

## Podcast Episode 75: Ministry of the Fathers

**Today, Denver addresses the question: What is the ministry of the Fathers? What is their role in the restoration, both in heaven and on the earth?**

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DENVER: Now I tell that as background because I recently had another experience in which I spent, as it turned out once again, 40 days in pain. And while in a great agony, I could not take pity on myself. I couldn't. What I thought about was the suffering of our Lord in Gethsemane. And I found myself measuring my own physical misery against what I know our Lord went through there. And I lay in bed praying and thanking the Lord for what He had done on our behalf; thanking the Father for sending His Son and standing down to permit it to go forward. And while in prayer (quoting from his journal):

I saw a great mountain and upon the top thereof was the glory of the Fathers. To reach the top, all were required to enter through a narrow pass. In the pass was a great beast, cruel and pitiless. The Lord brought people whom he had chosen to the mouth of the pass, and there He told them to wait for him, and He went away. The people did not wait for Him, but began to move forward into the narrow pass. The beast killed some and injured others, and none were able to pass through.

After great losses, many deaths, and terrible suffering, the people chosen by the Lord withdrew and departed from the mountain. After four and five generations, the Lord again brought some few back to the pass, and again told them to stay at the mouth of the pass and wait on Him. But again, there were those who tired of waiting, for they could see in the distance the glory of the Fathers, and they desired to be there. These, being overtaken by their zeal, did not wait but moved into the pass where again the beast killed some or hurt them.

Among those who waited, however, was a man who knelt and prayed, and waited patiently for his Lord. After a great time, the Lord came to this man and took him by the hand, and led him into the pass where the great beast guarded the way. As the Lord led, however, the beast was ever occupied with attacking others, and therefore its back was turned to the Lord and the man. And so they passed by unnoticed, safely to the top.

The Lord sent the man to the Fathers, who when they saw the man inquired of him, "How came you to be here and yet mortal; for the last who came here were brothers who had been slain, and you are yet alive?" And the man answered, "I waited on the Lord, and He brought me here safely."

Well, for some reason, that was given in time to be read here this evening. And I can't say who the man is—maybe it's President Thomas Monson, maybe it's President Packer, maybe it's one of you. I just can't say. But the fact of the matter is that it is the glory of the Fathers, which Joseph was trying to explain in the last two talks he gave in Nauvoo.

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.

"Having been approved of God." It is God, and God's approval alone, that matters. It is what God regards of you. It is what is in your heart because God can detect what is in your heart. God knows why you do what you do. God knows why you say what you say. God knows what is in your thoughts. Therefore, to be approved of God is to be weighed against the standard of righteousness and not the whims of fashion. Fashion will come and go, ideas will be popular or unpopular. Righteousness will endure forever. This is the kind of man upon whom the words get spoken, "My Son." The Fathers, about whom I spoke in Centerville, had this association with God. They had this fellowship with God. They had this *sonship* with God. And they had *this priesthood* from God. And the hearts of the children need to turn to the Fathers—and that, too, because Elijah is coming to plant in the hearts of the children the promises that were made.

Now, I want to take another detour into parsing things in a way that you might not have considered before, and for this I want to go to Doctrine and Covenants section 128 and I want to look at verse 21. This is Joseph writing a letter that got canonized, and he's talking about all the stuff that had gone on in the process of getting the restoration fully established on the earth. And he mentions in this letter that he writes, these things:

*And again, the voice of God in the chamber of old Father Whitmer, in Fayette, Seneca county, and at sundry times, and in divers places [throughout] all the travels and tribulations of this Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints! [So the voice of God has been there throughout all of this, as Joseph presided and as the Church rolled forth.] And the voice of Michael [Micha-el], the archangel; the voice of [Gabri-el] ["El" being the name of God] and of [Rapha-el], and of divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time, all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, there a little; giving us consolation by holding forth that which is to come, confirming our hope! (D&C 128:21; see also T&C 151:15-17 RE)*

So, I want to suggest to you that Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael are known to us as those who have come—though they were part of the “El,” or in the plural form, the Elohim. They came and they served here. They came and they ministered here. *Michael* descended, and he came to the earth and he was known as Adam in mortality. *Gabriel* came to the earth and he was known in mortality as Noah. There is a big debate over the identity of *Raphael*. I’ll tell you what I think and you can take it or leave it. *Raphael* is the name that was given to the man who in mortality we know as Enoch.

