

Denver Snuffer Podcast 182: The Ascent, Part 3

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

DENVER: In the tenth talk, given in Phoenix two years ago, you were warned about false spirits, as happened in Kirtland, which you were warned would come among us. That warning has proven true. False spirits have misled some into foolish errors. I am astonished at vain, foolish and prideful ideas that are anti-Christ, degrading and dark, but have been welcomed by some. Remember Pharaoh's magicians also enchanted their rods to become snakes (see Exo. 7:11-12), and conjured frogs to mimic the sign given by God through Moses and Aaron (see Exo. 8:7.) Pharaoh's heart was hardened by these imitations. Do not let yours become so likewise.

For two years I have watched, attended some of your meetings, gathered reports, and tried to let you stand and display your strength and understanding. Even God left Adam and Eve in the Garden, and allowed Lucifer the common enemy to tempt and try them, promising to return again to visit them. They transgressed His commandment, and He provided the means to cover their shame, repent and return. He also promised to later send messengers. But God did not "babysit" Adam and Eve, informing them that it was given unto them to choose, even when He forbids something. God is the same now as in the beginning. We are all required to display our understanding, obedience and prove our understanding.

People have come among you preaching falsehoods, and inviting others to follow false spirits: Adulterers and adulteresses who justify sins, and mock the commandment "*thou shalt not commit adultery.*" (Exo. 20:14.) False claimants are pretending to seal others up to eternal life, changing the ordinances and introducing foolish and vain ideas borrowed from pagans and heathen, who do not know Christ nor His righteousness. I do not oppose them directly by debate or counter-argument. I declare the truth and leave it for everyone to decide between clearly opposing teachings. If people cannot discern, then they will need to learn from sad experience to choose between good and evil, perhaps only coming to understand after their destruction in this world.

There are those who use well-reasoned arguments to expound their understanding of scripture who have declared with certainty it is impossible for what I say to be true. These voices come from both the fearful anonymous and proud academics. I do not respond to either.

In a letter on August 24, 1834, Joseph Smith described the only way falsehoods could be avoided. He wrote:

If the Saints are very humble, very watchful and very prayerful, that few will be deceived by those who have not authority to teach, or who have not the Spirit to teach according to the power of the Holy Ghost, in the scriptures (JS Papers, Documents Vol. 4, p. 117).

Only the truth is at issue. Individuals other than Christ do not matter. The message I have and do preach is from the Lord. His sheep hear His voice. If they accept it as His, then deceivers, false spirits and men's learning are powerless to destroy faith in Him. He promised He "*will take care of our flocks*" (D&C 88:72) and therefore it will be Him, and not me, who will keep His flock shepherded.

Following Christ's death He was buried and rose on the third day. I know He lives for I have seen Him. He showed me the morning of His resurrection. I testify as a witness that He rose from the dead and ascended to heaven, as the Gospels declare. Like those who wrote the New Testament, I am also a living witness the Lord rose from the dead:

When I saw His resurrection, I was surprised to see it was still dark. I had always thought it occurred at sun up, as the return of daylight symbolized the return of life. But it was dark. The Gospel of John is the only one that mentions the darkness of that morning. Even so, it never registered to me that Christ rose in the darkness of that early morning. ... He did rise from the dead. We rejoice because it is true. As so many others have done before, I can add my own witness that He rose from the dead. I was shown it. It happened. He who died on the cross rose from the dead and He lives still. (Snuffer Jr., Denver C., 2010-12-24. Come, Let Us Adore Him, pp. 249, 257)

All four Gospels give accounts of Christ's resurrection:

- Matthew: tells of two women, both named Mary, who were first to come to the grave, where an angel informed them of the resurrection, and told them to go tell others.
- Mark: states it was also two women, both named Mary, who arrived first to the grave where an angel informed them Christ was resurrected. Other disciples did not believe their testimony.
- Luke: tells of several women who saw the empty grave, were told He had risen by two angels, and then went to testify to the apostles. But the apostles thought the testimony "seemed as idle tales, and they believed them not."
- John: wrote that Mary Magdalene saw, even embraced the risen Lord, and related to the others her testimony of having seen Him returned to life, resurrected from the dead!

