

13 - Abraham 3 – The Eternal Nature of Spirits

The Eternal Nature of Spirits

In this section we will talk about some of “the things more noble,” a phrase Joseph used when he wanted to leave the dairy department. Most of the following quotes are actually found in the Priesthood / Relief Society Manual we were all given for our study in 2008: *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church – Joseph Smith*. In Lesson 17 of that manual there is a section on pg. 209 that begins with: ‘We are eternal beings.’ We’re going to be discussing the “Eternal Nature of Spirits.” We just went through the scriptures that showed us the pattern for becoming a son or daughter of God.

There are scriptures that talk about the eternal nature of spirits; one is in D&C 93 and the other is in Abraham 3.

D&C 93:23, 29:

23 Ye were also **in the beginning with the Father**; that which is Spirit, even the Spirit of truth;

29 Man was also **in the beginning with God. Intelligence**, or the light of truth, **was not created or made**, neither indeed can be.

It’s interesting to note that most of Joseph’s teachings and doctrines during the last several years of his life came from the Book of Abraham. He spoke often about the plurality of Gods and the Councils of the Gods, as well as some of these other concepts.

In **Abraham 3:18** it says:

18 Howbeit that he made the greater star; as, also, [**for example**] if there be two spirits, 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** gnolaum, or **eternal**.

Look at **D&C 93:29** again. “Man was in the beginning with God. Intelligence or the light of truth, was *not created or made.*” In Abraham it says these two spirits, one being more intelligent than the other, have no beginning. They existed before; they shall have no end. They are eternal. *In other words, they have always existed!*

These verses sometimes create a problem in the minds of some members. We talked about the **3 M's of doctrine** in our last session. As we discussed, the problem arises when people think there is nothing but the milk. Self-appointed guards sometimes bar the way to make sure no one gets out the dairy department even though they might smell a little Bar-B-Que going on. Those guards, with misplaced zeal, try to ensure no one gets out of the dairy department and no one comes in from the meat department. Joseph made an unusual statement about this tendency:

... when men open their lips against these truths they do not injure me, but injure themselves. When things that are of the greatest importance are passed over by the weak-minded men without even a thought, I want to see truth in all its bearings and hug it to my bosom. I believe all that God ever revealed, and **I never hear of a man being damned for believing too much; but they are damned for unbelief.** (TPJS p 373-374)

Concerning the next life, Paul said:

9 ... Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. (1 Corinthians 2:9)

Paul is letting us know that what is going on in the next world is *far beyond* what we are familiar with here. We cannot even conceive of what things are like in the next world. We have a tendency to filter our concept of the eternities through the lens of what we are familiar with here, thinking it will be the same. Paul's statement tells us otherwise. This is why Joseph said a man will be condemned more for what he doesn't believe than what he does believe. We need to keep an open mind if we are to prepare for the eternities.

As it says in D&C 93, Spirits are eternal. They had no beginning and they have no end, for they are eternal, as Abraham says. We often teach that our spirits were born, or just came into existence, but that is not what the scriptures or what Joseph taught us. We suppose these things because that is what we are familiar with. We imagine that the system that exists here is the same as in our pre-earth life, and that it will be the same in the next world.

Joseph's Teachings in lesson 17, p 209:

I have another subject to dwell upon, which is calculated to exalt man. ... It is associated with the subject of the resurrection of the dead,—namely, the soul—the mind of man—the immortal spirit. Where did it come from? All learned men and doctors of divinity say that God created it in the beginning; **but it is not so:** the very idea lessens man in my estimation. **I do not believe the doctrine;** I know better. Hear it, all ye ends of the world; for **God has told me so;** and if you don't believe me, it will not make the truth without effect. (TPJS p 352)

He is teaching that the spirit was never created. If you don't believe him, that is fine with me. He goes on...

