

Lecture 4: Covenants

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It's almost serendipitous: 40 years ago—tonight—I was in Centerville, Utah. Elder Brian Black (who baptized me) had a family in Centerville, Utah, that was still here. And the fellow who gave the opening prayer, Mel, was in the military with me. He got baptized the same year as I did, and he and I—I think we were barracks roommates at the time.

The way that the military operates is that they only deal with you by giving orders. And I found out that the military had provisions that allowed you to ask to attend a—what they called—a “religious retreat.” Having found out that they would allow you to attend a religious retreat, I applied for—and Mel did, also—and I was “ordered” by the United States Department of Defense to attend General Conference in October of 1973. And so, under orders from our government, I attended General Conference in this city, 40 years ago this evening.

Back then, it was a Saturday—October the 6th. General Conference would end on Sunday, October 7th. In the closing talk that was given by Harold B. Lee (it was his last talk in General Conference because he died in December of that year; I think he died December 14th, but I may be wrong on that—he died in December of that year; it was his last General Conference talk)—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 any event, I was looking through the names of those who spoke that General Conference. Now you have to understand, I had been baptized on September 10th; we were now October the 6th, less than a month. I looked through the list of names of those who spoke in General Conference.

Because I had orders, and if you wore a uniform (and we wore uniforms), there was a door in the Tabernacle that was for active-duty service people only. And when you lined up outside that door, unlike folks that lined up other places, they let you in. And we occupied—there were either two or three rows in the tabernacle, but they were on the right-hand side, and they were very close to the front. And so I got a good look at who the Church leadership was back in those days, and I was impressed.

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.) Eldred G. Smith spoke on Saturday afternoon. In the Priesthood session, Marion G. Romney, 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. Now you have to understand that later on, Spencer Kimball was someone that I had enormous respect for. But I came and I went from General Conference having heard him talk, and it never even registered. And so when we rolled around, finally, to another General Conference and I couldn't remember who he was—though I had seen him—and I heard his voice, I wondered why on earth didn't I remember him, because his voice was as we all recall.

Well, tonight we're gonna talk about covenants and, in particular, covenants that are being referred to in a verse that we find in the Joseph Smith History, verse 39—Moroni changing the content of the text of Malachi to render it to Joseph Smith, on this fall equinox occasion, to read 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* (see also Joseph Smith History 3:4 RE).

So, there is some peril if we do not have our hearts turned to these fathers. That peril 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 verse 37 it says: **they** that come shall burn them. And therefore, when **He** comes, **they** that come with Him shall burn those who are unprepared, those who are scheduled for being *utterly wasted* at His coming. And so, we need to inquire into what exactly it is the promises were, who the fathers were that the promises were made to, and then avoid this peril of those who come burning them, that *it shall leave them neither root nor branch* (ibid), terms which, in Boise, I referred to as being genealogical, because it becomes the end of the line at that point.

In looking at the promises that were made, I want to go back to Second Nephi chapter 3 and begin there, which we also referred to earlier. Because when we're tracking back the covenants that were made, and we're talking about the promises that were made to the fathers, and we're trying to identify who the fathers are, we get a real advantage in making the determination by what we have in Lehi's blessing to his son, Joseph. Beginning at verse 4 of chapter 3 of Second Nephi, Lehi says: *I am a descendant of Joseph who was carried [away] captive into Egypt. And great were the **covenants** of the Lord which he made unto Joseph* (see also 2 Nephi 2:2 RE).

As soon as you encounter the word "covenants," an alarm ought to go off, because much of what's going to go on in the history of the world is gonna go on as a consequence of these covenants that have been made—one of the possessors of those promises and covenants being Joseph, who had been 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 that he believed that Joseph of Egypt had foreseen about what would happen in his own day]....*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....Joseph truly testified, [verse 6:] A seer shall the Lord...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 goes on to talk about this choice seer is going to bring] them to the knowledge of the covenants which I have made with thy fathers (see also 2 Nephi 2:2-3 RE).

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, being: thy fathers, Joseph of Egypt. So the promises that God made to fathers before Joseph of Egypt—a seer is going to restore the knowledge about that. It may be complex wording, but it's dealing with very simple events, and the identities are important.

I will give unto him [that is, this choice seer] a commandment that he shall do none other work.... (see also 2 Nephi 2:3 RE). That is to say, he will not cause Zion to come. That was not the assignment of the choice seer. Joseph Smith was not in charge of, and not required to do, the work of bringing again Zion.

