

Denver Snuffer Podcast 180: The Ascent, Part 1

This is the first part of a series on ascension, the process of rising up to the throne of God which is mentioned but not well explained in the scriptures.

DENVER: In the tabernacle and, subsequently, in the temple that was built by Solomon, the temple divided up into three areas. There was an outer court into which was welcomed all of Israel. You had to enter Israel whether you were a priest or not a priest; all of Israel entered into the outer court. There was a Holy Place into which, on a rotating basis, the priests alone were allowed to come. (They would come for the morning service; they would come for the evening service.) And then there was the Holy of Holies, into which one priest (the presiding High Priest) would enter one time each year—for one specific ordinance—on Yom Kippur or the Holy of Holies. So you had, as a matter of separation, you had:

- Everyone, and
- Then you had a smaller group, and
- Then you had a single person.

Or—if you were to draw it out in terms of how the divisions looked—you create, in the structure of the temple itself, the mountain of the Lord's house.

In the Holy Place, there was a separation between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies by a veil. In front of the veil, there was an altar on which incense would be burned. On the one side, there was a menorah (or a candlestick). On the other, there was the table of the shewbread. And this is the structure into which the priests would pass for their ordinances. In the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the Covenant, together with the Mercy Seat and the symbolic presence of God the Father and Christ.

These represented ascending levels of holiness which were symbolically separated by who got to enter. The three degrees—the three levels of holiness—are represented there. It is inside the Holy Place, this spot right here [referring to whiteboard visual]—that is the place in which the New Testament begins, and the New Testament ends.

So, the dispensation of the meridian of time when the Lord is going to come begins right here in this spot. That ought to tell us something too about the terrible significance of—tying into everything that the Lord does—the temple.

So, here we are, standing on this side of the veil with the dispensation launched with an angel who has emerged, not from just the figurative or symbolic, but from the literal presence of the Lord, and we're going to have to, as part of this dispensation, at some point pass through that veil and enter into the Holy of Holies.

(I'm told we have to take a break at one point, so I'm checking my watch on that.)

When Moses passed through the veil, the presence of the Lord was shielded by a covering of a thick cloud. The cloud operated as a veil to the onlookers of Israel, but Moses was allowed

to pass through or enter through the cloud into the very presence of God. We have an account of that in Exodus chapter 24, in verses 15-18.

And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and [on] the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights. (Exodus 24:15-18; see also Exodus 13:26 RE)

See, just like in the mountain of the Lord's house you have the pinnacle (the spot at the top of the mountain at which, when one stands there, they are no longer of the earth but they have become a part of the sky—that is one of the reasons why the “mountain of the Lord's house” is the symbol that gets used in Scripture to describe the phenomenon because it is no longer connecting you to the earth; the only thing that touches is the soles of your feet; you have become part of the heavens), Moses ascends up, and the ascension that's being talked about here in the cloud at the top of the mountain of the Lord's house—inside there is where we find the presence of the Lord.

The Messiah's life necessarily included an ascension through a cloud or veil into the presence of God. He was touching on one of the required elements of His ministry when this ordinance was established and when He said: “Ought not these things to have occurred?” One of the things that ought to have occurred was the incident on the Mount of Transfiguration. It satisfied one of the elements of the Law of Moses which would **identify Him** as the Anointed One, as the Lord, as the promised Messiah. In all things, Christ was required to fulfill what had been foretold of Him.

When He asked: “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?” on the road to Emmaus, it's the same sort of question that He and John the Baptist exchanged at His baptism. “Suffer it to be so because we need these things. There's a pattern here. I must conform to the pattern. I am the one who will fulfill the pattern, therefore, I must do this, John. It's necessary. It's essential.” And if so for Him, then for us also. When He said, “Come, follow me,” I don't think He had in mind merely walking around Palestine, much to the rather organic view of Islam about what we ought to be doing. The Savior was talking about things that were transcendent.

We have a very coarse kind of intellect in the West. We have a “Give us a rule; give us a formula—if I follow the steps, then as a result of following the steps, I will produce the relevant gas, explosion, fire, compound, cake, cookie, whatever. So, all I want from you, therefore, is a list. And if I follow my list, I will produce at the end the fire I want, the taste I'm looking for, the whatever-it-is-I'm-trying-to-build.”

