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Revelation to the Prophet Joseph Smith opens a view to  
Old Testament doctrines and practices.

*Joseph Smith the Prophet*, by Del Parson  
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# An Everlasting Covenant: The Old Testament through the Lenses of the Restoration

*Robert L. Millet*

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The Old Testament is a vital part of our scriptural canon. It chronicles the dealings of God with men and women from the time of the Fall through the ministry of Malachi, a period of approximately thirty-five hundred years. The events, personalities, prophecies, and teachings of the Old Testament are foundational for any serious study of the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, and modern revelation. Such concepts as the Fall; the coming of a Messiah to atone for the sins of the world; the establishment of covenants; the scattering, gathering, and destiny of the house of Israel; the Ten Commandments and the laws of equity and justice upon which our Judeo-Christian ethic is built; the infinite mercy, patience, and constancy of God; and the unique role of temples—these are but a few of the matters introduced in the Old Testament, matters that constitute central features of our worship and way of life today.

## **Our Challenge**

When God called Joseph Smith to restore the fulness of the gospel to the earth, He did not confine Himself to the teachings and practices of the New Testament; rather, the Restoration entailed a bringing together of knowledge and power that date to the days of Eden. Thus, when we speak of “the primitive church” (Articles of Faith 1:6) and look beyond its organization, we speak of those Christian doctrines, covenants, and ordinances that came before the mortal days of Jesus the Messiah and that existed from the beginning of time.

If, then, the Old Testament is so important, so fundamental to our faith, why is it the least understood of all our scriptural records? Why is it quoted the least? Why do we limit ourselves to a selected group of “Bible stories” and fail to expand our understanding of the history, culture, languages, and challenges of a people who are, in fact, our own ancestors? For one thing, many of the most important teachings of the Old Testament are surrounded by cultures and customs that are almost completely foreign to people in the twenty-first century. Because few of us grasp the language, literary patterns, cultural values, and ideals of men and women in the days of Abraham, for example, we find some of the events and practices to be primitive, crude, harsh, distasteful, and thus awkward to contemplate.

In addition, we work under another disadvantage: many plain and precious truths, including many covenants of the Lord, have been “taken away” or “kept back” by designing persons through the ages who sought to “blind the eyes and harden the hearts of the children of men,” thus causing “an exceedingly great many [to] stumble, yea, insomuch that Satan hath great power over them” (1 Nephi 13:20–32; see also Moses 1:40–41).<sup>1</sup> And so the challenge of comprehending the message of the Bible, and especially the Old Testament, is not just a lack of education in ancient Near Eastern things but also the confusion and faulty contextualization that come when significant truths are removed from sacred records: we not only miss out on the truths that are removed but also struggle to make sense of what remains.

### **Our Charge**

Many years ago while serving as a bishop, I sat at the back of a gospel doctrine class. The instructor, a very capable and inspiring teacher, was leading a discussion on the life and work of Father Abraham. The information dispensed was excellent, the doctrine solid, and the class members very much involved. A number of questions were raised during the class period, some of which were answered while others were not. When class was over, I walked to the front of the room and commended the instructor for an outstanding lesson. I then observed that several of the questions that had gone unanswered could have been handled quite easily by turning to the book of Abraham in the Pearl of Great Price. The teacher’s response startled me: “I know that, and I was aware of what the book of Abraham has to say on the matter. But, Bishop, we’re studying the Old Testament, not the Pearl of Great Price.” I answered that, in fact, we were studying the gospel of Jesus Christ, using the Old Testament as our guide that particular year. I

pointed out further that it is incumbent upon us as gospel teachers to turn to other books of scripture or prophetic commentary whenever they can supplement or clarify a given scriptural passage. In doing so, we follow the pattern of the Master Teacher, who “expounded all the scriptures in one” (3 Nephi 23:14; see also Luke 24:27)—that is, He demonstrated how all of holy writ bears a united witness of Him.

