

Denver Snuffer Podcast 181: The Ascent, Part 2

This is the second part of a series on ascension, the process of rising up to the throne of God.

DENVER: I'm gonna read from the Seventh Lecture on Faith, paragraph 9, about Christ:

Where shall we find a saved being? for if we can find a saved being, we may ascertain without much difficulty what all others must be in order to be saved.... We think that it will not be a matter of dispute that two beings who are unlike each other cannot both be saved, for whatever constitutes the salvation of one will constitute the salvation of every creature which will be saved. And if we find one saved being in all existence, we may see what all others must be or else not be saved. We ask, then: Where is the prototype? Or where is the saved being? We conclude as to the answer of this question there will be no dispute among those who believe the Bible that it is Christ. All will agree [with] this, that he is the prototype or standard of salvation, or in other words, ...he is a saved being. And if we should continue our interrogation, and ask how [is it] that he is saved, the answer would be, because he is a just and holy being. And if he were anything different from what he is he would not be saved, for his salvation depends on his being precisely what he is and nothing else. For if it were possible for him to change in the least degree, so sure he would fail of salvation and lose all his dominion, power, authority, and glory, which constitutes salvation. For 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 and one like him.

We read this, and then we immediately gloss over it as if what salvation consists of is Him and “fairy dust,” which He can distribute to make us like Him. This teaching that appears... This was what Joseph Smith worked on editing for the months prior to the publication of the Doctrine and Covenants in 1835. He doesn't say in his diaries that he spent any time on the revelations—that was trusted to a committee, and the committee was responsible for getting those ready for publication. And they did a bunch of freelancing and embellishing and expanding; and some of the stuff they added to the revelations was **remarkably** more expansive than what Joseph had received revealed to him. That's not where Joseph spent his time. He spent his time on the Lectures on Faith. And this is early in his ministry—this is when he wanted to make sure that the doctrine was correct. And this is the doctrine that came rolling out in that first publication. And yet, despite that, we tend to read this and not take it seriously. **If you are going to be saved, you must be exactly, you must be precisely what Christ is and nothing else.** K? You! At that moment, that is when **you** are saved.

As a consequence of that, to speak of Christ is necessarily to speak of salvation. To understand Christ is to understand salvation. Despite how plainly this has been put, we still stop short of comprehending the doctrine. Joseph Smith's mind returned to this topic again, all the way down at the end of his ministry in April of 1844—the last General Conference of the Church that Joseph Smith would be alive for. And in April—April 7th of 1844—Joseph

gave a talk. I'm gonna first read to you the version that appears in *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*. But then, to make sure that you realize how important the point was, I'm gonna go back to the talk as recorded by various of those who were present that day, because one matter in this is picked up by every one of those who was present in recording what was said in their diaries. Joseph says,

I wish I was in a suitable place to tell it, and that I had the trump of an archangel, so that I could tell the story in such a manner that persecution would cease forever. What did Jesus say? (Mark it, Elder Rigdon!) The Scriptures inform us that Jesus said, As the Father hath power in Himself, even so hath the Son power—to do what? Why, what the Father did. The answer is obvious—in a manner to lay down His body and take it up again. Jesus, what are you going to do? To lay down my life as my Father did, and take it up again. Do you believe it? If you do not believe it, you do not believe the Bible. The Scriptures say it, and I defy all the learning and wisdom and all the combined powers of earth and hell together to refute it. Here, then, is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God; and **you [you]** have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as **all** Gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you attain to the resurrection of the dead... (*TPJS*, pg. 346-347, emphasis added)

“Exaltation to exaltation”; “grace to grace”; “until you attain to the resurrection of the dead.” Christ said, *I am the resurrection and the life* (John 11:25; see also John 7:3 RE and Testimony of St. John 8:3). You must be precisely what He is and nothing else.

You hear those who say, “The Church has all the keys.” But we do not yet have the keys of the resurrection. That’s because even when **you** are resurrected, you will not have the keys of resurrection until you, like Christ, have gone from exaltation to exaltation, until you likewise attain to the power to resurrect all that depends upon you.

John 5:19, *The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise* (see also John 5:4 RE). And the Father went before, and the Son follows after. And if you think that you can, at some point, like Him, attain to the status of godhood, then you’re going to have to do **precisely** what it is that the Gods do. Therefore, to understand Christ is to understand the challenging destiny about which Joseph Smith is speaking in this last Conference talk given in 1844.