...none other work, save the work which I shall command him...I will make him great in mine eyes; for he shall do my work...he shall be great [and] like unto Moses, whom I...said I would [deliver] up [verse 11:] But a seer [I will] raise up out of the fruit of thy loins; ...unto him will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins— (see also 2 Nephi 2:3 RE)

In verse 12 (see also 2 Nephi 2:4 RE) it talks about how there's gonna be this restoration of *knowledge of their fathers in the latter days...also to the knowledge of my covenants, saith the Lord*. And then in 15 (see also 2 Nephi 2:5 RE), it says, *his name shall be called after me...it shall be after the name of his father*—after "me" being Joseph of Egypt; so the name should be Joseph. That will also be the name of his father—he shall be like unto me; for the thing, which the Lord [God] shall bring forth by his hand, by the power of the Lord shall bring my people unto salvation.

And then he goes on, and he tells ~~Lehi~~ [Joseph], he tells his son in verse 23 (see also 2 Nephi 2:7 RE): *Because of this covenant [that is, 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, ...they shall hearken unto the words of the book. And there shall rise up one mighty among them*. I talked about that in Boise.

And so, if Joseph Smith fulfills the prophecy that was delivered to Joseph, that is recovered, in part, in the Book of Mormon, in this third chapter of Second Nephi, 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 Second Nephi chapter 3. Nor do we have to have the Brass Plates, as it turns out. Because Joseph Smith restored the

prophecy of Joseph of Egypt, and you can read it, right now, in the Joseph Smith Translation, beginning in Genesis chapter 50 at verse 24. It reads slightly different than Lehi's summation given—and Lehi's choice of what he adds in, and what he selects out, and what Joseph says have some interesting things... It's absolutely worth your time to study out all the differences and to pick apart what it is that Lehi did because it tells you much about father Lehi—what he chose to include and what he chose to pass over.

However, for our purposes tonight, I want to look at what was said to Joseph that we find in the Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis chapter 50, beginning at verse 24. Joseph of Egypt says: *The Lord [hath] visited me and I have obtained [a] promise of the Lord*. This is what Lehi will refer (to in his prophecy to his son Joseph) as a covenant. Because when the Lord delivers a promise to someone, He delivers it by way of covenant. God is bound by His word. Therefore, when He delivers a promise, it is a covenant.

*I have obtained a promise of the Lord, that out of the fruit of my loins [this is the covenant with Joseph of Egypt—out of **his** loins], the Lord God will raise up a righteous **branch** out of **my** loins [so that is talking about Joseph of Egypt, one of the sons of Israel, one of the twelve tribes]; And [now we're changing topics—and] unto **thee**, whom my father Jacob hath named Israel [so this is not just the descendants of Joseph, this is **all** of the twelve tribes, raised up unto **all** of the twelve 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's a covenant about deliverance to be had for all the tribes of Israel, not merely the descendants of Joseph].*

*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 Third Nephi? Or is the "latter-days" some other 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's] loins [different topic, different person, different time frame].*

*Thus saith the Lord God of **my fathers** [this is Joseph speaking—his fathers would include, at a minimum, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; his "fathers," in the plural] unto me [so the Lord God of Joseph's fathers said unto him], A choice seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy [that is, Joseph's] loins...he shall be esteemed highly among the fruit of thy [that is, Joseph's] loins; and unto him will I give [a] commandment that he shall do a work for the fruit of thy [that is, Joseph's] loins, **[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**.... (JST Genesis 50:24-28, emphasis added; see also Genesis 12:36-38 RE)*

Now we're 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 [that is, Joseph of Egypt's descendant—"seer"] he shall be great like unto **him** whom I have said I would raise up unto you, to deliver my people, O house of Israel ["him" that he's going to raise up is Moses, okay?] ...for a seer will I raise up to deliver my people out of the land of Egypt [this is Moses]; he shall be called Moses. And by this name he shall [be known] that he is of thy house [that is, "O, house of Israel"— that's the house, not Joseph's—the House of Israel]; for he shall be nursed by the king's daughter, and shall be called her son.*

And again [so we're changing topics again] a seer will I raise up out of the fruit of thy [that is, Joseph's] loins, and unto him [that is, this seer] will I give power to bring forth my word unto the seed of thy loins [that's Joseph's seer—and he's to give us God's word]... (ibid, vs. 28-30; see also Genesis 12:38-39 RE)

And then he goes on to say in verse 31 (39 RE):

*The fruit of thy loins [that is, Joseph's loins] shall write, ...the fruit of the loins of Judah shall write; ...that which shall be written by the fruit of thy loins, ...also that which shall be written by the fruit of the loins of Judah, shall grow together unto the confounding of false [doctrine], ...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's seer is to do this. This is what Moroni is telling Joseph in verse 39 of the Joseph Smith History.

*Out of weakness shall he be made strong, in that day when my work shall go forth among **all** my people ["all my people" include all of the various branches of Israel], which shall restore **them**, who are of the house of Israel, in the last days. (JST Genesis 50:32, emphasis added; see also Genesis 12:39 RE)*

That's the objective. To fix and reconnect the house of Israel, restoring them in the last days.

