

Covenants

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Lecture 4 Centerville, Utah

40 years ago tonight, I was in Centerville Utah. Elder Brian Black, who baptized me, had a family in Centerville, Utah, who lived here as Elder Black served his mission. The opening prayer was given by a friend, Mel, who was in the military with me. He was baptized the same year I was and he and I were barracks roommates at the time.

The way that the military operates is only through giving orders. I found out the military had a provision which would allow you to ask to attend what they called a "religious retreat." General Conference seemed to qualify for such a "retreat." Therefore, having found out that they would allow you to attend a qualifying event, I applied, as did Mel. I was ordered by the United States Department of Defense to attend General Conference in October of 1973. So under orders from our government, I attended General Conference in Salt Lake City 40 years ago this evening.

Back then this day, October 6th, was a Saturday. General Conference would end on Sunday, October 7. The closing talk was given by Harold B Lee was his last talk in General Conference because he died in December of that year, on December 26th. And so the October 7th talk was his last General Conference address. He spoke about the Yom Kippur war that had commenced during General Conference that year, and gave some closing remarks about how things were in turmoil between Syria, Egypt and Israel.

In any event, I was looking through the names of those who spoke at that General Conference. Now remember I had been baptized on September 10th and we were now on October 6th, less than a month. The names were, at that time, strangers to me. Today as I look through the list of names of those who spoke in General Conference they have become very familiar to me.

Because I had orders, I was there in uniform. If you wore a uniform, there was a door in the Tabernacle reserved for active-duty service people only. As you lined up outside that door, unlike folks who lined up in other places, they actually let you in. Service people occupied two or three rows of the Tabernacle on the right-hand side, very close to the front. So I got a good look at who the Church leadership was back in those days, and I was impressed with what I saw. Harold B. Lee, H. Burke Peterson, Marion D. Hanks, James E. Faust, and Boyd Packer spoke on Friday morning and we were there. Thomas Monson, Rex Pinegar, L. Ray Christiansen, Henry D. Taylor, O. Leslie Stone, David B. Haight, and Delbert Stapley spoke in the afternoon on Friday and we were there. [Delbert Stapley had a grandson, Elder Stapley who had participated in the missionary discussions. He was one of those missionaries I used up in the process of finally being converted and joining the Church.] Church Patriarch Eldred G. Smith, a prophet, seer and revelator, spoke on Saturday afternoon in the Priesthood session. Marion G. Romney and N. Eldon Tanner and Harold B. Lee all spoke. Spencer Kimball didn't speak until Sunday afternoon. And in all candor, he didn't leave an impression. Later on Spencer Kimball was someone for whom I grew to have enormous respect. But I came and I went from General Conference having heard him talk and he never even registered. So when we rolled around finally to another General Conference and I couldn't remember who he was. Once I saw him and heard his voice, I wondered why on earth I didn't remember him, because as well all know, his voice was so distinct.

Well tonight we are going to talk about covenants. In particular covenants that are being referred to in a verse we find in the Joseph Smith History, verse 39. Moroni changing the content of the

text of Malachi, states in that verse to Joseph Smith on this fall equinox occasion, the words of Malachi in this way: “And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.” (JS-H: 1:39)

Therefore we learn there is some peril if we do not have our hearts turned to these fathers. The peril, as Moroni put it, is that we will be “utterly wasted at his coming” if we fail. But His coming is not limited merely to the singular “him”—being the Lord. If you go back to what Moroni said to Joseph in verse 37 it says: “*they* that come shall burn them.” Therefore when He comes, they that come with Him shall burn those who are unprepared, those who are scheduled to be “utterly wasted” at His coming. And so we need to inquire into what exactly the promises were, who the fathers were that the promises were made to, and then avoid this peril of those who come to do the burning of all who are unprepared for that return. As to them, “it shall leave them neither root nor branch.” Remember that in the Boise talk I said these were genealogical terms, because their family lines comes to an end at that point. In looking at the promises made to the fathers, I want to go back to 2 Nephi, chapter 3 and begin there. I have referred to this earlier in Boise. When we’re tracking back the covenants that were made, and we’re talking about the promises that were made to the fathers, and trying to identify who the fathers are, we get a real advantage in making that determination by what we have in Lehi’s blessing to his son Joseph. Beginning at verse four of chapter 3 of 2 Nephi, Lehi says: “For behold, thou art the fruit of my loins; and I am a descendant of Joseph who was carried captive into Egypt. And great were the covenants of the Lord which he made unto Joseph.” As soon as you encounter the word “covenants” an alarm should go off. Because much of what is and has happened in the history of the world, is as a consequence of covenants made by God with the fathers. One of the fathers who possessed promises and covenants with God was Joseph, who was carried away captive into Egypt.

“Wherefore, Joseph truly saw our day.” [Meaning Lehi’s day. And when Lehi is talking, he’s talking about events he believed Joseph of Egypt had foreseen, and in turn foresaw would happen in his own day.] *“And he obtained a promise of the Lord, that out of the fruit of his loins the Lord God would raise up a righteous branch unto the house of Israel; not the Messiah, but a branch which was to be broken off, nevertheless, to be remembered in the covenants of the Lord that the Messiah should be made manifest unto them in the latter days, in the spirit of power, unto the bringing of them out of darkness unto light—yea, out of hidden darkness and out of captivity unto freedom. For Joseph truly testified, saying: A seer shall the Lord my God raise up, who shall be a choice seer unto the fruit of my loins. Yea, Joseph truly said: Thus saith the Lord unto me: A choice seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; and he shall be esteemed highly among the fruit of thy loins. And unto him will I give commandment that he shall do a work for the fruit of thy loins, his brethren, which shall be of great worth unto them, even to the bringing of them to the knowledge of the covenants which I have made with thy fathers.”* (2 Nephi 3: 5-7) So the assignment that is given to this choice seer, descendant of Joseph, is that this person is going to bring to the world, to us, to the descendants, to the people in the last days “... knowledge concerning covenants which God had made with thy fathers.”

“Thy fathers” in this statement is referring to the fathers of Joseph of Egypt. So the promises that God made to fathers *before* Joseph of Egypt would be fulfilled through “a seer” who is going to “restore the knowledge” about those promises. It may be complex wording but it’s dealing with very simple events, and the identities are important.

“And I will give unto him” [this choice seer who descends from Joseph of Egypt] *a commandment that he shall do none other work, save the work which I shall command him.”* [That is to

say, he will not be the person through whose ministry Zion will come. That was not the assignment of the choice seer. Joseph Smith was not in charge of, and was not required to do the work to bring again Zion.] *"[H]e shall do none other work, save the work which I shall command him. And I will make him great in mine eyes; for he shall do my work. And he [Joseph of Egypt's descendant seer] shall be great like unto Moses, whom I have said I would raise up unto you, to deliver my people, O house of Israel. But a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; and unto him will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins."* So there is a difference here between Joseph of Egypt's descendant seer and Israel, to whom Moses would be raised up.

In verse 12 it talks about how there is going to be a restoration of *"knowledge of their fathers in the latter days, and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord."* (2 Nephi 3: 12) And then in 15 it says, *"And his name shall be called after me [the "me" being Joseph of Egypt; therefore the name of this seer will likewise be "Joseph"]; and it shall be after the name of his father [requiring the seer's father to likewise be named Joseph]. And he shall be like unto me; for the thing, which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand, by the power of the Lord shall bring my people unto salvation."*

Then Lehi goes on to tell his son in verse 23: *"Wherefore, because of this covenant [meaning the one that was done with Joseph of Egypt], he [the son of Lehi] is blessed, for his [the son of Lehi's] seed shall not be destroyed, for they shall hearken unto the words of the book. And there shall rise up one mighty among them [I talked about that in Boise. If Joseph Smith fulfills this ancient prophecy given by Joseph of Egypt and repeated by Lehi which is recovered in part through this passage in the Book of Mormon, then Joseph Smith should give to us the ability to know something about these covenants that were made with the fathers.]"*

Well, we do not have to rely upon, merely what we have in 2 Nephi chapter 3. Nor do we require the Brass Plates, either, as it turns out. Because Joseph Smith restored the prophecy of Joseph of Egypt, and you can read it in the Joseph Smith Translation beginning in Genesis chapter 50 at verse 24. It reads slightly different than Lehi's summary. Lehi's choice of what he adds in and what he selects out, in contrast to what Joseph of Egypt actually wrote provides some interesting insight into Lehi. It is absolutely worth your time to study out all the differences. You ought to pick apart what it is that Lehi did, because it tells you much about what father Lehi choose to include and what he chose to pass over as a reflection on this prophet-father.

