

Denver Snuffer Podcast 194: Family of God, Part 4

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

DENVER: There is a great gulf separating us from the first fathers of mankind. At the very beginning, a book of remembrance was kept in the language of Adam. Enoch taught repentance and knowledge of God using that book of remembrance. Those records were passed down for generations until Abraham. He learned of the first fathers, the Patriarchs, from those records. Abraham wrote: "But the records of the Fathers, even the Patriarchs, concerning the right of Priesthood, the Lord, my God, preserved in mine own hands." (T&C Abr. 2:4).

At the time of Abraham, Egypt was the greatest civilization on earth. Egypt was great because it imitated the original religion of the first fathers. Abraham explained:

Now the first government of Egypt was established by Pharaoh, the eldest son of Zeptah, the daughter of Ham, and it was after the manner of the government of Ham, which was Patriarchal. Pharaoh, being a righteous man, established his kingdom and judged his people wisely and justly all his days, seeking earnestly to imitate that order established by the fathers in the first generations, in the days of the first Patriarchal reign, even in the reign of Adam, and also Noah, his father, who blessed him with the blessings of the earth, and with the blessings of wisdom, but cursed him as pertaining to the Priesthood. (Abr. 2:3).

Egypt began by imitating the pattern Adam, Seth, Enos and their direct descendants through Noah used to organize the family of the faithful. Abraham calls it a "government" but it was a family. The title "Pharaoh" originally meant "great house" or "great family" because Pharaoh was the "father" over Egypt who taught and led them. Over time, however, the title "Pharaoh" came to mean "king" or "tyrant" who controlled people.

The first Pharaohs, or founding father[s] of Egypt, imitated the first fathers of mankind. He could only imitate because he did not have the right to act as the patriarchal head of mankind. He nevertheless tried to be a shepherd who led by righteous example. Abraham knew more about the first fathers than did the Egyptians because Abraham had the original book of remembrance written by the fathers in the language of Adam.

God demands that our hearts turn to the fathers or we will be wasted at His return. This requirement is not to turn to them in just a figurative way, where we do genealogical work to connect ourselves with our recently deceased forbearers. That work is a wrongheaded effort to seal people to those kept in prison. The return of our hearts will require us to have the same religion, and the same beliefs in our hearts that the original fathers had beginning with Adam. Only in that way will our hearts turn to the fathers.

God declared to Abraham that the chosen descendants, the people of God, would call Abraham their father. They would need to have that same religion belonging to the first fathers. God explained, "For as many as receive **this** gospel shall be called after thy name

and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as unto their Father.” (Abr. 3:1, emphasis added.)

The term used by God (“this gospel”) is the original holy order the first fathers, including Adam, possessed at the beginning. Our hearts must turn to the fathers because their religion – not apostate Christianity, or Judaism, or apostate Mormonism, or some remnant or relic of Adam’s religion, but the order of the first fathers – must be fully restored before we have this gospel possessed by Abraham, who had the records of the fathers and therefore knew the original.

Adam still presides and still holds the keys. Joseph Smith said, “Adam holds the keys of the dispensation of the fullness of times; i.e., the dispensation of all the times have been, and will be revealed through him, from the beginning to Christ, and from Christ to the end of all the dispensations that are to be revealed.” (T&C 140:3).

In an October 1840 proclamation to the saints, Joseph and the High Council in Nauvoo hoped to see happen in 1840 what did not happen then, has not happened, and may only happen if people honor the covenant offered last year. The proclamation said:

The work of the Lord in these last days, is one of vast magnitude and almost beyond the comprehension of mortals; its glories are past description and its grandeur insurpassable. It has been the theme which has animated the bosom of prophets and righteous men from the creation of this world down through every succeeding generation to the present time; and it is truly the dispensation of the fullness of times, which all things which are in Christ Jesus, whether in heaven or on the earth, shall be gathered together in him, and when all things shall be restored, as spoken of by all the holy prophets since the world began: for in it will take place the glorious fulfillment of the promises made to the fathers[.] (JSP Documents Vol. 7, p. 412; also *Times and Seasons*, Oct. 1840, p. 178.)

Joseph understood that the project was reclamation and restoration of what once was and had been lost. We’re not trying to create something new; we’re trying to reclaim that which is the oldest of all, the original religion.

That grandeur was not achieved in Joseph’s day. The restoration has never reached the magnitude God intends.

If the covenant with God is kept, then He will allow His house to be built. The covenant cannot be kept if there is jarring, contention, envy, strife, lustful and covetous desires. If we do the same as those who went before, we would pollute the ground again.

