

Comments on Doctrine & Covenants 2

This rather terse section sums up the entire purpose of the Abrahamic covenant, the Day of the Lord, and the pre-Second Advent mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The text is an excerpt from various comments made by the angel Moroni to Smith. In this case, Moroni was quoting or paraphrasing a passage from Malachi. The same passage was quoted by the resurrected Jesus Christ to the Nephites in 3 Ne. 25:5-6.

The KJV on Malachi 4:5-6 differs from D&C 2 as follows:

KJV	D&C
Behold, I will send you	Behold, I will reveal unto you
	the Priesthood,
	by the hand of
Elijah the prophet	Elijah the prophet
before the coming of the	before the coming of the
great and dreadful	great and dreadful
day of the LORD:	day of the Lord.
And he shall turn	And he shall plant
the heart of	in the hearts
the fathers	
to the children,	of the children the
	promises made to the fathers,
and the heart of the	and the hearts of the
children	children shall turn
to their fathers,	to their fathers.
lest I come and	
	If it were not so,
smite the earth	the whole earth
with a curse.	would be utterly wasted
	at his coming.

The JST/IV on Malachi 4:5-6 was not changed to conform to the D&C account. This was probably intentional to present both the mortal and post-mortal interpretations on the turning of the hearts. Also note the 3 Ne. 25:5-6 quotation of Mal. 4:5-6 is a verbatim quotation of the KJV rendering.

1 Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. 2 And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. 3 If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.

v1-3 The Lord will reveal the Priesthood, His agent of sanctification, to mankind before the Day of the Lord (v. 1).

The Lord's desire is to sanctify as many of the inhabitants of earth as will be sanctified so they will do His will (v. 2). Otherwise, there will be nothing worth saving and all will be destroyed at the Second Advent (v. 3).

v1 Luke 1:17 indicates John Baptist was a type of the coming of Elijah in that he had the "spirit and power of Elijah" as a forerunner to the First Advent.

The phrase "great and dreadful day of the Lord" refers to the Second Advent, and the events immediately preceding it, cf. Isa. 2:12-17, Isa. 30:27-33, Joel 2, Mal. 3:2, 2 Ne. 26:2-6, D&C 112:23-26.

v2 "the promises made to the fathers", referring to the Abrahamic covenant and all additional covenants made under that umbrella (e.g., Jacob, Lehi, Nephi, Enos, etc.). These promises are generally the continuance of physical lineage on the earth and in heaven as well (i.e., eternal life/lives per D&C 132, cf. Gen. 12:1-3, Rom. 9:9, Hebr. 11:17, 1 Ne. 22:8-9, 2 Ne. 3:5, 2 Ne. 10:2, 2 Ne. 10:17, 3 Ne. 5:14-26, Morm. 8:21-25, D&C 3:19-20, D&C 107:40, D&C 132:30).

In the Book of Mormon, another accessory promise is that the record of the descendants of Lehi would go forth to them at a future time to reconcile them to their Lord, cf. Enos 1:15-18.

A more spiritual promise is the grafting in of the Gentiles into Israel which commenced with the events of Acts 10, cp. Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4, D&C 88:4, Abra. 2:10-11.

Overall, what this simple phrase means is the Lord is setting about the fulfill the Abrahamic covenant and not leave any strings dangling.

In specific, we know the keys held by Elijah and disbursed to Smith were those dealing with vicarious ordinance work, cf. D&C 127, 128. Note the D&C account differs from the KJV account in that it specifically references the Priesthood.

The turning of the hearts certainly has reference to immediate familial relations (mortality) as well as genealogy and family history (post-mortality). You could even develop an interpretation that has the "children" as the pre-mortal spirits assisting the "fathers" who would be the mortals doing the vicarious ordinance work.

It should be noted that the KJV rendering favors the mortality interpretation and the present D&C rendering favors a

post-mortality interpretation. Note the D&C version only has the children turning to the fathers and not the fathers to the children. In a post-mortality reading the fathers and sons are separated by death.

v3 If all people on the earth are of telestial quality at the time of the Day of the Lord, all will be destroyed with no remnant left. There have to be some better than telestial quality people on the earth in order to get the things done which the Lord wants done. This necessarily implies there exists a body of believers who are proclaiming the gospel, encouraging repentance, gathering natural Israel, and redeeming their dead. On this point, the KJV and D&C accounts effectively say the same thing, with the D&C account being a bit stronger in its wording.

Historical Material Pertaining to Doctrine & Covenants 2

The first is an excerpt from Smith's own writings, which also appears in the Pearl of Great Price as Joseph Smith-History. The second is an excerpt from the writings of Joseph's mother, Lucy Mack Smith.

The first publication of the text was in Manuscript History of the Church, Book A-1, pages 5-6, dated between June 11-November 3, 1839. It was published in Times & Seasons, Volume 3, Number 12, page 753, April 15, 1842. It was published in The Evening and The Morning Star, Volume 3, Number 4, page 53, August 1842.

