

Podcast 144: Shem, Part 3

This is the third part of a series about Shem, who came to be known as Melchizedek, one of the Patriarchal Fathers, who established a city of peace that ultimately achieved the status of "Zion" and was taken up into heaven.

DENVER: 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. 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. I don't think what Joseph is talking about is, "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 precedes with the 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 lead away Lehi and the family of Lehi was to try and establish a righteous branch and a vineyard unto 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. 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. 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. 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.

We seem to get so easily distracted that we have a hard time staying on task. It's one of the gentile afflictions. We're very ambitious people and we're very ego-centric. A lot of what is going to be required will require sacrifice and selflessness.

the purpose of the restoration is to return the hearts of the children to the Fathers because everything that is going to happen in the last days got established at the beginning by a covenant that was made three years previous to the death of Adam, when he gathered together his posterity in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman and he prophesied whatsoever should befall them unto the latest generation. And the Lord appeared and administered comfort unto Adam, and the gathering there rose up and called him Michael the Prince (see T&C 154:19-20).

Right there, at that moment, at the beginning of the history of the family of Adam, he prophesies by the power of the Holy Ghost what should befall his descendants unto the latest generation in the presence – Adam-ondi-Ahman – Adam in the presence of Son Ahman. Adam-ondi-Ahman was an event. It's like the Super Bowl. It doesn't matter where you play it. Wherever it is it's the Super Bowl. Adam-ondi-Ahman is an event. When Adam is there in the presence of Son Ahman, that is Adam-ondi-Ahman. Now you can say Springhill, Missouri is Adam-ondi-Ahman but it doesn't matter where it happens. When it happens – and it will happen again, in fulfillment of that original prophecy that was made in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, when Adam was before Son Ahman the first time – when it happens again it doesn't matter if that's in Mesa, Arizona or Springfield... I don't know, where do the Simpsons live? Springfield USA, or Bogus Basin. Wherever it is that that occurs that is Adam-ondi-Ahman and it will certainly 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 return 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 24:37).

We're gonna 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. Of course we've got a couple of those functioning after a fashion but we lack yet in 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 Mahalaleel 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.

Our hearts must become one. United hearts seem to be in a distant latitude from where **we** are now. Even then, before any attempt at “sealing” begins, the first question is the identity of the “fathers” to whom our singular heart must be sealed to avoid being “cursed”—or as Christ warned, “utterly wasted at his coming.”

There is a **true** religion; it was revealed first to Adam. Adam not only received and practiced that true religion, it is through **him** that **every subsequent** dispensation of the gospel has been revealed. Joseph Smith taught:

*Commencing with Adam, who was the first man, who is spoken of in Daniel as being the Ancient of Days, or in other words, the first and oldest of all, the great grand progenitor, of whom it is said in another place, He is Michael, because he was the first and father of all, not only by progeny, but he was the first to hold the spiritual blessings, to whom was made known the plan of ordinances for the salvation of his posterity unto the end, and to whom Christ was first revealed, and through whom Christ **has been** revealed from Heaven and will continue **to be** revealed from henceforth. **Adam** holds the keys of the dispensation of the fullness of times; i.e., the dispensation of all the times have been and will be revealed through him, from the beginning to Christ, and from Christ to the end of all the dispensations that are to be revealed.*

*...that all things pertaining to that dispensation should be conducted precisely in accordance with the **preceding** dispensations. And again, God purposed in himself that there should not be an Eternal fullness until every dispensation should be fulfilled and gathered together in one, and that all things whatever that should be gathered together in one, in those dispensations, unto the same fullness and Eternal glory, should be in Christ Jesus.*

*Therefore, he set the ordinances to be the same for ever and ever, and set **Adam** to watch over them, to reveal them from Heaven to man or to send angels to reveal them. (T&C 140:3,5-6; emphasis added)*

God gave to Adam the right of “dominion” over the Earth and everything (correspondingly, **everyone**) on the Earth. That was part of the original true religion. When the true religion was combined with the right to hold dominion or preside as a High Priest, it was called the “Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God.” This was shortened to “Holy Order.” It has also been called the Melchizedek Priesthood. Because of the too frequent use of the term “Melchizedek Priesthood” by the LDS Church and resulting confusion about the meaning of the term, I’ve redefined “priesthood” and avoid making use of that term without clarification. In this talk, the term “Holy Order” is used to mean the original priestly position conferred on Adam and thereafter passed on to the one eldest, worthy descendant in each subsequent generation, and the religion then taught by that holder was correct and held salvation.

