

Denver Snuffer Podcast 195: Family of God, Part 5

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

DENVER: Many great and glorious things pertaining to the Kingdom of God are reserved for God's house.

In the Glossary of Gospel Terms, the "Mysteries of God" are explained in this way:

That knowledge which is hidden from the world and only made available through revelation to the faithful. Much of such knowledge may be learned but it is not to be taught. One will have to apply the process of learning the mysteries in one's life if he or she intends to learn the mysteries themselves. The scriptures tell us how to get the "mysteries of God." Learning these mysteries is the fullness of Christ's Gospel. There is a system by which men learn the mysteries of heaven and are saved. That system is set out in Alma 9:7: first, angels are sent to prepare men and women; second, they are allowed to behold the Lord's glory; then they converse with the Lord, at which point they are taught the things that have been prepared from the foundation of the earth for their salvation. All this is driven by the man or woman's faith, repentance, and holy works. Joseph Smith said, *I advise all to go on to perfection and search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of godliness.... [As for myself] it has always been my province to dig up hidden mysteries, new things, for my hearers.* This is the Book of Mormon theme. Search deeper, and find God. *Ask that you may know the mysteries of God.* That is a commandment. Although given to Oliver Cowdery, it is a principle that is applicable to all of mankind (see T&C 3:3). The claim that one should stay away from the mysteries of God is false. Refusing to follow the command to *ask that you may know the mysteries of God* (JSH 13:23) denies the power of godliness and opposes the doctrine of salvation. It is anti-Christ. "We make our own mysteries; we are not meant to be kept in darkness, and the mysteries of heaven will be unfolded to us as [soon as] we make an effort to understand them." Christ said that *the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven* are understood only by those who have been initiated and given that understanding (see Matthew 7:2). Mysteries can also be defined as solemn ceremonial ordinances or rituals which take place in a special setting. "Mysteries (from the Greek, *mystērion*, μυστήριον)...[are] confided only to the initiated and not to be communicated by them to ordinary mortals.

This is the real reason why God requires that a temple be built. A temple ordained by God, built by His command and according to His pattern, will be a repository for teachings, precepts, commandments, tenets, and covenants that are not public but are all part of Christ's gospel.

Like true temples built in the past, there will be places for general assembly where everyone will be invited to come and worship. There will be other places for fewer people

to assemble where not everyone will be extended an open invitation to come. There will also be some places forbidden to the public where God alone determines who will enter.

There will be no **temple recommend** to enter the innermost courts of God's house. No one will be required to pay to enter. The only requirement will be God's approval, through revelation, to identify those He will invite. I assume that as soon as any soul is prepared to receive what God freely offers, God will extend His invitation.

The house of God is a place of learning. It is *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* (T&C 123:3). God will determine how His house will be ordered.

The Doctrine of Christ commands that whosoever believeth in Christ and is baptized, the same shall be saved, and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God. And whoso believeth not in Christ and is not baptized shall be damned. If followed, the Doctrine of Christ leads to that illumination of mind and spirit called *fire and the Holy Ghost*. It can purge and cleanse, enlighten and instruct. It can make you **one** with God the Father and Christ, His Son:

I say unto you that this is my doctrine, and I bear record of it from the Father. And whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also, and unto him will the Father bear record of me, for he will visit him with fire and with the holy ghost. And thus will the Father bear record of me, and the holy ghost will bear record unto him of the Father and me, for the Father and I and the holy ghost are one. And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things. (3 Nephi 5:9 RE)

We must obey the Doctrine of Christ to qualify to build His house.

To qualify to build an acceptable house to God requires that His instructions and commands be followed. Therefore, any land for that purpose must be acquired by lawful purchase.

I know of no way to flee Babylon other than to pay her what she values. She values money above all else. Babylon believes you can buy anything in this world with money. It is by **giving** to Babylon what she values that we prove our heart is not set upon her. Hearts set upon Babylon mourn parting with her money. We should willingly give **her** her due, and redeem the land to build Zion.

There is a lot of opposition to even the preparatory work. There are many false spirits distracting and hindering the efforts. Accusers and opponents rail against this effort. They're like the ancient dissidents who complained:

And the whole multitude of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots and when we did eat bread to the full; for you have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill the whole assembly with hunger. (Exodus 10:2 RE)

If the invitation to build a house of God by a kindly Lord is not attractive to you, then don't contribute. Do not give this work a second thought. But when the time comes, do not gather together with those who are delighted to answer the invitation to prepare... [long pause]

...because that preparation for the Lord's return in glory must take place.

