

LESSON 2
“Thou Wast Chosen Before Thou Wast Born”
Abraham 3; Moses 4:1-4

OVERVIEW:

Foreordination. Abraham learns that in the premortal life many spirits were foreordained to their mortal mission. Jesus Christ was chosen in the Council in Heaven to be our Savior; we chose to follow him. Lucifer (Satan) and the spirits who followed him were cast out of heaven.

We were schooled in the principles of righteousness by our Father in Heaven and His Son personally. D&C 138:56: Even before they were born, they, with many others, received their first^a lessons in the world of spirits and were^b prepared to come forth in the due^c time of the Lord to labor in his^d vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men.

SCRIPTURES:

THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM
TRANSLATED FROM THE PAPYRUS, BY JOSEPH SMITH
CHAPTER 3

Abraham learns about the sun, moon, and stars by means of the Urim and Thummim—The Lord reveals to him the eternal nature of spirits—He learns of pre-earth life, foreordination, the creation, the choosing of a Redeemer, and the second estate of man.

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

2 And I saw the^a 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; (We often think of Abraham going to Egypt to be taught astronomy by them. This indicates that Abraham probably taught the Egyptians the things he learned from God.)

3 And the Lord said unto me: These are the governing ones; and the name of the great one is^a 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.

4 And the Lord said unto me, by the Urim and Thummim, that Kolob was after the manner of the Lord, according to its^a times and seasons in the revolutions thereof; that one revolution was a^b day unto the Lord, after his manner of reckoning, it being one thousand^c years according to the time appointed unto that whereon thou standest. This is the reckoning of the Lord's^d time, according to the reckoning of Kolob.

5 And the Lord said unto me: The planet which is the lesser light (the moon), lesser than that which is to rule the day, even the night, is above or^a greater than that upon which thou standest in point of reckoning, for it moveth in order more slow; this is in order because it standeth above the earth upon which thou standest, therefore the reckoning of its time is not so many as to its number of days, and of months, and of years.

6 And the Lord said unto me: Now, Abraham, these^a two facts exist, behold thine eyes see it; it is given unto thee to know the times of reckoning, and the set time, yea, the set time of the earth upon which thou standest, and the set time of the greater light which is set to rule the day, and the set time of the lesser light which is set to rule the night.

7 Now the set time of the lesser light is a longer time (The moon revolves around itself slower than the

earth.) as to its reckoning than the reckoning of the time of the earth upon which thou standest.

8 And where these two facts exist, there shall be another fact above them, that is, there shall be another planet whose reckoning of time shall be longer still;

9 And thus there shall be the reckoning of the time of one ^aplanet above another, until thou come nigh unto Kolob, which Kolob is after the reckoning of the Lord's time; which Kolob is set nigh unto the throne of God, to govern all those planets which belong to the same ^border as that upon which thou standest.

10 And it is given unto thee to know the set time of all the stars that are set to give light, until thou come near unto the throne of God.

11 Thus I, Abraham, ^atalked with the Lord, face to face, as one man talketh with another; and he told me of the works which his hands had made;

12 And he said unto me: My son, my son (and his hand was stretched out), behold I will show you all these. And he put his hand upon mine eyes, and I saw those things which his hands had made, which were many; and they multiplied before mine eyes, and I could not see the end thereof.

13 And he said unto me: This is Shinehah, which is the sun. And he said unto me: Kokob, which is star. And he said unto me: Olea, which is the moon. And he said unto me: Kokaubeam, which signifies stars, or all the great lights, which were in the firmament of heaven.

14 And it was in the night time when the Lord spake these words unto me: I will ^amultiply thee, and thy ^bseed after thee, like unto these; and if thou canst count the ^cnumber of sands, so shall be the number of thy seeds.

15 And the Lord said unto me: Abraham, I ^ashow these things unto thee before ye go into Egypt, that ye may declare all these words. (Abraham was taught by God to teach the Egyptians.)

16 If ^atwo things exist, and there be one above the other, there shall be greater things above them; therefore ^bKolob is the greatest of all the Kokaubeam (stars) that thou hast seen, because it is nearest unto me.

17 Now, if there be two things, one above the other, and the moon be above the earth, then it may be that a planet or a star may exist above it; and there is nothing that the Lord thy God shall take in his heart to do but what he will ^ado it. (We must learn to envision only that which is noble, godly, and righteous. We must have a vision of who we are and what we can do. Latter-day Commentary on the Old Testament, p. 12. Vision without effort is daydreaming; effort without vision is drudgery; but vision coupled with effort will obtain the prize. Thomas S. Monson, Conference Classics, Vol 3. This is the business of the Church – to open the vision of men to eternal verities and to prompt them to take a stand for equity and decency, for virtue, sobriety, and goodness. Gordon B. Hinckley, Be Thou an Example, p. 17.)

18 Howbeit that he made the greater star; as, also, if there be two ^aspirits, and one shall be more intelligent than the other, yet these two spirits, notwithstanding one is more intelligent than the other, have no beginning; they existed before, they shall have no end, they shall exist after, for they are ^bgnolaum, or eternal.

