

**Moses 2-3**  
**Moses and Abraham**  
**Part 2**

**Creation Epics**

As we continue our discussion in the Book of Moses, we're going to be dealing with creation texts in the Books of Moses and Abraham. There is something going on in these next chapters that will lead to discussions and questions about the Temple. There are also questions that come up in relation to cave dwellers and dinosaurs. The reason for these questions is because we are dealing with "Creation Epics" in these next chapters. It is important to begin to see and understand what Moses and Abraham understood and saw in these things they recorded.

We do not have all of the details about the creation; we're not supposed to have all of the details. Some who have left the Church recently are using as their excuse that the scriptures and science are not harmonious with the facts as they understand them. So the key point in our discussion today in relation to these "Creation Epics" in our standard works is to remember that to receive an endowment of power is to receive KNOWLEDGE. It is not the ordinances. There is no power in the ordinances. The power is in the knowledge. The definition of the word, *Endowment*, in the 1828 Dictionary, says:

That which is given or bestowed on the person or the mind by the creator; gift or nature; any quality or faculty bestowed by the creator; Natural vigor of the intellect is an endowment of the mind.

The fact that you drove here today, or rode with someone else, is a function of the knowledge you received that enabled you to drive. It is not a function of just the license you possess. An endowment of power is always knowledge. Joseph said, "a man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge". (TPJS p 217) **D&C 93: 28** teaches us that:

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

The whole idea and concept of the endowment of power is based on learning more or desiring to learn more. If we cannot be saved any faster than we gain knowledge, those who do not want to gain knowledge here (in this life) are going to have to learn *to want to learn* when they get to the other side. Even in the spirit world you cannot be saved any faster than you gain knowledge. If a person has not developed that character trait that seeks for more light and truth here, he will have to develop that character trait in the spirit world before he can progress further. That's why Joseph also taught that:

**18** Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection. 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. (**D&C 130: 18-19**)

This verse describes the kind of person who has developed the character that seeks for light and truth. This is why Alma taught that that it was necessary that there be space between death and the resurrection. (**Alma 40: 19, 21**) That space between our death and our resurrection is where we are given the opportunity to learn. This is also why you do not have to worry too much about your children who have left the Church or who have fallen away: we ALL will have to know and understand the Gospel Plan of Salvation perfectly, without any misconception or any misunderstanding, before judgment is passed or before we choose the kingdom where we will be the most happy. Otherwise our agency will have been compromised and the judgment unjust. This is why there is space between death and the resurrection, and the best preparation for that time is to develop the character that desires further light and truth. If you don't want to learn in this life, the first thing you're going to have to do there is to learn to *want to learn*. That's going to be hard if you have not begun that process here in this life.

### **The Power of the Ordinances**

**Without a change in our character there is no power in the ordinances of salvation and exaltation!** The ordinances in and of themselves mean nothing unless we change our character in a way that enables us to realize the blessing of that ordinance. I can be baptized a thousand times or go through the Temple a thousand times and it will mean absolutely nothing unless I am willing to change my character to be in harmony with the promised blessings of those ordinances. To put it another way: all ordinances of the Gospel provide a hope for a future reality. A hope for a future reality! That hope can be fulfilled or realized only if we change our characters.

For a spirit to receive exaltation it must **seek for, receive, and be obedient to light and truth**. Think of the covenants that you have entered into. We have the covenant of the Law of sacrifice and the Law of the Gospel. These are Aaronic or temporal covenants. They fall under "sustaining and defending the Kingdom of God". In other words they are our tithing and fast offerings – they sustain the Kingdom and they take care of the poor. Under the higher or Melchizedek Order we have the Laws of Virtue and Consecration. We are to be chaste in all of our relationships, not just the one we have with our spouse. We are to be virtuous with God and our fellowmen. The Law of Consecration is for the 'building up' of the Kingdom of God on the earth and the establishment of Zion. These are the laws that we covenant to be obedient to. **Alma 13: 16** provides us with a confirmation of this concept:

**16** Now these ordinances were given after this manner, that thereby the people **might look forward on the Son of God, ...**  
that **they might look forward to him for a remission of their sins,**  
that **they might enter into the rest of the Lord.**

All Melchizedek ordinances are given so that **we might look forward to a remission of our sins**. What makes the ordinances real is our character change. If we are true and faithful in keeping our temple covenants – and a covenant is a promise of obedience -- if we begin to act and do according to those laws that we have promised to keep, then we

will begin to develop that character that will initialize the fulfillment of those blessings those laws are calculated to produce. Look at **Alma 13: 16** again.