Now, there are four angels who preside over the four corners of the earth. And Joseph *surely* knew that. And Joseph mentions the names of three of the four. But he leaves the fourth one out. And I find the absence of the fourth one rather extraordinary. The fourth one's name is *Uriel*, also one of the Elohim. And although there are those who will absolutely cry heresy, throw dirt on their hair, and tear their clothes because they are scholars, and they are *bona fide*, and they know I'm talking out of my hat—but I'd remind you Joseph talked out of his hat, too [*laughs*]. That fourth and missing, unmentioned angel is *Uriel*, who in mortality was known to us as John.

Adam is the one in the East, the angel who is considered the one who presides over and has control of the air; which is apt because unto Adam was given the Breath of Life in the beginning. *Raphael* is in the South and he is associated with the power of fire; which is apt because of his fiery ascent with his people into Heaven. *Gabriel* is the angel in the West who has the power over water; which is apt because in mortality he managed through the Flood. And *Uriel*, though not mentioned, is the one who in the North has the power over the earth; which is apt because he remains upon the earth and he's the guardian at one gate with Elijah at the other end. But you can take and leave all that, as you will. I find the mention here in this letter by Joseph of these individuals, and these Powers, and these four—three of whom are named; the fourth of whom, potentially, is unnamed—to be interesting; though he does mention *divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time* (ibid).

There has to be an opening that occurs in order to prepare the way. The opening at this end is going to be handled by someone who has remained behind, and the opening at the far end is going to be the one to whom the assignment was given to open the way for His return: Elijah, the one who was promised.

Now, I want to be really clear. I don't expect either of those individuals to have any public ministry *again*. They have a role in Zion, and those who dwell in Zion are going to have some contact with them. The three Nephites are a great example. They, like John, were given a similar ministry to remain around and to minister until the end of the earth. And they did minister. Two of the people to whom they ministered were Mormon and Moroni. They, like ministering angels, ministered to Mormon, who in turn ministered to the public. They ministered to Moroni (and kept his hope up in the waning days of that dispensation), but they did not minister publicly.

John will have a role, but the work of Zion is the work of *flesh and blood*. Men have to extend the invitation for God to return, so that men who extend that invitation are worthy of His return and the Lord can safely come without utterly destroying all who are upon the earth. Therefore you need Zion, among other reasons, in order for there to be a place and a people to whom the Lord can safely return without utterly destroying the earth at His coming. However small, however diminutive it may be, there needs to be a Zion that extends the invitation for the Lord to return.

Zion has been the promise of the Lord since the beginning. Adam foretold it at the great meeting in Adam-ondi-Ahman. I've spoken of that previously. I referred to that in a talk I gave in Centerville. I won't read it again. You can find it in D&C 107:56 (see also T&C 154:20 RE).

Enoch foresaw it. He prophesied concerning it. I've read that to you again today, even though I read it previously. Noah had it revealed to him by covenant—I read that to you today from the Joseph Smith translation of Genesis chapter 9. Moses was shown that it would be accomplished—I read that to you earlier today.

Now I want to change your view of one scripture, if I might. I want to take you to Luke chapter 9. You all think that the Mount of Transfiguration had a whole lot to do with Elijah, Moses, and keys, and the Kirtland Temple, and so on. It didn't have anything to do with that. It had to do with the head of the dispensation, Moses, and the one who brought that dispensation to a close, John the Baptist; appearing to Christ on the Mount, to hand off for the new dispensation.