The Patriarchal Fathers are Adam, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, Noah, Shem (or Melchizedek), Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. These 15 generational heads stood, **like Adam**, as God’s Patriarchal Father and High Priest at the head of God’s family on Earth. There were many others who believed in the religion taught by Adam and the Patriarchal Fathers, but the Holy Order given to Adam was always held in

its fullness by the eldest worthy descendant in each subsequent generation until—skipping generations to—Abraham.

Abraham was the first precedent for “**sealing**” into the Order, tying a descendant separated by generations into the position of patriarchal successor to Shem (or Melchizedek). This precedent helps explain Joseph Smith’s later practice of sealing others to him. Given the examples of Abraham and Joseph Smith, it becomes clear that the Holy Order does not have to be exclusively dynastic (passing in one family line) but can branch out to include any other worthy member of the line, however distant or separated by generations.

The Patriarchal head of the Holy Order is the shepherd for the faithful, husbandman for the Creation, and teacher responsible for dispensing Divine knowledge. It is more than competent gospel teaching; it is authoritatively dispensing a message from a position established and recognized by God, hence Joseph Smith’s observation that *there are many teachers, but perhaps not many fathers* (T&C 139:12). When the Holy Order is active, these obligations attach to the position in every generation.

The first or Patriarchal Fathers learned the true religion from Adam and practiced it under his direction. Adam taught the first eight patriarchs born after him. Their religion was Adam’s religion, and their understanding reached back to the Garden of Eden.

Despite nearly universal apostasy and rebellion against God **while Adam lived**, the line of Patriarchal Fathers **preserved** the true religion. Noah had a father who knew and was taught by Adam. Noah’s living grandfather, great-grandfather, and ancestors for seven generations knew and were taught by Adam. Learning about God from His messengers and priests was (and still is) necessary to avoid dwindling in unbelief and falling into apostasy. The “angels” who ministered **included mortals** who were given Divine knowledge to teach.

Noah preserved the original religion of God through the cataclysm of the flood. Three of the sons of Noah were taught it, and Noah’s most faithful son inherited the right. The fullness of the Holy Order was conferred upon Shem (who received the title “Melchizedek”). A descendant of Ham falsely claimed he held the Holy Order, but he could only institute an imitation of the Order.

After Melchizedek, an apostasy lasted until Abraham. Although he was raised by an idolater and lamented that his fathers offered sacrifices to idols, Abraham searched for the true God of Heaven. Abraham **found** God, and the covenant of the first Fathers was renewed and conferred upon him by Melchizedek. Generations of apostates were excluded from the Holy Order, but Abraham was adopted into the line by Melchizedek, thereby restoring continuity **back** to Adam.

Abraham represents the key Patriarchal Father prophesied of in Malachi. Abraham not only renews the covenant of “the fathers” (**including** Noah and Enoch), but also through the Abrahamic covenant, God established Abraham as the new head of the family of God on Earth. God told Abraham: *As many as receive this gospel shall be called after your name and shall be accounted your seed, and shall rise up and bless you, as unto their Father* (Abraham

3:1 RE). For us, connecting to Abraham is akin to the original Patriarchs' connection to Adam. Turning the heart of the children to the Fathers is a required part of the gospel. And after God's covenant with him, salvation for all subsequent generations is dependent on being accounted Abraham's seed.

In the beginning, Adam kept the Book of Remembrance, which Enoch elaborated upon because Enoch was the great scribe. (His prototype in Egyptian hieroglyphs is Thoth, who is shown ibis-headed with the stylus and writing—that was Enoch.) And Abraham says that the records of the Fathers (that came down from the beginning) came into his hands, and therefore, he (Abraham) had a knowledge of the beginning of the Creation and of the stars and the planets and all the rest of that. And he proceeded to tell us something about the Creation in the book of Abraham, based (apparently) upon the content of the records from the beginning that fell into his hands—followed, in due course, with his full initiation into the Holy Order through the surviving Melchizedek, son of ~~Shem~~ [Noah], who was a pre-diluvian and had a covenant that he could have been translated and taken up to heaven ('cuz that process continued right up into the flood). Even though the city of Enoch had risen before, people were still going through that process right up into the flood, and Melchizedek could lay claim on that promise as an antediluvian, but he tarried until he could hand off (after generations of apostasy) to Abraham. So, Abraham inherits the covenant, and Abraham has possession of the records.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's fireside talk titled "Cursed, Denied Priesthood", given in Sandy, UT on January 7th, 2018
- Denver's remarks given at the Joseph Smith Restoration Conference in Boise, ID on June 24, 2018
- Denver's general conference talk titled "Religion of the Fathers," presented at Aravada, Nevada on March 27, 2021; and
- Denver's talk titled "Joseph, Joseph, Joseph," given at the 4th Annual Joseph Smith Restoration Conference in Meridian, Idaho on June 26, 2021