

# THE FOUR LEVELS OF THE GOSPEL

by Max B. Skousen

## First Level THE TEMPORAL LAW OF GOOD AND EVIL

The Tree of Knowledge of (Temporal) Good and Evil  
(Israel's Great and Spacious Building of God's Law)

**Modern revelation states:** "The PREPARATORY GOSPEL which gospel is the gospel of *repentance* and of baptism, and the *remission of sins*, and the *law of the carnal commandments*, which the Lord in *his wrath* caused to continue...*among the children of Israel.*" (D&C 84:26)

**An angel told king Benjamin,** "It was *expedient* that there should be a *law* given to the children of Israel, yea, even a *very strict law*...yea, a *law of performances and of ordinances*, a law which they were to observe strictly from day to day, to keep them in *remembrance of God and their duty towards him*... *They did not understand the law; and this because of the hardness of their hearts; for they understood not that there could not any man be saved except it were through the redemption of God.*" (Mosiah 13:29-32)

**Alma declared that all nations are given a knowledge of good and evil by the Lord:** "Yea, and I know that *good and evil have come before ALL men*... For behold, the Lord doth grant unto ALL nations, of their *own nation and tongue*, to teach his word, yea, *in wisdom*, ALL that he seeth fit that they should have." (Alma 29:5-8)

**The Lord told Nephi,** "Know ye not that...I bring forth my word unto...ALL the nations of the earth?...For I *command ALL men*, both in the *east* and in the *west*, and in the *north*, and in the *south*...that they shall *write the words which I speak unto them*; for out of the books which shall be written I will judge the world, every man according to that which is written [in their nation]." (2 Nephi 29:7 & 11)

**Nephi was shown,** "The *multitude of the earth* was gathered together...in a large and spacious building, the world and the wisdom thereof; yea, behold the HOUSE OF ISRAEL hath gathered together... *The great and spacious building* was the...vain imagination and *the pride of the children of men*. And a great and terrible gulf divideth them [from the tree of life]; yea, even the word of the justice of the Eternal God. (1 Nephi 11:35-36 & 12:18)

**Paul warned,** "Ye [in the Church] have *need* that one teach you *again* which be the FIRST PRINCIPLES of the oracles of God; and are become such as have *need of MILK, and not of strong MEAT*. For everyone [of the priesthood] that useth milk is *unskillful in the word of righteousness*; for *he is a babe*." (Hebrews 5:12-14)

**Lehi declared,** "And [ALL] men are instructed *sufficiently* that they KNOW *good from evil*. And the LAW is given unto men. And *by the law NO flesh is justified*, or, by the law men are cut off. Yea, by the TEMPORAL LAW [of good and evil], they are *cut off*." (2 Nephi 2:5)

## Second Level THE SPIRITUAL LAW OF GOOD AND EVIL

The Tree of Knowledge of (Spiritual) Good and Evil  
(The Strait and Narrow Path and the Mist of Darkness)

**Again, Lehi said,** "And men are instructed sufficiently that they know good from evil. And the *law* is given unto men...Yea, by the *temporal law* they were *cut off*; and ALSO, BY THE SPIRITUAL LAW [of good and evil] *they perish from that which is GOOD, and become miserable forever...* Wherefore, the *ends of the law* which the Holy One hath given, unto the *inflicting of the punishment which is affixed.*"

(2 Nephi 2:5 & 10)

**Lehi was shown those not in the building found a path.** "And I also beheld a *strait and narrow path* [the spiritual law], which came...even to the *tree* by which I stood...And I saw numberless concourses of people, many of whom were pressing forward, that they might *obtain the path* which led unto the tree by which I stood. And it came to pass that they did come forth, and commence in the path which led to the tree. And it came to pass that there arose a *mist of darkness*; yea, even an exceedingly great mist of darkness, insomuch that they who had commenced in the path did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost...And the mists of darkness are the temptations of the devil, which *blindeth the eyes, and hardeneth the hearts* of the children of men, and leadeth them away into *broad roads*, that they perish and are lost." (1 Nephi 8:20-23 & 12:17)

**Church at Corinth was rich in spiritual gifts and yet could not be taught the spiritual meat:** "The grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ, that in everything ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge...*So that ye come behind in no gift...*[Yet] I, brethren, *could not speak unto you as unto spiritual...*I have fed you with *milk, and not with meat*; for hitherto ye were not able *to bear it, neither yet now are ye able...*for whereas there is among you...*strife.*" (1 Cor: 1:4-7, 3:1-3)

