

The Character of God

LECTURE THIRD- Part Two

1. Question 14-16: What effect would it have on any rational being not to have an idea that the Lord was God, the creator and upholder of all things? Why would it prevent him from exercising faith in God? Does this idea prevent this doubt?

Lecture: 19 An acquaintance with these attributes in the divine character, is essentially necessary, in order that the faith of any rational being can center in him for life and salvation. For if he did not, in the first instance, believe him to be God, that is, the creator and upholder of all things, he could not center his faith in him for life and salvation, for fear there should be a greater than he, who would thwart all his plans, and he, like the gods of the heathen, would be unable to fulfill his promises; but seeing he is God over all, from everlasting to everlasting, the creator and upholder of all things, no such fear can exist in the minds of those who put their trust in him, so that in this respect their faith can be without wavering.

Joseph's Answers: It would prevent him from exercising faith in him unto life and salvation. Because he would be as the heathen not knowing but there might be a being greater and more powerful than he, and thereby he be prevented from fulfilling his promises. (3:19) It does; for persons having this idea are enabled thereby to exercise faith without this doubt. (3:19)

Blake's Thoughts: The scriptures present a clear pattern of the Lord first revealing Himself as the creator and upholder of all things.

Moses 1:4

And, behold, thou art my son; wherefore look, and I will show thee the workmanship of mine hands; but not all, for my works are without end, and also my words, for they never cease.

The Lord then proceeds to deliver to Moses a grand vision of His creation of ALL things.

Abraham 3:1-3

1 And I, Abraham, had the Urim and Thummim, which the Lord my God had given unto me, in Ur of the Chaldees;

2 And I saw the stars, that they were very great, and that one of them was nearest unto the throne of God; and there were many great ones which were near unto it;

3 And the Lord said unto me: These are the governing ones; and the name of the great one is Kolob, because it is near unto me, for I am the Lord thy God: I have set this one to govern all those which belong to the same order as that upon which thou standest.

Again, Abraham is given a vision of the creation of all things.

Enoch's vision is perhaps the clearest in helping us to see this great divide between God, the creator and upholder of the universe, and all others.

Moses 7:4, 23-30

4 And I saw the Lord; and he stood before my face, and he talked with me, even as a man talketh one with another, face to face; and he said unto me: Look, and I will show unto thee the world for the space of many generations.

23 And after that Zion was taken up into heaven, Enoch beheld, and lo, all the nations of the earth were before him;

24 And there came generation upon generation; and Enoch was high and lifted up, even in the bosom of the Father, and of the Son of Man; and behold, the power of Satan was upon all the face of the earth.

25 And he saw angels descending out of heaven; and he heard a loud voice saying: Wo, wo be unto the inhabitants of the earth.

26 And he beheld Satan; and he had a great chain in his hand, and it veiled the whole face of the earth with darkness; and he looked up and laughed, and his angels rejoiced.

27 And Enoch beheld angels descending out of heaven, bearing testimony of the Father and Son; and the Holy Ghost fell on many, and they were caught up by the powers of heaven into Zion.

28 And it came to pass that the God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people, and he wept; and Enoch bore record of it, saying: How is it that the heavens weep, and shed forth their tears as the rain upon the mountains?

29 And Enoch said unto the Lord: How is it that thou canst weep, seeing thou art holy, and from all eternity to all eternity?

30 And were it possible that man could number the particles of the earth, yea, millions of earths like this, it would not be a beginning to the number of thy creations

Enoch gained a knowledge of the reality of God as the creator and upholder of the universe. His knowledge came not only from being able to see as God sees, but from knowing that God was the one who had granted him this ability to witness these creations through all of space and time. The Spirit also declared this truth to Nephi, “And when I had spoken these words, the Spirit cried with a loud voice, saying: Hosanna to the Lord, the most high God; for he is God over all the earth, yea, even above all.” **1 Nephi 11:6**

Later in the Book of Mormon when Christ personally visits the Nephites, one of the very first things that he teaches is His identity as the God of the whole earth.

3 Nephi 11:14

Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world.

Aaron, in the Book of Mormon, also recognized and taught this fundamental truth.

Alma 22:7-11

And Aaron answered him and said unto him: Believest thou that there is a God? And the king said: I know that the Amalekites say that there is a God, and I have granted unto them that they should build sanctuaries, that they may assemble themselves together to worship him. And if now

thou sayest there is a God, behold I will believe.

