

Seek The Face of the Lord

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Dear Reader, please note that the following document was prepared as a handout for a fireside given April 11, 2004 by John M. Pontius on this subject in Pleasant Grove, Utah. This is a list of scriptures and authoritative quotes on the subject with minimal introduction and commentary.

Man is commanded to seek the face of the Lord:

One of the great privileges of the Gospel that has existed in every dispensation, is the privilege of obtaining a personal visitation of the Lord. The scriptures are replete with accounts of those who have sought and obtained this great gift. A notable few of those who have obtained the privilege of conversing with the God of heaven face to face include Adam, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Peter, James, John, Paul, Lehi, Nephi, the brother of Jared, Alma, Moroni, the Nephite Twelve, Joseph Smith, and many others. It is also undoubtedly true that countless others, whose names are unknown to history, also obtained this sweet gift.

It is worth observing that even during times of spiritual decline and darkness, some sought and obtained this grand blessing. Many of the Old Testament prophets prevailed with the Lord while all around them wickedness reigned.

So sublime is this visitation, and so vast the blessings it bestows, that it is literally impossible to overstate its attendant blessings. In the following pages we will examine these blessings, as well as the requirements laid upon those who would be so bold as to seek the face of God.

We are literally commanded to seek His face.

And seek the face of the Lord always, that in patience ye may possess your souls, and ye shall have eternal life. (D&C 101:38)

Moses sought to bring his people out of spiritual darkness into the full light of the glory of God. He sought to prepare them that they might do as he had done, ascend the Holy Mount, and see the face of God. He labored diligently to prepare them to receive the Melchizedek Priesthood, which is the power to enter within the veil.

19 And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. 20 Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.

21 And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh;

22 For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live.

23 Now this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God;

24 But they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence; therefore, the Lord in his wrath, for his anger was kindled against them, swore that they should not enter into his rest while in the wilderness, which rest is the fulness of his glory. (D&C 84:19-24)

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Please observe that verse 22 clearly defines “the power of godliness” as that which makes it possible to see the face of the Father, to be in his presence and to enter into his rest, which is the fullness of his glory (v24).

The Personal Visitation is for all

If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John 14:23)

It requires monumental faith to translate a promise given to all mankind, into a personal belief so seemingly audacious as “I” can seek a personal audience with Deity. It almost seems irreverent to so believe, as if one is leapfrogging an entire paradigm of mortality – that God only appears to prophets, period. The internalization of a belief that you, or I, can and even must, find ourselves on the other side of the veil, is almost superhuman.

Mortal frailty notwithstanding, the promise has stood through time, sounding a divine invitation to awake, and behold.

Beyond human unbelief, the enemy of our souls does not want us to believe such lofty things, and carefully steals the precious seeds of veil-rending belief before they even touch the rich soils of our soul.

Still, the promise stands, and all mankind is invited to enter in.

Elder McConkie declared:

Seeing the Lord is not a matter of lineage or rank or position or place of precedence. (McConkie TPM p569)

Joseph Smith said:

"God hath not revealed anything to Joseph, but what he will make known unto the Twelve, and even the least saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them, for the day must come when no man need say to his neighbor, Know ye the Lord; for all shall know him . . . from the least to the greatest." (*Teachings*, p. 149.)

We who, perhaps incorrectly, consider ourselves the “least saint” can take great hope from the foregoing promise. The reason this promise is extended to all, is that God will lead us to the veil as fast as we are able, or perhaps better stated, as fast as we are *willing*, to bear it.

The process to approach the veil is clearly defined in scripture:

Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am. (D&C 93:1)

Chapters could be written on this divine formula. The power of what it tells us is that EVERY soul who follows this process may partake of the divine gift. The process is thus defined.

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1- Forsake sins. Though this process must include repentance, it reaches much further than simply repenting faster than one sins. It is a state of forsaking, walking away from sin, abandoning it, and living life as sinlessly as mortals may. To do so is to drink from the divine river of grace. It is to qualify, through obedience to law, for a retooling of the soul which makes sinless living, far more than merely possible, but joyful. No mortal can forsake sin so completely unaided by the power of Christ's grace. However, when obedience, fueled by unconquerable desire, taps into the power of the atonement, all things are possible – all spiritual refinements, including forsaking all sin, becomes not just possible, but sweetly distills upon our souls as the dews from heaven. We become pure in heart, not by our own discipleship, but by the disciple of obedience, and upgrading of the soul by God.

2- Come unto me. How can one come unto Christ unless one perceives where Christ is? Faith Repentance, and Baptism bring the seeker to the church of Christ, but not necessarily to Christ himself. To come unto Christ, one must hear His voice, and turn toward the sound thereof with faith-born desire, and struggle if necessary, walk when able, and eventually run toward the sound of his voice.