19 And the Lord said unto me: These two facts do exist, that there are two spirits, one being more intelligent than the other; there shall be another more intelligent than they; I am the Lord thy God, I am ^amore intelligent than they all. (I believe that this means more than that God is more intelligent than any other one of the intelligences. It means that he is more intelligent than all of the other intelligences combined. His intelligence is greater than that of the mass, and has led me to say in the second Year Book of the Seventies: - It is that fact doubtless which makes this One, 'more intelligent than them all,' God. He is the All-Wise One! The All-Powered One! What he tells other Intelligences to do must be precisely the wisest, fittest thing that they could anywhere or anyhow learn – the thing which it will always behoove them, with right loyal thankfulness, and nothing doubting, to do. There goes with this, too, the thought that this All-Wise One will be the Unselfish One, the All-Loving One, the One who desires that which is highest, and best; not for himself alone, but for all; and that will be best for him too. His glory, his power, his joy will be enhanced by the uplifting of all, by enlarging them; by increasing

their joy, power, and glory. And because this All-Intelligent One is all this, and does all this, the other Intelligences worship him, submit their judgments and their will to his judgment and his will. He knows, and can do that which is best; and this submission of the mind to the Most Intelligent, Wisest – wiser than all – is worship. This is the whole meaning of the doctrine and the life of the Christ expressed in – “Father, not my will but Thy will, be done.” Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 353)

20 The Lord thy God sent his angel to ^adeliver thee from the hands of the priest of Elkenah.

21 I dwell in the midst of them all; I now, therefore, have come down unto thee to declare unto thee the ^aworks which my hands have made, wherein my ^bwisdom excelleth them all, for I ^crule in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath, in all wisdom and prudence, over all the intelligences thine eyes have seen from the beginning; I came down in the beginning in the midst of all the intelligences thou hast seen. (The first principles of man are self-existent with God. God himself, finding he was in the midst of spirits and glory, because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself. The relationship we have with God places us in a situation to advance in knowledge. He has power to institute laws to instruct the weaker intelligences, that they may be exalted with himself, so that they might have one glory upon another, and all that knowledge, power, glory, and intelligence, which is requisite in order to save them in the world of spirits. This is good doctrine. It tastes good. I can taste the principles of eternal life, and so can you. They are given to me by the revelations of Jesus Christ; and I know that when I tell you these words of eternal life as they are given to me, you taste them, and I know that you believe them. You say honey is sweet, and so do I. I can also taste the spirit of eternal life. I know it is good; and when I tell you of these things which were given me by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, you are bound to receive them as sweet, and rejoice more and more. Joseph Smith, DHC, 6:312)

22 Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, the ^aintelligences that were organized before the world was; (Man was also in the beginning with God, and thus man is co-eternal, but certainly not co-equal with God. Neal A. Maxwell, If Thou Endure it Well, p. 82. It [i.e., the primal intelligence of man] never was created, being an inherent attribute of the eternal element called spirit, which element composes each individual spirit, and which element exists in an infinitude of degrees in the scale of intellect, in all the varieties manifested in the eternal God, and thence to the lower agent, which acts by its own will. Parley P. Pratt, JD 1:258. There is an eternity of life, from which we were composed by the wisdom and skill of superior Beings... The life that is within us is a part of an eternity of life, and is organized spirit, which is clothed upon by tabernacles, therefore constituting our present being, which is designed for the attainment of further intelligence. Brigham Young, JD, 8:284-85.) and among all these there were many of the ^bnoble and great ones; (As we ponder intelligence, a summational strength and attribute of Jesus, it is vital that we understand that intelligence includes more than raw IQ; it includes judgment – and not only in the judicial sense. He who has intelligence, or the light of truth, will forsake completely that evil one. To forsake the evil one, as Jesus did, is an act of high intelligence and superlative wisdom. Neal A. Maxwell, Even As I Am, p. 29.)

23 And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast ^achosen before thou wast born. (Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand council of heaven before this world was. I suppose that I was ordained to this very office in that Grand Council. Joseph Smith, JD 24:01. God has held you in reserve to make your appearance in the final days before the second coming of the Lord. Some individuals will fall away; but the kingdom of God will remain intact to welcome the return of its head – even Jesus Christ. While our generation will be comparable in wickedness to the days of Noah, when the Lord cleansed the earth by flood, there is a major difference this time. It is that God has saved for the final inning some of His strongest children, who will help bear off the kingdom triumphantly... Make no mistake about it – you are a marked generation. There has never been more expected of the faithful in such a short period of time than there

is of us. Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson, p. 104-5. The greatest and most important talent or capacity that any of the spirit children of the Father could gain is the talent of spirituality. Most of those who gained this talent were chosen, before they were born, to come to earth as members of the house of Israel. They were foreordained to receive the blessings that the Lord promised to Abraham and to his seed in all their generations. This foreordination is an election. Paul tells us, and truly it is so, for those so chosen, selected, or elected become, in this life, the favored people. Though all mankind may be saved by obedience, some find it easier to believe and obey than others. Hence the concept, taught by Jesus, that his sheep know his voice and will not follow the dissident voices of the world. Bruce R. McConkie, A New Witness for the Articles of Faith, p. 234-35.)

24 And there stood ^aone among them that was like unto God (Jesus Christ, Jehovah), and he said unto those who were with him: We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and ^bwe will make an earth whereon these may ^cdwell; (It is true that Adam helped to form this earth. He labored with our Savior Jesus Christ. I have a strong view or conviction that there were others also who assisted them. Perhaps Noah and Enoch; and why not Joseph Smith, and those who were appointed to be rulers before the earth was formed? Doctrines of Salvation 1:74-75)

25 And we will ^aprove them herewith, to see if they will ^bdo all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them; (The test is primarily one of obedience. One way to see if we are fulfilling our foreordained callings is to study our patriarchal blessings.)

26 And they who ^akeep their first ^bestate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second ^cestate shall have ^dglory added upon their heads for ever and ever. (Neal A. Maxwell: Mortality without the dimension of temptation or trial would not be a full proving; it would be a school with soft credits and no hard courses. We Will Prove Them Herewith, p. 45. The tests given to us here are given not because God is in doubt as to the outcome, but because we need to grow in order to be able to serve with full effectiveness in the eternity to come... The relentless love of our Father in Heaven is such that in His omniscience He will not allow the cutting short some of the brief experiences we are having here. To do so would be to deprive us of everlasting experiences and great joy there. What else would an omniscient and loving Father do, even if we plead otherwise? He must at times say no. All These Things Shall Give Thee Experience. P. 26)

27 And the ^aLord said: Whom shall I ^bsend? And one answered like unto the Son of Man: Here am I, send me. And ^canother answered and said: Here am I, send me. And the Lord said: I will ^dsend the first. (The Plan of salvation was not presented, it was already in place. It was only presented to see if we would choose it or Satan's plan. The Plan of Salvation was given by God the Father. Christ accepted his part in the plan.)