But it also had— It had the purpose of fulfilling the covenant, the promise, the word of the Lord—*Christ*, who spoke concerning Zion. The Mount of Transfiguration is about Zion, as it turns out. And I can prove it from your scriptures.

Christ, in Luke chapter 9, beginning at verse 27, Christ prophesies: *But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God.* That's the latter-day kingdom. That's the one that Christ said was not of this world, that He's going to come and inherit at the end. So He says some of you who are alive today will not die until you see Zion. The gymnastics that have gone into trying to explain that by both Christian, Catholic, and even Mormon commentators, is rather amusing. Keep reading though:

*And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and [glistening]. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. (Luke 9:27-31; see also Luke 7:4-5 RE)*

So, He says some are living; they're not going to die until they see the Kingdom of Heaven. And then he takes those three up on the Mount, and they see some things. Turn to Doctrine and Covenants section 63, beginning—and He's talking about Zion—beginning at verse 20 of section 63:

*Nevertheless, he that endureth in faith and doeth my will, the same shall overcome, and shall receive an inheritance upon the earth when the day of transfiguration shall come; When the earth shall be transfigured, even according to the pattern which was shown unto mine apostles upon the mount; of which account the fulness ye have not yet received. (D&C 63:20; see also T&C 50:5 RE)*

He promised them that they would get to see the latter-day triumph. He took three of them up on the mountain and he showed them the latter-day triumph. Therefore, there were those that were standing in that generation who did not die until they had seen the latter-day triumph of the Kingdom of God. He fulfilled His own word, and it was put into the gospel in that fashion for that reason.

**It will happen!** But it requires an awakening, and it requires an arising. It does not require a leader—a servant, maybe; not a leader. It does not require a president. It requires your common consent **by your deeds**; not only to say, but to do.

It will not be achieved by control. It will not be achieved by coercion. It will not be achieved by force. It will not be achieved because there's some big 'strongman' among you. It will only happen if each of you are strengthened in *your* faith and **know** the Lord. It *will* be achieved by humility. It *will* be achieved through meekness. It *will* be achieved by love which is unfeigned—the real thing.

Question #2: In the talk you gave in California you referenced Matthew 24, the signs of the last days; and that the signs have begun, and that it'll all get wrapped up within one generation. Would you be able to shine more light on the vague description of "one generation?"

Denver: Haha! *[laughs]* See, yeah! There've probably been as many Bible commentaries written on the definition of 'generation' as— One offered definition of generation is 'while the teachings/religion/movement remains in an unaltered state.' Almost invariably, however, the way a new revelation from heaven works is that God will reveal Himself in a generation. And then, when the prophet/prophets of that time (the mortals living, the messengers) die, what survives **cannot** be kept intact. It simply cannot be kept intact. You need another Peter; you need another Paul; you need another Moses; you need another one with that standing, or it falls into immediate disrepair. So, while there are living oracles that are in communication with God, that's the best definition of a generation. But you don't—you don't **add on** to the work of a prophet. It goes downhill.

From the death of Moses until the coming of John the Baptist, the only interruptions you get were when these singular men—Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel—came upon the scene; and their

work was confined to them in that spot. You don't improve upon what God gives. When God gives something, it is living and it is breathing. It is like a fire that has been lit, and it exists until the flame goes out. But when the visions of heaven are gone because the recipient is no longer on the stage—it's what happened with the death of Joseph Smith. Now, I use his name here, and I say that I accept him as an authentic prophet.

All scriptures are focused on the Lord's ministry and message. They are one; and we err when we fail to see a consistent, overall testimony of the Lord's great plan of happiness for all of us within it. Christ's apparent defeat and death were but a prelude to His great triumph over death itself. For those who follow Him, defeat while alive is irrelevant, and ultimate defeat in death itself is irrelevant; because if you follow Him here below you'll be invited to follow Him to greater things above.

Well, ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to have entered into His glory? The answer is: of course. Everything that He did was according to a plan. Every step He took and everything that He taught was intended to bear witness of the ministry and the mission that He had. He satisfied all of the requirements; not only of the Law of Moses but of the Law of the Gospel as well, which He was in the process of introducing to them.

