

Podcast Episode 57: Abraham, Part 4

This is the final 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: We face the same test as all others have ever faced from the days of Adam down to the present. Things never change. From the time of Adam the roles have been filled by different persons in different ages, but the conflict is perpetual. And the same battle continues from age to age. You can even lift the arguments that are made from one epoch and put them into the next, and they fit. It doesn't change.

Adam taught his posterity the gospel; and Satan, imitating an angel of light, declared himself to be a son of God and taught this doctrine: "Believe it not." And most of Adam's posterity did not believe.

Enoch received a message from God, and the record that Enoch left behind says, *and all men were offended because of him* (Genesis 4:4 RE).

Noah taught the same gospel as was taught in the beginning to Adam, but his audience claimed "we are the sons of God," and they would not hearken to the message that came through Noah.

Abraham obtained the same rights that were "belonging to the fathers"—or to Adam, in the beginning—including holding the right of the firstborn that came down from the first Father, Adam. And those who claim the gospel of Abraham is less than the gospel given to Adam are a false message borne by a false messenger. Mark it: If they don't repent for preaching that message in opposition to what the Lord declares both in scripture and by my voice, they will regret it. But, unfortunately, Abraham's own family—that is, his father(s), his uncles—utterly refused to hearken to his voice.

Moses saw God face to face, and he talked with Him. God gave Moses a work to do. Satan tempted Moses to instead worship him, even declaring to Moses, *I am the only begotten, worship me* (Genesis 1:4 RE). When Moses rejected this demand, his message from God

was opposed by sorcerers and magicians who *did in like manner with their enchantments* (Exodus 4:6 RE), duplicating signs shown through Moses over and over again in the record in Exodus. Even after delivering Israel from Egypt, the Israelites wished they had died in Egypt rather than being delivered and freed. And of course, what might have happened, given the qualification of Moses to bring it about, did not happen because the people that he led were unwilling to rise up as they were invited.

Christ was opposed by Satan who demanded that He worship him, and then He was opposed by religious leaders of the people. The people He went to save conspired to kill Him and ultimately brought that about.

Joseph Smith was, and is, opposed by those who claim to follow him or to belong to a church that was founded by him. If you don't understand the extent to which the opposition to Joseph Smith arose out of those claiming to be Mormons, take a look at the book *A Man Without Doubt*, and you'll see that Joseph's greatest opposition came from those who claim to follow him.

Opposition in scripture seems clear. But when we struggle in our environment, it becomes much more difficult to make decisions about what is right, what is wrong, what is good, what is bad, what is of God, what is deception, what is truth, what is false. But that's not a correct understanding, because the scriptures may reveal the conflict in sharp contrast, but it was no different in that day than it is today. Deciding between the opposing sides was not any more clear to those living at the time the scriptures were written than the opposition you encounter every day of your life.

The scriptures were written by or about prophets who took clearly opposing positions from those who were deceived. The clarity you read in scripture is because the views and opinions of prophets were used to tell about the events. But as the events happened, those living at the time had to have faith to distinguish between truth and error, to believe or to ignore a message from the Lord. It is no different for them than it is for the dilemma that we face today.

Does the message invite or entice you to believe in Christ and to do His works? Does it get presented in a way that displays patience, long-suffering? Does it use gentleness and persuasion, meekness and love and consistency with the revelations and commandments found previously in scripture? Or does it appeal to your vanity, to your arrogance? Does it make you proud of yourself, or does it make you instead wish that you were a better person?

Humility is absolutely required to progress. The more we think we understand, the less willing we can become to receive more. Joseph said, "It is the constitutional disposition of mankind to set up stakes and bounds to the works and ways of the Almighty." He also said, "I never heard of a man being damned for believing too much, but they are damned for unbelief."

James 4:6 says: *God resisteth the proud but giveth grace unto the humble* (see also Epistle of Jacob 1:16 RE). Damnation is limiting progress or stopping progress. Setting up boundaries to what the Lord can do is voluntary damnation. No matter how much you believe you know, if you will be humble, you will learn a great deal more. We must continue progression, or if we don't, we accept damnation and that, too, voluntarily.