I have pondered how much more ought to have been accomplished during Joseph Smith’s lifetime? Joseph was only able to accomplish a fraction of what needs to be restored. Joseph faced continuing troubles because of the ambition of the believers. Too many of the saints aspired to lead. They wanted control over others. It hindered the work. Joseph was not able to finish the restoration. Our hearts must turn to the fathers in heaven, and we cannot ignore that duty because of any other vain ambition here and now. We should be less

astonished by the earlier failure and far more astonished at how little we have learned from their failure.

There is a need “to set in order the House of God,” which can only be accomplished through a temple where that work can be performed. The temple is not the “House of God” needing to be set in order. But a temple is required to accomplish the work for God’s House, or family, to be set in order. As once described by God:

“Organize yourselves, prepare every needful thing, and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a House of God, that your incomings may be in the name of the Lord, that your outgoings may be in the name of the Lord, that all your salutations may be in the name of the Lord with uplifted hands unto the Most High.” (T&C 86:29).

The Lord is equal to the challenge. He will establish a new civilization. It will be founded on the fullness of His gospel. Lost truths will be restored; the path of righteousness will be returned.

Society is broken. Everywhere we see corrupt cultures based on corrupt laws, corrupt religions, corrupt values, and ultimately, corrupt thought. Beginning again requires recivilizing people. To be free from corruption requires a change in thinking. If the Lord is to accomplish this, there will need to be a new temple at the center of that new civilization.

The Lord talked with Enoch regarding His return and started with a description of His temple: *For there shall be **my tabernacle**, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem* (Genesis 4:22 RE, emphasis added). It can only become Zion and a New Jerusalem if the Lord’s tabernacle is there. His temple will be where He teaches all that must be understood to please God. Then, when people rise up to become what the Lord expects, His risen Tabernacle of glory, and the Lord Himself, will come to dwell there.

There is a great deal of work to be done to establish a foundation. And an even greater work thereafter. When God has His people, they are always commanded to build a temple. Joseph Smith explained:

What was the object of gathering the...people of God in any age of the world? ...The main object was to build unto the Lord a house whereby He could reveal unto His people the ordinances of His house and the glories of His kingdom, and teach the people the way of salvation; for there are certain ordinances and principles that, when they are taught and practiced, must be done in a place or house built for that purpose. (*Joseph Smith Papers*, History, 1838–1856, Vol. D-1, p. 1572)

Joseph Smith taught the Relief Society that “the church is not now organized into its proper order, and cannot be until the temple is completed” (*Joseph Smith Papers*, Relief Society Minute Book, p. 36). Some believe that meant temple rites would fit inside the existing church organization. However, it is possible, if the temple had been completed, the people

might have been organized in a new and different order, resembling the order in the age of the patriarchs. Joseph never had the opportunity to participate in that advancement. Before the temple was finished, Joseph was dead; and those who were leading had no intention or ability to reorganize the church into the “proper order.”

The need for covenant people to cooperate in building a temple has been the same in any age. Temple builders founded the earliest civilizations. They did this to imitate the antediluvians. The Book of Abraham account suggests there was something in Egypt below the floodwaters worth waiting for the waters to recede. Some observers claim there is physical evidence that the earliest temple-complex structures in Egypt were built prior to the flood. They use archeological evidence at the Giza site to conclude the place was once under water, consistent with the description in the Book of Abraham.

When the first temples were built, or inherited by ancient civilizations, the center of life, government, education, culture, and art was at the temple. This was handed down from the first generations. The temple was founded before and will be needed to be the foundation again. When there has been an apostasy, temple building has been part of restoring. A new civilization will only become possible through teachings learned in the future House of God. The necessary ordinances can only be restored in that setting. There you will receive an uncorrupted restoration of the original faith taught to Adam and the patriarchs.

Joseph Smith was told that God intended to restore what was lost (meaning the fullness of the priesthood), but it was only to be accomplished through a temple. These were the Lord’s words to Joseph:

For, for this cause I commanded Moses that he should build a tabernacle, that they should bear it with them in the wilderness, and to build a house in the land of promise that those ordinances might be revealed which had been hid from before [the foundation of] the world... Therefore, verily I say unto you that your anointings, and your washings, and your baptisms for the dead, and your solemn assemblies, and your memorials for your sacrifices by the sons of Levi, and for your oracles in your most holy places, wherein you receive conversations, and your statutes and judgments for the beginning of the revelations and foundation of Zion, and for the glory and honor, and endowment of all her municipals, are ordained by the ordinance of my holy house, which my people are always commanded to build unto my holy name. (T&C 141:12)

Joseph was martyred before there was a place where God could come to restore what had been lost. Joseph began to roll out a portion of temple ceremonial worship, but it was never completed. Uninspired men who have changed, deleted, and added to what remained from Joseph have corrupted those incomplete ceremonies.