The text was not included in the Doctrine & Covenants until 1872, when Orson Pratt was instructed by Brigham Young to include it in that print edition.

Excerpt from History of the Church

During the space of time which intervened between the time I had the vision and the year eighteen hundred and twenty-three—having been forbidden to join any of the religious sects of the day, and being of very tender years, and persecuted by those who ought to have been my friends, and to have treated me kindly, and if they supposed me to be deluded to have endeavored in a proper and affectionate manner to have reclaimed me,—I was left to all kinds of temptations; and mingling with all kinds of society, I frequently fell into many foolish errors, and displayed the weakness of youth, and the foibles of human nature; which, I am sorry to say, led me into divers temptations, offensive in the sight of God. In making this confession, no one need suppose me guilty of any great or malignant sins. A disposition to commit such was never in my nature. But I was guilty of levity, and sometimes associated with jovial company, etc., not consistent with that character which ought to be maintained by one who was called of God as I had been. But this will not seem very strange to any one who recollects my youth, and is acquainted with my native cheery temperament.

In consequence of these things, I often felt condemned for my weakness and imperfections; when, on the evening of the above-mentioned twenty-first of September, after I had retired to my bed for the night, I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies, and also for a manifestation to me, that I might know

of my state and standing before Him; for I had full confidence in obtaining a divine manifestation, as I previously had done. While I was thus in the act of calling upon God, I discovered a light appearing in my room, which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noonday, when immediately a personage appeared at my bed side, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the floor. He had on a loose robe of most exquisite whiteness. It was a whiteness beyond anything earthly I had ever seen; nor do I believe that any earthly thing could be made to appear so exceedingly white and brilliant. His hands were naked and his arms also, a little above the wrist, so, also were his feet naked, as were his legs, a little above the ankles. His head and neck were also bare. I could discover that he had no other clothing on but this robe, as it was open, so that I could see into his bosom. Not only was his robe exceedingly white, but his whole person was glorious beyond description, and his countenance truly like lightning. The room was exceedingly light, but not so very bright as immediately around his person.

When first I looked upon him, I was afraid; but the fear soon left me. He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me and that his name was Moroni; that God had a work for me to do; and that my name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people. He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the sources from whence they sprang. He also said that the fullness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants; also that there were two stones in silver bows—and these stones, fastened to a breastplate, constituted what is called the Urim and Thummim—deposited with the plates; and the possession and use of these stones were what constituted “Seers” in ancient or former times; and that God had prepared them for the purpose of translating the book.

After telling me these things, he commenced quoting the prophecies of the Old Testament. He first quoted part of the third chapter of Malachi, and he quoted also the fourth or last chapter of the same prophecy, though with a little variation from the way it reads in our Bibles. Instead of quoting the first verse as it reads in our books, he quoted it thus:

For behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and

all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall burn as stubble; for they that come shall burn them, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

And again, he quoted the fifth verse thus:

Behold I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

He also quoted the next verse differently:

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

In addition to these, he quoted the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, saying that it was about to be fulfilled. He quoted also the third chapter of Acts, twenty-second and twenty-third verses, precisely as they stand in our New Testament. He said that that Prophet was Christ; but the day had not yet come when "they who would not hear his voice should be cut off from among the people," but soon would come. He also quoted the second chapter of Joel, from the twenty eighth verse to the last. He also said that this was not yet fulfilled, but was soon to be. And he further stated that the fullness of the Gentiles was soon to come in. He quoted many other passages of Scripture, and offered many explanations which cannot be mentioned here.

Again, he told me, that when I got those plates of which he had spoken—for the time that they should be obtained was not yet fulfilled—I should not show them to any person; neither the breast plate with the Urim and Thummim; only to those to whom I should be commanded to show them; if I did I should be destroyed. While he was conversing with me about the plates, the vision was opened to my mind that I could see the place where the plates were deposited, and that so clearly and distinctly that I knew the place again when I visited it.

After this communication, I saw the light in the room began to gather immediately around the person of him who had been speaking to me, and it continued to do so, until the room was again left dark, except just around me, when instantly I saw, as it were, a conduit open right up into heaven, and he ascended until he entirely disappeared, and the room was left as it had been before this heavenly light had made its appearance. I lay

musings on the singularity of the scene and marveling greatly at what had been told to me by this extraordinary messenger; when, in the midst of my meditation, I suddenly discovered that my room was again beginning to get lighted, and in an instant, as it were, the same heavenly messenger was again by my bedside. He commenced, and again related the very same things which he had done at the first visit, without the least variation; which having done, he informed me of great judgments which were coming upon the earth, with great desolations by famine, sword, and pestilence; and that these grievous judgments would come on the earth in this generation. Having related these things, he again ascended as he had done before.

