

Podcast 138: Government of God, Part 1

This is the first part of a special series where Denver discusses what it is that makes God who and what God is, what that has to do with Godliness, and the power thereof, and how God governs on earth as it is in Heaven.

DENVER: The First Lecture on Faith is essentially asserting the primacy of faith as an operative principle of power, that exists with God and with all of us. Okay, you've left home, and you've come here. While you're here, your home exists only as a matter of faith to you. You believe it exists. You intend to drive back there; and your family that's there, and your dog that's there, and that infernal parrot that now can mimic the low battery signal on the fire alarm—she's there too. And so, it's a matter of faith, that despite the fact that I am here and out of her presence, my bird is waiting for me when I get home. You act as if these things that you no longer see... See, in the development of a child, what you find in really young children is that they don't have the capacity to entertain the fact that it still exists. When it's gone, it's gone forever. And the child... It takes a while before the child has confidence that what gets removed from their sight continues to exist outside of the presence of their actual observation. It's one of those childhood development things.

Well, God's beyond that. Everything that exists — faith, and faith only — And I'm using a compilation that was published — I don't know, it's from the Brigham Young University archive. I just printed it out. In mine it's verse 11, excuse me, it's verse 10 of Lecture 1:

It is faith, and faith only, which is the moving cause of all action in them [that is in all men, but is also the principle by which everything is moved into action. Verse 12:] Faith is the moving cause of all action in temporal concerns, so it is in spiritual; for the Saviour has said, that truly, that He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. Through faith— [In Verse 14:] Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. ...all things in heaven [in Verse 15:] [or] earth, or under...earth, exist by reason of faith as it existed in Him [Him being God. 17:] Who cannot see, that if God framed the worlds by faith, that it is by faith that he exercises power over them, and that faith is the principle of power? And if the principle of power, it must be so in man as well as in the Deity? This is the testimony of all the sacred writers and the lesson which they have been endeavouring to teach to man.

You are acting... Everything that you are doing—the education that you got, the employment that you have, the plans that you undertake, the things that you design to

do—are all a product of your faith. You are a being filled with, animated by, and continually upholding everything in your life by your faith! And yet you don't have the faith to see it. You are a creature of faith. All of you are. And you always have been, and you always will be. Do not be doubtful, but be believing. You are here by reason of God's faith. And you have faith to do the things that you do, continually. Every movement you undertake, every plan you make, is based upon the faith that you have.

Well, we don't have time to pause on the first one because I'm hoping to get far enough along in this process. But I'd like you to value the Lectures on Faith. I'd like you to study the Lectures on Faith. I'd like you to take a lot more time with them than we're going to have the time to take tonight. Let's skip to the Second Lecture. This is the second verse:

We here observe that God is the only supreme governor and independent being in whom all fullness and perfection dwell; who is omnipotent, omnipresent, ...omniscient; without beginning of days or end of life; and that in him every good gift and every good principle dwell; ...that he is the Father of lights; in him the principle of faith dwells independently, ...he is the object in whom the faith of all other rational and accountable beings center for life and salvation.

Did you get that?! It's not me; it's not your bishop; it's not Hugh Nibley; it's not your stake president; it's not the Catholic priest down the street, the Pope in Rome, or the President of the Church in Salt Lake. It's no man! The principle of faith must be grounded in God, the Supreme Governor. Because if your faith is grounded in anyone or anything else, you cannot have the faith necessary to attain to salvation. All of these Lectures are concerned with your salvation.

Look at verse 12. And it's been a discussion of what went on at the beginning: man in the Garden of Eden, God talking to him. Verse 12:

From the foregoing we learn man's situation at his first creation, the knowledge [of] which he was endowed, and the high and exalted station in which he was placed—lord or governor of all things on [the] earth, and at the same time enjoying communion and intercourse with his Maker, without a veil to separate between.

That's where man began. And that's why knowledge of God existed in the first place. Because in the beginning, God talked to man. And if you think, Well, yeah that was then, what about now? We will get to now. Verse 18, about halfway down:

God conversed with him face to face. In his presence he was permitted to stand, and from his own mouth he was permitted to receive instruction. He heard his voice,

walked before him...gazed upon his glory, while intelligence burst upon his understanding, and enabled him to give names to the vast assemblage of his Maker's works.

This was man's original condition—a condition, to which, the gospel is designed to return man. And in fact, at the Second Coming, all who remain will be in that condition once again. The earth is going to be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory, and it's going to do so because God will come and dwell here again. And man will be able to converse [with] Him.

The plan of salvation is the plan of education — the plan of knowledge about God and the principles of godliness and the basis upon which all of you can live together and be of one heart and one mind.

Joseph was sentenced to die on November 1st of 1838. The general who was supposed to carry out the execution rebelled and wouldn't do that. Joseph ultimately wound up being kept in prison in Liberty Jail. While he was in Liberty Jail he writes a letter. We've taken out three excerpts from the letter, and we've canonized them, and section 121 is one of those three sections. I want you to look at verse 45; ask yourself whether this has something to do also with the power of godliness:

Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven. The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever.