8 And now when Aaron heard this, his heart began to rejoice, and he said: Behold, assuredly as thou livest, O king, there is a God.

9 And the king said: Is God that Great Spirit that brought our fathers out of the land of Jerusalem?

10 And Aaron said unto him: Yea, he is that Great Spirit, and he created all things both in heaven and in earth. Believest thou this?

11 And he said: Yea, I believe that the Great Spirit created all things, and I desire that ye should tell me concerning all these things, and I will believe thy words.

2. Question 17-18: Is it not also necessary to have the idea that God is merciful, and gracious, long suffering and full of goodness? Why is it necessary?

Lecture: 20 But secondly: Unless he was merciful, and gracious, slow to anger, long suffering, and full of goodness, such is the weakness of human nature, and so great the frailties and imperfections of men, that unless they believed that these excellencies existed in the divine character, the faith necessary to salvation could not exist; for doubt would take the place of faith, and those who know their weakness and liability to sin, would be in constant doubt of salvation, if it were not for the idea which they have of the excellency of the character of God, that he is slow to anger, and long suffering, and of a forgiving disposition, and does forgive iniquity, transgression and sin. An idea of these facts does away doubt, and makes faith exceedingly strong.

Joseph's Answers: It is. (3:20) Because of the weakness and imperfections of human nature, and the great frailties of man; for such is the weakness of man, and such his frailties, that he is liable to sin continually, and if God were not long suffering, and full of compassion, gracious and merciful and of a forgiving disposition, man would be cut off from before him in consequence of which he would be in continual doubt and could not exercise faith: for where doubt is, there faith has no power, but by man's believing that God is full of compassion and forgiveness, long suffering and slow to anger, he can exercise faith in him and overcome doubt, so as to be exceedingly strong. (3:20)

Blake's Thoughts:

The Book of Mormon contains many wonderful teachings and examples of God's mercy, graciousness, and long suffering, but the Book of Mormon is a very unique book.

It is unique because it demonstrates both the intimate and yet all encompassing extent of God's mercy and long suffering. The picture of God we get from the Book of Mormon is of a man who

is far more concerned or intent on providing a way for mercy to be exercised as opposed to punishing or getting retribution for the sinful acts of men. Now this isn't to say that He won't or doesn't exercise justice. Far from it. But instead of seeing swift judgment, we see the Lord making painstaking effort, indeed every effort to reclaim the sinner.

The Book of Mormon is also unique because of the method by which it teaches about the mercy and grace of God. We learn about these characteristics of Deity through the experiences and actions of ordinary followers of Christ.

Ordinary people like Nephi who frankly forgave his brothers and continued to teach and exhort them despite them beating him with a rod, tying him up multiple times, and leaving him to die.

No wonder Nephi chose to include in his record these words:

1 Nephi 19:9

And the world, because of their iniquity, shall judge him to be a thing of naught; wherefore they scourge him, and he suffereth it; and they smite him, and he suffereth it. Yea, they spit upon him, and he suffereth it, because of his loving kindness and his long-suffering towards the children of men.

Ordinary people like Zeniff who chose to see the good in their “enemy”.

Mosiah 9:1

I, Zeniff, having been taught in all the language of the Nephites, and having had a knowledge of the land of Nephi, or of the land of our fathers' first inheritance, and having been sent as a spy among the Lamanites that I might spy out their forces, that our army might come upon them and destroy them—but when I saw that which was good among them I was desirous that they should not be destroyed.

Ordinary people like Ammon and the sons of Mosiah who sinned and felt the joy of forgiveness.

Alma 26:17-20

Who could have supposed that our God would have been so merciful as to have snatched us from our awful, sinful, and polluted state?

18 Behold, we went forth even in wrath, with mighty threatenings to destroy his church.

19 Oh then, why did he not consign us to an awful destruction, yea, why did he not let the sword of his justice fall upon us, and doom us to eternal despair?

20 Oh, my soul, almost as it were, fleeth at the thought. Behold, he did not exercise his justice upon us, but in his great mercy hath brought us over that everlasting gulf of death and misery, even to the salvation of our souls.

Ordinary people like Alma who saw God send an angel and a trembling of the earth to get him to “wake up”

Alma 36:6

For I went about with the sons of Mosiah, seeking to destroy the church of God; but behold, God sent his holy angel to stop us by the way.