However, for our purposes tonight, I want to look at what was said to Joseph of Egypt in God's promises to him which we find in the Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis chapter 50 beginning at verse 24. Joseph of Egypt wrote: *"for the Lord visited me and I have obtained the promise of the Lord."* This is what Lehi will refer to in his prophecy to his son Joseph, as a covenant. This is because when the Lord delivers a promise to someone, He delivers it by way of covenant. God is bound by His word . (D&C 1: 38) Therefore when He delivers a promise, it is a covenant.

He continues: *"I have obtained a promise of the Lord, that out of the fruit of my loins, [this is the covenant with Joseph of Egypt, that out of his loins] the Lord God will raise up a righteous branch out of my loins; [talking about Joseph of Egypt, one of the sons of Israel, one of the 12 tribes] And [now we are changing topics and changing identifications] and unto thee, whom my father Jacob hath named Israel [this is broadening the framework to beyond the descendants of Joseph, this is all the 12 tribes, raised up unto all of the 12 tribes] a prophet; (not the Messiah who is called Shilo;) and this prophet shall*

deliver my people out of Egypt in the days of thy bondage. [That is a covenant about deliverance to be had for all the tribes of Israel not merely the descendents of Joseph.]

It is important to distinguish between what relates to Joseph and his descendants and all of Israel. If you conflate them you will begin to conclude Moses, who is a Levite, is instead a descendant of Joseph. The text does not say that. Therefore these words should be carefully parsed to distinguish between what is promised Joseph of Egypt about his descendants and what was promised to him concerning all the Tribes of Israel.

He continues: *“And it shall come to pass that they (that is all of Israel) shall be scattered again; and a branch shall be broken off, and shall be carried into a far country; nevertheless they shall be remembered in the covenants of the Lord, when the Messiah cometh; for he shall be made manifest unto them in the latter days, [Now when is that? Is it when he was resurrected and he appears in 3 Nephi? Or is the latter-day, instead some other later time?] in the Spirit of power; and shall bring them out of darkness into light; out of hidden darkness, and out of captivity unto freedom. A seer shall the Lord my God raise up, who shall be a choice seer unto the fruit of my [that is Joseph of Egypt's] loins. [A different topic, different person, different time frame.]”*

He continues: *“ Thus saith the Lord God of my fathers [this is Joseph speaking and therefore his fathers would have include at a minimum, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. His “fathers” being plural require us to go back multiple generations for identities] unto me, [So the Lord God of Joseph's fathers said unto him these things] A choice seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy (that is Joseph's) loins, and he shall be esteemed highly among the fruit of thy [that is Joseph of Egypt's] loins; and unto him will I give commandment that he shall do a work for the fruit of thy [that is Joseph of Egypt's] loins, his brethren. And his brethren. [That is, other members of Israel] And he shall bring them to the knowledge of the covenants which I have made with thy fathers; and he shall do whatsoever work I shall command him.”* (JST Genesis 50: 28)

Now we are beginning to have laid out in the restoration through Joseph Smith, part of what it is that we need to know, in order to avoid being utterly wasted. *“He [the seer] shall do whatsoever work I shall command him. And I will make him great in mine eyes, for he shall do my work; and he [the seer, who will be one of Joseph of Egypt's descendant] shall be great like unto him whom I have said I would raise up unto you, to deliver my people, O house of Israel, out of the land of Egypt; [the “him” who the Lord is going to raise up is Moses] for a seer will I raise up to deliver my people out of the land of Egypt; and he shall be called Moses. And by this name he shall know that he is of thy house; [that is the House of Israel, not Joseph of Egypt's loins but instead the House of Israel] for he shall be nursed by the king's daughter, and shall be called her son. And again [notice here we are changing topics again] a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy [that is Joseph's] loins, and unto him [Joseph's descendant the seer] will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins;”* [That is Joseph of Egypt's descendant the seer. And he's to give us God's word.

Joseph of Egypt he goes on in the same in verse 31: *“Wherefore the fruit of thy loins [that is Joseph's loins] shall write, and the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write; and that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, and also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together unto the confounding of false doctrines, and laying down of contentions, and establishing peace among the fruit of thy loins, [a yet future event] and bringing them to a knowledge of their fathers in the latter days; and also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord. [Joseph of Egypt's seer is to do this.]”* It is this context which must be considered to understand what Moroni told Joseph Smith in

verse 39 of the Joseph Smith History. That is why we began in Boise with the 1838 version of Joseph's history and we have been following the material along since then. The explanation given to Joseph that night is a summary of all that was and is still yet to unfold in these last days.

Joseph of Egypt's prophecy continues: *"And out of weakness shall he be made strong, in that day when my work shall go forth among all my people, [the phrase "all my people" include all of the various branches of Israel and not merely Joseph's descendants] which shall restore them, who are of the house of Israel, in the last days."* That is the objective. To fix and reconnect the house of Israel, restoring them in the last days. This is the purpose still of the restoration. When it resumes it will be to cause this to happen. It must happen before the Lord's return.

Continuing, *"And that seer will I bless, and they that seek to destroy him shall be confounded; for this promise I give unto you; [Joseph of Egypt] for I will remember you [Joseph of Egypt] from generation to generation; and his name [that latter-day seer] shall be called Joseph,"* It is as if the Lord Himself so loved Joseph of Egypt that He wanted his memory to be kept in remembrance through all generations. This is Father Joseph who was sold into slavery by the jealousy of his brothers to whom he prophesied for their benefit, yet despite the betrayal of his brothers he kept the faith, and ultimately preserved and blessed those who despitefully used and abused him. Joseph of Egypt lived Christ's teachings before the Lord delivered them on the Mount. Joseph was, therefore, a man after the Lord's own heart.

The prophecy continues: *"and it shall be after the name of his father; and he shall be like unto you; [that is like unto Joseph of Egypt] for the thing which the Lord shall bring forth by his hand shall bring my people unto salvation. And the Lord sware unto Joseph that he would preserve his [Joseph's] seed forever, saying, I will raise up Moses, and a rod shall be in his hand, and he shall gather together my people, and he shall lead them as a flock, and he shall smite the waters of the Red Sea with his rod. And he shall have judgment, and shall write the word of the Lord. And he shall not speak many words, for I will write unto him my law by the finger of mine own hand. And I will make a spokesman for him, and his name shall be called Aaron. And it shall be done unto thee in the last days also, even as I have sworn."*

So the Lord swore by a covenant with Joseph concerning all these events. This is the text used by father Lehi when he gives the blessing recorded in 2 Nephi chapter 3, the patriarchal blessing to his son Joseph. The name of Joseph of Egypt and Lehi's son named Joseph no doubt commended to the mind of Lehi attention to this very material that we just read. Lehi would have named his son after Joseph because of the regard Lehi had for this ancestor of his.

If Joseph of Egypt's seer of the last days, who would be responsible for completing this assignment and fulfilling this foretold opportunity is in fact Joseph Smith, then through Joseph Smith we should be able to learn something about knowledge of covenants that were made with the fathers. Proofs of Joseph Smith's validity as a messenger from God should be found in evidence from him concerning the covenants between the fathers and God.

Joseph of Egypt said "the seer will do none other work." He will have power to bring forth God's words. He will restore knowledge of their fathers. He will restore knowledge of God's covenants. He will restore ultimately, a basis that makes the House of Israel alive again. His name will be after Joseph of Egypt. It will be the same name as his father, that is, Joseph. In every particular, Joseph Smith seems to be the one about whom this is written. Therefore, if Joseph Smith is that seer it does not seem we need to look for another.