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 [that latter-day seer—his] name shall be called Joseph [as if the Lord Himself wanted to be had in remembrance in all generations—Joseph of Egypt: Joseph of Egypt who was sold into slavery; Joseph of Egypt who kept his faith; Joseph of Egypt who was sold into slavery by the jealousy of brothers whom he only sought to declare the truth to—His name shall be called

Joseph] ...it shall be after the name of his father [so his father shall be that, too]; 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, ...he shall lead them as a flock, ...he shall smite the waters of the Red Sea with his rod...*

He shall have judgment, and [he] shall write the word of the Lord....he shall not speak many words, for I will write unto him my law by [my] 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. (ibid, vs. 33-36, emphasis added; see also Genesis 12:40-41 RE)

So the Lord to Joseph is swearing. It is from this text that father Lehi lifts out what father Lehi lifts out, in order to write what he composes in Second Nephi chapter 3, in the patriarchal blessing he gives to his son Joseph—the names “Joseph” and the son named Joseph, commending to the mind of Lehi attention to this very material that we’ve just looked at.

And so, if the seer of the last days, who was responsible for completing this assignment and fulfilling this foretold opportunity is Joseph Smith, then through Joseph Smith we should be able to say: We can learn something about knowledge of covenants—covenants that were made with the fathers. *And 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.

And in every particular, Joseph Smith **seems** to be the one about whom this is written. And therefore, doesn’t seem that we need to look for another.

Chapter 4 of Second Nephi talks about (this is Nephi, now, interjecting): *He* [that is, Joseph—verse 2 of chapter 4—he, Joseph of Egypt] *truly prophesied concerning all his seed* (see also 2 Nephi 3:1 RE).

“All his seed” include not just the folks that were included in the tribe of Manasseh and through others that joined the party, Ephraim—descendants of Joseph in the Book of Mormon—but it includes, as well, other portions of the tribe of Joseph, scattered wherever they were throughout the world, many of whom may be here among us tonight, in your bloodlines.

Well, it's not a prophecy about Joseph's seed only. It's talking about the ministry of this latter-day prophet—and this latter-day prophet restoring knowledge. Through Joseph, then, we should be able to find knowledge of covenants made to the fathers and to identify who the fathers are.

In order to know something about covenants, Joseph Smith needed to give us some material about that. And I want to refer you to section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants, beginning at verse 8, where the Lord tells Joseph:

Behold, mine house is a house of order, saith the Lord...and not a house of confusion. Will I accept...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)

See, everything proceeds according to law. And the government of God is not necessarily limited to an organizational structure, but it hails back to things that were committed, by God—in promises made to the fathers—which have to be fulfilled. And it doesn't matter if we try to capture that. God's purposes are ordained according to a law that was ordained before the world was.

I am the Lord thy God; and I give unto you [a] commandment—that no man shall come unto my Father but by me or by my word, which is my law, saith the Lord. (ibid, vs. 12)

In other words, if you are going to come—whoever you are—unto the Father, the only way you are going to get there will be through the Son.

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; ...whatsoever things are not by me shall be shaken and destroyed. (ibid, vs. 13-14)

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 Nephi 9:41, emphasis added; 2 Nephi 6:11 RE). 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. And our Redeemer is the one who not only keeps the gate, protects the way, but greets those along the way whom He is going to introduce to the Father.

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* (D&C 132:13). 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: *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* (D&C 130:20-21). Therefore, what is important for you to understand and to know is whatever it is that law consists of. Because the way in which you accept the covenant that has been offered to you is by learning the principle or the law upon which the blessing you seek is predicated. And then, having learned what law that is upon which it is predicated, obeying it.

We learn all of this through the revelations given to us through Joseph Smith.

Before Joseph of Egypt, one of the fathers that we need to look at is Abraham. And therefore, I want to turn to Abraham chapter 1, beginning at verse 2:

And, finding there was greater happiness and peace and rest for me, I sought for the blessings of the fathers...

Once again, now we have Abraham, and we've gone all the way back to him generations before Joseph of Egypt, and we encounter the same thing—that is, searching for the blessings which belong to the fathers—Abraham looking for the blessings of the fathers, hoping to find, thereby, happiness; hoping to find peace and rest for himself.

...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...

You know, when I spoke in Logan, I talked about repentance being related to knowledge and that it's our ignorance that damns us, most of all. Abraham perceived the same thing. And Abraham believed that redemption and possessing great knowledge went hand-in-hand. And if he could obtain that great knowledge, then he wanted to be:

a greater follower of righteousness, and [as a consequence of that] to possess a greater knowledge...

Because this is one of those laws upon which blessings are predicated. Knowledge, light, truth, the glory of God—all of those things are obtained by obedience to law. And Abraham sought for and desired to possess more light and truth. And as a result of that, he wanted inevitably to become:

...a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and [he desired most of all] ...to receive instructions, and to keep...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 [the] first father, through the fathers unto me.*

All of this ties back, necessarily, to Adam.