Not long after joining the religion faculty at BYU, I attended an Old Testament in-service meeting. The topic of the day was the place of temples among the ancient Israelites. For about forty-five minutes, we talked about animal sacrifice and purification rites. Just before the meeting ended, my colleague, Joseph McConkie, spoke up and suggested that many of the same covenants and ordinances associated with temple work in our day were available anciently and that we would be wise to study modern scripture to better understand ancient scripture. “How do you know that?” the discussion leader inquired. “Because the scriptures say so,” Brother McConkie responded. He then turned to verses in section 124 of the Doctrine and Covenants and to an explanation of facsimile 2 in the book of Abraham. The group leader then said; “I think we need to be careful in this approach to the Old Testament. Aren’t you reading the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price into the Old Testament?” Brother McConkie replied, “I certainly am! Isn’t that what we are supposed to do?”

Perhaps there is some value in reading the Old Testament on its own, without scriptural or prophetic support or clarification, to “let the text speak for itself,” as some folks say. That’s just fine, as long as the text does, in fact, have something to say. There are those, for example, who refuse to read into the biblical record what we know from modern revelation, who feel that to do so is to compromise the integrity or unique contribution of the Bible itself. Let me suggest an analogy. If you were eager to locate a valuable site, should you utilize a map that is deficient in detail or inaccurate in layout simply because the map has been in the family for generations and is highly prized? Should you choose to ignore the precious information to be had on a more reliable or complete map if such were made available? Of course the whole matter is related to the question of whether the traveler is sincerely desirous of reaching a particular destination: maps have real value only to the degree that they do, in fact, guide us to a desired location. To change analogies, would a scholar in any discipline choose to maintain a position or defend a point of view when subsequent but available research had shed further (and perhaps clarifying) information on the subject? To do so would represent at best naïveté and at worst shoddy and

irresponsible scholarship. So it is with the Bible and modern scripture; the latter is a supplementary doctrinal guide and witness.

I am prone to take seriously the following divine directives given through the head of our dispensation:

“This generation shall have my word through you” (D&C 5:10).

“Lift up your heart and rejoice, for the hour of your mission [Thomas B. Marsh] is come; and your tongue shall be loosed, and you shall declare glad tidings of great joy unto this generation.

*“You shall declare the things which have been revealed to my servant, Joseph Smith, Jun.”* (D&C 31:3–4; emphasis added).

“Again I say, hearken ye elders of my church, whom I have appointed: Ye are not sent forth to be taught, *but to teach the children of men the things which I have put into your hands by the power of my Spirit*” (D&C 43:15; emphasis added).

“And my servant Leman [Copley] shall be ordained to this work [to carry the message of the Restoration to the Shakers], *that he may reason with them [the Shakers], not according to that which he has received of them, but according to that which shall be taught him by you my servants* [Sidney Rigdon and Parley P. Pratt]; and by so doing I will bless him, otherwise he shall not prosper” (D&C 49:4; emphasis added).

As gospel teachers, we should be sobered by the fact—a fact that President Ezra Taft Benson reminded us of frequently—that the whole Church will remain under condemnation, scourge, and judgment unless and until we repent of our shortsightedness, ingratitude, and vanity and utilize the Book of Mormon and modern revelation in our study and teaching: “For I will forgive you of your sins with this commandment—that you remain steadfast in your minds in solemnity and the spirit of prayer, *in bearing testimony to all the world of those things which are communicated unto you*” (D&C 84:61; emphasis added; see also 84:54–60).

### Principles to Guide Our Study

Let us turn our attention now to a few of those principles, doctrines, and eternal concepts that ought to direct and empower our study of the Old Testament. Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation, the study of how we come to understanding. Let us construct a hermeneutic, what we might call a Restoration hermeneutic, based upon what we learn from the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible, and doctrinal teachings of Joseph Smith and his successors. The following are but a few of

those principles that allow us to make sense of the events and message of the Old Testament. We will, of necessity, be brief.