When Christ established and organized the New Testament dispensation, Christ patterned what He did as a reminiscence—as an homage—to the children of Israel. That was who He was serving with. It would not go out to the gentiles until after Christ's death. So during His immediate ministry, Christ was serving among the Jews who notoriously would claim repeatedly they're children of Abraham. And that children-of-Abraham-status gave them a credential with which they could pass into heaven. And so when He structures the incipient stage of the dispensation—

- Peter, James, and John = Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob;
- twelve apostles = twelve tribes of Israel;
- the seventy (Exodus 1:5) = seventy descendants of Jacob that went into Egypt.

Christ gives an homage, a send up, a mirror, a structure to resonate with the people to whom He was serving.

There are things that because I went to law school and I learned how to be a lawyer, that I can see in the record of the Old Testament that explains a legal system that they had back in those days.

Abraham's wife, Sarah, died. And Abraham wanted to bury his wife, but he was in a land, at that time, in which he owned no land; so he needed to acquire a burial site for his wife. Well, their system in that day required that whatever the bargain was that was struck between the people that were negotiating, it had to be witnessed by at least two people. And in order for that agreement to be binding, something had to be given in exchange. If you didn't give something in exchange, then whatever you got could be taken back. And Abraham wanted Sarah buried in a place where it could not be taken back—it would be hers as her burial spot forever.

So, he goes to the people of the city to try and find out who owns the field that has the cave that he would like to bury Sarah in. Well, the field has a crop in it. He wants the land, but he doesn't necessarily want the crop. And he wants the land because of the cave, and that's where he wants to bury Sarah.

So he approaches the fellow who owns the cave, in the presence of others, and he says, "I would like to purchase this for the burial spot." And the first response is, "Oh, you don't need to buy that from me. I'll give it to you. Go ahead, and use it as the burial spot." Which meant that he was really going to retain ownership and he could, in fact, disturb the gravesite of Sarah because nothing was being exchanged. And Abraham said, "No, no you can't give it to me. I want to purchase that," because he wants his wife's remains undisturbed.

And so now that he knows he can't give it to him and therefore take it back, Efron (that was the name of the fellow that owned the field) says, "Well what is it to me to give to you something that is worth [and I think it was] 200 shekels of silver?" I think that was the price he named. Said, "That's a small sum between you and I, and it's no problem." So now Abraham knows the price that's being asked for the property. And he was overcharging; it was an unfair amount. But he had a crop on it, so maybe he valued the crop. And Abraham, in the presence of the witnesses, paid the 200 shekels, secured the ground, and he acquired for himself the burial place for Sarah that could not now be taken back.

Well, there are a lot of little legal things that are going on in the process of getting an enforceable agreement so that Abraham owns the ground and Sarah's body will not be disturbed. And I learned about those things by going to law school.

Marriage was, in the beginning, between one man and one woman, and was intended to remain so for the sons of Adam and the daughters of Eve, that they may multiply and replenish the earth. I commanded that there shall not any man have save it be one wife, and concubines he shall have none. I, the Lord your God, delight in the chastity of women, and in the respect of men for their wives. Marriage was established at the beginning as a covenant by the word and authority of God, between the woman and God, the man and woman, and the man and God. It was ordained by my word to endure forever. Mankind fell, but a covenant established by my word cannot fail, and therefore in death they were not to be parted. It was my will that all marriages would follow the pattern of the beginning, and therefore all other marriages would be ordained as at the first. But fallen men refused my covenant, did not hearken to my word, nor receive my promise, and marriages fell outside my rule, disorganized and without me, therefore unable to endure beyond the promises made between the mortal