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. (Revelations 3:20)

If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him! What a marvelous promise. Christ's voice is Light and Truth and Spirit. (D&C 84:45) To walk without His voice is to walk in darkness. Throughout scripture, the Lord laments that man is walking in darkness at noon day. (D&C 95:6) Christ laments over and over that He is a light shining in darkness, and the darkness does not perceive the light. (D&C 6:21, 10:58, 34:2, 39:2, 45:7, 88:49)

More than in any other way, we come unto Christ by hearkening to his voice. Every other criteria follows as naturally as day follows the night: Ordinances, ordination, covenants, contracts, promises, perfections, visions, visitations and glories unspeakable all flow from this one obedience, and in no other way. It is not possible that someone unwilling to follow His voice would progress at all in His Gospel, no matter how many outward ordinances they wiggled themselves into.

3- Call on My name. The language here is interesting, and powerful. These words can't implied calling upon Him in prayer, since we pray not to Christ, but to the Father. Why then, instruct us to call upon His name? What use must we make of His name?

The answer lies in the fact that, as fallen mortals, we are not invited to pray unto the Father in our own right. Since we must petition the Father for all blessings, this is an obstacle of eternal proportions. We simply are not invited.

It may be easier to consider the audacity of asking for an interview with an earthly king. Even if our cause is just, or our need overwhelming, we would have no privilege to ask for an audience. We would be stopped at the outer gate, long before reaching his ear. We have no claim upon his time, or upon his power.

However, continuing the analogy, if we had a master, one whom we obeyed and served, and who loved us and championed our needs, we might prevail upon him to intercede. Especially since our master is also the favored son of the king, and heir to the

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throne. Then consider that the king owed our master a vast sum, even all of his kingdom. Factor in that we were not mere servants, but adopted sons and daughters, and in this setting we could rightly petition our master to intercede with the king.

The actual interview might go something like this. “Our king, we humbly come before you in the name of your beloved son, our master, who has himself plead our case, and in his name, we appear today and ask for relief.”

To call “upon” His name, is to invoke our covenant relationship with Christ when calling upon the Father. It is to stand, not behind, but upon his grace as he implores the father in our behalf.

I am the same which have taken the Zion of Enoch into mine own bosom; and verily, I say, even as many as have believed in my name, for I am Christ, and in mine own name, by the virtue of the blood which I have spilt, have I pleaded before the Father for them. (D&C 38:4)

Christ can plead with the Father in his own name by virtue of the blood which he spilt upon the cross and in Calvary, but we have no such standing in the divine court. Our relationship with God, our hope of divine intervention in our lives, our salvation, our hope of redemption and eternal glory is all in the name of Christ.

Hence, we must call “upon” his name.

4- Obey my voice. This is a topic upon which I have written extensively. Everywhere in scripture the injunction is the same; those who obey his voice will be exalted – those who do not, will not. More than obedience to the commandments, more than obedience to law, more than obedience to any doctrine or principle, obedience to the voice of the Lord is listed as the dividing line between righteousness and wickedness.

Christ’s voice begins as the voice of conscience. This means that conscience is the most rudimentary (unrefined) manifestation of Christ’s voice. Other, purer manifestations follow as greater obedience to this tiny voice of truth calls them forth. Promptings, insights, bursts of understanding, doctrine distilling upon our souls, revelations, visions, conversations, visitations, and even the divine presence, are increasingly more pure manifestations of revelation. One cannot evolve to the greater forms without first perfecting the lesser.

5- Keep my commandments. Lastly, having done all other things, the penitent must keep the commandments.

Then follows this last and greatest promise – that we shall be privileged to see His face, and know that He is. Then, faith turns to knowledge, and knowledge to power, and power to privilege.

These five steps define a pathway to the presence of God. They are the same that every prophet has trod to enter the divine presence. They will, in the timetable of the Lord, bring us to the same spiritual stature as the Brother of Jared.

If and when we obtain the spiritual stature of this man Moriancumer, then we shall see what he saw and know what he knew. (McConkie TPM p582)

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Elder McConkie, who wrote extensively on this subject, adds this sweet and encouraging insight. Commenting upon D&C 88:62-63 (Call upon me while I am near— Draw near unto me and I will draw near unto you; seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.) He exults:

Surely, this is what we must do if we ever expect to see his face. He is there waiting our call, anxious to have us seek his face, awaiting our importuning pleas to rend the veil so that we can see the things of the Spirit. (McConkie TPM p582)

How do men obtain a knowledge of the glory of God, his perfections and attributes?" the Prophet asked. His answer: "By devoting themselves to his service, through prayer and supplication incessantly strengthening their faith in him, until, like Enoch, the brother of Jared, and Moses, they obtain a manifestation of God to themselves." (*Lectures on Faith* 2)

Priesthood Ordinances & Mysteries of Godliness

All gospel blessings, especially those related to entering the presence of the Lord, flow from ordinances. It is worth noting that the power of the godliness lies not in the priesthood per se, but in the right that priesthood gives us to righteously perform ordinances. It is in the fulfillment of the promised blessings held forth by those ordinances that the mysteries of the kingdom are revealed, even the key of the knowledge of God.