I am dwelling on the immortality of the spirit of man. Is it logical to say that the intelligence of spirits is immortal, and yet that it has a beginning? The intelligence of spirits had no beginning, neither will it have an end. That is good logic. That which has a beginning may have an end. There never was a time when there were not spirits. (Ch 17, p 210, TPJS p 353)

...I take my ring from my finger and liken it unto the mind of man—the immortal part, because it had no beginning. Suppose you cut it in two; then it has a beginning and an end; but join it again, and it continues one eternal round. So with the spirit of man. **As the Lord liveth, if it (the spirit) had a beginning, it (the spirit) will have an end.** All the fools and learned and wise men from the beginning of creation, who say that the spirit of man had a beginning, prove that it must have an end; and if that doctrine is true, then the doctrine of

annihilation would be true. But if I am right, I might with boldness proclaim from the house-tops that **God never had the power to create the spirit of man at all.** God himself could not create himself. [*God has a spirit, too!*] (Ch 17 p 210, TPJS p 354)

Intelligence is eternal and exists upon a self-existent principle. It is a spirit from age to age and there is no creation about it. All the minds and spirits that God ever sent into the world are susceptible of enlargement.” (Ch 17 p 210, TPJS p 354)

Comment: Our spirits have been in the process of enlargement all along since we have existed eternally and forever.

Yes. That enlargement is a consequence of being valiant in the pursuit of light and truth. The *intelligence of spirit*, a term Joseph used, *is the spirit's ability to seek for, receive, and be obedient to light and truth.* That's the enlargement that we are all susceptible to. That is our potential. That potential, realized, is exaltation, for he that receives a fullness of light and truth receives all things. Our goal is to seek for light and truth, receive light and truth, and be obedient to light and truth until we receive a fullness of light and truth and enter into that exaltation. That's the process and the goal. That's what Joseph talks about over and over again.

We couldn't come to this earth until we reached a point where we needed a physical body to hinder us so that our spirits could gain strength over our physical body, which occurs when we continue to seek for further light and truth. What happens is, we sometimes shut the door to light and truth and say, “I'm here...I don't want to know any more.” When people stick their fingers in their ears and choose not to listen to inspired truths, they will be condemned more for what they don't believe than for what they do. Joseph also taught that man can be saved no faster than he gains knowledge (TPJS p 217), or no faster than he seeks for light and truth. Our goal here on earth is to seek for, receive, and be obedient to light and truth. Those who willfully remain distant from these saving truths are spiritually damning themselves by their own ignorance. If they don't want to learn more here, the first thing they will have to learn on the other side is to learn to want to learn.

D&C 130:19 says:

And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come.

Nephi taught in **2 Ne 28**:

27 Yea, wo be unto him that saith: We have received, and we need no more!

29 Wo be unto him that shall say: We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the word of God, for we have enough!

30 ... for unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have.

Comment: So, our intelligence is not connected to our I.Q.?

That's correct. The intelligence of our spirit is connected to its propensity, or susceptibility, to receiving and **being obedient** to the light and truth it seeks. Our progression is measured by our obedience to light and truth.

God-given Limitations

When God placed us in this physical environment, He placed some limitations on our minds that are necessary in mortality. One of those limitations is that we can only think of one thing at a time. Another one is that it cannot think of anything that it has not already seen, heard or read about before. You cannot think of anything that has not already been put in there. It even filters your experiences through the lens of what it has already experienced, looking for the familiar. For example, describe an alien who may happen to visit the earth. What words will you use to describe this life-form? You can really only draw upon the words you already know and the conceptions of life you already know. Because we can only think of one thing at a time, this life becomes a perfect probationary state. Given that you have your own agency, you have total control over everything you think. If you don't want to think about one thing, all you have to do is think about something else. That's why Alma said:

14 For **our words** will condemn us, yea, all **our works** will condemn us; we shall not be found spotless; **and our thoughts** will also condemn us; and in this awful state we shall not dare to look up to our God; and we would fain be glad if we could command the rocks and the mountains to fall upon us to hide us from his presence. (Alma 12:14)