28 And the ^asecond was angry, and kept not his first ^bestate; and, at that day, many (one third) followed after him.

SELECTIONS FROM THE
BOOK OF MOSES
CHAPTER 4
(June—October 1830)

How Satan became the devil—He tempts Eve—Adam and Eve fall and death enters the world.

1 AND I, the ^aLord God, spake unto Moses, saying: That ^bSatan, whom thou hast commanded in the name of mine Only Begotten, is the same which was from the ^cbeginning, and he came before me, saying—Behold, here am I, send me, I will be thy son, and I will ^dredeem all mankind, that one soul shall not be lost, and surely ^eI will do it; wherefore ^fgive me thine honor. (When we seek to aggrandize ourselves, we become unrighteous.)

2 But, behold, my Beloved ^aSon, which was my Beloved and ^bChosen from the beginning, said unto me—^cFather, thy ^dwill be done, and the ^eglory be thine forever. ([The Church] expects that each of you will have a testimony of the living reality of God our Eternal Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the beginning of all wisdom. It is the beginning of all faith. It is your duty and your obligation to acquire this knowledge. It is the only knowledge which will bring you salvation. Jesus said, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine” and that is the way you acquire a testimony – by doing the will of the Father. Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley, p. 404. Since the natural man is inclined to hold back his talents, his time, or his possessions, there will also be enhancing experiences to teach us, if we will, the need to let our wills be swallowed up in the will of the Father. Neal A. Maxwell, Increase Our Faith, p. 42)

3 Wherefore, because that ^aSatan ^brebelled against me, and sought to destroy the ^cagency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him, and also, that I should give unto him mine own power; by the power of mine Only Begotten, I caused that he should be ^dcast down;

4 And he became ^aSatan, yea, even the ^bdevil, the father of all ^clies, to ^ddeceive and to blind men, and to lead them ^ecaptive at his will, even as many as would not ^fhearken unto my voice.

Additional Reading:

Isaiah 14: 12 How art thou ^afallen from ^bheaven, O ^cLucifer, (The word Lucifer means shining one.) son of the morning! *how* art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the ^dnations! 13 For thou hast said in thine ^aheart, ^bI will ascend into heaven, I will ^cexalt my ^dthrone above the stars of God (Lucifer thought he could exalt himself without the atonement of Christ.): I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the ^enorth: (north refers to heaven.) 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds (In order to get to heaven, one must be baptized and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost and prove oneself worthy. Lucifer wanted to skip all that.); I will be like the ^amost High. 15 Yet thou shalt be brought down to ^ahell, to the sides of the pit. (Satan was sent to the place farthest from heaven.)

Revelation 12: 7 And there was ^awar in heaven: ^bMichael and his ^cangels fought against the dragon; and the ^ddragon (and his angels) fought ~~and his angels~~ (against Michael),

8 And (the dragon) prevailed not (against Michael, neither the child, nor the woman which was the church of God, who had been delivered of her pains, and brought forth the kingdom of our God and his Christ.); (The kingdom is ruled by both God the Father and Jesus Christ.) ~~neither was their place found any more in heaven.~~

9 And (Neither was there place found in heaven for) the great dragon (who) was ^acast out, that old serpent, called the ^bDevil, (The word devil is not used in the Old Testament. In Greek it means false accuser or slanderer.) and (also called) Satan (The word Satan means adversary.), which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Alma 13: 3 And this is the manner after which they were ordained—being ^acalled and ^bprepared from the ^cfoundation of the world (As in the Grand Council in Heaven Christ was called and ordained to his earthly ministry, so were all who minister in his name first called in heavenly councils, where they too were ordained to labors that would be theirs in mortality. TPJS, p. 365. None were called to offices for which they had not been properly prepared. In teaching this principle, Alma’s reference is to men like Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and many other faithful priesthood holders of the earth’s early history. Modern revelation uses as illustrations Joseph and Hyrum Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, and Wilford Woodruff. These, we were told, were “among the noble and great ones who were chosen in the beginning to be rulers in the Church of God. Even before they were born, they with many others, received their first lessons in the world of spirits and were prepared to come forth in the due time