man and the mortal woman, to end when they are dead. Covenants, promises, rights, vows, associations and expectations that are mine will endure, and those that are not cannot endure. Everything in the world, whether it is established by men, or by Thrones, or by Dominions, or by Principalities, or by Powers, that are not by my word and promise, shall be thrown down when men are dead and shall not remain in my Father's Kingdom. Only those things that are by me shall remain in and after the resurrection. Marriage by me, or by my word, received as a holy covenant between the woman and I, the man and woman, and the man and I, will endure beyond death and into my Father's Kingdom, worlds without end. Those who abide this covenant will pass by the angels who are appointed, and enter into exaltation. Concerning them it shall be said, You shall come forth in the first resurrection, and if they covenant after the first resurrection, then in the next resurrection, and shall inherit in my Kingdom their own thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, all heights and depths, and shall pass by the angels to receive exaltation, the glory of which shall be a fullness and a continuation of their posterity forever. Marriage is necessary for the exaltation of the man and woman and is ordained by me through the Holy Spirit of Promise, or in other words, by my covenant, my law, and my authority. Like the marriage in Eden, marriage is a sacrament for a sacred place, on holy ground, in my presence, or where the Holy Spirit of Promise can minister. But rebellion has kept mankind from inheriting what I ordained in the beginning, and therefore women and men have been left to marry apart from me. Every marriage established by me requires that I be part of the covenant for it to endure, for Endless is my name and without me the marriage cannot be without end: for so long as I endure it shall also endure, if it is made by my word and covenant. But know also that I can do my work at any time, for I have sacred space above, and can do my work despite earth and hell. The wickedness of men has not prevented my will, but only kept the wicked from what they might have received. Whenever I have people who are mine, I command them to build a house, a holy habitation, a sacred place where my presence can dwell or where the Holy Spirit of Promise can minister, because it is in such a place that it has been ordained to recover you, establish by my word and my oath your marriages, and endow my people with knowledge from on high that will unfold to you the mysteries of godliness, instruct you in my ways, that you may walk in my path. And all the outcasts of Israel will I gather to my house, and the jealousy of Ephraim and Judah will end; Ephraim will not envy Judah and Judah will not provoke Ephraim. And again I say to you, Abraham and Sarah sit upon a Throne, for he could not be there if not for Sarah's covenant with him; Isaac and Rebecca sit upon a Throne, and Isaac likewise could not be there if not for Rebecca's covenant with him; and Jacob and Rachel sit upon a Throne, and Jacob could not be there if not for Rachel's covenant with him; and all these have ascended above Dominions and Principalities and Powers, to abide in my Kingdom. Therefore the

marriage covenant is needed for all those who would likewise seek to obtain from me the right to continue their seed into eternity, for only through marriage can Thrones and Kingdoms be established. (T&C 157:34-43)

Christ is the means by which we lay hold upon the promises, but it is His intention to make of us all sons of God. Therefore, the Holy Order after the Son of God is—when the name is announced—self-identifying the person holding such a Holy Order as one of God's sons, even though they may be mortal, even though they may be in the flesh. The Holy Order is for that very purpose.

...and is after the Order of the Son of God. All other priesthoods are only parts, ramifications, powers and blessings belonging to the same, and are held, controlled and directed by it. It is the channel through which the Almighty commenced revealing His glory at the beginning of the creation of this earth, and through which He has continued to reveal Himself to the children of men to the present time, and through which He will make known His purposes to the end of time. (*History of the Church* 4:207)

Therefore, among other things, the purpose of the Holy Order is to put in place a mechanism by which God can reveal from heaven what is necessary for the salvation of man on earth in every generation, in order to fix what is broken; in order to restore what has been lost; in order to repair, heal, forgive, and reconnect those who are willing to give heed to the message sent from heaven, so that they can rise up to become sons of God.

The Holy Order descended from Adam, in turn. We're not going to do it, but if you take the time to go through and look at who got ordained, Seth was a replacement for the slain Abel. Cain was an elder brother. Cain would have qualified as the elder brother if he had been righteous for inheriting the Holy Order. And he had lived long enough, and he had been observed by his parents long enough so that Eve identified Cain as a man who had been gotten from God. Therefore, she knew he would not fail—which means that for at least some prolonged period of time after the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve had drifted into apostasy, Cain exhibited not only an interest but an adherence to what was being taught by the first parents. And so Eve celebrated that they had at last someone to whom the Holy Order could be passed. Cain was not the oldest son. He was the oldest *righteous* son, and as the oldest righteous son, it would have passed to him in due course.