[These] accounts differ in the details. [They have] similarities and differences. They are universal in the fact that Christ was seen by the women (or [a] woman) first, and not by His Apostles. [John's account] records that Christ told Mary: 'Touch me not.' In the Joseph Smith Translation the words are changed to read: 'Hold me not.' (JST-John 20: 17.) Joseph's change of the text was warranted. [I tell you that] when Mary realized it was Jesus, she embraced Him joyfully. She did not timidly reach out her hand, but she readily greeted Him with open arms, and He, in turn, embraced her. It

is difficult to describe what I saw of the incident, apart from saying [that] the Lord was triumphant, exultant, overjoyed at His return from the grave! She shared His joy. I was shown the scene and do not have words to adequately communicate how complete the feelings of joy and gratitude were which were felt by our Lord that morning. As dark and terrible [as] were the sufferings through which He passed, the magnitude of which is impossible for man to put into words, these feelings of triumph were, on the other hand, of equal magnitude in their joy and gratitude. [He had attained to the resurrection of the dead! Just as He had seen His Father do, He likewise held the keys of death and hell!] I do not think it possible for a mortal to feel a fullness of either. And, having felt some of what He shares with His witnesses, I know words are inadequate to capture His feelings on the morning of His resurrection. He had the deep satisfaction of having accomplished the most difficult assignment [to be] given by the Father, knowing it was a benefit to all of His Father's children, and it had been done perfectly. Mary and Christ embraced. There was nothing timid about the warm encounter she had with Him. Then He said to her, 'Hold me not' because He had to ascend, return and report to His Father. Joseph Smith was correct when he [changed] this language. I then saw Him ascend to heaven. I saw the golden heavenly light glowing down upon Mary as she watched His ascent. All this happened while it was yet dark on the morning He rose from the dead. He has shown this to me and I can testify to it as a witness. (ibid, pp. 256-7.)

Our Lord is meek, and although greater (see D&C 19:18) and more intelligent than us all (see Abr. 3:19), yet He condescends to speak with us in plain humility (see Ether 12:39.).

He is the only means for salvation: "*there shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent.*" (Mosiah 3:17.) Anyone who claims otherwise is deceived or dishonest.

I testify of Him in a day when most people do not believe it possible for my testimony to be true. I ask nothing of you. But I do testify truthfully.

The Lord has taught me a great deal more than I can discuss. This talk can only be given because there are some few here who will believe, and the Lord respects your faith.

If Zion is ever founded, its residents will fulfill the prophecy of Habakuk: "*For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*" (Hab. 2:14.)

It shall be as Jeremiah prophesied: *And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more.*" (Jer. 31:34.)

But the knowledge in Zion will be of and with Him. Zion will be like Him, without envy, strife, jealousy, ambition, pride and covetousness.

Until that day the Lord will send witnesses to testify of Him. The world is filled with deceit, and some men make claims to have authority from Christ as their basis to ask for obedience, support, trust and property. I ask for none of those things. If you want to donate money to the Lord, then do it as part of a community of believers, and use the donations to relieve the needs of the poor among you. If you have no poor among you, donate to build a temple.

In a letter written August 16, 1834, Joseph Smith expected Zion could be established very soon. He wrote, “we have a great work to do, but little time to do it in and if we don’t exert ourselves to the utmost in gathering up the strength of the Lords house ...there remaineth a sco[u]rge” (JS Papers, Documents Vol. 4, p. 106.) In the same letter he reminded people in his day that, “so long as unrighteousness acts are suffered in the church it cannot [be] sanctified neither Zion be redeemed.” (Id., p. 107.) At the time, he considered the church to be “in a languid cold disconsolate state.” (Id.) It was the opposite of the lively, confident and happy state accompanying righteousness, even when worldly circumstances are direful and the wicked seem to triumph. When doing what the Lord asks, we can be lively because He will accompany our efforts and add His strength to our labor. If we have a hope in Christ, we can be confident. If our sins have been forgiven, we have every reason to be happy.

Virtue and patience are required of us every bit as much as it has been required in every age. We cannot wallow in sin, nor be prideful, and expect to do any better than those who have already failed. The best guard against our failure is humility, meekness, longsuffering and patience. We must not charge ahead when the Lord has not prepared the way for us to proceed safely. There’s much still to be done. But it must be done when, where and how the Lord directs; and that also not in haste—because haste brings confusion, resulting in pestilence, including violence and jarring contentions (See D&C 63:24).

There is an effort to collect funds for a temple project that transcends every group. Other than that one “transcending each group project,” there is no other general fund or aggregation of funds between fellowships. Each fellowship is independent in their own funds. There is no general fund collected even at these conferences. But conference sponsors may ask for donations to help defray the cost of the conference. That’s up to them.

