

Podcast Episode 76: Patriarchs

Today, Denver addresses the question: What can you tell us about Patriarchs and the Patriarchal Priesthood? Is it on the earth now, and how can we learn more about it?

DENVER: Everything about what it is that Abraham was seeking— All of this ties together because there is *only* one gospel.

In the Lectures on Faith, the second lecture, paragraphs 37 to 53, there is a chronology given. I'm not gonna go through the chronology, and you needn't have brought it with you tonight. But that chronology is listed in the Lectures on Faith in order to save you the trouble of going through and tracking it yourself. But, it was important enough to Joseph Smith to put it into the Lectures on Faith so that you know how to reconstruct the Fathers, who they were.

Noah was 502 years old when Shem was born. 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 [was] a contemporary *with* Shem for 150 of the 175 years of the life of Abraham. Shem knew Noah, and Shem knew those on the other side of the flood, having lived with them for 98 years before the flood.

Abraham had the records of the Fathers. Look at Abraham chapter 1, verse 31:

But the records of the fathers, even the patriarchs, concerning the right of Priesthood, the Lord my God preserved in mine own hands; therefore a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the planets, and of the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers, have I kept even unto this day, and I shall endeavor to write some of these things upon this record, for the benefit of my posterity that shall come after me. (See also Abraham 2:4 RE)

Since Abraham was acquainted with the priesthood that belonged to the Fathers; and since Abraham had a knowledge that was reckoned from priesthood that goes back to the time of the Patriarchs, he, as a consequence of possessing that, knew about the beginning of creation, knew about the planets, knew about the stars *as they were made known unto the Fathers*. Go back to Doctrine and Covenants section 121. It's talking about our dispensation. I want to look at it 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...the seas, and to the dry land, [and] 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...set times, **shall** be revealed in the days of the dispensation of the fulness of times—According to that which was ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before this world was, that should be reserved unto the finishing and the end thereof, when every man shall enter into **his** eternal presence and into **his** immortal rest. (D&C 121:28-32; see also T&C 138:21 RE, emphasis added)*

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 No. 2, as I recollect, that is an effort to lay out a relationship in the heavens between certain positions of glory and authority. But Abraham is testifying that it was part of the original gospel that was entrusted to the Fathers and that those records were handed down to him.

In Doctrine and Covenants section 121, we find out that that's part of what is supposed to have been included within and is ultimately scheduled for revelation to those that will receive the restoration of the gospel when it is fully upon the earth in the dispensation of the fullness of times.

Abraham's record is a testimony about this knowledge of the heavens. Such knowledge was part of the original gospel that was entrusted to the Fathers. The records of the first Fathers were handed down to him.

We are told likewise in Doctrine and Covenants section 121 *that* knowledge is part of what is supposed to be included within and is ultimately scheduled for revelation *to* those who will receive the restoration of the gospel when it is fully upon the earth in the dispensation of the fullness of times. This knowledge can only return to us through revelation. When it does return, then we, like Abraham, will be at last in possession of the gospel Abraham knew, studied, and taught.

Though the Egyptians tried to preserve the things that came down from the beginning— As we read in the Book of Abraham, the Pharaoh sought *earnestly to imitate [the] order* (Abraham 1:26; see also Abraham 2:3 RE) that came down from the beginning, and the Pharaoh succeeded in large measure in doing that. And he was a righteous man.

Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom... judged his people wisely...justly all his days, seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first patriarchal reign, even...the reign of Adam, as also Noah, his father. (ibid, vs. 26; vs. 3 RE)

Pharaoh was not out there freelancing. He was trying to imitate something, and Egypt did a good job of preserving some things that had fallen into decay elsewhere, but—

The restoration through Joseph Smith and the promises that were made to the Fathers and the statement that was made by Moroni to Joseph on the evening that he came to him and talked about and reworded the promise given through Malachi— All of these are pointing to something that is at this moment still incomplete; a work that is at this moment still undone; a project that remains for *us if* we will receive it to finally *receive*. This points to a work that at this moment is still undone, a project that remains for *us if* we will receive it. But it will require revelation from heaven to be able to restore it. Therefore, it will require people willing to receive new revelation.

Because the way in which Zion is going to come about is going to necessarily be something that is *so* comfortable and *so* familiar on the earth—as a pattern reflecting what it is that exists in the heavens—that they who come not only do not burn them up, but they fall upon them, and they kiss their necks (because at last, they have a sister and a brother on the earth united by belief, united by covenant, united by knowledge, united by light and truth or, in other words, the glory of God which is intelligence)—because the purpose of the gospel has always been to inform, to edify, to raise up, to instruct. It was never meant to be reduced to something that is merely repetitious. It was intended to challenge you to your very core in what you do and what you think and how you act. It's intended to make you *godlike* in your understanding.