The third limitation of our minds is that we have to have an answer to our questions. If we don't get an answer from a true source, we tend to either make up an answer or believe one that we can accept based upon our limited knowledge. This is what is causing the apostasy among the youth and even seasoned members in the Church. When confronted by hard questions, we can no longer respond to our youth by saying, "You don't need to know that right now," or, "That's not pertinent to your salvation." Or, "Just exercise a little more faith and don't think about that right now." When our youth have questions today, what do they do? They consult the god of the world — Google! It's so large it fills the universe (you can get Wi-Fi everywhere), yet it is so small it can fit in the palm of your hand! If we don't give correct answers to the Gospel questions they have, they will consult the 'new god' that is everywhere but nowhere, and so small it can dwell in your hand, and that new god will give them an answer.

The Will of the Flesh and Ignorance

According to the Book of Mormon there are two specific ways by which Satan gains control over mankind: the first is *the will of the flesh*, and the second is *ignorance*. After Lehi describes our dual natures and the need for opposition in all things, he concludes his discussion on agency and choice with this appeal:

...and not choose eternal death, according to the *will of the flesh and the evil which is therein, which giveth the spirit of the devil power to captivate*, to bring you down to hell, that he may reign over you in his own kingdom. (**2 Nephi 2:29**)

At birth we all inherit a physical sin-machine called a body, which in infancy is designed to seek satisfaction for every need and want of body and mind. In these sin-machine bodies, we learn how to manipulate everybody around us from day one to satisfy our every desire, appetite, and passion. The natural man becomes awakened and begins to develop a character that must be overcome. By the age of accountability, every trick in the book has been learned and perfected. When 8 years

old, the child of record is baptized, receives the Gift of the Holy Ghost and is confirmed a member of the Church of Jesus Christ. After years of sharpening their manipulative skills, newly baptized Christians will spend the rest of their life learning self control, restraint, and respect for others – putting their body in subjection to their spirit.

The second way Satan gains power over us is *ignorance*. Spiritual ignorance may be the result of our own choices. However, it can also be the result of evil designs by others who seek control over us. When Nephi sought to understand the vision his father had, it was revealed to him that Satan gains power over mankind when they are intentionally left ignorant of the truth. Speaking of spiritual ignorance, the verse below discusses the plain and precious things that were removed from the Bible:

And after these plain and precious things were taken away it goeth forth unto all the nations of the Gentiles...thou seest—because of the many plain and precious things which have been taken out of the book, which were plain unto the understanding of the children of men, according to the plainness which is in the Lamb of God—and *because of these things which are taken away out of the gospel of the Lamb, an exceedingly great many do stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them.* (1 Nephi 13:29)

People who harden their hearts against the truth when it is presented (pride), believing they already know it all (the definition of ignorance), are described by Alma as being in the “chains of hell.”

11 And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries; and then they are taken captive by the devil, and led by his will down to destruction. Now this is what is meant by the **chains of hell**. (Alma 12:11)

This is what happens when men do not seek for light and truth—they are led down to destruction. Through ignorance and the weaknesses of the flesh, Satan obtains the power to lead us captive. Back to our texts:

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. (Ch 17 p 210, TPJS p 354)

Our spirits have existed as long as God's has. Remember, God did not create spirits. These spirits are ready to move forward in their search for light and truth. This is what John was talking about when he said that Christ gave us power to become the sons of God (John 1:12).

He has given us power to understand light and truth if we choose to seek for it, which then gives us power to advance in knowledge. If we are obedient to that light and truth we can then become the sons and daughters of God.

Question: That quote makes it sound like we were already not equal in the beginning. How did we get not equal?

As we read in **Abraham 3:22-23**, in that grand council, the one in which we were all present, we saw and heard that Abraham was among those who were already great and noble. They had distinguished themselves by their valiancy in seeking for greater light and truth. All of us had reached the point where we were ready to move forward and could go down to an earth to receive a body. We needed this physical world with this physical body to provide a means for our spirits to gain strength in our search for further light and truth. If we are obedient to the light and truth we receive, we can receive more until eventually we can receive a fulness of light and truth. The concept to keep in mind is that everything is a progression.