In chapter 4 of 2 Nephi verse 2 talks about this. Nephi, interjects “he [that is Joseph of Egypt] truly prophesied concerning all his seed.” Remember that “all his seed” includes not just Lehi and his tribe of Mannasseh, and through Ismael and his daughters Ephraim, both of these are descendants of Joseph. But Joseph also includes people outside the branch that wrote the Book of Mormon. Joseph’s descendants went elsewhere, as well. These other portions of the tribe of Joseph, scattered wherever they were throughout the world, include many of those here among us tonight, through your bloodlines. Therefore Joseph of Egypt spoke of all these, and Lehi uses his blessing to his son Joseph to make mention of those prophecies, because they would fit his son. But the prophecies fit many others, as well. This shows to us the need to read and understand the full import of the blessings and covenants given to the fathers mentioned by Moroni to Joseph Smith.

Well this is not a prophecy about Joseph’s seed alone, but it is talking about the ministry of this latter-day prophet with the foretold mission of restoring knowledge in the latter days. Through Joseph Smith, then, if he is the one to fulfill the prophecy we should be able to find through him knowledge about covenants made to the fathers, and to also identify who the fathers are. In order to know something about covenants, Joseph Smith needed to have given to us material about that. As we look further into the matter I want to refer you to section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants beginning at verse eight where the Lord told Joseph: “Behold, mine house is a house of order, saith the Lord God, and not a house of confusion. Will I accept of an offering, saith the Lord, that is not made in my name? Or will I receive at your hands that which I have not appointed? And will I appoint unto you, saith the Lord, except it be by law, even as I and my Father ordained unto you, before the world was?” (D&C 132: 8-11)

Everything proceeds according to God’s law. The government of God is not and never has been necessarily limited to an organizational structure. Instead it hails back to things that were committed, by God, in promises made to the fathers, which have yet to be fulfilled. It doesn't matter if we think we can capture that and tie it into an organization we control. We are unable to bind God into our preferences. He controls the agenda and always has. God's purposes are ordained according to a law that was ordained before the world was. He reminds us: “I am the Lord thy God; and I give unto you this commandment—that no man shall come unto the Father but by me or by my word, which is my law, saith the Lord.” (D&C 132: 12) In other words, if you were going to come, whoever you are, unto the Father, the only way you are going to get there will be through the Son.

God warns us: *“And everything that is in the world, whether it be ordained of men, by thrones, or principalities, or powers, or things of name, whatsoever they may be, that are not by me or by my word, saith the Lord, shall be thrown down, and shall not remain after men are dead, neither in nor after the resurrection, saith the Lord your God. For whatsoever things remain are by me; and whatsoever things are not by me shall be shaken and destroyed.”* This is the law preordained which controls. Not a committee, not an office, not our common consent, but a law belonging to and ordained by God alone. We must find and submit to it, or our expectations will not materialize. This is another way in which we can know that “the Keeper of the Gate is the Holy One of Israel, and he employeth no servant there.” (2 Ne. 9: 41) Because when it comes to this kind of material, involving this kind of salvation, for any of the children of men, God is hands on. Our Redeemer is not only the one who keeps the Gate, protects the way, and greets those along the way, but it is He alone who will introduce to the Father. Continuing, *“And it has to be by me, or by my word, saith the Lord. If it is not, then it shall be thrown down. And it shall not remain.”* Only God can, or does, ordain covenants. We do not make covenants. Covenants come as a consequence of God's will, and *only* as a consequence of God's will. We can accept them, or we can reject them, but we cannot create them. He does. Our participation is limited to, acceptance of,

or rejection of, what he offers. The way in which we accept the covenants, is set out in Doctrine and Covenants section 130: 20, which states: “There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.”

Therefore what is important for you to understand and learn is what the relevant law requires of you. Because the way in which you accept the covenant offered to you is by learning the principle or the law upon which the blessing you seek is predicated. Then having learned what the law ordains, you follow through by obeying it. We learn all of this through the revelations given to us by Joseph Smith.

Before Joseph of Egypt, one of the fathers we need to look to for guidance is Abraham. Therefore I want to turn to Abraham, chapter 1 beginning at verse two next. “*And, finding there was greater happiness and peace and rest for me, I sought for the blessings of the fathers* [Once again we have Abraham who lived three generations before Joseph of Egypt, and we read about the same search for the blessings which belong to the fathers. Abraham was looking for the blessings of the fathers, hoping thereby to find happiness, peace and rest for himself. These all are connected. These are the things Moroni was telling Joseph Smith we, the children, must look for to avoid being utterly wasted] *“and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge,”* When I spoke in Logan, I talked about repentance being related to knowledge and that it is our ignorance that damns us most of all. Abraham perceived the same thing. Abraham believed redemption and possessing great knowledge went hand-in-hand.

When we read these things in scripture we should reflect on them. Perhaps these ancients were not so ignorant after all. Perhaps they were better studied and more thoughtful than are we. In Abraham’s case he believed if he could obtain that great knowledge he would thereby become “*a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge,*” because this is one of those law upon which blessings are predicated. Knowledge, light, truth, or in other words the glory of God, all of those things are obtained by obedience to law. Abraham sought for, and desired to possess, more light and truth. And as a result of that inevitably would lead to him becoming “*a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring* [most of all] *to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God,*” As a result of all that desire, he became “*a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers. It was conferred upon me from the fathers; it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time, yea, even from the beginning, or before the foundation of the earth, down to the present time, even the right of the firstborn, or the first man, who is Adam, or first father, through the fathers unto me.*” (Emphasis added.)

All of this ties back necessarily to Adam. Abraham is looking to acquire the original religion taught by God directly to father Adam in the beginning. Therefore Abraham records “*I sought for mine appointment unto the Priesthood according to the appointment of God unto the fathers concerning the seed.*”

Everything about the original form of priesthood, everything about what it is Abraham was seeking, all of this ties together because there is only one gospel. In *The Lectures on Faith*, the Second Lecture paragraph 37 to 53, there is a chronology given. I’m not going to go through the chronology, and you needn’t have brought it with you tonight. But that chronology is listed in *The Lectures on Faith* in order to save you the trouble of going through and tracking it yourself. It was important enough to

Joseph Smith to put into *The Lectures on Faith*, so that you know how to reconstruct the fathers and who they were.

Noah was 502 years old when Shem was born. 98 years later the Flood came. Noah was 600 years old when the Flood came and Shem was 98. You can see that in paragraph 45 of the Second Lecture. Shem lived to be 600. Shem was 448 years old when Noah died. Shem was acquainted with both Noah and Abraham. Abraham lived to be 175 years old, and Shem was alive and a contemporary with him for 150 of the 175 years of the life of Abraham. Shem knew Noah. Shem knew those on the other side of the Flood, having lived with them for 98 years before the Flood. Abraham also had the records of the fathers from the other side of the flood. Look at Abraham chapter 1 verse 31: *“But the records of the fathers, even the patriarchs, concerning the right of Priesthood, the Lord my God preserved in mine own hands; therefore a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the planets, and of the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers, have I kept even unto this day, and I shall endeavor to write some of these things upon this record, for the benefit of my posterity that shall come after me.”* (Emphasis added.) Since Abraham was acquainted with the priesthood that belonged to the fathers, and since Abraham had a knowledge which reckoned from that priesthood, his knowledge went back to the time of the patriarchs. This knowledge included the beginning of creation, and therefore he knew about the planets, knew about the stars, in the form in which that knowledge was made known unto the fathers. Now go back to Doctrine and Covenants section 121, talking about our dispensation. Look at D&C 121: 28: *“A time to come in the which nothing shall be withheld, whether there be one God or many gods, they shall be manifest. [Because that's included within the knowledge that the first fathers had. That's included with what was here at one time.] All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, shall be revealed and set forth upon all who have endured valiantly for the gospel of Jesus Christ. And also, if there be bounds set to the heavens or to the seas, or to the dry land, or to the sun, moon, or stars—All the times of their revolutions, all the appointed days, months, and years, and all the days of their days, months, and years, and all their glories, laws, and set times, shall be revealed in the days of the dispensation of the fulness of times—According to that which was ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before this world was, that should be reserved unto the finishing and the end thereof, when every man shall enter into his eternal presence and into his immortal rest.”* (Emphasis added.) This is part of what we are expected to have given us, if we were interested enough to receive it. Abraham, unlike us, was interested. Abraham was not merely talking about something in this verse, Abraham 1: 31 but it becomes one of the major themes of his record. We read later on in the book of Abraham about the various stars shown to him, and the relationship between them. Then in Facsimile 2, there is an effort to lay out a relationship in the heavens, between certain positions of glory and authority and a configuration of the sky. Abraham's record is a testimony about this knowledge of the heavens which was part of the original gospel that was entrusted to the fathers, and those records were handed down to him. We are told, likewise, in Doctrine and Covenants section 121 that is part of what is supposed to be included within, and is ultimately scheduled for revelation to, those who will receive the restoration of the Gospel, when it is fully upon the earth in the dispensation of the fullness of times. This knowledge can only return to us through revelation. When it does return, then we, like Abraham, will be at last in possession of the Gospel Abraham knew, studied and taught.