Now these ordinances were given after this manner,  
that thereby the people **might look forward on the Son of God, ...**  
that **they might look forward to him for a remission of their sins,**  
that **they might enter into the rest of the Lord.**

I hope you are beginning to see that all ordinances provide [not guarantee] a hope for a future reality. The power that makes that future reality *real* IS YOUR AGENCY. Baptism means nothing unless you exercise your faith in Jesus Christ unto your own repentance and the change of your character. Your sealing ordinances mean nothing unless you develop a celestial character and a celestial relationship. The power behind the ordinances is your agency and your change of character – not the ordinance itself.

Looking forward to a remission of our sins comes back to **faith** in Christ and His atonement. It is a hope of a future reality. The **hope** is looking forward to that future reality. **Charity** is the character trait that ratifies the ordinances. So, to repeat, we exercise faith in Christ and that atonement. Repentance is the process of changing our character. We participate in ordinances that give us a hope of a future reality so that we can “act in futurity” (**D&C 101:78**). That is, we make choices and decisions in this life that cannot not be measured as a reward or a punishment *until after we are dead*.

**78** That every man may act in doctrine and principle pertaining to futurity, according to the moral agency which I have given unto him, that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment.

We can use those ordinances to give us that hope of a future reality, and then we can begin that process of acting right now for that reality in the next life. We are the only beasts on this earth that can do that. We are the only creatures that can conceive of a God that we cannot see, and the only ones that can perform an action or action that will either be rewarded or punished in the next life. My dog will quickly roll over for the hope of a future reality of a treat, but he will not do that trick while thinking he will be getting a treat in the next life.

Now these ordinances were given after this manner,  
that thereby the people **might look forward on the Son of God, ...**  
that **they might look forward to him for a remission of their sins,**  
that **they might enter into the rest of the Lord. (That future reality)**

**This gives us the power to act in futurity for that future reality!**

Keep in mind that the power behind all ordinances is the exercise of our own agency in changing our character from a natural man to one of a saint. This is the true power of the ordinances.

**Question:** Does this only apply to us in mortality?

No. This is also why we do work for the dead. Our probationary state extends into the spirit world. This is why it is requisite that there be space between our death and our own individual resurrection. Those who have already passed on can also have that hope for that future reality as they change their characters.

This important principle is not confined to Mormons. Mormons do not have a monopoly on righteousness or faith or kindness or charity. Jesus taught us that in order to be saved in the Kingdom of God we have to learn to love God and our fellowman. Upon “these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (**Matt 22: 40**). If that is the case, then upon these two commandments hang all judgment.

### **Establishing a Relationship**

All who seek the ordinances will have them administered by the proper authority. No one will slip through the cracks! What's at stake here is establishing relationships. We as individuals need to come unto Christ and establish our relationship with Christ and that atonement. We need to exercise faith in Christ and His atonement unto the changing of our characters, which is repentance. This is something we all need to do.

Of course, the ordinances that we participate in that give us that hope of a future reality have to be administered by an organization that has been given the authority to do so by God. We cannot self-administer these ordinances; they have to be administered by someone who has the correct authority.

A lot of people are falling away because they have decided that the organization has not brought them to Christ, or given them a personal relationship with Christ. The Church is not responsible for bringing you to Christ. It provides you every opportunity for you to *bring yourself* to Christ! The local leaders make sure the sacrament is on the table and the font is filled when you want to baptize your 8 year old. They make sure the manuals are there to assist you in your efforts to come unto Christ. But it remains your own personal and individual responsibility. It is not the Priesthood Organization's responsibility to expound the deep mysteries of the Gospel or provide special ordinances or special information. It is not their responsibility to make me come unto Christ – that is my responsibility. If I choose to participate in the ordinances, they have the authority to administer those ordinances to me. In other words, the Church is there to assist you in your efforts to come unto Christ. But you have to do the work.

The Church's responsibility is to administer the Gospel of Jesus Christ and our responsibility is to participate in it. We participate by exercising faith in Christ and repenting (changing our character), then accepting baptism and qualifying to receive the Holy Ghost, which is the authoritative responsibility of the Church.

For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, **unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint** through the atonement of Christ the Lord, and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient,

full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father. (**Mosiah 3:19**)

It does not say, “the natural man is an enemy to God since the fall of Adam and will be forever and ever *unless the Church takes him and makes him a saint.*” No. It does not say that. We are to be submissive, meek, humble, full of love, willing to submit to all things — this is the humility that is required of us.