The gospel is for redemption. Redemption from the fall returns man to God’s presence. Ascending the heavenly mount is always taught in a properly-organized-temple’s ceremonies. Ascending to heaven, redemption, and becoming part of the Family of God are all part of the ancient temple rites and must also be part of future temple rites.

The concept of “adoption” is widely recognized as part of Christianity. The term is employed loosely to mean that a person believes in Christ and recognizes Him as their Savior. The language of Paul is often cited and understood to claim believers are adopted into God’s family.

For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs: heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. (Romans 1:34 RE)

Language in the Book of Mormon has also been used to support a loose understanding of the term “adoption.” *Marvel not that all mankind, yea, men and women—all nations, kindreds, tongues and people—must be born again; yea, born of God, changed from their carnal and fallen state, to a state of righteousness, being redeemed of God, becoming his sons and daughters (Mosiah 11:28 RE).*

The loose understanding of “adoption” was considerably tightened around October 1843 when Joseph Smith expanded his use of sealing authority. It grew from establishing marriages to include, also, man-to-man sealing through adoption. The last eight months of his life, Joseph sealed or “adopted” other men to himself. There was no settled, formal ordinance that has been preserved, and the proof of Joseph’s practice is mostly post-mortem, as those who were exposed to the practice only vaguely recalled what he had done.

What Joseph Smith understood about adoption did not get passed to subsequent church leaders clearly enough to preserve the practice intact. Today adoption has vanished from the LDS church and was never practiced by the RLDS church or other branches of the Restoration.

Joseph Smith did not leave the Christian practice of “adoption” a loose idea, with believers becoming sons of God by conversion, belief, or baptism. He tied it to both authority to seal and an authoritative ordinance. Both of those were lost when Joseph and Hyrum were killed.

If adoption is (as Brigham Young thought in 1856) the highest ordinance above all the endowments that can be given, if it is needed for the gospel (as taught to Abraham) to be restored, then the loss of adoption rites is indeed a sign of apostasy. Brigham Young taught adoption would bind a person beyond the devil’s power to break. But adoption was abandoned before the end of the 1800s. Adoption will need to be restored as a rite (with an accompanying authoritative ordinance and sealing) in order for the things Joseph Smith alone understood and taught to be renewed.

In the Joseph Smith History, when he was visited by the angelic visitor Nephi, he quoted the prophecy in these words:

"And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers; if it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming" (JSH 3:4 RE).

So, now we have (in various renderings of this) something that is referred to as "sealing hearts of Fathers to children and children to Fathers," something that is called "turning the hearts," and something that is called "promises made to the fathers."

"Promises made to the fathers" are covenants that God made with them concerning the last days' work, in which there would again be on the earth those who are connected to the Fathers in a way that avoids the earth becoming utterly wasted at His coming. This is something that has to be attended to through the restoration and construction of an authentic temple conforming to the pattern of heaven, in which these things can be attended to and the knowledge and understanding imputed, in order for people to comprehend what it means to be a "greater follower of righteousness."

This was a revelation given in March 2015: "Hence, the great need to turn the hearts of the children to the fathers and the fathers to the children—and this too by covenant and sealing through the Holy Spirit of Promise" (*Plural Marriage*, Denver C. Snuffer, Jr. March 22, 2015). This is to restore **us**—as God restored Abraham—to the original religion.

Abraham came into this world uniquely different from the fathers that had gone before. There was an unbroken chain that continued from father to son and father to son, from the time of Adam, down through the generations until the time of Melchizedek. All of them were participants in an unbroken familial line. Abraham came into an apostate family in which his father worshipped—indeed made—dumb idols as the god to be worshipped. Therefore, Abraham is the first one that will join this line, who emerges from apostasy into possession of the original holy order. In that sense, Abraham is representative of **all** who would follow after, that seek after righteousness, in a world that is **constantly** overcome by apostasy.

Apostasy exists the **instant** that God ceases to talk, the instant that God ceases to **restore**, the instant that further light and knowledge by conversing with the Lord through the veil comes to an end. Abraham—**because** he came at a time of apostasy and **because** his father had turned to the worshipping of dumb idols—could not inherit that same standing as the first uninterrupted period, unless it were possible for that to be accomplished through adoption. Therefore, Abraham represents the revolutionary idea that one can emerge out of a state of apostasy back into (and be adopted into) the line that is in possession of the fullness of the gospel and to be one equal with them. Abraham represents an astonishing revolutionary moment in the history of God's dealing with mankind, and he also represents the opportunity for redemption for others at remote times, in remote places, who dwell among people who are apostate. It represents hope for **us**. And so, when the hearts of the children are turned to the fathers, that hope is verified and confirmed **primarily** through God's covenant with Abraham. Abraham inherited the promises that had been given to the first fathers, to be sure, but Abraham represents **hope for us**. He represents **our**

opportunity to, likewise, obtain that same hope, which was given to Abraham 430 years before the law was added through Moses.

