



Lambert Sustris, *The Baptism of Christ*, ca. 1552–1553, oil on canvas, 129.4 x 236.1 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts Caen, Caen. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

# MATTHEW 3; MARK 1; LUKE 3

## COME, FOLLOW ME: NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY

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### **The Gospels Introduce John the Baptist**

During the second temple era, two centuries before the New Testament, groups of Israelites and priests separated themselves from society in an attempt to maintain their spiritual purity.<sup>1</sup> In their records found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, we read that they anticipated three significant leaders—a great prophet and two messiahs (or anointed ones). They waited for “the coming of a prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel.”<sup>2</sup> Christianity proclaims that John the Baptist and Jesus fulfilled those roles.

John the Baptist’s story is found in each of the four Gospels. The authors are consistent on the major details, but each one adds unique facts that give us a broader picture of the prophet John the Baptist.

1. *Date.* Luke gives the only exact historical date in the New Testament. He dates John the Baptist’s preaching to “the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar” (Lk 3:1). Many biblical scholars calculate this as a sabbatical year.<sup>3</sup> Luke also tells us Jesus was about thirty at His baptism (3:23).

2. *Political leaders.* As a Greek scholar and experienced historian, the author of Luke includes the names of local and Roman leaders throughout his Gospel and the Acts. Here he includes:

- Governor of Judaea, Pontius Pilate
- Tetrarch of Galilee, Herod Antipas
- Tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis, Philip
- Tetrarch of Abilene, Lysanias
- Two recent high priests, Annas and Caiaphas (only one reigned at a time—Annas preceded Caiaphas, his son-in-law)

3. *Dress and diet.* Mt 3:4 and Mk 1:6 record that John the Baptist wore the thick, coarse (if woven) camel's hair with a leather sash. Also like the Bedouins, he ate locusts and wild honey (probably date honey). The dress sounds similar to that of the prophet Elijah (2 Kng 1:8), and the two men also shared a spartan wilderness diet.

4. *Location.* All four Gospels mention that John the Baptist preached near the Jordan River, but John and Lehi include Bethabara (2 Ne 10:9), near the southern end of the Jordan River before it runs into the Dead Sea. Bethabara is also the place where the children of Israel crossed the Jordan to enter into their promised land (see Jn 1:28; Jos 3–4).



Palestine under Roman rule. Image via biblemapper.com.

**Mk 1:1.** “[In] the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”<sup>4</sup> Mark’s Gospel begins with a spin on the opening of Genesis. Mark’s second sentence speaks of John the Baptist’s ministry. Each of the Gospels begins differently to emphasize its specific themes. Luke begins with John the Baptist’s miraculous birth (Lk 1:5–24, 39–66). Matthew begins with Joseph’s genealogy and part of Jesus’s Nativity narrative (Mt 1:1–17). John begins with the premortal Word, who was God (see Jn 1:1–14).

**Lk 3:2.** “the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.” Luke again connects John the Baptist with his father, Zacharias, the priest from Lk 1:21 (who is not to be confused with any of the forty men named Zachariah in the Old Testament, who we will discuss in Lk 11:51; Mt 23:25). Luke’s word choice for “the word” is *rhēma* (“a thing spoken, . . . a word or saying of any kind, as command, report,

promise”),<sup>5</sup> not *logos* (which Jn 1:1–4 uses). “Wilderness,” *erémos*, is used twenty-four times in the New Testament referring to a solitary, desolate, or waste place. It often refers to the desert in southeastern Palestine.<sup>6</sup>

### ***The Way***

***Mt 3:3; Mk 1:3; Lk 3:4; Jn 1:23.*** “***The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord.***” Isaiah’s prophecy has multiple levels of fulfillment—including John the Baptist’s preaching and baptizing (Isa 40:3–4). This prophecy is also heavily used in modern revelation, totaling fourteen references (including “prepare the way of the Lord”). It was also a Puritan theme in the early United States history. Jesus used part of it in one of His “I am” statements: “I am the way” (Jn 14:6).