**The more one knows and understands about life,  
the more perfect will be their decisions, actions and nature.**

The more we can know and learn about a particular subject, the better decisions we can make. The people who are jumping ship are doing so because they just don't know the answers. Their ignorance of the scriptures just astounds me. They hear of questions, and because no one is providing them with the answers, they determine there is no answer, and they jump ship. This is why we need to be searching for light and truth. Our spiritual responsibility is to *seek for, be worthy to receive, and then be obedient to light and truth* **until** we receive a fullness of light and truth. See **D&C 50: 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.

He that keepeth his commandments receiveth truth and light, until he is glorified in truth and knoweth all things. (**D&C 93: 28**)

## **Eternal Truth**

Let's turn to **D&C 93: 24**. This will lead us into our texts concerning the creation epics.

### **And truth is knowledge of things**

<b>as they are,</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Our Temple Drama</b>
<b>as they were,</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Past</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Moses / Genesis</b>
<b>as they are to come</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Future</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Abraham</b>

This is the definition of “eternal truth”. The Brother of Jared was taken into the presence of the Lord while on top of the mount. (**Ether 3: 6, 13-16**) You remember that the Brother of Jared brought forth sixteen small stones that he had prepared for their journey across the many waters. The Lord parts the veil, stretches forth His hand from the other side of the veil, [this is a Temple Text], touches the stones with His finger, and the Brother of Jared falls back and down in fear. The Lord asks, “What's wrong?” The Brother of Jared says, “I knew not that the Lord had flesh and blood, and I feared Thou would smite me.” The Lord recognizes his faith, and inquires if he would like to see more. “Believest thou the words which I shall speak?” The Brother of Jared answers, “Yea, Lord, I know that thou speakest the truth, for thou art a God of truth, and canst not

lie.” The Brother of Jared is brought into the presence of the Lord, and the Lord tells him: “Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall [he is now clean from the blood and sins of his generation]; therefore ye are brought back into my presence ...”

The Brother of Jared had greater faith than any other man up until that time. “Never has man come before me with such exceeding faith as thou hast; for were it not so ye could not have seen my finger.” “Never have I showed myself unto man whom I have created, for never has man believed in me as thou hast”. When he entered into the presence of the Lord he entered into an environment that had no time; he was able to see the past, the present and the future at the same time. He was able to see and witness eternal truth; he was able to see the infinite and eternal sacrifice of Christ or the Lamb slain before the foundation of this world. He saw the body that Christ *shall* take upon himself, 2700 years before He was born. This is the definition of eternal truth: things as they are, as they were, and as they are to come.

This is the primary reason why we have the three creation epics in our scriptures. In our classes we often read Genesis; we will read Moses more often, but Abraham is seldom referenced. It ought to be the other way around. Regarding these creation accounts, we ought to always read Abraham, uses Moses as a supplement and realize Genesis is not the inspired version.

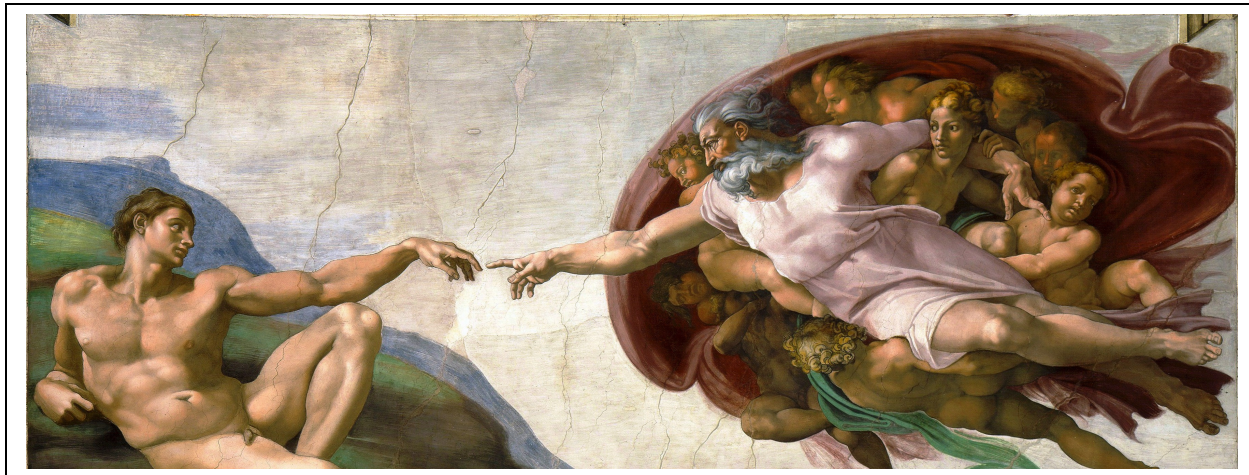
<b>And truth is knowledge of things</b>		
<b>as they are,</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Our Temple Drama</b>
<b>as they were,</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Moses / Genesis</b>
<b>as they are to come</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>Abraham</b>