Abel, his younger brother, was probably in his day righteous because of the positive example of his older brother, Cain. If you've got someone in the family who is on the right path, it's so much easier for the sibling to respect the example of someone similarly

situated with them than it is to listen to the parents. And so Abel, likewise, followed in the path of righteousness.

Satan put it into the heart of Cain to view the inheritance that he was going to receive of the Holy Order as an opportunity to gratify his pride and to satisfy his ambition and to exert control and compulsion, because if he were the one in the line, then the Messiah would descend through him. And he would have a patriarchal position superior to the Messiah Himself. This was an important part of the plot of the adversary—because if the adversary could gain control over the inheritor under Adam of the Holy Order, then (as I just read a moment ago) before the Savior returns—

(When dominion was given to Adam, it was by God's word. And God cannot break His word. The right of dominion had been conferred; it has to be returned to Him.)

If Cain were the one in a position to exercise control, then he could exert whatever conditions Satan put into his heart before he would return the right of dominion back to the Savior. Thus, if a disciple of Satan were to be in possession of that Holy Order in that line holding dominion, all of the conditions that Satan had demanded in the preexistence—which were rejected by the Father and created the war in heaven, designed to destroy the agency of man—could become the condition for the redemption of this creation. Therefore, Cain's apostasy represented an enormous threat to the salvation of everyone who would live thereafter.

As a consequence of that, the offering by the younger brother was approved, and the older brother, Cain, was told, "You need to stop what you're doing. You need to repent and return. And if you do not, sin lieth at the door. The adversary is ready to enter into your house." This represented a serious frustration or threat to the second great conspiracy to destroy the souls of men and to capture this creation. And therefore, Satan put it into the heart of Cain to murder his brother, and Abel was slain so that (the theory was) by controlling the position, that necessarily meant that the Messiah would be a descendant of Cain's, the line would come through him, and he would have the authority, the control, the dominion, and the right to change the plan or the conditions for the salvation of the souls of men in this world.

At this point, we're at the very beginning; we haven't gotten very far. But it is essential when you begin to talk about the Holy Order that you start here. If you don't start here, if you want to start at the time of Moses and the Aaronic priests, if you want to start at the time of Joseph Smith and talk about ordinations in June of 1831, if you want to talk about the Three Witnesses identifying the Quorum of the Twelve and then ordaining them, you're

not going to comprehend what the Holy Order is all about because the Holy Order has, as part of its implication, the right of dominion over all creation. That was what it was established for, and it came down to the beginning. It belonged to God. It is why God is God. In essence, the Holy Order is to create of flesh and blood a surrogate for the Father and Mother. That's what the Holy Order was designed to accomplish.

So in the beginning, when you're talking about this process, the reason why we have Seth as the next person is because Cain fell, Abel was murdered, and perhaps because of the example, Adam and Eve in their sorrow were able to inform Seth of things that secured his fidelity to God.

It descended in regular course down through these Fathers until you get to Shem, who was called Melchizedek: *Mulek*=King; *Zedek*=Priest. It's a new name for the man, Shem. And then it simply falls into disrepair or apostasy, and we encounter our first gap in the descent from the days of Adam down, which lasted several generations until we get to Abraham.

Abraham also happened to have a genealogical right, but that wasn't what was important. In the case of Abraham, *finding there was greater happiness and peace and rest for me, I sought for the blessings of the fathers* (Abraham 1:1 RE). The "blessings of the fathers" after which he was seeking was the Holy Order. He wanted to become one like those that had been in the beginning.

When God spoke to Cain, He called him to repent. So God speaks to Cain and tells him to repent. He didn't repent; he did forfeit. But he forfeited it by becoming the first murderer. So the first time that you do something wrong, would you want God to say, "There you go, you're done; you're cut off. You will never have an opportunity to become what I would like you to become, a son of God." Or would you want Him to call you to repentance? Because God called Cain to repent, and he didn't. He went out, and he murdered his brother. He just got more determined to accomplish what he wanted. And at that point, Cain did not die as a result of the murder of his brother. He was driven out, but he wasn't killed; and he did lose the right. So even though he was living and even though he was alive at the time of his brother Seth, the right went to his brother exactly for that reason. But the first instance of error—

I mean, heavens, the Kirtland Safety Society may have been enough to get rid of Joseph's position.