Abraham received his priesthood ordination through Melchizedek. You see that Doctrine and Covenants section 84 verse 14: *“Which Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek, who received it through the lineage of his fathers, even till Noah;”* Now, Bruce R McConkie read that verse and he disagreed with what the church had previously taught. That is, at one time we believed that Melchizedek was Shem. Bruce R. McConkie took the position that verse 14 (Melchizedek received the

priesthood through the lineage of his fathers, even until Noah) means there were fathers between Melchizedek on one hand, and Noah on the other. Therefore, he concluded, Noah cannot be Shem. I take the view instead, that it was received through the lineage of his fathers even until Noah, meaning from Adam down to the time of Noah. It was this lineage from Adam to Noah through whom the priesthood was preserved. Melchizedek, that is Shem, received it from Noah. In any event, it is clear in verse 14 that Abraham received it from Melchizedek. But if you go to Abraham chapter 2 beginning at verse 6 you read: "But I, Abraham, and Lot, my brother's son, prayed unto the Lord, and the Lord appeared unto me, and said unto me: Arise, and take Lot with thee; for I have purposed to take thee away out of Haran, and to make of thee a minister to bear my name in a strange land which I will give unto thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession, when they hearken to my voice. For I am the Lord thy God; I dwell in heaven; the earth is my footstool; I stretch my hand over the sea, and it obeys my voice; I cause the wind and the fire to be my chariot; I say to the mountains—Depart hence—and behold, they are taken away by a whirlwind, in an instant, suddenly. My name is Jehovah, and I know the end from the beginning; therefore my hand shall be over thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations, and thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations; And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father;"

There is a difference between ordination and confirmation by the voice of God. These are two separate events. We will speak more about this when we talk about Priesthood in Utah County, and therefore it is enough to take note of that here.

Jehovah spoke directly to Abraham, told him that from this moment, from the moment God spoke to Abraham before his departure, Abraham would now become the father of all the righteous. Now you ought to ask yourself: why would that be the case? Why is it that Abraham becomes the prototype of who will be saved, and the father of whoever is saved from that point going forward? The answer is important. When you go back to the fathers and you began with Adam, there were immediate apostasies from the truth by Adam's posterity. It was generations before Eve bore Cain and thought she had a son that would at last be faithful. They (Adam and Eve) were grandparents when Cain was born. Then Able was born. Cain slew Able. So the hoped-for righteous were lost, one to apostasy and the other to murder. Seth came as a replacement to the grandparents, Adam and Eve. From Seth reckons then the seed of the righteous.

Priesthood then ran from father to son to grandson to great-grandson, and so on when you look at the list of those that are gathered together into the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman. That was briefly the first Zion, where the Lord came and dwelt among them. "*And he rose up and he called Adam, Michael* [El being the name of God]. Jehovah appeared the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, where you find the names of seven from Adam. The seventh being Enoch, as you know. But in the beginning this priesthood is a line of continuity from Adam directly down all the way until you arrive at Shem.

Once we have Shem the line interrupts. There is a complete falling away. There are no righteous fathers for Abraham. His fathers had turned to idolatry. Abraham is the prototype of the saved man, and the father of all who would be righteous thereafter, because Abraham represents, coming to the truth in a generation of apostasy. Abraham represents coming back to the light despite the fact his fathers taught him idolatry. Abraham represents the challenge that every man, who would be saved from that point forward, must confront and then overcome: the idolatry of their fathers. Abraham is the prototype. Even you face this same challenge. Even you must overcome the idolatry of your fathers.

Therefore Abraham was acknowledged by that same Jehovah who visited with the fathers at Adam-ondi-Ahman and identified Himself again to Abraham. Father Abraham after generations of apostasy becomes literally the first to return to the righteousness of the first fathers. He was the first to return to the religion that belong in the beginning to mankind, and which is intended by God to be given anew to man in the last days. Abraham was the first to rediscover “a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the planets, and of the stars, as they_were made known unto the fathers,” after generations of darkness about the matter.

Abraham was the one who desired to be a follower of righteousness. One who possessed great knowledge, to be a greater follower of righteousness and to possess greater knowledge still. It is this which made him a candidate the Lord could speak with face to face. It is this that made him the prototype in his generation, and for every generation who would follow. Abraham represents what it takes to turn away from idolatry, to turn away from the kind of corrupt and degrading religions that were then and play on the earth, the fertility cults and the human sacrifices and the vileness that surrounded him. Abraham succeeded. In a wicked and fallen world Abraham sought out righteousness by his diligence, not merely to satisfy his curiosity but to then be obedient to what he found.

After he succeeded and knew the truth, Abraham was asked by God to slay his son, as if there was some legitimacy to the human sacrifice practiced all around him. In the version that we have in the King James Bible, Isaac is not slain. There is an older tradition that you can find in the book of Hebrews (Heb. 11: 17-19) and in the Book of Mormon (Jacob 4: 5), in which Isaac is slain and then brought back to life, rather like Lazarus is brought back to life. The Old Testament version that we have in King James tells us of Abraham raising his hand with the knife to commit the act, and then the ram is found in the thicket to deliver him. (Gen. 22: 10-13) Sometimes as it turns out, rams are not found in thickets and the sacrifice will be required. The Lord says in Abraham 2: 11: *“And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) [Because fundamentally, what distinguishes Abraham and what distinguishes the covenant is the knowledge of the priesthood holder. Abraham was in possession of priesthood like the original fathers because he knew things that are true which relate back to the very beginning. As a consequence of that, those who are given the same knowledge, necessarily have to belong to the same priesthood.] and in thy seed (that is, thy Priesthood), [Because you become a son of Abraham if you take upon yourselves the requirements for the covenant, you inherit that. Just as Abraham inherited it because of what he sought and obtained. It comes down from the beginning from the fathers.] for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal. Now, after the Lord had withdrawn from speaking to me, and withdrawn his face from me, I said in my heart: Thy servant has sought thee earnestly; now I have found thee;”* Here again, Abraham stands as the prototype of the saved man, the father of the righteous, the example of all those who coming out of apostasy find their way back to God and redemption, because all of the servants that will be acknowledged by Him, must seeking earnestly, and will as *The Lectures on Faith* promise, assuredly find Him.

Everyone who receives the gospel, this gospel, verse 10 of that Abraham chapter 2: “And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name,” You ought to ask yourself what is *“this Gospel?”* And are you yet in possession of it? Because it would appear that the promises made to the fathers include rather more than what we talk about in our meetings and conferences as yet. But it is nevertheless the case that it is through Joseph, Jacob, Isaac and Abraham

that promises remain. You can see that in Doctrine and Covenants 27: 10: “And also with Joseph and Jacob, and Isaac, and Abraham, your fathers, by whom the promises remain;” That is, promises are still in play right now as a consequence of what God did in covenant with Joseph, and by His covenant with Jacob, and His covenant with Isaac, and His covenant with Abraham. Those promises are still in play. This is what Moroni was talking about to Joseph Smith. And also, most importantly, as mentioned in Doctrine and Covenants 27, verse 11: “And also with Michael, or Adam, the father of all, the prince of all, the ancient of days;” These are promises that are in play today which go all the way back to them.

The covenant which we are to inherit will come as consequence of them. What they got, secured for us, are promises which the Lord intends to honor in the last days. Therefore when we are the beneficiaries of those covenants we are going, like Abraham, to have restored to us a knowledge of the beginning of creation, the planets, the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers, as Section 121 tells us. This is part of what belongs to the dispensation of the fullness of time.

Go to Joseph Smith translation of Genesis chapter 14, beginning at verse 25: “And Melchizedek lifted up his voice and blessed Abram. Now Melchizedek was a man of faith, who wrought righteousness; and when a child he feared God, and stopped the mouths of lions, and quenched the violence of fire. And thus, having been approved of God, he was ordained an high priest after the order of the covenant which God made with Enoch, It being after the order of the Son of God;” There is an order that is after the son of God. But there was a covenant that preceded even the days of Melchizedek, it came down as a consequence of what happened in God’s covenant with Enoch.

