

Podcast Episode 55: Abraham, Part 2

This is the second part of a special series on Abraham.

QUESTION: What do we need to understand about Abraham in order to understand our place in the last-days events? What is God's view of the book of Abraham and what ought we to take from it as we look towards a continuation of the Restoration?

DENVER: In the course of events, Melchizedek established a city—city of peace, city of righteousness. He was the king, and he was the priest, and he presided over his people in righteousness. And Abraham, who was converted to the truth, came to Melchizedek. They had a ceremonial get-together in which, among other things, there's a sacral meal. And Melchizedek, who has been waiting for this moment, “hands the football” to Abraham and says, “At last! Me and my people are gone!” And so, once again, Zion flees.

And when Zion flees again, now we have the people of Melchizedek. Now notice, if you will, that the Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God has been renamed the Priesthood of Enoch and then renamed, again, the Melchizedek Priesthood. And that name has become rather more enduring, because in each case they came, and they established Zion; and when they established Zion, they were taken with their people up into heaven.

And so now, now we have— you know, I was going to read this stuff about Melchizedek. You'll find it in the Joseph Smith translation of Genesis 14. It's a long enough section that it's back in the back of your Bible, 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 [Okay? He's got the same covenant as had been previously made with Enoch; that tells you something, if you're paying attention] it being after the order of the Son of God; which order came, not by man, nor the will of man; neither by father nor mother; neither by beginning of days nor end of years; but of God; And it was delivered unto men by the calling of his own voice, according to his own will, unto as many as [received] his name. (Genesis 7:17-18 RE)

“Again the doctrin [of the] sealing power of Elijah is as follows if you have power to seal on earth & in heaven then we should be Crafty, the first thing you do [is you] go & seal on earth your sons and daughters unto yourself, & yourself unto your fathers in eternal glory” (*Wilford Woodruff Diary*, 10 March 1844).

“Unto your fathers in eternal glory”— that is *not* your kindred dead. They are relying upon *you* to be redeemed. The connection that needs to be formed is between you and the Fathers who dwell in glory.

And who are the Fathers who dwell in glory? Well, if we go back to the revelation in which Joseph Smith received the sealing power—and he received the sealing power some time before 1831, in that portion of the revelation known as D&C 132:49: *I the Lord thy God will be with thee even unto the end of the world and through all eternity for verily I seal upon your exaltation. Prepare your throne for you in the kingdom of my Father, with Abraham your father (vs. 49). I say unto you whatsoever you seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven. Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth in my name by my word, saith the Lord, it shall be eternally bound in the heavens. Whosoever sins you remit on earth shall be remitted eternally in heaven (vs. 46) and so on.*

Just before that portion of the revelation, in verse 37, he talks about Abraham, he talks about Isaac, and he talks about Jacob. And then concerning those three, the Lord says to Joseph: *Because they did none other things than that which they were commanded, they have entered into their exaltation, according to the promises, and sit upon thrones, and are not angels but are Gods.* This is Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These are the ones who are Gods.

And so when Christ— And I think Christ is deliberate about everything He says, about the analogies that He uses, and about the stories that He tells. When Christ takes occasion in a parable to tell someone about the status of heaven, the story that He tells is about Lazarus and a rich man. And it says (concerning the beggar, Lazarus) when he died, he was *carried [by] the angels into Abraham's bosom* (Luke 9:20 RE). Okay? So the dead man Lazarus, with an angelic accompaniment, is taken to Abraham's bosom when he dies. And so the definition of a reward in the afterlife is to go to the bosom of Abraham.

And see, the rich man is dead, and he cries. And the rich man, who is now in a state of torment, he cries out. He does not cry out (in Jesus' story) to God. He cries out to Abraham. So when Jesus is describing positions of authority in the afterlife, a person He puts into a position of authority in the afterlife, to answer the petition of the dead rich man for relief from his torment, is Abraham.

Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. (ibid)

There is an equation; everything will balance. The things that you suffer from, it is the Lord's intention to wipe away every tear. And if you are one that chooses to inflict tears, then that will be recompensed, as well—because what will be restored unto you is exactly (as we began with Alma) what you send out. It is an equation, after all.

Then the rich man cried out:

I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house [send Lazarus to my father's house], for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham said unto him, They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one should rise from the dead [foreshadowing, of course, the rejection of the Lord's resurrection and testimony, as well]. (ibid.)