Economic realities and legal obligations must be dealt with. The path to Zion does not go **through** consecration. Consecration comes **after** there is a Zion. Even Father Abraham did not live the law of consecration. He was sanctified and qualified to receive all the blessings of the Fathers and now sits on a throne, but he paid **tithes** to Melchizedek.

When Joseph Smith restored Enoch's record (now found in Genesis), Joseph learned about the last days' Zion. It revealed, *And the Lord called his people Zion because they were of one heart, and...one mind, and [dwelt] in righteousness, and there [was] no poor among them* (Genesis 4:14 RE).

I do not believe this was their ancient goal, but it was a byproduct. Such a society cannot be organized but can be gathered. Individuals rarely are able to persuade one another through arguing to expose the other man's error.

Even among people who keep their eyes on the Lord and pay no heed to their neighbor's failure still must grow to become:

- People who refuse to judge and belittle others;
- Those who are humbled by the opportunity to build a house of God;
- Those who refuse to become an accuser.

Even among humble people the Lord can use to restore His house, there will be many things on which to disagree. Therefore, we should ask ourselves:

- What if I don't need to always be right?
- What if you don't need to be wrong?
- What if we don't need to debate?
- Can people with different backgrounds be of one heart?
- Can we have different ideas, value one another, and be of one mind?
- Is it possible to disagree with one another about meanings of Scriptures and still dwell in righteousness?
- Can we explore, consider, and respectfully discuss incomplete or inaccurate ideas?
- What if *no poor among us* includes sharing the wealth of diverse and interesting ideas?

This path of sober, thoughtful, open welcoming of differences is the only way first steps can be taken. We cannot jump into Zion. We must crawl there on bended knee, asking the Lord to bring us there.

There's a great work that at this moment is still undone, a project that remains for a faithful people. It will require revelation from heaven to be able to accomplish, and therefore, it will require people willing to receive new revelation.

Although we may understand some few things about the Lord's plans, what we know at present is relatively small in comparison with the fullness of the revelations yet to be restored.

Incomplete understanding has never prevented mankind from obeying God. From the beginning, righteous men and women have pleased God by doing what He asks of them even though they did not yet comprehend the reasons behind the commandment:

And after many days, an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, [asking], Why do you offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him, I know not but the Lord commanded me. ...the angel [spake], saying, This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father who is full of grace and truth. Wherefore, you shall do all that you do in the name of the Son. ...you shall repent...call upon...the name of the Son for ever more. And in that day the holy ghost fell upon Adam, which [bears] record of the Father and the Son... (Genesis 3:3-4 RE)

Ignorant obedience (perhaps decades or centuries) in the absence of the Holy Ghost falling upon him was the prelude that led Adam to receiving the gift.

Adam was the first Patriarch over humanity and stands at the head of his posterity, governing in the Family of God beneath only Christ and God the Father. Yet, when he lived and obeyed God, there were commandments he was given that he did not understand. He was puzzled, but he obeyed.

If you confine yourself to what existed at the time that Joseph was alive, you have a *very*, *very* difficult time saying that there is evidence Joseph did anything other than practice something called *sealing* that was designed to create plentitude in the afterlife. Joseph Smith, as Bushman described it, wanted large families to go into the eternities. In John Taylor's book, *The Government of God*, he asserts that the government of God in eternity is the family. So, if Joseph Smith is trying to restore on earth the family of God, the way in which you restore the family of God is to bind people together into some sealed family connection—doesn't matter that they're married to one another. If you seal them together, you seal people into a family relationship that can exist on into eternity.

So, Joseph doesn't use the word *adoption* in the context of *sealing* until October of 1843. In *The Joseph Smith Papers*, that's the earliest date I can find that—in his diaries—that the word adoption gets used. A very misunderstood concept, but Joseph practiced something that was adoption. But apparently, the introduction of that occurs in about the October 1843 time frame.

Until then, if you're talking sealing without defining what *sealing* meant, you weren't using the word *adoption*. You were using the word *marriage*, in people's projection of what the word meant, backward. If the sealing that took place was some form of familial tie that was designed to bind together as a family to Joseph, who had a connection that had been made to heaven, then what was being sealed was a family and not a sexual partner.

But beginning in that October 1843 time frame, there comes out something that results in adoption. Joseph will be dead within six months. Between the October mention and the time of his death six months later, there really isn't enough time in order to develop even an adequate historical record of what Joseph was doing with the idea of adoption in that time period.

