

D&C#09 "The Only True and Living Church"

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I. Introduction

The Peter Whitmer, Sr. home in Fayette, New York, was a simple home twenty feet by thirty feet with two rooms on the main floor, with two more in the loft above. It was approximately 25-30 miles from the Joseph Smith, Sr. home in Palmyra, where Joseph had received his first vision. Approximately ten years had passed since that initial event. Many events had occurred during this ten year span of time. They included the visit of the angel Moroni, the translation of the ancient record, and the restoration of both the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood. The Book of Mormon had been published and the priesthood authority restored. All that had occurred was in preparation for an event that had been prophesied by ancient prophets.

Isaiah 29:13-14

13 Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precepts of men;

14 Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.

Jeremiah 31:31-33

31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD.

33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Daniel 2:44-45

44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it break in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

The Church Jesus Christ had organized in the meridian of time was, "built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles" (Ephesians 2:20), had been taken from the earth, and, according to Daniel, was going to be restored in these latter days. The place was the home of Peter Whitmer, Sr. The date was April 6, 1830.

On this day, many had gathered. They had heard the message of the restoration, read the Book of Mormon, and felt the spirit. It was their desire to be present on this special occasion, so they came. Those who had come from Colesville, had traveled 100 miles to be in attendance.

Gordon B. Hinckley states,

"This day of organization was, in effect, a day of commencement, the graduation of Joseph Smith from ten years

of remarkable schooling. It had begun with the incomparable vision in the grove in the spring of 1820, when the Father and Son appeared to the fourteen-year-old boy. It had continued with the tutoring from Moroni, with both warnings and instructions given on multiple occasions. Then there was the translation of the ancient record, and the inspiration, the knowledge, and the revelation that came from that experience. There was the bestowal of divine authority, the ancient priesthood again conferred upon men by those who were its rightful possessors--John the Baptist in the case of the Aaronic Priesthood, and Peter, James, and John in the case of the Melchizedek. There were revelations, a number of them, in which the voice of God was heard again, and the channel of communication opened between man and the Creator. All of these were preliminary to that historic April 6, 1830." ("150-Year Drama: A Personal View of Our History," in *Ensign*, April 1980, 11-12).

We, now 186 years later, look back with deepest gratitude to those early Saints who assembled that designated day in April, to mark the beginning of the Church of Jesus Christ once more being established upon the earth. The promise was that it would never again be taken from the earth. How blessed we are to be the benefactors of their sacrifices. May we also be faithful to our testimonies.

II. The Church is Organized in the Latter Days

Doctrine and Covenants 20:1

1 The rise of the Church of Christ in these last days, being one thousand eight hundred and thirty years since the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the flesh, it being regularly organized and established agreeable to the laws of our country, by the will and commandments of God, in the fourth month, and the sixth day of the month which is called April--

April 6, 1830 was designated by the Lord to be the date that His Church was to be organized upon the earth. It infers that this date marked the date of His birth in the flesh. How appropriate that the date the Church was to be organized was designated by the Lord Himself through His prophet.

Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl state,

"The Church was organized on the 6th of April, 1830, in the home of Peter Whitmer, Sr., at Fayette, New York. After prayer the Prophet asked those present if they were willing to accept him and Oliver Cowdery as teachers and to organize the Church. The vote was affirmative and unanimous. Then the Prophet ordained Oliver Cowdery an Elder, where after Oliver ordained him to the same office. They had received the Melchizedek Priesthood under the hands of Peter, James, and John, out of which all the offices of the Church come. On this day of the organization, they complied with the instruction given to them by John the Baptist, and ordained each other to the office of Elder by and with the consent of their brethren. After the ordination, they partook of the Sacrament, and they confirmed all the members present. The Spirit of the Lord fell upon the little group of Saints. Some prophesied; all were filled with joy. [In accordance with the laws of the State of New York, a church must have at least six members], the six original members of the Church were, Joseph Smith, Jr., Hyrum Smith, Samuel H. Smith, Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, Jr., and David Whitmer..." (*Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1951, [Revised Edition 1962], 112-113).

*What was the name of the Church when it was organized?