The account continues: “And it was delivered unto men by the calling of his own voice, according to his own will, unto as many as believed on his name. For God having sworn unto Enoch and unto his seed with an oath by himself; that every one being ordained after this order and calling should have power, by faith, to break mountains, to divide the seas, to dry up waters, to turn them out of their course; To put at defiance the armies of nations, to divide the earth, to break every band, to stand in the presence of God; to do all things according to his will, according to his command, subdue principalities and powers; and this by the will of the Son of God which was from before the foundation of the world.” These are signs which follow that order. In every case, however, it is not your will. Even if you are given this ordination, it is by the will of the Son of God. That is to say, nothing has ever been broken or will be broken by this power, and nothing ever has been or will be held in defiance, and nothing ever gets done using this power except as it is done solely by the will of the Son. Remember that. It is a key to understanding who the Lord will entrust with such power.

Continuing: “And men having this faith, coming up unto this order of God, were translated and taken up into heaven. And now, Melchizedek was a priest of this order; therefore he obtained peace in Salem, and was called the Prince of peace. And his people wrought righteousness, and obtained heaven, and sought for the city of Enoch which God had before taken, separating it from the earth, having reserved it unto the latter days, or the end of the world; And hath said, and sworn with an oath, that the heavens and the earth should come together; and the sons of God should be tried so as by fire.” These are they who are coming, whose glory and brightness will burn them up on the earth, who are unprepared to receive them. These are they about whom Moroni was speaking to Joseph Smith. These things all fit together. There is one story being told here in all of the scriptures by the prophets. From the beginning to the end, it is the same.

Continuing: “And this Melchizedek, having thus established righteousness, was called the king of heaven by his people, or, in other words, the King of peace. And he lifted up his voice, and he blessed

Abram, being the high priest, and the keeper of the storehouse of God; Him whom God had appointed to receive tithes for the poor. Wherefore, Abram paid unto him tithes of all that he had, of all the riches which he possessed, which God had given him more than that which he had need. And it came to pass, that God blessed Abram, and gave unto him riches, and honor, and lands for an everlasting possession; according to the covenant which he had made, and according to the blessing wherewith Melchizedek had blessed him." Remarkable account, isn't it.

Joseph Smith restored this information, as he restored the rest of what Joseph of Egypt promised would come from the latter day seer. This is done in order for us to understand that God has sworn by Himself to the fathers about what it is He intends to accomplish in the last days. Therefore as we get near that event, as we are now over that horizon and inevitably going to fall into those dark days, some few will take it seriously enough to say, like Abraham, 'I too would like to seek for the blessings of the fathers. I would like also to have from God, a covenant. I would like to inherit, what it was that was given in the beginning.'

God alone makes the covenant. We accept it by abiding the conditions. The only thing we can do on our own is attempt to make vows to God. We can make vows, but Christ discouraged us from doing that in Matthew chapter 5. This was in the Sermon on the Mount. (You can read the same thing in 3 Nephi chapter 12.) Turn to Matthew 5:33: " Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." He will say the same thing in 3 Nephi 12: 33-37.

The fact of the matter is, that you can make a vow to God, but you cannot create a covenant with God. God can make a covenant which you can fulfill by your performance. God can offer you something, but it's up to you to accept it. You accept it by what you do. It's not enough to say, "Yea Lord, I'll go out and do as I'm bidden." Instead you must actually do it. Because it is only through doing that the covenant is kept by you. It is only through doing the covenant is able to be empowered sufficiently to give you the blessing which a law has been established to allow you to lay ahold. You can't get there without God offering you the covenant and you accepting God's invitation.

So now we should realize, I hope, that that city which Melchizedek, the King of Peace, was able to teach righteousness sufficiently so that it was taken up from the earth, was reserved by God's covenant to return in the last days. They will return at the end of the world. Not the end of mankind or the planet, but the end of the world, or in other words the destruction of the wicked.

The next time we have an event on the earth in which a people of righteousness are taught and gathered, it will not be for the purpose of going up to heaven. Instead it will be for the purpose of permitting those who have gone up before with Enoch and Melchizedek to come back down. It will be for the purpose of preparing those who can endure the presence of those who will come. Because those who come, as Moroni put it, will burn up all who are unworthy, leaving them neither root nor branch. Therefore, some few need to be gathered, so that the earth is not utterly wasted at His coming.

We all know the Lord's expression, "As it was in the days of Noah, so it shall be also at the coming of the Son of Man." (JS-Matt. 1: 41) How many people were required in order to have the Ark be

an acceptable place in which God could preserve all of humanity? It was a portable Ark of the Covenant, in which the family was preserved.

So if it's going to be as it was in the days of Noah there is this net that has been cast out to gather together all manner of fish. (Matt. 13: 47-50.) But as the Lord tells the parable, the angels are going to come at the end of the world to pick through all manner of fish, they keep the good, and the wicked are cast away. They are "cast into the furnace of fire," in the Lord's parable. So the question is, how diligent ought the search be into the things of God? How carefully ought we to consider the things that have been restored to us through the Prophet Joseph Smith?

The fact is, the fulfillment of these ancient covenants is assigned to occur in our dispensation. These comments are taken from the Book of Mormon which the world does not have or accept. They are taken from the book of Abraham, which the world does not have or accept. They come from the Joseph Smith Translation and the Doctrine and Covenants, which the world does not have or accept. All of you have this information in front of you as Latter-day Saints. All of this material has been restored through someone who we claim we honor and regard as a Prophet. Yet we neglect it.

Well, they who come, will burn up those who are unprepared. Therefore, what should we be doing in order to make sure that we are included among those who *are* prepared?

I want to look more into Enoch. So let's go back to the book of Moses. Moses 7: 60: "*And the Lord said unto Enoch: As I live,*" [This is covenant language. This is God swearing by his own life. This is God promising that if He lives, so shall His word live. If He's alive He will vindicate what He's about to say.] "*As I live, even so will I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance, to fulfil the oath which I have made unto you concerning the children of Noah; And the day shall come that the earth shall rest, but before that day the heavens shall be darkened, and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth; and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth; and great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but my people will I preserve; And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men; and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem. And the Lord said unto Enoch: Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there,*" [These are they, who when they come, will burn up those unprepared for the coming, so that it leaves neither root nor branch.] "*we will receive them into our bosom, and they shall see us; and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other; And there shall be mine abode, and it shall be Zion, which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made; and for the space of a thousand years the earth shall rest. And it came to pass that Enoch saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, in the last days, to dwell on the earth in righteousness for the space of a thousand years; But before that day he saw great tribulations among the wicked; and he also saw the sea, that it was troubled, and men's hearts failing them, looking forth with fear for the judgments of the Almighty God, which should come upon the wicked.*" (Moses 7: 60-66.)

This was how the Lord described to Enoch what would happen before His return. It was given to Enoch through a covenant. When The Lord swears "as I live," "... even so will," followed by Him telling them what will happen in the last days, it is a certainty it will happen.

This covenant given to Enoch is among the promises that were made to one of the fathers, and Enoch is one of the fathers. These are the covenants whose time is now upon us. This is the day in which we need to be prepared, so that those who went before and ascended up the ladder can return and fall upon your neck and kiss you, and you fall upon their neck and kiss them. This is to be a sacred embrace through the veil, evidencing fellowship, between you here and them there. The Lord has promised and covenanted these things are going to happen.

But notice, there has to be a tabernacle to be built, like what He requested to be built in Nauvoo. He wanted to come to a Temple there and to restore what had been lost. (D&C 124: 28.) We failed and He did not come to Nauvoo. Yet to fulfill His covenant He must yet come to and take up His abode in a dwelling here. There has to be preparation made. These things require some effort to be made *here*, in order to prepare for His return. If there is no one here who is willing to engage in what's necessary to bring this to pass (because everyone looks around and expects someone else to do it), then you're neglecting the duty that's devolving upon you. Those who have been assigned to come down in this day, in order to honor the fathers, and honor the Lord, by allowing the covenants that have made to be fulfilled, have some responsibility to finish and fulfill the promised work. We are farther away from that day by day. What is presently underway doesn't even begin to accomplish what has been foretold. We are engaged in busy-work. But the Lord has a greater work in mind.