The relief from the donations for “the poor among you” refers to the poor among the individual fellowship. If there are no poor among you, then excess donations should go to the temple, but they can be shared as your fellowship determines by common consent, and that’s up to you, using your common consent.

When a temple exists, there will be a box in the main courtyard where people can make donations. Donations to the temple will go for two purposes: First is maintenance and repair of the temple. Second, that fund, when that happens in that time and those circumstances, is a general fund for the poor. That fund can be called upon by any fellowship needing assistance with their poor. Anyone who is part of any fellowship is entitled to a request for assistance from that excess temple fund.

There are entirely local and independent fellowshiping groups that are comprised primarily of family and friends. That's the way that this has and will operate, with only two exceptions. First, conferences can be called that are area-wide, region-wide, or general. Like this one and the one in Boise, and the one coming up this next September in Boise, those are all general and everyone is invited to come to those. Those things operate in addition to local fellowships.

Secondly, the temple by its nature is general and is the one place that involves all believers, wherever they are located throughout the world. When the temple is functioning, there will be general conferences regularly conducted there. It should be expected also, when the temple is fully organized and operating, that there will be festivals or feasts that will be observed whereas, in the present state of things, such things are not yet expected observances.

I don't think the Lord cares whether you want to practice or not, that would be up to you. But the Lord has plans for a temple that go beyond what you might associate typically with a temple from some of your past experiences.

Funds that are donated to build the temple are going to be fully transparent. At present, the GoFundMe site is public and the funds donated to there are open and public. But in time every cent that is donated will be fully accounted for. The Lord requires a record of donations and expenses. They are supposed to be gathered and ultimately maintained at the temple, and be open for inspection, and I expect will be disclosed at some point online when the full accounting can be made.

Now I want to refer to a verse, and refer to this verse in the context of the temple. Apply these words solely and exclusively for a moment to the temple. *"Do not expect to eat the bread or wear the garment of the laborer in Zion."*¹ If you oppose the work, if you stay your hand, if you refuse and others do the labor, don't expect to eat the bread or wear the garment.

Now, I want to address the Spirit of Elias, Elijah and Messiah. Or in other words, work to be accomplished by those operating under the mandate of the Aaronic, Melchizedek and Patriarchal division of labor.

Let me reiterate it again, because there is at least one angry foolish soul out there who persists in redefining the terms when I have defined the terms. So let me be yet again redundant:

Joseph spoke of three divisions of priesthood.² He entitled these the Aaronic, the Melchizedek and the Patriarchal. Joseph defined the greatest of these as Melchizedek priesthood because it comprehended all others. I'm not using, and have not used, and have explained before, since Melchizedek has acquired a definition in the heads of Latter-day

¹ D&C 42:42

² See TPJS, pp. 335-341, a discourse on March 10, 1844

Saints, I'm not going to try and extract for the bull the line of thought that reckons from that. I'm just leaving that alone and saying, Okay, let me re-define the terms. In my re-definition of the terms, Aaronic refers to the least of these, Melchizedek refers to the next level of these, and Patriarchal refers to the greatest of these, in my nomenclature, not Joseph's.

I do this, as I have explained, because in the beginning, there was a unitary priesthood. It was the Holy Order After the Order of the Son of God. But in order to prevent the too frequent repetition of the name of the Son of God it got renamed, first after Enoch and then later after Melchizedek. But it is referring to one original, unitary priesthood which is the Holy Order After the Order of the Son of God. Yet Joseph spoke about three great divisions. In the beginning, because the first patriarchs had that original unitary fullness of the priesthood after the Order of the Son of God, and because Abraham acquired the rights of the fathers or the first father, Adam, and therefore like Adam held the Holy Order After the Order of the Son of God, I use the term "Patriarchal" priesthood to refer to that original fullness, and to nothing else. I divide them up into three categories and three nomenclatures using those terms.

There is the Spirit of Elias, there is the Spirit of Elijah and there is the Spirit of Messiah. These three great spirits unfolded in the work of God in the generations of man in a steady descent. They will be likewise inverted like a chiasm and return in an ascent so that at the end it will be as it was in the beginning. "Now this same Priesthood, which was in the beginning, shall in the end of the [earth] also," was the prophecy that Father Adam gave, Enoch quoting Adam, and Moses quoting Enoch, the prophecy being contained in the *Book of Moses* or soon, in the *Book of Genesis*.