The promise made by Elijah is about reconnecting us to the Fathers. Joseph called them the “Fathers in heaven.” These are not our kindred dead, because our kindred dead are required to be redeemed by us. These are the Fathers in heaven. Among them would be Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and (because of this dispensation being what it is) Peter, James, and John.

The purpose of the Holy Ghost is to allow you to see things in their true light with the underlying intent behind them and to allow you to do that without distortion and without confusion.

The temple is a ceremony designed to teach you about the path back to God—the very same thing that the Book of Mormon teaches repeatedly. The path back to God is so that you can meet with, and be instructed by, our Savior. The purpose of our Savior is to prepare us in all things so that we can, at last, become Zion. Because if your heart is right and my heart is right—and if I'm looking to God and God only, and you're looking to God and God only—then the trivial things of having things in common are of so little import that they matter not. Because we ought to fear God more than we fear man. We ought to fear God more than we fear the loss of anything that is down here. We ought to fear God more than

we fear the approval or disapproval, the criticism, the ostracism— We ought to love God and fear Him, because it's our relationship to Him, and Him alone, that matters.

This requires more than mere belief or supposition that he's doing the will of God, but actual knowledge, realizing that when these sufferings are ended, he will enter into eternal rest and be a partaker of the glory of God. It does require more than mere belief or supposition. But it's obtained in accordance with this set of principles. And it is purchased by the same price, paid by each of us, in turn, on the same conditions. And no one gets it on any other condition.

Your life may be uniquely situated. You may be inside an environment—a group of friends, a family, a neighborhood, an association—that is completely unique to you and has nothing in common with anyone else in this room. Inside of that, whatever the sacrifices are that are required, it will be exactly the same as it was for Moses who gave up everything, and then gave up everything again. It will be the same as for Abraham who gave up everything, and then gave up everything again. It will be the same. And you'll be called upon to make a sacrifice. Because knowing God requires obedience to Him and sacrifice to Him—and not to some man, certainly not to me; but not to a pope, not to a president, not to a priest—to Him. You're not trying to get to know me; or if you are, you're a damn fool. You're supposed to be getting to know the Lord. You're not supposed to be getting to know some local presiding authority.

The way to preserve yourself consists in having faith in God. And the conditions upon which faith in God is obtained are exactly the same for you as they were for Moses and Abraham and all of the those who have ever had faith—Joseph Smith being the latest great example of that.

So let's turn to a few scriptures and interrupt this for a moment, because we want to repent, after all. We want to change what we are. Let's go to Doctrine and Covenants 84, and let's look beginning at verse 33. Now I'm simply going to allow you to entertain your present views on some things for tonight, but we're going to have to deconstruct a bunch of junk later, and we'll do that down in Spanish Fork, I think. Beginning at verse 33 of section 84 of the Doctrine and Covenants: *For whoever is faithful unto the obtaining these two Priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies that they become the sons of Moses, and of Aaron, and the seed of Abraham, and the church, and Kingdom, and the elect of God* (D&C 84:33-34; see also T&C 82:16). *Sons...seed*. And it's necessary that you become that in order that you become *the church, and Kingdom...the elect of God*. Because, as we saw in the statements

made to Joseph Smith, the hearts have to be turned to the Fathers because it's going to be reconstructing the Holy Family at some point.

And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord (vs. 35). Now many of you read that verse 35, and you think that what that means is: If you fetch this priesthood by ordination, ipso facto you have fetched Jesus. Praise Jesus! (And by the way, Joel Olsteen is coming to the E Center. You're not going to want to miss that. It's a mega church! It's a mega church in transit! It's going to come to the E Center! SUNDAY, SUNDAY, SUNDAY! I'm sorry; I get worked up when the evangelicals show up on the horizon. He had some nice things to say about Mormons, though, so Joel Olsteen has kind of crept a little more in the positive column for me of late.)

I want to suggest that verse 35 can also be read exactly as D&C 93:1 (that we were reading a moment ago) is read. And that is to say: If you're going to receive this priesthood you're going to get it from Him. That is, you enter into His presence, you receive Him, *if you have it*. Then when you have it, as a consequence of having it, you receive Him.