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.

The other reason why I think Patriarchal ought to be viewed as the highest form is because the priesthood which began with Adam was priesthood which was after the Order of the Son of God.

That Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God descended from Adam down to the time of Enoch, and then it got renamed the Priesthood after the Order of Enoch. These are the Patriarchs, and therefore, their priesthood, in the original form of the Holy Order, can rightly be named Patriarchal Priesthood because it was the priesthood of the original Patriarchs of mankind.

When Adam promises that the priesthood that was in the beginning is going to return at the end of the world, also (Moses 6:7-8; see also T&C 154:21 RE), he is talking about a return at the end of the world of that priesthood which was held by the original Patriarchs—a time when, for generations, it was unitary; there was only one. And the designation, the correct designation, of that priesthood is the Holy Priesthood or the Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God. It's a long name, but it was that priesthood that was held by the Patriarchs.

As a consequence of it being that priesthood held by the original Patriarchs (which *was* in the beginning of the world and is to return at the end of the world, also), I prefer to regard the highest order under the name designation of Patriarchal Priesthood.

If you go to Doctrine and Covenants section 84, verse 6: *And the sons of Moses, according to the Holy Priesthood which he received under the hand of his father-in-law, Jethro* (See also T&C 82:3 RE)— Now, just to remind you about this: Jethro was a Midianite; he was a descendent of Midian; Midian was the son of Keturah; Keturah was the wife of Abraham after Sarah. After Sarah died, Keturah bore him children, one of whom was Midian. The birthright had already been given to Isaac.

See, there is so much— There is so much about the priesthood that has yet to be clarified, and I think that is a good thing, and I'm not going to clarify enough for mischief to ensue.

But the fact of the matter is that *that* priesthood which Abraham handed to Midian which then descended down and came to Moses did not possess the birthright—didn't possess that. Therefore, it was not the same thing as the priesthood that had belonged previously to the Patriarchs. It was something less, and it was something different.

But Moses obtained *that* priesthood through Jethro, a Midianite—not even an Israelite—because Midian was named at the same time genealogically as Isaac. And it would be Isaac's son Jacob who would be named Israel, and it was Israel who possessed the birthright that descended down. And so, Moses inherited a *form* of priesthood that was, by its very nature, lesser. It's one of the reasons why the prophets of the Old Testament all had to be ordained directly by heaven in order to obtain what they obtained.

Because of apostasy by the overwhelming majority of Adam's posterity, Abraham was born into apostasy. Abraham's struggle to overcome an apostate world qualified him to be the Father of the righteous. His struggle to return and reclaim faith is the model mankind would see, with very few exceptions, forever after. He was the prototype of *everyman* in a post-deluge world, cut off from God, the Patriarchs, and cut off from the Garden.

Abraham's chosen son with whom the covenant would continue was Isaac. God renewed the covenant with Isaac and again with Jacob and again with Joseph.

But Abraham married after the death of Sarah. His wife, Keturah, bore him sons, also. Among these was Midian. Generations later, the chosen line was devoid of priesthood, but through Midian, a descendant named Jethro was still a priest whose line of authority reckoned back generations. This priest (who had seven daughters) ordained Moses to the very priesthood that allowed him to enter God's presence.

From this we know the house of God extended beyond the Biblical narrative involving Abraham's lineage. God's house included generations of righteous, priesthood-empowered, independently functioning families lost to the scriptural record in our memory.

Anciently, it was by descent through a family line. In Adam's day the eldest worthy, surviving son—Abel was replaced by Seth—held the priesthood in each generation. The accounts in Moses 6:10-23 (See also: Genesis 3:15-23 RE) and in D&C 107:41-53 (See also T&C 154:9-19 RE) are both preserving the priesthood lineage during the era of the Patriarchs. Abraham reconnected to that line and reestablished Patriarchal authority for himself and four generations that followed. Following Moses, the tribe of Levi and the family of Aaron held *an* office.

In the LDS Church, common consent has been used for all but one office, the Patriarch to the Church. *It* was filled through patrilineal succession. Hyrum, as the older brother, held this right, and that's according to D&C 124:91 (see also T&C 141:32 RE), which would continue *from generation to generation, forever and ever*—D&C 124:96 (ibid, vs. 32 RE).