of the Lord to labor in the vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men. DCBM, 3:94.) according to the^d foreknowledge of God, (“Brigham Young and Willard Richards explained that the general principle of election means that God elected or chose certain individuals in our premortal state to receive certain blessings, or to perform certain works, while in mortality (HC 4:258) According to the Book of Mormon, one great foreordained appointment or blessing was to receive the Melchizedek priesthood (Alma 13:3-9). Since we know that the greatest of all the gifts or blessings which God can bestow is eternal life (D&C 14:7), it follows that the greatest foreordained calling or appointment that could be received in the premortal existence was to eternal life. (*Book of Mormon Symposium Series*, edited by PR Cheesman, MS Nyman, and CD Tate, Jr., 1988, Hel 3 – 3 Ne 8, p. 115) Bruce R. McConkie: “Since men are foreordained to gain exaltation, and since no man can be exalted without the priesthood, it is almost self-evident that worthy brethren were foreordained to receive the priesthood. And so we find Alma teaching that those who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood in this life were ‘called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God.’ (Alma 13:1-12.) And Joseph Smith said, ‘Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world,’ and this includes all who hold the Melchizedek Priesthood, ‘was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was. I suppose that I was ordained to this very office in that Grand Council.’ (*Teachings*, p. 365.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 329) Neal A. Maxwell: “Yet, though foreordination is a difficult doctrine, it has been given to us by the living God, through living prophets, for a purpose. It can increase our understanding of how crucial this mortal second estate is and encourage us in good works. This precious doctrine can help us go the second mile because we are doubly called. When we mortals try to comprehend rather than to accept foreordination, finite minds are trying to comprehend omniscience. A full understanding is impossible; we simply have to trust in what the Lord has told us, knowing that we are not dealing with guarantees from God, but extra opportunities and heavy responsibilities.” (*Things As They Really Are*, p. 24) Spencer W. Kimball: “Remember, in the world before we came here, faithful women were given certain assignments while faithful men were foreordained to certain priesthood tasks. While we do not now remember the particulars, this does not alter the glorious reality of what we once agreed to.” (*Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, p. 316 as taken from *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon* compiled by K. Douglas Bassett, p. 267)) on account of their exceeding faith and good works (Those designated in heavenly councils as “noble and great” had proven themselves even in the pre-earth estate. To suppose that in our spirit existence prior to mortal birth we walked exclusively by sight, never having to exercise faith, is to misunderstand the purpose of that existence as a training ground for mortality. Those born into this life with the gift of faith merited that blessing, for we are told that there is a law “irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated.” D&C 130:20. Good works were also requisite for such high and holy foreordinations. Surely there is no better preparation for exercising faith and doing good works in the second estate than actually exercising faith and doing good works in the first. DCBM, 3:94-95.); in the first place (first estate) being left to^e choose good or evil (This phrase affirms the existence of good, evil, and agency in our first estate. The scriptural declaration that God gave us agency in that estate also attests to the existence of good and evil, for without these, agency would have been a needless gift. DCBM, 3:95); therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceedingly great^f faith, are^g called with a holy calling (Foreordinations to the higher priesthood.), yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such. (“All doctrines, ordinances, and powers associated with the gospel of Jesus Christ assume force and meaning only in and through Christ’s atoning sacrifice. Such was the plan prepared before the foundation of the earth. Men are called to receive the priesthood to assist in the redemption of souls. They are called to preach and make available what Paul described as the ‘ministry of reconciliation’ (2 Corinthians 5:18). They are called to bless lives-to lighten burdens, to strengthen the feeble knees and lift up the hands that hang down-just as their Master, the great high priest, is called upon to do. The priesthood bearers before and after Christ are thus involved in the work of his ministry. Their work is

preparatory. They, like the preeminent forerunner, John the Baptist, prepare the way of the Lord. Those prophets and priests who labored before the meridian of time sought to prepare mankind for the coming of the Redeemer. In the words of Elder Bruce R. McConkie: ‘They could preach redemption; they could foretell its coming; but their work was preparatory only. Redemption itself would come through the ministry of Him of whom they were but types and shadows.’ (*Promised Messiah*, p. 451.) Those who have lived since that time seek to instruct and warn and exhort mankind—all in preparation for his second advent, that final redemption of the earth and its inhabitants.” (McConkie and Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 3, p. 95) I fear there are many among us who because of the faithfulness in the spirit world were called to do a great work here, but like reckless spendthrifts they are exercising their free agency in riotous living and are losing their birthright and the blessings that were theirs had they proved faithful to their calling. Hence as the Lord has said, there are many called but few are chosen. Harold B. Lee, *Decisions for Successful Living*, p. 168-69.)

4 And thus they have been ^acalled to this holy calling on account of their faith, while others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and ^bblindness of their minds (The voice of the Spirit speaks to us in our hearts and minds. Gospel understanding can be neither heartless nor mindless. Neither feeling nor intellect, standing alone, is sufficient to bring the understanding and faith essential to salvation. Thus in the pre-earth life those who rejected the fullness of gospel blessings did it as it is done in mortality, that, is by ignoring the feelings of their hearts and by closing the windows of their minds to light and truth. DCBM, 3:96), while, if it had not been for this they might have had as great ^cprivilege as their brethren. (We would suppose that in our pre-earth existence all persons had the opportunity to exercise faith and involved themselves in works of righteousness. Those so doing obtained a birthright to the blessings of the priesthood as Abraham’s seed. Before the day of judgment, that opportunity will again be extended, and again it will become the privilege of those men exercising faith and doing works of righteousness to have the priesthood conferred upon them. DCBM, 3:95.)

5 Or in fine, in the first place (first estate) they were on the ^asame standing with their brethren (All men in the pre-existence could have received the priesthood if they had been worthy in their first estate. God gave his children their free agency even in the spirit world, by which the individual spirits had the privilege, just as men have here, of choosing the good and rejecting the evil, or partaking of the evil to suffer the consequences of their sins. Because of this, some even there were more faithful than others in keeping the commandments of the Lord. Some were of greater intelligence than others, as we find it here, and were honored accordingly...The spirits of men had their free agency, some were greater than others, and from among them the Father called and foreordained his prophets and rulers...The spirits of men were not equal. They may have had an equal start, and we know they were all innocent in the beginning; but the right of free agency which was given to them enabled some to outstrip others, and thus, through the eons of immortal existence, to become more intelligent, more faithful, for they were free to act for themselves, to think for themselves, to receive the truth or rebel against it. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1:58-59); thus this holy calling being prepared from the foundation of the world for such as would not harden their hearts, being in and through the atonement of the Only Begotten Son, who was prepared—