And so, when we pick up the Scriptures, it ceases to be for us a Urim and Thummim, and it turns into a rule book. It ceases to be a contact point between God and us—in which God Himself can be speaking, and the manner of revelation that He gives to us are the words contained by other prophets elsewhere. It ceases to be that, and it turns into a bibliography

for our behavior, a justification for what we're all about, a way to say, "I'm right; you're wrong." It becomes clutter and noise and nonsense—and useless.

- What is inside you, sustaining you from moment to moment, is God.
- What organized you and keeps you intact, moment to moment, is God.
- What lies at the deepest core inside you is God.
- What you should be trying to regress back to and find within yourself is God.

The kingdom of [Heaven] is within you (Luke 17:20-21; see also Luke 10:2 RE), said Christ. Well, if the kingdom of Heaven is within you—if, in your core, there is a contact between you and God—then our rule books don't do us a whole lot of good.

There's another way of looking at the mangled mess that we find in the minds that we have with us. And by the way, the vision of Daniel where it was necessary in the last days to grind up Babylon to dust—despite the fact that Babylon has been gone for 2,500 years—is because Babylon's still alive and well and running around inside your head. That's the manner in which you think. You're the product of Babylon; you're the product of the Medes and Persians; you're the product of the Greeks; you're the product of the Romans. You're the product of all those things as they've accumulated and been handed down. Therefore, *it* must be ground to dust—in a regression back to a point where, within you, you find that simplicity.

There's another tradition; it hails from the East. It is, in fact, the tradition out of which Christ Himself came, and that was one that focused upon the transcendent. The Gospel of John was written by someone who fully bought into the notion of transcendence: that there is this great and powerful and over-governing Word or Order or Truth or Light, and that the greatest embodiment of that Word or Notion or Truth or Light finds itself embodied fully in the person of Jesus Christ. And that great Light, that great Truth came down here in the person of Jesus Christ and dwelt among us.

See... And there's a statement rather on point with that in the Scriptures as well. Doctrine and Covenants section 88, beginning at verse 6:

*He that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in...and through all things, the light of truth; Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. As also he is in the moon, and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made; [And] the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made; And the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand. And the light which shineth, which giveth...life, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings; Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—The light which is in **all things**, which giveth life to **all things**, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things. (D&C 88:6-13, emphasis added; see also T&C 86:1)*

When we read that, we say, “Cool; wonder how that science works? Wonder what rules we’ve got to learn in order to have that happen?” But an Eastern mystic would say, “Yes, I have seen that; yes, I have felt that.”

So, 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 Foster...front of Robert D. Foster’s hotel in...nearby the Nauvoo Temple, then under construction, in Wilford Woodruff’s journal.)

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 their Baptismal fonts...going...& receiving...ordinances, Baptisms, Confirmations, washings anointings ordinations & sealing powers upon our heads in behalf of all [the] Progenitors who are dead & redeem them that they may Come forth in the first resurrection & be exalted to thrones [and so on]. (*The Words of Joseph Smith*, p. 318, emphasis added).

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 to 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.)

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:

...their has 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 pieces **like glass as soon as any thing 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. 319, emphasis added)

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

...the spirit...& calling of Elijah is [to] have [the] power to hold the keys of the revelations ordinances, oracles powers & endowments of the fulness of the Melchizedek Priesthood & of the Kingdom of God on the Earth &...receive, obtain and perform all the ordinances belonging to the Kingdom of God even unto the sealing of the hearts of the fathers unto the children & the hearts of the children unto the fathers **even those who are in heaven**. (Ibid., p. 329, 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—*our* dead through us; *us* to our Fathers in Heaven.

Who are our Fathers in Heaven? Who are our Fathers in Heaven to whom we are to be connected? We want the power of Elijah to seal those who dwell on Earth to those which dwell in Heaven. Those who are in the spirit world (our dead, the ones that need redemption from us) are not redeemed. They cannot be in Heaven because they need us to be redeemed. We need to be redeemed by *our* connecting to the Fathers who are in Heaven. The dead have to *be* redeemed; the *Fathers* are in Heaven. Joseph understood this doctrine.