The first spirit was the spirit of Messiah. Adam dwelt in the presence of God. Adam represents that original fullness. Adam was the first man. Adam received instructions and spoke to God face to face. He dwelt in a temple, from which he was cast out, but he dwelt in a temple. Therefore, Adam represents the Spirit of Messiah.

The Spirit of Elijah is represented by Enoch who, when the Earth was threatened with violence and men were to be destroyed because of the wickedness upon the face of the Earth, was able to gather a people into a city of peace, and to have the Lord come to their city of peace and remove them from the coming violence and destruction. He is a type of the Spirit of Elijah because Elijah would likewise later ascend in the fiery chariot into heaven. He is a type of the Spirit of Elijah, because it is the Spirit of Elijah in that ascent into heaven that must prefigure the return of the Spirit of Messiah in the last days in order to gather a people to a place that God will acknowledge, will visit and will shield from the coming violence that will involve the destruction of the world. And so Enoch becomes the great type of the Spirit of Elijah, although the name "Elijah" is associated with a man who lived later still but who duplicated, among a hardened people in a fallen world, the same achievement as Enoch had accomplished, albeit Enoch did so with a city, and Elijah did it as a solitary ascending figure, yet it will be Elijah and his spirit which, in the last days, will likewise prepare a city for salvation and preservation.

Then there is the Spirit of Elias which is represented by Noah, in which everything that had gone on before was lost. Things begin anew and Noah begins a ministry of attempting to preserve what was before by preaching repentance. And so Noah as the messenger, or the Elias, bears testimony of what once was.

In the end, before the Lord's return, these same three spirits need to have been brought into the world, in order for the completion of the plan that Adam prophesied about and that was in the heart of the Lord from before the foundation of the world. The Spirit of Elias declaring the gospel has to come again into the world, and it did in the person of Joseph Smith, and in the message that he brought, and in the scriptures that he restored, and in the message and the practices that he was able to bring about, however short-lived that success may have been. Elias and the Spirit of Elias came through Joseph Smith into the world.

We have yet to take the Spirit of Elias seriously enough to move on to receive something further. But we are now facing a crossroads in which it may be possible to restore again and continue the work and move forward. Moving forward successfully however, will require the Spirit of Elijah. This time the Spirit of Elijah is not to prepare a people so that they might ascend into heaven but instead to prepare a people so that those who come will not utterly destroy them. There must be a people prepared to endure the burning that is to come. Just as Enoch's people were prepared, shielded and brought worthy to ascend so as not to be destroyed by the flood, the Spirit of Elijah must prepare people in order for them to endure the day that is coming that shall burn the wicked as stubble. That will be people living in a place of peace and they will be the only people who are not at war one with another. They will be people who accept a body of teachings and allow them to govern their daily walk; both with each other and with God, so that they receive "commandments, not a few" and "revelations in their day" because that is what the people of Zion must necessarily be willing to do.

We are promised that one will come who will be part of Jesse and part of Ephraim who will set in order, whose identity will be established by the work accomplished and not by the foolishness and prideful claims made by someone who has done nothing. If the work is done, once it's completed, you might be able to guess. But any fool can run around claiming themselves to be whatever their peculiar schizophrenia allows them to claim.

The third spirit that is to return is that spirit which was in the beginning. It is the Spirit of Messiah, this time the Messiah Himself. This time He will come to His house. He will dwell there. Everything must be prepared in order for Messiah to return. And so in the end, as it was in the beginning. Adam being a type who represents dwelling in the presence of God, or the Spirit of Messiah. In the end it will be Messiah Himself who returns to dwell among a people who are prepared. This is a chiasm. It is returning to the beginning as the work of the last days walks backward in time to the point where it all began.

Elias goes before to prepare for a greater work that is coming after, just as the Aaronic ordinances go before. Joseph Smith said the Spirit of Elias was revealed to him, but "the Spirit of Elijah holds something more. It holds the revelations, ordinances, endowments and sealings necessary to accomplish turning the hearts of the fathers to the children by

securing an unbroken thread between the living and the fathers in heaven. This can only be done in a temple prepared for that purpose." I'm reading Joseph. Without sealing of living children to the fathers in heaven, who dwell in glory and who sit upon thrones, the return of the Lord with Enoch and the other thousands who will accompany him would result in none escaping the judgments to come.

In the *Answer to Prayer for Covenant*, it is explained that establishing any Throne is done through a covenant requiring a mother-companion and female counterpart to elevate a father to a Throne. It's also clear that once elevated, these two sit together upon a Throne. Every Throne and every Kingdom in eternity requires these two separate parties, the man and the woman, to be one.