Until you attain to the resurrection of the dead and are able to dwell in everlasting burnings, and to sit in glory, as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power. (*TPJS*, pg. 347)

Even what we envision as the highest heaven is a condescension for those who sit enthroned, able to dwell in everlasting burnings. Else why in section ~~132~~ [130] would you be given a white stone that reveals things pertaining to *a higher order of kingdoms* (D&C 130:10) when you are **in** the Celestial Kingdom! It’s because where you are now (at this moment, in this meeting, hearing my voice in this room today) is about halfway to where you need to grow (and it’s been almost infinite in getting you here—today) in order to

arrive at the point that you might be able to be as Christ. And where Christ arises to, in everlasting burnings, is about halfway to where things ultimately **can** go. You say it's necessary in this condition to have a physical body in order to come down here and perform, and you say that rightly. But there are other places beyond.

I want you to know that God, in the last days, while certain individuals are proclaiming his name, is not trifling with you or me. (*TPJS*, pg. 347)

That's Joseph talking. We preach, and we exhort; and largely we do so vainly, having not power—not having been asked and not teaching what ought to be.

But “to attain to the resurrection of the dead” means you have the power to resurrect—and not yourself, but those who are dependent upon you. It's a ways off yet.

Now Joseph says something in 1844 that's remarkable:

These are the first principles of consolation. How consoling to the mourners when they are called to part with a husband, wife, [daughter], mother, child, or dear relative, to know that, although the earthly tabernacle is laid down and dissolved, they shall rise again to dwell in everlasting burnings in immortal glory, not to sorrow, suffer, or die anymore; but they shall be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. What is it? To inherit the same power, the same glory and same exaltation, until you arrive at the station of a God, and ascend the throne of eternal power, the same as those who have gone before. What did Jesus do? Why; I do the things I saw my Father do when the worlds come rolling into existence. My Father worked out his kingdom with fear and trembling, and I must do the same; and when I get my kingdom, I shall also present it to my Father, so that he may obtain kingdom upon kingdom, and it will exalt him in glory. He will then take a higher exaltation, and I will take his place, and thereby become exalted myself. So that Jesus treads in the tracks of his Father, and inherits what God did before; and God is thus glorified and exalted in the salvation and exaltation of all his children. It is plain beyond disputation, and you thus learn **some of the first principles of the Gospel...** (*TPJS*, pg. 347-348, emphasis added)

You heard that right.

It is plain beyond disputation, and you thus learn some of the first principles of the Gospel, about which so much hath been said. (*Ibid*)

Now, the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: faith, repentance, baptism, laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. We know that, because Joseph wrote that in *The Wentworth Letter*. We lifted it out of there, we put it in the back of *The Pearl of Great Price*, and it's now *The Articles of Faith*, right? The first principles and ordinances of the Gospel. Now he's talking about “about which so much [has] been said.” That's because in the Restorationist environment in which the Gospel was restored, everyone was talking about the first principles of the Gospel. “The first principles of the Gospel are...”—and you

could've gone to Sidney Rigdon long before Sidney was baptized a member of the Church of Christ (when that was what it was called in Joseph's beginning era), and Sidney Rigdon would've told you that the Restorationist movement all believed that the first principles of the Gospel are faith, repentance, and baptism. That was a mantra. Parley Pratt, who was also one of the Restorationist Campbellite ministers, would've told you the same thing. That was a rallying cry for people that said that "the New Testament needs to be restored; the New Testament church needs to be returned; it needs to be revitalized; it needs to be restored and reconstituted. And the first principles, as we find in the New Testament church, are these..." And so Mormons, largely, were drawn out of the same environment, and they're talking about it, and Joseph conceded the point, and he used that. That's what he put into *The Wentworth Letter* when he sent *The Wentworth Letter* off.

But now, we're far along in the process. Now, we're in 1844, and Joseph will be dead about 60 or 90 days after this talk is given. This is the **end** of his ministry. This is not the beginning of his ministry. And so, now, he's talking to people that had been aboard for awhile. They've heard him preach. They know something more about what God intended. They had the Book of Mormon—they'd been converted through it. They had more revelations that had rolled forth. They'd been taught for awhile. And so, he returns now, and he says that... that "first principles about which so much has been said," now let me tell you what they really are. They really are this:

- Resurrection from the dead.
- Becoming Gods.
- Walking in the same path as our Lord walked.