***Mt 3:3; Mk 1:3; Lk 3:4; Jn 1:23.*** “***the way.***” The Way became the first name for believers in Christ after His death (Act 9:2). When Jesus identified Himself as the Way, the term took on exceptional meaning. The couplet is first found in the Bible in the Garden of Eden story when “the way” to the tree of life is guarded by angels (Gen 3:24). The way to the tree of life was also seen in Lehi’s and Nephi’s vision (1 Ne 8, 11). In the vision, those who held onto the word of God, followed the way back to the tree of life, and partook of its fruit were forgiven of their sins. Symbolically, the way back to the tree of life is the path back to God’s presence. The Mosaic tabernacle and temple rituals also outline this way.

The way began as Aaron, the first high priest, was washed for a physical and spiritual cleanse in the brass laver, or “molten sea” (1 Kng 7:23). He dressed in holy garments of white linen and received an anointing to be set apart as a servant of the Anointed One, or Messiah (Ex 30:30; Lev 16:32). He sacrificed on the altar, sprinkling blood on the horns seven times (Lev 16:18–19); walked through the holy place, with the incense, table of bread, and wine; and then once a year, on the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) he sanctified himself to walk past the menorah, sprinkle sacrificial blood on the veil seven times, and then enter into the Holy of Holies to the presence of God, symbolically sitting on the mercy seat (Lev 4:6; 16:1–34). For centuries each high priest repeated this way, symbolizing the way back to the presence of God. In the holy place, the menorah candlestick represents the tree of life.

These steps are each symbolic of how we apply the Savior’s atoning sacrifice in our own lives. Jesus can cleanse our sins through repentance. John the Baptist was a direct descendant of Aaron on both his father’s and mother’s side. At age thirty he was authorized to serve in the Aaronic Priesthood temple ordinances. He was ordained at eight days old and held the Aaronic Priesthood, which is needed to baptize with proper authority

#### ***Look at textual harmony.***

As we look closely at all four Gospel accounts of John the Baptist’s preaching, we learn what each author emphasized, how the authors wrote, what their shared sources were, and why they emphasized certain things. For example, while the three Synoptic Gospels record that John the Baptist preached repentance (Mt 3:2; Mk 1:4; Lk 3:3), John does not—nor does he use the word *repent* anywhere in his Gospel.

(D&C 84:27–28). John the Baptist prepared the way for the Redeemer by teaching that it is through repentance that we can receive a remission of our sins and be brought back to enter God’s presence.

**Mt 3:1–12; Mk 1:2–8; Lk 3:3–18. John the Baptist teaches repentance and forgiveness**

**Mt 3:2 (also Mk 1:4; Lk 3:3). “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”** Because John the Baptist had repentance on the lips, we see another similarity between him and Old Testament prophets. The Synoptic Gospels include Jesus’s message of repentance in subsequent chapters.

We find variations on the words *repent* and *repentance* in restored scriptures as the following chart numerates.

Table 1. Repent in the standard works

	Old Testament (610,303 words)	New Testament (180,565 words)	Book of Mormon (266,944 words)	D&C / PGP (165,166 words)
<b>Repent</b>	22	24	205	97
<b>Repentance</b>	1	25	99	36
<b>Repent-ed, -s, -eth, -ing</b>	21	27	55	22
<b>TOTAL</b>	44	66	359	155
<b>Ratio per 10k words</b>	7.21	36.5	134.5	79.42

In addition to shedding light on the word *repent*, modern scripture adds more meaning to the word *repentance*.<sup>7</sup> A careful study brought to my attention an extra 275 verses on repentance in restored scripture. Additionally, the JST on John the Baptist adds to these verses significant changes that clarify the doctrine of repentance and forgiveness (see note on Mt 3:7–12).