In these three Creation accounts the Temple narrative is in the Present. Participants are the man Adam or the woman Eve. You are there, you see what is going on right now. We have a present-tense point of view. The account seen in Moses is a past-tense point of view. Moses is trying to teach the children of Israel what God has done for them, that God created the earth and mankind. Moses is trying to teach hardhearted, stiff-necked Israel about their relationship with God. The creation account found in Abraham is different. It is better than all the rest of them. His point of view is from a future event – something that has not happened yet. He is looking at things from a prophetic point of view. Prophecy is history in reverse, and of the two, prophecy is always more sure. Prophecy is more sure than history because history cannot be described without some filter. Thus, Abraham’s record is better than the rest of them. He is seeing things that have not happened yet. Abraham is looking at the creation from the point of view of the Gods. These three creation accounts teach us eternal truth by showing us things from a present point of view, from a past point of view, and from a future point of view. This is so that we might gain a better understanding of how things are, how they were and how they are to come. This is the great thing about our scriptures. They open up the eternities for us!

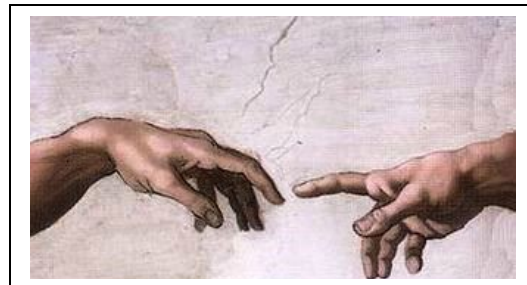
### **Why Creation Accounts**

Some have supposed that these creation accounts are intended to explain scientific concepts, such as how long the day described in Genesis was (when it says "and it was the morning and the evening of the first day") or how long creation really took. Was the day 24 hours long or was it to be interpreted as "a thousand years *is as* one day with God"? Notice, it does not say "is"; it says "as" a thousand years. Our creation accounts are not given to us as scientific explanations, but rather they are given to us so that we might establish relationships. The purpose of the creation accounts is to establish the relationship between God, man, and the environment (this earth) in which man is placed.

The Sistine Chapel has this wonderful scene painted on the ceiling of the chapel: God is trying to reach out to Adam, and the Cherubs and the angels are holding Him back. God has created Adam and wants to come out of Heaven. He is reaching out, stretching to touch Adam and create a relationship with Adam; but what is Adam doing?



Look at Adam's wrist.  
Is he trying to reach out  
or to hold back?



We're the man Adam. He is holding back. God is the one who wants a relationship, we are told that we need to have that relationship, but too often we don't even reach up. Some of you may remember Elder Paul Dunn; in one conference he quipped: "One day for Church, six days for fun; the odds of going to heaven are six to one!" So we need to be the ones who are stretching; we are the ones who need to be stretching to make that grasp. Establishing that relationship with God is crucial during our probationary state. Nephi said:

And we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins. (2 Ne 25: 26)

Our responsibility as adults is to help the rising generation understand the importance of coming unto Christ, and especially to assist them in developing their relationship with Christ and the Atonement. As we have said before, the Church is to administer the Gospel so that we may participate in the Gospel. It is not the Church that is going to save you; it is not the Church that is going to get you into the Celestial Kingdom, for there is no Mormon Church in the Spirit World – there is only the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our responsibility, our endowment of power, is knowing that we can develop that relationship with Christ while we're here on the earth. These creation accounts, these epics, are in our scriptures to assist us in establishing those relationships.

### The Two Churches

In **1 Ne 14: 10** we learn that there are only two churches: the church of the Lamb of God and the Church of the devil. We have often attributed the phrase, "the Great and Abominable Church" and other phrases to a particular religion or denomination. That is not necessarily so because what is really being described is two separate and opposite philosophies. One is about coming unto Christ and the other is anti-Christ. We're told in that same verse that if we're not in the Church of the Lamb of God, then we're in the church of the devil -- Period. There are a lot of Mormons who go to church every Sunday who are nevertheless in the church of the devil because one can be completely active in church and be completely inactive in the Gospel. This is what Christ was teaching when he spoke about the Publican and the Pharisee in **Luke 18: 10-14**.

Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. **The Pharisee** stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And **the publican**, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

The Pharisee is the one patting himself on the back, claiming to be active in church and the Temple, paying his tithes and offerings. Why, he even brings *two* dishes to every potluck! (*much laughter*) The publican, on the other hand, is the one active in the Gospel. In humility he asks God for mercy because he knows he is a sinner. Christ is saying here that the one who is totally active in the Gospel (practicing faith & repentance) is more righteous than the one who is totally active in the Church.