Susan Easton Black states,

"The Church had been known as the Church of Christ from 1830 to 1834 (see D&C 20:1), and the Church of the Latter-Day Saints from 1834 to 1838. The Church is commonly but unofficially referred to as the Mormon Church and its members as Mormons because of their belief in the Book of Mormon. The name of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was given by the Lord in revelation to Joseph Smith on April 26, 1838 (see D&C 115:4)." (*400 Questions & Answers About the Doctrine and Covenants*. American Fork, Utah: Covenant Communications Inc., 2011, 75).

Doctrine and Covenants 115:4

**4 For thus shall my church be called in the last days,
even The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.**

*Why is it important that the Lord's Church be called by His name?

B/M, 3 Nephi 27:7-8

7 Therefore, whatsoever ye shall do, ye shall do it in my name; therefore ye shall call the church in my name; and ye shall call upon the Father in my name that he will bless the church for my sake.

8 And how be it my church save it be called in my name? For if a church be called in Moses' name then it be Moses' church; or if it be called in the name of a man then it be the church of a man; but if it be called in my name then it is my church, if it so be that they are built upon my gospel.

As noted the name *Mormon* is a nickname given to the Church due to our belief in the Book of Mormon. We prefer, however, to call our Church by its complete name to further emphasize our belief in the Savior, Jesus Christ.

III. The Lord Commands Church Members to Follow the Prophet

Immediately following the opening prayer, Joseph proposed that he and Oliver be sustained by common consent as the presiding officers of the Church. The Lord gave a revelation instructing members of the Church to follow Joseph Smith as the prophet.

Doctrine and Covenants 21:1, 4-5

1 Behold, there shall a record kept among you; and in it thou [Joseph Smith] shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, an elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of your Lord Jesus Christ.

4 Wherefore, meaning the church, thou shalt give heed unto all his [Joseph Smith] words and commandments which he shall give unto you as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;

5 For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.

In the 2013 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, the heading for Section 21 states, "Revelation given to Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Fayette, New York, April 6, 1830.

This revelation was given at the organization of the Church, on the date named, in the home of Peter Whitmer, Sr. Six men, who had previously been baptized, participated. By unanimous vote, these persons expressed their desire and determination to organize, according to the commandment of God (see section 20). They also voted to accept and sustain Joseph Smith, Jr. and Oliver Cowdery as the presiding officers of the Church..." (Heading: Section 21. *The Doctrine and Covenants*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981, [2013], 40).

Richard O. Cowan states,

"Joseph Smith's titles listed in verse 1 describe various functions of the president of the Church. A *seer* sees spiritually and is qualified to use the Urim and Thummim (B/M, Mosiah 8:13-16); *translator* focuses on Joseph's role in bringing forth ancient scriptures; a *prophet* is one who speaks for God; an *apostle* is a 'special witness' for Christ (D&C 107:23); *elder* is the title of one bearing the Melchizedek Priesthood." (*The Doctrine and Covenants: Our Modern Scripture*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1978, [Revised and Enlarged, 1984], 54-55).

Verses 1, 4-5, confirmed to those present that Joseph Smith was to be the Lord's mouthpiece as the Prophet of His Church. It was important to the Lord that the members understood to whom they should look to obtain the Lord's word. For some of the early members of the Church, this was a difficult concept to grasp. In the Lord's preface to the Doctrine and Covenants given November 1, 1831, he reiterated the role of Joseph Smith and those who would succeed him as His prophets in the latter days.

Doctrine and Covenants 1:38

38 What I the Lord have spoken, I have spoken, and I excuse not myself; and though the heavens and the earth pass away, my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants [Joseph Smith and his successors], it is the same.

*Where can we find the words of the living prophets today?

Official letters, general conference and church magazines.

*What counsel or teachings of latter-day prophets have been especially meaningful to you?