Oh! *For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me* (D&C 84:36). I want to suggest that throughout scripture, almost invariably the word *servants* is referring to angelic ministrants. And so angels minister—that would be Aaronic. And then Christ ministers—that would be “sons of Moses.”

And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father (vs. 37). Because it is the purpose of the Son to bear record of the Father. It is the purpose of the Son to bring others to the Father so that there might be many sons of God. *And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom* (vs. 38; see also T&C 82:17), because you can't go where the Father is without entering into and receiving an inheritance.

You know, one of the things that we tend to think is that if you get something (this is based upon statements made in 132)—but if you get something here and you get it by a covenant, that you are automatically entitled to take it into the next world. But what if the covenant that you are to receive in order to obtain that inheritance in the next world doesn't reckon merely from something handled by ordinance, but that the ordinance is pointing you to something higher and more holy? What if the thing that secures for you the inheritance in the next life is not the ordinance but what the ordinance testifies to—that is, embracing the Lord through the veil; and then, having conversed with Him, entering into His presence; and then having entered into His presence, being ministered to and taught? What if it means all that?

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— 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 (ibid). 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 first father, through the fathers unto me (ibid).*

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 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. 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. Ninety-eight 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 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 1:31: *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* (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 121. It's talking about our dispensation. I want to look at beginning 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, 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 (vs. 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 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 see that in Doctrine and Covenants 84:14: *Which Abraham received the priesthood from Melchizedek, who received it through the lineage of his fathers, even till Noah (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 means that Melchizedek received it *through the lineage of his fathers, even [until] 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 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 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. (vs. 6-10; 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 Abel was born. And Cain slew Abel. 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, and also of the planets, and of the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers.*

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 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: *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 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, 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 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 (Abraham 3:1-2 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 of 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 2—*as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name* (Abraham 3:1 RE)— 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 27. We only need to look at verse 10 of section 27: *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 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: *And 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 fullness of time.

Go to Joseph Smith translation of Genesis 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. (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.

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 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. 18-19)

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.

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. (ibid, vs. 19-20)

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. 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. (ibid, vs. 20-22)

Joseph Smith restored this information—as he restored the rest 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. And we can make vows, but Christ discouraged us from doing that in Matthew. Go back to Matthew 5—this is in the Sermon on the Mount. You can read the same thing in 3 Nephi 12. But look at 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. [Well, cosmetically some of you women can.] But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. (Matthew 3:24 RE)

He'll say the same thing in 3 Nephi 12:33-37 [LE].

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 a 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 will 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 it shall be also at the coming of the Son of Man (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?

See, the angels were unwilling to receive what they might have received, and as a consequence of that, they could not go. Look in Doctrine and Covenants 132:16. *Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory.* Angels—in this context, if you will hear it—are included within Joseph's description of “Angels desire to look into it, but they have set up too many stakes.” As a consequence of their unwillingness to receive what God freely offers to all, and their hedging up their own way by their failure to develop that faith and confidence necessary to lay hold upon the blessings of heaven—because they believe that those blessings are reserved for others and not for them; because as the de-canonized-now Lectures on Faith suggest, they fear that they do

not have the power to lay hold upon all the blessings which were entirely reserved and promised to them; because they have not that faith required—they become limited in what they seek for and, therefore, what they obtain.

God cursed the children of Israel because they would not receive the last law from Moses. The sacrifice required of Abraham in the offering up of Isaac, shows that if a man would attain to the keys of the kingdom of an endless life; he must sacrifice all things. When God offers a blessing or knowledge to a man, and he refuses to receive it, he will be damned. (*TPJS*, p. 322)

Which is why when the Lord sets something in motion and begins to declare the truth again and He offers a message that needs to be received—and it is not received by those to whom it is offered—the results are, “they refused to receive the blessing or knowledge that is offered to them, and therefore they will be damned.” Damned, in this sense, meaning that they hedge up the way, that they limit the ability of God to confer upon them what they might have received. They partake of, ultimately, the sufferings of the damned because the pain of the mind is exquisite when they realize that they have not laid hold upon what God freely offered to give unto them. And therefore, they are their own condemnor, and they are their own judge.