1. God has revealed Himself—the nature and kind of being He is—since the beginning of time. Earth’s first inhabitants came to know “that there is a God in heaven, who is infinite and eternal, from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God, the framer of heaven and earth, and all things which are in them; and that he created man, male and female, after his own image and in his own likeness, created he them; and gave unto them commandments that they should love and serve him, the only living and true God, and that he should be the only being whom they should worship” (D&C 20:17–19). More specifically, “In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; in the image of his own body, male and female, created he them” (Moses 6:8–9).

2. As a part of the revelation of God to man, it was known, from the beginning, that there is a Godhead composed of three personages and, more specifically, that the Father and the Son are separate and distinct. This knowledge, as you know, is absent from the Old Testament, no doubt one of the plain and precious truths taken away or kept back before the Bible was compiled. In the prayer of Zenos, quoted by Alma, we find these words: “And thou didst hear me because of mine afflictions and my sincerity; and *it is because of thy Son that thou hast been thus merciful unto me*, therefore I will cry unto thee in all mine afflictions, for in thee is my joy; *for thou hast turned thy judgments away from me, because of thy Son*” (Alma 33:11; emphasis added). Now note the prayer of Zenock, another brass-plates prophet: “Thou art angry, O Lord, with this people, because *they will not understand thy mercies which thou hast bestowed upon them because of thy Son*” (Alma 33:16; emphasis added). In the first chapter of the book of Moses, which is the beginning of the Prophet Joseph’s inspired translation of the Bible, we find Moses’s first effort to cast out Satan. “Get thee hence, Satan,” the lawgiver stated; “deceive me not; for God said unto me: *Thou art after the similitude of mine Only Begotten*. And he also gave me commandments when he called unto me out of the burning bush, saying: *Call upon God in the name of mine Only Begotten*, and worship me” (Moses 1:16–17; emphasis added). The ancients were instructed plainly to worship the Father in the name of the Son (see 2 Nephi 25:16; Jacob 4:5; 7:11). In addition, they were taught that salvation was in Christ, the promised Messiah, and that His atoning blood and Resurrection would bring to pass the redemption of those who choose to come unto Him (see Moses 6:51–68; 7:45–47; 8:19, 23–24).

3. The Father's plan of salvation, the plan of redemption, the great plan of happiness, was first revealed on this earth to Adam and Eve. Joseph Smith explained to the School of the Prophets that "after man was created, he was not left without intelligence or understanding, to wander in darkness and spend an existence in ignorance and doubt (on the great and important point which effected his happiness) as to the real fact by whom he was created, or unto whom he was amenable for his conduct. God conversed with him face to face. In his presence he was permitted to stand, and from his own mouth he was permitted to receive instruction. He heard his voice, walked before him and gazed upon his glory, while intelligence burst upon his understanding, and enabled him to give names to the vast assemblage of his Maker's works."<sup>2</sup>

4. Adam, Eve, and their posterity learned the truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ from God and angels and by the power of the Holy Ghost (see Moses 5:58). Christian prophets have taught Christian doctrines and administered Christian ordinances from the very beginning (see Moses 6:51–68). Those ordinances or sacraments of salvation have been and are and will be forever the same. Again, the Prophet Joseph Smith explained:

It is said that Abel himself obtained witness that he was righteous [Hebrews 11:4]. Then certainly God spoke to him: indeed, it is said that God talked with him; and if He did, would He not, seeing that Abel was righteous, deliver to him the whole plan of the Gospel? And is not the Gospel the news of the redemption? How could Abel offer a sacrifice and look forward with faith on the Son of God for a remission of his sins, and not understand the Gospel? . . . And if Abel was taught of the coming of the Son of God, was he not taught also of His ordinances? We all admit that the Gospel has ordinances, and if so, had it not always ordinances, and were not its ordinances always the same?<sup>3</sup>

