

Preface to Temples

(August 28, 2007)

Frequently get questions about our ministry finances and inquiries on how to contribute.

Let me respond to this with a passage of scripture:

With respect to giving, Paul writes in 2nd Corinthians 9:7 *Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*

What does this say? It says to give as YOU purpose in your heart.

Do not give grudgingly.

Do not give out of necessity. (a lot of ministries and churches will say “we’ve got to pay for this or that, so please give” or “we have this necessity or that.” To me, that is asking people to give out of necessity.

No way.

Paul concludes with a summary of God’s view:

For God loves a cheerful giver.

Our policy is this:

If God compels you to give, give. If not, don’t. God has always taken care of us through others.

Now how do you donate if so inclined?

Two ways:

Go to our website at

<p>www.bornagainmormon.com</p> <p>Click on the “Respond” page then click on support the ministry.</p> <p>OR you can send your offering to:</p> <p>Alathea Ministries, Inc. 314 South Redwood Road Salt Lake City, Utah 84104</p> <p>We appreciate all support – whether it be financial, prayer support, or just telling others about the show. It ALL helps the message get out.</p> <p>Go the way the Lord leads you and no other.</p>	
<p>Last week I told you about a documentary in the making called:</p> <p>A Mormon President.</p> <p>Well a two minute trailer is out on it and we’d like to give you a sneak preview.</p> <p>(SHOW TRAILER)</p> <p>You can watch the trailer and get other information about the film by going to</p> <p>www.amormonpresident.com</p>	<p>All right, let’s have a word of prayer.</p>
<p>We’ve been talking about polygamy for the past number of weeks.</p> <p>Now, staying true to form, we are going to go back to when Joseph began to dabble in polygamy and move forward by examining the “development of doctrines” which served to set Mormonism apart from classic Christianity.</p>	

These doctrines, in my opinion, find their ultimate expression in the LDS temple endowments, rites, rituals, and practices.

For this reason, we're calling this show: Preface to the Temple. Beginning next week, we're going to do a thorough examination of the LDS doctrinal underpinnings of the Temple, the temple itself, and how it serves to literally segregate Mormons today from the Body of Christ.

So let's lay some historical foundation.

Several weeks ago, before we delved in polygamy, we talked about Joseph moving "the recently established Church" from his stomping grounds in and around the burned-over district of New York to Kirtland Ohio.

And we mentioned that when the Smith's arrived in Kirtland and met the charismatic converts of the Kirtland area, Joseph had to sort of tone down a number of "unique spiritual" outbursts the practiced.

He shut these things down as a means to retain control and to save his movement from the same fate other radically charismatic sects met as a result of spiritual chaos.

Paradoxically, Joseph also sought to lead the obedient Saints into a very liberal experience with God.

I'm really excited about sharing this information tonight because it allows us to actually begin to "see" where Joseph's Mormonism begins sort of coagulate, then break off from traditional and acceptable Christian beliefs.

Now, let's be fair:

Aside from the origin fabrications, early Mormonism was really built upon a fairly (*fairly*) sound Christian base.

Yes, Joseph presented an inauthentic book to the world and yes, he maintained to have translated it in through some very questionable means.

But he was young. And he appears to have simply wanted to just present a simplified Christianity to his family and the hopped up religious community around him.

Right or wrong, I think he used his gifts and understanding of the Bible to attempt this very thing.

The Book of Mormon teaches

Jesus Christ the Savior.

Repentance.

Baptism.

Grace.

Spiritual rebirth

The Holy Ghost.

Righteous living.

And a repetitive but believable cycle of blessings and cursings.

As the Book of Mormon cut and pasted heavily from biblical themes, the early message of Mormonism resonated to a Bible believing people.

And the number of converts grew.

Taking a lead from the Bible and Book of Mormon texts, Joseph then began to emphasize "consecrated" living – meaning members should share and share alike because, as Joseph put it, "*one man should not possess that which is above another.*"

Once the foundation was set, other “more advanced” spiritual themes began to dance in the young visionaries mind.

This is nothing new to shamanistic leaders.

In time, an image of a New Jerusalem began to take shape, and visionary plans began to form for the Saints to establish Zion in a place the Lord so indicated.

At the same time, Joseph was looking for a “tremendous endowment of power and light” was to be bestowed upon the Saints – another day of Pentecost, if you will.

Being the Gospel totally restored, another day of Pentecost was a must.