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

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

And again, the doctrine of sealing power of Elijah is as follows:

...if you have power to seal on earth & in heaven then we should be Crafty, the first thing you do [is you] go...seal on earth your sons and daughters unto yourself, & yourself unto your fathers in eternal glory... (Ibid., p. 331)

“Unto your fathers in eternal glory...” That is not your kindred dead; they are relying upon you to be redeemed. The connection that needs to be formed is between you and the Fathers who dwell in glory.

And who are the Fathers who dwell in glory? Well, if we go back to the revelation in which Joseph Smith received the sealing power (and he received the sealing power sometime before 1831), in that portion of the revelation known as Doctrine and Covenants section 132, verse 49—

[For] I am the Lord thy God and will be with thee even unto the end of the world and through all eternity for verily I seal upon...your exaltation...prepare you [a] throne for you in the kingdom of my Father, with Abraham your father (D&C 132:49).

...I say unto you whatsoever you seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven. Whatsoever ye...bind on earth in my name by my word, saith the Lord, it shall be eternally bound in the heavens. Whosoever's sins you remit on earth shall be remitted eternally in heaven (Ibid., vs. 46) [and so on].

Just before that portion of the revelation in verse 37, he talks about Abraham; he talks about Isaac; and he talks about Jacob. And then concerning those three, the Lord says to Joseph:

*...because they did none other things than that which they were commanded they have entered into their exaltation, according to the promises, and sit upon thrones, and are not angels but are **gods** (Ibid., vs. 37, emphasis added).*

Joseph said: "Knowledge saves a man. And in the world of spirits no man can be exalted but by knowledge." He also said in another talk:

When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step-by-step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel—you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned them. It's not all to be comprehended in this world; it will be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave.

Now, if you go back and reread that quote, and you comprehend that it is possible to pass through the veil before you leave here—"it will be a great while after you pass through the veil before you will have learned them. It's not all to be comprehended in this world"—you begin to say, Ah, I think I understand why, after 40 years of reflection, Nephi commented about how it was his constant meditation to think upon the things which he had seen and heard. The knowledge obtained from heaven is dynamic.

In another place Joseph said:

A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if he does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity by some evil power in the other world, as evil spirits will have more knowledge, and consequently more power than many men who are on the earth. Hence it needs revelation to assist us, and give us knowledge of the things of God.

We equate, in large measure, repentance with whatever it is you're doing with your genitals. Joseph equates redemption and repentance with whatever it is you're doing with

your heart and with your mind. The problem that we have is our profound ignorance. And what the gospel offers defies ignorance, subdues it, challenges it, destroys it, leaves it in the dark. And so let's try and search into and obtain some illumination.

First, I want to read a passage from Job and misapply it, if you will. I want you to imagine that what I am reading is not merely a description of a mortal horse. What I am reading is a description of those horses which pull the chariot upon which Elijah ascended to heaven. This is the horse **you** need to ride in your quest for heaven. This is the way in which **you**, too, are to mount up:

Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? the glory of his nostrils is terrible. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting. (Job 39:19-25; see also Job 12:14 RE)

As the battle engages, ride the horse, not away, but toward the sound.

Joseph Smith said (and this goes hand-in-hand with that Mormon 9:2-5), "A man is his own tormentor and his own condemner. The torment of disappointment in the mind of man is as exquisite as a lake burning with fire and brimstone." Inflict that upon yourself. The quickest way to achieve that is to act in this life like the coward who is unwilling to be valiant in the testimony of Christ. And to stand up when opposed by those who tell you it ought not to be so. Valiance is the only way by which you secure the blessings of God.

When Uriah was killed, he was killed with a message sent by King David, delivered by the hand of Uriah himself to Joab. In the integrity of his heart, King David knew Uriah could be trusted with the order condemning him to die. And Uriah, faithful to his King, carried the message to Joab. There are accounts—not the one we have in our Old Testament version—but there are accounts that suggest that when Joab opened the message and read it, that he read it to Uriah, and Uriah knew he was sent to his death. And in those accounts, the men who died with Uriah, died with him wittingly. It's one of the few places in scripture where the word "valiant" appears. Those men went where the valiant men were. And the unworthy King forfeited something in his cowardice.

