

Denver Snuffer Podcast 193: Family of God, Part 3

This is part three of a series about the Family of God, what it consists of, and how it is and will be organized.

DENVER: Individual salvation and promises of eternal life are just that, they are individual. A restoration of the family of Israel requires more – including cooperation and interrelationships that will be formed by God himself. Promises made to individuals give the individual hope.

If you take the vision of the redemption of the dead – that we find in D&C 138 – he saw a vision where they were gathered together in one place an innumerable company of the spirits of the just who had been faithful in the testimony of Jesus while they lived in mortality. And who had offered sacrifice in the similitude of the great sacrifice of the Son of God, and had suffered tribulation in the redeemer's name. All these had departed the mortal life firm in the hope of a glorious resurrection through the grace of God the Father and his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ. All of them. These were the righteous. They were in paradise and all of them were worthy, they had hope, and not only did the Savior give them hope before death, he visited with them in the spirit world during the time between his death and his resurrection. But that did not get them reconnected to the fathers in heaven. Nor did it even get them resurrected because it goes on to say in the same vision, 'from among the righteous he organized his forces and appointed messengers clothed with power and authority and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness. Even to all the spirits of men, and thus was the gospel preached to the dead.' So the righteous who departed this life firm in the hope of a glorious resurrection, who had offered sacrifice in the similitude – many of whom had seen him in the flesh, who witnessed him and were ministered to by him, and given authority by him in the spirit world, remained in the world of the dead to preach to the dead.

Only the organization through a temple and associated rites results in finishing the family of God in the house of order, following the results achieved – or allowing the results achieved – by Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. Which are described in D&C 132:37.

Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob they did none other things than that which they were commanded, they have entered into their exaltation according to the promises. And they sit upon thrones and are not angels, but are Gods.

In D&C 138:41, Abraham, the father of the faithful, Isaac, and Jacob were also there. In verses 41 and 42 of D&C 138 Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were there, but in the revelation given in 1843 they're sitting on thrones. They're not in the spirit world proselytizing. They're sitting on thrones. The difference between these two categories are the differences between individual salvation, which can come, and reorganizing the family of God, which must occur by an ordinance in a temple, to be acceptable to God.

This is why the command was given to build the temple in Nauvoo. And why God offered to

restore to them the fullness that they did not achieve. We need to let God take the lead and we need to patiently await each step along the way. This is the stuff of which the prophecies speak. And it is the stuff that will be fulfilled. But the rites and the ordinances necessary to accomplish that – people in this generation don't even have a clue how that necessarily has to roll forth. But rest assured, it will. It will.

Zion will be God's work, and in the end it will be His and His alone. He will own it; He will bring it; He will be the author of it, and He is the one who says that He will take credit for it. When it happens, however, it will conform to a pattern.

This is a verse that gets attributed to Enoch, who is in turn quoting a prophecy that was given by Adam. This is the original prophecy given at the beginning of the world through father Adam, who established in the beginning the covenant that God Himself intends to vindicate.

"Now this same priesthood, which was in the beginning, shall be in the end of the world also." (Moses 6:7 LE; see also Genesis 3:14 RE.)

That authority gets explained a little more fully when Abraham sought for the blessing that began in the beginning. He describes what it was that he wanted:

I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same; having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers. It was conferred upon me from the fathers; it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time, yea, even from the beginning, or before the foundation of the earth, down to the present time, even the right of the firstborn, or the first man, who is Adam, or first father, through the fathers unto me. (Abr. 1:2-3 LE; see also Abraham 1:1 RE.)

There are some very bright, well studied, Latter-day Saints who think they know what the gospel and priesthood of Abraham was.

I'm here today to declare to you the truth, whether you accept it or not, whether you understand it or not, whether you think you can parse the scriptures otherwise or not. I'm telling you what the truth is today. Abraham sought for the right that came down through the fathers, from Adam, which was the right of the firstborn, which is that priesthood that must be restored in order to bring about the purposes of God in the last days. Abraham chapter 2 verse 11 LE (see also Abraham 3:1 RE), the Lord says that through him:

...I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed (that is, thy Priesthood), for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say,

the literal seed, or the seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel.