**Paul stressed the relative inferiority of both the temporal and spiritual laws of good and evil as compared to charity in these words:** "Though I speak with the *tongues of men and of angels*, and have not charity [the pure love of Christ from the tree of life], I am become *as sounding brass, or a tinkling symbol*. And though I have the *gift of prophecy*, and *understand ALL mysteries*, and ALL knowledge; and though I *have ALL faith*, so that I could remove mountains, and *have not charity, I am nothing*. And though I *bestow ALL my goods to feed the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, *it profiteth me nothing.*" (1 Corinthians 13: 1-3)

**Alma challenged those who proudly claim they have the final knowledge of good and evil,** "Behold, *are ye stripped of pride?* I say unto you, if ye are not ye are *not prepared to meet God...*Ye that have *professed to know the ways of righteousness* [through the spiritual law of good and evil], nevertheless have gone astray; as sheep having no shepherd." (Alma 5:28-39)

Third Level  
THE CHASTISEMENT OF THE LORD  
  
The Flaming Sword, The Iron Rod

**During the suffering at Winter Quarters, the Lord revealed these words:** "My people must be tried in ALL things, that they may be prepared to receive the *glory that I have for them*, even the GLORY OF ZION, and he that will not bear CHASTISEMENT is not worthy of my kingdom...For my Spirit is sent forth into the world to *enlighten the humble and contrite...*Therefore, marvel not at these things, [*since*] *ye are not yet pure; ye cannot yet bear my glory.*" (D&C 136:31-37)

**Alma said,** "Because ye were compelled to be humble ye were blessed, do ye not suppose that they are more blessed *who truly humble themselves because of the WORD?*" (Alma 32:14)

**In Revelations:** "His name is called The Word of God...Out of His mouth goeth a *sharp sword*, that with it he should smite the *nations*: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God... KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." (Rev. 19:13-16)

**Christ told Moroni,** "If men *come unto me* [the WORD] *I will show unto them their weakness. I GIVE unto men weakness that they may be humble.*" (Ether 12:27)

**Nephi said,** "I beheld that the *rod of iron*, which my father had seen, was *the WORD of God* [who is the chastening Christ], which led to *the fountain of living waters, or to the* [fruit of the] *tree of life* [both symbolizing

Christ's perfect love].” (1 Nephi 1:25)

**In the Revelation on Priesthood, the Lord declared, speaking to the saints,** "And the *whole* world groaneth under sin and darkness even now [for not living their law of good and evil].. And *your minds* in times past have been *darkened...which vanity and unbelief* have brought the whole church under condemnation. And this condemnation resteth upon the children of Zion, *even ALL*. And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant...not only *to say but to do* according to that which I have written...Otherwise there remaineth a *scourge and judgment* to be poured out upon the children of Zion." (D&C 84:53-58)

**Paul declared that the work of Christ, the Word, is to *humble us*:** "Despise not thou the CHASTENING of the Lord, nor faint when thou are *rebuked of him*. For whom the Lord *loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons, for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof ALL are partakers, *then are ye bastards, and not sons*...Now no chastening for the present *seemeth to be joyous, but grievous*; nevertheless afterward *it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness* unto them which are exercised thereby." (Hebrews 12:5-11)