The Proclamation of the Family given prior to the national debate regarding the definition of marriage; the increased number of temples being built in order to bring the blessings of the temple closer to the members throughout the world; the decrease in age of Elders and Sisters serving as full-time missionaries

Doctrine and Covenants 21:5

5 For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.

Harold B. Lee states,

"Now the only safety we have as members of this church is to do exactly what the Lord said to the Church in that day when the Church was organized. We must learn to give heed to the words and commandments that the Lord shall give through his prophet, 'as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before me;...as if from mine own mouth, in all patience and faith.' (D&C 21:4-5.)

"There will be some things that take patience and faith. You may not like what comes from the authority of the Church. It may contradict with your political view. It may contradict your social views. It may interfere with some of your social life. But if you listen to these things, as if from the mouth of the Lord himself, with patience and faith, the promise is that 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against you; yea, and the Lord God will dispense the powers of darkness from before you, and cause the heavens to shake for your good, and his name's glory' (D&C 21:6).

"...Your safety and ours depends on whether or not we follow the ones whom the Lord has placed to preside over his church, and he will make no mistake. The Lord doesn't do things by accident. He has never done anything accidentally.

"Let's keep our eye on the President of the Church and uphold his hands. ("Upholding the Hands of the President of the Church," in *Conference Report*, October 1970, 152-153).

*What blessing does the Lord promise to those who follow

the prophet?

Protection from the evils of Satan; We will feel enlightened by the Spirit and at peace though storms may rage around us; We will not be misled by 'false prophets' who seek to mislead even the righteous.

*In what ways have you been blessed because you have followed the prophet?

Doctrine and Covenants 21:9

9 For, behold, I will bless all those who labor in my vineyard with a mighty blessing, and they shall believe on his words [Joseph Smith], which are given him through me by the Comforter, which manifesteth that Jesus was crucified by sinful men for the sins of the world, yea, for the remission of sins unto the contrite heart.

Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl state,

"Labor in the Lord's vineyard is never in vain. The laborers always receive a blessing. One reward promised is increased faith in the atonement of our Savior, who was crucified for the sins of the world. This great, central truth of the gospel is made manifest by the Comforter--the Spirit of Revelation." (*Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1951, [Revised Edition, 1962], 117).

Bruce R. McConkie adds,

"The test of discipleship is how totally and completely and fully we believe the word that was revealed through Joseph Smith, and how effectively we echo or proclaim that word to the world." ("The Generation Shall Have My Word through You," in *Sperry Symposium Classics: The Doctrine and Covenants*. Edited by Craig K. Manscill. Co-published by the Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, and Deseret Book Company, Salt Lake City, 2004, 39).

*How have you been blessed as you have served the Lord?

One blessing of serving the Lord is that our testimonies of the words of the prophets are strengthened

IV. Church Members to Meet Often to Partake of the Sacrament

In preparation of the restoration of the Church, the sacramental prayers on the bread and water were again given by revelation to Joseph Smith. (see D&C 20:77, 79.) On April 6, 1830, the sacrament was administered for the first time to the members of the newly organized Church.

Joseph Fielding Smith states,

"On the occasion of the organization of the Church and after other business had been attended to, the little group partook of the Sacrament. This was the first time, since before the apostasy, hundreds of years ago, that the sacrament had been administered acceptably and with divine approval and in accordance with the manner which the Lord had revealed." (*Church History and Modern Revelation. Course of Study Melchizedek Priesthood, 1947. Salt Lake City: The Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1946, 94*).

*Why do you think it was important to have the ordinances of the sacrament performed at the first meeting of the restored Church?

Each member, through partaking of the sacrament, for the first time, were now able to renew the covenants they had made at their baptism. It is important to note that all in attendance were also confirmed and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. (see Richard O. Cowen. *The Doctrine and Covenants: Our Modern Scriptures*, 54).]

Doctrine and Covenants 20:75-76

75 It is expedient that the church meet together often to partake of bread and wine in the remembrance of the Lord Jesus;

76 And the elder or priest shall administer it; and after this manner shall he administer it--he shall kneel with the church and call upon the Father in solemn prayer, saying:

Richard O. Cowen states,

"Verse 76's direction that the elder or priest administering the sacrament should 'kneel with the church'

does not necessarily mean that the congregation must also be kneeling.