Question: Aren't we teaching the milk when we sing "I Am a Child of God"?

Yes, we are, and that is Okay because that primary child needs to understand that basic foundation. In our discussion today we have moved out of the dairy department. Joseph said he wanted to talk about nobler things. He said *laws were instituted to instruct the weaker intelligences*—not that those laws were forced on anyone—*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.* As we mentioned before, there is more to learn than just the milk.

Coming back to Christ, John said in **D&C 93:7**:

I saw his glory, that he was in the beginning, before the world was;

...and in v **21** Christ says:

And now, verily I say unto you, *I was in the beginning with the Father*, and am the Firstborn;

Speaking of Man, Christ says in v 23:

Ye were also in the beginning with the Father; that which is Spirit, even the Spirit of truth; [*i.e., we have existed, the same as Christ has existed.*]

Verses 27-29 say:

27 And no man receiveth a fulness **unless** he keepeth his commandments.

28 He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, **until** he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things.

29 **Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence**, or the light of truth, **was not created or made, neither indeed can be.**

We teach that the only way to become exalted is to keep all of the commandments. Keeping the commandments is associated with character change. If keeping the commandments does not change our character then the commandments have failed. In order to dwell with God we need to

develop the same character that God has (TPJS p 216). If we are truly obedient, it will lead to a character change. When Christ was asked which two of the commandments were the greatest, He replied that loving God and loving your fellowman were the two greatest commandments – for upon these two hang all of the Law and all of the Prophets (Matt. 22:35-40). ‘The Law’ is all of the commandments and ‘the Prophets’ is everything the prophets have taught. It is the same today. When we listen to General Conference, everything the prophets teach hang upon two laws: Loving God and loving our fellow man. How do we love God? We keep his commandments. If we are obedient in loving God and loving our fellow man, then by extension we are being obedient to all of the commandments. By the exercise of our own individual agency we can develop the character that loves God and loves our fellow man.

Hugh Nibley defined sin as the misuse of time. According to Christ, if all the Law and all of the prophets hang upon those two commandments, so will all judgment! Therefore, sin is anything that distracts us from developing the character that loves God and loves our fellow man. That's why it says in D&C 93:28: if we can develop that same character then we can become glorified in all things and we can know all things.

Remember our definition of intelligence: The Spirit's ability to seek for, receive and be obedient to light and truth.

Abraham 3:18-19

... if there be two spirits, 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 gnolaum, or eternal. 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 more intelligent than they all.

We see that some spirits have a greater propensity to seek for light and truth than others. However, God has set up laws where even the weaker intelligences can seek for, receive and be obedient to light and truth. That's also why we have a spirit world. Alma 40 informs us that there will be additional time for learning:

9 Therefore, there is a time appointed unto men that they shall rise from the dead; and **there is a space between the time of death and the resurrection.**

21 But whether it be at his resurrection or after, I do not say; but this much I say, that **there is a space between death and the resurrection of the body**, and a state of the soul in happiness or in misery until the time which is appointed of God that the dead shall come forth, and be reunited, both soul and body, and be brought to stand before God, and be judged according to their works. (Alma 40:9, 21)

There is a time for learning that needs to take place. Christ said that “he is more intelligent than they all.” In D&C 93:26 we read that Christ received a fulness of light and truth. This is why Christ could be exalted even before he received his physical body. In **93:19** it tells us:

I give unto you these sayings that you may understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and **in due time receive of his fulness.**

In **v 36** we learn that “The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, *[a fulness of]* light and truth. (See also D&C 93:12-14, 16, 19-20, 26-29, 36-37, 39-40.)

Question: Is intelligence connected to love, or to the manner in which God loves?