The Prophet went on to say: "It will be noticed that according to Paul, (see Galatians 3:8) the Gospel was preached to Abraham. We would like to be informed in what name the Gospel was then preached, whether it was in the name of Christ or some other name. If in any other name, was it the Gospel? And if it was the Gospel, and that preached in the name of Christ, had it any ordinances? If not, was it the Gospel?"<sup>4</sup> Further: "Now taking it for granted that the scriptures say what they mean, and mean what they say, we have sufficient grounds to go on and prove from the Bible that the gospel has always been the same; the ordinances to fulfill its requirements, the same, and the officers to officiate, the same; and the signs and fruits resulting from the promises, the same; therefore, as Noah was a preacher of righteousness

he must have been baptized and ordained to the priesthood by the laying on of the hands, etc.”<sup>5</sup> In short, “ordinances instituted in the heavens before the foundation of the world, in the priesthood, for the salvation of men, are not to be altered or changed. All must be saved on the same principles.”<sup>6</sup> All of the ordinances are necessary for anyone to receive a fulness of salvation.<sup>7</sup>

5. The Church of Jesus Christ has been on the earth from the beginning of time. We are told that the higher priesthood was known early on as the Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God. “But out of respect or reverence to the name of the Supreme Being, to avoid the too frequent repetition of his name, they, the church, in ancient days, called that priesthood after Melchizedek, or the Melchizedek Priesthood” (D&C 107:4). In a 1984 address, Elder Bruce R. McConkie asked: “Was there a Church anciently, and, if so, how was it organized and regulated? There was not so much as the twinkling of an eye during the whole so-called pre-Christian Era when the Church of Jesus Christ was not on the earth, organized basically in the same way it now is. Melchizedek belonged to the Church; Laban was a member; so also was Lehi, long before he left Jerusalem.”<sup>8</sup>

6. Despite periods of apostasy or falling away, the holy priesthood has always been on the earth. Again from Elder McConkie: “Did they have the fulness of the everlasting gospel at all times? Yes. There was not a period of ten minutes from the days of Adam to the appearing of the Lord Jesus in the land Bountiful when the gospel—as we have it, in its eternal fulness—was not on earth. Do not let the fact that the performances of the Mosaic law were administered by the Aaronic Priesthood confuse you on this matter. Where the Melchizedek Priesthood is, there is the fulness of the gospel; and all the prophets held the Melchizedek Priesthood.”<sup>9</sup> More specifically, President Joseph Fielding Smith noted that the Lord “has kept authorized servants on the earth bearing the priesthood from the days of Adam to the present time; in fact, there has never been a moment from the beginning that there were not men on the earth holding the Holy Priesthood. Even in the days of apostasy, and apostasy has occurred several times, the Lord never surrendered this earth and permitted Satan to have complete control. Even when the great apostasy occurred following the death of the Savior’s apostles, our Father in Heaven held control and had duly authorized servants on the earth to direct his work and to check, to some extent at least, the ravages and corruption of the evil powers. These servants were not permitted to organize the Church nor to officiate in the ordinances of

the gospel, but they did check the advances of evil as far as the Lord deemed it necessary.”<sup>10</sup>

7. The kingdom of God is “a house of order,” not “a house of confusion” (D&C 132:8). Thus, knowing what we know about what it takes to build up and establish that kingdom on earth, we would conclude the following: (*a*) all of those former-day Saints who were a part of the Church of Jesus Christ entered the covenant gospel through the exercise of faith in the Lord, repentance of sin, baptism by immersion by one holding proper authority, and the reception of the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands; (*b*) those who functioned in the priestly or prophetic office were properly ordained to the priesthood and called by a legal administrator; and (*c*) whenever the kingdom was here and prophets walked the earth, the keys of the kingdom—the directing power, the right of presidency—were held by someone on earth. Otherwise, there would be chaos—no way of overseeing the performance of ordinances and the proper proclamation of the gospel. Thus, in Lehi’s day, we would suppose that there was a Church organization of some sort and that his prophetic contemporaries worked together under the direction of one holding the fulness of the keys of the priesthood. In the words of a modern Apostle:

There was always apostolic power. The Melchizedek Priesthood always directed the course of the Aaronic Priesthood. All of the prophets held a position in the hierarchy of the day. Celestial marriage has always existed. Indeed, such is the heart and core of the Abrahamic covenant. Elias and Elijah came [to the Kirtland Temple in April 1836] to restore this ancient order and to give the sealing power, which gives it eternal efficacy.