"A later revelation (D&C 27:2-4) instructed that it is not necessary to use wine for the sacrament. Bread and water have become the customary emblems, but these are not specifically required by the scriptures." (*The Doctrine and Covenants: Our Modern Scripture*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1978, [Revised and Enlarged, 1984], 54).

*Why is it important to partake of the sacrament often?

Joseph Fielding Smith states,

"The Sacrament meeting of the Church is the most important meeting we have, and sadly neglected by many members. We go to this service, if we understand the purpose of it, not primarily to hear someone speak, important though that may be, but first, and most important, to renew our covenant with our Father in heaven in the name of Jesus Christ. Those who persist in their absence from this service will eventually lose the Spirit, and if they do not repent will eventually find themselves denying the faith." (*Church History and Modern Revelation. Course of Study Melchizedek Priesthood*, 1947. Salt Lake City: The Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1946, 123).

Doctrine and Covenants 77, 79

77 O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it, that they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given them; that they may always have his Spirit to be with them. Amen

79 O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this wine to the souls of all those who drink of it, that they may do it in remembrance of the blood of thy Son, which was shed for them; that they may witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they do always

remember him, that they may have his Spirit to be with them. Amen.

*What promises do we make when we partake of the sacrament?

Luke 22:19-20

19 And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

B/M, 3 Nephi 18:7, 10-11

7 And this shall ye do in remembrance of my body, which I have shown unto you. And it shall be a testimony unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.

10 And when the disciples had done this [partaken of the emblems of the sacrament], Jesus said unto them: Blessed are ye for this thing which ye have done, for this is fulfilling my commandments, and this doth witness unto the Father that ye are willing to do that which I have commanded you.

11 And this shall ye always do to those who repent and are baptized in my name; and ye shall do it in remembrance of my blood, which I have shed for you, that ye may witness unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my Spirit to be with you.

Both prayers emphasize the importance of our remembering Jesus.

*What does it mean to remember Him always?

*How does the sacrament help us remember Him?

*What are we to remember as we partake of the sacrament?

One of things I believe we are to remember is that the suffering Jesus endured in the garden of Gethsemane and on the cross at Golgotha, was for our individual sins.

George W. Pace states,

"Imagine this type of experience: As you really search the scriptures and study with all your heart, you discover that there may be a possibility that you are not as totally clean as you would like to be. You realize that maybe the reason that you aren't receiving more revelation and happiness in your life or fulfilling your stewardship as you should is because you don't have the power and the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

"On one occasion as you are praying with all your heart, there is a bright light and you look up and there stands the Lord. He has come to visit with you. 'I have come,' he says, 'to place you in a position where you can have a remission of your sins.'

"And oh, you are overjoyed because that's just what you have been praying for with all your heart. And then he says something which bothers you; he says, 'In order for you to have a remission of your sins, it will be necessary for you and I to review your life. We will walk back through the corridors of your life and watch those activities wherein you knowingly transgressed my laws.'

"All of a sudden, you have some second thoughts about your remission of sins; You say, 'You mean I've got to go back through my life with you standing right by me and we have to witness the things that I have done that I am so embarrassed about?'

"And the Lord says, 'Yes, this is the price that you have to pay.'

"As you stand there viewing your sins, close to this pure, undefiled individual who reflects such marvelous love, your heart aches. In fact, you are so embarrassed and so broken-hearted over the experience that you think your heart will break. In the meantime, you forget to notice what is happening to him. Whereas he had been very happy and joyous, he is burdened down with sorrow. His sorrow becomes so great, in fact, that he sweats drops of blood. You stand in awe as you realize that what he is going through is because of your transgressions, that he has actually, in a very personal way, assumed on his shoulders, the effects of your sins.

"Gradually, your heart gets lighter, you are happier. Something deep inside of you is happening. A new kind of joy and peace is entering your heart. You are now clean; you are changed; you have a whole new heart! His name has been written upon your heart in a mighty way, and you realize the change that has come in your heart has been a result of his magnificent love and willingness to assume on his shoulders the effects of your sins.

