

## Denver Snuffer Podcast 158: Completing God's Image, Part 5

This is part five of a series where Denver addresses listener-submitted questions relating to the roles of Women in scripture and in the restoration movement. Today, Denver discusses women as a “type” of Eve and thus of our Mother in Heaven; how women are characterized in scripture as having and being “wisdom,” and then he delivers some concluding remarks.

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DENVER: Our scriptures speak carefully about the existence and importance of a Heavenly Mother: a Divine Female whose greatest attribute is to bestow wisdom upon the whole of this creation. It is possible to miss Her presence. That cultural and theological blindness is not because of Her absence from the scriptures. It is not hard to detect Her, if you know what to look for. WE just don't yet understand how to look.

The Old Testament (now retitled The Old Covenants) was preserved and transmitted in the Hebrew language for generations. Some characteristics of that language are important to understand as part of this discussion. First, Hebrew has no neuter, only masculine and feminine. Furthermore, when there are multiple persons involved, even if only one member of a group is male, Hebrew uses only the masculine to refer to the group. Women and men collectively are referred to using a masculine noun or pronoun.

When a masculine noun or pronoun from the Hebrew language is translated into English, English language readers assume it means “man” or “men” and excludes “women.” In English we can use neuter pronouns like “they” or “them” to refer to a group of both men and women. Hebrew would use “men” or “he” if the group included even a single male in the group.

We all know that the Hebrew word “Elohim” is used to refer to God and that it is plural. In English it should be translated as “Gods,” but because we allow theology to control translating the text, the term “Elohim” in Hebrew is therefore rendered in English as a singular “God.” It should be plural; and if plural, rendered masculine in English. But that is Hebrew to English, and does not mean, as we shall see, there is no female among the Elohim.

The story of creation starts by identifying Heavenly Parents, a couple clearly described as the true and living “God.” In the King James Version, the creation of mankind is told in these words: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”

The context of the words “created he (God) him (man)” is immediately clarified to refer to both the male and female and not just the male: “created he him; male and female created he them.” The English translation follows the masculine pronoun implied in Hebrew. Therefore, looking at it in the Hebrew language, there were two persons described and only one of them was male. It could be translated: “created they (Gods) them (man and woman); male and female.” In the King James Version the Gods are described using a masculine pronoun taken from the Hebrew. Moving from Hebrew into English, the translation stayed

true to the Hebrew and the human couple is likewise described using a masculine pronoun. They are called “him” in English because of this.

The words “So God created man in his (God’s) own image,” affirm two points: First, the plurality of God. Second, that plurality is a couple that includes both a male and a female. Man is created in God’s image, and that image is a couple: a man and a woman. This is not figurative language. It is literally describing mankind having two sexes and that is godlike, or what God’s own “image” is.

I was recently listening to a podcast with my wife. Philip McLemore was being interviewed by Dan Wotherspoon. They were discussing attributes of the Divine male and female. In their discussion the dual nature of God was incorrectly regarded as figurative, not literal. It was suggested that this dual nature was intended to be part of every individual, with all men and women having both masculine and feminine attributes. Dan Wotherspoon thought individuals would develop through successive stages of growth. This idea may bring comfort to some, but the scriptural account is not ambiguous. It refers to a literal male and a literal female created by the Elohim. The male is named Adam and the female is named Eve. They are made in the image of the Elohim, or the Gods of creation, whose image is a male and a female.

There is even more meaning added to the scriptures describing the creation of man in the Joseph Smith Translation. The JST renders the account in Genesis this way: “And I, God, created man in mine own image, in the image of mine Only Begotten created I him; male and female created I them.” Here, not only is the Father male and female, but so is the image of the Only Begotten, who is therefore also two separate beings (male and female). Joseph’s clarification helps us understand who the Son was and is. The Son has a female counterpart, or, like His Father, a spouse.

There are instances in which Hebrew uses the feminine directly to describe God. For example, the spirit of God (Ruach Elohim) is a feminine noun. Likewise when referring to the “presence of God” Hebrew uses the feminine. God’s presence includes the feminine.

If you go to Genesis chapter 2, verse 18, it says: The Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make an help meet for him (see also Genesis 2:13 RE). If it is not good for man to be alone; you have to necessarily conclude that if you’re going to be “good” (in the sense that God desires for man to be good), you have to be with a woman. There has to be a union of the man and the woman. Otherwise, no matter who you are, no matter what you are, no matter what virtues you may hold, you cannot be—in the eyes of God—“good” (in the sense that God uses the word “good” to describe the condition of man in his separate and in his single state). The work of God, after all, is to bring to pass the immortality and the eternal life of man (Moses 1:39; see also Genesis 1:7 RE). That is not even a possibility if you do not have the man and the woman together. It’s not “good.”