D&C 29: 36 And it came to pass that Adam, being tempted of the ^adevil—for, behold, the ^bdevil was before Adam (before mortality), for he ^crebelled against me, saying, Give me thine ^dhonor, which is my ^epower; and also a ^fthird part of the ^ghosts of heaven turned he away from me because of their ^hagency; 37 And they were thrust down, and thus came the ^adevil and his ^bangels; 38 And, behold, there is a place ^aprepared for them from the beginning, which place is ^bhell. 39 And it must needs be that the ^adevil should ^btempt the children of men, or they could not be ^cagents unto themselves; for if they never should have ^dbitter they could not know the sweet—

D&C 138: *A vision, given to President Joseph F. Smith in Salt Lake City, Utah, on October 3, 1918. In his opening address at the eighty-ninth Semiannual General Conference of the Church, on October 4, 1918, President Smith declared that he had received several divine communications during the previous months. One of these, concerning the Savior's visit to the spirits of the dead while his body was in the tomb, he had received the previous day. It was written immediately following the close of the conference; on October 31, 1918, it was submitted to the counselors in the First Presidency, the Council of the Twelve, and the Patriarch, and it was unanimously accepted by them.*

1—10, President Joseph F. Smith ponders upon the writings of Peter and our Lord's visit to the spirit world; 11—24, He sees the righteous dead assembled in paradise and Christ's ministry among them; 25—37, How the preaching of the gospel was organized among the spirits; 38—52, President Smith sees Adam, Eve, and many of the holy prophets in the spirit world who considered their spirit state before their resurrection as a bondage; 53—60, The righteous dead of this day continue their labors in the world of spirits.

1 ON the third of October, in the year nineteen hundred and eighteen, I sat in my room ^apondering (Pondering is often a prerequisite to receiving revelation.) over the scriptures; (Elder Boyd K. Packer: On one occasion when Elder Harold B. Lee spoke to the seminary and institute teachers, he was stressing to us the reality of spiritual communication and of the help and guidance we may receive from beyond the veil. But, he warned, we must be attuned in order to receive it. Here is an excerpt from his address: A few weeks ago, President McKay related to the Twelve an interesting experience, and I asked him yesterday if I might repeat it to you this morning. He said it is a great thing to be responsive to the whisperings of the Spirit, and we know that when these whisperings come it is a gift and our privilege to have them. They come when we are relaxed and not under pressure of appointments. The President then took occasion to relate an experience in the life of Bishop John Wells, former member of the Presiding Bishopric. A son of Bishop Wells was killed in Emigration Canyon on a railroad track. Brother John Wells was a great detail man and prepared many of the reports we are following up now. His boy was run over by a freight train. Sister Wells was inconsolable. She mourned during the three days prior to the funeral, received no comfort at the funeral, and was in a rather serious state of mind. One day soon after the funeral services while she was lying on her bed relaxed, still mourning, she says that her son appeared to her and said, "Mother do not mourn, do not cry. I am all right." He told her that she did not understand how the accident happened and explained that he had given the signal to the engineer to move on, and then made the usual effort to catch the railing on the freight train; but as he attempted to do so his foot caught on a root and he failed to catch the hand rail, and his body fell under the train. It was clearly an accident. Now, listen. He said that as soon as he realized that he was in another environment he tried to see his father, but he couldn't reach him. His father was so busy with the duties in his office he could not respond to his call. Therefore he had come to his mother. He said to her, "You tell father that all is well with me, and I want you not to mourn any more." Then the President made the statement that the point he had in mind was that when we are relaxed in a private room we are more susceptible to those things; and that so far as he was concerned, his best thoughts come after he gets up in the morning and is relaxed and thinking about the duties of the day; that impressions come more dearly, as if it were to hear a voice. Those impressions are right. If we are worried about something and upset in our feelings, the inspiration does not come. If we so live that our minds are free from worry and our conscience is clear and our feelings are right toward one another, the operation of the Spirit of the Lord upon our spirit is as real as when we pick up the telephone; but when they come, we must be brave enough to take the suggested actions. The Lord will approve it and the Brethren will approve it, and we know it is right. He said, it is a great consolation in this upset world today to know that our Savior is directing this work. Then the President concluded: "I value that testimony." If you forget all else I have said, you remember that lesson and that admonition. (Address to seminary and institute faculty, Brigham

Young University, 6 July 1956. Additional revelation comes as a result of the study of the scriptures.)

2 And ^areflecting upon the great ^batonement ^csacrifice that was made by the Son of God, for the ^dredemption of the world;

3 And the great and wonderful ^alove^{*} made manifest by the Father and the Son in the coming of the ^bRedeemer into the world;

4 That through his ^aatonement, and by ^bobedience to the principles of the gospel, mankind might be saved.

5 While I was thus engaged, my mind reverted to the writings of the apostle Peter, (One chief Apostle is pondering the words of another chief Apostle.) to the ^aprimitive saints scattered abroad throughout ^bPontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, and other parts of Asia, where the gospel had been ^cpreached after the crucifixion of the Lord.

6 I opened the Bible and read the third and fourth chapters of the first epistle of ^aPeter, and as I read I was greatly ^bimpressed, more than I had ever been before, with the following passages:

7 "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

8 "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in ^aprison;

9 "Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water." (1 Peter 3:18—20.)

10 "For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." (1 Peter 4:6.)

11 As I ^apondered over these things which are ^bwritten, the ^ceyes of my ^dunderstanding were opened, and the Spirit of the Lord ^erested upon me, and I saw the hosts of the ^fdead, both small and great.