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. You make sacrifices. You obey **Him**. And to obey Him is to find yourself oddly incongruent with everything about you. Not about **you**—**about** you, meaning the external world in which you find yourself moving about within.

Well, why are they **all corrupt**? You know there's a line— I happen to like Luke; try and

quote him when he fits. I gave a talk one time: *On the Road to Emmaus*. It's drawn out of the book of Luke. I think Luke was the other character that was walking. He names Cleopas; he doesn't name himself. Well, Luke chapter 11, this is verse 52 (oh, I love this! We ought to carve this on the Utah Bar Office exterior and lobby on the interior, require lawyers to put it on their business cards): *Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering... ye hindered* (see also Luke 8:17 RE). False teachers prevent others from obtaining salvation, period. And happily, they will be accountable for that. *You've taken away the key of knowledge: [you enter] not in yourselves ... them that were entering in ye hindered.*

Well, there is another verse in D&C 121 (this would be one written in the year following the Joseph Smith testimony). This one is written... 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. You break yourself against the laws that have been ordained. You condemn yourself by the things that you bring upon yourself. God just **is**. And He **is** to give you opportunity. And He opens opportunity to allow you to enter in **if** you are willing to enter in. But whether you are willing to enter in or not is predicated upon your own conduct, your own desires. And the best way to determine what your desires are are based upon what it is you do.

We are so situated that we have the inability to do two things at once. No matter who you are, you are only doing one thing at a time. 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. And anyone that suggests otherwise is flatly contradicting the message of the Book of Mormon. It is all about the ascent back to the presence of God. Testimony after testimony, experience after experience, that's what the Book of Mormon stands for. That is the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You encounter it almost immediately in the first chapter when Lehi rises up. And you encounter it in Nephi.

And you encounter it in Jacob. And you encounter it in Enos and in Alma and in Mosiah. You just continually get the same message.

Everything begins with faith. You don't skip to knowledge. You begin with faith, and you progress. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* on page 348 says, "When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel."

The principles of the gospel are not supposed to be comprehended in one bite. You progress. And the ladder that he's talking about climbing is, in fact, the ladder that is ordered and that Jacob referred to. Jacob's ladder is something that we refer to, and it's an ordered process. But whenever you begin that climb, you begin it at the bottom. And so, you find yourselves here.

Tonight, we're just trying to figure out how it is we move from wherever we are back to a state of being repentant. And that requires you to exercise your effort to learn and obtain glory from God, which is intelligence, or in other words, light and truth—not darkness, dimness, error, missteps, incomplete and inadequate information. You're gonna have to face it, and you're gonna have to face it with some amount of courage. Because we all labor with a good deal of tradition that had been inflicted upon our minds and upon our hearts. And things that we may love, if they don't conform to the glory of God—intelligence or light and truth—they have to be discarded, too. Because what God wants to do is to bring you back into a state of reconciliation with Him, which comes only from bravely facing light and truth, the glory of God, the power of godliness, if you will—the very thing that Christ said was missing as an ingredient in the Christian world at the time that He talked to Joseph in the First Vision.

Salvation consists in the glory, authority, majesty, power and dominion which Jehovah possesses, and in nothing else; and no being can possess it but himself or one like him (Lectures on Faith 7:9).

Glory—intelligence or the light of truth—thrones, kingdoms, principalities, powers, heights, depths—these words get used in the Doctrine and Covenants section 132. We've read those. Glory of God and intelligence, [D&C] section 93:36 (see also T&C 93:11). We looked at that. Dispensations, rights, keys, honors, majesty, glory, priesthood—we've looked at that. All of these words: *salvation consists in the glory, authority, majesty, power and dominion which Jehovah possesses and in nothing else; and no being can possess it but himself or one like him*. All of these words are related to an underlying notion of priesthood. And all of them are related to that oath and the covenant of the priesthood that we looked at in section 84.