That office has been discarded, and its last occupant, Eldred G. Smith, was made emeritus by President Kimball October 6, 1979, and later died on April 4, 2013, at which point that line came to an end. That also will require a new restoration which will be part of the dispensation completion in this day.

QUESTION: As a second witness then, which you have proclaimed you are, how is the Savior working through you to continue the restoration He began through Joseph Smith?

DENVER: God could, does, and will work through anyone who awakens and then pays attention. There's an army of witnesses and awakened individuals that are being assembled by God.

It's required to know Him, and I know Him. I've been taught and understand His gospel.

The first task is to assure people that He lives, and His gospel exists as an authentic method for saving souls. The second task is to remember the restoration Joseph gave his life to begin. We're ungrateful when we fail to remember and practice *it*.

At the moment, there is almost no clear understanding of that gospel. I'm working to set that up in a comprehensive way. It's never been completed. There's a great deal prophesied to roll out as part of the restoration that has not even commenced! Do we have Zion? What about the lost teachings of the brass plates? Do we have the rest of the Book of Mormon? Do we have the Testimony of John? Do we have restored knowledge of the Jaredites? The list could be very long. But the fact that there *is* a list *tells* us that the restoration *must resume* at some point in order to be completed. We don't have it on the table—but we've forgotten what we once had.

So, the first job is to show that we're grateful enough to remember and to remember it in a fulsome, comprehensive way before God is going to say, "Now, I will permit it to move forward." We haven't gotten to the point of remembering yet which is why we ought to be studying a lot more diligently the material we got in the restoration. We ignore it at our peril.

QUESTION: In the Phoenix or Mesa lecture (or whatever you want to call it—it's called different things by different people) back in September of last year [September 9, 2014], a very powerful moment in time, in my opinion, both personally in my family and among many people who were there because they related it to me, you stated: "The Lord has said to me in His own voice, 'I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you.' Therefore..."—just continuing quoting you:

I want to caution those who disagree with me...feel free,...feel absolutely free to make the case against what I say. Feel free to disagree [to] make your contrary arguments. If you believe I err, then expose the error...denounce it. But take care; take care about what you say concerning me for your sake, not for mine. I live with constant criticism. I can take it. But I do not want you provoking Divine ire by unfortunately chosen words if I can persuade you against it. (Talk 10, Preserving the Restoration, p. 4)

My question: In Genesis 12:3, the Lord said to Abraham essentially the same thing. *I will bless them that bless thee,...curse [them] that [curse] thee* (see also Genesis 7:1 RE). Abraham was further blessed to be the Father of many nations, that in him *shall all families of the earth be blessed* (ibid, vs. 3; vs. 1 RE). Abraham was a prophet. Isaac, Jacob— They were prophets. Abraham referred to the Fathers going all the way back to Adam. (You spoke about that in your talk on plural marriage and elsewhere.) It seems that there is something significant about connecting to the Fathers. Abraham was a Patriarch. The LDS Church no longer has a presiding Patriarch, as we've discussed, or even such an office anymore. Is there a Patriarch on the earth today who can connect us to the Fathers?

DENVER: Well, the simple answer is that there is *always* one on the earth. That has been true from Adam to the present time, yeah. Remember that in Nauvoo, the Lord offered to reconnect the saints but clearly defined the condition for that to happen was necessarily an acceptable temple where He could come and restore the connection. The reconnection is

ordinance-based and will require an acceptable temple before it goes beyond the single representative.

Well, the notion that Christ has a mission, has a destiny for mankind; the idea that His glory necessarily encompasses us; the idea that the temple anciently divided things into three levels of holiness; and the idea that His plan is robust enough—that His glory is robust enough—to provide for both the immortality on the one hand and eternal life on the other hand of mankind suggests a Lord who is collegial, who is friendly, who is social, who is as interested in you as you may be curious about Him; a person who, in describing His own glory necessarily includes within it others, is the kind of being worthy of worship and worthy of admiration.

In January of 1844— Now this is some eight years post-Kirtland Temple. This is in January of 1844. Joseph is talking about Elijah, and he says: “The Bible says, ‘I will—’” This is taken from [a talk] in front of Robert D. Foster’s hotel nearby the Nauvoo Temple, then under construction, in Wilford Woodruff’s journal. “The Bible says, ‘I will send you Elijah—’” Boy, he put quotes in it, too. Good for Wilford! Man, he’s better than my transcription machine in that respect.