I sought for mine appointment unto the Priesthood according to the appointment of God unto the fathers concerning the seed. (Abraham 1:2-4; see also Abraham 1:1 RE)

Everything about the original form of priesthood, everything about what it is that Abraham was seeking, all of this ties together because there is only one gospel.

In the Lectures on Faith, the Second Lecture paragraphs 37 to 53, there is a chronology given. I'm not gonna 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. But it was important enough to Joseph Smith to put it into the Lectures on Faith so that you know how to reconstruct the fathers—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; 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 ~~Shem~~ [Abraham] for 150 of the 175 years of the life of Abraham. Shem knew Noah. And Shem knew those on the other side of the Flood, having lived with them for 98 years before the Flood.

Abraham had the records of the fathers. 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 (see also Abraham 2:4 RE).

Since Abraham was acquainted with the priesthood that belonged to the fathers—and since Abraham had a knowledge that was reckoned from priesthood, that goes back to the time of the patriarchs—he, as a consequence of possessing that, knew about the beginning of creation, knew about the planets, knew about the stars as they were made known unto the fathers.

Go back to Doctrine and Covenants section 121; it's talking about our dispensation. I want to look at—beginning at about verse 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, [and] to the dry land, ...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 [the] glories, laws, ...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. (D&C 121:28-32; see also T&C 138:21)

Abraham is not merely talking about something—both in this verse, Abraham 1:31, as well as what we encounter later on in the Book of Abraham about the various stars that were shown to him and the relationship between them and his Facsimile #2, as I recollect—that is, an effort to lay out a relationship in the heavens between certain positions of glory and authority. But Abraham is testifying that it was part of the original gospel that was entrusted to the fathers and that those records were handed down to him. In Doctrine and Covenants section 121, we find out that that's part of what is supposed to have been included within, and is ultimately scheduled for revelation to, those that will receive the restoration of the Gospel, when it is fully upon the earth in the dispensation of the fullness of times.

Abraham received his priesthood ordination through Melchizedek. You can see that in 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* (see also T&C 82:10). Now, Bruce R. McConkie reads that verse, and he disagrees with what the church had previously taught; that is, that Melchizedek was Shem. He takes the position that this 14 means that *Melchizedek, who received it through the lineage of his fathers, even till Noah*, means that there were fathers between Melchizedek, on the one hand, and Noah, on the other—and therefore, Melchizedek could not 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, the priesthood was preserved, and that Melchizedek—that is, Shem—received it from Noah. In any event, it's clear in verse 14 that Abraham received it from Melchizedek. But if you go to Abraham chapter 2, in the Book of Abraham, beginning at verse 6:

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 [will I] 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— ...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, ...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; ...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 (see also Abraham 3:1 RE).

“Ordination” and “confirmation by the voice of God” are two separate events. We’ll speak more about this in the next talk, which will be on Priesthood. But it’s enough to simply take note of that here.

Jehovah, speaking directly to Abraham, tells 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 whomever **is** saved from that point going forward? When you go back to the fathers and you begin with Adam—although there were apostasies (and apostasies began immediately—it was generations before Eve bore Cain and thought she had a son that would, at last, be faithful. They were grandparents when Cain was born. And then Able was born. And Cain slew Able. And Seth came as a replacement to the grandparents, Adam and Eve. And from Seth reckons then the seed of the righteous)—

Father to son to grandson to great-grandson—when you look at the list of those that are gathered together into the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, in 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 in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and you have—seventh from Adam being Enoch—you have a line of continuity from Adam, directly down all the way until you arrive at Shem.

But when you hit Shem, it 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 that his fathers taught him idolatry. Abraham represents the challenge that every man who would be saved from that point forward must find themselves within and then overcome: the idolatry of their fathers. Abraham is the prototype.

And so Abraham is acknowledged by that same Jehovah who visited with the fathers in Adam-ondi-Ahman and identified Himself again to Abraham who—after apostasy—becomes, literally, the first—the first to return to the righteousness of the first fathers; the

first to return to the religion that belonged in the beginning to mankind; the first to discover *a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, [as] also of the planets, and of the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers* (Abraham 1:31; see also Abraham 2:4 RE).

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 (Abraham 1:2; see also Abraham 1:1 RE). It is this which made him a candidate the Lord could speak to. It's this that made him the prototype in his generation of what it takes to turn away from idolatry, to turn away from the kind of corrupt and degrading religions that were then in play on the earth—the fertility cults and the human sacrifices and the vileness that surrounded him. And then, having done so, to be asked by God to slay his son, as if there was some legitimacy to the rites that were practiced all around him.