Ordinary people like the Anti-Nephi Lehis who would rather die than take the life of their enemy

Alma 24:16-18

And now, my brethren, if our brethren seek to destroy us, behold, we will hide away our swords, yea, even we will bury them deep in the earth, that they may be kept bright, as a testimony that we have never used them, at the last day; and if our brethren destroy us, behold, we shall go to our God and shall be saved.

17 And now it came to pass that when the king had made an end of these sayings, and all the people were assembled together, they took their swords, and all the weapons which were used for the shedding of man's blood, and they did bury them up deep in the earth.

18 And this they did, it being in their view a testimony to God, and also to men, that they never would use weapons again for the shedding of man's blood; and this they did, vouching and covenanting with God, that rather than shed the blood of their brethren they would give up their own lives...

Ordinary people like Mormon who continued to stand as a witness of God's mercy even when his people appeared beyond repentance.

Mormon 3:12, 16

Behold, I had led them, notwithstanding their wickedness I had led them many times to battle, and had loved them, according to the love of God which was in me, with all my heart; and my soul had been poured out in prayer unto my God all the day long for them; nevertheless, it was without faith, because of the hardness of their hearts. And it came to pass that I utterly refused to go up against mine enemies; and I did even as the Lord had commanded me; and I did stand as an idle witness to manifest unto the world the things which I saw and heard, according to the manifestations of the Spirit which had testified of things to come.

3. Question 19: Is it not equally as necessary that man should have an idea that God changes not, neither is there variableness with him, in order to exercise faith in him unto life and salvation?

Lecture: 21 But it is equally as necessary that men should have the idea that he is a God who changes not, in order to have faith in him, as it is to have the idea that he is gracious and long suffering. For without the idea of unchangeableness in the character of the Deity, doubt would take the place of faith. But with the idea that he changes not, faith lays hold upon the excellencies in his character with unshaken confidence, believing he is the same yesterday, today and forever, and that his course is one eternal round.

Joseph's Answers: It is; because without this, he would not know how soon the mercy of God might change into cruelty, his long suffering into rashness, his love into hatred, and in consequence of which doubt, man would be incapable of exercising faith in him, but having the

idea that he is unchangeable, man can have faith in him continually, believing that what he was yesterday he is to day, and will be forever. (3:21)

Blake's Thoughts:

It is important to understand what Joseph means here when he uses the word "unchangeableness". Here again, the Book of Mormon can help us understand "unchangeableness" as a character of the Deity. Remember, Joseph says it is a character trait.

First, the path God walks or, in other words, the life He lives, is unchangeable.

Alma 7:20

I perceive that it has been made known unto you, by the testimony of his word, that he cannot walk in crooked paths; neither doth he vary from that which he hath said; neither hath he a shadow of turning from the right to the left, or from that which is right to that which is wrong; therefore, his course is one eternal round.

Second, the manner in which God reveals himself or expresses Himself to His children is unchangeable and it is not based on the time period a person lives in or other distinguishing traits.

Alma 39:17-19

Behold, you marvel why these things should be known so long beforehand. Behold, I say unto you, is not a soul at this time as precious unto God as a soul will be at the time of his coming?

18 Is it not as necessary that the plan of redemption should be made known unto this people as well as unto their children?

19 Is it not as easy at this time for the Lord to send his angel to declare these glad tidings unto us as unto our children, or as after the time of his coming?

Alma 24:14

And the great God has had mercy on us, and made these things known unto us that we might not perish; yea, and he has made these things known unto us beforehand, because he loveth our souls as well as he loveth our children; therefore, in his mercy he doth visit us by his angels, that the plan of salvation might be made known unto us as well as unto future generations.

4. Question 20: Is it not necessary also, for men to have an idea that God is a being of truth, before they can have perfect faith in him?

Lecture: 22 And again, the idea that he is a God of truth and cannot lie, is equally as necessary to the exercise of faith in him, as the idea of his unchangeableness. For without the idea that he was a God of truth and could not lie, the confidence necessary to be placed in his word in order to the exercise of faith in him, could not exist. But having the idea that he is not man that he can lie, it gives power to the minds of men to exercise faith in him.