In paragraph 10, Joseph translates (or Joseph refers to) a statement in the New Testament by the Savior, *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect* (Matthew 5:48; see also Matthew 3:26 RE). That will change in the Sermon in Bountiful, and Christ will say in 3 Nephi, *[Be ye therefore] perfect even as I, or your Father [which] is in heaven is perfect* (3 Nephi 12:48; 3 Nephi 5:13 RE). Because by the time He preached in Bountiful, He had finished the climb up the ladder. And I want to remind you of a statement

that we read in Boise that Joseph gave, found in the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* on page 348:

When you climb... a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel—you must begin with the first, and go on until **you** learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you [pass] through the veil before you will have learned them. (Emphasis added)

Well, isn't that interesting? So now you have to pass through the veil to learn some things. It's not all to be comprehended in this world.

If any should ask, Why all these sayings?— the answer is to be found from what is before quoted from John's epistle, that when he (the Lord) shall appear, the saints will be like him, and if they are not holy as he is holy, and perfect as he is perfect, they cannot be like him, for no being can enjoy his glory without possessing his perfections and holiness, no more than they could reign in his kingdom without his power. (Lectures on Faith 7:10)

When He appears, you need to be like Him. Lay down the burden of guilt; lay down the burden of sin. Stop focusing on that stuff, and become like Him. And you become like Him by doing His works. And you do His works by serving others, by ministering to the needs of others. And when you do that, it is a natural by-product of that process, ordained by laws established before the foundation of the world, that light and truth will grow within you. You will **have** compassion when you minister **with** compassion to the needs of others. Your heart will open to—and receive within it—light and truth when your conduct reflects the same conduct as a merciful and holy and just God, whom you claim to worship. Worship Him by imitating Him. Worship Him by doing His works. Worship Him by making a living sacrifice. Set aside the junk that occupies you, and go do something that is holy for someone else. However mundane and trivial it may seem to you, when you relieve the suffering of other people, something changes in you. You become different. You become better. You become more like our Lord—because when you give whatever it is you give away, you get more in return. But make sure that what you give goes to relieve the suffering of others. ***Relieve the suffering of others.***

You're going to have to finish that path. You're going to have to rise up. If you expect to be in His presence when He returns—and He is coming in judgment—then **you're** going to have to be like Him; because if you are not like Him, you will not be able to endure His presence. Take it seriously. Study it through. Seek to be like Him whom you worship. It is possible—not while you're carrying a load of sins that trouble you and worry you and distract you, but that's what the Lord will remove from you. He can take all of that away, but it is entirely up to you to choose **then** to do something to draw nearer to Him. He can't do that because that would violate your free will. **You** have to choose to be like Him. Although He may remove all of the stains upon you, you have to go forward and not stain yourself again, because He can't stop you from doing that. You're free to choose. Therefore, choose the better part.

I wanna turn to Doctrine and Covenants section 132 and take a look at that because in here we then run into a brief description of some of that “Powers” that exist. This is in Doctrine and Covenants section 132, verse 19. And it’s about in the middle of that verse. It says you *come forth in the first resurrection [to] inherit* [and here are the words] *thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths*. Those are, in fact, referring to different steps in the process of rising up to the place where God is. This is telling you something about the map to the afterlife. This is telling you something about how there is a hierarchy that is organized there. And you proceed, as Joseph said, from one step to the next. When you begin to climb a ladder, you always begin at the bottom, and you go step-by-step until you reach the top.

Well, there are those... And I’m not gonna vouch for this, but I’ll find it useful to use today. And I use this not because I’m trying to originate anything, but rather, this is already out there, and so I don’t think I’m speaking out of turn. Rather like what Nephi did with Isaiah, if I can lay it at the feet of someone else, I can say, Well then, I didn’t break any confidences.

In any event, the ranking goes:

- Angels, and then
- Archangels, and then
- Principalities, and then
- Powers, and then
- Dominions, and then
- Thrones, and then
- Cherubim, and then
- Seraphim...

(The Seraphim being those who dwell in everlasting burnings, the glorious ones, the ones who are flaming. For a description of them, we’ve already looked at that in Doctrine and Covenants section 109, [verse] 79. I’m not gonna go there.)