**Mk 1:4; Lk 3:3. “the baptism of repentance for remission of sins.”** Remission refers to casting away, which was taught all the way from the time of Adam (Mose 6:53).<sup>8</sup> The Greek root words related to “baptism,” *baptizo* and *bapto*, were discussed in Jn 1:26. According to James Montgomery Boice,

The clearest example that shows the meaning of *baptizo* is a text from the Greek poet and physician Nicander, who lived about 200 B.C. It is a recipe for making pickles and is helpful because it uses both words. Nicander says that in order to make a pickle, the vegetable should first be “dipped” (*bapto*) into boiling water and then “baptised” (*baptizo*) in the vinegar solution. Both verbs concern the immersing of vegetables in a solution. But the first is temporary. The second, the act of baptising the vegetable, produces a permanent change. When used in the New Testament, this word more often refers to our union and identification with Christ than to our water baptism. e.g. Mark 16:16. “He that believes and is baptised shall be saved.” Christ is saying that mere intellectual assent is not enough. There must be a union with him, a real change, like the vegetable to the pickle!<sup>9</sup>

John the Baptist's focus on repentance is a restoration of lost truths. All must repent to receive forgiveness and a remission of sins.

Table 2. Comparison of Mk 1:4 and Lk 3:3

**Mk 1:4**

John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins

**Lk 3:3**

he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching *the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins*

**Lk 3:5 (JST).** *“to take away the sins of the world and to bring salvation unto the heathen nations; to gather together those who are lost.”* The JST more than doubles the total size of Luke's writings on John the Baptist's preaching, with over 280 more words. The JST additions emphasize Christ's salvation to the Gentiles, His Resurrection, and Ascension “to dwell on the right hand of the Father,” acting as judge in the day of power. Another large section is added in the JST starting in Lk 3:13. These extra verses bolster Luke's theme of the universality of Jesus's message (see JST, Lk 3:4–11).

**Lk 3:6.** *“all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”* Each Gospel cites Isa 40:3–4, but Luke alone continues and adds the fifth verse. This specifically highlights Luke's theology that Jesus came for *all*.

**John the Baptist's second call to repent**

**Mt 3:7–8; Lk 3:7–8.** *“O generations of vipers, . . . bring forth . . . fruits worthy of repentance.”*

Luke and Matthew include a second call to repent that is almost identical (probably because the two Gospels shared the same source material, referred to as Q).<sup>10</sup> John the Baptist's condemnation evokes symbols from the Garden of Eden with a viper, snake, trees, good fruit, wrath, spirit, and so forth. Again, he bridges the old and new covenant as a restorer.

The JST adds significantly to the content and doubles the word count between Mt 3:8 and 12 and Luke 3:8 and 13. John the Baptist asks his audience questions and explains that the people's hearts are not meek enough to accept his message or, more importantly, to receive their Messiah.

**Mt 3:9; Lk 3:8.** *“We have Abraham to our father.”* The JST of Matthew crossed out this phrase. The Israelites knew they were God's chosen people and boasted of their connection to the righteous Abraham as if that gave them a direct link to heaven. Israelite traditions taught that their lineage through Abraham automatically saved them from eternal torture.<sup>11</sup> The New Testament repeatedly addresses this mistaken teaching.<sup>12</sup> The blessings of Abraham from Gen 12:1–3 are available to the children of Israel, but not merely through a birthright; receiving those blessings requires returning to God's ways. This is one reason that John the Baptist calls for repentance.

Table 3. Comparison of JST, Mt 3:7–11 with Mt 3:7–11 and Lk 3:7–10

JST, Mt 3:7–11	Mt 3:7–11	Lk 3:7–8, 16
<p>O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?</p> <p>Why is it that ye receive not the preaching of him whom God hath sent? If ye receive not this in your hearts, ye receive not me; and if ye receive not me, ye receive not him of whom I am sent to bear record; and for your sins ye have no cloak.</p> <p><i>Repent, therefore, and</i> bring forth fruits meet for repentance; <b>and think not to say within yourselves, We are the children of Abraham, and we only have power to bring seed unto our father Abraham; for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children into Abraham. . . .</b></p> <p>I indeed baptize you with water, <i>upon your repentance.</i></p>	<p>But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, <b>O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?</b></p> <p>Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:</p> <p>And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.</p> <p>I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance.</p>	<p>Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?</p> <p>Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. . . .</p> <p>I indeed baptize you with water.</p>

**Mk 1:7; Lk 3:16.** “*There cometh one mightier than I.*” John the Baptist clearly knows his nothingness in relationship to the Messiah. Jesus described him as the greatest “born of women” (Mt 11:11). John the Baptist’s powerful message teaches us to better understand our nothingness in comparison to Jesus.