It is connected to light and truth. Joseph said, and I'm quoting loosely, that man will progress to a point where he no longer has any more disposition to do evil. This is why we can be saved no faster than we gain knowledge. When we begin to see the whole plan, and understand it, we come to see that having a fulness of light and truth means we cannot do anything that would not be for the benefit of mankind, which is exactly like God's love. **2 Ne 26:24** says:

He doeth not anything save it be for the **benefit** of the world; for he loveth the world, even that he layeth down his own life that he may draw all men unto him.

God's love is beyond the conception of love we have. God *cannot*, by virtue of who He is and what He knows, do anything that would not be for our spiritual benefit. He just can't do it. We call that love, but that is His character. He possesses a fulness of light and truth; He has developed a character that *cannot* do anything unless it is for our spiritual benefit.

Let me put it in a way that will affect every one of us. To be exalted (and I have talked about this before), or to have the character of an exalted being, you cannot love a child you had here on earth to a greater extent than any other child born anywhere else in the world or in any other time period. If you do, you are not worthy to be in the celestial kingdom. See? I'm trying to bring it home to each of us. When we read in John 13:34 that Jesus gave a “new” commandment, “that ye love one another *as I have loved you,*” we think: how did God love us more than anyone else? If we're going to be in the celestial kingdom, we cannot love our own children any more than we love any other child born anywhere else or in any other time. I realize this is a concept that is sometimes hard to swallow.

Question: Is charity, that pure love of Christ, a gift given to us when we become sons and daughters of God?

It is a character trait we have to develop on our pathway to becoming the sons and daughters of God.

In **Moroni 7:45-48** we read:

And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own ... if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth. Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all ... pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love, which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of his Son, Jesus Christ; that ye may become the sons of God;

Negative Confessions

When we develop those character traits mentioned above, we have charity. We need to ask God to help us develop that charity. How does he do that? By giving us commandments! In ancient Egypt when Pharaoh went up to the veil, there was a spot in which he was to stand and recite what was called his “negative confessions” before he could pass through. The Pharaoh would proclaim that he did not lie; he did not cheat, he was not unfaithful, and so on, running through a list of things he could not be accused of—hence his negative confessions. He had to recite this list before he could pass through the veil into the presence of God. This would prove that he obtained the character that gave him the right to remain in God's presence. Likewise, during our own temple endowment, when we stand at that veil and declare that we have been true and faithful in all things, we are in effect declaring that we have developed the character that makes God *God*. This is what enables us to pass through that veil. Remember, Joseph said we cannot dwell with God unless we have the same character that He has (TPJS p 216).

Purpose of Commandments / The Power to Become

We are given commandments in the Temple that we promise to keep by covenant. Those commandments are given to help us develop that character: The Law of Obedience and Sacrifice, the Law of the Gospel, the Law of Virtue, and the Law of Consecration. If we were take those laws and actually live them – really live them, where they become part of us – that would enable us to stand at the veil and say to God, “I have kept all these commandments that Thou hast given me, and I desire now to enter Thy presence.” This is coming back to where we started today: **By way of these commandments, God has given me the power to become His son and be admitted in His presence!** By giving me the Gospel, by giving me His commandments, He has given me power to become a son of God. When we develop the character that makes God *God*, we obtain power to become a son or daughter of God. This concept – the Power to become – is what is being taught in all of those verses we went through in our last hour.

The commandments are not restrictions – they are recipes for happiness because they help us develop that character and the power to become a son or daughter of God. This is connected to charity. It's not an isolated concept; it is real and it is obtainable. It's all connected. It's a beautiful plan. It could not be any better! I'm one of those weaker intelligences that was described.

The Quest For or Diversion from Light and Truth

Question: It seems to me that the more one rises in academia, the less likely they are to seek for more light and knowledge. Could you perhaps comment on that?