But in any event, here you have (in section 132) a listing of some of the things which get inherited. And you think that we have a singular afterlife that consists of heaven and hell or —oh, no! You’re Mormons; therefore, you got three of them. You got your Testial (which kingdom you’re presently occupying, by the way). You’ve got your Terrestrial (we hope to manage to get there sometime during the Millennium, also occupying this same globe). And you got your Celestial (which you know, apparently, you’ll be all garbed up and glowing and wearing a robe and nicely put). However, this is suggesting a much more complex afterlife in which, literally, the ascent is by degrees as you move upward. As Joseph said (and I read that in Boise), it’ll be a great time after we have crossed through the veil before we will have learned all that needs to be learned in order to qualify for our salvation and exaltation.

Well, let’s go to Moses chapter 7. This is Moses chapter 7, verse 27: *Enoch beheld **angels descending out of heaven, bearing testimony of the Father and Son; and the Holy Ghost fell on many, and they were caught up by the powers of heaven** into Zion* (Moses 7:27, emphasis added; see also Genesis 4:15 RE). There they show up again—“the powers of

heaven”—plural, in the same verse where it's talking about angels descending. This is the kind of thing that is littered throughout the scriptures if you have the eyes to see it. Because there is actually a structure there.

The **fathers** (about whom I spoke in Centerville) had this association with God. They had this fellowship with God. They had this sonship **with** God. And they had this priesthood **from** God. And the hearts of the children need to turn to the fathers, and that, too, because Elijah is coming to plant in the hearts of the children the promises that were made.

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

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

So, I wanna suggest to you that Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael are known to us as those who have come—though they were part of the El (or, in the plural form, the “Elohim”)—they came, and they served here. They came, and they ministered here:

- **Micha-el** descended, and he came to the earth, and he was known as Adam in mortality.
- **Gabri-el** came to the earth, and he was known in mortality as Noah.
- There is a big debate over the identity of **Rapha-el**. I'll tell you what **I** think, and you can take it or leave it. Raphael is the name that was given to the man who in mortality we know as Enoch.
- Now there are four angels who preside over the four corners of the earth. And Joseph **surely** knew that. And Joseph mentions the names of three of the four, but he leaves the fourth one out. And I find the absence of the fourth one rather extraordinary. The fourth one's name is **Uri-el**, also one of the Elohim. And although there are those who will absolutely cry heresy, throw dirt on their hair, and tear their clothes because they are scholars, and they are bona fide, and they know I'm talking out of my hat—but I'd remind you Joseph talked out of his hat, too—that fourth and missing, unmentioned angel is Uriel who, in mortality, was known to us as John.

Adam is the one in the East, the angel who was considered the one who presides over and has control of the air—which is apt because unto Adam was given the breath of life in the beginning.

Raphael is in the South, and he is associated with the power of fire—which is apt because of his fiery ascent with his people into heaven.

Gabriel is the angel in the West who has the power over water—which is apt because, in mortality, he managed through the Flood.

And Uriel, though not mentioned, is the one who, in the North, has the power over the earth—which is apt because he remains upon the earth, and he is the guardian at one gate, with Elijah at the other end.

But you can take and leave all that as you will. I find the mention here (in this letter by Joseph) of these individuals and these powers—and these four (three of whom are named; the fourth of whom, potentially, is unnamed)—to be interesting, though he does mention *divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time* (ibid).

Now I wanna focus on...

You think, and you hear, and you get beaten into your head on a continuous drum beat... I know, 'cuz I go to your meetings too. And I know this 'cuz you broadcast your general conference, and so, I can hear what you guys think. And—ohmm—here's what you think: "Keys! Keys! Keys! Keys! Keys! Keys! Keys! Keys! We got keys! We got keys! We got... We got... We're bustling with keeeeeys! We got your keys!"