**Lk 3:16.** “*the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose.*” John the Baptist acknowledges Jesus’s greatness by stating that he is not even worthy to be the enslaved child who unties His sandal. Mt 3:11 includes that John does not feel worthy to carry the Messiah’s shoes, and Mk 1:7, that he is not worthy even to stoop down to untie them.

John the Baptist refers to the relationship between Jewish disciples and their teacher as well as that between servants or slaves and their master (see my note on Jn 1:27). The ancients maintained a clear social stratum, and half of the population of Jerusalem lived in servitude. Across the Roman Empire, one-third of people were enslaved or worked as servants. Walking on dusty roads left one’s feet so dirty that the cultural decorum required one’s feet to be cleaned when entering a house. Washing callused, filthy, and often sore feet was such a demeaning job that it was left to society’s lower classes: women, children, servants, and enslaved people.

Interestingly, in a tutorial setting, students or disciples of a master teacher often chose to do everything they could to spend more time with their teacher (like helping him get dressed)—everything, that is, except foot care. Later rabbis specifically forbid disciples to wash their master teacher’s feet because it was too demeaning a task.<sup>13</sup> Yet John the Baptist humbly explains that he is not worthy even to untie the leather strap on Jesus’s sandals, let alone to act as His slave or servant and wash His feet.

**Mt 3:11 (JST; also Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16).** “I indeed baptize you before he cometh, that when he cometh he may baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and fire.” If you were to introduce Jesus’s mission in life, what would you say? Of all the things Jesus did during His mortal ministry, John the Baptist chose to emphasize that the promised Messiah would bring baptism by fire, or the gift of the Spirit. This spiritual baptism included a refining, judgment, higher priesthood, and cleansing through Jesus’s atoning sacrifice (see Mt 3:12). The Spirit became so important in Christianity that Christians call the time after Jesus’s Resurrection the dispensation of the Spirit. Jesus’s redemption allows the Spirit to act in our lives. It is the agent that communicates the Atonement.<sup>14</sup>

**Mt 3:12 (JST).** “**it is he of whom I shall bear record.**” The JST added that Jesus will baptize with the Holy Ghost and the important detail of when. The time for Jesus to purge the wicked will come “in the fulness of his own time.”

## **The Baptism of Jesus**

**Mk 1:9 (also Mt 3:13–14; Lk 3:21).** “*Jesus came from Nazareth . . . and was baptized of John in Jordan.*” Mark mentions the Jordan River, while John specifies Bethabara (Jn 1:28; see 1 Ne 10:9). Bethabara is near the Dead Sea, the lowest point of land on the planet—which adds to the symbolism

of baptism as a burial of the old person (see Rom 6:4; 2 Cor 5:17).<sup>15</sup> The river was also parted there centuries earlier by Joshua, Elijah, and Elisha (Jos 3:8, 15–16; 2 Kng 2:8, 14).

**Mt 3:15 (JST; also Mk 1:10; Lk 3:22).** “Suffer me to be baptized of thee, for thus it cometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” Even Jesus was obedient and received the ordinances (compare 2 Ne 31:5–7).

**Mt 3:16–17; Mk 1:10; Lk 3:22. The sign of the dove**

**Mt 3:16 (also Mk 1:10; Lk 3:22).** “Spirit of God descending like a dove.” Jesus’s baptism features heavenly witnesses and divine manifestations, including the sign of the dove. Modern revelations have restored truths that augment our understanding of the significance of the Holy Spirit as the sign of the dove in five ways:

1. Other scriptures also reference the dove (D&C 93:15; Gen 8:10–12; Lev 15:14; Hos 7:11; 11:11; and so forth. The same word is translated as *dove* and *pigeon* in the Hebrew and Greek testaments.)
2. D&C 130:22 emphasizes that the Holy Ghost is a personage of Spirit.
3. The wording from the baptism story is slightly different in D&C 93:15; 1 Ne 11:27; and 2 Ne 31:8: “in the form of a dove.”
4. Joseph Smith taught at a Sunday meeting on January 29, 1843:

[John the Baptist] had the privilege of beholding the Holy Ghost descend in the form of a dove, or rather in the **sign of the dove**, in witness of that administration. The sign of the dove was instituted before the creation of the world, a witness for the Holy Ghost, and the devil cannot come in the **sign of a dove**. The Holy Ghost is a personage and is in the form of a personage. It does not confine itself to the form of the dove, but in sign of the dove. The Holy Ghost cannot be transformed into a dove; but the sign of a dove was given to John to signify the truth of the deed, as the dove is an emblem or **token** of truth and innocence.<sup>16</sup>

5. The book of Abraham includes the sign of the dove in figure 7 of facsimile no. 2 (Kolob). God is sitting upon His throne, revealing key words of the priesthood to Abraham; the bird-like flying figure relates to this sign. It appears that the Spirit is descending in bodily form and uses a sign to identify Himself.



Figure 7 of “A Facsimile from the Book of Abraham, No. 2.” Image via LDS Media Library.

**Mt 3:17 (JST; also Mk 1:11; Lk 3:22).** “He heard a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son.” John the Baptist testified that he heard the Father’s tender introduction of Jesus: “In whom I am well pleased.” We see this pattern repeated when Heavenly Father introduces His Son on the Mount of Transfiguration and again in Joseph Smith’s First



Vision.<sup>17</sup> The Lord revealed a short commentary from the Apostle John on Jesus's growth in which he repeats the Father's introduction (D&C 93:14–15).

### **Lk 3:23–38. The Genealogy of Joseph**

**Lk 3:23.** *“Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age.”* Thirty was a significant age in Jewish culture because it represented the age of authority. This also tells us Jesus was thirty at His baptism.

**Lk 3:23.** *“Jesus . . . being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph.”* Luke and Matthew both report Joseph's genealogy. In their culture, because he named Jesus, Joseph claimed Jesus, or adopted Him as his child. Some have tried to explain the differences in grandfathers by asserting that Luke records Mary's genealogy. However, no woman's lineage has been found from this time, and the text specifically says it is Joseph's genealogy.

**Lk 3:27.** *“which was the son of Zorobabel.”* Comparing Matthew's and Luke's genealogical lists, we find the first consistent male relatives twenty names after Joseph: Zorobabel and Salathiel. We also find similar names (sometimes with different spellings) from King David to Abraham (that is, David, Jesse, Obed, Boaz, Nahshon, Amminadab, Hezron, Perez, Judah, Jacob, and Abraham).

**Lk 3:38.** *“Adam, which was the son of God.”* Luke's genealogical list is a sequel to Jesus's baptism. At the baptism, a voice from heaven announces Jesus as the Son of God, and then Luke immediately places Joseph's genealogy all the way back to Adam—the only other man created as a son of God. It is Luke's companion, Paul, who refers to Jesus as the second Adam. In the ancient world, recording one's ancestors was not an exact science, so it is not surprising to see little overlap with Matthew's royal lines. Luke is unique in tracing a rabbinic genealogy back to God.<sup>18</sup>

The number of names in Luke's long list differs in various Greek manuscripts (it varies between seventy-four and seventy-eight).<sup>19</sup> It may be significant that important names fall on multiples of seven (for example, Adam is seventy-seven; Enoch, seventy; Abraham, fifty-six; David, forty-two; Zorobabel, twenty-one), yet that counting is not consistent across translations that use different Greek sources. Historically ancient genealogies often included blocks of seven or ten names. For example, Josephus claims, “Abraham was [Moses's] ancestor of the seventh generation.”<sup>20</sup>

### **The Book of Mormon Highlights John the Baptist**

The Book of Mormon adds another witness to John the Baptist's preaching and to the baptism of Jesus in 1 Ne 10:9, 11:27; 2 Ne 31:8. John the Baptist's life and message were foretold by Isaiah: “Prepare ye the way of the Lord” (Isa 40:3). This prophecy is found three times in the New Testament and ten times in the Book of Mormon. John the Baptist has special significance to the Restoration as the one who brought the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood to this last dispensation (see D&C 13).