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 to them both and to all of their subsequent offspring. 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 to 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 [unto] 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. (T&C 157:42-43, emphasis added)*

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 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 women's role will require worthy people willing to be taught and to build an acceptable house for the Elohim to return.

First and foremost, for fallen man in this creation, salvation is dependent upon Jesus Christ. We have a revealed account that explains who we worship and how to worship:

And I, John, saw that he received not of the fulness at...first, but received grace for grace; And he received not of the fulness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness; And thus he was called the Son of God, because he received not...the fulness at the first. And I, John, bear record, and lo, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove, and sat upon him, and there came a voice out of heaven saying: This is my beloved Son. And I, John, bear record that he received a fulness of the glory of the Father; And he received all power, both in heaven and on earth. (D&C 93:12-17; see also T&C 93:4-6)

The account continues:

Ye were also in the beginning with the Father; that which is Spirit, even the Spirit of truth; And truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come; And whatsoever is more or less than this is the spirit of that wicked one who was a liar from the beginning. (D&C 93:23-25; see also T&C 93:8)

Like Christ, we are to grow from grace to grace. Those words are in a revelation that begins with this promise: *Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am;* (D&C 93:1; see also T&C 93:1). This is how we are to grow from grace to grace. This is how we can receive of His fullness. There is no mention of redirecting our obedience to another. Nor is there any name provided to us to call upon other than Christ's. Nor is there any voice we are to hearken unto other than Christ's.

We are in a fallen state and need to be saved. Like Mary acknowledged to Elizabeth when they met, we need to be rescued by a Savior. That Savior is Jesus Christ. She pointed us to Him, and if we will heed Her wise counsel, we will rely on the merits of Christ, who is mighty to save.

There are other revelations that clarify how our attention and adoration must center in Christ. It is Jesus Christ who we are to acknowledge as the great Creator and Redeemer of creation:

God, the holiest of all, through Jesus Christ his Son—He that [ascendeth] 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...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. (D&C 88:5-13; see also T&C 86:1)

There are Heavenly Parents, to be sure. They are two separate beings: a Father and a Mother. She exists, and Her role is acknowledged in scripture. We are supposed to find Her. And in the last-days temple (should it be finally built by a humble and obedient people), Her open presence will be there.

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.* (D&C 88:14-17; see also T&C 86:2)

Christ is identified in the 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.

Here are some of the great thoughts God inspired and Joseph Smith conveyed to us:

It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God. Nevertheless, they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart, only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him. And therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word. And he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until they know them in full. And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries;³

³ NC Alma 9:3

This is one of the great and succinct declarations about coming to know God. Finding Them is deeply personal. We come to God by giving “heed and diligence” to what God asks of us. I cannot do that for you, nor can you do it for me. It is the sojourn of every individual.

The path requires motion. We remain in motion all the time. There is no stasis, no holding a position. We advance (that is, experience restoration) or we recede (that is, experience apostasy). There is no avoiding movement.

The mysteries of God are His hidden but simple truths. They set a man’s bones on fire.

To pay heed to God requires that we not harden our hearts. When we have hard hearts we know less. Even what we once knew can be lost. Eventually, we know nothing of God’s mysteries and we are left alone, without God in the world.

One of the world’s greatest religious epistles was composed in Liberty Jail. It includes the following passage:

[T]he things of God are of deep import, and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Your mind, O man, if you will lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost Heavens, and search into and contemplate the lowest considerations of the darkest abyss, and expand upon the broad considerations of Eternal expanse. You must commune with God. How much more dignified and noble are the thoughts of God than the vain imagination of the human heart? None but fools will trifle with the souls of men. How vain and trifling have been our spirits, our conferences, our councils, our meetings, our private as well as public conversations: too low, too mean, too vulgar, too condescending for the dignified characters of the called and chosen of God, according to the purposes of his will from before the foundation of the world[.]⁴

These words enlarge the soul. Only a great religion challenges us to stretch as high as the utmost heavens! Search into and contemplate the darkest abyss! An expansive religion that urges us to become godlike in our interest, in our search for truth! We are clearly directed to turn our attention to the heavens and learn how they function, what they are, and who is to be found there. This is a vast religion. It is not confined to the earthly, and certainly not under the control of any institution’s administrative regimentation or stifling controls. It cannot be what institutional Mormonism has become:

“O God, God!
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of [modern Mormonism]!
Fie on ’t, ah fie!
‘Tis an unweeded garden
That grows to seed.