Now, you tell me, Mormons... You tell me—you declare to me—what are your dispensations? Tell me what your rights are. Tell me what your keys are. Even John Taylor tried to develop the *Book of Keys* because he didn't know what they were. You tell me what they are. Stop proclaiming that you **own** them, and **tell me** what the hell they are. If you got 'em, you oughta understand 'em. Tell me what your honors are. Tell me what your majesty is. Tell me what your glory is. Tell me, then, what the power of your priesthood is. Because if keys alone were sufficient, I rather think that Joseph Smith (who understood what he was writing) would not have gone to the trouble of parsing through the words *dispensation...rights...keys...honors...majesty...glory, and...power* (ibid) if it was all speaking to exactly the same thing. It is **not** speaking to the same thing. There is so much more that has to go on and be understood **if** you are going to save yourself and any soul in this generation in that kingdom which **we claim** we would like to inherit. And **w e claim** we would like to inherit it without any idea of the consequences of what it would take in order to ascend there—or without any regard to the fact that you don't take one of the El and bring them down into mortality pain-free. You say that the Son of God condescended to come and be here. And I say, so did Michael, and so did Raphael, and so did Gabriel—because coming down and condescending to be here (on a rescue mission) by those who dwell in glory is an act of service and sacrifice that we simply take for granted out of the abundance of our ignorance.

...The word of God will always be respected, both in time and in eternity, **if** it is given by God, **if** it is the power of the Holy Spirit.

There are those who have heard that their calling and election is made sure. And they've heard that as a witness from God. Don't doubt the word of God given to you. However, don't think for one moment that's the end of the matter. Remember (that in the cases that we looked at before) that one of the purposes of ascending up into the presence of the Father is to be endowed with knowledge, with light and truth, and with intelligence, to possess a God-like mind and a God-like understanding. Therefore, no matter what you receive, you ought to always search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of God. Indeed, we're commanded to do so, as I reminded you in Boise and won't repeat again here.

Now, keeping in mind everything I've said, now we're really gonna parse the scriptures in a way that may not yet have occurred to you, but I find perfectly delightful. Doctrine and Covenants section 132; I wanna begin at verse 8. And I want you to remember what I've said the house of God is.

*Behold, mine house is a house of order, saith the Lord God, and not a house of confusion. Will I accept...an offering, saith the Lord, that is not made in my name? Or will I receive at your hands that which **I** have not appointed? And will I appoint unto you, saith the Lord, except it be by law, even as I and my Father ordained unto you, **before the world was**? I am the Lord thy God; and I give unto you this commandment—that no man shall come unto the Father but by me or by my word, which is my law, saith the Lord. And **everything** that is in the world, whether it be **ordained of men, [or] by thrones, or [by] principalities, or powers, or things of name, whatsoever they may be**, that are not by me or by my word, saith the Lord, **shall be thrown down**, and shall not remain after men are dead, neither in [or] after the resurrection, saith the Lord your God. For whatsoever things remain are by **me**; and whatsoever things are not **by me** shall be shaken and destroyed (D&C 132:8-14, emphasis added).*

The Powers of Heaven. And this is the reason why that third form of priesthood is so rare a commodity—because even the angels desire to inquire into it, but the angels don't possess it. And it doesn't matter if, in that hierarchy of those that exist on the other side of the veil, you manage to wrestle something from those who are powers there and possess thrones or principalities. God is saying in this revelation—if you understand the words—that even His **angels** (and those who have ascended far up) must, in every case, only establish that which comes by the will and covenant of the Son and the Father: the Son, because He possesses the keys to do so; the Father, because He is the one from whom the original covenant began in the pre-existence. So, don't think, because you've had an angel promise you something... In Doctrine and Covenants section 132, you have to connect up with the Father.

The foregoing excerpts were taken from:

- Denver's talk titled "Christ's Discourse on the Road to Emmaus", given in Fairview Utah on April 14, 2007;
- Denver's talk given at the Chiasmus Conference in American Fork, Utah on September 18, 2010;
- His talk titled "The Mission of Elijah Reconsidered", given in Spanish Fork, UT on October 14th, 2011;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #1 titled "Be of Good Cheer" given in Boise, ID on September 10th, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #2 titled "Faith" given in Idaho Falls, ID on September 28th, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #3 titled "Repentance" given in Logan, UT on September 29th, 2013; and
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #5 titled "Priesthood" given in Orem, UT on November 2nd, 2013.