Abraham's fatherhood reckons from priesthood. Although the right will continue through the literal seed, it reckons through priesthood. He sought for the right to be one of the fathers.

We're talking about a time in the last days, prophesied, and repeated by Jacob as his testimony in the Book of Mormon, when the natural fruit is going to reappear upon the earth. Natural fruit is always genealogical; it is always familial.

There is going to come a time in the last days when the Family of God will return again to the earth. "That same priesthood" includes a function that is not well understood. Abraham knew what this was when he said he desired to be a "father of many nations." He was identifying one of the attributes and one of the roles that necessarily must return.

If you go to Moses chapter 5 there is an incident that takes place in which Mother Eve celebrated because, after the apostasy of son after son, she rejoiced because – well, I'll read it to you. This is Moses 5:16 LE (see also Genesis 3:5-6 RE):

And Adam and Eve, his wife, ceased not to call upon God. And Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bare Cain, and said: [now this is her, she conceived, she bare Cain, and she said concerning this son] I have gotten a man from the Lord; wherefore he may not reject his words. But behold, Cain hearkened not, saying: Who is the Lord that I should know him?

That is to say, Mother Eve looked at Cain in contrast to those that had rejected the gospel message that had been born by her previously. And Cain, apparently an answer to her supplication to the Lord, came as what she anticipated would be the son upon whom the birthright would be conferred. The one through whom the lineage would continue; the one through whom the government of God would continue upon the earth. The replacement for Adam.

But Cain when he arrived at the age of accountability and beyond, "hearkened not, saying: Who is the Lord that I should know him?"

And she again conceived and bare his brother Abel. And Abel hearkened unto the voice of the Lord. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. (Moses 5:17 LE; see also Genesis 3:6 RE.)

Now mind you, there is no attempt to set out the chronology here other than by milestones. But Cain had determined to reject the Lord and not hearken to Him by the time the replacement, Abel, was born. And when Cain, who thought it his birthright, found that he could be displaced by his younger brother, as an act of overthrowing the government of God, Cain slew Abel in order to prevent the birthright, in order to prevent the promised Messiah, in order to prevent the work of God progressing through any lineage other than

his own. This was an act of treason. This was an act of overthrowing the government of God. This was an attempt to force God to place the Messiah, that should redeem all mankind, into a position inferior to Cain, his father.

But God replace the slain Abel with Seth. And Seth who was the one through whom then the promise would be realized.

As you go through the account in Moses chapter 6, at [verse] 10 and 11 LE (see also Genesis 3:15 RE):

...Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his own image, and called his name Seth.

So in "his own likeness after his own image" when Adam was created in God's own likeness after God's own image makes Seth, like Adam, a godly man.

And the days of Adam, after he had begotten Seth, were eight hundred years, and he (that is [Adam]) begat many sons and daughters.

There is no indication that any of them were as rebellious as were the descendents of Cain. He begat many sons and daughters. And yet, in the next verses there is only one son who is identified.

Seth lived one hundred and five years, and begat Enos, and prophesied in all his days, and taught his son Enos in the ways of God; wherefore Enos prophesied also. (Moses 6:13 LE; see also Genesis 3:16 RE.)

So although there are many sons and many daughters, there is only one name. And you can follow it through. Seth, "many sons," all of whom are unnamed other than one — and that one that is named is Enos.

Enos had "many sons," all of whom are also unnamed other than one: Cainan. And Cainan has "many sons," all of whom are unnamed other than one; the one that is named is Mahalaleel. And although all of his predecessors had "many sons," Mahalaleel had "sons." So the fertility rate is collapsing as we got closer to the Flood. There is only one named son of Mahalaleel and that is Jared. There is only one named son out of all the sons of Jared, and that is Enoch. And there is only one named son out of all of the sons of Enoch, and that is Methuselah.