There is a **true** religion; it was revealed first to Adam. Adam not only received and practiced that true religion, it is through **him** that **every subsequent** dispensation of the gospel has been revealed. Joseph Smith taught:

*Commencing with Adam, who was the first man, who is spoken of in Daniel as being the Ancient of Days, or in other words, the first and oldest of all, the great grand progenitor, of whom it is said in another place, He is Michael, because he was the first and father of all, not only by progeny, but he was the first to hold the spiritual blessings, to whom was made known the plan of ordinances for the salvation of his posterity unto the end, and to whom Christ was first revealed, and through whom Christ **has been** revealed from Heaven and will continue **to be** revealed from henceforth. **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.*

*...that all things pertaining to that dispensation should be conducted precisely in accordance with the **preceding** dispensations. And again, God purposed in himself that there should not be an Eternal fullness until every dispensation should be fulfilled and gathered together in one, and that all things whatever that should be gathered together in one, in those dispensations, unto the same fullness and Eternal glory, should be in Christ Jesus.*

*Therefore, he set the ordinances to be the same for ever and ever, and set **Adam** to watch over them, to reveal them from Heaven to man or to send angels to reveal them. (T&C 140:3,5-6; emphasis added)*

God gave to Adam the right of “dominion” over the Earth and everything (correspondingly, **everyone**) on the Earth. That was part of the original true religion. When the true religion was combined with the right to hold dominion or preside as a High Priest, it was called the “Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God.” This was shortened to “Holy Order.” It has also been called the Melchizedek Priesthood. Because of the too frequent use of the term “Melchizedek Priesthood” by the LDS Church and resulting confusion about the meaning of the term, I’ve redefined “priesthood” and avoid making use of that term without clarification. In this talk, the term “Holy Order” is used to mean the original priestly position conferred on Adam and thereafter passed on to the one eldest, worthy descendant in each subsequent generation, and the religion then taught by that holder was correct and held salvation.

The Patriarchal Fathers are Adam, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, Noah, Shem (or Melchizedek), Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. These 15

generational heads stood, **like Adam**, as God's Patriarchal Father and High Priest at the head of God's family on Earth. There were many others who believed in the religion taught by Adam and the Patriarchal Fathers, but the Holy Order given to Adam was always held in its fullness by the eldest worthy descendant in each subsequent generation until—skipping generations to—Abraham.

Abraham was the first precedent for “**sealing**” into the Order, tying a descendant separated by generations into the position of patriarchal successor to Shem (or Melchizedek). This precedent helps explain Joseph Smith's later practice of sealing others to him. Given the examples of Abraham and Joseph Smith, it becomes clear that the Holy Order does not have to be exclusively dynastic (passing in one family line) but can branch out to include any other worthy member of the line, however distant or separated by generations.

Despite nearly universal apostasy and rebellion against God **while Adam lived**, the line of Patriarchal Fathers **preserved** the true religion. Noah had a father who knew and was taught by Adam. Noah's living grandfather, great-grandfather, and ancestors for seven generations knew and were taught by Adam. Learning about God from His messengers and priests was (and still is) necessary to avoid dwindling in unbelief and falling into apostasy. The “angels” who ministered **included mortals** who were given Divine knowledge to teach.

Noah preserved the original religion of God through the cataclysm of the flood. Three of the sons of Noah were taught it, and Noah's most faithful son inherited the right. The fullness of the Holy Order was conferred upon Shem (who received the title “Melchizedek”). A descendant of Ham falsely claimed he held the Holy Order, but he could only institute an imitation of the Order.

After Melchizedek, an apostasy lasted until Abraham. Although he was raised by an idolater and lamented that his fathers offered sacrifices to idols, Abraham searched for the true God of Heaven. Abraham **found** God, and the covenant of the first Fathers was renewed and conferred upon him by Melchizedek. Generations of apostates were excluded from the Holy Order, but Abraham was adopted into the line by Melchizedek, thereby restoring continuity **back** to Adam.

Abraham represents the key Patriarchal Father prophesied of in Malachi. Abraham not only renews the covenant of “the fathers” (**including** Noah and Enoch), but also through the Abrahamic covenant, God established Abraham as the new head of the family of God on Earth. God told Abraham: *As many as receive this gospel shall be called after your name and shall be accounted your seed, and shall rise up and bless you, as unto their Father* (Abraham 3:1 RE). For us, connecting to Abraham is akin to the original Patriarchs' connection to Adam. Turning the heart of the children to the Fathers is a required part of the gospel. And after God's covenant with him, salvation for all subsequent generations is dependent on being accounted Abraham's seed.

The covenant with Abraham was renewed with Isaac, who also became the Patriarchal head and husbandman-father of the faithful. Believers thereafter likewise are numbered as Isaac's “seed” through the renewal and extension of the covenant. God renewed it again with Jacob. The covenantal relationship of these three Patriarchs in three successive

generations is the reason the Scriptures use “the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob” as **one name** for **Deity**.