This is the **first** principles of the Gospel! That's why he wished he had the trumpet of an archangel with which to declare it. He didn't have that. But I read his words as if they came from an archangel.

You thus learn some of the first principles of the Gospel, about which so much hath been said. 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 have passed through the veil before you've learned them [all]. It's not all to be comprehended in this world; it'll be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave. (*TPJS*, pg. 348, emphasis added)

Wilford Woodruff recorded the same talk. And in the Wilford Woodruff account:

You've got to learn how to make yourselves God, king and priest by going from a small capacity to a great capacity, to the resurrection of the dead, to dwelling in everlasting burnings. I want you to know the first principle of this law, how consoling to the mourner when they part with a friend to know that though they lay down this [he misspells "body"], it will rise and dwell with everlasting burnings to be an heir with God and joint-heir with Jesus Christ and join the same rise,

exaltation, [and] glory until you arrive at the station of a God. What did Jesus Christ do? The same thing as I see the Father do. See the Father do what? Work out a kingdom. When I do so too, I will give the Father which will add to His glory, He will take a higher exaltation, I will take His place, and am also exalted. These are the first principles of the Gospel. It will take a long time after the grave to understand the whole. If I should say anything but what was in the Bible, the cry of treason will be heard.

Thomas Bullock Report—he also says:

This is eternal life to know the only wise and true God. You've got to learn how to be Gods yourself, and to be king and priest to God, the same as all have done by going from a small capacity to another, from grace to grace until the resurrection and sit in everlasting power as they who have gone before. And God in the last days, while certain individuals are proclaiming His name is not trifling with us. All earthly tabernacles should be dissolved, that they shall be heirs of God and joint-heirs of Jesus Christ to inherit the same power and exaltation until you ascend the throne of eternal power the same as those who have gone before. You thus learn the first principles of the Gospel. When you climb a ladder you must begin at the bottom.

This is the basics of the Gospel. This is the foundation upon which salvation itself rests. This is the way through which **you** must tread in order for **you** to be like Him. If you understand Christ, you understand salvation. He's the prototype, and therefore, **you must be like that prototype** in order for **you** to be saved.

Christ's suffering was redemptive. It lifted the Creation as a result of what He was able to do. And if you think about it in physical terms, if you're going to use a fulcrum to lift an object, it's necessary to put the fulcrum underneath the whole thing. You can't lift it unless you put the fulcrum beneath. Christ is, in effect, the fulcrum which lifted the entirety of Creation. So, in lifting the entirety of the Creation, it's necessary for you to appreciate the extent to which Christ is bonded to all of this and, therefore, all of you.

Go to Doctrine and Covenants section 88. This is a **marvelous** transcript. This is a description that you need to keep in mind when you're trying to understand who our Lord is. Beginning in 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 all 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; As also 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 **you** light, 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. 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 are 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 that quickeneth all things, in whose bosom it is decreed that the poor and the meek of the earth shall inherit it. (D&C 88:6-17, emphasis added; see also T&C 86:1-2)

Between verse 6 and verse 13, rather like bookends, the connection of Christ to *all things* appears seven times. It appears at the beginning and appears again at the end. Christ is in all things. Everything that you're acquainted with in this creation is sustained by the light of Christ. He occupies, He brings the light into, He is more intelligent than it all, and He keeps its organization together by the light that emanates from Him. This is why it is possible for redemption to come through Him. Because when He descended below it all, including death, He has the power then to bring it all with Him back into life. He is the fulcrum. He is the one which must permeate all things, in order for Him to be able to lay hold upon all things and in order, therefore, to bring you back from the grave—which means, at this very moment, **you are in contact with Him** through His Spirit. **He** is giving **you** the life which you are presently living.

He is not a distant God. He is an immediate and an intimate God. You say He knows your thoughts, and that is true enough! Because He is giving you the ability and the freedom to entertain the thoughts. Therefore, He knows how to judge you—because everything that you have done, you have done using the power and the light He lends to you. You have the **illusion** of privacy. You have the **actuality** of agency, but that agency is being employed by you, using an instrumentality that belongs to **Him**.

And the scriptures make it abundantly apparent that that is in fact the case. Mosiah chapter 2, verse 21:

I say unto you that if ye should serve him who has created you from the beginning, and is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, that ye may live and move and do according to your own will, and even supporting you from one moment to another—I say [unto you] if ye should serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants...

...because the energy being used at present to power this life that you're living is borrowed from Him; it is His light. It is His light; it is His truth; it is His intelligence. He is sustaining you from moment to moment.