12 (Will many be saved in the Celestial Kingdom?) And there were gathered together in one place **an innumerable company** of the spirits of the ^ajust, who had been ^bfaithful in the ^ctestimony of Jesus while they lived in mortality;

13 And who had offered ^asacrifice in the ^bsimilitude of the great sacrifice of the Son of God, and had suffered ^ctribulation in their Redeemer's ^dname. (From this scripture we learn that those who inherit the Celestial Kingdom will offer a sacrifice similar to the sacrifice made by Jesus Christ. We will be called to offer a sacrifice like that of Abraham. We will be tried and chastened to see if we will be willing to offer the sacrifice that will be required of us. Gordon B. Hinckley: Sacrifice is the very essence of religion; it is the keystone of happy home life, the basis of true friendship, the foundation of peaceful community living, of sound relations among people and nations. Without sacrifice there is no true worship of God. I become increasingly convinced of that every day. "The Father gave his Son, and the Son gave his life," and we do not worship unless we give-give of our substance, give of our time, give of our strength, give of our talent, give of our faith, give of our testimonies. BYU Speeches of the Year, 1962.)

14 All these had departed the mortal life, firm in the ^ahope (Bruce R. McConkie: All the faithful Saints, all of those who have endured to the end, depart this life with the absolute guarantee of eternal life. There is no equivocation, no doubt, no uncertainty in our minds. Those who have been true and faithful in this life will not fall by the wayside in the life to come. If they keep their covenants here and now and depart this life firm and true in the testimony of our blessed Lord, they shall come forth with an inheritance of eternal life. We do not mean to say that those who die in the Lord, and who are true and faithful in this life, must be perfect in all things when they go into the next sphere of existence. There was only one perfect man—the Lord Jesus whose Father was God. There have been many righteous souls who have attained relative degrees of perfection, and there have been great hosts of faithful people who have kept the faith, and lived the law, and departed this life with the full assurance of an eventual inheritance of eternal life. There are many things they will do and must do, even beyond the grave, to merit the fulness of the Father's kingdom in that final glorious day when the great King shall say unto

them, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (Matt. 25:34.) But what we are saying is that when the saints of God chart a course of righteousness, when they gain sure testimonies of the truth and divinity of the Lord’s work, when they keep the commandments, when they overcome the world, when they put first in their lives the things of God’s kingdom: when they do all these things, and then depart this life—though they have not yet become perfect—they shall nonetheless gain eternal life in our Father’s kingdom; and eventually they shall be perfect as God their Father and Christ His Son are perfect. CR, Oct 1976, p. 107) of a glorious^b resurrection, through the^c grace of God the^d Father and his^e Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

15 I beheld that they were filled with^a joy and gladness, and were rejoicing together because the day of their^b deliverance was at hand. (Joseph Smith: "We came to this earth that we might have a body and present it pure before God in the celestial kingdom. The great principle of happiness consists in having a body. The devil has no body, and herein is his punishment. He is pleased when he can obtain the tabernacle of man, and when cast out by the Savior he asked to go into the herd of swine, showing that he would prefer a swine's body to having none. [Luke 8:26-33.] All beings who have bodies have power over those who have not." (Joseph Smith, TPJS, p. 181.))

16 They were assembled awaiting the advent of the Son of God into the^a spirit world, to declare their^b redemption from the^c bands of death.

17 Their sleeping^a dust was to be^b restored unto its^c perfect frame, ^dbone to his bone, and the sinews and the flesh upon them, the^e spirit and the body to be united never again to be divided, that they might receive a fulness of^f joy.

18 While this vast multitude waited and conversed, rejoicing in the hour of their^a deliverance from the chains of death, the Son of God appeared, declaring^b liberty to the^c captives who had been faithful;

19 And there he^a preached to them the everlasting^b gospel, the doctrine of the^c resurrection and the redemption of mankind from the^d fall, and from individual sins on conditions of^e repentance.

20 But unto the^a wicked he did not go, and among the ungodly and the unrepentant who had^b defiled themselves while in the flesh, his voice was not raised;

21 Neither did the^a rebellious who rejected the^b testimonies and the warnings of the ancient^c prophets behold his^d presence, nor look upon his face.

22 Where these were, ^adarkness reigned, but among the righteous there was^b peace;

23 And the saints rejoiced in their^a redemption, and bowed the^b knee and acknowledged the Son of God as their Redeemer and Deliverer from death and the^c chains of^d hell.

24 Their countenances^a shone, and the^b radiance^c from the presence of the Lord rested upon them, and they^c sang praises unto his holy name.

25 I marveled, for I understood that the Savior spent about three years in his^a ministry among the Jews and those of the house of Israel, endeavoring to^b teach them the everlasting gospel and call them unto repentance;

26 And yet, notwithstanding his mighty works, and miracles, and proclamation of the truth, in great^a power and authority, there were but^b few^c who hearkened to his voice, and rejoiced in his presence, and received salvation at his hands.

27 But his ministry among those who were dead was limited to the^a brief time (Somewhere between 38 and 40 hours) intervening between the crucifixion and his resurrection;

28 And I wondered at the words of Peter—wherein he said that the Son of God preached unto the^a spirits in prison, who sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah—and how it was possible for him to preach to those spirits and perform the necessary labor among them in so short a time.