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The Higher Priesthood holds the “keys” of all the spiritual blessings of the kingdom. These keys give us the ability to open the doors and enter into the covenant relationships that ultimately distill into eternal glory. The keys should not be confused with the doors themselves. Once in possession of the key, one must still learn how to use it. Possessing the key is not to automatically open the door.

The object of our journey, the hope of our souls, the yearning desire of our faith, is beyond the door. It would be foolish to acquire a set of keys, then hang them in a place of honor upon our wall and revere them as journey’s end. The purpose of the gospel, the purpose of the priesthood, the purpose of ordinances, and the keys they hand us is to open the door. Nothing more.

What lies beyond the door? As the above quoted scripture attests, the very presence of God.

Let us not siphon the virtue from this glorious promise by assuming that this divine audience with deity is the inevitable day when we shall all kneel before Him to be judged, or some automatic event at death. Moses sought to bring his people – his very much mortal and living people – into the presence of God. Such is the nature of the keys we possess.

Between that glorious audience with God, and today, lies a vast array of divinely ordained “mysteries” which must be obtained, understood in crystalline clarity, the resulting truths obeyed, and newly opened doors entered into.

Much could be said about the mysteries of the kingdom. Suffice it to say that the mysteries are glorious, wholesome and vitally necessary. They are recorded in scripture, but can only be understood through the opening of the channels of revelation. We read them daily, and pass over them because they are not discernable to the natural man.

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Where in the scripture are they? They're actually easy to find. Read until you come to a passage or phrase you don't understand, most probably it is oft repeated, and one which causes you to ponder. You've just found a mystery. There are thousands of them.

These precious pearls remain mysteries until revealed through revelation. Once a seeker has learned a mystery, mortal language is not able to make them known to another. No combination of words, no matter how powerful or inspired, can ferry them into the soul of another. Each must acquire them through personally revealed truth.

The power and authority of the higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood, is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church—To have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them, to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, and to enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant." (D&C 107:18-19.)

From all of this it follows, automatically and axiomatically, that if and when the holy priesthood operates to the full in the life of any man, he will receive its great and full blessings, which are that rending of the heavens and that parting of the veil of which we now speak. (McConkie: TPM 588, commenting on 107:18-19)

The mysteries are those principles of the Gospel which must be received and understood by the Holy Ghost. Mysteries are not to be shunned, but rather appropriately sought under the guidance of the Spirit. It is the mysteries which give us the key to the knowledge of God, and in time, the actual knowledge of God – which is life eternal (John 17:3)

It is your privilege, and a promise I give unto you that have been ordained unto this ministry, that inasmuch as you strip yourselves from jealousies and fears, and humble yourselves before me, for ye are not sufficiently humble, the veil shall be rent and you shall see me and know that I am—not with the carnal neither natural mind, but with the spiritual. For no man has seen God at any time in the flesh, except quickened by the Spirit of God. Neither can any natural man abide the presence of God, neither after the carnal mind. Ye are not able to abide the presence of God now, neither the ministering of angels; wherefore, continue in patience until ye are perfected. Let not your minds turn back; and when ye are worthy in mine own due time, ye shall see and know that which is conferred upon you by the hands of my servant Joseph Smith, Jun. (D&C 67:10-14)

The Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood

When I was interviewed by my bishop to become a Priest. That good man asked me if I knew what the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood was. I said, not really. He then suggested we read the 84th section beginning at verse 33, and handed me an open book. I read it aloud. When I was done I looked up.

He smiled. “Do you know what it means?”

When I was unsure, he said, “It means that when we have finally obtained both priesthoods, and do our priesthood duties, we will receive all that the Father has, and God can’t break this covenant. Isn’t that wonderful?”

It is wonderful! But, the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood is considerably more complex and wonderful than that simplified description.

33 For whoso is faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods of which I have spoken, and the magnifying their calling, are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of their bodies.

34 They become the sons of Moses and of Aaron and the seed of Abraham, and the church and kingdom, and the elect of God.

35 And also all they who receive this priesthood receive me, saith the Lord;

36 For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me;

37 And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father;

38 And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him.

39 And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood.

40 Therefore, all those who receive the priesthood, receive this oath and covenant of my Father, which he cannot break, neither can it be moved. (D&C 84:33-35)

It is tempting to over-analyze this very important scripture. It is best understood in the over-arching view, than with minute scrutiny of its words and their meanings. A glowing key to its meaning is in verse 35. All they who receive this priesthood receive me. This defines the fulfillment of the oath and covenant of the priesthood as being that moment when one enters into the presence of the Lord.

The Pure in Heart shall See God

8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. (Matthew 5:8)

Elder McConkie adds this emphasis:

The pure in heart shall see God. This we have already seen, but we restate it again because the process of becoming pure in heart is the process that prepares us to see the face of Deity. (McConkie TPM p580)

Being pure in heart is further defined here:

67 And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things. (D&C88:67)

These glorious words give us a divine roadmap by stating that when your body is filled with light we will, in time, comprehend all things. It is very interesting that the body must be filled with light, rather than the soul, or mind. While we believe the body is sacred, and essential to our exaltation. Still, the body is our battleground. It is through the flesh that we are most influenced by evil.