Verse 25:

Now I ask [you], can ye say aught of yourselves? I answer you, Nay. Ye cannot say that ye are even as much as the dust of the earth; yet ye were created of the dust of the earth; but behold, it belongeth to him who created you. (See also Mosiah 1:8-9 RE)

So, this mortal frame that you're walking about in temporarily, belongs to Him. And ultimately, He's gonna take it back, and reduce it back to dust, and re-form it in something else, and do something else with it. And someday He will resurrect you, but when He does that, that's Him also—because it will be a long time before you “attain to the resurrection of the dead” (*TPJS*, pg. 346). You're gonna borrow this from Him for yet some time.

Look in Alma chapter 7, beginning at verse 11. This is Him descending below all things. Alma 7:11,

And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people. ...he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; ...he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities. Now the Spirit knoweth all things; nevertheless the Son of God suffereth according to the flesh that he might take upon him the sins of his people, that he might blot out their transgressions according to the power of his deliverance; and now behold, this is the testimony which is in me. Now I say unto you that ye must repent, and be born again; for the Spirit saith if [you're] not born again ye cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven; therefore come and be baptized unto repentance, that ye may be washed from your sins, that ye may have faith on the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, who is mighty to save and to cleanse from all unrighteousness. (Alma 7:11-14; see also Alma 5:3-4 RE)

He did this stuff precisely so that whatever it is that is infirm in you, He can blot it out. Whatever it is that you need to have “succor” to remedy, He has the knowledge required to do that. He is not experimenting when He deals with us. He knows what He is doing. He has descended below it all in order to acquire the capacity to lift it all. And the things that He intends to lift back include all of you. He intends to save everything—and by saving everything, allow it to continue on in its course.

Those who will receive less, will continue on in a lesser course. Those who will receive more, will continue on in a greater course. But all will continue on, freely using what God freely gives to both the righteous and the wicked. He makes the sun to shine on the righteous and the wicked. He makes the rain to fall on both the righteous and the wicked. And He does so while merely asking you to repent and turn to Him. He does not demand obedience. He offers you, if you will obey, grace for grace, that you too might receive more **of Him in you**, and that you might be **better** animated by a **higher** source than the one that animates you at the moment. No matter where you are situated, He continuously offers you more.

Now we go back to Abinadi. And I said a few moments ago that he knows what he's talking about. Let me read you just how very much Abinadi knows. This is Mosiah chapter 15, beginning at verse 8:

*And thus God breaketh the bands of death, having gained the victory over death; giving the Son power to make intercession for the children of men—Having ascended into heaven, having the bowels of mercy; being filled with compassion toward the children of men; standing betwixt them and justice; having broken the bands of death, taken upon himself their iniquity and their transgressions, having redeemed them, and satisfied the demands of justice. ...now I say unto you, who shall declare his generation? Behold, I say unto you, that when his soul has been made an offering for sin he shall see his seed. Now what say ye? And who [are] **his seed**? Behold I say unto you, that whosoever has heard the words **of the prophets**, yea, all the holy prophets who have prophesied concerning the coming of the Lord—I say unto you, that all those who have hearkened unto their words, and believed that the Lord would redeem his people, and have looked forward to that day for a remission of their sins, I say unto you, that **these are his seed**, or they are the heirs of the kingdom of God. (Mosiah 15:8-11, emphasis added; see also Mosiah 8:6-7 RE)*

A while ago we read a quote from Joseph [Smith] in Orem about where the kingdom of God is. And Joseph said, “If you can find anyone sent by God, there is the kingdom of God.” It was good doctrine when Joseph declared it. It was good doctrine when ~~Mosiah~~ [Abinadi] declared it. It’s good doctrine when I declare it. Because any of you who will hear and then who will hearken unto their words, you become His seed. You have to hear it. You have to hear it from someone who has been sent. But it does you no good at all if you will not hearken to it. Because it is in the hearkening that **you** will meet God. **You** will find redemption. **You** will hear His voice, and **you** will become a holy vessel because His word will be animated in you. And you will have no doubts about your salvation, because **you** will hear Him declare it in His own voice. And **you** will know that He’s no respecter of persons. And you’ll know that **you**, like any other person, can come unto Him, and look to Him (and Him alone) for your salvation, and not be dependent upon any other person or system. And you too can join in singing the song of redeeming love.

