Lesson 20

Doctrine and Covenants 76; 131:1–4; 132:19–24; and 137

Doctrine and Covenants 76

The vision that resulted in this section lasted about one and one-half hours. According to one of the twelve people who witnessed Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon receiving the vision, one would ask, “What do I see?” and then describe a scene. The other would then say, “I see the same.” They alternated in this method for the time and wrote the account given in section 76 afterward. How is section 76 an explanation of John 5:29 (see verse 15 of the section)?

**Verse 5:** What does it mean to fear the Lord? To help you think about that, find out the meaning of the Hebrew word translated *fear.*

What does it mean to serve the Lord?

**Verses 6–10:** What is promised those who fear the Lord and serve him? Why do you think that is so?

**Verse 12:** What does it mean to say that Joseph’s and Oliver’s eyes were opened “by the power of the Spirit”?

**Verse 13:** What does it mean to say that the Son was “in the bosom of the Father, even from the beginning”? 
Verse 14: The wording here is slightly unusual: “Of whom we bear record; and the record we bear is the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” The first clause is no surprise. Joseph and Oliver bear record of the Son; they testify of him. But why does the verse say that their testimony is the fulness of the gospel?

Verse 18: About what do you think Joseph and Sidney marveled? What does it mean to say they marveled because it was given to them of the Spirit? What was given to them of the Spirit?

Verse 19: President McKay said, “Meditation is one of the most secret, sacred doors through which we pass into the presence of the Lord.” All of us have stopped to think about something sometimes, but that probably isn’t what President McKay meant. What is meditation? When do we do it? How do we do it?

Verse 12 says that their eyes were opened by the power of the Spirit. This verse says that their eyes were opened when the Lord touched them. What do those two claims suggest? Is there a connection between the Lord touching their eyes to give them this vision and the story of the man born blind from birth (John 9:1–7)?

Verses 20–21: What is the significance of what they see here? Why is even this small part of the whole revelation an important vision in itself?

Verses 22–24: What does it mean to say that this testimony is “last of all?” What is the import of the testimony that Christ lives? Why is that particular part of the message so important? What does it mean to say, at one and the same
time, that Christ is the Only Begotten of the Father and that the inhabitants of the worlds are begotten sons and daughters of God?

The grammar of verse 24 is ambiguous. It can say that (1) the worlds are created by the Savior and that (2) all of us are begotten sons and daughters of God. Or it can say that (1) the worlds are created by the Savior and that (2) the inhabitants of the worlds are begotten sons and daughters through the Savior. What is the difference? How do you think we should understand the verse? Why?

**Verses 25–29:** Why does this section testify not only of Jesus, but also of Satan? Why do you think Satan is called *Lucifer*, meaning “the morning star”? This name is mentioned in only two other places in scripture, Isaiah 14:12 and 2 Nephi 24:12. The Hebrew word in Isaiah (and presumably in 2 Nephi) has a root meaning of “to be clear” or “to be shining,” but it can also be used to mean “to make a show,” “to boast,” “to make a fool of oneself,” “to rave,” and even “to stultify.” How might these different meanings of his name help us understand who Satan is? Might that name tell us something about why the scriptures so consistently warn us against all pride?

**Verse 29:** What does it mean to say that Satan makes war on the Saints? That he encompasses them?

**Verses 30–38, 44–48:** Why do you suppose the Lord gives us so much information about the sons of perdition?

**Verse 31:** What does this verse tell us about those who fought alongside Satan? Why is that important for us to know?
Verse 32: Why are these people called “sons of perdition”? What does perdition mean? Why would it be better for them never to have been born? What would their state have been like had they not been born?

Verse 33: What does it mean to say that the sons of perdition are vessels of wrath? (Compare Romans 9:22.) What is “the wrath of God”? What does it mean to suffer that wrath? What is the punishment of “the devil and his angels”?

Verse 35: What does it mean to deny the Holy Ghost after having received it? (See also Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 138.) When does a person receive the Holy Ghost? Is receiving the Holy Ghost the same as receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost?

Verse 37: What does it mean that the sons of perdition are the only ones on whom the second death shall have any power? Don’t all except those in the celestial kingdom suffer the second death, the second separation from God?

Verse 38: What does it mean that the sons of perdition “shall not be redeemed in the due time of the Lord”?

Verse 39: If “all the rest shall be brought forth by the resurrection of the dead,” does this mean that the sons of perdition will not be resurrected? Does this verse, with verse 32
and Jacob’s teaching in 2 Nephi 9:8–9, help us understand the fate of those people?

**Verses 41–42:** When we speak or testify of the gospel, is this what we mean?

**Verse 50:** Who are the just? Why are they described as *just* rather than something else?

**Verses 51–70, 92–95:** Those going to the celestial kingdom.

Doctrine and Covenants 137 adds to this description:

**Verses 2–4:** What are we to make of this description? What is its point?

**Verses 5–10:** What does the Prophet learn here about the celestial kingdom? When was baptism for the dead revealed?

How might we read these verses independent of section 137? In other words, how would this have been understood when section 76 was received?