Joseph's Answer: It is; for unless men have this idea they cannot place confidence in his word, and not being able to place confidence in his word, they could not have faith in him; but believing that he is a God of truth, and that his word cannot fail, their faith can rest in him without doubt. (3:22)

Blake's Thoughts:

The idea that God is a God of truth and cannot lie is a powerful thought. Believing this truth causes us to see and feel things as they really are.

Enos 1:5-6

And there came a voice unto me, saying: Enos, thy sins are forgiven thee, and thou shalt be blessed.

6 And I, Enos, knew that God could not lie; wherefore, my guilt was swept away.

Enos' guilt was literally swept away because he knew God was not lying when he said "thy sins are forgiven thee"

Ether 3:11-13

11 And the Lord said unto him: Believest thou the words which I shall speak?

12 And he answered: Yea, Lord, I know that thou speakest the truth, for thou art a God of truth, and canst not lie. 13 And when he had said these words, behold, the Lord showed himself unto him, and said: Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I show myself unto you.

Notice the way in which the Lord phrases the question to Mahonri Moriancumer. He isn't asking Mahonri if he believes the things which the Lord has already spoken. He is asking Mahonri if he believes things which the Lord has yet to speak, words which haven't even been uttered. Think about the difference here. On one hand, to believe in something which the Lord has already spoken doesn't necessarily require you to believe that God is a God of truth. You can hold this belief and it can be founded on other evidence. In Mahonri's case, he had evidence from the scriptures that the Lord could provide light in barges. This was something which the Lord had already accomplished with Noah and which was likely available to Mahonri.

However, to believe in something which the Lord has not yet spoken can only be founded upon a belief that God is a God of truth. There are no other powers by which a person can hold this belief. It only happens when someone believes He is a God of truth and cannot lie.

5. Question 21: Could man exercise faith in God so as to obtain eternal life unless he believed that God was no respecter of persons?

Lecture: 23 But it is also necessary that men should have an idea that he is no respecter of persons; for with the idea of all the other excellencies in his character, and this one wanting, men could not exercise faith in him, because if he were a respecter of persons, they could not tell what their privileges were, nor how far they were authorized to exercise faith in him, or whether they

were authorized to do it at all, but all must be confusion; but no sooner are the minds of men made acquainted with the truth on this point, that he is no respecter of persons, than they see that they have authority by faith to lay hold on eternal life the richest boon of heaven, because God is no respecter of persons, and that every man in every nation has an equal privilege.

Joseph's Answer: He could not; because without this idea he could not certainly know that it was his privilege so to do, and in consequence of this doubt his faith could not be sufficiently strong to save him. (3:23)

Blake's Thoughts:

In today's world there is an incorrect conflating of the principles of equality and equity. Equality of opportunity and the freedom of choice being available to all is God's standard. Equity in outcome is Satan's counterfeit. This idea leads people to believe that freedom of choice is NOT universally available. That a person has freedom to choose or lacks it based on the circumstances of their genius or strength. This belief in reality promotes division and the respect of persons. God's Standard-Equality of opportunity and no respect of persons

2 Nephi 26:27-28, 33

Hath he commanded any that they should not partake of his salvation? Behold I say unto you, Nay; but he hath given it free for all men; and he hath commanded his people that they should persuade all men to repentance. 28 Behold, hath the Lord commanded any that they should not partake of his goodness? Behold I say unto you, Nay; but all men are privileged the one like unto the other, and none are forbidden. and he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile.

2 Nephi 2:27

Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.

Satan's Counterfeit-Equity of outcome which leads to respect of persons

Alma 1:2-6

And it came to pass that in the first year of the reign of Alma in the judgment-seat, there was a man brought before him to be judged, a man who was large, and was noted for his much strength.

3 And he had gone about among the people, preaching to them that which he termed to be the word of God, bearing down against the church; declaring unto the people that every priest and teacher ought to become popular; and they ought not to labor with their hands, but that they ought to be supported by the people.

And he [Nehor] also testified unto the people that all mankind should be saved at the last day, and that they need not fear nor tremble, but that they might lift up their heads and rejoice; for the Lord had created all men, and had also redeemed all men; and, in the end, all men should have eternal life.

And it came to pass that he did teach these things so much that many did believe on his words, even so many that they began to support him and give him money.

6 And he began to be lifted up in the pride of his heart, and to wear very costly apparel, yea, and even began to establish a church after the manner of his preaching.