I find it always amusing to consider what was going on, on Mars Hill, when Paul arrived there; and they were always interested in hearing some new thing. When in fact, what Christ on the road to Emmaus wanted was not some *new* thing, but a clearer understanding of the things that had already been given—a clearer understanding of the testimonies that mankind had entrusted to them already; a clearer understanding that His work and His glory was intended to encompass not only Himself, as the Father of all those who will receive Him, but also intended to encompass our own immortality and eternal life.

Then in March of 1844, he picks up the subject again—the 10th of March, 1844. And this time, when he's talking about Elijah, he says:

“The spirit...and calling of Elijah is...[to] have [the] power to hold the [keys] of the [revelations], ordinances, oracles, powers and endowments of the fulness of the Melchisedeck Priesthood and of the kingdom of God on the Earth; and to receive, obtain, and perform all the ordinances belonging to the kingdom of God, even unto the [sealing] of the hearts of the fathers unto the children, and the hearts of the children unto the fathers, **even those who are in heaven.**” (*History of the Church* 6:251)

The hearts of the **Fathers who are in heaven**; *that's* the mission of Elijah. If you will receive it, this is the spirit of Elijah: that we redeem our **dead** and connect **ourselves with our Fathers which are in heaven**—our dead through us; us to our Fathers in heaven. Who are our Fathers in heaven? Who are our Fathers in heaven to whom we are to be connected? We want the power of Elijah to seal those who dwell on earth to those which dwell in heaven. Those who are in the spirit world—our dead, the ones that need redemption from us—are not redeemed. They cannot be in heaven because they need **us** to

be redeemed. **We** need to be redeemed by **our** connecting to the **Fathers who are in heaven**. The **dead** have to be redeemed; the **Fathers are in heaven**. Joseph understood this doctrine.

It is my view that the notion that you go to the temple and do genealogical work, to answer the coming of Elijah, does not conform to the description we're reading here from Joseph Smith. Our ancestors, our kindred dead, they need to be redeemed. They all have an interest in you and your life. And the work that is being done needs to be done. But the gulf that needs to be bridged through the work of Elijah, in the words of Joseph Smith, is to form a bond or a connection.

And of course, now, who was the last one who lived on the earth—not to hold the sealing power, but to ascend to heaven; and to draw together heaven and earth by his ascent—representing the opening of that way through which Zion above and Zion below will be connected with one another? Who was the last guide, as a mortal man, to have walked this path? Because when the Lord comes, He's coming with an entourage; and the path needs to be opened beforehand. And the path, once it's opened, allows men on the earth to be prepared for the coming again of those who are Zion above. Well, Elijah answers. Because Elijah is the one who made that connection.

Again, the doctrine of sealing power of Elijah is as follows if you have power to seal on earth & in heaven then we should be Crafty...first thing you do [is you] go...seal on earth your sons and daughters unto yourself, & yourself unto your **fathers in eternal glory**. (Ehat, Andrew F. and Cook, Lyndon W., *The Words of Joseph Smith*, pg. 331; emphasis added)

“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 Doctrine and Covenants section 132, verse 49:

*I am 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 [you] a throne for you in the kingdom of my Father, with Abraham your father. I say unto you...whatsoever you seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven...whatsoever you 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]; and so on. (D&C 132:49,46)*

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 (D&C 132:37).*

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. 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 are tormented. (Luke 16:34-35; see also Luke 9:20 RE)*

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]...I have five brethren; [he can] testify [to] 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...said unto him...they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. (Luke 16:27-31; see also Luke 9:20)*

Foreshadowing, of course, rejection of the Lord's resurrection and testimony as well.

Understand, I assumed God, and angels, and the heavens themselves were wide open to all of you. I assumed it was a common experience for people to have angelic ministrants. I had every expectation that sooner or later, you're just going to find yourself in the presence of angels, because that's what the restoration is all about. So I had no doubt that that would happen.