Take a look at Doctrine and Covenants section 107: 53, because in this we see that first brief Zion after which Enoch would later pattern his teaching: *"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."* [This is the original, first patriarchal blessing being given by Adam, he having summoned them there. While Adam was in the act of giving his last blessing, three years previous to his death:] *"the Lord appeared unto them, and they rose up and blessed Adam, and called him Michael, the prince, the archangel. And the Lord administered comfort unto Adam,"* [Ask yourself what comfort is it that the Lord ministers.] *"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. 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. These things were all written in the book of Enoch, and are to be testified of in due time."* (D&C 107: 53-57.) This is the original covenant. This is the first father. This is what was set in motion before the death of Adam, under the binding influence and ratification of the Holy Ghost (or the mind of God), in which Adam, under the influence of that Spirit, predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation. This is the original covenant. This is the original father. Words spoken as a consequence of the influence of the Holy Spirit become the words of God because they are His. They will not fall to the ground unfulfilled. The new and everlasting covenant in our day, is "new" only as a consequence of it having been restored to our attention recently. It is not a new thing. It is a very old thing going back to the days of Adam. It was known to him. You were known to him. What was going to happen in your day was predicted and promised as a consequence of him.

Prophecies as I've said before, revolve around two, and primarily two events only. The first was the coming of the Lord as a mortal, and the second is the coming of the Lord in judgment at the end of the world. There are plenty of prophecies that reckon to intermediate events, so you can find exceptions to the rule. It is nevertheless a rule, however, that the primary focus of all prophecy is the first and second coming of the Lord. These two events vindicate the promise the Father made at the beginning that He would redeem us all from the grave, and He promised further that at some point, the world

would come to an end as to its wickedness and there would be peace again on the earth. Everything revolves around those two prophetic events.

The seed that is to be preserved, and the effort that the Lord has made to try and preserve the seed, that He needs to have, in order to establish a population of the earth after His coming, is the topic Zenos' allegory addresses. Zenos' prophecy was picked up by Jacob as a part of his record, in Jacob chapter 5. Jacob's older brother, Nephi, wrote the first books in the small plates of Nephi. Located there is Nephi's testimony, his prophecy. Nephi adopted the words of Isaiah in order to explain what it was that he, Nephi, had seen. He used Isaiah's words as the means to do that. And Jacob does the same thing.

Jacob said, I want everyone to come up to the temple and I'm going to deliver to you a prophecy. (Jacob 4: 15) When he delivers the prophecy it consists of him reading the allegory taken from Zenos, about the history of God's chosen people. When he finishes reading this lengthy chapter from Zenos he says, Here's the words of my prophecy, because I told you I was going to give it, here it is: "the things which this prophet Zenos spake, concerning the house of Israel, in which he likened them unto a tame olive tree, must surely come to pass." (Jacob 6: 1) That's Jacob's testimony and prophecy! Jacob adopts the words of Zenos in order to bear testimony of the things which he, Jacob, had been taught by the Lord, when the Lord spoke to him face-to-face.

Jacob didn't invent a new allegory. Jacob didn't invent a new narrative. He didn't invent a new story. And he didn't invent new scriptures. He simply took the words of prophets that went before and said, 'Here they are. The words of my prophecy are: they are true.'

Nephi had done the same thing. Jacob does the same thing. Jacob saw in his older brother Nephi the example which he chose to follow, and he did follow. We are going to look at this prophecy, which originally delivered by Zenos, is reaffirmed, ratified, renewed, and a second witness is given to us, in the form of Jacob in the fifth chapter of Jacob. I want to skip to the time that is relative to our day in Jacob 5: 48, because all the rest of that stuff is past history and what we're trying to figure out from where we are, to how to get to the spot in which we might not be burned up, root and branch. Beginning at verse 48: "*And it came to pass that the servant said unto his master: Is it not the loftiness of thy vineyard—have not the branches thereof overcome the roots which are good?*" [That is to say, the roots, the original covenant, the original stock from which we reckon, they were good. But we have become lofty in the way in which we approach things, and as a consequence of that, we have done something that has so cumbered the construct of where we find ourselves, that we've essentially destroyed the ability of the roots to do us any good.] "*And because the branches have overcome the roots thereof, behold they grew faster than the strength of the roots, taking strength unto themselves.*" [That is their pride, their haughtiness. They decided that they were driving this, and not the covenants that were originally made in the beginning.] "*Behold, I say, is not this the cause that the trees of thy vineyard have become corrupted? And it came to pass that the Lord of the vineyard said unto the servant: Let us go to and hew down the trees of the vineyard and cast them into the fire, that they shall not cumber the ground of my vineyard, for I have done all. What could I have done more for my vineyard? But, behold, the servant said unto the Lord of the vineyard: Spare it a little longer. And the Lord said: Yea, I will spare it a little longer, for it grieveth me that I should lose the trees of my vineyard.*"

The Lord, despite the fact that He can't think of anything else that He's left undone, in all of His preparations—and, by the way, it is only that. It is only His preparations. Go to Doctrine and Covenants section 19 and look at what the Lord did for us in the atonement. In describing what He went through in

D&C 19:19 the Lord says: “Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men.” You see that is what He did! And He finished that. He finished His preparations. But verse 20 is what is left for us to do: “Wherefore, I command you again to repent, lest I humble you with my almighty power;” That’s us. He’s done his part. What more could He do? Well, the only other thing He could do is rob us of our agency, and He’s not prepared to do that, because our existence then would come to an end. (D&C 93: 30-31.) That is because without the freedom to choose we don’t have an existence. Therefore, what more could He have done? But it does grieve Him that is going to lose the trees of his vineyard. “Wherefore” the Lord says, “*let us take of the branches of these which I have planted in the nethermost parts of my vineyard,*” [That’s where we find ourselves.] “*and let us graft them into the tree from whence they came;*” [That is, let’s restore the covenant, or at least make it possible to do so.] “*and let us pluck from the tree those branches whose fruit is most bitter,*” [That is coming.] “*and graft in the natural branches of the tree in the stead thereof. And this will I do that the tree may not perish, that, perhaps,*” [Perhaps, or on the off chance. Because without the ability to control the outcome, depending on what you decide to do, perhaps the Lord may preserve unto Himself. You see this does depend upon us.] “*the roots thereof for mine own purpose.*” [That is, some of the promises that were made back to the fathers, that their seed would not be utterly destroyed, might be fulfilled...perhaps.]

How great a number is required in order for the Lord to vindicate his promise? It’s not about numbers. It’s never been about a big volume. It’s the quality of the salvation. Because if you can save but one, what you have saved is infinite and eternal. And therefore it continues on forever.

And so we get this happy reflection: “*Behold, the roots of the natural branches of the tree which I planted whithersoever I would are yet alive;*” [Those promises remain. They are still in play. What the Father promised, what covenants were established, did remain in play. It is yet possible for the Lord to vindicate everything that has been given.] “*wherefore, that I may preserve them also for mine own purpose, I will take of the branches of this tree, and I will graft them in unto them.*” [This is the process by which house of Israel is restored, not in the way that is possible to mass-produce. But in the way in which, some rise up and lay hold upon that original religion that belonged to the fathers, that came down from the beginning, that existed at one time, and that is to exist again.] “*Yea, I will graft in unto them the branches of their mother tree, that I may preserve the roots also unto mine own self,*” [Notice that word “mother” appears in there too. The mother tree. This is genealogical and familial. The purpose is always to restore to the earth the Family of God.] “*that when they shall be sufficiently strong perhaps they may bring forth good fruit unto me, and I may yet have glory in the fruit of my vineyard.*”

And then they go through things and so we skip to verse 61: “*...call servants, that we may labor diligently with our might in the vineyard, that we may prepare the way, that I may bring forth again the natural fruit, which natural fruit is good and the most precious above all other fruit.*” [That’s the whole purpose of the endeavor. And when they call servants in order to help them, the labor of the servants is confined to trying to make the vineyard finally produce fruit again.] Verse 62: “*Wherefore, let us go to and labor with our might this last time, for behold the end draweth nigh, and this is for the last time that I shall prune my vineyard.*” He tells them again in verse 64: “*for the last time, for the end draweth nigh. And if it be so that these last grafts shall grow, and bring forth the natural fruit, then shall ye prepare the way for them, that they may grow.*” Again in verse 71: “*Behold, this is the last time that I shall nourish my vineyard; for the end is nigh at hand, and the season speedily cometh; and if ye labor with your might with me ye shall have joy in the fruit which I shall lay up unto myself against the time which will soon come. And it came to pass that the servants did go and labor with their mights; and the Lord of the vineyard labored also with them;*” [Because the Lord in the last effort, is not going to leave the servants

that he sends, unattended to, by *His* ministrations. This is why in the verses we been reading, and every location we been at, we find that the personal ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, direct, immediate and involved. He continues to remain personally in charge of what is going to happen. But as it begins to happen these Divinely appointed ministers have to sit back and watch. Because the question isn't, is the laborer any less, any well prepared, any less capable, any less complete? No, they are truly sent by the Master. Therefore, the question instead is: What are the branches going to do?]