**Verses 51–53:** What have those resurrected to celestial glory done?

If baptism is to wash us clean, what does it mean to say that keeping the commandments washes us (verse 42)?

What does “to overcome by faith” mean? What is it that he is speaking of us overcoming? How do we do that by faith?

**Verse 54:** Why are these people said to be “the church of the Firstborn”? Does that name have any particular significance in this section, given other beings who have been spoken of?
Verses 55, 59: The law of consecration requires the Saints to give all things. Here they are given all things. The exchange is all for all, but our all and his all are incomparable. We do well in the exchange, but he does not. Why would he make such an exchange?

Verse 56: What is the import of the prophecy that the just will be kings and queens, priests and priestesses?

Verse 57: What is the significance of the just holding the Melchizedek Priesthood?

Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–24 is relevant:

Verses 19–20: Here is my précis of these verses:

If a man and woman marry in the covenant and their marriage is sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise through someone holding appropriate priesthood authority, and if they abide in the covenant and do not commit murder, then:

They will come forth in the first or second resurrection.
They will inherit thrones, powers, dominions, all heights and depths.
Their marriage will be written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.
They will receive everything that the officiator has promised them.
They will receive exaltation and eternal increase.
They will be gods.
What does it mean to inherit thrones, powers, dominions, all heights and depths?

What does it mean for one’s marriage to be written in the Lamb’s Book of Life?

What is exaltation? What does it mean to say that they will be gods? Verse 20 says, “They shall be gods, because they have no end,” and it uses “they continue” as a parallel to “they have no end.” What does it mean to say that they will be gods because they continue? Continue in what way?

Verse 24 (still in reference to section 132): Why does the Lord use the plural here, lives instead of life?

See also Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4.

What does it mean to say that marriage is an order of the priesthood (verse 2)? Why is the highest degree of the celestial kingdom reserved for the married? The Prophet Joseph Smith said:

Except a man and his wife enter into an everlasting covenant and be married for eternity, while in this probation, by the power and authority of the Holy Priesthood, they will cease to increase when they die; that is, they will not have any children after the resurrection. But those who are married by the power and authority of the priesthood in this life, and continue without committing the sin against the Holy Ghost will continue to increase and have children in the celestial glory. (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pp. 300–301)
How is eternal increase a blessing?

What about the faithful saints who for some reason are unable to be sealed to a husband or wife in this life? Does D&C 124:49 give an answer to this question?

**Verse 58** (returning to section 76): In context, this verse says that because the Saints have received all things and become priests and priestesses and kings and queens, they are gods and the sons and daughters of God. Doesn’t that mean those who haven’t done these things are not his children? How can that be, given the doctrine that we are all his spirit children?

**Verse 60:** What is the significance of the future tense in this verse: “They shall overcome all things” rather than “They have overcome all”?

**Verse 61:** How does this verse follow from verse 60 (and perhaps also the verses before it), as the word wherefore suggests?

**Verse 62:** Why would we want to dwell in the presence of God forever? Why does this verse speak of “his Christ”? Is there another?

**Verses 63–65:** Explain what the Lord is prophesying here.

**Verse 66:** Why does this verse say that they are come to Mount Zion rather than they will come to it? Is this an implicit reference to Hebrews 12:22?

Where do Latter-day Saints believe Mount Zion will be?

**Verse 67 (and 54):** Why is the church of the Firstborn also called the church of Enoch? Aren’t we commanded not to
call the church after the name of someone other than the Savior?

**Verse 69:** In context, what does it mean to be a just person? What does it mean to be “made perfect”? Who makes us perfect? How?

Jesus was killed by Roman soldiers on the orders of a Roman commander hoping to appease the corrupt Jewish leadership (primarily the temple leadership) in Jesus’s day. So why does this say that he shed his own blood?

**Verse 70:** What does it mean to have a celestial body?

What does glory mean in this verse?

**Verses 71–80:** The terrestrial kingdom. Perhaps we should know about the celestial kingdom and who will go there because it is our goal. However, why should we know about the terrestrial and telestial kingdoms, much less the fate of the sons of perdition?

**Verse 72:** To whom does “they are they who died without law” refer? Does this verse teach that all those who do not hear about the law before they die will inherit the terrestrial kingdom? (See D&C 137 and 138.)

**Verse 73:** Since no one was resurrected prior to Christ, everyone who died before his visit to spirit prison was in that prison. Does this mean that everyone who died before him will go to the terrestrial kingdom? If not, why not?

**Verses 74–77:** Grammatically these verses continue to describe those whom Christ visited in spirit prison. However, we take them more broadly. What justifies our doing so?
Verse 74: Does “received not” mean the same as “rejected”?