**Fourth Level**  
**THE TREE OF LIFE, THE PURE LOVE OF CHRIST**  
The Fountain of Living Waters

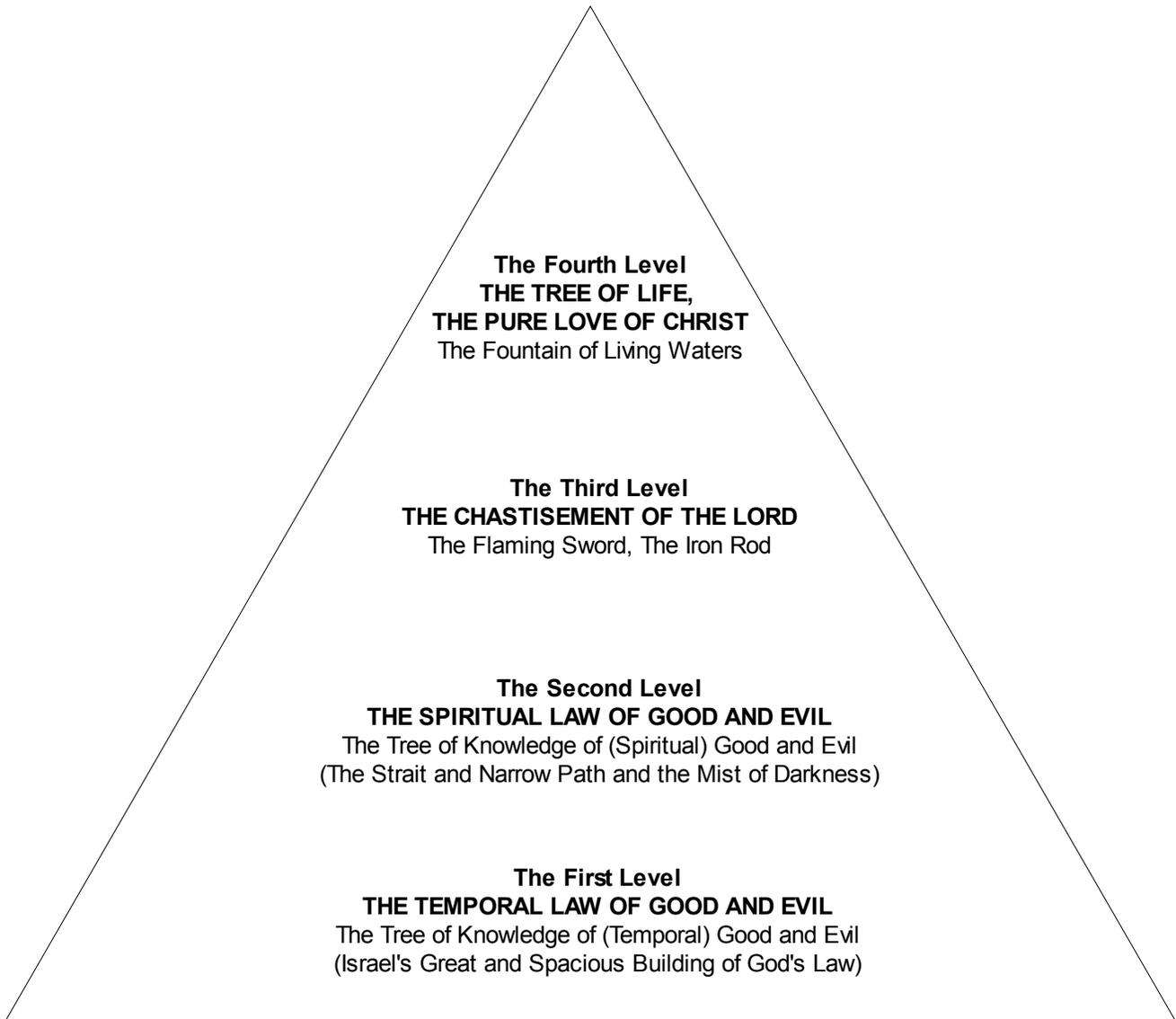
**An angel asked young Nephi,** "Knowest thou the meaning of the *tree* [of life] which thy father saw? And I answered him, saying, Yea, it is the LOVE OF GOD, *which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men*; wherefore, it is the *most desirable* above ALL things. And he spake unto me, saying,

Yea, and the *most joyous* to the soul.... *The fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life*; which waters [and tree] are a representation of the LOVE OF GOD. (1 Nephi 11:21-25)

**Alma told us how to grow the tree of life in our own hearts, saying:** "But if ye will nourish the WORD [by meekly seeking Christ's promised gift], yea, *nourish* the tree [of life] as it beginneth to grow, by your *faith* with *great diligence*, and with *patience, looking forward to the fruit thereof*, it shall take root; and behold it shall be a *tree springing up unto EVERLASTING LIFE*. And because of your *diligence* and your *faith* and your *patience* with the WORD in nourishing it, that it may take root in you, behold, by and by *ye shall pluck the fruit thereof*, which is *most precious, which is sweet above ALL that is sweet, and which is white above ALL that is white, yea, and pure above ALL that is pure, and ye shall feast upon this fruit even until ye are FILLED, that ye HUNGER NOT, NEITHER SHALL YE THIRST*." (Alma 32:41-42)

**An angel told king Benjamin,** "For the natural man [judgmentally living by the tree of knowledge of knowing *what ought to be*] is an enemy to [cut off from] God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and *will be, forever and ever*, unless he YIELDS to the enticings of the Holy Spirit and putteth off the natural man [tree of knowledge] and becometh a saint through the atonement [at-one-ment, perfect love] of Christ the Lord, and becometh *AS A CHILD, submissive, meek, humble, patient, FULL OF LOVE, willing to submit to ALL things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father*." (Mosiah 3:19)

**Mormon also described the fruit of the tree of life:** "Charity suffereth long, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth, BEARETH ALL THINGS, BELIEVETH ALL THINGS, HOPETH ALL THINGS, ENDURETH ALL THINGS... But charity is THE PURE LOVE OF CHRIST, and it endureth forever...Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with *this love, which he hath bestowed upon ALL WHO ARE TRUE FOLLOWERS OF HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST, that ye may become the sons of God; that when he shall appear we shall be like him*." (Moroni 7:45-48)



**Max B. Skousen**  
(Oct. 28, 1921 – Nov. 16, 2002)

For more information, visit:  
**[www.maxskousen.org](http://www.maxskousen.org)**