This is not a genealogy. This is a description of the government of God as it descended down through each generation. So that upon the death of one you then knew who stood next in line in order to be "the father of all, the father of many nations;" the role that is occupied by the head of the human family. It is a priesthood line, in which only one in each generation stands at the head as the father.

This one stands as "the father of all," and hence Abraham's desire to become "a father of many nations," because if he stepped into the line, he necessarily stepped into the role of providing the government of God. Christ is the one to whom all generations belong. He is the Redeemer of all mankind, and as the Savior of mankind He becomes the Father of all.

In Isaiah chapter 9 there is a verse that is dealing squarely with this issue. This is chapter 9 verse 6 of Isaiah LE (see also Isaiah 4:1 RE):

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.

This is a prophecy about Christ coming to restore, in the meridian of time, the government of God in which He, Christ, represented the "Father" of all, as the Redeemer of all, as the bringer again of the holy covenant.

He is prophesied to return with the description provided in the Book of Revelation, chapter 19 verse 16 LE (see also Revelation 8:1 RE), as "the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords."

In D&C section 76 He explains what His intention is with respect to mankind. He intends to make men:

[T]hey are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fullness and glory, and are priests of the Most High after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son. (D&C 76:56 LE; see also T&C 69:13 RE.)

That's the intention that He has for all men; that men should become like Him: "kings and priests."

Zion is a mortal responsibility. Men must cooperate with God for God to be able to bring it. It is not something that heaven is going to provide for us.

When Enoch and his city were established, it was not until after it was established and people had gathered together that the Lord came and dwelt with them. They prepared the place, they extended the invitation, and the Lord came.

Likewise, in the city that was established by Melchizedek, it wasn't the angels who built his city. He preached repentance; men repented, and as a consequence of having repented Zion was taken up into heaven. Enoch's Zion fled. Melchizedek's Zion fled.

The last days Zion will be built not to flee. It will be built as an established beachhead to which the Powers of Heaven will return in order for He whose right it is to govern the earth can assume the responsibility of governing the earth. He intends to overthrowing every

other government there is and to establish as the King and as the Prince of Peace, and as the Father of Righteousness, His rule and His reign over the earth once again at His coming.

Joseph Smith described the priesthood that will function in Zion preliminary to the Lord's return. This is a quote from one of his teachings: "That priesthood is a perfect law of theocracy and stands as God to give laws to the people." (That's from *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* on page 322.) In that same talk there is a better elaboration made [by] one of the note-takers. You can find this in *The Words of Joseph Smith*, page 246. Joseph said:

It is understood by many by reading this chapter [referring to Hebrews chapter 7] that Melchizedek was a king of some country or nation on earth. But it was not so. In the original it reads 'king of shalom,' which signifies 'king of peace or righteousness' and not of any country or nation.

What Melchizedek established was a community of peace, and as the one who preached the peace to which the people came he was acknowledged as the prince of peace or the King of righteousness.

Zion will come. It will come, not because of the worthiness of any of us, it will come because of the repentance of us, and the worthiness of those with whom God covenanted to bring it to pass, including Adam and Enoch and Abraham and Melchizedek. It will come as a consequence of the righteousness of those who went before and with whom God, who cannot lie in a covenant, made a covenant to cause it to happen in the last days. It will surely come.

Mormon wrote his book and had us in mind as his audience. After Mormon finished his book there was one reader, and that was his son Moroni, who buried it. Everything Mormon did he did for this audience today, the last days, the gentiles. As he is finishing up his record – this is in Mormon 8:31 LE (see also Mormon 4:4 RE) – he talks about us and says:

There shall be many who will say, Do this, or do that, and it mattereth not, for the Lord will uphold such at the last day. But wo unto such, for they are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.