Now 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, and you can find it in the Book of Mormon—where Isaac is slain, and he's brought back to life, rather like Lazarus is brought back to life. But it's clear that the Old Testament version that we have in King James: he raises his hand with a knife to commit the act, and then the ram is found in the thicket to deliver him. Sometimes, as it turns out, rams are not found in thickets, and the sacrifice will be required.

The Lord says:

*I will bless them that bless thee, ...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 that he has—Abraham is in possession of something because Abraham **knows** some things that are true that relate back to the very beginning; and as a consequence of that, those who are given the same **knowledge** necessarily have to belong to the same priesthood] ...in thy seed (that is, [in] thy Priesthood) [because you **become** a son of Abraham if you take upon yourself the requirements for the covenant; you inherit that, just as Abraham inherited it—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...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 [un]to me, and withdrawn his face from me, I said in my heart: Thy servant has sought thee earnestly; now I have found thee. (Abraham 2:11-12; see also Abraham 3:1 RE)*

And there 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 themselves redeemed—because all the servants that will be acknowledged by Him must seek Him 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): *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 includes rather more than what we know about, as yet.

But it is, nevertheless, the case that it is through Joseph and Jacob, Isaac and Abraham that the promises remain. You can see that in Doctrine and Covenants section 27. We only need to look at verse 10 of section 27: *[As] 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 covenant with Jacob and covenant with Isaac and covenant with Abraham. Those promises are still in play. This is what Moroni was talking to Joseph Smith about. *And [verse 11] also with Michael, or Adam, the father of all, the prince of all, the ancient of days.* Promises that are in play today go all the way back to them.

The covenant which we receive will come as consequence of **them**. What **they** got secured for **us** promises which the Lord intends to honor. 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,* and as Section 121 tells us is going to be the case in the Dispensation of the Fulness of Time.

Go to Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis chapter 14, beginning at verse 25:

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, ...quenched the violence of fire. ...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. (JST Genesis 14:25-28; see also Genesis 7:17-18 RE)

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 with Enoch.

*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...dry up [the] waters, ...turn them out of their course; To put at defiance the armies of nations, to divide the earth, ...break every band, to stand in the presence of God; to do all things...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. (ibid, vs. 29-31, emphasis added; see also Genesis 7:18-19 RE)*

See, it's not your will. Even if you're given this ordination, it is by the will of the Son of God. That is to say, nothing gets broken, nothing gets held in defiance, nothing gets done except by the will of the Son.

*Men having this faith, coming up unto this order of God, were translated and taken up into heaven. ...now, Melchizedek was a priest of this order; therefore he obtained peace in Salem, and was called the Prince of peace...his people [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. (ibid, vs. 32-35, emphasis added; see also Genesis 7:19-20 RE)*

These are they who are coming, whose glory and brightness will burn them up who are on the earth, who are unprepared to receive them. **These** are they about whom Moroni was speaking to Joseph Smith.

And this Melchizedek, having thus established righteousness, was called the king of heaven by his people, or, in other words, the King of peace....he lifted up his voice, ...he blessed Abram, being the high priest, and the keeper of the storehouse of God; Him [unto] whom God had appointed to receive tithes for the poor. Wherefore, Abram paid unto him tithes of all...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, ...according to the blessing[s] wherewith Melchizedek had blessed him. (ibid, vs. 36-40; see also Genesis 7:20-21 RE)

Joseph Smith restored this information—as he restored the rest of what he gave us—in order for us to understand that when God swears by Himself to the Fathers about what it is He intends to accomplish in the last-days, and we get near enough to that event so that we’re over the horizon and inevitably going to fall into that dark day, some few will take it seriously enough to say, like Abraham, “I 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**. We can make **vows**, but Christ discouraged us from doing that in Matthew. Go back to Matthew chapter 5—this is in the Sermon on the Mount (you read the same thing in 3 Nephi chapter 12). But look at Matthew chapter 5, verse 33:

[And] again, ye have heard...it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but [thou] 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 [well, cosmetically some of you women can, but...]. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil (see also Matthew

3:24 RE).

He'll say the same thing in 3 Nephi chapter 12, verses 33-37 (see also 3 Nephi 5:29 RE).

The fact of the matter is that you can make a vow to God, but you can't make a covenant with God. God can make a covenant which you can fulfill by your performance. God can offer you something; it's up to you to accept it. And you accept it by what you do. It's not enough to say, "Yea, Lord; I'll go out, and I'll do as I'm bidden." You have to do it—because it's only in the doing that the covenant is kept. It's only in the doing that the covenant is able to be empowered sufficient to give you the blessing upon which a law has been established for the blessing to be predicated. You can't get there without God offering and you accepting.

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, reserved to the last days of the end of the world—

The **next** time we have such an event on the earth, the **next** time there is this kind of gathering and this kind of a population anywhere, it will not be for the purpose of going up. It will be for the purpose of permitting those who have gone up to come back down. It will be for the purpose of having those who can endure the presence of those who come because those who come will burn up all those who are unworthy. And therefore, **some few** need to be gathered so that the earth is not utterly wasted at His coming.