29 And as I wondered, my eyes were opened, and my understanding^a quickened, and I perceived that the Lord went not in person among the^b wicked and the disobedient who had rejected the truth, to teach them;

30 But behold, from among the righteous, he^a organized his forces and appointed^b messengers, ^cclothed

with power and authority, and^d commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in^e darkness, even to^f all the spirits of men; and thus was the gospel preached to the dead. (President Wilford Woodruff explained that in the spirit world "every Apostle, every Seventy, every Elder, etc., who has died in the faith as soon as he passes to the other side of the veil, enters into the work of the ministry, and there is a thousand times more to preach [to] there than there is here. They have work on the other side of the veil; and they want men, and they call them" (Journal of Discourses, 22:334). Joseph F. Smith: I believe that the disciples who have passed away in this dispensation— Joseph, the Prophet, and his brother Hyrum, and Brigham, and Heber, and Willard, and Daniel and John, and Wilford and all the rest of the prophets who have lived in this dispensation, and who have been intimately associated with the work of redemption and the other ordinances of the gospel of the Son of God in this world, are preaching that same gospel that they lived and preached here, to those who are in darkness in the spirit world and who had not the knowledge before they went. The gospel must be preached to them. We are not perfect without them—they cannot be perfect without us. Now, among all these millions of spirits that have lived on the earth and have passed away, from generation to generation, since the beginning of the world, without the knowledge of the gospel—among them you may count that at least one-half are women. Who is going to preach the gospel to the women? Who is going to carry the testimony of Jesus Christ to the hearts of the women who have passed away without a knowledge of the gospel? Well, to my mind, it is a simple thing. These good sisters who have been set apart, ordained to the work, called to it, authorized by the authority of the holy Priesthood to minister for their sex, in the House of God for the living and for the dead, will be fully authorized and empowered to preach the gospel and minister to the women while the elders and prophets are preaching it to the men. The things we experience here are typical of the things of God and the life beyond us. There is a great similarity between God's purposes as manifested here and his purposes as carried out in his presence and kingdom. Those who are authorized to preach the gospel here and are appointed here to do that work will not be idle after they have passed away, but will continue to exercise the rights that they obtained here under the Priesthood of the Son of God to minister for the salvation of those who have died without a knowledge of the truth. Gospel Doctrine, 460-61)

31 And the chosen messengers went forth to declare the^a acceptable day of the Lord and proclaim^b liberty to the captives who were bound, even unto all who would^c repent of their sins (Those in the spirit world are still able to repent.) and receive the gospel. (Both those who died without hearing the gospel in mortality and those who rejected the words of the prophets while in the flesh are to hear the gospel in the spirit world. That is to say the gospel will be taught to all who will listen. Those who had the opportunity to receive the gospel in this life (God being their judge) and who rejected it, may accept it in the spirit world to their blessing but not to their exaltation. This is not to suggest that there is no repentance in the spirit world. This revelation states that "the dead who repent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ordinances of the house of God. And after they have paid the penalty of their transgressions, and are washed clean, shall receive a reward according to their works, for they are heirs of salvation" (D&C138:58-59). Revelations of the Restoration, p. 1148)

32 Thus was the gospel preached to those who had^a died in their sins, without a^b knowledge of the truth, or in^c transgression, having^d rejected the prophets.

33 These were taught^a faith in God, repentance from sin, ^b vicarious baptism for the ^c remission of sins, the^d gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands,

34 And all other principles of the gospel that were necessary for them to know in order to qualify themselves that they might be^a judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit. (Joseph Fielding Smith: If a person is in every way worthy of the blessings and was denied them while living, then any time after death the ordinances may be performed. If the person had every opportunity to receive these blessings in person and refused, or through procrastination and lack of faith did not receive them, then he is not entitled to them, and it is doubtful if the work for him will be valid if done within one week or 1,000 years. The Lord has declared that it is he who endures to the end that

shall be saved, and he who rejects or neglects these blessings until death, when he has had the opportunity, is not worthy of them. Doctrines of Salvation, 2:179. The question is often asked as to whether it is harder or easier to accept the gospel in the spirit world. If those in that sphere are to be "judged according to men in the flesh," it must of necessity require the same degree of faith and courage to accept and live the gospel there as here. For those who have accorded their lives with gospel principles, accepting the gospel will be a natural step in their progression. Those whose lives were devoted to debauchery, wickedness, and warring against light and truth will have the greatest of difficulty in changing their course. Revelations of the Restoration, p. 1148)

35 And so it was made known among the dead, both small and great, the unrighteous as well as the faithful, that redemption had been wrought through the ^asacrifice of the Son of God upon the ^bcross.

36 Thus was it made known that our Redeemer spent his time during his sojourn in the world of ^aspirits, instructing and preparing the faithful spirits of the ^bprophets who had testified of him in the flesh;

37 That they might carry the message of redemption unto all the dead, unto whom he could not go personally, because of their ^arebellion and transgression, that they through the ministration of his servants might also hear his words.

38 Among the great and ^amighty ones who were assembled in this vast congregation of the righteous were Father ^bAdam, the ^cAncient of Days and father of all,

39 And our glorious ^aMother ^bEve, with many of her faithful ^cdaughters who had lived through the ages and worshiped the true and living God.

40 ^aAbel, the first ^bmartyr, was there, and his brother ^cSeth, one of the mighty ones, who was in the express ^dimage of his father, Adam.

41 ^aNoah, who gave warning of the flood; ^bShem, the great ^chigh priest; ^dAbraham, the father of the faithful; ^eIsaac, ^fJacob, and Moses, the great ^glaw-giver of Israel;

42 And ^aIsaiah, who declared by prophecy that the Redeemer was anointed to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the ^bcaptives, and the opening of the ^cprison to them that were bound, were also there.

43 Moreover, Ezekiel, who was shown in vision the great valley of ^adry bones, which were to be ^bclothed upon with flesh, to come forth again in the resurrection of the dead, living souls;

44 Daniel, who foresaw and foretold the establishment of the ^akingdom of God in the latter days, never again to be destroyed nor given to other people;

45 ^aElias, who was with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration;

46 And ^aMalachi, the prophet who testified of the coming of ^bElijah—of whom also Moroni spake to the Prophet Joseph Smith, declaring that he should come before the ushering in of the great and dreadful ^cday of the Lord—were also there.

47 The Prophet Elijah was to plant in the ^ahearts of the children the promises made to their fathers,

48 Foreshadowing the great work to be done in the ^atemples of the Lord in the ^bdispensation of the fulness of times, for the redemption of the dead, and the ^csealing of the children to their parents, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse and utterly wasted at his coming.