You can minister all you want to the tree, but the tree has to respond, sometimes to what they view as offensive pruning, offensive digging, offensive conduct of cutting and moving and grafting. Sometimes the kindly service requires the blunt statement that what you have here is error. What you have here is a bundle of false tradition that will damn you.

You can plant the doctrine, you can restore the truth, you can have the Prophet Joseph Smith declare to you that he wants to be held to account for every word of the testimony that he delivers to you in a canonized set of scripture. But if you decide that you are going to throw that away, and you will not allow it to graft in and inform you about the nature of God, and nature of the religion that God is seeking to deliver to you, then the ministrations, and the pruning, and the care, does not result in producing fruit. It simply results in a rather damaged vineyard, continuing to produce precious little, other than what is suitable to be gathered in bundles and burned as a consequence of the loftiness of the people.

Grafting is to restore, to reconnect, to return, or in other words, to plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers. "And the hearts of the children shall turn to the fathers." That's what Moroni said. That's why Moroni reworked the language of Malachi in verse 39 of the Joseph Smith History. "He shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers. And the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers." The work has been for one purpose. Joseph Smith began it. And he laid out all the information necessary for you to be able to identify who the fathers are. He also laid out all the information necessary for you to be able to identify what the covenants were. And now the question is, are we able at this point to preserve the roots, which is the Lord's purpose, by producing fruit in our day?

Well I'm hoping as a consequence of the things that we've looked at tonight, that you conclude that the choice seer in 2 Nephi 3: 7 and in JST-Genesis chapter 50, was more than answered by the ministry of the Prophet Joseph Smith. I hope that you conclude that the knowledge that was supposed to be restored through Joseph of the fathers and the covenants given to the fathers, the knowledge which will ultimately result in restoring Israel, as it is referred to in 2 Nephi 3: 15, has also been something Joseph Smith accomplished. Because Joseph Smith was the promised seer descended from the loins of Joseph of Egypt.

Now I want to change subjects only slightly, in order to address something that we have all been fixated upon. One of the problems with understanding the will of God is that religion was always intended to be proven, and provable, personally. I cannot prove it for you. You cannot prove it for me. But God can prove it for both of us.

When it comes to the proof of the things of God, it is necessarily anecdotal. Anecdotal proof means, that someone went out and they had an experience, and they come back and they tell you as an anecdote, what happened to them. You cannot know whether, when they tell you what happened to them, that they are telling you the truth or not, because their experience is theirs and belongs only to

them. What you can do is say, Joseph Smith seems to persuade me. Joseph Smith seems to have arrived at a point in which, the things that have come to us from Joseph appear to be beyond the capacity of a mere man to have accomplished. Joseph Smith seems to say things which, because of their volume, because of their consistency, because of their purity, appear to me to be something which hails from God and not merely Joseph Smith. However, in the end you must trust Joseph Smith, because it is impossible for you to go back to the morning of a beautiful Spring day in 1820 and be there in the woods near Palmyra to see for yourself. It is a one-time occurrence. It was Joseph's experience.

The only way in which you can know for yourself, is if you go out and you encounter something *for* yourself, in which, you come back from that experience and say, "God spoke also to me." Therefore, as a consequence of God speaking to me, I now know something, which independent of Joseph Smith and independent of the scriptures, God has covenanted with me, and I know now to be true. Your knowledge of God is necessarily anecdotal. Your knowledge of God is necessarily yours, and yours alone. That knowledge of God becomes your property, belonging to you, your covenant in the final analysis, in which, God promises by His own voice to you, in words that He cannot break (because He is a God of truth (Ether 3: 12), and He is the same God today as yesterday, and will be the same tomorrow). He does not change. When you fall into His orbit, you are now revolving around the center, in which, all truth is to be found.

All the answers to the dilemmas that you have, are to be given. But they are to be given to you individually, by Him, and not by another. Even if a man has power to declare things that have been kept hidden from the beginning of the world until now, it's of no use if it's mere voyeurism on your part. If it's just entertainment to you, rather than transcendent in effect to your mind and soul. It's not supposed to be entertaining. It may appropriately be inspiring. But it if is inspiring, it's only so if it results in you taking action. Because the action that is required is for you to go out and to acquire for yourself your own anecdote, your own experience, your own testimony, or more correctly, your own knowledge of the things of God.

One of the reasons why we look at the scriptures is because these are evidence of, how often the Lord has, and how frequently does, covenant with those who seek after Him. When the restoration began through Joseph Smith there was already in place a restorationist movement. It was all over the Western Reserve including frontier Ohio, spreading into upstate New York. That restorationist movement already knew that what was missing from true faith was a New Testament church. What was needed was a New Testament church that was modeled, governed, patterned and authorized in the same way in which Jesus had authorized a New Testament church in the meridian of time.

But what was Jesus up to in the meridian of time in establishing a church? He was about to launch the Gospel into the Gentile world in which you would not find those who could organize themselves as the House of Israel. Therefore in order to accomplish that, as a substitute for the 12 princes of Israel, the 12 sons of Jacob, He called 12 apostles to model that family. And he called 70 others because the family of Israel included 70 souls in Exodus 1: 5. You will find that when Israel went in Egypt, the family of Israel consisted of 70 souls. And so He remodeled the ancient family of Israel in the New Testament church.

But the restoration of the Gospel in the last days is not reaching back to the meridian of time. The restoration of the Gospel in the last days is reaching back, at a minimum, to the time of Enoch. Because what you have to accomplish is not a return merely to the center of the events. Rather, you must walk back through the dispensations in a mirror image or chiasm, to the beginning of mankind.

Ultimately back from the fall itself. Therefore the symmetry of the history of mankind will match at the end what was in the beginning. It's unfolding according to a pattern. It's unfolding according to a plan. It is vindicating the promises and the prophecies that were made, beginning with Adam in the first days.

And what is now needed for the culmination of the last days are those who will at last say to God, "I am not satisfied with my Sunday School lessons, and the disappointment that I see all around me. I'm not prepared to wait on another before I rise up to know God myself." We need a generation of belief to arise and then act according to their belief to become people of faith.

If any of *you* lack wisdom, ask God. He gives to all men liberally. He does not upbraid. That means He doesn't send you away discouraged, telling you, don't inquire of me. You have no right to ask of me.

We saw in that first talk in Boise that we were commanded to pursue after the mysteries of God. What is more mysterious than what went on in the beginning generations? Because we have so little left from which to reconstruct that it is entirely a mystery. And yet, we have enough to know the pattern the Lord intended for the last days to unfold. That pattern is to return us, in the end, to what was here in the beginning. It is God's intent to return us to a state of knowledge about things He has always had in His heart, as the goal, as the ambition, as the desire to fulfill. Not a New Testament church, although a New Testament church is absolutely part of the last-days pattern.

When the Lord hung on the cross, and the sun was darkened at noon, if you had looked up in the sky to see what was overhead, you would see the sacrificial sheep in the pattern of the stars; what we call Aries today. Proceeding forth from under the forefoot of Aries, we have renamed it "the bands of Pisces," but it should be more appropriately rendered as the net of Pisces. Because from under the fore leg of the Lamb, was cast out a net. This is the New Testament pattern or church. That net gathers in at least two kinds of fish. The larger one that is gathered in the net is forever circumnavigating the ecliptic, and will do so eternally. The larger group in the star field, though caught in the net cast by the Lamb will never rise up to the North. The smaller group, the smaller star field of Pisces, which also is caught in that same net, is pointed to the sides of the North, where the Throne of the Father is to be found; that place around which all things revolve and where the Father presides and sustains all of His creations.