Christ is the redemption of all. When His religion is here, then His religion, when it appears, is the same in every day.

Turn to Mormon chapter 9, beginning at verse 7:

And again I speak unto you who deny the revelations of God, and say that they are done away, that there are no revelations, nor prophecies, nor gifts, nor healings, nor speaking with tongues, and the interpretation of tongues; Behold I say unto you, that he that denieth these things knoweth not the gospel of Christ; yea, he has not read the [scripture]; if so, he does not understand them. For do we not read that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and in him there is no variableness neither shadow of changing? ...now, if ye have imagined up unto yourselves a god who doth vary, and in whom there is [a] shadow of changing, then [you have] imagined...unto your[self] a god who is not a God of miracles. But behold, I will show unto you a God of miracles, even the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; and it is [the] same God who created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. Behold, he created Adam, and by Adam came the fall of man. And because of the fall of

man came Jesus Christ, even the Father and the Son; and because of Jesus Christ came the redemption of man. And because of the redemption of man, which came by Jesus Christ, they are brought back into the presence of the Lord. (Mormon 9:7-13; see also Mormon 4:7 RE)

It's true that that will happen in the resurrection, but I wanna pause on that. *Because of the redemption of man, which came by Jesus Christ, they are bought back into the presence of the Lord, yea this is wherein all men are redeemed....* If I were punctuating it, I'd put a period there, and I'd start a new thought in a new verse.

Now is the day of redemption. *Because of the redemption of man which came by Jesus Christ, they are brought back into the presence of the Lord, yea **this** is wherein all men are redeemed.*

What is the fall of man? It's to be cast out from the presence of God. What is the redemption of man? It's to be brought back into the presence of God. Today is the day of redemption. Today is the day of salvation. Come back into His presence.

Ether chapter 3, beginning at verse 13: *When he had said these words, behold, the Lord showed himself unto him, and said: Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I show myself unto you (see also Ether 1:13 RE).*

This is the gospel of Christ. What is it that you know? You know Him. *And this is life eternal that you might know [Him]* (John 17:3; see also John 9:19 RE). "Because you know these things, I'm coming to see you. I return you to my presence. I redeem you from the Fall—*because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall.*" This is Christ speaking in the first person. He's defining redemption. Who better is able to define what it means to be redeemed than the Redeemer? Reconciliation comes **through** Christ. Reconciliation comes **with** Christ. Reconciliation is **by** Christ. And Christ has the power to redeem you all.

Doctrine and Covenants section 84 has a description of events at the time of Moses, beginning at verse 19 of section 84:

And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest. (D&C 84:19-20)

And by the way, I should add (as a parenthetical thought), *the ordinances thereof* is far more expansive than simply a set of rites or rituals—because when the higher priesthood is present on the earth, everything that that higher priesthood does is done as an ordinance—because once it has been ordained by God to take place (and God's hand is behind what takes place), those events, under the direction of that priesthood, is **all** an ordinance, and therefore, within them you find the power of godliness.

And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh; For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live. Now this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God; But they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence; therefore, the Lord in his wrath, for his anger was kindled against them, swore that they should not enter into his rest while in the wilderness, which rest is the fullness of his glory. (ibid, vs. 21-24)

I remind you (we've talked about this before), *the glory of God is intelligence, or in other words, light and truth* (D&C 93:36; see also T&C 93:11), therefore, the "rest" is to be filled with His glory or, in other words, filled with Light and Truth—or to comprehend things that you do not at present comprehend without the **benefit** of the glory of God.

Therefore, he took Moses out of their midst, and the Holy Priesthood also. (ibid, vs. 25; see also T&C 82:12-14)

And thus, at that point ended the expectation anciently that there might be Zion.

Now, I want you to think about what the words mean: *...his anger was kindled against them, swore that they should not enter into his rest while in the wilderness.* And He did this in *His wrath*. We tend to think of God as very loving and benign after the sacrifice of Christ. And these words seem to be "Old Testament-like" and not "New Testament-like." But understanding, hopefully more about the nature of God's ire and God's approval... Disapproval from God feels terrible.

When we were looking at the reaction that people have (in the last day of judgment) to standing in the presence of a just and holy being and feeling awful, I pointed out to you that in that passage, God was doing nothing other than existing. But the disappointment in the mind of man is so exquisite that it is likened by Joseph Smith to *a lake of fire and brimstone*.