As it was in the days of Noah, so [also shall it be] at the [time of the] coming of the Son of Man (JS-M 1:41; see also Matthew 11:11 RE). 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. And 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. But as the Lord tells the parable, the angels are going to come, and they're going to pick through all manner of fish, and they're going to keep the good, and the rest are going to be scheduled for burning. And 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 that this stuff is assigned to our dispensation. And I'm reading from the Book of Mormon, which the world does not have or accept. I'm reading from the Book of Abraham, which the world does not have or accept. I'm reading from the Joseph Smith Translation, which the world does not have and accept. All of you have this information in front of you. All of this material has been restored through someone that we claim we honor and regard as a prophet.

Well, they who come will burn up those who are unprepared. And therefore, what should

we be doing in order to make sure that we are included among those who **are** prepared?

Well, I wanna look more into Enoch. So let's go back to the book of Abraham—oh, excuse me, the Book of Moses. Moses chapter 7, beginning at verse 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 this word live; if He's alive, He shall 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, [even] 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 their 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 [called] Zion, which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made; ...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; ...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 [shall] come upon the wicked.*** (Moses 7:60-66, emphasis added; see also Genesis 4:22-23 RE)

This is the Lord describing to Enoch what would happen by way of covenant, the Lord swearing *as I live, even so will...* and He tells him what's going to come to pass in the last days. This is among the promises that were made to one of the Fathers—and this **is** one of the Fathers, and 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—a sacred embrace through the veil, evidencing fellowship between you here and them there, the Lord promising and covenanting these things are gonna happen.

But notice—there has to be a tabernacle; He has to come and take up His abode. 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 a duty that's devolving upon you as one of those who was assigned to come down, in this day, in order to honor the fathers and honor the Lord, by allowing the covenants that have been made to be fulfilled.

Take a look at Doctrine and Covenants section 107, because in this we see that first Zion:

Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called Seth [his son], Enos [his grandson], Cainan [the son of Enos], Mahalaleel [son of Cainan], Jared [son of Mahalaleel], Enoch [son of Jared], and Methuselah [son of Enoch], 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. (D&C 107:53; see also T&C 154:19)

This is the original, first, patriarchal blessing being given by Adam, he having summoned them there. And as he's giving his last blessing, three years previous to his death: *the Lord appeared unto them*. So the Lord comes to dwell with these seven high priests and Adam:

The Lord appeared unto them, and they rose up and blessed Adam, and called him [Mich-a-el] Michael, the prince, the archangel. And the Lord administered comfort unto Adam [Ask yourself, what comfort is it that the Lord administers?], and said unto him: I have set thee to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of thee, ...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. (ibid, vs. 54-57; see also T&C 154:19-20)

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. They will not fall to the ground unfulfilled. The 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—one being the first coming of the Lord; the other one being the coming of the Lord in judgment at the end of the world. Now, there are plenty of prophecies that reckon to other events that are intermediate. However, the primary focus is the first and the second coming of the Lord—the vindication of the promise that the Father made in the beginning that He would redeem us all **from the grave**, and the vindication of the promise 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's 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 on the earth at His coming—is a topic about which Zenos prophesied, an allegory that was picked up by Jacob; and Jacob preserves it in his testament, the Book of Jacob, in chapter 5 (see also Jacob 3 RE). Nephi wrote the first books in the Small Plates of Nephi, and in there is his testimony, is his prophecy. What he did was he adopted the words of Isaiah in order to explain what it was that he, Nephi, had seen. But he used Isaiah's words as the means to do that. And Jacob does the same thing.

Jacob says, "I want everyone to come up to the temple; I'm gonna deliver to you a prophecy." And when they get there and he delivers his prophecy, he reads them the allegory that's taken from Zenos, which goes on and on about the history of God's chosen people. And when he finishes reading this lengthy chapter from Zenos, he says, "Here's the words of my prophecy 'cause I told you I was gonna give it. Here it is; it's coming: What I just told you is true!" And that's Jacob's testimony. 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 he said, "Here they are. The words of my prophecy are: They are true."

Nephi had done the same thing. Jacob does the same thing. And so in Nephi, Jacob saw the example which he chose to follow, and he did follow. And we're gonna look at this prophecy, which, 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.