In the creation (this is the preceding chapter of Genesis chapter 1): So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it (Genesis 1:27-28, see also Genesis 2:8 RE). You see, when it comes to

the image of God, the image of God is both male and female. That is who the Elohim... And a singular verb gets used—the Elohim is (despite the fact that the word “Elohim” is itself plural). Why would you use a single verb with a plural noun? The reason you would do that is because they two are one. It’s because there is no difference between the Father and His Consort, the one about whom so little is said because there is something about Her role that, at this point, has not emerged into our plain view. And that is wisdom in Them.

In the scriptures, very often, the voice of God is heard, and it’s described as the voice that sounds like waters—rushing waters, mighty waters. If I were going to stage the endowment, the voice that you would hear whenever it is Elohim who speaks would be the voice of a man and a woman speaking in unison. It would not be the voice of a man. It would not be the voice of a man in an echo chamber. It would not have sound effects. I would not make some effort to get feedback or make it sound like Charlton Heston's conversation on the mount in Cecil B. DeMille's movie; I wouldn't do that. I would have a man and a woman speaking in unison whenever Elohim were to speak.

If you want to know what the image of God is: In the image of God created he him; male and female created he them (ibid). That is the image of God. That is what God—if you look at His image—looks like. This is the reason why, when you have the Father throughout Scripture on display, it is always a Host. He appears with a heavenly Host. It is because our God, in the end, is not the image of some fellow standing about in a robe. It is this image, male and female. They two are together.

You’ve seen this scripture; it’s been read by Latter-day Saints perhaps more than any other denomination. But it’s in First Corinthians chapter 11, beginning at verse 11: Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God (1 Corinthians 11:11-12, emphasis added; see also 1 Corinthians 1:44 RE). Now, the modifier there, in the King James translation, works marvelously well because think about what is being said here. The woman is of the man, all things are of God, and the man is by the woman. Woman of man, all things of God, man by the woman. That's how men get into the world—is by the woman. And that is, incidentally, also how the first man got into the world; it is by the woman.

Think of the image of God. And think of what is being said here about it “not being good for man to be alone”—that is, the image of God includes the notion of companionship. Think about multiplying and replenishing. The image of God includes, necessarily, offspring. As a separate and single individual, you are finite; each of us is finite. But when you put together the man and the woman, it is in the image of God because they become—despite the fact that we are in mortality—you become infinite, in that you have no end. Sitting in the room today, we are all descendants of Adam and Eve. They are present here today in you because they continue, despite the fact they died. Until they come back from the grave, it doesn't matter that they are dead; they are yet present through the people who exist that are their offspring. They became in the image of God.

This is at the core of redemption; this is at the core of the work of God; this is at the core of what it means for God to complete His work and to have the continuation of what it is that God does.

To reflect the image of God, there are two sexes, male and female. Man was organized in this way to help us to understand who and what the Gods are. The importance of this is illustrated in a passage of the Lectures on Faith:

Let us here observe, that three things are necessary, in order that any rational and intelligent being may exercise faith in God unto life and salvation. First, The idea that he actually exists. Secondly, A correct idea of his character, perfections, and attributes. Thirdly, An actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing, is according to his will.—For without an acquaintance with these three important facts, the faith of every rational being must be imperfect and unproductive; but with this understanding, it can become perfect and fruitful, abounding in righteousness unto the praise and glory of God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>25</sup> Eventually every man—and I use that word in the Hebrew sense, meaning every male and female—will be brought to stand before the Throne of God. Then all questions about the image of the Gods will be answered by what is apparent to anyone standing in Their presence.

These truths are in the scriptures accepted by every Christian denomination. They are in the scriptures believed by the Jews. Yet the Heavenly Mother's existence is not acknowledged.

While a great deal more could be said to demonstrate that God the Father necessarily includes God the Mother, we want to know more than merely She exists. We want to understand her character, perfections and attributes also.

The Father and the Son are masculine and therefore personified by the word "knowledge." The Mother as well as the Son's companion are feminine, and personified by the word "wisdom." These personifications reflect an eternal truth about these two parts of the One True God.