27 Wherefore, men are free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil; for he seeketh that all men might be miserable like unto himself.

28 And now, my sons, I would that ye should look to the great Mediator, and hearken unto his great commandments; and be faithful unto his words, and choose eternal life, according to the will of his Holy Spirit;

29 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 2:26-29)

It is in the will of the flesh that we feel the unsanctified urgings of darkness, of appetite and passion. Here it is that Satan exerts his greatest influence over us. Our body is the geography of our personal Waterloo. So, here too do we bear the tokens of our sanctification. Here it is that light must reign supreme, and when our bodies are filled with light – we may comprehend all things!

Therefore, the inspired word continues, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, or as verse 67 describes, let your eye be single to the glory of God. Much we have heard this proscription. Little have we understood.

The key lies in correctly understanding what constitutes the glory of God.

36 The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth. (D&C 93:36.)

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45 For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ. (D&C 84:45)

Consider the connection formed by these two references. These various terms are synonymous:

Verse 35: Light and Truth = Glory of God = Intelligence

Verse 45: Light and Truth = word of the Lord = the Spirit of Jesus Christ

If $A = B$ and $A = C$, then it must be true that $B = C$.

Therefore, Light and truth = word of the Lord = Spirit of Jesus Christ = Glory of God = Intelligence.

These terms are spiritually synonyms, and in this context, interchangeable. More importantly, they reveal what we are to make our eyes single to – the light and truth which flows from the Spirit of the Lord – which light and truth is literally the Glory of God. Making our eye single to all truth as it flows from the Spirit also makes our eye single to His glory and in time fills us with all truth. Since truth and Light are spiritually synonymous, being filled truth is to be filled with light.

And when our bodies are filled with light:

67 And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things.

68 Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will. (D&C 88:67-68)

Elder McConkie said much the same thing in this beautiful proclamation:

After the true saints receive and enjoy the gift of the Holy Ghost; after they know how to attune themselves to the voice of the Spirit; after they mature spiritually so that they see visions, work miracles, and entertain angels; after they make their calling and election sure and prove themselves worthy of every trust—after all this and more—it becomes their right and privilege to see the Lord and commune with him face to face. Revelations, visions, angelic visitations, the rending of the heavens, and appearances among men of the Lord himself—all these things are for all of the faithful. They are not reserved for apostles and prophets only. God is no respecter of persons. They are not reserved for one age only, or for a select lineage or people. We are all our Father's children. All men are welcome. "And he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile." (2 Ne. 26:33.) (McConkie TPM p575)

The Vision of All & Knowing All Things:

All through Scripture holy men have seen visions of things to come. Most notably, perhaps, is Moses, whose own vision of all was recorded in the first of Genesis, and constitutes most of what the Christian world knows about the creation. We turn to the book of Moses for a more perfect account of this grand vision.

8 And it came to pass that Moses looked, and beheld the world upon which he was created; and Moses beheld the world and the ends thereof, and all the children of men which are, and which were created; of the same he greatly marveled and wondered.

27 And it came to pass, as the voice was still speaking, Moses cast his eyes and beheld the earth, yea, even all of it; and there was not a particle of it which he did not behold, discerning it by the spirit of God. (Moses 1:8, 27)

3 And it came to pass that I turned and went up on the mount; and as I stood upon the mount, I beheld the heavens open, and I was clothed upon with glory;

4 And I saw the Lord; and he stood before my face, and he talked with me, even as a man talketh one with another, face to face; and he said unto me: Look, and I will show unto thee the world for the space of many generations. (Moses 7:3-4)

Abraham, the father of the righteous, likewise saw this vision.

I, Abraham, talked with the Lord, face to face, as one man talketh with another; and he told me of the works which his hands had made; And he said unto me: My son, my son (and his hand was stretched out), behold I will show you all these. And he put his hand upon mine eyes, and I saw those things which his hands had made, which were many; and they multiplied before mine eyes, and I could not see the end thereof. (Abr. 3:11-12)

Numerous Old Testament prophets saw this vision, and recorded it in various degrees of detail and clarity. Lehi apparently saw the vision of all, and instilled the desire to likewise see this vision in his righteous son Nephi, who, desiring to see what his father had seen, (1 Nephi 11:3) asks for and receives a vision which began with the tree of life, then expands to a grand vision of the birth and ministry of Christ and the future history of the world. (1 Nephi chapters 11-14)

The Brother of Jared records seeing this same vision:

25 And when the Lord had said these words, he showed unto the brother of Jared all the inhabitants of the earth which had been, and also all that would be; and he withheld them not from his sight, even unto the ends of the earth.