Alma 30:17

And many more such things did he say unto them, telling them that there could be no atonement made for the sins of men, but every man fared in this life according to the management of the creature; therefore every man prospered according to his genius, and that every man conquered according to his strength; and whatsoever a man did was no crime.

Notice also how Korihor's acceptance of this counterfeit belief system tainted his perception of the Church of God and why he thought people believed and belonged to it.

“And Korihor said unto him: Because I do not teach the foolish traditions of your fathers, and because I do not teach this people to bind themselves down under the foolish ordinances and performances which are laid down by ancient priests, to usurp power and authority over them, to keep them in ignorance, that they may not lift up their heads, but be brought down according to thy words.”

6. Question 22: Would it be possible for a man to exercise faith in God, so as to be saved, unless he had an idea that God was love?

Lecture: 24 And lastly, but not less important to the exercise of faith in God, is the idea that he is love; for with all the other excellencies in his character, without this one to influence them, they could not have such powerful dominion over the minds of men; but when the idea is planted in the mind that he is love, who cannot see the just ground that men of every nation, kindred and tongue, have to exercise faith in God so as to obtain eternal life?

Joseph's Answer: He could not; because man could not love God, unless he had an idea that God was love, and if he did not love God, he could not have faith in him. (3:24)

Blake's Thoughts:

1 John 4:7-11, 19

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

19 We love him, because he first loved us.

*John here is teaching that the idea that God is love was really contained in and revealed to man through the life and mission of Jesus Christ. Every prophet since Adam had a knowledge of Christ and his mission revealed to them and understood this connection between Christ and the love of God.

This truth is illustrated perfectly in Nephi's vision of the tree of life.

1 Nephi 11:7-9, 16-17, 21-22

And behold this thing shall be given unto thee for a sign, that after thou hast beheld the tree which bore the fruit which thy father tasted, thou shalt also behold a man descending out of heaven, and him shall ye witness; and after ye have witnessed him ye shall bear record that it is the Son of God.

8 And it came to pass that the Spirit said unto me: Look! And I looked and beheld a tree; and it was like unto the tree which my father had seen; and the beauty thereof was far beyond, yea, exceeding of all beauty; and the whiteness thereof did exceed the whiteness of the driven snow.

9 And it came to pass after I had seen the tree, I said unto the Spirit: I behold thou hast shown unto me the tree which is precious above all.

16 And he said unto me: Knowest thou the condescension of God?

17 And I said unto him: I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless, I do not know the meaning of all things.

21 And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father! Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?

22 And I answered him, saying: Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things.

Once a person has this knowledge revealed to them and they personally experience God's love in their life, they then understand how to demonstrate true love for God. Jesus taught "If ye love me, keep my commandments." John 14:21. Where does our love of God eventually lead us? "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Our love of God leads us to the Father and the Son. This abode mentioned by the Savior is the mansion which Christ has already prepared for us in the kingdom of our Father. It is the neverending blessing of being able to partake of AND exercise the love of the Father and the Son.

7. Question 23: What is the description which the sacred writers give of the character of the Deity calculated to do?

Lecture: 25 From the above description of the character of the Deity which is given him in the revelations, to men, there is a sure foundation for the exercise of faith in him among every people, nation and kindred, from age to age, and from generation to generation.

Joseph's Answer: It is calculated to lay a foundation for the exercise of faith in him, as far as the knowledge extends among all people, tongues, languages, kindreds, and nations and that from age to age, and from generation to generation. (3:25)

Blake's Thoughts: My answer to the last two questions is explained in my thoughts about God's unchangeableness.

8. Question 24: Is the character which God has given of himself uniform?

Lecture: 26 Let us here observe that the foregoing is the character which is given of God in his revelations to the Former Day Saints, and it is also the character which is given of him in his revelations to the Latter Day Saints, so that the saints of former days, and those of latter days, are both alike in this respect; the "Latter Day Saints" having as good grounds to exercise faith in God, as the former day saints had; because the same character is given of him to both.

Joseph's Answer: It is, in all his revelations whether to the Former Day Saints, or to the Latter day saints, so that they all have the authority to exercise faith in him, and to expect by the exercise of their faith, to enjoy the same blessings. (3:26)

Blake's Thoughts: My answer to the last two questions is explained in my thoughts about God's unchangeableness.