Knowledge (masculine) initiates, Wisdom (feminine) receives, guides and tempers. Knowledge can be dangerous unless it is informed by wisdom. Wisdom provides guidance and counsel to channel what comes from knowledge. These are eternal attributes, part of what it means to be a male or a female. Creation begins with the active initiative of knowledge, but order and harmony for the creation requires wisdom. Balance between them is required for an orderly creation to exist.

A great deal can be learned about Heavenly Mother by searching for the word "wisdom" in scripture. Very often the reference to "wisdom" is to Her distinctly, and not merely an abstract attribute. If we are blind to Her existence, we cannot see the reference to Her in those passages. Although many scriptures have the Divine Mother's words, Her presence is veiled by our ignorance and refusal to acknowledge Her. There is one extensive passage in scripture in Her voice that we look at today. It teaches us a great deal about Her.

This was once a temple text and has become somewhat corrupted. I will not make any corrections or clarifications. This is from Proverbs 8. The version we have has additional passages about the foolish woman at the beginning and again at the end. I discard those so the words attributed to the Heavenly Mother can be considered. She states:

Hear, for I will speak of excellent things and the opening of my lips shall be right things. For my mouth shall speak truth and wickedness is an abomination to my lips. All the words of my mouth are in righteousness, there is nothing froward or perverse in them.

She proclaims Herself as the reliable source of truth, righteousness and plain— meaning clear—understanding. She is opposed to wickedness, frowardness—meaning stubbornness or contrariness—and perversity.

If we are “froward” we are stubborn or contrary with one another. We dispute. We find it difficult to agree. How much debate and anger are produced by frowardness!

Jacob (called James in the King James Bible) mentioned “wisdom” in his letter. In contemplating Her, Jacob suggested we should be “easy to be entreated.”

Who is a wise man, and endowed with knowledge among you? Let him show out of good conduct his works with meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie not against the truth.

This wisdom descends not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish; for where envying and strife are, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. Wisdom from above can endow us with the kindly demeanor of brothers and sisters who seek what is good for one another. How often are the words of our mouths froward and “perverse?” The Divine Mother refuses to speak wickedness and abominations, and Her influence brings others to depart from such failures. Continuing:

They are all plain to him that understandeth and right to them that find knowledge. Receive my instruction and not silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.

Proclaiming, “wisdom is better than rubies,” she asks us to receive Her instruction rather than seek silver and gold. Nothing else is to be compared with Her wisdom. She instructs in virtues that would make any person better. But Her instruction will also make living in peace with others possible. Nothing in this world is more desirable than acquiring wisdom: understanding and putting knowledge to wise use. Zion will require the wisdom to use pure knowledge in meekness, humility and charity. Zion will require Her influence. Continuing:

I, wisdom, dwell with prudence and find out knowledge of witty inventions. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil, pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way and the froward mouth do I hate.

Wisdom and prudence go together as companions. “Prudence” means good judgment or common sense. It is the quality of assessing things correctly and making a sound decision in light of the circumstances and persons involved. Prudent judgment is not hasty or unfair. Arrogance is destroyed and pride overtaken by “fear of the Lord”—meaning that we do not want to disappoint our Lord by our low, vulgar and mean conduct.

She mentions a second time Her opposition to the froward. This time She declares She hates the froward mouth. We repel Her by being argumentative and contrary with one another. Continuing:

Counsel is mine and sound wisdom, I am understanding, I have strength.

The Mother must possess great strength because She hates the forward—the contentious. She does not welcome that spirit in Herself or any of Her offspring.

Christ taught this to the Nephites, which seems to be clearly taken from the Mother’s wisdom:

And there shall be no disputations among you as there hath hitherto been, neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine as there hath hitherto been. For verily, verily I say unto you, He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the Devil, who is the father of contention, and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger one with another. Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger one against another, but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away.

It requires strength to refrain from contention and disputes with froward and arrogant people. When we feel strongly that we are right, or are firmly convinced someone else is wrong, it is difficult to bridle our tongue and meekly persuade without contention. But the Heavenly Mother possesses the strength required to look with compassion on our failings. She deals with Her offspring using good judgment and common sense. She is opposed to arrogance, and when we are arrogant we offend Her.

How many religious arguments, even religious wars have been caused because mankind is too weak to patiently reason together? The history of this world is a bold testimony of what weak and deceived men do when they reject wisdom.

Mankind cannot have Zion without wisdom to guide us. Zion must be a community. Developing wisdom requires us to patiently interact with one another. This counsel from the Heavenly Mother is a gift to help us understand what we lack.