Oh, that I had the ability to declare it. This is in the middle of one of the three great principles by which God governs and shapes the universe itself — it is not through compulsory means. The only way in which God works is by inviting and enticing....

Joseph Smith said: "I advise all to go on to perfection and search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of godliness." Turn to Doctrine and Covenants section 8....

Ask that you may know the mysteries of God. That's a commandment....

I declare to you in the words of scripture: Ask that **you** may know the mysteries of God! That's a commandment, given to us by revelation, enshrined in the scriptures that you folks claim to believe in.

...The mysteries of God largely consist in developing the attributes of godliness in us. The things that matter the most are the things that make us more like Him—better people, more kindly. You want to know more of the mysteries of God, serve your fellow man, and be of more value to them. In the process of blessing the lives of others, you find out that you know more of the character of God as a consequence of that.

I would suggest that if law governs all blessings, and it does, the statement isn't just some, the statement is *all*. We probably ought to read it: "*There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated — And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.*" (D&C 130:20-21).

Don't be cowards. Stand and be valiant no matter what it is. In the day of judgment you will find yourself wanting, and in this life you will find you lack the power of godliness, unless you obey the law upon which all blessings are predicated.

"Which should I join?"—verse 19, *I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: "They draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof."*

What do you suppose it means: *having a form of godliness...deny[ing] the power?* How do you deny the power of godliness? How do you obtain the power of godliness? What does it mean to have possession of the power of godliness?

Let's go back to that section 76 again; it's got some nice stuff in it. I want to go to the very end because we're going to run into this same notion in the First Vision and in section 76. And 76 is a transcript that is given to Joseph that was dictated, transcribed, read back, approved, then the dictation continued until we reach the end. But look, at beginning at verse 113:

This is the end of the vision which we saw, which we were commanded to write while we were yet in the Spirit. But great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his kingdom which he showed unto us, which surpass all understanding in glory, and in might, and in dominion; Which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit, and are not lawful for man to utter; Neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Ghost, which God bestows on those who love him, and purify

*themselves before him; To whom he grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves; That through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, **while in the flesh**, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory. (See also T&C 69:28-29, emphasis added)*

Is this related to not denying the power of godliness? I mean, to have the ability to bear his presence in the world of glory, as we get farther along in our discussion about the topic of Zion, it becomes critical that you become able to bear His presence. For those who are unable to bear His presence will be destroyed at His coming. Therefore, whatever this power of godliness is, I think we need to get some.

No matter who you are, you are only doing one thing your entire life. You are either focusing on one thing or on something else. And whatever it is upon which you dwell, that's what you've chosen. Hence the saying: *Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God (D&C 121:45)*. Is the power of godliness related to that? Is the power of godliness related to the presence of God? Well, the Book of Mormon continually declares that to be the case.

...In order for you to exercise faith you must have a correct idea of God's character, perfections, and attributes. You've got to have that. And if you don't have that, then you are missing something that prevents you from having the right kind of faith. Okay, so Lecture Fifth, verse 1:

We shall, in this lecture, speak of the Godhead—we mean the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There are two personages who constitute the great, matchless, governing, and supreme power over all things, by whom all things were created and made, that are created and made, whether visible or invisible, whether in heaven, on earth, or in the earth, under the earth, or throughout the immensity of space. They are the Father and the Son—the Father being a personage of spirit, glory, and power, possessing all perfection and fullness, the Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, a personage of tabernacle, made or fashioned like unto man...

And then, you go down to the bottom of that verse:

He being the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth... having overcome, received a fullness of...glory of the Father, possessing the same mind with the Father, which mind is the Holy Spirit, that bears record of the Father and the Son, and these three are one; or, in other words, these three constitute the great, matchless, governing and supreme power over all things; by whom all things were created and made that were created and made, and these three constitute the Godhead, and are one; the

Father and the Son possessing the same mind, the same wisdom, glory, power, and fullness—filling all in all; the Son being filled with the fullness of the mind, glory, and power; or, in other words, the spirit, glory, and power, of the Father, possessing all [the] knowledge and glory, and the same kingdom, sitting [on] the right hand of power, in the express image and likeness of the Father...

And it goes on to say: *...the Spirit of the Father, which Spirit is shed forth upon all who believe [in] his name...keep his commandments...all those who keep his commandments shall grow...from grace to grace...[possess] the same mind...* (Lectures on Faith 5:1-2) and so on.