Verse 75: If these people were blinded by others, how are they responsible for their failure to accept the gospel?

Verse 76: What does it mean to receive of Jesus’s glory but not of his fulness?

Verse 79: To what people does this refer? What does it mean not to be valiant in the testimony of Jesus? How can these people not have been valiant in the testimony of Jesus if they didn’t receive it (see verses 74 and 76)?

Or do these verses perhaps describe various groups of people in the terrestrial kingdom rather than all the attributes the people in that kingdom share?

Verses 81–89, 98–106, 109–12: The telestial kingdom. What does it mean to say that someone receives neither the gospel nor the testimony of Jesus? How could a person receive one without receiving the other? Why does it describe those in the telestial kingdom as having been “thrust down to hell” (verse 84) when verse 81 describes the kingdom as a kingdom of glory? If the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are all members of the Godhead, what does it mean to say that those who receive “of the Holy Spirit” in the telestial kingdom (verse 86) do not receive of “his fulness”? What does it mean to say that they receive “through the ministration of the terrestrial”?

Does verse 98 tell us that there are many different glories in the telestial kingdom? If so, why would that be? Does verse 111 answer that question?
What do verses 99–101 tell us about those in the telestial kingdom? Are these the members of other churches? If so, how did they differ from those in the terrestrial world?

What does it mean to “love and make a lie” (verse 103)?

What might it mean to be a servant of the Father and the Son who cannot enter into their presence (verse 112)?

**Verse 82**: Is not receiving the gospel of Christ the same as not receiving the testimony of Jesus? If they are different, how so?

**Verse 84**: What is this verse saying?

**Verse 85**: What does it mean to be redeemed from the devil?

**Verse 86**: How do the inhabitants of the telestial kingdom receive the Holy Spirit? What does that mean?

**Verse 87**: What does it mean to say that the terrestrial kingdom receives something (the Holy Spirit?) “through the ministration of the celestial”? Explain verses 86–87.

**Verse 88**: What does it mean that the inhabitants of the telestial world will be “heirs of salvation”? Salvation from what? What do the ministering angels have to do with being heirs?

**Verses 89–90**: What understanding does this give us that isn’t had by those outside the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?

**Verse 94**: What does it mean to see as we are seen and to know as we are known? (Compare 1 Corinthians 13.)

**Verses 92–95**: Why does the Lord return to a description of the celestial kingdom?
Verse 95: How can we be equal in power, might, and dominion with the Father?

Verses 96–98: What does it mean to say that each of the kingdoms “is one”?

Verse 98: What does it mean to say that the glories in the telestial world differ from one another like the glory of the stars differ from one another? Is the same thing true of the other kingdoms?

Verses 99–101: What does it mean to say that the inhabitants of the telestial world “are they who are of Paul, and of Apollos, and of Cephas . . . some of one and some of another”? Why is Christ included in the list at the end of verse 100? How could someone claim to be “of Christ” but not have received the gospel? Does the definition of gospel that we see in verses 40–42 answer the last question?

Verse 102: Does this verse begin a new category or does it continue to discuss the inhabitants of the telestial kingdom?

What is the verse referring to when it speaks of the Saints being gathered up into a cloud? When will that occur?

Verses 103–6: Is the list in verse 103 an inclusive list or an example? Who are the sorcerers? Compare Malachi 3:5. Is this list an echo of that one? It may also be an echo of Revelation 21:8. The sorcerers of the Old and New Testaments seem to have been people who not only performed magical acts but also claimed to be incarnations of divine power and, so, competitors to Jesus’s claim to be the only Son of the Father. In our day, to whom might sorcerers refer?
Verse 103: If the telestial kingdom is going to filled with liars, adulterers, and whoremongers, how can it have a glory that surpasses understanding (verse 89)?

Why will their habitation be a mansion (verse 111), and how can they serve the Most High (verse 112)?

What does it mean to say that someone “loves and makes a lie”?

Verses 107–8: To what kingdom does the first clause of the verse refer?

How is the winepress an apt image for Christ’s suffering? Why does he focus here on his suffering rather than on his resurrection?

Verse 109: What does this verse suggest about how many people will go to the telestial kingdom?

Verse 110: Why is it important for us to know that every person in the telestial kingdom will bow to and confess to Christ? Why is it important that they make confession to him?

Verse 111: Why does this verse begin with for? How does that word connect the ideas of this verse to those that preceded it? To whom does the word they at the beginning of the verse refer? To the inhabitants of the terrestrial world? If not, to whom does it refer?

Verse 112: What might we gather from the teaching that those in the telestial kingdom will be “servants of the Most High”? 
Verses 116–18: Who can have the privilege of seeing and understanding the things revealed here? What does it mean to see and know for oneself? How does a person come to that state?

According to these verses, how does the Holy Ghost prepare us for life after the resurrection?