49 All these and many more, even the ^aprophets who dwelt among the Nephites and ^btestified of the coming of the Son of God, mingled in the vast assembly and waited for their deliverance,

50 For the ^adead had looked upon the long absence of their ^bspirits from their bodies as a ^cbondage.

("The elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy; and when separated, man cannot receive a fulness of joy" (D&C 93:33-34). All of the spirit world is considered a prison because we do not have our bodies.)

51 These the Lord taught, and gave them ^apower to come forth, after his resurrection from the dead, to enter into his Father's kingdom, there to be crowned with ^bimmortality and eternal life, (How do we get the power to become resurrected? President Spencer W. Kimball: President Brigham Young, the second president of this dispensation, said: "It is supposed by this people that we have all the ordinances in our possession for life and salvation, and exaltation, and that we are administering in those ordinances. This

is not the case. We are in possession of all the ordinances that can be administered in the flesh; but there are other ordinances and administrations that must be administered beyond this world. I know you would like to ask what they are. I will mention one. We have not, neither can we receive here, the ordinance and the keys of resurrection.” (Journal of Discourses, 15:137.) Do we have the keys of resurrection? Could you return to the earth as ones who would never again die—your own parents, your grandparents, your ancestors? I buried my mother when I was eleven, my father when I was in my early twenties. I have missed my parents much. If I had the power of resurrection as did the Savior of the world, I would have been tempted to try to have kept them longer. I have been called to speak in numerous funerals for people whom I have known, people whom I have loved, and people whom I have saved and held on to in a limited way. We do not know of anyone who can resurrect the dead as did Jesus the Christ when he came back to mortality. “[The keys] will be given to those who have passed off this stage of action and have received their bodies again. . . . They will be ordained, by those who hold the keys of the resurrection, to go forth and resurrect the Saints, just as we receive the ordinance of baptism then receive the keys of authority to baptize others for the remission of their sins. This is one of the ordinances we can not receive here [on the earth], and there are many more.” (JD, 15:137.) CR, Apr 1977, p. 69. Brigham Young: Some person holding the keys of the resurrection, having previously passed through that ordeal, will be delegated to resurrect our bodies. JD, 9:139)

52 And continue thenceforth their labor (What labor? To be as God is.) as had been promised by the Lord, and be partakers of all ^a blessings which were held in reserve for them that love him.

(Having witnessed the visit of the Savior to the world of spirits while his body lay in the borrowed tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea, the scene now changes so that President Joseph F. Smith is invited to view things in the spirit world as they were at the time he received this vision in October of 1918. There is no justification in the supposition that premortal spirits (Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, and Wilford Woodruff) mingled with the disembodied spirits during the visit of Christ to them in the meridian of time. Those described as being present included the faithful from Adam to Malachi (vv. 38-46) and the Book of Mormon prophets (v. 49), all of whom had complied with the law of sacrifice as practiced in the Old Testament (vv. 12-14) and had received the power of resurrection (v. 51). It is common for a vision of this sort to change scenes, including time and place. The vision of John the Revelator in the book of Revelation, that of Nephi in 1 Nephi 11-14, and that of the Prophet Joseph Smith in Doctrine and Covenants 76 are classic examples. What President Smith now sees is a vision of those who had been "reserved to come forth in the fulness of times" to lay the foundation of the "great latter-day work." Having completed their labors in the flesh, they now continued them in the spirit world. Verses 55 and 56 may well be a flashback to our first estate. Revelations of the Restoration, p. 1149-50)

(President Smith is now going to see the pre-mortal existence.) 53 The Prophet Joseph Smith, and my father, Hyrum Smith, Brigham Young, John Taylor, Wilford Woodruff, and other choice ^a spirits who were ^b reserved to come forth in the ^c fulness of times to take part in laying the ^d foundations of the great latter-day work, (There is no scriptural evidence to suggest that those in pre-mortality mingled with those who had died and were in the spirit world.)

54 Including the building of the ^a temples and the performance of ordinances therein for the redemption of the ^b dead, were also in the spirit world.

55 I observed that they were also among the ^a noble and great ones who were ^b chosen in the beginning to be rulers in the Church of God.

56 Even before they were born, they, with many others, received their first ^a lessons in the world of spirits and were ^b prepared to come forth in the due ^c time of the Lord to labor in his ^d vineyard for the salvation of the souls of men.

(Now he goes back to the spirit world.) 57 I beheld that the faithful ^a elders of this dispensation, when

they depart from mortal life, continue their labors in the ^bpreaching of the ^cgospel of repentance and redemption, through the sacrifice of the Only Begotten Son of God, among those who are in darkness and under the bondage of sin in the great world of the ^dspirits of the dead.

58 The dead who ^arepent will be redeemed, through obedience to the ^bordinances of the house of God,
59 And after they have paid the ^apenalty of their transgressions, and are ^bwashed clean, shall receive a ^creward according to their ^dworks, for they are heirs of salvation. (In the previous verse we are assured that the dead can repent. We know that there is no true repentance without suffering (Alma 42:16-18). It naturally follows that those in the spirit world who repent will be involved in the same process that they would have been involved in had they lived to do their repenting in this life. If they are to be judged according to men in the flesh, they too must pay "the penalty of their transgressions." One illustration of this principle could include those who, in a state of despondency, commit suicide. While not negating the seriousness of this transgression, it would be our hope that there will be those who, in the course of time, having "paid the penalty" will be able to right their lives (Ballard, Suicide, 52-54). Revelations of the Restoration, p. 1150)

60 Thus was the ^avision of the redemption of the dead revealed to me, and I bear record, and I know that this ^brecord is ^ctrue, through the blessing of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, even so. Amen.

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