What comes to mind is **2 Ne 9:28-29**:

O that cunning plan of the evil one! O the vainness, and the frailties, and the foolishness of men! When they are learned they think they are wise, and they hearken not unto the counsel of God, for they set it aside, supposing they know of themselves, wherefore, their wisdom is foolishness and it profiteth them not. And they shall perish. But to be learned is good if they hearken unto the counsels of God. (See also 2 Ne 4:34 ; 2 Ne 28:26, 31)

The tendency is, the more education a person obtains, the more they begin to trust in their own arm of flesh (their own education), which is really stupidity! Of all of the knowledge and truth that is available in the universe, of all that is out there, how much does academia really know? If we only know so much, the scholar will boast that he knows more than God knows, and boast that he can make a decision based on the eternities, a subject on which he knows almost nothing. Jacob says to be learned is good if we hearken unto the counsels of God. He says that the wisdom man has is just foolishness because he doesn't realize that real knowledge, real light and truth, is predicated on being obedient, which obedience creates the character that loves God and loves our fellow man.

Knowledge from the Beginning

31 Behold, here is the agency of man, and here is the condemnation of man; because that which was from the [very] beginning [*in the pre-earth life*] is plainly manifest unto them, and they receive not the light. (D&C 93:31-32)

Before we chose to come to this earth, while in that Grand Council, we had to know exactly what the Plan of Salvation consisted of and what we were signing up for. God made known to all of us just how bad life on earth could be for us, both physically and spiritually. We came to a perfect understanding of what it meant to leave God's presence and receive a physical body. We had to understand perfectly how bad life could be before we agreed to come here so that our agency would not be compromised. We did not necessarily know how bad our life was going to be, but we understood perfectly how bad it could be, no matter where we would be living or in what time period. We knew and understood multi-dimensionally what it would be like to lose a loved one (a nearly universal experience); we knew and understood what it was going to be like to suffer illness and pain (also universal) and physical privation. We knew what it would be like to experience remorse for sin and a separation from God. We knew and understood these things perfectly. If we did not, our agency would have been compromised and any punishment would be unjust.

The same principle applies to Lucifer and his followers. In order for their agency not to be compromised, they would have had to have a perfect understanding of the consequences of their rebellion. Not only did they have to understand the plan of salvation perfectly, they also had to understand their judgment and their condemnation perfectly, or their agency would have been compromised, and God would cease to be God. Even with this perfect knowledge, they still rebelled against God and against the Plan of Salvation. God allowed Satan to do whatever Satan wanted to do; that is His love (TPJS p 187).

Now that we're here and the Gospel plan has been restored:

D&C 93:32, 36-37

32 And every man whose spirit receiveth not the light is under condemnation.

36 The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth.

37 Light and truth [will] forsake that evil one.

D&C 88:40

For intelligence cleaveth unto intelligence; ... truth embraceth truth; ... light cleaveth unto light;"

D&C 50:24-25, 27-28

24 That which is of God is light; and he that receiveth light, and continueth in God, receiveth more light; and that light groweth brighter and brighter until the perfect day.

25 And again, verily I say unto you, and I say it that you may know the truth, that you may chase darkness from among you;

27 Wherefore, he is possessor of all things; for all things are subject unto him, both in heaven and on the earth, the life and the light, the Spirit and the power, sent forth by the will of the Father through Jesus Christ, his Son.

28 But no man is possessor of all things except he be purified and cleansed from all sin.

Joseph Said:

We consider that God has created man with a mind capable of instruction, and a faculty which may be enlarged in proportion to the heed and diligence given to the light communicated from heaven to the intellect; and that the nearer man approaches perfection, the clearer are his views, and the greater his enjoyments, till he has overcome the evils of his life and lost every desire for sin; and like the ancients, arrives at that point of faith where he is wrapped in the power and glory of his Maker, and is caught up to dwell with Him. But we consider that this is a station to which no man ever arrived in a moment." (Ch 17, p 210-211, TPJS p 51)

This is why if a man gains more light and truth through diligence and obedience it will rise with him in the resurrection and give him a greater the advantage in the world to come (D&C 130:18-19). This is what it means concerning the intelligence of spirit: it is the spirit's ability to seek for, receive and be obedient to light and truth.