“The Israelites prayed that God would speak to Moses and not to them; in consequence of which he cursed them with a carnal law” (*ibid*). Can you imagine?! If the children of Israel in that day were cursed by God because they said, “Moses must talk to God and not us,” how much greater must be the damnation upon those who say, “You must not talk to God because we have one who does so for you! And you're not entitled to receive anything beyond the bounds of your limited position in this beehive we've constructed!” Damnable heresy! Doctrines of devils, propounded by those who are purveyors of a false priestcraft, unauthorized by God; unsanctioned by Him! They suffer not themselves to enter in, and they will hedge up the way if you will heed them. There is no man— There is no man on his own errand in this world who can offer to you salvation. But if God sends a message, you'd better heed it, even if you find it difficult to hear.

“What was the power of Melchizedek? 'Twas not the Priesthood of Aaron which administers in outward ordinances, and the offering of sacrifices. Those holding the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood are kings and priests of the Most High God, holding the keys of power and blessings” (*ibid*), because the Aaronic holds and is given for judgments and destruction; the Melchizedek is given for blessing. And when someone claims to hold Melchizedek priesthood and they use it in order to offer up judgment and condemnation and control and compulsion and authority over the souls of men and they refuse to

constrain themselves to use persuasion only and gentleness and meekness, then you know you're listening to an Aaronic and not a Melchizedek authority. Because the office and the authority and the keys of the Melchizedek is to bless; it's to enlighten; it's to raise and to bring to you light and truth.

“In fact, that Priesthood is a perfect law of theocracy, and stands as God to give laws to the people, administering endless lives to the sons and daughters of Adam” (ibid). Because once again, it is always genealogical. It is always familial. It has always been turning the hearts of the children back to the fathers, the final Father in that chain being Adam.

Abraham says to Melchizedek, I believe all that thou hast taught me concerning the priesthood and the coming of the Son of Man; so Melchizedek ordained Abraham and sent him away. Abraham rejoiced, saying, Now I have a priesthood. Salvation could not come to the world without the mediation of Jesus Christ. How shall God come to the rescue of this generation? He will send Elijah the prophet. The law revealed to Moses in Horeb never was revealed to the children of Israel as a nation. Elijah shall reveal the covenants to seal the hearts of the father to the children, and the children to the fathers. (ibid, pg 322-323)

Some people asked a question about God speaking to Cain as a result of the talk I gave in Idaho Falls, referring to your privilege of talking to God because He spoke to Cain. It doesn't say that God *appeared* to Cain; it says that God *spoke* to Cain. Cain heard the voice of God speaking to him. He didn't get caught up to the throne of God; he did not have a throne theophany; he was not brought back and redeemed from the fall, but he heard the voice of God. God spoke to Cain *after* the murder of Abel. The *angels* withdrew from him. The angels were grieved; they would have nothing to do. And yet the God still spoke to him. His words are endless.

I don't care what malignancy you think you carry around within you. The fact is, none of you have done the same crap that Cain did, because Cain possessed greater knowledge than you did at the time of the murder that he committed. And yet God spoke to him still. Therefore, have the confidence, even if you grieve angels, that God will talk to you.

...my words, for they never cease (Genesis 1:1 RE). Yeah, God is talkative. God desires us to know more than we know, if we will receive it. And the minute we tell Him to be quiet and withdraw and leave us alone, we are in the very act of damning ourselves. Because what we're saying is, That which you offered unto us we would prefer to be silence instead. Don't do that.

Abraham 3:12, we encounter God saying: *And he said unto me: [Abraham saying] My son, my son (and his hand was stretched out), behold I will show you all these. And he put his hand upon mine eyes, and I saw those things which his hands had made, which were many; and they multiplied before mine eyes, and I could not see the end thereof.* Once again, you have—at the same instance that he is being acknowledged as a son—the outpouring of the intelligence of God, the glory of God, light and truth, knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, as they are to come. Joseph Smith [said] in Doctrine and Covenants 121:7: *My son, peace be unto thy soul* (T&C 138:11).

Okay, if you view priesthood as a brotherhood or an association, then I want to suggest that the way in which you should parse the three orders of priesthood is to parse them this way:

- As among men, it's merely a brotherhood of men.
- As between mankind and the heavens:
 - the first order is an order in which there is an association between men and angels.
 - The second order is an order in which there is an association between mankind and the Son of God.
 - And the third order, the highest order, the Patriarchal order brings one into contact with the Patriarch, who—of all the names that He could choose to be called by—chooses to have us call Him “Our Father who art in heaven”—the third grand order being Sonship to the Father and association with Him who sits in the bosom of eternity and sustains all the creation.