I had an experience in which I did encounter an angel. He had very little to say, but he certainly would've answered a question if I'd put one. The words that he said to me were, "On the first day of the third month, in nine years, your ministry will begin, and so you must prepare." And then he waited.

Now, some things that ought to be obvious, if that's a statement that's made, is, "Okay, how does one prepare? What is this ministry? What are you talking about? How am I to do what you just suggested I ought do?" But I wasn't doing *that*. I was looking at him; I was looking at the clothing; I was looking at the scene. I was trying to take in— And there were things that were visible that were odd to me: art, for example. And I thought, Why would you have artwork in the afterlife or in the eternities, or...? I was like a tourist. If I'd had spray paint, I might have sprayed 'Denver was here.' I may have behaved really poorly, but I did not ask a question. So, he leaves. I am left thinking about that scene, and I can conjure it back up into my mind. I can see that moment right now, and it's been decades.

Well, I didn't, at that time, know that you ought to keep a journal. I didn't, at that time, know that you ought to keep a record and know dates. But I kept it in my mind, and I did what I thought was a calculation. And I calculated out when the first day of the third month, in the ninth year, had arrived. And on that date I'm expecting, Hey, hey! Something big! And the date comes, and the date goes, and nothing happens—just another day in school. It's just nothing at all. So I thought, "Okay, 'and so you must prepare' is how heaven gets out of this. I didn't prepare, so it's my fault. I blew it. Not worthy, not prepared. Shoot! I wish I had known what I should have done." Because obviously, I had not done it.

The next year, on the first day of the third month, on my door comes a LDS bishop and Sunday School president to call me to be the new Gospel Doctrine teacher for the ward. It was actually a few days *after* they had extended to me the request that I teach gospel doctrine, that I went back and realized it was the first day of the third month. And then I went back and recalculated everything. And because I had not kept a record, I had assumed that the nine year calculation began from the year in which I was baptized, which was 1973. But it had been some time, apparently months later in '74, so I was off by a year in my calculation.

I hope you realize that God is real, and that He is as concerned about you and *your* day, and in *your* life, as He was concerned about Peter, or Paul, or John, or Mary, or Elizabeth, or Abraham, or Sarah. Every one of you matter to Him. And if He were to speak to you out of heaven today, He would call you by name, just as He has done with everyone to whom He's ever spoken. And if the Lord calls you by name, it's not going to be by your full legal name, it's not going to be by what's on your birth certificate. He will call you by that name your best friend knows you. Because God is intimate with every one of us. He knows everything, including the desires of your heart.

And even though we are all rough customers, the fact is the only reason you're here is because your heart is inclined to follow Him. Your aspirations, your desires, and your hopes can be perfect. And your conduct can be reprehensible. God takes into account the

perfection of your hope, and He evaluates you based upon your most noble aspirations. And He's cheering you on to try and get you to move a little closer throughout your life to that ideal, that perfection that you would like to have. We get hungry, we get tired, we get ill, we get weak; and so we excuse ourselves. But through it all we can maintain the aspiration, the hope, the love of Christ. If you do that, He will take that into account as He deals with you.

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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The foregoing are excerpts taken from:

- A fireside talk on "The Temple," given in Ogden, Utah on October 28th, 2012;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #5 entitled "Priesthood," given in Orem, Utah on November 2nd, 2013;
- His talk entitled "Zion Will Come," given near Moab, Utah on April 10th, 2016;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #6 entitled "Zion," given in Grand Junction, Colorado on April 12th, 2014;
- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #2, given in Dallas, Texas on October 19th, 2017;
- His talk entitled "Christ's Discourse on the Road to Emmaus," given in Fairview, Utah on April 14, 2007;
- His talk entitled "The Mission of Elijah Reconsidered," given in Spanish Fork, Utah on October 14th, 2011;
- His remarks entitled "Remember the New Covenant," given at Graceland University in Lamoni, IA on November 10, 2018; and
- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #3, given in Atlanta, Georgia on November 16, 2017.