

Ir-ot-02
Thou Wast Chosen Before Thou Wast Born
(Abraham 3; Moses 4:1-4)
By Lenet Hadley Read

(Here is inspirational background and supportive true accounts)

I. Knowledge of the Pre-mortal existence is a great and unique blessing in our lives.

A. I once heard a recent convert bear strong testimony of the wonderful difference it made in her life when she learned of the pre-mortal existence. It answered many previously perplexing questions, and resolved many conflicts for her concerning what appeared to be injustices.

Being raised in the Church, I had never recognized what a unique blessing it was to have this knowledge. Her testimony helped me no longer take it for granted.

B. For example, how do the events in Heaven before this earth was created help us to understand the nature of suffering in this life?

(Answers could include: a. We were meant to experience adversity in order to prove our character and to strengthen us; b. We are often victims of others' free agency, which the Lord will not deny, though He will call for accountability in the end; c. Knowing that we would experience adversity here, we chose to come and to assume the risk, even with joy!)

C. How does it help in knowing we chose to follow Jesus Christ in the Council in Heaven?

I find it empowering to know I chose to follow Jesus Christ in the pre-mortal existence.

And thus I find it a wonderful experience, when faced with a moral choice, to envision Jesus Christ in my mind, and to deliberately make a conscious choice a second time: "I choose You!"

II. Knowing of the pre-mortal existence helps clarify important issues concerning Jesus Christ.

A. Our knowledge that in the pre-mortal existence Jesus *volunteered* to be Our Redeemer makes an enormous difference.

1. Otherwise we are left like many others who struggle with why God would kill His own son as sacrifice. [An example of those who struggle is given in *The Life of Pi*.]

2. Knowing Jesus from the beginning volunteered Himself to serve as our sacrificing Redeemer builds a greater love for Him and for what He has done for us, and helps us understand more why the Father would *allow* such a sacrifice.

B. Knowing of the pre-mortal existence helps us understand Jesus' role as Counselor.

1. Some Biblical scholars say Isaiah 9:6 actually contains four titles of the Savior with four modifying adjectives, and should be translated: "**Wonderful Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.**" [Note: the Hebrew Bible was originally written without punctuation. It would have been later translators who inserted a comma between Wonderful and Counselor. "Wonderful Counselor" would make all elements parallel, a pattern consistent with typical Hebrew literary patterns.]

2. Consider all the ways Jesus truly was a “Wonderful Counselor” in the Council in Heaven!

III. Knowing of the pre-mortal existence helps us accept God’s prophets.

A. A good share of the revelation to Abraham was to teach him of the foreordination of the Lord’s leaders. (Abraham 3:22-23).

B. Throughout the centuries the Lord’s prophets, and the Savior Himself, were killed because men could not accept other men as speaking or acting for the Lord. But if they truly understood that the Father, **in the pre-mortal existence, foreordained individuals to come and lead His children, they would more readily have accepted those prophets.**

1. For example, Joseph Smith was not just any ordinary boy kneeling down and asking God’s help in prayer. If men understood that he was foreordained for his role, it would help them accept the miraculous events which occurred because of his prayer.

C. We are blessed to have confirmation that the Lord foreordained even modern prophets.

1. For example, See “True and Faithful,” *The Ensign*, January 2014, p., 46, where Joseph Fielding Smith received this blessing by his patriarch at the age of 19, “... You will indeed stand in the midst of the people a prophet and a revelator to them, for the Lord has blessed you and ordained you to this calling.”

D. In the 2012 movie “Lincoln,” President Lincoln is portrayed as asking at one time, “Do you think we chose to be born?” Then he asked two young men present whether some persons might have been born for a certain purpose. The two young men in attendance replied that perhaps he, at least, had been. Of course, all their thoughts were that Lincoln himself may have been raised for the purpose of freeing the slaves. And of course he most likely had been.

So it is interesting that even **those without the Church, do, at times, sense there is more to life than just accidental births with no purpose or significance to the lives of individuals.**

IV. Knowledge of the pre-mortal existence helps us understand *our own lives* are purposeful.

A. Virginia Hinckley Pearce related that when the patriarch placed his hands upon her, any uncertainties she felt vanished. She has expressed, “...every other time I have read that blessing -- the startling news: He *knows* me. Heavenly Father knows *me*! She also rejoiced in knowing the Lord had a plan for her future. (*Ensign*, May 1994, p.93.)

B. Surely *all* of us, as latter-day Saints, were set apart to do the great work of establishing Zion. (Do not the three missions of the Church rest upon all *our* shoulders as missions?)

C. And many, if not all, have certain *specific* responsibilities placed upon us as individuals.

How can we find out what responsibilities were laid upon *us* as individuals?

1. Patriarchal blessings do not come from the patriarch. They come from the Lord. This was particularly verified when one patriarch, after saying to a sister, “I have a wonderful blessing for you,” experienced a sudden blankness overcome him. He told her, “I was mistaken. I do not have a blessing for you. It is the Lord who has the blessing for you.” The woman left and the patriarch humbly petitioned to be guided in giving her a blessing. After she returned, he gave her a blessing which spoke of

certain concerns that no one other than herself had known. (James E. Faust, *Ensign*, Nov. 1995, p. 63.)

I personally testify that knowing the Lord has confidence in us to fulfill responsibilities, as shown by our patriarchal blessings, helps us when feeling inadequate or discouraged in trying to take upon ourselves any task.