Major statistics on the dreams

- 34 total people responded (5 women, 29 men). I have strong reasons to believe there are many, many more.
- All had previously served missions, except 2
- All (but two) recognized that they were not serving as a young man/woman, so this was clearly a second mission.
- There is no clear generational divide in who has had these dreams. These dreams have been had by people in every recent generation.

We believe that we have a right to revelations, visions, and dreams from God, our Heavenly Father; and light and intelligence, through the gift of the Holy Ghost . . . on all subjects pertaining to our spiritual welfare; if it so be that we keep his commandments, so as to render ourselves worthy in his sight. (**Letter from Joseph Smith to Isaac Galland, Times and Seasons, February 1840, 54**)

When a man's mind is illuminated by a dream, it leaves a vivid and pleasant impression: when it may be guided by the Spirit of God, it leaves the mind happy and comfortable, and the understanding clear. (**George A. Smith JD 8:255**)

Why do I think these dreams are divinely inspired?

The dreams themselves made it very clear that they came from God and not from a deceptive or impure source. Many people reported having a guide or companion in their dream who gave them their call or who was present together with them in the dream. This matches perfectly with other dreams/visions in scripture where a guide or companion is present (Lehi, Nephi, John the Revelator).

Very few reported any items or representations of evil in their dreams. For those who did experience evil, this evil was something which they were charged with overcoming, avoiding, or combatting.

For some, these dreams began during or right after they got home from their mission. For others, these dreams have only come recently, many years later. For those who started having them right after the mission, I know that some expressed a feeling that maybe these dreams came because that is what their life was at that point. But the fact that these dreams continued for pretty much everyone for years later suggests they weren't just a symptom of their circumstance at that time, but part of their future, their entire life calling and mission.

The major focus or purpose of the dreams was to help the individual understand their purpose or mission was to preach the gospel. The focus of these dreams didn't deal with other aspects of the Lord's work or have them doing something else besides preaching the gospel. In this sense, these dreams are very specific in their intent.

Another aspect to these dreams that suggests they are divinely inspired is that the vast majority of people had multiple dreams of being called. Sometimes these dreams recurred over a 10-15 year period. For some, in each dream different aspects of their mission were highlighted. For

others, they witnessed very similar things each time, but with other details added each time. For those who only had the dream once, their dream appeared to be sufficiently detailed to give the revelation the Lord wanted them to have. Elder Bednar has taught, “Repetition is a vehicle through which the Holy Ghost can enlighten our minds, influence our hearts, and enlarge our understanding.” (David A. Bednar, **BYU-I Devotional, January 26, 2016**)

-The Lord can and does give us inspiration or series of impressions regarding future callings or missions in life.

-Example-President Eyring in April 2021 General Conference

“The temple is a holy place where revelation comes to us easily if our hearts are open to it and we are worthy of it. Later that first day I again felt the same Spirit. The temple ceremony includes some words that brought a feeling of burning in my heart, confirming that what was being portrayed was true. What I felt was personal to me regarding my future, and it became a reality 40 years later through a call to serve from the Lord.”

On their sealing day, “Hal and Kathy, live so that when the call comes, you can walk away easily.”

“The warning given by President Kimball to be able to “walk away easily” became a reality. It was a call to leave what seemed an idyllic family situation to serve in an assignment in a place that I knew nothing about.”

Is there a connection between lineage and the content of these dreams?

All of those who responded were of the tribe of Joseph, Ephraim, or Manasseh. One of the blessings/responsibilities promised to the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh was to push together the house of Israel to the ends of the earth (Deuteronomy 33:16-17).

Everyone who responded said that in their dreams, the primary purpose of their mission was to preach the gospel, i.e. to gather scattered Israel. So it makes perfect sense why the Lord would reveal these duties/responsibilities to those of these tribes.

Why would the Lord choose to reveal these things in dreams to those of Joseph, Ephraim, Manasseh?

As we examine the scriptures and church history, we see a consistent pattern of those of the Tribe of Joseph/Ephraim/Mannaseh receiving revelation in dreams regarding their future responsibilities or callings. The fact that almost everyone who has had these dreams is of the tribe of Joseph/Ephraim/Manasseh matches well with the revealed word.

Genesis 37:5-11

5 And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.

6 And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed:

7 For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.⁸ And his

brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words.

