home.
(Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1985], 492.)

It is very interesting that Elder McConkie notes that this doctrine is either unknown, or not believed. What is interesting is that this is the very definition of a mystery. It is either a grand mystery, and not even visible, or if seen, it is not believed. What is also intriguing is that this is what Moroni accuses we, the latter-day gentiles, of as well.

13 Come unto me, O ye Gentiles, and I will show unto you the greater things, the knowledge which is hid up because of unbelief. (Ether 4:13.)

The thing which limits our ability to claim the great blessings of the Gospel, those which specifically fall within the greater portion, is mostly that we don't believe it. As Elder McConkie notes, this is either because they are unknown to us – which might be termed a form of ignorance – or we just don't believe it is possible, or perhaps we think it inappropriate, for us to seek and obtain such lofty things. And yet, these blessings are clearly promised. They are promised over and over in the scriptures as the lives of the faithful are held forth as examples for us to follow. And, they are taught a thousand times daily in latter-day temples.

What is the great teaching of the temple endowment if it is not that men and women, through obedience to specific laws, and by making certain covenants, may approach the veil and be invited into God's presence? This is the burden of everything that happens there. It is the culmination and grand conclusion of every other ordinance. It is so much the ultimate event of mortality that the very words of the promise are held forth as unspeakable, except at the veil when in the presence of Christ. As Elder McConkie makes plain above, this is "what the Lord has promised as to seeing his face and being in his presence while we are yet pilgrims far removed from our heavenly home."

This then prompts us to state in overarching terms, in a grand stroke of the eternal brush, simplifying a very complex and demanding process into a single phrase, that the fullness of the Gospel is this, that mankind may, by obedience to specific laws and ordinances, enter into the presence of God in this life.

Rejecting the Fullness

That which you have read is the carrot. It is what entices us to trudge onward, always pressing forward to obtain the greatest gifts we can lay hold upon by stretching our faith almost beyond its tensile strength.

The stick is that if we reject this offer of the fullness, then God will take it away and give it to a more worthy people, even as he did the Children of Israel when they refused to ascend the holy mount with Moses and partake of the presence of their God.

10 And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you: At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of

hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, and of secret abominations; and if they shall do all those things, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fulness of my gospel from among them.
11 And then will I remember my covenant which I have made unto my people, O house of Israel, and I will bring my gospel unto them. (3 Nephi 16:10-11.)

In simpler words, if we reject, by unbelief or by ignorance, the blessed opportunity to seek and obtain the Fullness of the Gospel, which is that we may obtain the divine presence, and if we further as a people enter into the Babylonian lifestyle, some of which is enumerated above, then God will take away the fullness of His gospel from among us, and will return it to the people of the House of Israel.

When we consider our blessings, and our privileges, it is somewhat alarming to observe that we do consider ourselves more blessed (lifted up in our hearts) than all other nations, and all other people. That part of the prophecy is fulfilled partly because without true Christ-like humility, a simple assessment of our blessings leads us to this sin of pride. It is an unavoidably observation. We seem to truly be highly blessed, but this condition cannot enter our hearts as pride, only as gratitude to our God.

With 9 million plus members, it is also very likely that these other abominations do exist within the church. People are very adept at living double lives. Knowing this world as we all do, and being exposed to the unending onslaught of unrighteous media, there can be little doubt that some of our fellow pilgrims have succumbed to these other abominations. Less than 50% of the membership of the latter-day kingdom even attends church. I know of many, many “Mormons” who are as Babylonian as Babylon itself.

Now, consider what has happened: We have nearly fulfilled the prophecy. The jury is still out on whether we will ultimately reject the Fullness of the Gospel by not obtaining the presence of God. We still may have time to accomplish this. But, we have become lifted up in our pride, and some of these abominations do exist within the church.

How can we fix this? The hinge upon which this door swings is this, that when all of these abominations and pride exist – and then we *also* reject the fullness. In other words, if we embrace and fully partake of the fullness of the Gospel, then it doesn’t matter (at least to the fulfilling of this prophecy) that these other abominations exist. Therefore, exercising control over our own righteousness, and seeking and obtaining our own admission into these greater blessings, ends the curse upon our own heads. It is a merciful observation because we are powerless to change our brethren, but, we are fully empowered to change our own lives.