I sought for the blessings of the fathers, 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, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge (Abraham 1:1RE)

When you think of the Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God, don't think of it exclusively as some sort of status. It's implicit that what that includes is possession of great knowledge and greater knowledge. "A man cannot be saved in ignorance," as Joseph put it. "A man is saved no sooner than he gets knowledge" (*History of the Church* 4:588). But implicit in those statements by Joseph Smith is that the purpose of the knowledge is so that you can be a greater follower of righteousness. It's not so that you can play spiritual Trivial Pursuit and win, because the knowledge has to be implemented into practice in order for it to have the desired effect. Without accompanying obedience to the things that are known, there is no salvation in that. It has to be as Abraham puts it: *To be a greater...and to possess a greater knowledge and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir* (ibid). Okay?

At this point in the creation, Adam would have all mankind descend from him, and Noah would have all mankind descend from him, and therefore they would be the Father of nations. Abraham knew that was part of what was involved. It's not merely knowledge for knowledge's sake. It's being put into a position in which there is a posterity involving nations that would look to him as they looked to Noah, as they had looked to Adam as their Father.

Think of fatherhood as an opportunity to nurture, to assist, to provide for, to care for, to bring along; to take what is innocent and malleable and turn it into something that is God-like, responsible, capable—something or someone who can stand on their own two legs and defend the truth when called upon to do so, someone that will themselves be a vessel of righteousness. Don't think of a father as a bully with a whip or a belt.

What Abraham desired was to be a servant; that was what his ambition to be a Father of nations involved. And so he *became a rightful heir, 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... 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).

That's where it came from. A son of God descended through those Fathers to Abraham, because Melchizedek—after a period of apostasy lasting generations—reconnected Father Abraham into the Fathers, which is the issue raised a minute ago about this genealogical

thing. This is non-genealogical. This is a righteous man in a world of apostasy, looking to reconnect to heaven. He becomes the Father of the righteous because he's the first example of a generation, a man in a world of apostasy, coming out of that apostasy and reconnecting to Heaven.

There were generations separating Abraham from Shem. But Abraham qualified to receive the rights belonging to the Fathers because he sought for his appointment, he possessed knowledge, he lived consistent with the knowledge he had, he wished to have greater knowledge so that he could obey more commandments, so that he could gain further light and knowledge by the things that he learned through obedience.

So when you get to what happens after he's connected up, the Lord talking to him says:

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 [Holy Order] unto all the 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. (Abraham 3:1 RE)

That's non-genealogical. That's the same process through which Abraham went to become a descendant of the Fathers. It's reconnecting, and whoever does that, in whatever generation, is a descendant and can call Abraham their Father.

Abraham 2 (that one is verse 10, but I started at verse 9, and I'm going on to 11, so right in there):

I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee (that is, in thy [Holy Order]) and in thy seed (that is, the [Holy Order]), 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 eternal life. (ibid)

Abraham says: *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 3:2 RE).* So he's saying that whenever you receive the gospel, whenever you receive *this* gospel (and it's really hard to try and get *this* gospel back on the earth; there

was still a great deal left to be recovered, restored, and returned when Joseph was killed at 38½), but when *this* Gospel (the one that Abraham had received) was on the earth at any time, then whoever receives *that* is a descendant of Abraham. They are part of the family of Abraham, and he is their Father.

And so he becomes the Father of many nations. He instructed and passed along the same birthright to Isaac and to Jacob and to Joseph and to Ephraim. And then it rather turns into the same sort of mess that we had previously, until the time of Moses.