The Bible says, “I will send you Elijah before the great & dreadful day of the Lord [of course, he misspelled *dreadful*. He spells it like *dredlocks*, instead of like—] day of the Lord Come that he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the Children...the hearts of the Children to their fathers lest I Come...smite the whole earth with a Curse,” Now the word turn here should be translated (bind or seal) But what is the object of this important mission or how is it to be fulfilled, The keys are to be delivered the spirit of Elijah is to Come, *to* be delivered, *to* come, The gospel *to* be established. Saints of God gathered Zion built up, & the Saints to Come up as Saviors on Mount Zion. How are they to become Saviors on Mount Zion by building...temples erecting Baptismal fonts & going...& receiving ordinances, Baptisms, Confirmations, washings anointings ordinations & sealing powers upon our heads in behalf of all our Progenitors who are dead & redeem them that they may come forth in the first resurrection & be exalted to thrones [and so on]. (*The Mission of Elijah Reconsidered*, p. 16, Transcript, emphasis added; see also *Wilford Woodruff Diary*, January 1844)

And then Joseph laments. This is the only guy— This is an important talk, and this is the only guy that records this—Wilford Woodruff. And Woodruff records Joseph saying:

I would to God that this temple was now done that we might go into it & [get] to work & improve [on] our time & make use of the seals while they are on the earth...the Saints have none [too] much time to save & redeem their dead,...together [with] their living relatives that they may be saved also, before the earth will be smitten. (ibid, p. 16; see also *Wilford Woodruff Diary*, January 1844)

And then this is the place where Joseph says— He's talking about Elijah. He's talking about the seals being on the earth, and he's talking about preparing for Zion. And in this context in January of 1844, this is where Joseph says:

[There's] been a great difficulty in getting anything into the heads of this generation. [It's] been like splitting hemlock knots with a Corn doger for a wedge & a pumpkin for a beetle. Even the Saints are slow to understand [I've] tried for a number of years to get the minds of the Saints prepared to receive the things of God, but we frequently see some of them after suffering all they have for the work of God, will fly to peaces *like glass* as soon as anything Comes [that's] contrary to their traditions, *they cannot stand the fire at all* How many will be able to abide a Celestial law & go through & receive their exhaltation, I am unable to say, [but] many are called & few are chosen. (ibid, p.17; see also *Wilford Woodruff Journal*, January 1844, emphasis added)

But in March of 1844, he picks up the subject again—the 10th of March, 1844—and this time, when he is 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 & endowments of the fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood & of the Kingdom of God on the earth &...receive, obtain & perform all the ordinances belonging to the Kingdom of God...even unto the [sealing] of the hearts of the fathers unto the children & the hearts of the children unto the fathers *even those who are in heaven*. (ibid, p.17; see also *Wilford Woodruff Journal*, March 1844, emphasis added)

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.

"Go to and finish the temple, and God will fill it with power, and you will then receive more knowledge concerning this priesthood." (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 323)

This statement is another reason I suggest the third or highest form of the priesthood should be called Patriarchal Priesthood. Joseph's words suggest *that* ordination to what I call the middle Melchizedek Priesthood could occur outside the temple. He had given those ordinations to others. But for what he calls the Patriarchal Priesthood, it required something which, by its *nature*, necessitated the completion of the temple and required the presence of God.

To restore this fullness, as the revelation given in January 1841 recounts, *it* needed God to come to accomplish. *For there is not a place found on the earth that He may come to and restore again that which was lost unto you or which he hath taken away, even the fullness of*

the priesthood (D&C 124:28; see also T&C 141:10 RE). It requires *Him, God*, to come *to* that place, and for *Him, God*, to restore *to* you that which has been taken away—the fullness.

“Go to [you] finish the temple,...God will fill it with power...you will then receive more knowledge concerning this priesthood.” (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 323)

The foregoing are excerpts taken from:

- Denver’s *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk 4, entitled “Covenants,” given in Centerville, Utah on October 6, 2013;
- Denver’s *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk 5, entitled “Priesthood,” given in Orem, Utah on November 2, 2013;
- Denver’s *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk 10, entitled “Preserving the Restoration,” given in Mesa, Arizona on September 9, 2014, including footnote 51 found on page 10;
- A Q&A session entitled “A Visit with Denver Snuffer,” held on May 13, 2015;
- His talk entitled “Christ’s Discourse on the Road to Emmaus,” given in Fairview, Utah on April 14, 2007; and
- His talk entitled “The Mission of Elijah Reconsidered,” given in Spanish Fork, Utah on October 14, 2011.