In the revelation that told Joseph to move from New York to Ohio, he said God said:

“I will give you my law, and you shall be endowed with power from on high.”

Power from on high. This was a key.

Where mere Christians spent their days groveling before a God who granted them forgiveness for their sinful hearts and hands, Joseph envisioned a faith where eight year olds are supposed to have come to terms with this divine reprieve and spiritually mature adults were to spend their time as apprentices to Godhood.

While eagerly awaiting this endowment of power, Joseph and his brethren experienced several unique false alarms.

At one meeting, held in 1831, Joseph *“claimed to see God with Jesus Christ at his right hand.”*

This announcement, however, turned into a disaster when Joseph then chose to ordain

a man named Harvey Whitlock with the “high priesthood.”

When he did Whitlock’s skin is said to have turn “ black” and his fingers morphed into “claws.” Then suddenly one Leman Copley, a two hundred pound plus man, was randomly flipped up into the air where he somersaulted then landed back on the bench where he was sitting.

I’m sorry, but the imagery cracks me up.

Anyway, according to John Whitmer’s record, this false alarm moved many of the men attending the meeting straight onto the road of apostasy.

But it was also at this meeting, however, that Joseph ordained five additional men to the “high Priesthood” and brother Lyman Wight ordained eighteen others, which included his ordaining Joseph Smith.

Priesthood has long had a negative connotation to Protestant Christians. I don’t think Joseph Smith appreciated the term either in his early days as it evoked an image of men draped in robes and robbing the poor of their money and land.

But Joseph overcame these attitudes, which were undoubtedly passed onto him by his father and grandfather, by reaching back over Catholic history and into ancient Israel, resurrecting the ancient “priesthood” used by the Jews in their temple rituals and re-established it as necessary to both act in the name of God AND for believers to receive all that was needed for complete salvation.

Now at this point, a “high priesthood” had yet to fully materialize in his visionary head, but like everything else with Joseph, he was

not afraid to revise and reform anything as time moved on.

In fact, in 1831, even though men in the restored Church had been ordained to church offices including elders, teachers, and priests and were given authority accordingly, this was done without – listen to me – without any reference to them having received any sort of priesthood.

In other words, like so many other things in early Mormon history, Joseph retroactively reached back and implemented the need for a “priesthood” once it became part of his evolving theology.

This is why the story of the supposed visitations of Peter, James, and John – which the LDS missionaries teach as fact today – is nothing but a fabrication. But it’s a fabrication that tends to make the whole priesthood thing seem systematic and orderly. So, unwittingly, they humbly and softly share it with people as though it were a historical fact.

Not having yet experienced “a true endowment of power,” Joseph later tied this “high priesthood” into its appearance in the restoration, and said, in revelation, that

“the power of Godliness is manifest; and without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of God is NOT manifest unto men in the flesh.”

In other words, this “priesthood” was going to bring about the endowment of power to the Saints.

I know this is a lot of seemingly unrelated material, but it actually culminates and gets legs with the introduction of the Temple – which is what we are working toward here.

Now, just as a refresher, the Bible is clear that only two people ever held a Melchizedek priesthood – Melchizedek and Jesus Himself, who were both manifestations of God's High Priest.

But Joseph AGAIN had the audacity to say that the high priesthood was bestowed upon "*as many as believed on His name.*"

Do you see what he did?

He reached back into ancient Israel, and he reinstated the need for high priests and a high priesthood where the BIBLE IS CLEAR THAT WE ALL HAVE A FINAL HIGH PRIEST who makes eternal and endless intercession for us before the throne of God.

And His name is Jesus.

Remember my friends, God had high priests working in His temple, who once a year on the day of atonement sacrificed an unblemished lamb, and took it's blood into the holy of Holies where God visited, and offered it up – as a covering for the sins of the people.

When Jesus came and offered Himself up, He became our final, ultimate, and permanent high priest, forever offering up His perfect shed blood and sacrifice for all those who believe on His name.

Hebrews 9:11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained *eternal redemption for us.*

There is no need for the office in any man on this earth today!

And what of the LDS High priests today?

Walk into any LDS ward on earth. What do you find? A group of aged and graying men sitting around in a group, wondering who's going to open their home for this year's progressive dinner party.

It's a stinking mockery.

Jesus is our high priest.

Anyone who calls himself a high priest today is mocking His offering.

I think Joseph had a gift for making even cow manure appear holy.