Accordingly, the more we can know of Abraham, the more we can know of the covenant with the Fathers spoken of by Malachi.

The religion of the Fathers involved direct communion, contact, and connection between mankind and God. The Holy Order is an important part of the return of that direct association. The original religion of the Patriarchs enabled the faithful to hear directly from the Lord **His** promise of eternal life. God would seal them by covenant into His Heavenly Family. We can, if faithful, obtain all that the original Fathers received from God at the beginning:

What I, the Lord, have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself. And though the heaven[s] and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by my own voice or by the voice of my servants [it's] the same. For behold and lo, the Lord is God and the spirit bears record, and the record is true, and the truth abides for ever and ever. Amen. (T&C 54:7)

As a servant of God, I say with **His** authority that these promises are true, and He intends to fulfill them for His covenant people Israel. In the beginning, mankind was placed in a family. The first commandment to Father Adam and Mother Eve was to multiply and replenish the Earth. The first man and woman were married. Their union produced the family of mankind. **Every** soul born into this Creation came from parents and were all intended to be in a family.

The plan of salvation is covenantal and familial. The government of God is a family. If a family is established by covenant with God, it will be the only order that can survive death. In a very real sense, the salvation of mankind now comes only through the family of Abraham. The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob covenanted with these three successive generations that they would stand at the head of all who would be saved after them. The God of Israel requires **some** part of mankind—however small—to be sealed into that line or be utterly wasted at His coming.

The religion of the Fathers cannot be adequately conveyed if it is separated from ritualized knowledge. By using symbol, movement, gesture, dress, architecture, sound, orientation, and setting, it is possible to embed light and truth in a way to engage the mind, spirit, and heart of mankind. The temple can **be** the house in which it is possible to stretch the mind of man both upward and downward by the things presented there. “The temple itself was but a copy of the heavenly temple, the liturgy on earth a shadow of the worship of the angels” (Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel*, p. 118). It is through covenant-forming ordinances—including rituals—that the power of Godliness has been manifested to mankind. *The order of the House of God has and ever will be the same, even after Christ comes, and after the termination of the thousand years it will be the same, and we shall finally roll into the Celestial Kingdom of God and enjoy it forever (T&C 117:4).*

So the original organization of the very first Zion was **familial**, meaning it was a family. It was **patriarchal**, meaning it descended from father to son to grandson. **And** it was

dynastic, meaning that it stayed inside one family (father-son) line. That's how the original worked. There are a lot of advantages to that because in that setting, what you've got is an intimate connection between the people. You've got a family unit.

But Joseph did something really interesting towards the end. It didn't get preserved **much**—except as a kind of confused footnote that only lingered until the time of Wilford Woodruff, and then it just got thrown on the trash heap. And today, it's occasionally visited by Mormon scholars in BYU Studies and other places—Mormon Dialogue—usually dealt with in a way that makes kind of fun of the whole thing, like, “How weird was this?” You can even find an allusion to it in *Rough Stone Rolling*, where Bushman talked about how Joseph's ambition was “familial plentitude in the eternities.” That was how Bushman described it. Joseph was doing things not because he was a (as Bushman would put it) some kind of lothario (meaning a womanizer, someone that was always looking to seduce women). Bushman said that wasn't what Joseph was doing there at the end. He wasn't a lothario; he was looking to try to achieve familial plentitude in the eternities by sealings, which later in the vernacular that got adopted by the Brigham Young-led group in Utah meant **marriage**, which meant **polygamy**, which meant all kinds of **corrupt teachings** based upon that. And that's another day and another story.

Joseph was trying to use the authority that had been given to him at the end not to reinforce the church. He essentially walked away from the church. He rode across the Mississippi River on June 23rd in a skiff, sent for his horse so that he could just leave. He was headed west; he was gonna go somewhere else and start over. And he was gonna do that in a whole different capacity. The new capacity (and one which he began mentioning for the first time in October of 1843) was to create a family by adoption. Okay?

In the first generations that brought us Zion, it was **familial, patriarchal, and dynastic**. And **it worked** because of the righteousness of the men involved. But in the hands of the unrighteous, a familial, patriarchal, dynastic system for organizing people can create hell on earth and ultimately end in genocide. But with the cautions that are given to us by Joseph and the experience that he had (first, in Missouri, and later, soberly assessing the people around him in Nauvoo), he created something that **potentially** allows for the organization of a righteous society **that is familial, that is patriarchal, but that is non-dynastic**—not confined to a single line of men but encompasses any righteous man by adoption and by sealing into an imitation of that order that existed in the beginning.