Jacob (Nephi's brother) delivered a sermon that Nephi records in his second book. In his second book, after Jacob had read from Isaiah to teach his brethren that were interested in learning about things, he then elaborates or explains the prophecy given by Isaiah:

*"And now my beloved brethren, I have read these things that ye might know concerning the covenants of the Lord, that he has covenanted with **all the house of Israel**" (2 Nephi 6:1 RE).*

That's important—because "all the house of Israel" is greater than those that they left behind at Jerusalem. "All the house of Israel" is greater even than the Nephites plus those left at Jerusalem. The Ten Tribes had left the Northern Kingdom. They had migrated away years before Lehi left Jerusalem. Therefore, "all the house of Israel" (which includes those scattered on the isles of the sea, as the Nephites were) were remembered, and Jacob wants his brethren to understand that God's plan is all-inclusive, wherever they are, in whatever scattered condition. Even if they've altogether lost their identity as members of the house of Israel, yet they are remembered in the covenants of the Lord.

*...[he's] spoken unto the Jews by the mouth of his holy [prophet], even from the beginning, down from generation to generation, until the time cometh that they shall be restored to the true church and fold of God, when they shall be gathered home [into] the lands of their inheritance [lands—plural, not singular] and shall be established in **all their lands** of promise. (ibid)*

What Jacob is teaching to his brethren is that there are those who have received (who belong to the house of Israel) covenants that have handed to them—by covenant—**lands**, plural. This land has people upon it today who have entered into a covenant (with the Lord today) that has made this land a place of their inheritance. The descendants of the Lamanites likewise descend from fathers with whom a covenant was made that **they** inherit this land. The Jews in Israel have a promise given them; that land is theirs by divine decree—God gave it to them; it is their land. And there are **other** broken branches from the house of Israel living on lands (their descendants today) that they possess by right.

Jacob continued his sermon over a second day; and in the sermon the second day, this is the second part of Jacob's teaching concerning the covenants:

*Wherefore, for this cause, that my covenants may be fulfilled which I have made unto the children of men, that I will do unto them while they are **in the flesh**, I must needs destroy the secret works of darkness, and of murders, and of abominations. Wherefore, he that fighteth against Zion, both Jew and Gentile, both bond and free, both male and female, **shall perish**; for they are they who are the whore of all the earth. For they who are not **for** me are against me, saith our God. For I will fulfill my promises which I have made unto the children of men that I will do unto them **while they are in the flesh**. (2 Nephi 7:3 RE, emphasis added)*

This isn't some dreamy, distant, other-worldly event. He says He is going to establish, in the flesh, a people that will become Zion; and He will defend those people who are His Zion.

As Nephi closes his record, he explains plainly what he wants us (the Gentiles) to understand from his record:

Woe...unto him that shall say, We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the word of God, for we have enough. ...unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them [which] say, We have enough — shall be taken away even that which they have.

...I will be merciful unto them, saith the Lord God, if they will repent and come unto me...

There shall be many at that day when I shall proceed to do a marvelous work among them, that I...remember my covenants which I have made unto the children of men, that I may...remember the promises which I have made unto thee, Nephi, and also unto thy father, that...shall say, A bible, a bible, [we've] got a bible, ...there cannot be any more bible. But thus saith the Lord...O fools, [that] shall have a bible...

O ye gentiles, have ye remembered the Jews, mine ancient covenant people? Nay, but [you've] cursed them, [you've] hated them, and have not sought to recover them...

Thou fool that shall say, A bible, [we've] got a bible and we need no more bible. Have ye obtained a bible, save it were by the Jews? Know ye not that there are more nations than one? ...I, the Lord your God, have created all men, and...I remember those [that] are upon the isles of the sea? ...I rule in the heavens above and [I rule] in the earth beneath...Wherefore murmur ye because...ye shall receive more of my word? (2 Nephi 12:6-9 RE)

That was the very objective that Abraham sought: to **get more** of God's word. He wanted to know more; he wanted to receive commandments; he wanted to receive instructions.

Because that I have spoken one word, ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another...