The religion that was established in the beginning recognized the testimony set out in the stars above us, which we cannot touch, corrupt, corrode, alter, or change by our apostasy, which is beyond our ability to reach and alter. That testimony above was placed there in the beginning and remains overhead still. But it serves us no purpose today because, when mankind could not destroy the testimony written in the heavens, then we simply lost it through ignorance; or in the words we read tonight from Enoch, darkness was permitted to reign upon the earth. Satan is content with darkness, because it works just as well as any of the other tools used to condemn and chain mankind.

The God of heaven intends for the testimonies that He has given to be understood. In the beginning they were understood. Now don't think that you can start doing Google searches, and you can reconstruct what it was they knew. I know because I've looked at it. I've looked at the best sources that are out there. I bought a library of material to look into whether or not it would be possible to talk about these things without using any source other than what already exists here. If I can't find a source already in existence I do not feel presently at liberty to go further in the discussion. That will be in another day. Now Francis Rolleston has a good book to raise awareness of the subject. John Pratt uses Rolleston in a

lot of what he's written. I've looked carefully at what John Pratt has done as well, and I've spoken with him about these subjects. He is a Latter-day Saint astronomer, who has paid attention to this subject and written articles in Meridian Magazine. I can tell you that the resources simply do not exist here on the earth. You would probably be better off not trying to reconstruct it at this point, because even the constellations are so messed up in what has been bequeathed to us that the wrong images are now believed to be part of the testimony above. One of the earliest sources about the constellations you can find in the Egyptian temple at Dendra. It too is a mess. Historically it is also late.

The Egyptians tried to preserve the things that came down from the beginning, as we read in the book of Abraham. The Pharaoh "sought earnestly to imitate the order that came down from the beginning." (Abr. 1: 26) Pharaoh succeeded in large measure in doing that. He was a righteous man, "Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom and judged his people wisely and justly all his days, seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam, and also of Noah, his father." (Abraham 1:26.) Pharaoh was not out there freelancing. He was trying to imitate something, and Egypt generally did a commendable job of preserving some things that had fallen into decay elsewhere. But the restoration through Joseph Smith, and the promises that were made to the fathers, and the statement that was made by Moroni to Joseph on the evening that he came to him, when he reworded the promise given through Malachi, all of these are pointed to something that is, at this moment, still incomplete. This points to a work that at this moment is still undone; a project that remains for us, if we will receive it. But it will require revelation from heaven to be able to restore it. Therefore it will require people willing to receive new revelation.

When Zion does come to pass, heaven will look down and see what is to them, so comfortable, and so familiar, that it appears to accurately reflect a pattern that exists in the heavens. When they see we have that here, then they who come not only will not burn them up, but they will instead fall upon them and they kiss their necks. This will be because, at last, they had a sister and brother on the earth, united by belief, united by covenant, united by knowledge, united by light and truth, or in other words, the glory of God, which is intelligence. The purpose of the Gospel has always been, to inform, edify, to raise up, to instruct. It was never meant to be reduced to something that is merely repetitious. It was intended to challenge you to your very core. What you do and what you think and how you act is intended to make you godlike in your understanding. And you're not godlike when you're bored out of your mind in a meeting.

If you have the opportunity to teach, you *must* push the envelope. You *must* teach and instruct and try to raise people up. The grafting serves no purpose if it simply continues to produce the same barrenness. Fruit is a genealogical term. Be fruitful and multiply was what Adam was told to be with Eve, at the beginning. It's about preserving a "family of Gods" if you will. It's about creating a circumstance in which it is possible for the work which began an eternity ago can continue to go on for an eternity from now, because *you* were saved. Because *you* were redeemed; because *you* tied into that same connection, that unifies all of the Gods who have gone before.

The work of salvation is not achieved by ignorance and indifference. The Gospel of Christ is not limited to, making you feel better about yourself. Quite frankly, my wife and I marvel all the time at how unprepared and unworthy she and I feel in everything that has gone on. But, I know God. And therefore, because I know God, I am confident that you can know Him too. I am absolutely confident that you can know Him too. He *will* speak to any one of you, just as He spoke to Joseph Smith, and that He will answer any earnest seeker. No one is sent away disappointed.

Do you think the Lord, who would not turn away the blind, and the halt, the crippled, and the leprous, do you think the Lord who, seeing the widow whose only son was being carried away dead, and was moved with compassion to restore the life of that young man, so that she, in that circumstance, in that culture, in that environment, she now had future security because she had a son to look out for her; do you think that that Lord doesn't intend to answer the prayers of the earnest seeker? My suspicion is that God has answered, and you have turned a deaf ear to much of what you looked for, because you want something other than the answers He has already given in the material that sits in front of you unexamined. My suspicion is, that if you would spend time looking into the revelations given us by the Prophet Joseph Smith, and studying history, however perilous that may be a prove to you, that you will conclude that God has already given an answer to the inquiry you've made. And with a little effort you can find it. [Holding up the scriptures.] And when you find it, you'll hear the voice of God saying, "There it is. Now was that so hard? Why don't you keep going and see what else is in there for you." Because this stuff was given to us at the price of the life of a 38 ½ year old young man and his older brother, whose blood was shed in order to restore what we now have in our possession. And we take it lightly and we look away.

I could write my own Gospel. I could bear my own testimony. I could invent a new narrative about our Lord, if it were necessary to do so. But I will tell you the only thing that is necessary is to open the scriptures and read them, and to tell you, the things that we looked at tonight are true. Like Jacob. In fact, if you go all the way back to Jacob chapter 6: 1: "And now, behold, my brethren, as I said unto you that I would prophesy, behold, this is my prophecy—that the things which this prophet Zenos spake, concerning the house of Israel, in the which he likened them unto a tame olive-tree, must surely come to pass."

So here are the words my prophecy: That the things that we have looked at this evening, restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the seer named Joseph, the son of the father named Joseph, fulfilled the promise of Joseph of Egypt, and they are all true. I know them to be true. And you could know them to be true too. But the price you have to pay to gain that knowledge is to study what was restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Otherwise, they're just something gathering dust on a shelf. Don't read them as if you're trying to vindicate the religion you already understand. Don't read them as if you're trying to defend your current group of preferred doctrines. Read them as if you are as ignorant of the will of God as the convert you hope to make living somewhere in Florida or New Guinea or Guatemala. Because the truth of the matter is we have been devolving in our understanding from the day of Joseph Smith until today at an ever accelerating rate. And what we have left, Enoch called gross darkness.

I bear testimony that Joseph Smith was a Prophet. I bear testimony that our Lord lived and lives. I'm one of those who can say that I am a witness of that. I have seen His suffering. I have heard His voice. He doesn't intend that I be a solitary witness of Him, or Joseph be one. He intends for everyone of you to rise up and do as James bids you to do. If you lack wisdom, ask God. He gives to you, He gives to all of us liberally. He is real. It is His work to bring this stuff to pass. The only thing that we can do is to offer to be a servant. And I am confident that I am a poor one of those. But I am His servant. I serve Him however poorly, however offensively, however inadequately. He intends to call, in the plural, servants to fulfill what needs to be done in the last days. He does intend to bring again Zion. That will be his, and not a man's work.

When we get together again the next time I talk, the subject is going to be Priesthood. And the time after that we'll talk about Zion. Hopefully as a consequence of covering the subjects we do, in the order that we address them, you'll begin to appreciate the restoration that has come about through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Hopefully you will understand Joseph's work as only the beginning of the work of God in the last days. Much of what is left yet to be accomplished will not be accomplished unless it is through others, eventually leading to the return of the natural fruit. A proposition that remains a challenging and undone and an incomplete labor.

The things I've talked about tonight were chosen precisely because they focus on the issue, the real issue involving covenants, we need to begin to understand in the last days in order to know that the covenants of the fathers and the work of reuniting His children with the fathers is something yet to be accomplished. But it is something which, hopefully, we will begin to see happen again. Joseph did not return without some success in that. Joseph was able to obtain what he sought. Now we need to do the same to save ourselves in our day.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.