People ask: Did they have the gift of the Holy Ghost before the day of Pentecost? As the Lord lives they were so endowed; such is part of the gospel; and those so gifted wrought miracles and sought and obtained a city whose builder and maker is God.<sup>11</sup>

8. The fulness of the blessings of the everlasting gospel, including eternal marriage, were available in temples built anciently. In the words of the choice seer, “The order of the house of God has been, and ever will be, the same, even after Christ comes; and after the termination of the thousand years it will be the same; and we shall finally enter into the celestial kingdom of God, and enjoy it forever.”<sup>12</sup>

From our present Old Testament, all we really know about the ordinances of the temple is that the priests and Levites officiated in sacrificial offerings. It is to modern revelation that we turn to learn otherwise. From the Doctrine and Covenants, we learn that the keys

associated with eternal marriage and the sealing of families were held by ancient prophets (see D&C 132:39). At the time the early Saints of this dispensation were commanded to construct a temple in Nauvoo, the Lord asked: “How shall your washings be acceptable unto me, except ye perform them in a house which you have built to my name? For, for this cause I commanded Moses that he should build a tabernacle, that they should bear it with them in the wilderness, and to build a house in the land of promise, *that those ordinances might be revealed which had been hid from before the world was.*” The Savior went on to speak of washings, anointings, baptisms for the dead, and other oracles and conversations within His holy house, “*which my people are always commanded to build unto my holy name*” (D&C 124:37–39; emphasis added). In a similar vein, the explanation of figure 3 in facsimile 2 in the book of Abraham speaks of “God, sitting upon his throne, clothed with power and authority; with a crown of eternal light upon his head; representing also the grand Key-words of the Holy Priesthood, as revealed to Adam in the Garden of Eden, as also to Seth, Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, and all to whom the Priesthood was revealed.”

At the time that Joseph Smith first introduced the temple endowment in Nauvoo in May 1842, he spoke of “instructing them in the principles and order of the Priesthood, attending to washings, anointings, endowments and the communication of keys pertaining to the Aaronic Priesthood, and so on to the highest order of the Melchizedek Priesthood, setting forth the order pertaining to the Ancient of Days, and all those plans and principles by which any one is enabled to secure the fullness of those blessings which have been prepared for the Church of the Firstborn, and come up and abide in the presence of the Eloheim in the eternal worlds.” In short, “in this council was instituted the ancient order of things for the first time in these last days.”<sup>13</sup>

9. From the days of Adam, the Melchizedek Priesthood was administered under the patriarchal order. Elder McConkie wrote:

Adam, our father, the first man, is the presiding high priest over the earth for all ages. The government the Lord gave him was patriarchal, and from the expulsion from Eden to the cleansing of the earth by water in the day of Noah, the righteous portion of mankind were blessed and governed by a patriarchal theocracy.

This theocratic system, patterned after the order and system that prevailed in heaven, was the government of God. He himself though dwelling in heaven, was the Lawgiver, Judge, and King. He gave direction in all things both civil and ecclesiastical; there was no separation of church and state as we know it. All governmental affairs were directed,

controlled, and regulated from on high. The Lord's legal administrators on earth served by virtue of their callings and ordinations in the Holy Priesthood and as they were guided by the power of the Holy Ghost.<sup>14</sup>

And so it was that Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, and Noah presided over the kingdom of God during their respective times on earth. From Noah to Abraham, an additional ten generations, righteous men were called upon to officiate in the Lord's theocratic system. They were high priests. They were presiding patriarchs. Others held the priesthood, but these men held the keys, the directing power over the affairs of God on earth.<sup>15</sup> It was a family order, an order of family government presided over by a father and a mother. Yes, in the ultimate sense, the father was responsible and accountable for the family. "Of necessity," the revelations affirm, "there are presidents, or presiding officers" within God's program (D&C 107:21). Knowing what we know, however, about the Lord's system of priesthood government, we must assume that in ancient times husbands and wives counseled together on the government of the family.