26 For he had said unto him in times before, that if he would believe in him that he could show unto him all things—it should be shown unto him; therefore the Lord could not withhold anything from him, for he knew that the Lord could show him all things. (Ether 3:25-26)

The Three Nephites, and their nine brethren apparently saw the vision of all. It requires a special instruction from the Lord for a participant in this grand vision to speak of it, and especially to write it. The Nephite disciples were never allowed to write what they had seen. The Brother of Jared wrote, but sealed up his words. Nephi was only allowed to write part of his vision, and so the pattern unfolds.

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13 And behold, the heavens were opened, and they were caught up into heaven, and saw and heard unspeakable things. (3 Nephi 28:13.)

Mormon saw our times (Mormon 8:34-35.)

Moroni, likewise spoke with Christ, face to face, and was shown great things.

38 And now I, Moroni, bid farewell unto the Gentiles, yea, and also unto my brethren whom I love, until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ, where all men shall know that my garments are not spotted with your blood.

39 And then shall ye know that I have seen Jesus, and that he hath talked with me face to face, and that he told me in plain humility, even as a man telleth another in mine own language, concerning these things;

40 And only a few have I written, because of my weakness in writing. Ether 12:38-40)

The prophet of the opening of this dispensation likewise saw the vision of all things, and was privileged to write a small part for our benefit.

And now, after the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him: That he lives!

23 For we saw him, even on the right hand of God; and we heard the voice bearing record that he is the Only Begotten of the Father—

24 That by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God. (D&C 76: 22-24)

Far more importantly than all these grand visions of the past, this glorious promise to you and I stands supreme:

5 For thus saith the Lord—I, the Lord, am merciful and gracious unto those who fear me, and delight to honor those who serve me in righteousness and in truth unto the end.

6 Great shall be their reward and eternal shall be their glory.

7 And to them will I reveal all mysteries, yea, all the hidden mysteries of my kingdom from days of old, and for ages to come, will I make known unto them the good pleasure of my will concerning all things pertaining to my kingdom. (D&C 76:5-7)

The pattern, if one may be so bold as to suggest anything about deity, seems to exist, that everyone who stands in the presence of God is privileged to see the vision of all. One of the grand witnesses we have of this assumption is the temple endowment which we enjoy today. It is well known, and widely written, and thus not a breach of etiquette to mention, that the endowment begins with a depiction of the creation.

That temple ceremony we call the endowment, is not “the” endowment, but a ceremony prefiguring and instructing. The actual endowment is when we are so privileged as the Brother of Jared, Moses, Abraham and a host of others, to stand in the presence of Our Lord, and there behold the workmanship of His hands, the vision of all.

The Gifts received

Perhaps the looming question we must ask ourselves when contemplating seeking such a lofty blessing is: Why do it at all? The obvious obstacle in seeking such great blessings is the requirement for great obedience, and apparently, even great trials. Is the personal visitation a requirement to receive the blessings we desire in the eternities? Or, is it more like divine extra credit? Good questions all.

Disciples contemplating whether to seek this blessing must eventually cross this bridge, and fear may be the keeper of the toll booth, and the coin required may appear far too dear to contemplate – especially if the whole journey is eternally optional.

It may also be that anyone truly contemplating this journey should take off their jacket, sit back down and relax. In my opinion, this is not a decision one can actually make, but one that was forged in the spiritual genetics that followed us into this world. It seems to me that if one must contemplate, either the timing is wrong, or the journey is wrong. When the timing is right, the journey will be right, and the spiritual power will arise, the cost will seem trivial, and the end goal more desirable than breath.

Add to this the unassailable truth that this journey is *not* optional. At some point in our pursuit of the Kingdom, we will of necessity qualify for a personal interview with Jesus Christ. That God is no respecter of persons, and the eternal Justice of the Father, precludes the process being harder, or easier for any individual. The price we pay to obtain this privilege now will be equal to any other who obtains it, no matter if it is in this mortal sphere, or some future world.

Additionally, there are fantastic blessings to be enjoyed for experiencing this blessed moment in this life. Most of the prophets who left records urged us to seek the face of God. Why, because they knew first hand of the glory and majesty that had entered their lives. Why, because obtaining these supernal privileges in this life gives us the unparalleled opportunity to bequeath them to our children. Why, because this is the greater gift, the very object of temple worship, the very purpose of the Melchizedek Priesthood.

Beyond these reasons born of logic, far beyond, is the astonishing fact that *this* is the zenith of human accomplishment. Nothing that can happen in mortality compares to the outpouring of glory, joy and blessings in mortality and in eternity of this singular event. Nothing. It may be, it must be, that once received, nothing in all of eternity will have a more profound effect upon our eternal future.

Much of secular literature records in fictional form man's yearning for a magical component to his life. The concept of magic is pervasive throughout the world. The concept is not only fascinating, it is generally conceptually comfortable, as if somewhere in our psyche there is a deeply submerged memory of "magic" as being not only commonplace, but good. The recent phenomenal success of the Harry Potter series is an example of our general comfort with the idea of magical forces, as are stories of magic lamps and magic rings and the like.

Imagine for just one moment that most of those stories are very loosely grounded in historical fact! If they are grounded in actual happenings that could not be understood or duplicated by the uninitiated, they would have quickly evolved into myth and legend.