There is a right way, and it will be done according to the Lord's will. And the Lord is actively working to bring that about right now in our day. The potential for Zion and the covenants being fulfilled in our day is as great as it has been in any generation from the days of Adam until now. And yet in all those generations there have only been two successes that the scriptures have captured.

Well, the original priesthood and the original pattern will have to return in order for the last days Zion to exist.

God's purpose is to bring us to repentance. The Lord is exceptionally positive, but He is positive in stating affirmatively the standard that is acceptable to Him. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely

for my name's sake." He expected us to be misunderstood, misapprehended, assessed very narrowly just as He was, cast out, not to be handed money and to be given a chief seat, to be adored, and to be respected.

Our challenge among ourselves, however diminutive we may seem to be; priestcraft can invade our little fellowships every bit as much as it can invade multi-billion-dollar institutions. There's no limit on where you can run amiss.

Rest assured that God intends to establish in the last days a Zion in which we will see the return of exactly what was here at the beginning. There will be a return. The reason why they are coming to the children of Ephraim in the everlasting mountains is because there will be a new Jerusalem. They will bring rich treasures when they come because they have records that they themselves are going to need to have translated. They are going to be crowned because the Family of God consists of people who are, in fact, kings and priests. All of that infrastructure has to be put in place by the Lord before His return. Therefore He intends to accomplish this work. When He accomplishes this work, you are not going to find at the top of it a king like the gentiles expect. You're going to find something or someone or some group who are meek and lowly, who are rather more like our Savior than the kings who ruled during our Savior's day. You won't find a Caesar and you won't find a local potentate; you will find a servant.

There is a parable. It's just one verse. It's a very short parable. It moves along, but it's a response that Christ gave to the question that was put to Him by his disciples asking Him: Tell us what the signs of your return is going to be. He goes through a list of things but he ends with a little parable at the end. Our translation makes it seem kind of morbid so I'm going to substitute "body" for "carcass" because it sounds like what you're dealing with in the current King James version is morbid, not a living body. He says one of the signs that are going to be of His return is: "Where the body is, that's where the eagles will gather." The "body" is the New Jerusalem. The "eagles" are going to be angelic ministrants who are going to come.

There has to be an opening that occurs in order to prepare the way. The opening at this end is going to be handled by someone who has remained behind, and the opening at the far end is going to be the one to whom the assignment was given to open the way for His return; Elijah, the one who was promised.

Now, I want to be really clear. I don't expect either of those individuals to have any public ministry again. They have a role in Zion, and those who dwell in Zion are going to have some contact with them. The three Nephites are a great example. They, like John, were given a similar ministry to remain around and to administer until the end of the earth. And they did minister. Two of the people to whom they ministered were Mormon and Moroni. They, like ministering angels, ministered to Mormon who in turn ministered to the public. They ministered to Moroni and kept his hope up in the waning days of that dispensation. But they did not minister publicly. John will have a role, but the work of Zion is the work of flesh and blood.

Men have to extend the invitation for God to return so that men who extend that invitation are worthy of His return and the Lord can safely come without utterly destroying all who are upon the earth. Therefore you need Zion, among other reasons, in order for there to be a place and a people to whom the Lord can safely return without utterly destroying the earth at His coming. However small, however diminutive it may be, there needs to be a Zion that extends the invitation for the Lord to return.

What Joseph Smith seemed to want, according to Bushman, and I agree with him on this, was plentitude of family, meaning he wanted to bring everyone into a family together. And so the sealing mechanism was the means by which you bring family together, not to commit adultery but to bind people together through an ordinance that was authoritative, that allowed them to pass out of this life into the next life as part and member of a family of God.

And then you have all of those statements about how Joseph would manipulate people, promising them and their family salvation in the afterlife if this marriage covenant were entered into. Sounds a whole lot like what you are trying to achieve is sealing people together into a family that will endure into eternity so that they can lay claim on one another.