⁴ T&C 138:18-19

Things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely.
That it should come to this.”⁵

The restoration is far too great to have been reduced to the vain, trifling, low, mean, vulgar, and condescending versions presented in today’s Mormon institutions. If we are going to hold a conference, it should aspire to stretch our minds upward! To make us reach beyond, and never remain content. This Sunstone Symposium deals with diverse, interesting thought, important issues and wonderful contrasts. God is being honored here. Churches should aspire to be as informative and thought-provoking.

This search into the highest heaven is the search to find holiness. Joseph Smith wanted us to ascend, like the ancients, into that realm of light and truth. How can any of us be content to listen to the institutional fare? It is incapable of sustaining spiritual life. Joseph’s ideas and teachings are as far above those teachings of today as the heavens are above the earth. The restoration once sought to find what God declared as “His way” to Isaiah: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” How the restoration has fallen! It is little wonder so many now hold Mormonism in contempt. It has become unnecessarily contemptible when it ought to be inspiring.

The restoration’s delight has turned to dismay; its ingenuity turned to ineptitude. Silk has become burlap. How have we allowed it to become so?

The original faith, in the first dispensations, had more understanding than what we find preserved in the Bible. Joseph was searching back into these beginnings. His heart was “turned to the fathers” of the first generations. He wanted a return of their original as part of the end. It was to be nothing less. Consider this declaration:

[H]as the day of miracles ceased? Or have angels ceased to appear unto the children of men? Or has he withheld the power of the Holy Ghost from them? Or will he so long as time shall last, or the Earth shall stand, or there shall be one man upon the face thereof to be saved? Behold, I say unto you, Nay. For it is by faith that miracles are wrought. And it is by faith that angels appear and minister unto men. Wherefore, if these things have ceased, woe be unto the children of men, for it is because of unbelief, and all is vain. For no man can be saved, according to the words of Christ, save they shall have faith in his name. Wherefore, if these things have ceased, then has faith ceased also, and awful is the state of man, for they are as though there had been no redemption made. (NC Moroni 7:7)

If the heavens open to us, we have faith. If the heavens are brass, we are faithless. Without faith, it is as if Christ provided us no redemption. These words are as inspiring as they are sobering.

⁵ *Hamlet* Act 1, Scene 2

At the conclusion of the vision of the three-heavens, Joseph wrote the following. It clarifies that we are supposed to access heaven, and see for ourselves the glory to be found there:

But great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his Kingdom which he showed unto us, which surpasses all understanding, in glory, and in might, and in dominion, which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit, and are not lawful for men to utter, neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy Spirit, which God bestows on those who love him and purify themselves before him, to whom he grants the privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves that through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, while in the flesh, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory. (T&C 69:29)

This privilege of seeing and knowing for ourselves is available to us “while in the flesh.” The restoration aimed to reconnect us to heaven in a literal way. This is the same that transpired with Enoch and others in earlier dispensations.

The Book of Mormon is filled with ascension lessons and examples. There is one verse that captures Joseph Smith’s ascent theology. That verse compresses it into a single sentence. It explains why the Book of Mormon contains the “fullness of the gospel.” And it’s perhaps Joseph’s most inspired declaration:

Verily thus says the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsakes their sins, and comes unto me, and calls on my name, and obeys my Voice, and keeps all my commandments, shall see my face and know that I Am, and that I am the true light that lights every man who comes into the world[.] (T&C 93:1)

“Every soul” includes you and me. Every one of us has equal access to the Lord. The conditions are the same for all. Forsake sins; come to Christ; call on His name; obey His voice; keep his commandments. This is far more challenging than obedience to a handful of “thou shalt nots” because so much is required to be *done*, so much required to be *known*. A great deal of study and prayer is required to stand in the presence of the Lord. Once done, we shall see His face and know that He is the true light that enlightens every one.

The foregoing excerpts were taken from:

- Denver's conference talk titled “The Doctrine of Christ”, given in Boise, ID on September 11th, 2016;
- Denver’s conference talk titled “Things to Keep Us Awake at Night” given in St. George, UT on March 19th, 2017;

- Denver's conference talk titled "Our Divine Parents" given in Gilbert, AZ on March 25th, 2018; and
- The presentation of Denver's paper titled "The Restoration's Shattered Promises and Great Hope", given at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, UT on July 28, 2018.