[Earlier in class a question was asked how the Atonement worked, and Br Porter took time to provide a brief answer.]

Question: *I know that the Atonement works but I am still trying to wrap my mind around how Christ could suffer for the sins of another?*

Justice and Mercy are intimately connected. When we begin to truly understand these concepts, Justice has his demands and the Mercy of Christ cannot rob Justice, or God would cease to be God. The Justice of God is that 'no unclean thing can be in His presence'. Not because He doesn't want us there, God has done all in His power, word, and plan to get us there with His same glory to be able to endure His presence and glory. If we cannot endure or are unworthy, we "shrink" from His presence. God does not cast us out we cast ourselves out. We don't sin against God, we, by our agency, reject the greater happiness and glory, we sin against ourselves, our potential, our exaltation. The Justice of God is that no unclean thing can be in his presence with a confidence that will wax strong unless we have exercised 'faith unto repentance' character change.

Turn to **Alma 42:13-15:**

13 Therefore, according to **justice**, the plan of redemption could not be brought about, only on conditions of repentance of men in this probationary state, yea, this preparatory state; for except it were for these conditions, **mercy** could not take effect *except it should destroy the work of justice*. Now the work of justice could not be destroyed; if so, God would cease to be God. *[This is telling us that even God is bound by laws that are even greater than He is, and Justice is one of those laws.]*

14 And thus we see that all mankind were fallen, and they were in the grasp of justice; yea, **the justice of God**, which consigned them forever to be cut off from his presence. **15** And now, the plan of mercy could not be brought about *except an atonement should be made*; therefore *God himself atoneth for the sins of the world, to bring about the plan of mercy, to appease the demands of justice*, that God might be a perfect, just God, **and a merciful God also**. (See also [Alma 42:23-24](#))

There is a difference between Grace and Mercy. Grace is a free gift from God. When Adam fell he introduced physical death and spiritual death (separation from God). Those are the two elements of Adam's fall. Grace takes care of both of those types of death. *Everyone* is going to be resurrected and *everyone* will be brought back to the presence of God because the fall of Adam has been taken care of by Christ. By Grace everyone is redeemed from the fall of Adam; everyone is going to be brought back to the presence of God. But...in order to remain in the presence of God, and have our confidence "wax strong in the presence of God," we have to exercise faith in Christ and in His atonement (D&C 121:45). This is where Mercy steps in as Amulek teaches in **Alma 34:15-17**:

15 And thus he shall bring salvation to all those who shall believe on his name; this being the intent of this last sacrifice, to bring about the bowels of mercy, which overpowereth justice, and bringeth about means unto men **that they may have faith unto repentance**.

16 And thus mercy can satisfy the demands of justice, and encircles them in the arms of safety, while **he that exercises no faith unto repentance is exposed to the whole law of the demands of justice**; therefore *only unto him that has faith unto repentance is brought about the great and eternal plan of redemption*.

17 Therefore may God grant unto you, my brethren, **that** ye may begin to **exercise your faith unto repentance**, **that** ye begin to call upon his holy name, **that he would have mercy upon you**; (See [Alma 36:18-21](#))

Alma 42:23-24

23 **and mercy claimeth the penitent**, and mercy cometh because of the atonement; and the atonement bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead; and the resurrection of the dead bringeth back men into the presence of God; and thus, they are restored into his presence, to be judged according to their works, according to the law and justice.

24 behold, justice exerciseth all his demands, and also mercy claimeth all which is her own; and thus, none but the truly penitent are saved.

What mercy does is satisfy the demands of justice and gives us the time to develop the character that makes God, *God*. Mercy comes because of the atonement, and if we exercise our faith in Christ and His atonement *unto repentance*, mercy then steps in to give us the time to develop the character that make God *God*. When we develop that character, God remembers our sins no more. God lives

in an environment where the past, present, and future are continually manifest before Him, and if God can't remember those sins any more, they don't exist! (See D&C 58:42) If sin does not exist, then justice has no claim.