Beginning in October of 1843 there's a mention made of a new ordinance that never gets mentioned by Joseph until then. And, beginning in October, he, for the first time, mentions a different ordinance that might be used. That different ordinance is adoption.

He's saying that adoption would accomplish the same thing. If you're picking up on the fact that Joseph Smith was trying to put together the family of God, and you saw that chart that comes out in the - it was the Millennial Star - where you have God, and then you have the Tree of the Family... Orson Hyde prepared it but he did it based upon something that Joseph had been teaching. This is 1839, mind you. There's still only one ordinance associated with sealing at this point. It's going to be four more years before the word "adoption" ever appears in anything that Joseph writes. Thinking in terms of the role Joseph Smith may have occupied, although it was not generally understood at that time, and of what was happening with adoption later on, think about this in terms of covenantal relationships and of what is being assembled as a family of God in order to endure into eternity:

We have reason to believe that many things were introduced among the saints before God had signified the times, and notwithstanding the principles and plans may have been good; yet aspiring men, in other words, men who had not the substance of godliness about them, perhaps undertook to handle edged tools. Children, you know, are fond of tools while they are not yet able to use them. Time and experience, however, is the only safe remedy against such evils. *There are many teachers but perhaps not many fathers.* There are times coming when God will signify many things which are expedient for the wellbeing of the saints, but the times have not yet come but will come as fast as there can be found place and receptions for them.

So there are many teachers but there aren't many fathers. The challenge is to put people into position in which you have this family of God reconstituted on earth. Joseph was aimed in that direction, and it was 1839. But you have one tool, and only one tool.

The government of God is the family. The government of God is not stakes and wards and districts and missions and areas and all that. It's family; the government of God is family. Therefore the sealing is to put together a family.

One of the requests that the mother of John and his brother came and made of Christ was that when Christ got into his kingdom, the mother was asking if her boys could sit on his left and on his right. Christ said that "when I get my kingdom they can be there with me but I don't have the right to assign who's going to sit on my right and who's going to sit on my left. That's left up to the Father." The purpose of organizing the family on earth through the sealing process is to make sure that you get into the kingdom, but it's kind of foolish to say I have ambition to be way up high in the organization of the family of God, because Christ told parables about people that are capable of ruling over a city will be put in that position. People that aren't – his parable of the talents, his parable of the laborer in the vineyard – but what you really want is to get into the kingdom. Once you get into the kingdom then how the kingdom gets organized is going to be entirely up to the Father. How that will unfold will be the permanent resolution of all issues involving salvation pertaining to this planet at the very end, and all those who have lived or come through here. And that organization at the end is more relevant for what will come thereafter.

The reason why father Abraham had to go to Melchizedek in order to then rejoice and say, "I have gotten me a priesthood," was because although the line may have had fatherly connections from father Shem down to Abraham, the immediate ancestors of father Abraham were idolaters. True enough, his father repented for a short period of time but he didn't persist in that. Therefore, despite the fact that Melchizedek certainly held authority, there were members of the posterity of Melchizedek between him and father Abraham who were lost and then Abraham was required to come and reconnect because of the apostasy.

When you're talking about the greatest blessings that God offers for the salvation of his children, when you're talking about the family of God, if it could simply be put in one time forever then putting it into father Adam would have solved the problem all the way down to us today. It can and it has been broken. It can and it has been restored. It can and it has been reconnected after a period of apostasy. In fact, once you reconnect Abraham with Melchizedek, you actually have then a family of God beginning with Adam that runs in one continuous line right down to Ephraim. Then you have Joseph's comment about the prophets of the Old Testament. I'm not sure that he means all of them but he certainly means a number that are identifiable. All prophets held Melchizedek priesthood and were ordained by God himself, Joseph said that. I don't think what Joseph is talking about is, "I confer upon you something." I think he's talking about this very connection where you have an isolated faithful individual who honors the fathers and is doing everything that he can in his day but for whom there is no existing possibility for having it occur. God fixes that problem for that individual, not in order to establish a new dispensation in which salvation proceeds with the gathering of a people, and a making of a people. But it's a dispensation to

that individual for purposes of trying to call others to repentance, and if others were to repent then God could do something with that.