The account of the creation from Moses in Genesis is a parable. The account veils identities of the role players unless the parable is explained. Christ did this when He taught publicly. The parable written by Moses relates:

And I, God, said unto my Only Begotten, who was with me from the beginning, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And it was so. And I, God, said, Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the

cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the Earth. And I, God, created man in my own image. In the image of my Only Begotten created I him. Male and female created I them. And I, God, blessed them.

The creation of the man Adam was secondarily in the image of God the Father, but was primarily and specifically “in the image of my Only Begotten”—meaning Jesus Christ. The reason Adam was born “in the image of” God the Father’s “Only Begotten” was because the Only Begotten was the one who begat Adam. God the Father was the father of Jesus Christ in the spirit, and the biological father of Jesus Christ in the flesh. God the Father was also the Father of the spirit of the man Adam. But the biological Father of Adam in the garden was “in the image of the Only Begotten,” or Jesus Christ. Christ and His companion were the physical Parents of the man Adam.

Jesus Christ was among the “souls” who were “noble and great” before this cycle of creation. The word “soul” as used in the 1842 publication of the Book of Abraham had been defined in a revelation received in 1832: “Now verily I say unto you, that through the redemption which is made for you is brought to pass the resurrection from the dead, and the spirit and the body is the soul of man, and the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul, and the redemption of the soul is through him who quickeneth all things, in whose bosom it is decreed that the poor and the meek of the Earth shall inherit it.” Christ is identified in scripture as a “soul” before this world was created. Therefore, before this world was created Christ had both a “spirit and a body”—having gone through the necessary progression required for all who ascend to be “like unto God.” Christ had the physical capacity to be the biological father of offspring. He did this with Adam.

The account continues and describes the creation of the woman. Here the parable distinguishes between the process of creating the man Adam and creating his spouse, the woman Eve:

And I, the Lord God, said unto mine Only Begotten, that it was not good that the man should be alone, Wherefore, I will make an help meet for him.

God the Father said to the Only Begotten and that He (God the Father), will be the one to make Adam’s “help meet.” It was not good for Adam to be alone because he was not complete without a suitable companion to help him progress and develop. The creation parable continues:

And I, the Lord God, caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept, and I took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in the stead thereof, and the rib, which I, the Lord God had taken from man, made I a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This I know now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man.

The parable of the creation of the woman therefore differs from the creation of the man. She was not formed from the dust of the ground. She was formed from a “rib” –from an already existing part of the man. She was born from something equal to him and able to stand beside him in all things.

But the parable about the woman Eve means a great deal more. She was at Adam's side before the creation of this world. They were united as "one" in a prior estate when they progressed to become living "souls" with both bodies and spirits. They were sealed before this world by the Holy Spirit of Promise and proved true and faithful. They once sat upon a throne in God the Father's Kingdom. In that state they were equal and joined eternally together. She sat beside him and was a necessary part of his enthronement. Her introduction into this world to join her companion was needed to complete Adam. It was not good for him to be alone. They were "one" and therefore Adam without Eve was not complete—or in the words of the parable "not good to be alone."

Like the man Adam, the woman Eve was the spirit offspring of Heavenly Father and Heavenly Mother. But unlike the man Adam, who was the physical offspring of Christ, the woman Eve needed to be the physical offspring of God the Father and God the Mother. Eve was Adam's sister in spirit. Eve was also his physical aunt. She had to be the direct descendant of the Heavenly Mother in order to endow her with her Mother's creative abilities. That power belongs to the Mother. The fertility of Eve, and thereafter of all the daughters of Eve, came because of the power given from direct descent from the Heavenly Mother.

Men descend from Christ. Christ founded the family of men and is accountable for them. He was placed in that position to enable Him to atone for any failure on their part. Through Adam "sin entered the world" and death was imposed upon all mankind. Jesus Christ, one greater than Adam, made Himself responsible for all mankind's failures and transgressions. Through the obedience of Jesus Christ all mankind were justified and "made righteous." The Father made mankind Christ's posterity. This was necessary to qualify Christ as "the last Adam." Christ was the rightful "heir of all things" because He always stood at the head. When "all things were made by Him" it included the man Adam. Death came upon all mankind through Adam. Before Adam there was one greater who has made it possible for mankind to inherit life through Him. Christ has the standing to answer for man's disobedience. He could and did take upon Him the sins of all His posterity.