But as I understand it, we're gonna take about a two-minute break while you change discs. So—

[time lapse for disc change]

Alright, so I want to skip to the time period that is relevant to our day in Jacob chapter 5, beginning at verse 48—because all the rest of that stuff is past history, and what we're trying to do now is to figure out, from where we are, how we 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 [the] vineyard—have not the branches thereof overcome the roots which are good?* (see also Jacob 3:22 RE). That is to say, the roots, the original covenant, the original stock from which we reckon—they were good. But we've 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 [all] 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. (Jacob 5:48-51; see also Jacob 3:22 RE)

See, the Lord (despite the fact that He can't think of anything else that He's left undone in all of His preparations—and it is only that; it is only His preparations)—

Go to Doctrine and Covenants section 19, and look at what it is that the Lord did for us in the atonement. In describing what He went through—in verse 19 of section 19 of the Doctrine and Covenants—the Lord says: *Glory be to the Father, ...I partook and finished **my** preparations unto the children of men* (emphasis added; see also T&C 4:5). That's what **He** did! And He has finished that. **He** finished **His** preparations. But 20, now, is us: *Wherefore, I command you again to repent, lest I humble you with my almighty power* (see also T&C 4:6). 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—because without the freedom to choose, we don't have existence. Therefore, what more could He have done? But it does grieve Him that He's 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 for it to be so]; and let us pluck from the tree those branches whose fruit is most bitter [that's 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; on the off chance that; that without the ability to control the outcome; that depending upon what **you** decide to do; perhaps] [the Lord may preserve unto Himself] 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]. (Jacob 5:52-53, emphasis added; see also Jacob 3:23 RE)*

How great a number is required in order for the Lord to vindicate His promise? It's not numerosity. 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.

Behold, the roots of the natural branches of the tree which I planted whithersoever I would are yet alive... (ibid, vs. 54; see also Jacob 3:23 RE). Those promises remain; they are still in play. What the Father promised—what the covenants that 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 (ibid). This is the process by which the house of Israel is restored, not in the way that you 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 one time—that is to exist again.

Yea, I will graft [into] them the branches of their mother tree, that I may preserve the roots also unto mine own self.... Notice the word “mother” appears in there, too—the mother tree. *...when they [may] be sufficiently strong perhaps they may bring forth good fruit unto me, [that] I may yet have glory in the fruit of my vineyard* (ibid).

And then they go through things, verse 61 (24 RE): *...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....* 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 (25 RE): *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: *...the last time, for the end draweth nigh. And if it [so be] that these last grafts shall grow, and [shall] bring forth...natural fruit, then [ye shall] prepare the way for them, that they may grow.*

Again in verse 71 (26 RE):

For behold, this is the last time that I shall nourish my vineyard; for the end is nigh... the season speedily cometh; ...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...the servants did go and labor with their might; 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 sent) unattended to by **His** ministration. This is why—in the verses we've been reading and every location we've been at—we find 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, They 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? The question 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—and saying, 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're going to throw that away—and you will not allow it to graft in and inform you about the nature of God and the nature of the religion that God is seeking to deliver to you—then the ministration and the pruning and the care does not result in **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—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. And he 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 Second Nephi chapter 3, verse 7—and in Genesis chapter 50—was more than answered by the ministry of the Prophet Joseph Smith. And 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, that will ultimately result in restoring Israel, that's referred to in Second Nephi chapter 3, verse 15—has also been something that Joseph Smith accomplished.

Now, I want to change subjects only slightly, in order to address something that we have all been fixated upon. And 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 to you. You cannot prove it to me. But God can prove it to 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, that that is what happened to them. You cannot know whether—when they tell you what happened to them—they are telling you the truth or not.

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 appear to be beyond the capacity of a man to accomplish; Joseph Smith seems to say things which—because of their volume, because of their consistency, because of their apparent purity—appear to me to be something which hails from God.” But you must **trust** him.

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 these 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—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, 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’re 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, if it’s just entertainment; it’s not supposed to be entertaining. It may appropriately be inspiring. But if it is inspiring, it’s only so if it results in you taking action. Because the action that’s required is for you to go out and to acquire for yourself your own anecdote, your own experience—if you will, 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 frequent He 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 frontier Ohio, moving into upstate New York. That restorationist movement already knew that what was wanted 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 that 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 twelve princes of Israel (the twelve sons of Jacob), He called twelve apostles to model that family. And they called 70 others, because the family of Israel included 70 others—in Exodus chapter 1, verse 5, you’ll find that when they went into Egypt, the family of Israel consisted of 70. 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 have is not the center. You have to have—walking back in a mirror image to—the beginning, so that the symmetry of the history of mankind matches at the end as it 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 wanted in the last days are those who will at last say: “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.” If any of **you** lack wisdom, ask God. He gives to all men liberally. He does not upbraid; that is, He doesn't send you away discouraged, telling you, Don't do that; don't ask me that.

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. And yet, we have enough to know the pattern that the Lord intended the last days to unfold in accordance with. And that pattern was to return us, in the end, to what was here in the beginning—to return us to a state of knowledge about things that He has always had in His heart as the goal, as the ambition, as the desire to fulfill—not a New Testament church, though a New Testament church is absolutely part of the pattern.