The reason He lead away Lehi and the family of Lehi was to try and establish a righteous branch and a vineyard unto the Lord, and the only way to do that was to get them away from the people who were corrupt in Jerusalem, and maybe give them the potential for holding onto and becoming a people of promise. They were on again, off again, and faithful. A number of troubling moments in their history, but in general, they were sufficiently intact by the time that the Lord came, that He visited with them and He renewed that with them, and that connection was certainly fulsome at that point.

The only purpose behind the last days work, both what was happening at the time of Joseph and what the Lord is offering to us today, is to accomplish that fulsome restoration of the family of God. Joseph talked about temples and they were built incrementally, and they never reached the finish line even on the second one before he was killed, but he laid a fabulous foundation and pointed in a direction that the restoration necessarily must go to and complete. If we don't have the tabernacle of God where he comes to dwell with his people, which he does when he has a family on earth, then the prophecies are not going to be fulfilled. Then the promises that were made to Enoch will not be realized. Then the statements of what will happen in the last days through Moses will not be vindicated. Then Adam's prophecy concerning his descendants to the end of time will not be realized. All of these things point, so we know it is going to happen. The question is not, is it going to happen, the question is, will we rise up or will we not. Because what he's offering is, in fact, a legitimate opportunity for that to indeed happen.

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

If you cannot reconstruct the family through an adoption ordinance process the work cannot be accomplished. There just isn't time. We're in the process of walking back to how it was in the beginning. A lot of people think that by getting a New Testament church put on the ground that Joseph Smith accomplished the fulsome restoration. It was never intended to stop there, it's supposed to go all the way back to the beginning. It's a giant chiasm and it's a giant mirror, and today we do not live 900 years. The way in which it will be rebuilt at the end is going to be by ordinance in the house of the Lord and a place that He has accepted. The only kinds of places that are legitimately the house of God are houses that God has come to, to dwell in, in order for those who seek His face to find Him. That happened at Kirtland. It never happened at Nauvoo or Salt Lake.

I know that... well... the fact is that a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of smoke by day is an allusion, an attempt to refer to things we are familiar with to describe things that we are not familiar with. A conduit that reaches up into heaven as the temporary appearance of the Lord to Joseph in the First Vision is intended to be a permanent connection at some place. It will be one of the reasons why people say, let's not go up against the people of Zion because Zion is too terrible. The presence of God is dreadful to the wicked, it's frightening to them.

They get near it and it convicts them of their unworthiness. They dare not go up. But the pure and the humble and the noble are drawn to it. They will want to be there. And so that conduit, that fiery pillar, that stairway to heaven, Jacob's ladder, the chariot of fire, all of those things are an attempt to describe that heavenly connection, that heavenly presence. To the unworthy and the ungodly looking at it, they may or may not be able to see anything about it but they will sense extraordinary dread. It will frighten them. To the worthy there will be something enlightened about the very presence of the place. It will not seem to them to just be another place. It will seem as though the God of heaven has some base established there. That's when you know that an ensign has been established in the tops of the mountains to which nations will flow saying, come, let us go up and learn from the god of Jacob, because that ensign is actually something godly, holy, edifying, instructive, revelatory, filled with light, and redemptive, and the god who dwells there is going to be the Lord. So we don't have time... If you think about it, Enoch taught for 365 years before his people were prepared enough to go up, and we have to be prepared enough for them to come down and not destroy us by the brightness of their presence.

The foregoing excerpts were taken from:

- A Q&A session titled "A Visit with Denver Snuffer" held on May 13, 2015
- His talk titled "Zion Will Come" given near Moab, UT on April 10th, 2016
- A fireside talk titled "Cursed, Denied Priesthood", given in Sandy, UT on January 7th, 2018