Women descend from mother Eve, who was born the biological daughter of Heavenly Mother. Women descend from Heavenly Mother to endow them with Her creative power of fertility to bear the souls of men. Eve was not beneath Adam, nor subject to his rule when first created. Eve was put beside him to complete him and be his helpmeet.

There was another condition required to enable Christ to lawfully redeem the daughters of Eve as well as the sons of Adam. The parable of the creation includes this step to put Eve under Adam's responsibility. The account explains that Eve (and by extension her daughters) was put under Adam's rule. Adam was handed responsibility and accountability for Eve. These are the words in the parable:

[T]hy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

Adam was made accountable to "rule" in the fallen world. All the mistakes, mismanagements, failings, wars, and difficulties of mortality are the responsibility of the appointed "ruler." Adam would not have been accountable for Eve unless she was made



subject to his "rule." Once under Adam's rule, the redemption of Adam became also the redemption of Eve. Therefore Adam and the sons of Adam, and Eve and the daughters of Eve, were all rescued through Christ's atonement for mankind.

The parable continues with another allusion to Heavenly Mother:

And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living, for thus have I, the Lord God, called the first of all women, which are many.

One of the names of Heavenly Mother is "Eve." She was the "mother of all living" because She was the one who mothered the spirits of Adam and Eve and was therefore parent of them both. Out of respect for Her, Adam called his companion by the same name as the Heavenly Mother.

Redemption of all mankind, male and female, required Adam to descend from Jesus Christ. It also required Adam to "rule," or be responsible to teach all those in his dominion. That role assigned to Adam was in order to extend the legal effect of Christ's redemption to Adam, Eve and their posterity.

However, for women to bear the souls of men, Eve had to be a direct descendant of Heavenly Mother. Although veiled for present, women's direct descent from the Heavenly Mother is also required for men to be placed on a throne in the hereafter. The Answer to Prayer for Covenant states:

And again, I say to you, Abraham and Sarah sit upon a Throne, for he could not be there if not for Sarah's covenant with him. Isaac and Rebecca sit upon a Throne, and Isaac likewise could not be there if not for Rebecca's covenant with him. And Jacob and Rachel sit upon a Throne, and Jacob could not be there if not for Rachel's covenant with him. And all these have ascended above Dominions and Principalities and Powers, to abide in my Kingdom. Therefore the marriage covenant is needed for all those who would likewise seek to obtain from me the right to continue their seed into eternity, for only through marriage can Thrones and Kingdoms be established.

The creation of woman was designed to fulfill the work and the covenants of the Father in this world and will be critical in eternity. Families come through the union of the man and woman. Women bear the souls of mankind and bring all of us into this world through childbirth. That power was inherited from the Heavenly Mother. But there are other rights belonging to women that will only be apparent in either a completed temple or the afterlife. They have been endowed with an everlasting authority required for any man to occupy a throne in the Father's Kingdom.

A fuller explanation of woman's role will require worthy people willing to be taught, and to build an acceptable house for the Elohim to return.

The role of woman is more glorious than I can explain in the present circumstances. To discuss all I know would be to violate the present order, which I will not do. But I have no hesitation to say that the "many great and important things" which are "yet to be revealed" (Articles of Faith, Article 9) will include a great deal more than presently understood about

women. I do not know if that will need to wait until after the Lord's second coming, or if it will be known to the church before then. What I do know, however, is that the full picture of woman's past and future glory is presently withheld from man's view in the wisdom of the Lord.

Temple rites are not complete. I've said that before on a number of occasions. When they are, the role of women will be greatly clarified. But it is not my calling or my right to get ahead of the Lord on such matters. What I can do, however, is to testify that among the things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man" is included a sound understanding of the role of women. It is only withheld at present because of our wickedness. What we have is enough to test us, and we are being tested. Will we ever be enough to pass the test to warrant the Lord giving more?

When we have more before we are ready to receive it then it only condemns us. The Lord is merciful in withholding such things.

What I also know is that if He will reveal things to any man He will do so to all mankind. Therefore as I said at the beginning, these are legitimate and worthy questions. They deserve an answer. Ask the Lord and trust His answer.

No man has ever been elevated to a throne in eternity who was not placed upon it by his wife.

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The foregoing excerpts were taken from:

- Denver's conference talk titled "Our Divine Parents" given in Gilbert, AZ on March 25th, 2018;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #9 titled "Marriage and Family" given in St. George, UT on July 26th, 2014; and
- Denver's blog post dated September 1, 2012 titled "Role of Women, Conclusion" subsequently recorded for this podcast on February 21, 2022.