*The Jews shall have the words of the Nephites, and the Nephites shall have the words of the Jews, and the Nephites and the Jews shall have the words of the lost tribes of Israel, and the lost tribes of Israel shall have the words of the Nephites and the Jews. ...My people which are of the house of Israel shall be gathered home [into] the **lands** of their [possession], and my word also shall be gathered in one. ...I am God, and...I covenanted with Abraham that I would remember his seed for ever (2 Nephi 12:10 RE, emphasis added)—*

That includes those portions of the family of Abraham that migrated out of the view of the scriptures we presently possess, so that when they drop out of the Biblical narrative (or they drop out of the Book of Mormon narrative), God was still with them; He was still doing with them; He was still leading them and teaching them; and ultimately, He visited them. All of them kept records. Those are all to be restored.

Ye need not suppose that the gentiles are utterly destroyed. For behold, I say unto you, as many of the gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord... For the Lord covenanteth with none save it be with them that repent and believe in his Son, who is the Holy One of Israel. (2 Nephi 12:11 RE)

Therefore, the covenant people of the Lord (according to the Book of Mormon) who will inherit the promises of Abraham necessarily include those gentiles who are willing to covenant with Him to allow Him to labor through them to restore things that will bring the remainder of the house of Israel back to the knowledge of their God.

Mormon interrupts his narrative summary of events by an observation he makes about the work of the Lord (inserted into his account just prior to the final round of apostasy, violence, and the great tempest that destroyed the wicked—and then Christ’s visit to the other sheep that are covered in the Book of Mormon). This is Mormon’s insertion into the record:

Surely shall he again bring a remnant of the seed of Joseph to the knowledge of the Lord their God. And as surely as the Lord liveth [he will] gather in from the four quarters of the earth all the remnant of the seed of Jacob.... He hath covenanted with all the house of Jacob, even so shall the covenant wherewith he hath covenanted with the house of Jacob be fulfilled, in his own due time, unto the restoring all the house of Jacob unto the knowledge of the covenant [which] he hath covenanted with them.... Then shall they know their Redeemer, who is Jesus Christ, the Son of God.... (3 Nephi 2:18 RE)

In Christ’s teachings to the Nephites (after He had been resurrected, appeared to them, had them come and be in contact and witness of His death and resurrection), He delivered to them the Sermon on the Mount in a slightly different form, the Sermon at Bountiful. And after He had taught that sermon, He commanded that they write down and preserve these teachings that He’s going to give:

(Hmm... someone wrote in the margin of my book. It looks like my handwriting, so I wanted to read that.)

...the remnant of their seed, who [should] be scattered forth upon the face of the earth because of their unbelief, may be brought in... (3 Nephi 7:4 RE)—

Okay, He’s now talking to the Nephite believers about the descendants of the Nephite believers, and He’s telling them, “You have to write this down.” And He tells them what they’re to write down is that eventually their descendants are gonna be scattered upon the

face of the earth because of their **unbelief**, but those descendants may be brought in. The note I wrote in the margin is that even the Lamanite remnant, who are the target of the covenant, **have to be reclaimed**, have to be brought in, have to **know** of their inheritance in order to take advantage **of** it. If they're not brought in, then they still suffer under the plague of unbelief.

...because of their unbelief, may be brought in, or may be brought to a knowledge of me...I [will] gather them in...I [will] fulfill the covenant which the Father hath made unto all the people of the house of Israel.... In the latter day shall the truth come unto the gentiles, that the fullness of these things shall be made known unto them. (Ibid.)

In other words, He's promising to the Nephites... Their descendants are going to fall away, but He promises their descendants will be gathered back in. In order to bring the descendants back in, He's promising them that the Gentiles shall receive **this knowledge**—the truth shall come unto the knowledge,

...that the fullness of these things shall be made known unto them... I will remember my covenant unto you, O house of Israel, and ye shall come unto the knowledge of the fullness of my gospel. But if the gentiles will repent and return unto me, saith the Father, behold, they shall be numbered among my people, O house of Israel. (3 Nephi 7:4-5 RE)

When the Gentiles repent and they return, then they're numbered back—just like the descendants of the Nephites when they're awakened and repent and are taught the truth and return unto God. All become one house, one fold, one people.

The foregoing excerpts were taken from:

- Denver's remarks titled "Keep the Covenant: Do the Work" given at the Remembering the Covenants Conference in Layton, UT on September 30, 2018
- Denver's conference talk titled "Civilization", given in Grand Junction, CO on April 21, 2019; and
- Denver's conference talk titled "The Book of Mormon Holds the Covenant Pattern for the Full Restoration" given in Boise, ID on September 22, 2019