## Notes

- 1 F. F. Bruce, *Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Press, 1956).
- 2 Dead Sea Scrolls, QS 9:1. Also see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke X–XXIV* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 1311.
- 3 Tiberius reigned from August 19, AD 14, to March of AD 37. John the Baptist was thirty—and Jesus six months younger—when John the Baptist began his ministry (King David was also thirty when he began his reign). See Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), 259–280; Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1977). Some suggest AD 27/28 as the sabbatical year in Palestine, although this is complicated by the differences of the many calendar systems—Julian, Jewish, Syrain-Macedonian, and Egyptian. I like the discussion in Ernest L. Martin, *The Birth of Christ Recalculated*, 2nd ed. (Pasadena, CA: Foundation for Biblical Research, 1980).
- 4 Mark’s Gospel is historically attributed to John Mark, nephew of Barnabas (Col 4:10), companion to Paul (Act 12:25), son of the wealthy property owner and Jerusalem disciple Mary (Act 12:12), and close family friend of Peter (1 Pet 5:13). The early Christian Church claimed John Mark was the scribe who recorded Peter’s teachings in his book. His Gospel is the shortest, focusing on the reality of Jesus’s human emotions (compare, for example, the Gethsemane scenes), and the fastest moving, and it was used almost entirely by Matthew and Luke in their longer Gospels.
- 5 “Rhéma,” Strong’s *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, available online at <https://biblehub.com/greek/4487.htm>.
- 6 “Erémos,” Strong’s *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, available online at <https://biblehub.com/greek/2048.htm>. The word is used twenty-four times in the NT referring to a solitary, desolate, or waste place. It often refers to the desert in southeastern Palestine
- 7 The simple answer that repentance entails the four *r*’s (recognize, remorse, reconcile, renounce) is not enough. Modern scripture teaches that in addition to change, repentance is the condition of trying with all our heart, might, mind, and strength to live as Jesus would have us live. When we are repentant, we feel and recognize the Spirit in our lives. Repentance, as described in modern revelation, is actually the condition of our heart that earnestly tries to do only those things that will please our Savior and His Father.
- 8 Kent Brown, *The Testimony of Luke* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2015), 180–181.
- 9 James Montgomery Boice, Bible Study Magazine, May 1989. For more examples of *baptizo* in the New Testament, see, for example, Mt 3:11; Mk 1:4–8; Jn 1:29–33; Act 1:5; 2:14–38, 41; 8:12, 15–17; 10:48; and so forth.
- 10 German biblical scholars reported in 1900 that Matthew and Luke share much information unique to the two of them, but they often edit it in their own way (even placing the information at different historical times and places). The scholars deduced that Matthew and Luke shared a common source material and called it after the German word *quell*, meaning “source.” For short, this source is more commonly known as Q.
- 11 Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I–IX* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1982), 468: “Rabbinical literature later played on Israel’s physical descent from Abraham as protection against God’s wrath.” See Luke 16:24.
- 12 Lk 16:24; Jn 8:33–41; Gal 3:28–29.

13 Judith R. Baskin and Kenneth Seeskin, *The Cambridge Guide to Jewish History, Religion, and Culture* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 313.

14 In our dispensation of the fullness of times, one of the first things the Lord taught the young Prophet Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery was how to recognize and receive guidance from the Spirit (D&C 6:14–23; 8:1–3; 9:7–9; and so forth). The Spirit became one of Joseph’s favorite topics. In a meeting at the White House on November 29, 1829, President Martin Van Buren asked Joseph Smith what the difference is between his church and others. Joseph answered, “Our mode of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost.” President Russell M. Nelson also emphasized, “One of the things the Spirit has repeatedly impressed upon my mind since my new calling as President of the Church is . . . [our need to] stretch beyond your current spiritual ability to receive personal revelation.” Russell M. Nelson, “Revelation for the Church, Revelation for our Lives,” April 2018 general conference, online at churchofjesuschrist.org.

15 Russell M. Russell, “Why Palestine?” Missionary Training Center, October 11, 1994.

16 “History Draft [1 January–3 March 1843][b],” p. 13[b], The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-draft-1-january-3-march-1843/15>; emphasis added. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1990).

17 Mt 17:5; Mk 9:7; Lk 9:35; 2 Pet 1:17; JS–H 1:17.

18 Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1990).

19 Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I–IX* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1982), 491.

20 Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 2.229.