The highest priesthood is an association with the Father, brought about as a consequence of the Father calling “My son.” It is the Holy Order after the Son of God, because those who inherit that become, by definition, His Sons. They are the Church of the Firstborn because they are in association with, and made by the Father equal to, all those who rise up to be Firstborn.

Go to Moses 6:7. This is a prophecy given by Adam which constituted one of the covenants which I referred to in the talk given at Centerville. *Now this same Priesthood [this is Adam speaking]— Now this same Priesthood which was in the beginning, shall be in the end of the world also. Now this prophecy Adam spake, as he was moved upon by the Holy Ghost* (Genesis 3:14 RE). Therefore, it was by the power of the priesthood, animated by the holy ghost, which established—as a matter of right and, therefore, of covenant—the promise that this thing, this authority, this power, and this relationship which once existed in the beginning of the world is to exist again at the end of the world. And that that, too, arises as a consequence of the covenant given in the beginning.

So what kind of person receives that ordination? I'm going back to the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis 14. This is the kind of person: *Melchizedek was a man of faith who wrought righteousness* (Genesis 7:18 RE). You have to have faith. You have to wrought (or perform) righteousness, which is not the same thing as virtue.

Virtue can be offended by righteousness. Virtue would never kill, okay? It just never would. But it is righteous in the case of Nephi—at the command of God—to slay Laban. Virtue would never do any number of things, say any number of things, or behave in any number of ways in which John the Baptist behaved. *You generation of vipers!* (Luke 3:7 RE). Look, we translate that as if what we're reading is some nicely phrased King James-ian version of an insult. If you were trying to put it into modern English— This is John the Baptist, a righteous man with whom the kingdom of God existed, essentially in the language of their day saying, “You sons of bitches!” Because in our vernacular, by saying “Sons of bitches,” what you're saying is, Your mother is a female dog, and therefore, you are a dog; and since you're a dog, you are a cur, and you are unworthy. This is guttural language. We read, *You generations of vipers*, and we say, Oh isn't that a nice way to parse out that John's thinks he's talking to the bad guys. And yet, we look sometimes at righteousness, and we say it can never be so, because it is not virtuous. Because we overlay virtue atop righteousness, and it does not work, and never has worked that way. Righteousness controls, and virtue surrenders. And virtue yields every time to righteousness. Else Abraham could never have been commanded to slay his son, because that was not virtuous.

Therefore, Melchizedek was a man of righteousness. *And when a child he feared God* [not man], *and stopped the mouths of lions, and quenched the violence of fire. And thus, having been approved of God* [not man] (Genesis 7:18 RE)—in fact, to be approved of God, in many cases, will make you offensive to man. But the opinions and the vagaries and the fashions of men, the opinion polling, and the drifts of what is and what is not popular at one point or another are damnable. They ought not even be considered. Righteousness does not give any regard to such things. And yet it may be virtuous. It may be virtuous to be a limp-wristed, weepy, happy-go-lucky, “have a nice day” kind of chap. But righteousness will kick his ass everyday.

The foregoing are excerpts taken from:

- Denver's talk entitled “The Mission of Elijah Reconsidered,” given in Spanish Fork, UT on October 14, 2011;
- His fireside talk on “The Temple,” given in Ogden, UT on October 28, 2012;

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism* Series, Talk #2 entitled "Faith," given in Idaho Falls, ID on September 28, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism* Series, Talk #3 entitled "Repentance," given in Logan, UT on September 29, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism* Series, Talk #4 entitled "Covenants," given in Centerville, UT on October 6, 2013; and
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism* Series, Talk #5 entitled "Priesthood," given in Orem, UT on November 2, 2013.

In addition to the foregoing, Denver has addressed this topic extensively in multiple blog posts that may be worthwhile for you to review. Some of them include, among many others:

["Abraham and Sarah" posted April 29, 2010](#)

["Abraham's Gospel" posted January 17, 2012](#)

["Alma 13:15" posted June 14, 2010](#)

["1 Nephi 14:1-2" posted July 5, 2010](#)

["3 Nephi 20:25-27" posted September 20, 2010](#)

["Jos Smith Letter Sept 1833" posted February 22, 2015](#)