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Consider the fact that in the early history of mankind men of pure faith walked the earth – Adam, Seth, Enoch and a hundred-thousand others. Consider how incredible healings, raising the dead, ascents in fiery chariots, walking on water, moving mountains, defeating vast armies, or creating wealth, food, homes, or cities by a single word must have jolted the secular mind. Such people and such events would begin a superstition and a legend of such power that it would never die, but would persist throughout all the living memory of mankind in one form or another. I think Harry Potter is just a modern-day recycling of that legend.

Such is the enormity of the blessings received by uncommon man in the personal visitation of the Lord. The blessings are so vast as to eclipse human understanding, and to literally appear like magic.

When the “Perfect Day” finally comes when we at last are so blessed that we may enter into His presence and into His glory, the pattern exists that He asks if there is something that we desire.

1 And it came to pass when Jesus had said these words, he spake unto his disciples, one by one, saying unto them: What is it that ye desire of me, after that I am gone to the Father? (3 Nephi 28:1)

This is the pattern of all visitations. This pattern has repeated itself in every visitation recorded in scripture. Adam, and his generations obviously asked to live long upon the earth. Enoch asked for translation. Noah asked that his family be saved from the floods. Melchizedek (who was probably Noah’s son, Seth) asked for two things, to be translated, and to have the privilege of bestowing the priesthood outside of his family line. Thus, the priesthood became “Melchizedek” rather than patriarchal. Abraham asked for blessings upon his posterity. Moses asked for translation. Samson asked for strength. Solomon asked for wisdom. The Brother of Jared among other things asked for sixteen stones to be lighted. Lehi asked for deliverance for his family. Nephi asked to see the same things his father had seen, and that the record he wrote would be the means of salvation to his distant posterity. The nine Nephite Disciples asked to skip the spirit world and go speedily into Heaven. The Nephite three asked for the greater blessing of translation.

12 And it came to pass that when Jesus had spoken these words, he touched every one of them with his finger save it were the three who were to tarry, and then he departed.

13 And behold, the heavens were opened, and they were caught up into heaven, and saw and heard unspeakable things. (3 Nephi 28:12-13)

Such a promise is held out to those of this dispensation.

8 Yea, even the wonders of eternity shall they know, and things to come will I show them, even the things of many generations.

9 And their wisdom shall be great, and their understanding reach to heaven; and before them the wisdom of the wise shall perish, and the understanding of the prudent shall come to naught.

10 For by my Spirit will I enlighten them, and by my power will I make known unto them the secrets of my will—yea, even those things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor yet entered into the heart of man. (D&C 76:8-10)

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D&C section 76 contains part of the “vision of all” Joseph received and was allowed to record. Observe the tenses of the promises. Notice how glorious are the blessings listed as “*are*”. These blessings occur in *this* life. Once these present-day blessings come to pass, the “*shall*” blessings are promised for the next life.

53 And who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true.

54 They are they who are the church of the Firstborn.

55 They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things—

56 They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory;

57 And are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son.

58 Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God—

59 Wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

Now, the promises pertaining to the eternities:

60 And they shall overcome all things.

61 Wherefore, let no man glory in man, but rather let him glory in God, who shall subdue all enemies under his feet.

62 These shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever.

63 These are they whom he shall bring with him, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven to reign on the earth over his people.

64 These are they who shall have part in the first resurrection.

65 These are they who shall come forth in the resurrection of the just.

Now, back to the present day:

66 These are they who are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all.

67 These are they who have come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of Enoch, and of the Firstborn.

68 These are they whose names are written in heaven, where God and Christ are the judge of all.

69 These are they who are just men made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood.

70 These are they whose bodies are celestial, whose glory is that of the sun, even the glory of God, the highest of all, whose glory the sun of the firmament is written of as being typical. (D&C 76:52-70)

The only way such blessings, such astonishingly, unspeakably glorious things could come upon modern man is if the blessed individual were changed, caught up and translated. Then, all of these “*are*” verses become understandable. Without the principle of Translation, these “*are*” verses become heart-warming platitudes without specific meaning since most of us suspect deep in our hearts that all but a very few mortal men can climb to such glorious climbs as to be considered a “god” (v58) in this life.

Yet, the promises are published for all! All are invited to partake. And, when understood in the light that literally hundreds of thousands have been translated, it makes the above promises present and possible. They *are* priests and kings, and have received of

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his fullness, they *are* priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, and the order of Enoch, and members of that general assembly (which order is that of the Translated Zion). They *are* gods, they *are* just men made perfect, they *are* celestial, and have all power delivered into their hands.

The Prophet Joseph added this understanding to the long list of magnificent blessings.

. . . until the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads, which signifies sealing the blessing upon their heads, meaning the everlasting covenant, thereby making their calling and election sure. When a seal is put upon the father and mother, it secures their posterity, so that they cannot be lost, but will be saved by virtue of the covenant of their father and mother. (Teachings 338)

And thus it is today, even as in days of old.