Few details are given in the Bible or the Book of Mormon concerning the lives or contributions of the great matriarchs. The scriptural records were kept by men and focused on certain fundamental doctrinal messages or precepts. But it is important for us to know that both Adam and Eve called on the name of the Lord, heard the voice of the Lord, received commandments to offer animal sacrifices, and obeyed the will of the Almighty (see Moses 5:1–8). "Adam held the priesthood," Elder Russell M. Nelson observed, "and Eve served in matriarchal partnership with the patriarchal priesthood."<sup>16</sup> Adam did not receive the fulness of the blessings of the priesthood alone, nor will any man; Eve was by his side as an intelligent, contributing, and equal partner. We enter the patriarchal order through marriage in the house of the Lord, the new and everlasting covenant of marriage (see D&C 131:1–4). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob may have qualified for exaltation in the highest heaven, but they did not so achieve on their own; they stand now, with their eternal companions, not as angels but as gods and goddesses (see D&C 132:37). The patriarchal order is a partnership.

Elder McConkie said, "It is an eternal principle—the man and the woman are not alone: neither is the man without the woman, nor the woman without the man in the Lord. Women are appointed, Rebekah-like, to be guides and lights in righteousness in the family unit, and to engineer and arrange so that things are done in the way that will result in the salvation of more of our Father's children."<sup>17</sup>

10. The patriarchal order continued in the Old World until the days of Moses, when the children of Israel proved unworthy of the higher priesthood and unwilling to receive its highest privilege—entering the presence of Jehovah (see Exodus 20:19; D&C 84:19–27). When Moses was translated and taken from the midst of ancient Israel, the keys of the Melchizedek Priesthood, including the right to pass that divine authority from father to son, were taken also. The fulness of the everlasting gospel was taken from the generality of the people. The preparatory gospel, with its governing priesthood, the Aaronic Priesthood, was then given to the people (see Joseph Smith Translation, Exodus 34:1–2; Joseph Smith Translation, Deuteronomy 10:1–2). There were, of course, people living on the earth after this time who held the Melchizedek Priesthood—including the sons of Aaron, the seventy elders of Israel, and the prophets who were called thereafter—but the keys, the right of presidency, including the right to confer the higher priesthood, were taken from the generality of the people. It was not until the mortal ministry of Christ that the keys of the higher priesthood were once again delivered to men on earth.<sup>18</sup>

11. The Abrahamic covenant is no more or less than the gospel covenant, the new and everlasting covenant. It is the very same covenant that God initiated with Adam and Enoch and Noah and all the antediluvians. It is a two-way promise between God and His chosen people. On our part, we agree to come unto Christ, receive the covenants and ordinances of salvation, and separate ourselves from worldliness. “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant,” Jehovah declared, “then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation” (Exodus 19:5–6). A millennium and a half later, the Apostle Peter reminded the Saints scattered abroad that “as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation [conduct]; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15–16; see also Leviticus 11:44). To do this, it has always been necessary for those who aspired after holiness to “put [a] difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean” (Leviticus 10:10).

On His part, God promises the faithful lineal descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—as well as all who enter the same covenant in the same manner (see 2 Nephi 30:1–2)—to make available the gospel, the priesthood, eternal life (including the promise that our posterity will be as innumerable as the stars of the heavens or the sands upon the seashore), and a land of inheritance (see Genesis 13, 15, 17; Abraham

2:8–11, 19). These are known as the “promises made to the fathers” (D&C 2:2). The chosen seed is scattered whenever they reject the true Messiah and His gospel, scattered as much to their identity as they are to their geography. On the other hand, they are gathered whenever they “come to the knowledge of their Redeemer and the very points of his doctrine, that they may know how to come unto him and be saved” (1 Nephi 15:14; see also 2 Nephi 6:10–11; 10:3–7). They are “restored to the true church and fold of God”; thereafter, they are “gathered home to the lands of their inheritance” (2 Nephi 9:2). Thus, the people of Israel are gathered first spiritually; they are gathered to a person, Jesus Christ. Second, they are gathered temporally, either to certain lands of inheritance or to the congregations of the faithful in the nations where they reside.