When the Lord hung on the cross and the sun was darkened at noon, if you looked up in the sky to see what was overhead, you would see the sacrificial lamb in the pattern of the stars (that we call Aries today). Proceeding forth from under the foot of Aries—we have renamed it “the bands of Pisces,” but it should be more appropriately rendered the “net” of Pisces—because from under the foreleg of the Lamb was cast out a net. And that net gathers in at least two kinds of fish. The larger one that is gathered in the net is circumnavigating the ecliptic and will do so eternally. The larger group in the starfield will never rise up to the North. The smaller group, the smaller star field of Pisces, also caught in that same net, is pointed to the sides of the North, where the Throne of the Father is found—the spot around which all things revolve.

The religion that was established in the beginning and the testimony that was set out in the stars above us—that we cannot touch, corrupt, corrode, alter, or apostatize; and leave neglected and forgotten, beyond our ability to reach to—that testimony remains overhead still. And it serves **you** no purpose because when you can't destroy the testimony written in the heavens, then you simply cause ignorance or, in the words we read tonight from Enoch, **darkness** to reign upon the earth. Satan's content with darkness; works just as well as anything else.

The God of heaven intends for the testimonies that He has given to be understood. And 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, 'cause I've looked at it

[audience laughter]. And I've looked at the best sources that are out there. And I've 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—

Francis Rolleston did a really good job of laying a bunch of stuff out. John Pratt uses Rolleston in a lot of what he's written. And [Joseph] Seiss followed, thinking... but could do better. And I can tell you—and I've looked at what John Pratt has done as well, a Latter-day Saint astronomer, who's paid attention and written articles in Meridian Magazine—and I can tell you that the resources simply do not exist. And 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.

One of the earliest ones is a constellation that you can find at an Egyptian format at Dendra. And it's a mess, and it's late, too, though 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. And the Pharaoh succeeded, in large measure, in doing that. And he was a righteous man:

Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom...judged his people wisely...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...the reign of Adam, [as] also... Noah, his father. (Abraham 1:26; see also Abraham 2:3 RE)

Pharaoh was not out there freelancing. He was trying to imitate something—and Egypt did a good job of preserving some things that have 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 and talked about—and reworded—the promise given through Malachi, all of these are pointing to something that is, at this moment, still incomplete—a work that is, at this moment, still undone; a project that remains for us, if we will receive it, to finally receive.

Because the way in which Zion is going to come about is going to necessarily be something that is so comfortable and so familiar on the earth, as a pattern, reflecting what it is that exists in the heavens—that they who come not only do not burn them up, but they fall upon them and they kiss their necks because, at last, they have a sister and a 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. Because the purpose of the Gospel has always been to inform, to 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. And what you do and what you think and how you act—it's intended to make you godlike in your understanding. And you're not godlike when you're bored out of your mind in a meeting [audience laughter].

If you have the opportunity to teach, you **must** push the envelope. You **must** teach, instruct, and try and raise people up. The grafting serves no purpose if it simply continues to

produce the same barrenness. *Fruit* is a genealogical term. *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 that 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 your ignorance and indifference. And 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—absolutely confident that you can know Him, too; and that 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've turned a deaf ear to much of what you've looked for because you want something other than the answers He's 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 the history, however perilous that may prove to be to you), that you will conclude that God's already had an answer to the inquiry that you've made, and that with a little effort, you can find it. And when you find it, you'll hear the voice of God saying, "There it is. Now was that so hard? [audience laughter] 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 1/2 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'll tell you, the only thing that is necessary is to open the scriptures and read them and to tell you: the things that we've looked at tonight are true—like Jacob.

In fact, if you go all the way back to Jacob chapter 6: *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* (Jacob 6:1; see also Jacob 4:1 RE).

So here's the words of **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 a father named Joseph—fulfilled the promise of Joseph of Egypt, and they are all true. And I know them to be true. And you can know them to be true, too. But the price you have to pay in order to gain that knowledge is to pay some attention to what it was that 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 that you think that 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 is that you hope to make living somewhere in Florida or New Guinea or Guatemala. Because the truth of the matter is that 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 was a prophet. I bear testimony that our Lord lived and lives. I'm one of those who can say that I'm 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's 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'm a poor one of those. But I am His servant. And 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.

And when we get together again—or if you listen to the CD's again—the next time we talk, the subject is going to be Priesthood. And the time after that (we'll take a break, but the time after that), we're gonna talk about Zion. And hopefully—as a consequence of covering the subjects that we do, in the order that we do them—you'll begin to appreciate the restoration that has come about through the Prophet Joseph Smith as only the beginning of the work of God in the last days; and that 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, incomplete labor.

The things I've talked about tonight were chosen precisely because they focus on the issue—the real issue, involving covenants—that 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 that is yet to be accomplished but is something which, hopefully, we will see begin to happen **again**. Joseph did not return without some success. Joseph was able to obtain what he sought. Now **we** need to do the same.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.