Now, I have used, for convenience sake, the word “man” and “patriarchal” and “he.” But if you go back and read the talk that I gave about our Divine Parents, there is no such thing as a patriarch without an associated matriarch. And if you study that further, what you will learn is it's not the man who even chooses the next in authority, the next one upon whom status is conferred. That's entrusted exclusively into the hands of the matriarch. It is the Mother who ordains **that** succession.

Well, in that T&C 139, there's a comment that Joseph makes in passing. This is in paragraph 12 of 139: *There are many teachers, but perhaps not many fathers*. He doesn't elaborate on that. Take the comments that I've given today, go to that paragraph 12 of 139, and look at

that aside comment that there are many teachers, but perhaps not many fathers, and let that sink deep in your mind to consider what that might include.

Then there's a...about the only talk that Joseph Smith ever had written out in advance, which oughta tell you how important this talk is—there's a talk that Joseph gave that appears as section 140 of the Teachings and Commandments that I want to read from beginning in paragraph 5, and then I'll conclude.

*Now, the purpose in himself, in the winding up scene of the last dispensation, is that all things pertaining to that dispensation should be conducted precisely in accordance with the preceding dispensations. And again, God purposed in himself that there should not be an Eternal fullness **until every dispensation should be fulfilled and gathered together in one**, and that all things whatever that should be gathered together in one, in those dispensations, unto the same fullness and Eternal glory, **should be in Christ Jesus**.*

Therefore, he set the ordinances to be the same for ever and ever, and set Adam to watch over them, to reveal them from Heaven to man or to send angels to reveal them. Hebrews 1st chapter, 14th verse: Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be [the] heirs of salvation? These angels are under the direction of Michael, or Adam, who acts under the direction of Christ.

*From the above quotation we learn that Paul perfectly understood the purpose of God in relation to his connection with man and that glorious and perfect Order which he established in himself, whereby he sent forth power, revelations, and glory. **God will not acknowledge** that which He has not called, ordained, and chosen.*

...This then is the nature of the Priesthood: every man holding the presidency of his dispensation and one man holding the presidency of them all, even Adam.

...The ordinances must be kept in the very [same] way God has appointed, otherwise their Priesthood will prove a cursing instead of a blessing. (T&C 140:5-12, emphasis added)

You see, in the beginning, all things were confirmed unto Adam by an holy ordinance, and the gospel preached. Adam had to receive that fullness of understanding before he went out to preach the gospel because there were things about the pattern which don't emerge into **clarity** until Adam understood all things. And that same priesthood which was in the beginning is to return again at the end of the world, also. And that same clarity that was entrusted into the hands of Adam **will again be restored upon the earth with the same clarity to allow for a connection**—by Adam's permission, it will be restored, under the direction of Christ who presides over it all, for the purpose of having the end agree with and fit together with the beginning, in which all things get combined together.

And so, at the very moment when the greatest effort to bring darkness and confusion into the lives of all men and children, there will break forth a light—clearer, brighter, comprehending more, revealing more, and establishing again that same gospel and priesthood which was in the beginning. It is going to return. The world is not worthy of it.

Therefore, it necessarily must be housed inside sacred space belonging to God in the form of a temple, which is the reason why (in the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant) the Lord makes mention of a coming command to build a temple.

God's purposes will not fail. His effort is equally relenting with the effort of the adversary to bring about darkness. And I don't care if it appears as though darkness covers the whole face of the earth, and there's but one spotlight in one small corner. That will be enough to begin the overthrow of the kingdom of this world and the powers of darkness that rule here. It will be the beachhead from which our Lord will launch a victory that will be total, that will encompass the whole Earth. And from that tiny beginning, it will spread until Zion fills the whole of North and South America, as Joseph Smith described it. He didn't live to get there. He didn't have the right people listening and giving heed and diligence to the things that were taught. How oft will God gather together people like a hen gathering chicks under her wings? Apparently, He will keep doing it and keep doing it until, finally, some group of people decide that they will rise up. Hopefully, that will include some of you.

— — — —

The foregoing excerpts were taken from:

- Denver's conference talk titled "The Heavens are Open", given in Hurricane, UT on March 22, 2020
- Denver's remarks during an interview by Rick Bennett for the Gospel Tangents Podcast, recorded in Salt Lake City, Utah on June 28, 2020
- Denver's general conference talk titled "Religion of the Fathers," presented at Aravada, Nevada on March 27, 2021; and
- Denver's remarks given at the Seminary Graduation event held in Centerville, Utah on May 15, 2022