The lesson to be learned is that if you are active in the Gospel of Jesus Christ you will want to be active in the Church of Jesus Christ, no matter who says things that may be



out of harmony with what the scriptures teach. We cannot forget our responsibility to participate in the Gospel and our need for the authoritative ordinances administered by the Priesthood organization. These are the two necessary ingredients needed to establish our relationship with God and our fellowman.

### **The Definition of Sin**

From a scriptural point of view sin can be defined simply as the misuse of time. The scriptures teach us that the two commandments upon which hang all of the Law **and** all of the Prophets is **loving God and loving our fellowman**. Mormons have no monopoly on those two commandments. "The Law" means abiding by all of the commandments, and "the Prophets" mean following what the Prophets have taught. All of those things hang upon only two things; loving God and loving our fellowman. Thus everything the Law requires and everything the Prophets teach are to assist us in loving God and loving our fellowman. So, to carry the definition of sin a little further out, sin, then, is anything that spiritually distracts us from developing the character that loves God and loves our fellowman.

It only stands to reason that all judgment will also hang upon the two character traits of loving God and loving our fellowman. When the covenants we make in the Temple become part of our lives we will begin to develop the character that loves God and loves our fellowman. Those covenants are of the Aaronic and Melchizedek Orders. One is for loving God and the other is for loving our fellowman.

### **Why the Earth was Created**

Wherefore, it is lawful that he should have one wife, and they twain shall be one flesh, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation; And that it might be filled with the measure of man, according to his creation before the world was made. **D&C 49: 16-17**

According to this scripture, the purpose of the creation is marriage, that a man might have one wife and get married. Why marriage? That it might be filled with the measure of man according to the spirits who are waiting to come down. In other words, the earth was created so that a man and a woman could get married and together create the physical bodies for those spirits, so that they in turn could get married and have children... and so on. This is what it means "according to his creation before the world was made".

In **Isaiah 45: 18**, Isaiah says:

**18** For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, **he formed it to be inhabited**: I *am* the Lord; and *there is* none else.

Nephi teaches us the same thing: **(1 Ne 17: 36)**

**36 Behold, the Lord hath created the earth that it should be inhabited; and he hath created his children that they should possess it.**

These accounts are rehearsed and explained in history and ritual ordinance to establish a relationship between God, **Man** and the Environment in which **Man** must live to work out his salvation. **Man** is that being that has the potential to become like God!

### **Relationship with our Creator**

I say unto you, my brethren, that if you should render all the thanks and praise which your whole soul has power to possess, **to that God who has created you**, and has kept and preserved you, and has caused that ye should rejoice, and has granted that ye should live in peace one with another—I say unto you that if ye should serve **him who has created you from the beginning**, and is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, **that ye may live and move and do according to your own will**, and even supporting you from one moment to another—I say, if ye should serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants. And behold, **all that he requires of you is to keep his commandments**; and he has promised you that if ye would keep his commandments ye should prosper in the land; and he never doth vary from that which he hath said; therefore, if ye do keep his commandments he doth bless you and prosper you. And now, in the first place, **he hath created you, and granted unto you your lives, for which ye are indebted unto him**. And secondly, **he doth require that ye should do as he hath commanded you**; for which if ye do, he doth immediately bless you; and therefore he hath paid you. And ye are still indebted unto him, and are, and will be, forever and ever; therefore, of what have ye to boast? And now I ask, can ye say aught of yourselves? I answer you, Nay. **Ye cannot say that ye are even as much as the dust of the earth; yet ye were created of the dust of the earth; but behold, it belongeth to him who created you.** (Mos 2: 20-25)