The keystone of our religion gives examples of how faith in God does not require any comprehension of the corporeal existence or physical dimensions of God. The understanding of the Brother of Jared before he saw God was decidedly limited. Despite this, he was redeemed from the fall by returning to God's presence where he gained greater knowledge of God. Beforehand, he did not understand Christ had a finger, nor did he understand he would one day take upon Himself a mortal body:

And the veil was taken from off the eyes of the brother of Jared, and he saw the finger of the Lord; and it was...the finger of a man, like unto flesh and blood. And the brother of Jared fell down before the Lord, for he was struck with fear. And the Lord saw that the brother of Jared had fallen to the earth, and the Lord said unto him, Arise. Why hast thou fallen? [It's hard to talk to people when they're laying on their face. It's annoying.] And he [said to] the Lord, I saw the finger of the Lord, and I feared lest he should smite me, for I knew not that the Lord had flesh and blood. [See, if I see someone who is big and powerful, and I get a look at his hand, the usual thing that the Big Man does is slap me with that same damn hand because that's what big chiefs do.] ...I feared lest he should smite me, for I knew not...the Lord had flesh and blood. (Ether 1:12 RE)

I knew not. I knew not. This is the guy that has faith sufficient to get through the veil to be in the presence of Christ. I knew not this. But he understood the character, attributes, and perfections. He could have faith.

And the Lord said unto him, Because of thy faith, thou hast seen that I shall take upon me flesh and blood (ibid, vs. 12).

When Ammon was teaching King Lamoni, the instruction began by only acknowledging that God was a *Great Spirit*.

Believest thou that there is a God? And he answered unto him, I do not know what that meaneth...then Ammon said, Believest thou...there is a Great Spirit? And he said, Yea. And Ammon said, This is God. And Ammon said unto him again, Believest thou that this Great Spirit, who is God, created all things which are in Heaven and in...earth? And he said, Yea, I believe...he created all things which are in the earth, but I do not know the Heavens. And Ammon said unto him, The Heavens are a place where God dwells and all his holy angels. (Alma 12:15 RE)

This man would have the veil taken, and he would be caught up into a heavenly vision with that foundation because that was enough of the character, attributes, and perfections of God to allow him to pass through the veil.

When Aaron taught King Lamoni's father, he likewise described God vaguely as that Great Spirit:

Behold, assuredly as thou livest, O king, there is a God. And the king said, Is God that great Spirit that brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem? And Aaron said unto him, Yea, he is that great Spirit,...he created all things both in Heaven and in...earth. Believest thou this? And he said, Yea, I believe that...Great Spirit created all things, and I desire that ye should tell me concerning all these things, and I will believe thy words. (Alma 13:8 RE)

That's it.

These examples demonstrate that understanding there is both a Father and a Mother who jointly comprise a single Heavenly Father is not essential for mankind to be able to have saving faith in God. Knowing the character, perfections, and attributes does not extend to these particulars. To be like Them is to be patient, faithful, obedient, loving, charitable, and pure. These are the important characters, perfections, and attributes of godliness.

Their character, perfections and attributes are mercy, righteousness, love, compassion and truthfulness. They are without partiality, no respecter of persons, regarding all alike. They make the sun to shine and the rain to fall on both the righteous and the wicked. They regard wickedness as an abomination. They prize truth, meekness and peacemakers. They abhor the froward, prideful, evil and arrogant. They are full of grace and truth, and are more intelligent than us all. They are the Creators and will be the final judges of this cycle of existence and no one will be permitted to progress further without Their permission. There is nothing vile or perverse about Them. They are repelled by contention and seek for us all to associate with one another equally, as brothers and sisters. They are "perfect" in the sense of having completed the journey to the end of the path and entered

into Eternal Lives and Exaltation. They now seek to guide Their children along that same path.

The defect does not consist in the absence of faith in the Lord. The defect consists in the arrogance and hardness of the heart that prevents you from crying out, in the realistic and anguish of your heart, looking to God who is trying to bring you to Him. That “depths of humility,” that status of being someone who is utterly harmless, that condition in which you present no threat to the righteous (you are harmless as a dove; you seek only the betterment of others) — that is who God is and what you must become in order for God to be able to redeem you to be like Him. That’s you voluntarily changing to be that person by your submission to Him — because there is no reason to give to the proud, the vain, and the warlike the ability to torment and to afflict others. There is every reason to give to someone who would ultimately be willing to “give the rain to fall on the righteous and the wicked and make the sun to shine on both the righteous and the wicked” the power of God, because the power of godliness consists in this kind of a heart — and in this kind of a heart, God can accomplish anything.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver’s *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #2 entitled “Faith” given in Idaho Falls, ID on September 28th, 2013
- Denver’s *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #1 entitled “Be of Good Cheer” given in Boise, ID on September 10th, 2013
- Denver’s remarks entitled “Book of Mormon as Covenant” given at the Book of Mormon Covenant Conference in Columbia, SC on January 13, 2019
- Denver’s talk entitled “Christ’s Discourse on the Road to Emmaus”, given in Fairview Utah on April 14, 2007
- Denver’s conference talk entitled “Our Divine Parents” given in Gilbert, AZ on March 25th, 2018; and
- Denver’s *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #8 entitled “A Broken Heart” given in Las Vegas, NV on July 25th, 2014