Therefore, God *in His wrath* has simply withdrawn. He's taken a step back because we're not suited to be in His presence. Therefore, having God withdraw is a matter of feeling **keenly** that absence, that rejection.

This incident is being described in modern revelation (in section 84), but the incident itself occurred back in the book of Exodus. This is Exodus chapter 20, beginning at verse 18:

And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was. (Exodus 20:18-21; see also Exodus 12:14 RE)

They did not want to encounter Him, not because the presence of God is so terrible that it drives men from Him—because Moses approached Him—but because the evidence of His presence makes us internally evaluate **who** and **what** we are. And although we can lie to ourselves about how good we really are, when the measuring stick against which you compare yourself is God, all of us come short. Even when the Lord Himself testifies to you that your sins are forgiven, you still recognize that you fall short. To the extent that you have confidence in the presence of the Lord, it is wholly derivative from Him. He **has** to strengthen you because if He does not, all of us would retire in shame.

Doctrine and Covenants section 124 has a revelation given in January of 1841 to the saints (at that point in Nauvoo), offering something to the saints in that day that is relevant to the history that unfolded thereafter. Beginning at verse 28, the Lord says through Joseph:

For there is not a place...on earth that he ["He" here being the Lord, God—that he] may come to and restore again that which was lost unto you, or which he hath taken away, even the fulness of the priesthood. (see also T&C 141:10)

Skipping to verse 31:

But I command you, all ye my saints, to build a house unto me... (D&C 124:31)

See, this commandment was unto everyone who at that point claimed to be a saint. All of them—every one of them—was put under the equal burden *to build a house unto me*.

...and I grant unto you [all of "you"] a sufficient time to build a house unto me; and during this time your baptisms shall be acceptable unto me. But behold, at the end of this appointment your baptisms for your dead shall not be acceptable unto me; and if you do not these things at the end of the appointment ye shall be rejected as a church, with your dead, saith the Lord your God. (ibid, vs. 31-32)

It's interesting that in verse 31, it says *your baptisms*, and in verse 32, it says *your baptisms for your dead*—which suggests that after verse 31, if we fail in verse 32, that our baptisms will continue to be acceptable, but our vicarious work would not, and the Church would then be rejected.

If you skip to 34, talking about this proposed temple to be constructed:

For therein are the keys of the holy priesthood ordained, that you may receive honor and glory... (ibid, vs. 34; see also T&C 141:11)

...honor being the promise from God into the afterlife, respecting what you can expect to receive from God as an oath and as a covenant; *glory* being intelligence—or knowledge and understanding, Light and Truth—things that were not comprehended but which God hoped to have the Saints, at that point, comprehend.

Well, He gives to us (in this same revelation) a measuring stick by which we can determine if we satisfy the requirements that the Lord has set forth. And the measuring stick is this, beginning in verse 44—well, verse 43, probably, we should begin:

And ye shall build it on the place where you have contemplated building it, for that is the spot which I have chosen for you to build it. (ibid, vs. 43)

So, they contemplated it, the Lord approved it, and this would become a spot where the Nauvoo temple was to be constructed.

If ye labor with all your might, I will consecrate that spot that it shall be made holy. And if my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place... (ibid, vs. 44-45, emphasis added; see also T&C 141:13)

...**they** being the people; **they** being those that He had chosen to lead them; **they** being, in this instance, the Prophet Joseph Smith and the one who would be appointed to receive priesthood and be appointed to hold the sealing power in this revelation, Hyrum Smith—the one who was designated to be the successor to Joseph Smith in the event of Joseph's death, and the one whom the Lord would take first: Hyrum. Joseph died knowing that his successor had first fallen.

If...then they shall not be moved out of their place. But if they will not hearken to my voice, nor unto the voice of these men whom I have appointed, they shall not be blest, because they pollute mine holy grounds, and mine holy ordinances, and charters, and my holy words which I give unto them. And it shall come to pass that if you build a house unto my name, and do not do the things that I say, I will not perform the oath which I make unto you, neither fulfill the promises which ye expect at my hands, saith the Lord. For instead of blessings, ye, by your own works, bring cursings, wrath, indignation, and judgments upon your own heads, by your follies, and by all your abominations, which you practice before me, saith the Lord. (ibid, vs. 45-58, emphasis added; see also T&C 141:14)