The way in which I would suggest it would be best to understand is that they came, not for purposes of conferring priesthood that would occur in June of 1831, but for reconnecting the genealogical line that required someone to be designated as descendants from "the Fathers." Now, some folks have argued that that meant that Joseph Smith was like *the* birthright holder in the line from Ephraim.

Given the way in which genealogical lines run, if you kill Charles and William and George (and I think there's another one—the royal line of England), then it's all the way back to Andrew, okay? So you can have a line that goes on a long distance, but if you have the Thirty Years War, and you have World War I, and you have World War II, and you have the Black Plague, and you're following genealogical lines, there's no way to track who God thinks holds the birthright. Then you have the added complication that Esau was older than Jacob, but Jacob was more righteous, and so Jacob got the birthright. Seth—he had older brothers who were grandfathers by the time he was born, but the birthright went to Seth because he was true and faithful.

I would suggest that it may be possible that in this room there is a lot of people who could qualify. And whether or not that ever happens depends upon being a son of Abraham, which requires you to receive *this* gospel, meaning the one to which Abraham had been exposed, which requires a great deal of correct information to be restored.

It's almost amusing for people in their arrogance to assume that they know enough to understand what God is doing or has done, because the things of God are of deep import, and careful and solemn and ponderous and prayerful thought can only find them out. Your understanding has to reach into heaven itself and search into and contemplate the darkest abyss if you're going to save any soul, including your own. And that's not accomplished casually, nor is it accomplished without sacrifice.

The government of God is the family. The government of God is not stakes and wards and districts and missions and areas and all that; it's family. The government of God is family. Therefore, the sealing is to put together a family.

Now one of the requests that the mother of John and his brother came and made of Christ was that when Christ got into His kingdom, the mother was asking if her boys could sit on His left and on His right. Okay? And Christ said that, "When I get my kingdom they can be there with me, but I don't have the right to assign who's going to sit on my right and who's going to sit on my left. That's left up to the Father."

The purpose of organizing the family on earth through the sealing process is to make sure you get into the kingdom. But it's kind of foolish to say, "I have ambition to be way up high in the organization of the family of God, because Christ told parables about people that are capable of ruling over a city will be put in that position...." People that aren't— I mean His parable of the talents, His parable of the laborer in the vineyard— That what you really want is to get into the kingdom. Once you get into the kingdom, then how the kingdom gets organized is going to be entirely up to the Father. How that will unfold will be on the permanent resolution of all issues involving salvation pertaining to this planet at the very end. And all those that have lived or come through here—and that organization at the end—is more relevant for what will come thereafter. It's permanent, until there is some further development that requires people to go out and develop.

Get into the kingdom, because like the talk down in Ephraim, the prototype of the saved man is Jesus Christ. And if any man will be saved, he must be precisely what Christ is and nothing else. Because Christ attained to the resurrection, we're going to be resurrected. Christ attained to the resurrection. On the other side of that, you won't hold the keys of death and hell; He will. He'll use them for your benefit, but ultimately, you're going to have to hold the keys of death and hell if you're going to be precisely what the prototype of the saved man is—or else not be saved.

Joseph would certainly have the right to lay claim upon not just himself and his wife, but certainly his children. It begins to become a little less certain and a little more tenuous when you get to his grandchildren and even more so when you get to his great-grandchildren, because—

The reason why Father Abraham had to go to Melchizedek in order to then rejoice and say, "I have gotten me a priesthood," was because, although the line may have had fatherly connections from Father Shem down to Abraham, the immediate ancestors of Father Abraham were idolaters. True enough, his father repented for a short period of time, but he

didn't persist in that. And therefore, despite the fact that Melchizedek certainly held authority, there were members of the posterity of Melchizedek between him and Father Abraham who were lost. And then Abraham was required to come and reconnect because of the apostasy.

When you're talking about the greatest blessings that God offers for the salvation of His children, when you're talking about the family of God, if it could simply be put in one time forever, then putting it into Father Adam would have solved the problem all the way down to us today. It can and it has been broken. It can and it has been restored. It can and it has been reconnected after a period of apostasy. In fact, once you reconnect Abraham with Melchizedek, you actually have, then, a family of God beginning with Adam that runs in one continuous line right down to Ephraim.