***Question:** If Joseph taught that intelligence and spirit are the same thing, why is the distinction made between intelligence and spirit?*

The first thing to understand is that Joseph said intelligence and spirit is the same thing. D&C 77:2 says that the spirit of man (*i.e., the intelligence of that spirit*) is in the likeness of his physical body, and always has been.

In the church, there are two theories concerning the intelligence of spirits. The first is the 'globular theory' in which all spirits are in a pool and the larger the amount of intelligence that is used the greater the potential the spirit might have. The Globular view point is that you take a big handful of intelligence and it becomes a man. If only a little bit of intelligence is taken, it becomes a dog or a cat; less than that, perhaps an insect or cockroach. But...this is not the case. The second theory, more in line with scripture, is the individual intelligence of spirit. This would teach that each spirit has the intelligence to be what it is capable of becoming. In other words, there are spirits that can only be man, and spirits that can only be monkeys; likewise, cows, dogs, or even beetles.

The scriptures tell us that everything has its own intelligence:

30 All truth is independent **in that sphere in which God has placed it**, to act for itself, **as all intelligence also**; otherwise there is no existence. (D&C 93:30)

This is what Joseph Smith taught:

Intelligence is eternal and exists upon **a self-existent principle**. It is a spirit from age to age and there is no creation about it. (TPJS p 354)

The concept of *intelligence* and *spirits* being separate distinctions did not come about until after the turn of the century. An opinion and interpretation about what constituted spirits and intelligences was proposed and published even though it was contrary to the scriptures and what Joseph taught. This interpretation briefly stated that an intelligence animates the spirit and the spirit animates the body—but if that is the case, that would imply a pre-existence to the pre-existence. Even more issues arise from this point of view. But as we read in D&C 77, every spirit, either man or beast, has a particular level of intelligence that allows it to fulfill the full measure of its creation. The Lord created physical bodies for those intelligences to inhabit that will enable them to fulfill their full potential. As it says in Abraham 5:7:

7 And the Gods formed man from the dust of the ground, and took his spirit (that is, the man's spirit), and put it into him; and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

Joseph reasoned:

We say that God himself is a self-existent being. Who told you so? It is correct enough; but how did it get into your heads? Who told you that man did not exist in like manner upon the same principles? Man does exist upon the same principles. **God made a**

tabernacle and put a spirit into it, and it became a living soul. [Refers to the old Bible.]
How does it read in the Hebrew? It does not say in the Hebrew that God created the spirit of man. It says “God made man out of the earth and put into him Adam’s spirit, and so became a living body.” (TPJS p 352-353)

In order for each spirit to reach its full potential, it must have a physical body that will allow that spirit to act and react in the environment or ‘sphere’ in which it is placed. As an example, if the spirit of a dog was placed in the body of a beetle or bird, the dog spirit would not be able to reach its full potential and fulfill the measure of its creation. Likewise, if the spirit of a cockroach was put in the body of a dog, you’d never be able to train that cockroach to roll over, fetch a ball, yelp, or any other dog-like behavior.

What this means is: **The spirit is made up of the full intelligence that it is capable of having.** A fly will always be a fly; a beetle will always be a beetle. A dog will always be a dog; a cat will always be a cat. This would extend to man, who has the potential to become like God. With that potential, he must be created in the image of God *because the measure of his creation is to become like God*, who is an exalted man.

We have to keep in mind that Joseph used the phrase, “intelligence of spirits.”

I am dwelling on the immortality of the spirit of man. Is it logical to say that the **intelligence of spirits** is immortal, and yet that it had a beginning? The **intelligence of spirits** had no beginning, neither will it have an end. That is good logic. That which has a beginning may have an end. There never was a time when there were not spirits. (TPJS p 353; see also p 181)