Visitation and Translation

Again, these grand promises can be realized in no other way than through modern-day translation, which translation is received during the personal interview with God.

The perfect day is the day when we finally enter into His presence.

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;

26 He that is ordained of God and sent forth, the same is appointed to be the greatest, notwithstanding he is the least and the servant of all.

All of the priesthood ordinations that happen in this dispensation happened under the hands of men. When one is ordained of God, the Lord Himself places His hands upon your head. Such an event happens within the veil, and in conjunction with translation. The prototype for this is in the translation of the three Nephites. (3 Nephi 17)

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.

Again, these promises can only be understood as happening after translation.

From the following verse it appears that the change from mortality to translation is subtle – at least at first. The changes would be come very obvious with time when aging stopped, or fire didn't burn you, or all of nature obeyed your words.

15 And whether they were in the body or out of the body, they could not tell; for it did seem unto them like a transfiguration of them, that they were changed from this body of flesh into an immortal state, that they could behold the things of God.

16 But it came to pass that they did again minister upon the face of the earth; nevertheless they did not minister of the things which they had heard and seen, because of the commandment which was given them in heaven.

17 And now, whether they were mortal or immortal, from the day of their transfiguration, I know not; (3 Nephi 28:15-17)

18 But this much I know, according to the record which hath been given—they did go forth upon the face of the land, and did minister unto all the people, uniting as many to the church as would believe in their preaching; baptizing them, and as many as were baptized did receive the Holy Ghost.

19 And they were cast into prison by them who did not belong to the church. And the prisons could not hold them, for they were rent in twain.

20 And they were cast down into the earth; but they did smite the earth with the word of God, insomuch that by his power they were delivered out of the depths of the earth; and therefore they could not dig pits sufficient to hold them.

21 And thrice they were cast into a furnace and received no harm.

22 And twice were they cast into a den of wild beasts; and behold they did play with the beasts as a child with a suckling lamb, and received no harm.

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23 And it came to pass that thus they did go forth among all the people of Nephi, and did preach the gospel of Christ unto all people upon the face of the land; and they were converted unto the Lord, and were united unto the church of Christ, and thus the people of that generation were blessed, according to the word of Jesus. (3 Nephi 28:18-23)

Christ made several statements that can only be understood in light of translation being a true principle available to all.

47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

48 I am that bread of life.

49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

50 This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

The Church of the Firstborn

22 But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. (Hebrews 12:22)

65 These are they who shall come forth in the resurrection of the just.

66 These are they who are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all.

67 These are they who have come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of Enoch, and of the Firstborn. (D&C 76:65-67)

11 Q. What are we to understand by sealing the one hundred and forty-four thousand, out of all the tribes of Israel—twelve thousand out of every tribe?

A. We are to understand that those who are sealed are high priests, ordained unto the holy order of God, to administer the everlasting gospel; for they are they who are ordained out of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, by the angels to whom is given power over the nations of the earth, to bring as many as will come to the church of the Firstborn. (D&C 77:11)

17 Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye are little children, and ye have not as yet understood how great blessings the Father hath in his own hands and prepared for you;

18 And ye cannot bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer, for I will lead you along. The kingdom is yours and the blessings thereof are yours, and the riches of eternity are yours.

19 And he who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious; and the things of this earth shall be added unto him, even an hundred fold, yea, more.

20 Wherefore, do the things which I have commanded you, saith your Redeemer, even the Son Ahman, who prepareth all things before he taketh you;

21 For ye are the church of the Firstborn, and he will take you up in a cloud, and appoint every man his portion. (D&C 78:17-21)

4 This Comforter is the promise which I give unto you of eternal life, even the glory of the celestial kingdom;

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5 Which glory is that of the church of the Firstborn, even of God, the holiest of all, through Jesus Christ his Son— (D&C 88:4-5)

18 The power and authority of the higher, or Melchizedek Priesthood, is to hold the keys of all the spiritual blessings of the church—

19 To have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them, to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, and to enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus the mediator of the new covenant. (D&C 107:18)

Two Interviews at the Veil

Brother of Jared speaks with the Lord, leaves and fulfills his assignments, then returns with stones in his hands (the evidence or tokens of his faithful service), and sees God.

Nephi speaks with the Lord, proves himself faithful in retrieving the plates of Laban, and other tasks, and later sees Him.

Lehi speaks with Lord, faithfully preaches what he was told, and later sees Him.

Appearance of Christ to Nephites, they first hear a voice, struggle to reach Zarahemla during the night, then see him the next day.

In the following quite from the 88th section of the D&C, we find a continuation of the dual nature bestowal of the gift of the second comforter. First, Joseph is given “another comforter” which was the promise of eternal life. Another way of expressing this would be Joseph had his calling and election made sure. This included the “promise”, as opposed to the actual reception of, the glory of the celestial kingdom, which is further described as the same as that of the church of the Firstborn, even God, the father.