By this time, so deep were the impressions made on my mind, that sleep had fled from my eyes, and I lay overwhelmed in astonishment at what I had both seen and heard. But what was my surprise when again I beheld the same messenger at my bedside, and heard him rehearse or repeat over again to me the same things as before; and added a caution to me, telling me that Satan would try to tempt me, (in consequence of the indigent circumstances of my father's family,) to get the plates for the purpose of getting rich. This he forbade me, saying that I must have no other object in view in getting the plates but to glorify God, and must not be influenced by any other motive than that of building His kingdom; otherwise I could not get them. After this third visit, he again ascended into heaven as before, and I was again left to ponder on the strangeness of what I had just experienced; when almost immediately after the heavenly messenger had ascended from me the third time, the cock crowed, and I found that day was approaching, so that our interviews must have occupied the whole of that night.

I shortly after arose from my bed, and, as usual, to the necessary labors of the day; but in attempting to work as at other times, I found my strength so exhausted as to render me entirely unable. My father, who was laboring along with me, discovered something to be wrong with me, and told me to go home. I started with the intention of going to the house; but, in attempting to cross the fence out of the field where we were, my strength entirely failed me, and I fell helpless on the ground, and for a time was quite unconscious of anything. The first thing that I can recollect was a voice speaking unto me, calling me by name. I looked up, and beheld the same messenger standing over my head, surrounded by light as before. He then again related unto me all that he had related to me the previous night, and commanded me to go to my father and tell him of the vision and commandments which I had received. I obeyed; I

returned to my father in the field, and rehearsed the whole matter to him. He replied to me that it was of God, and told me to go and do as commanded by the messenger. I left the field, and went to the place where the messenger had told me the plates were deposited; and owing to the distinctness of the vision which I had had concerning it, I knew the place the instant that I arrived there. (Joseph Smith, History of the Church, Volume 1, Chapter 2, page 10-15)

Excerpt from History of Joseph Smith, by his Mother

From this time until the twenty-first of September 1823, Joseph continued, as usual, to labor with his father and nothing during this interval occurred of very great importance--though he suffered every kind of opposition and persecution from the different orders of religionists.

On the evening of the twenty-first of September, he retired to his bed in quite a serious and contemplative state of mind. He shortly betook himself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God, for a manifestation of his standing before him, and while thus engaged he received the following vision:

[Quotation of History of the Church, vol. i, pp. 11-14]

When the angel ascended the second time, he left Joseph overwhelmed with astonishment, yet gave him but a short time to contemplate the things which he had told him before he made his reappearance, and rehearsed the same things over, adding a few words of caution and instruction, thus: that he must beware of covetousness, and he must not suppose the record was to be brought forth with the view of getting gain, for this was not the case, but that it was to bring forth light and intelligence, which had for a long time been lost to the world; and that when he went to get the plates, he must be on his guard, or his mind would be filled with darkness. The angel then told him to tell his father all which he had both seen and heard.

The next day, my husband, Alvin, and Joseph, were reaping together in the field, and as they were reaping,

Joseph stopped quite suddenly, and seemed to be in a very deep study. Alvin, observing it, hurried him, saying, "We must not slacken our hands or we will not be able to complete our task." Upon this Joseph went to work again, and after laboring a short time, he stopped just as he had done before. This being quite unusual and strange, it attracted the attention of his father, upon which he discovered that Joseph was very pale. My husband, supposing that he was sick, told him to go to the house, and have his mother doctor him. He accordingly ceased his

work, and started, but on coming to a beautiful green, under an apple tree, he stopped and lay down, for he was so weak he could proceed no further. He was here but a short time, when the messenger whom he saw the previous night, visited him again, and the first thing he said was, "Why did you not tell your father that which I commanded you to tell him?" Joseph replied, "I was afraid my father would not believe me." The angel rejoined, "He will believe every word you say to him."

Joseph then promised the angel that he would do as he had been commanded. Upon this, the messenger departed, and Joseph returned to the field, where he had left my husband and Alvin; but when he got there, his father had just gone to the house, as he was somewhat unwell. Joseph then desired Alvin to go straightway and see his father, and inform him that he had something of great importance to communicate to him, and that he wanted him to come out into the field where they were at work. Alvin did as he was requested, and when my husband got there Joseph related to him all that had passed between him and the angel the previous night and that morning. Having heard this account, his father charged him not to fail in attending strictly to the instruction which he had received from this heavenly messenger. (Lucy Mack Smith, History of Joseph Smith, by his Mother, pages 74-80)

Copyright © 2025 by S. Kurt Neumiller <kurt.neumiller@gmail.com>. All rights reserved. No part of this text may be reproduced in any form or by any means for commercial gain without the express written consent of the author. Digital or printed copies may be freely made and distributed for personal and public non-commercial use.