He was the greatest religious synthesizer, the greatest religion maker the world has ever seen.

But none of it belongs to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Part of a club? I guess.

Part of a religion? Whatever.

A product of a fertile and imaginative mind?

Why not.

But it is NOT part of true Christianity.

Now most of Joseph's revelations up until this time served as functional directives in helping the Saints accomplish Joseph's earthly visions and to prepare them for the "eminent second coming" of the Lord.

Joseph established his Church by effectively utilizing an atmosphere of fervent millennialism.

Then, in 1832, Joseph introduced four revelations which can be found in four sections of the LDS Church's present-day Doctrine and Covenants (sections 76, 84, 88, and 93).

And here is where the fissure between Mormonism being sort of creative Christianity to being a non-Christian culture.

Because all of these new revelations were centered on the "exaltation" of Man.

Or, on Men and Women becoming God.

Now remember, in Christianity, the operative word that describes the ultimate result of the Good News is "salvation" or being saved.

But here in 1832 Joseph begins to dabble with a term which describes something more – "exaltation."

Now just think for a minute about these two words – salvation / exaltation.

Salvation / Exaltation

What is the attitude of a person who knows he or she has been saved from sin, death, and hell?

Then what is the attitude of a person who is believes they are in the process of being exalted to their own throne as a God?

At the heart of it all, these two words summarize the difference between biblical Christianity and Mormonism today.

That is, Christianity is still centered on sinners being saved from hell because God Himself came down and gave His life . . .

. . . and Mormonism, in the end, is focused

on Men and Women going up to become God's themselves.

Now Christians are very well aware that God will indeed, exalt believers in the sense of lifting them up and out of their sinful state as heirs in a mansion in His house.

But Joseph expanded this idea out to the point that faithful men and women could someday be elevated to the position of God's and Goddess's.

Where this is what makes Mormonism so "advanced and enlightened" to true believers today, Christians find the idea absolutely antithetical to the Bible's message of the state of Man and the Sovereignty of God.

LDS writer Richard Bushman states:

"Out of the exaltation revelations came a "new idea" of salvation."

Just what the men needed – a new idea of salvation. But to men out to make themselves a name, to be equal with God, to become a God, the plain old vanilla salvation offered by Jesus is never enough.

Let me conclude with one idea Joseph presented in his "exaltation" revelations.

When Joseph and his one time partner Sidney Rigdon were revising the Bible (we'll talk about this revision in a few weeks) Joseph would seek for "revelations" when he had questions pop up.

At one point he was pondering the resurrection and rewards and wrote:

"It appeared self-evident that if God rewarded every one according to the deeds done in the body, the term 'heaven' as

intended for the Saints eternal home, must include more kingdoms than one."

I guess Jesus words of "*In my Fathers house are many mansions*" just wasn't enough.

With this thought in mind, Joseph had a revelation and in it gave a description of three level of heaven (and one level of non-heaven) and the types of people who existed therein.

I had a conversation with some missionaries not too long ago and they said that Mormonism presents a fuller definition of Grace because it's doctrines allow for heaven for even unbelievers, sinners, and the lost.

Now listen to this.

The Bible teaches heaven and hell. Various mansions, yes, but heaven for those who accept Jesus and hell for those who reject Jesus.

The operative word is Jesus – not man, not works, not whether you're a sinner or not – Jesus.

But Joseph's introduction of three kingdoms automatically destroys Grace and places it upon the individuals own righteousness and merits and works.

So where Mormonism offers a heaven to all, it offers a heaven where God dwells only to the most obedient LDS who have earned it!

But Christianity offers heaven **where God dwells - to all** - based on Jesus and Jesus alone.

Do you see the difference?

And do you see the insidious nature of these supposed revelations that offer “further light and knowledge?”

Joseph taught three kingdoms of glory and one non-kingdom called outer darkness.

He labeled the three kingdoms the telestial, terrestrial, and celestial.

Now the late 18th century, Swedish philosopher Emmanuel Swedenborg appealed to the New England intellectual community with his ideas about three levels of heaven too.

His book was widely read in Joseph’s home state well before the establishment of the Church.

Swedenborg called his kingdoms the “celestial,” the “spiritual” and the “natural” and likened them to the “sun, moon, and stars.”

Sound familiar?

The ideas of a restored priesthood, of an endowment of power, of three kingdoms of glory, and even of polygamy – all became foundational for the physical idea of temples.