9 ¶ And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

10 And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?

11 And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying.

*The tribe of Joseph is clearly blessed with the ability to receive revelation concerning their future in dreams

Genesis 40:5-8

5 And they dreamed a dream both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream, the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which were bound in the prison.

6 And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and, behold, they were sad.

7 And he asked Pharaoh's officers that were with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, Wherefore look ye so sadly to day?

8 And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them, I pray you.

*Joseph also exhibited the spiritual gift for the interpretation of dreams, even the dreams of others. He likely received the interpretation of this specific dream BECAUSE it dealt with him being able to fulfill his future calling/responsibility.

Genesis 41:14-15, 25

14 Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh.

15 And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it. And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do.

*Again, Joseph exercises the gift of interpretation of dreams of others. In fact, this particular gift seems to be exercised to enable God's promises to be fulfilled to all of the house of Israel. The interpretation of this dream was given to Joseph in order that all the house of Israel may be gathered to Egypt and saved temporally and spiritually.

Judges 7:9-15

9 And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said unto him (Gideon), Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand.

10 But if thou fear to go down, go thou with Phurah thy servant down to the host: 11 And thou shalt hear what they say; and afterward shall thine hands be strengthened to go down unto the host. Then went he down with Phurah his servant unto the outside of the armed men that were in the host.

12 And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seaside for multitude.

13 And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell, and overturned it, that the tent lay along.

14 And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel: for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host.

15 ¶ And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that he worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the LORD hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian.

*It is unclear exactly how the Lord spoke to Gideon here, but it does mention that the revelation occurred “the same night”, suggesting that it may have been a dream. The revelation Gideon had received led him to another person in the camp, possibly also of Manasseh, who had received a dream and then yet another person in the camp received the interpretation of the dream. The dream and interpretation of it matched the revelation Gideon had himself received. Gideon’s 300 men were composed of men from the tribes of Naphtali, Zebulun, Asher, and Manasseh.

Lehi, a descendant of Mannaseh and Joseph

1 Nephi 1:7-13,18

7 And it came to pass that he returned to his own house at Jerusalem; and he cast himself upon his bed, being overcome with the Spirit and the things which he had seen.

8 And being thus overcome with the Spirit, he was carried away in a vision, even that he saw the heavens open, and he thought he saw God sitting upon his throne, surrounded with numberless concourses of angels in the attitude of singing and praising their God.

9 And it came to pass that he saw One descending out of the midst of heaven, and he beheld that his luster was above that of the sun at noon-day.

10 And he also saw twelve others following him, and their brightness did exceed that of the stars in the firmament.

11 And they came down and went forth upon the face of the earth; and the first came and stood before my father, and gave unto him a book, and bade him that he should read.

12 And it came to pass that as he read, he was filled with the Spirit of the Lord.

13 And he read, saying: Wo, wo, unto Jerusalem, for I have seen thine abominations! Yea, and many things did my father read concerning Jerusalem—that it should be destroyed, and the inhabitants thereof; many should perish by the sword, and many should be carried away captive into Babylon.

Therefore, I would that ye should know, that after the Lord had shown so many marvelous things unto my father, Lehi, yea, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, behold he went forth among the people, and began to prophesy and to declare unto them concerning the things which he had both seen and heard.

*Lehi receives a vision/dream of the future of Jerusalem and then goes forth and preaches it to the people.

1 Nephi 2:2 And it came to pass that the Lord commanded my father, even in a dream, that he should take his family and depart into the wilderness.

*Lehi has a dream in which he receives revelation. It is implied that Lehi also received an interpretation of his dream if he understood the Lord wanted him to leave Jerusalem.

1 Nephi 8:2 And it came to pass that while my father tarried in the wilderness he spake unto us, saying: Behold, I have dreamed a dream; or, in other words, I have seen a vision.

*Lehi receives a dream in which he is shown the future state of his posterity, not only his children, but his descendants.

*I didn't include the Prophet Joseph Smith here, but he was of the tribe of Ephraim and he had many dreams pertaining to his calling and future responsibilities as a member of the house of Joseph.

Orson Pratt JD 18:22 Now, having read these things, let us come back again to this spiritual movement that we hear of among the remnants of Jacob (those of Ephraim and Manasseh), in these western deserts, in the northwest hundreds of miles, in the west and in the southwest. It is not confined to hundreds, but thousands testify that men have appeared individually in dreams, speaking their own language...