### **Relationship with Mankind**

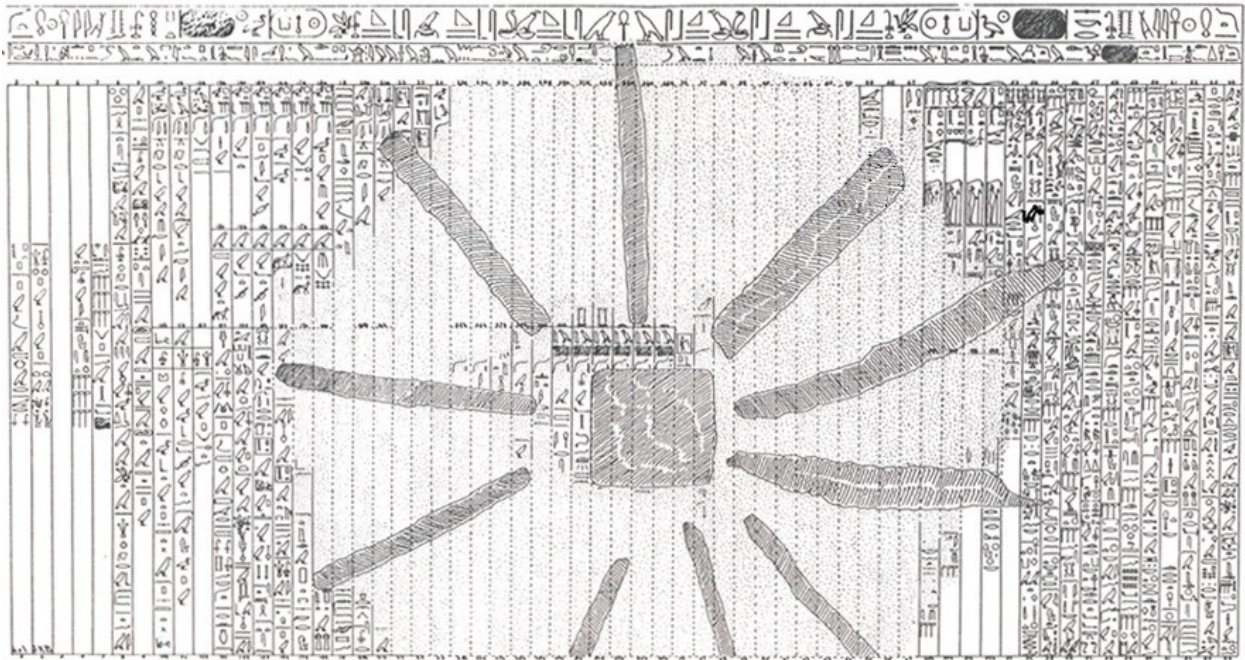
And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that **when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God.**

King Benjamin brings in every aspect: our relationship with God and with our fellow beings and the environment in which we must live to work our own salvation with fear and trembling. (Mormon 9: 27-28)

### **Ancient Cultures / Creation Epics**

Every culture has a creation account that is rehearsed at regular intervals during the year. When they were presented there was always some type of ordinance attached to

the presentation, such as the Sed Festival in Egypt or the Akitu Festival in Mesopotamia, or the Saturnalia Festival in Rome. These festivals had to be repeated, and often at the various Temple sites of these cultures. At the Temple of Menes in Egypt, the creation account written upon the Shabaka Stone was performed on a regular basis, thereby giving the people a chance to understand their relationship to God and to each other.



The Shabaka Stone is the world's oldest written document. It is a 'temple text' that was carved into stone during the earliest Egyptian dynasty, about 3500 BC. It talks about a "council in heaven," and about how God created things "by the word of his power". It talks about God and his multiple children, and how He decided which of His two sons would become the God of the world that has now been created. He chooses his "most beloved son". The other son becomes upset and tries to destroy the plan. This is all part of the early Memphite Theology, from the Temple of Menes in Memphis in the delta region of Egypt.

This is a Temple Drama, a play written with stage directions and the dialogue of the stage directions. One enters from the left and says such and such; another enters from the right and utters his lines. Thus this drama, this play, is about the council in heaven, the creation of the earth and the choosing of who is going to be the most beloved son.

A non-LDS scholar, Barbara Sproul, has published a book containing all of the ancient creation accounts from around the world. In the introduction to her book she writes:

**The most profound human questions give rise to creation myths.**

**Who are we?**

**Why are we here?**

**What is the purpose of our lives and our deaths?**

**How should we understand our place in the world in time and in space?**

**These are central questions of value and meaning, and, while they are influenced by issues of fact, they are not, in themselves, factual questions; Rather they involve attitudes towards facts and reality. As such the issues that they raise are addressed most directly by myths. (*Primal Myths, Introduction, p 1*)**

[The word 'myth' originally meant "the true story of one's beginnings or origins". Over the years that word's meaning has changed, and it is now often used to describe a 'fable' or something false or even a sensational story.]