3 Wherefore, I now send upon you another Comforter, even upon you my friends, that it may abide in your hearts, even the Holy Spirit of promise; which other Comforter is the same that I promised unto my disciples, as is recorded in the testimony of John.

4 This Comforter is the promise which I give unto you of eternal life, even the glory of the celestial kingdom;

5 Which glory is that of the church of the Firstborn, even of God, the holiest of all, through Jesus Christ his Son (D&C 88:3-5)

What follows in the next sixty-two verses is a brilliant discussion on the Light of Christ. After instructing us that this light is only ours because Christ descended below all things to bring it forth, The light of Christ is equated with the powers of creation, the order of the universe, the light of man’s intellect, the law of the celestial kingdom, the law of Christ, Christ’s voice, Christ’s Spirit, Truth and Light.

In other words, not only is the light of Christ our source of all truth, and all light, but it is quite literally the law we must live to enter the celestial kingdom.

After this exquisite instruction, the Lord instructs Joseph on how to turn the “promise,” of verse four, into the grand fulfillment of verse sixty-eight.

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67 And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things. [Comprehending all things suggests the vision of seeing all things.]

68 Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will. (D&C 88:67-68)

The temple endowment is a great teacher of the divine order of things. The whole of the endowment is a prototype of man's journey from the innocence of pre-mortal life, to the veil. It is worth noting again and again, that nowhere is death mentioned. The symbolism of newly discovered mortality remains prominent through out. When we arrive at the veil we yet display the symbols of mortality. In plainer words, all these things happen during this life.

Drawing from the grand prototype of veil experiences, that of the brother of Jared, we learn that the final events at the veil are two-part. We, like the brother of Jared, , and then speak with the lord without seeing him (through the veil), wherein we learn precious truths, and are instructed in greater blessings that await us. We withdraw to ponder, and to perform. Perhaps many years later, after having been true and faithful to those additional principles and tasks, we approach bearing the results of our labors in our hands. We return to request the greater privilege of entering into the Lord's presence. If our tokens of obedience are unflawed, we are allowed to enter in.

Paul alludes to this same duality in somewhat couched language.

13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. (1 Ephesians 1:13-14)

In other words, Paul says that we are first sealed by the holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest, or assurance, of our inheritance of glory, which promise stands firm until we, as the purchased possessions, are redeemed – which is to return to the presence of God.

Christ is our “Redeemer” because he purchases us, by paying the price of our sins, from the effects of the fall of Adam. When a son or daughter of God is fully redeemed, they will have returned to the presence of God. Those who do not at some point qualify for life in His presence, have not been redeemed.

The Lord himself used this definition of redemption with the brother of Jared.

13 And when he had said these words, behold, the Lord showed himself unto him, and said: Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I show myself unto you. (Ether 3:13)

Faith and Knowledge and Seeing the Lord

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And because of the knowledge of this man he could not be kept from beholding within the veil; and he saw the finger of Jesus, which, when he saw, he fell with fear; for he knew that it was the finger of the Lord; and he had faith no longer, for he knew, nothing doubting.

Wherefore, having this perfect knowledge of God, he could not be kept from within the veil; therefore he saw Jesus; and he did minister unto him. (Ether 3:19-20)

And in that day that they shall exercise faith in me, saith the Lord, even as the brother of Jared did, that they may become sanctified in me, then will I manifest unto them the things which the brother of Jared saw, even to the unfolding unto them all my revelations, saith Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Father of the heavens and of the earth, and all things that in them are. (Ether 4:7)

Calling and Election & Seeing God

It is the privilege of all those who have made their calling and election sure to see God; to talk with him face to face; to commune with him on a personal basis from time to time. These are the ones upon whom the Lord sends the Second Comforter. Their inheritance of exaltation and eternal life is assured, and so it becomes with them here and now in this life as it will be with all exalted beings in the life to come. They become the friends of God and converse with him on a friendly basis as one man speaks to another. (TPM 584)

After a person has faith in Christ, repents of his sins, and is baptized for the remission of his sins and receives the Holy Ghost, (by the laying on of hands), which is the first Comforter, then let him continue to humble himself before God, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and living by every word of God, and the Lord will soon say unto him, Son, thou shalt be exalted. When the Lord has thoroughly proved him, and finds that the man is determined to serve Him at all hazards, then the man will find his calling and his election made sure, then it will be his privilege to receive the other Comforter, which the Lord hath promised the saints. . . .

586"Now what is this other Comforter? It is no more nor less than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; and this is the sum and substance of the whole matter; that when any man obtains this last Comforter, he will have the personage of Jesus Christ to attend him, or appear unto him from time to time, and even he will manifest the Father unto him, and they will take up their abode with him, and the visions of the heavens will be opened unto him, and the Lord will teach him face to face, and he may have a perfect knowledge of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God; and this is the state and place the ancient saints arrived at when they had such glorious visions—Isaiah, Ezekiel, John upon the Isle of Patmos, St. Paul in the three heavens, and all the saints who held communion with the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn." (*Teachings*, pp. 149-51.)