Do these dreams show any consistent pattern of when these second missions would likely occur?

Almost all of those who dreamed that they were called to serve in the same mission they served previously had previously served in a location in North, Central, or South America. There were some who had these dreams who previously served in locations outside of these areas. There was information in their dreams which gave them specific details regarding the specific locations, even specific cities within North, Central, or South America to which they would be called.

3 Nephi 21:23-24

23 And they (the converted Gentiles) shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob (those of Ephraim and Manasseh), and also as many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem.

24 And then shall they assist my people that they may be gathered in, who are scattered upon all the face of the land, in unto the New Jerusalem.

The Lord in these verses is referencing a yet future phase of gathering which will take place after the New Jerusalem begins to be established. The primary people involved in assisting in this gathering will be converted Gentiles (primarily of Ephraim and Manasseh), the remnant of Jacob (those of Ephraim and Manasseh), and others from other tribes of the house of Israel. Of these three, the prophets and scriptures most frequently discuss the “remnant of Jacob” as being involved in this phase of gathering. For more information on the remnant of Jacob, see my presentation. These are some quotes from Orson Pratt on this gathering accomplished after the New Jerusalem is established.

Orson Pratt JD 17:302 First, a remnant will be converted; second, Zion will be redeemed, and all among the Gentiles who believe will assist this remnant of Jacob in building the New Jerusalem; third, a vast number of missionaries will be sent throughout the length and breadth of this great continent, to gather all the dispersed of his people in unto the New Jerusalem; fourth, the power of heaven will be made manifest in the midst of this people, and the Lord also will be in their midst, in the character of a shepherd, and he will lead Joseph as a flock, and he will instruct and counsel them personally as he did their ancient fathers in the days of their righteousness.

Orson Pratt JD 17:301 What I wish to call your special attention to now, so far as these sayings are concerned, is this—the Latter-day Saints in these mountains never can have the privilege of going back to Jackson County and building that city which is to be called the New Jerusalem, upon the spot that was appointed by revelation through the Prophet Joseph, until quite a large portion of the remnants of Joseph go back with us. Now then, here is a work for us, and we have no need to pray the Father to return us to Jackson County until that work is done.

Orson Pratt JD 17:301 Now, a great many, without reading these things, have flattered themselves that we are the ones who are going to do all this work. It is not so; we have got to be helpers, we have got to be those who cooperate with the remnants of Joseph in accomplishing this great work; for the Lord will have respect unto them, because they are of the blood of Israel, and the promises of their fathers extend to them, and they will have the privilege of building that city, according to the pattern that the Lord shall give. Do not misunderstand me, do not think that all the Lamanite tribes are going to be converted and receive this great degree of education and civilization before we can return to Jackson County. Do not think this for a moment, it will only be a remnant; for when we have laid the foundation of that city and have built a portion of it, and have built a Temple therein, there is another work which we have got to do in connection with these remnants of Jacob whom we shall assist in building the city. What is it? We have got to be sent forth as missionaries to all parts of this American continent. Not to the Gentiles, for their times will be fulfilled; but we must go to all those tribes that roam through the cold regions of

the north—British America, to all the tribes that dwell in the Territories of the United States, also to all those who are scattered through Mexico, and Central and South America, and the object of our going will be to declare the principles of the Gospel unto them, and bring them to a knowledge of the truth.

Did women have these dreams as well? What does this mean for them?

A big question I had was whether it was only men who had these dreams or whether women did also. I did receive responses from women who also said they had these dreams. Of those, most had previously served a mission. There are some things I discovered which help us understand why women may also be having these dreams.

First, women just like men have been given the charge to gather Israel. Especially if you are of Joseph/Ephraim/Mannasseh, part of your divine mission here on earth is to assist in the gathering of Israel. The gathering isn't solely done by the priesthood.

Second, every single person who responded mentioned that there was a realization, either during the dream or when pondering on the dream, that the circumstances of them being called on a mission again were in contradiction to or differed from current church policy of calling missionaries. If church policy on the calling of missionaries does change (as all of these dreams attest it will), perhaps there may also be changes made to allow middle aged sisters to serve as well. There is also the possibility that personal and family circumstances may also allow for these sisters to serve missions.

*Highlight the importance of recording dreams/journaling spiritual experiences