**Creation epics proclaim such attitudes toward reality of how to exist in this world; they organize the way we perceive the facts and understand ourselves in the world.**

### **The Endowment Provides Knowledge**

Consider the knowledge our endowment of power can provide us during our lifetime of suffering and death. Our real endowment of power comes from knowing:

**That God lives;  
That God created the world for mankind;  
That our separation from God can be reversed;  
That we have an eternal nature and spirit;  
That there is plan of progression towards God;  
That there is purpose to this life that endures past death;  
That our potential is as limitless as God's;  
That the trials of mortality are purposeful and are necessary;  
That we know where evil comes from and how to control it;  
That death is not an end but a beginning;  
That a Son of God provides an atonement and resurrection that makes all of this possible.**

We chose to participate in this lone and dreary world. We raised our hands and chose to come to hell. We wanted to come. We knew how bad life *could be* on this earth or else our agency would have been compromised. We had to know perfectly how bad life *could be* on this earth. We had to know perfectly what it would feel like to loose a child in childbirth or a spouse early on, or suffer through illness, disease, cancer, leukemia, or dementia. IF we did not understand these things perfectly before we came here then our agency would have been compromised. When you understand how bad this life *could be*, when you understand you knew the worst that *could happen* -- that you *could* end up in India living in the streets begging for food to keep from starving, or being

washed away in their seasonal floods like 20,000 of them do every year! *You knew that could have been you* -- When you begin to understand these things, you will no longer have trials and tribulations – you will only have a life that you chose to participate in.

This hit me hard as a teenager growing up on my grandparent's ranch in northern Arizona. The horses and the cows brought out the worse in me it seemed. The things those dumb animals did just seemed to bring out the worse in me. One evening while sitting around the dinner table my grandfather told me about the Quaker who had this milk cow. The Quaker was familiar with some of his Mormon neighbors. One morning while milking his cow, the old cow looked back at the almost full bucket of milk and kicked it over. This happened several times that morning, and finally the Quaker looked in the old cow's eyes and said, "Thou knowest that I am a Quaker and cannot beat thee, but if thou will not stop kicking over the milk pail, I will sell thee to a Mormon, and he will beat the hell out of thee!" (*room fills with laughter*)

Horses are pretty tough, and I have broken my hand on the jaw of a horse before. I'm not proud of that, but I got that mad at a horse before. I used to get so frustrated while riding out late at night looking for one of those dumb cows. Snow would be on the ground, and I'd be cold, tired and hungry. I've been dragged through the mud, thrown off horses and stepped on by more than one horse or cow. And one day it hit me that if I was living the kind of life I chose to participate in, then why should I get so upset at what those dumb animals did? When I began to see that, it gave me a sense of freedom that I had not had before. I was able to look beyond the daily frustrations and trials of working on that ranch. I no longer had trials and tribulations; I just had a life I chose to participate in.

That fact that you are here on earth verifies that you also chose to participate in "life" and all that it encompasses. Think of the things you have been or are dealing with. What would happen if you did not know these things that were listed above? For sure you would not be here in this room today, I can tell you that! You'd be out eating, drinking and playing golf, for tomorrow we die! (*class laughter*) Without the knowledge our endowment of power provides, our lives would have no purpose. Death would be the end of all things and we would become a Korihor, believing and teaching that when a man was dead that was the end thereof (**Alma 30: 18**) If we did not know these things, we would be confused, perplexed, disoriented or bewildered.

This knowledge is what everyone is either consciously or unconsciously searching for. Even if they don't know it, they are searching for it. The mind is such that if a true answer is not available, the mind will make something up to satisfy the question. If it cannot make up an answer, it will go somewhere to try and find an answer. The mind has to do this. That is why I say that the endowment of power is knowledge, not necessarily the ordinances presented or received.

If you do not know that there is life after death, then you might believe in reincarnation, because you need an answer to the question of what comes after death. Contemplate these truths and look at the power they give you in this life that is so terrible and rotten and hard to deal with. Look at the power it gives you to know these things. When the

scriptures talk about an endowment of power, it is talking about understanding this information, so that we can obtain the power to progress after our mortal deaths.

### Teachings from the Prophet Joseph Smith

Here, then, is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you attain a resurrection of the dead . . . [and] they shall be heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. What is it? To inherit the same power, the same glory and the same exaltation, until you arrive at the station of a God, and ascend the throne of eternal power, the same as those who have gone before. (TPJS p 346-347)

*When you climb up a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel—you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned them. (TPJS p 348, italics in original)*

Part of our progression or part of our character change will take place on the other side. Without our physical bodies that progression may be harder in some areas, but our progression must still go on.

### Distinction between Grace and Mercy

There is a difference between Grace and Mercy. Grace is being saved from the effects of the Fall of Adam. **Moses 6: 54** says:

Hence came the saying abroad among the people, that the Son of God hath atoned for original guilt, wherein the sins of the parents cannot be answered upon the heads of the children, for they are whole from the foundation of the world.

Everyone is going to be resurrected and everyone is going to be brought back into the presence of God – everyone. This is **Grace**. We're all saved from the effects from the Fall by **Grace**. No matter what we do, **Grace** is going to save everyone from the Fall of Adam. That separation from God and that separation of our spirit from our bodies will be taken care of by **Grace**. However, if we want *to remain* in the presence of God, we will have to exercise our faith in Christ unto repentance. We must exercise our faith in Christ and the Atonement and begin the process of changing our character. Amulek teaches us in **Alma 34: 15-17** that when we begin to exercise our faith unto repentance **Mercy** kicks in to satisfy the demands of justice.