12. Because we know that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (see Revelation 19:10), we also realize that the principal duty of every prophet is to stand as a living oracle, a covenant spokesman, a dynamic witness of Jehovah, who is the Lord Jesus Christ. The prophets who remained faithful to their supernal charge (see Mosiah 15:13) bore witness of the coming of the Messiah, for in the words of Peter, “to him give all the prophets witness” (Acts 10:43; see also Jacob 7:11). The prophets all rejoiced to see His day; they saw it and were glad (see John 8:56; Helaman 8:17; Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 15:11–12). They knew and understood that He who would leave His divine throne and condescend was indeed the same Being known in Old Testament times as “the Lord Omnipotent who reigneth, who was, and is from all eternity to all eternity, [who should] come down from heaven among the children of men, and . . . dwell in a tabernacle of clay” (Mosiah 3:5).

The God of justice and the God of mercy were one and the same. The God of the Old Testament came to earth as the Suffering Servant of the New Testament. “And the God of our fathers,” wrote Nephi, “the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, yieldeth himself, according to the words of the angel, as a man, into the hands of wicked men, to be lifted up . . . and to be crucified . . . and to be buried in a sepulchre” (1 Nephi 19:10).

## Conclusion

Enoch “beheld the spirits that God had created; and he beheld also things which were not visible to the natural eye; and from thenceforth came the saying abroad in the land: A seer hath the Lord raised up unto his people” (Moses 6:36). Ammon explained to King Limhi that “a

seer can know of things which are past, and also of things which are to come” (Mosiah 8:17). It just may be, for example, that Joseph Smith the seer revealed more to us concerning the past than he did concerning the future.

The priceless gems that he delivered to us concerning the ancients, including the fact that they “knew of Christ, and . . . had a hope of his glory many hundred years before his coming” (Jacob 4:4), links us to the ancients, the former-day Saints. We have the gospel. So did they. We have the holy priesthood, and so did they. We enjoy the gift and gifts of the Holy Ghost, and so did they. We forge forever families through the ordinances of the temple, and so did they. If we exercise a lively hope in Christ and endure faithfully to the end, we shall enjoy the sweet fruits of exaltation in the highest degree of the celestial kingdom, and so shall they. Truly, the gospel of God is a new and an everlasting covenant; its teachings and principles are timely, and its reach and transcendent blessings are timeless. **RE**

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## Notes

1. See Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 9–10, 61, 327.
2. Joseph Smith, *Lectures on Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 2:18.
3. Smith, *Teachings*, 59.
4. Smith, *Teachings*, 60.
5. Smith, *Teachings*, 264; see also 98, 168–69.
6. Smith, *Teachings*, 308.
7. See Smith, *Teachings*, 309, 331, 362.
8. Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrines of the Restoration*, ed. Mark L. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1989), 292.
9. McConkie, *Doctrines of the Restoration*, 292.
10. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Answers to Gospel Questions* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957–66), 2:45.
11. McConkie, *Doctrines of the Restoration*, 293.
12. Smith, *Teachings*, 91.
13. Smith, *Teachings*, 237.
14. Bruce R. McConkie, *A New Witness for the Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 35.
15. See Joseph Fielding Smith, *The Way to Perfection* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1970), 72–73.
16. Russell M. Nelson, *The Power within Us* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 109.
17. Bruce R. McConkie, “Our Sisters from the Beginning,” *Ensign*, January 1979, 63.
18. See Smith, *Teachings*, 181, 274.