Then you have Joseph's comment about the prophets of the Old Testament—I'm not sure that he means all of them, but he certainly means a number that are identifiable: "All prophets held Melchizedek priesthood and were ordained by God Himself." Joseph said that. Okay? So I don't think what Joseph is talking about is, like, you know, "I confer upon you something." I think he's talking about this very connection, where you have an isolated, faithful individual who honors the Fathers and is doing everything that he can in his day, but for whom there is no existing possibility for having it occur. God fixes that problem for that individual—not in order to establish a new dispensation in which salvation proceeds with a gathering of a people and a making of a people—but it's a dispensation to that individual for purposes of trying to call others to repentance, and if others were to repent, then God could do something with that.

The reason He led away Lehi and the family of Lehi was to try and establish a righteous branch in the vineyard of the Lord, and the only way to do that was to get them away from the people who were corrupt in Jerusalem—and maybe give them the potential for holding onto and becoming a people of promise. And they were on again, off again, and faithful. A number of troubling moments in their history; but in general, they were sufficiently intact by the time that the Lord came, that He visited with them, and He renewed that with them, and that connection was certainly fulsome at that point.

The only purpose behind the last-days work, both what was happening at the time of Joseph and what the Lord is offering to us today, is to accomplish that fulsome restoration of the family of God. I mean, Joseph talked about temples, and they were built incrementally, and they never reached the finish line, even on the second one, before he was killed. But he laid a fabulous foundation and pointed in a direction that the Restoration necessarily must go to and complete. Because if we don't have the tabernacle of God where

He comes to dwell with His people (which He does when He has a family on earth), then the prophecies are not going to be fulfilled. Then the promises that were made to Enoch will not be realized. Then the statements of what will happen in the last days through Moses will not be vindicated. Then Adam's prophecy concerning his descendants to the end of time will not be realized. All of these things point—so we know it is going to happen. The question is not, is it going to happen? The question is, Will we rise up, or will we not? Because what He's offering is, in fact, a legitimate opportunity for that to indeed happen.

The "hearts of the children turning to the Fathers so that the earth is not smitten with a curse" means that the purpose of the Restoration, ultimately, is to turn us back to something that was here in the beginning, the way in which it once was—the dispensation of Adam, the dispensation of Enoch, the dispensation of Noah, all of which were running simultaneously at the time of the Flood. *As it was in the days of Noah so also shall it be at the time of the coming of the Son of Man* (Matthew 11:11 RE). We're going to have three different kinds of remnants operating at the same time at the coming of the Lord:

- a dispensation that will reflect somewhat of the Christian era;
- a dispensation that will reflect somewhat of Joseph Smith's era; and
- a dispensation that will reflect somewhat of the original, the one in which man stood in the presence of God.

And of course, we've got a couple of those functioning, after a fashion. What we lack yet, and what necessarily will involve the presence of Son Ahman to achieve, is something that He must bring about. When He said, "I will bring again Zion," He literally means that; because you can't have it without His presence. *That* dispensation, that's the one that needs to occur. Joseph gave a talk where he referred to the spirit of Elias and the spirit of Elijah and the spirit of Messiah—because there are really three great spirits that are involved, with three great stages.

Abraham is the Father of the righteous because, at the time that Abraham lived, the connection back to the government of God that began with Adam—to whom dominion was given over the earth—had been broken. It had been broken for generations. It had existed at one time for ten generations, continuously and uninterrupted from the days of Adam to the days of Shem. But when Abraham lived, it had been broken for generations.

Now Shem, who had lived on the other side of the Flood and who could have fled with Enoch's people into Zion (because people were taken up into Zion continuously, right up until the flood, and Shem did not need to remain on the earth), but he remained on the earth to perpetuate what was there in the beginning. And so Shem, who would be called Melchizedek—*Melek Zadok*: King, Priest, the Prince of Peace, the King of Salem, the King of

Peace, the Teacher of Righteousness—he remained through the Flood, but he held onto the covenant that would allow him to lay hold upon that. And he waited through generations of apostasy.