So, if you get out the history and you look at the events that occurred between 1841 and the death of Joseph on June 27th of 1844—and you ask yourself whether or not the Saints went to and built the House that had been commanded and did it with the kind of dispatch and the timeframe that was allowed that allowed the House of the Lord to be constructed—and if you look at the history to find where it was that the Lord **came into that House** (because it was **Him** that was required in order to restore what had been lost; because it was **Him** that was required to be there in order to return the glory to the House of the Lord; because it was **Him** that would bestow upon the saints the fullness of the priesthood; because it was the **Lord, Himself**, that required a place at which He could meet with His people)—and then once Joseph and Hyrum were dead, if you look at the history of what occurred in Nauvoo and ask yourself, Were they blessed? Were they protected? Or did they experience (in the ordeals that drove them out of Nauvoo and into the wilderness, and the suffering that ensued there)... If, instead, you see *cursings, wrath, indignations, and judgments* upon the head of the saints, then **you** can reach a considered conclusion about whether or not

we, in our day, mirror what happened at the time of Moses, and we, in our day (just as in the day of Moses) elected to say, “You—Joseph, Hyrum—**you** go talk to the Lord for us”—because when we consider the glory of the House of the Lord, it is no more desirable to us to go and ascend there as it was for those ancient Israelites to climb up the mountain (where there was thundering and lightnings and earthquakes underway).

I have one and only one desire: to try to persuade you to believe in the Restoration through Joseph Smith. It is not and has never been completed. It is a work yet before us. It is a work largely neglected since the time Joseph and Hyrum breathed their last breath. The prophecies that were delivered to Joseph Smith, both by Christ in the First Vision and by Moroni on the night of the first visit (which we began this with in Boise, Idaho), are a rallying cry for us to rise up and lay hold upon things. It's a rallying cry—a prophecy—that does not fulfill itself. It gets fulfilled by what **you** do. Whether or not you **fulfill** those prophecies is dependent upon whether you will, like the ancient Israelites, elect not to go up. Or whether you—like Moses, like Joseph, like Hyrum—choose instead to forsake your sins and to move forward, even in the face of your own weakness and unworthiness. There isn't one of us in this room that should not kneel before the presence of a just and holy being. There isn't one of us who, if instructed to stand before Him, would not keenly feel the inadequacy of doing so—not one of us. But there are some here who have been in His presence, myself included.

You don't read my email (...it's probably a good thing, because if you did, you'd be overwhelmed at the insults that come in). But among all those emails, I can tell you that there are a number who have borne testimony that since reading the book *The Second Comforter* and since taking seriously the promises that are made through Joseph and in the Scriptures, there are a number who, like me, have a witness of our resurrected Lord. It can and it does happen. And hopefully, as we get through this material today, you'll have confidence in your own ability to rise up.

Let's assume that we are like ancient Israel. Let's assume that we too were left outside of God's presence when He offered to come and dwell generally among the Saints back in Nauvoo. Let's assume that this was not what God wanted for us.

Let's assume that these things have, just like they did anciently, kindled God's anger, like we read in D&C 84:24. Let's assume that we have now—as a body, generally—been left with something lesser, which is like what was described in D&C 84, verse 26; that is, only the lesser priesthood, which includes within it the ministering of angels.

Well, assuming all of that, what shall we do? Well, turn to Alma chapter 12 (a great chapter, by the way). Chapter 12, between 9 and 11, that talks about, “if you harden your hearts, you get less; but if your heart is soft and open, you get more” (see also Alma 9:3 RE).

You're the regulator that determines whether, on the one hand, you get more or whether, on the other, you get less. Soften your heart now. Today is the day of salvation. This is the moment you came down here to face. The test is on; the challenge is in front of you. You better have ears to hear. God will judge you, but more importantly, you will judge yourself.

Yes God is real! Because if I have seen Him, I think you can see Him, and ought to. I think everyone should make the fiery ascent to God's presence. I think it should not be limited to an occasional "here," or an occasional "there." I think we should have an abundance of witnesses. And the prophecy that Moroni spoke to Joseph Smith, that the time is going to come when no one needs to say to anyone else, "Know ye the Lord, for they shall all know Him," needs to be fulfilled. It is lying dormant.

The foregoing excerpts were taken from:

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #7 titled "Christ, Prototype of the Saved Man" given in Ephraim, UT on June 28, 2014
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #8 titled "A Broken Heart" given in Las Vegas, NV on July 25th, 2014; and
- The presentation of Denver's paper titled "Cutting Down the Tree of Life to Build a Wooden Bridge", given at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, UT on August 2, 2014.