**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;

Christ has already paid for the effects from the Fall. As we begin exercising our faith unto repentance, **Mercy** then satisfies the demands of justice by giving us the time to develop the character that makes God, God. **Mercy = time** to develop our character. Joseph Smith said we cannot dwell with God unless we have the character of God.

If you wish to go where God is, you must be like God, or possess the principles which God possesses, for if we are not drawing towards God in principle, we are going from Him and drawing towards the devil. (TPJS p 216)

We sometimes think that when we die we're going to be tapped with a magic wand and we're going to be perfect. Or there will be some ordinance that will make us perfect, or maybe some miracle will occur to make us perfect. No, no, no. That will not be the case! Our change of character into the character of God has to come about by our own agency. As I said at the beginning of our discussion today, *we have to be seeking for further light and truth, receive that light and truth, and then be obedient to the light and truth we have received and make it become part of our life.*

## No Victims

The space between death and the resurrection will be another time of learning, a time without the fetters of a physical body. There will be no victims in the Spirit World. The Gospel of Jesus Christ eliminates victims. Whatever physical or genetic defects we may have while in this physical body will be eliminated in the Spirit World. Our spirits will be unfettered to learn and grasp things of a much higher or expanded order. There will be no victims or those who cannot progress.

Perhaps we ought to talk about the character we possess when we die. **Alma 34: 34** says: "...that same spirit which doth possess your bodies at the time that ye go out of this life, that same spirit will have power to possess your body in that eternal world."

What this is saying is: the character you have in this life is going to be the same character you're going to have there. If you do not have the character that seeks for light and truth here, you won't have one there either. You will have to learn to want to learn to change your character. God will not control **your** agency! (TPJS p.187) If you don't want

to learn in the next life, that will be up to you. As it says in Mosiah, there will be those who know that Jesus is their Redeemer but "they would not be redeemed." (**Mosiah 26: 25-26**) Over three hundred times in the Book of Mormon the words "repent or repentance" shows up, and as we have said multiple times in this class, repentance is the process of changing your character.

Victims do not progress. As long as a victim can point a finger to someone else, they avoid taking responsibility for their own behavior. The great thing about the Gospel is that even if something has happened to you, either physically, mentally or temporally, the Gospel opens the door for you to no longer be under an external control. In the Spirit World you will not have physical weaknesses or genetic problems or a physical body that may have been abused. You will have a spirit that recognizes the power of its own agency. The manifestation of deity on the other side cannot be any greater than what you believe or know about deity here in this life. If I only believe God is a spirit, I will not see Him with a physical body. I will have to learn line upon line, and precept upon precept to acquire that knowledge.

If you have **not** accepted the Gospel here, then go to the other side where you suddenly remember the pre-earth life, the Plan and the Council in Heaven, and – "poof" – expect you're going to accept the Gospel on the other side, that won't happen because the use of your own agency to gain further light and knowledge is required to progress. The Gospel has to be accepted on faith both here and in the spirit world.

The first principle of the Gospel is faith in Jesus Christ and His atonement. We then exercise our faith unto repentance or to the changing of our character. Then we will begin to gain access to further light and knowledge. **D&C 88:40** says that "light cleaveth unto light", "truth embraces truth", because as you get it, you can see more, and once you receive that amount of light and truth, you can have more and more until you begin to know the truth of all things. (**Moses 6: 61**) **It is a great and perfect Plan of Salvation!**

**Comment:** Yet we have to still endure to the end.

Yes, we do. We will have to experience an Abrahamic test as talked about in **D&C 101**.

### **An Abrahamic Test**

What's an Abrahamic test? You may have wanted to kill any one of your kids as they were growing up, but that is not the test we are talking about. If Abraham had a weakness it was his love for his son. That was his greatest weakness, and he had to be tested in his greatest weakness at his weakest moment. That was when Isaac would have received his blessings that would guarantee Abraham the posterity the Lord had promised him. So Abraham, at his weakest moment, was told he had to sacrifice his son. We, too, will have to be tested in our greatest weakness at our weakest moment. And when we pass that test, it will generate a power within us not ever before known, giving us an ability and power to endure to the end. Joseph taught:



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: he must have been instructed in the government and laws of that kingdom by proper degrees, until his mind is capable in some measure of comprehending the propriety, justice, equality, and consistency of the same. (TPJS p 51)

Let's take a break.