And Abraham represents every man, because Abraham came into the world in a state of apostasy, disconnected from the Fathers, incapable of laying hold upon the promises that go back through Adam and Seth and Enos and Jared and Mahalalel and the other descendants, right down until the days of Shem. Abraham was disconnected from that. And he went, and he looked, and he searched because the records belonging to the Fathers had come down into his possession, and he knew there was something to that. He knew there was something more to be obtained, and he longed for his appointment unto that—that which was in the beginning.

He obtained a connection for himself into that. That's why he had to connect up with Melchizedek, because the bond had to be formed, the covenant had to be established, the connection had to be made. And when it was made, the same right that belonged to Adam in the beginning—that right that belonged to Adam as the one to whom dominion over all the earth had been given—had been passed to Abraham. And Abraham became the rightful heir, the holder of that right belonging to the Fathers, even the first Father, or Adam, that came down from the beginning. That's what Joseph Smith sought to have be restored. That's something that cannot be done apart from the direct, personal involvement of God. That's something that, when it's restored, returns us back to a state in which Eden is again possible.

It was a year ago that a renewed covenant was given to all willing to accept it by God. New covenant people sprang into existence when a few accepted that gift. Until that moment, there were only lost and scattered remnants who (although the object of God's earlier covenants) lived in ignorance of God's renewed labor in His vineyard. Now, in addition to other remnants, there is a new covenant remnant aware of God's renewed labor—a remnant who has been asked to labor alongside the Master of the Vineyard as He sends His final invitation to come to His wedding feast. Christ spoke of this very thing when He taught the Nephites. He foretold that the barren gentiles would eventually produce more children for His Kingdom than the remnants on this land and at Jerusalem. Christ said:

And then shall that which is written come to pass: Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes, for thou shalt

break forth on the right hand and on the left, and thy seed shall inherit the gentiles and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed, neither be thou confounded, for thou shalt not be put to shame, for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood anymore. For thy maker, thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth shall he be called. (3 Nephi 10:2 RE)

We can see a new and different meaning in Christ's Book of Mormon prophecy to the Nephites. Before, Christ's words seemed to foretell that the lost and scattered remnants would build the Lord's house in the New Jerusalem. Now it appears that there are covenant-receiving gentiles who are included. Gentiles who repent and hearken to Christ's words and do not harden their hearts will be brought into the covenant as His people.

Christ mentions three distinct bodies:

- First, those who have accepted the covenant and are numbered among the remnant of Jacob, to whom Christ gave this land for their inheritance.
- Second, the lost descendants of the remnant of Jacob on this land who will repent and return.
- Third, as many from the House of Israel who will repent and return.

These three will build a city that shall be called the New Jerusalem. All three of those will come to know God in gathering and laboring to build the New Jerusalem. Then they will go out to assist all of God's people in their lost and forgotten state, to be awakened to the work of God and gathered as if one body of believers. Then all who have any of the blood of Abraham, who are scattered upon the face of the land, will come to be taught in the New Jerusalem. There the Power of Heaven will come down to be among them. The angels and Enoch (with his ten thousands) will come down; the Ancient of Days, or Adam our first Father, and Christ also will be in the midst of His people.

The foregoing are excerpts taken from

- Denver's conference talk entitled "Things to Keep Us Awake at Night," given in St. George, UT on March 19, 2017, including a question and answer session;
- His remarks at "A Day of Faith and Connection" youth conference in UT on June 10, 2017;
- The presentation of "Answer and Covenant," given at the Covenant of Christ Conference in Boise, ID on September 3, 2017;

- A fireside talk entitled "The Holy Order," given in Bountiful, UT on October 29, 2017;
- A fireside talk entitled "Cursed, Denied Priesthood," given in Sandy, UT on January 7, 2018;
- His remarks given at the Joseph Smith Restoration Conference in Boise, ID on June 24, 2018; and
- Denver's remarks entitled "Keep the Covenant: Do the Work," given at the Remembering the Covenants Conference in Layton, UT on August 4, 2018.