"By the time that experience is over with, you just marvel. You marvel at the dimension of love that caused him to pay the price on your behalf, and, oh, how you rejoice for that tremendous blessing that has come into your life.

"To know the Lord is to know that he did indeed suffer not only for us, but because of us. We were individually implicated and we can change as we acknowledge individually, the sorrow we have subjected the Savior to. In that knowledge, we seek a remission of our sins." ("What It Means to Know Christ," in 1971-1972 California *Know Your Religion Speeches*. 94-95).

One of the reasons why we partake of the sacrament is to remember His sacrifice and His love for us.

Doctrine and Covenants 27:2

2 For, behold, I say unto you, that it mattereth not what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink when ye partake of the sacrament, if it so be that ye do it with eye single to my glory--remembering unto the Father my body which was laid down for you, and my blood which was shed for the remission of your sins.

In the 2013 edition of the Doctrine and Covenants, the heading for Section 27 states, "Revelation given to Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Harmony, Pennsylvania, August 1830. In preparation for a religious service at which the sacrament of bread and wine was to be administered, Joseph set out to procure wine. He was met by a heavenly messenger and received this revelation, a portion of which was written at the time and the remainder in the September following. Water is now used instead of wine in the sacramental services of the Church." (Heading: Section 27. *The Doctrine and Covenants*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981, [2013], 46).

Newel Knight states,

"In the beginning of August I, in company with my wife, went to make a visit to Brother Joseph Smith, Jun., who then resided at Harmony, Penn. We found him and his wife well, and in good spirits. We had a happy meeting. It truly gave me joy to again behold his face. As neither Emma, the wife of Joseph Smith, nor my wife had been confirmed, we concluded to attend to that holy ordinance at this time, and also to partake of the sacrament, before we should leave for home. In order to prepare for this, Brother Joseph set out to procure some wine for the occasion, but he had gone only a short distance, when he was met by a heavenly messenger, and received [a] revelation [see D&C 27]..."

"In obedience to this revelation we prepared some wine of our own make, and held our meeting, consisting of only five persons namely, Joseph Smith and wife, John Whitmer, and myself and wife. We partook of the sacrament, after which we confirmed the two sisters into the Church, and spent the evening in a glorious manner. The Spirit of the Lord was poured out upon us. We praised the God of Israel and rejoiced exceedingly." ("Scraps of Biography: Newel Knight's Journal," in *Classic Experiences and Adventures*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969, 62-63).

From Newel Knight's journal, we learn that this revelation was given in response to Joseph Smith's efforts to secure some wine so he could share the sacrament prior to the confirmation for two sisters, one his wife, who had not previously been confirmed and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. We learn from this revelation that it is not the elements that are important, but the spirit of the individual as they partake of the emblems of the sacrament.

*How can we partake of the sacrament "with an eye single to Christ's glory?

As our thoughts are upon the sacrifice of the Savior for sins, we will be filled with gratitude and love for His atonement on our behalf.

V. Duties of Church Members

As we enter on the path to eternal life, through Faith in Jesus Christ, Repentance, Baptism, and the confirmation and

receipt of the gift of the Holy Ghost, we are now members of the Church of Jesus Christ. It is important to understand that we have taken upon ourselves sacred covenants that include our service in the kingdom of God.

Doctrine and Covenants 20:68-69

68 The duty of the members after they are received by baptism--The elders or priests are to have a sufficient time to expound all things concerning the church of Christ to their understanding, previous to their partaking of the sacrament and being confirmed by the laying on of hands of the elders, so that all things may be done in order.

69 And the members shall manifest before the church, and also before the elders, by a godly walk and conversation, that they are worthy of it, that there may be works and faith agreeable to the holy scriptures--walking in holiness before the Lord.

Hoyt W. Brewster states,

"One who walks in holiness walks in concert with Christ and has the companionship of the Spirit. One who walks in holiness eschew anything that is sordid and sinful, having 'no more disposition to do evil, but to do good continually' (B/M, Mosiah 5:2).

Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl state,

"By baptism we enter into a solemn covenant with God. We must, therefore, learn to know our duties as baptized members of the Church. Church members, above all others, should, in the language of the Prophet Joseph, 'be kindly affectionate, one toward another; that the fathers should be kind to their children, husbands to their wives,...children obedient to their parents, wives to their husbands,...(*History of the Church*, Vol. 2, p. 263)." (*The Doctrine and Covenants*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1951, [Revised Edition, 1962], 110).

B/M, 3 Nephi 27:27

**27 ...Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be?
Verily I say unto you, even as I am.**

Our goal is at all times and on all occasions, whether we are alone or with others, to become like our Savior Jesus Christ. If we were diligent in our effort, we will have lived our life in keeping with our testimony of Jesus Christ.

VI. Our Relationship With God

We again focus upon Doctrine and Covenants, Section 20. Within its verses, is an important message regarding God, Our Eternal Father, and His relationship with His sons and daughters. We often address the relationship we each have with His Son, Jesus Christ, and His atoning sacrifice. He is pivotal in our relationship with the Father, as He serves as our mediator. We come to the Father, through His Son, seeking even to be numbered among his sons and daughters. We must, however, never forget our relationship with the Father, and His love for us. Let us review, if only to be reminded, His relationship with each of us.

a. God still inspires people and calls them to do His work.

Doctrine and Covenants 20:11

11 Proving to the world that the holy scriptures are true, and that God does inspire men and call them to his holy work in this age and generation, as well as in generations of old;

The work of the Father is the immortality and eternal life of all His children. In order to accomplish His purposes, He delegates His will through His Son, and those who serve with Him. He is aware of each of us and the challenges we face. Knowing our trials and adversities, He inspires His servants to further His work on the earth thereby providing us with direction and hope, even during our adversity.

b. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Doctrine and Covenants 20:12

12 Thereby showing that he is the same God, yesterday, today, and forever. Amen.

It is the consistency of God's character that enables us to exercise trust in Him. Like the presence of the North Star in the heavens, we come to know that His word never

changes. Whether we read His words as found in the Old or New Testament, the Book of Mormon, or the Doctrine and Covenants, His word is the same. Just as it is troubling to a child when the direction they receive from their parents is ever changing, he will be comforted to learn that this is not true with his Father in Heaven. Whenever chaos comes upon us, we may always look heavenward for stability and unchanging direction.

c. He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, and He framed the heaven and the earth and all things in them.

Doctrine and Covenants 20:17

17 By these things we 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;

Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl state,

"Not 'we believe,' but we *know* that God exists; that He is infinite and eternal; unchangeable; the [Master of the creation] of the heavens and the Earth and all things that are in them. The world is not the work of chance; nor is it self-existent; it is 'created.' The elements have been organized by an Infinite Intelligence. This the Saints *know.*" (*The Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1951, [Revised Edition, 1962], 102).

Likewise we have Alma's testimony to the anti-Christ, Korihor, as recorded in the Book of Mormon, Alma 30:40-44, that the creation bears witness to the existence of a divine creator.

d. He created us in His image.

Doctrine and Covenants 20:18

18 And that he created man, male and female, after his own image and in his own likeness, created he them;

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Craig J. Ostler state,

"The word of the Father's power is his Son, Jesus Christ. The word of the Son's power is his Spirit, the light of

Christ. The words and power of Christ are those of the Father. The Father and the Son are one in their creative endeavors. Concerning his creations, the Lord explained, 'And by the word of my power have I created them, which is mine Only begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth. And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten' (PGP, Moses 1:32-33). Excepting the birth of spirits, all the labor of creation is done by Christ under the direction of the Father." (*Revelations of the Restoration*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2000, 238)).

Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl add,

"We know that God created man, male and female, after His own 'image' in His own 'likeness.' Our first parents were in the image of God in the same sense that Seth was in the image of Adam (Genesis 5:1-3). 'Image' suggests reproduction in form and substance, physical or spiritual; 'likeness' gives the idea of resemblance and outward similarity' (*The Cambridge Bible*, Genesis, p. 20). Woman, as well as man, was made after the image, in the likeness, of God." (*The Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1951, [Revised Edition, 1962], 102).

e. God gave His Only Begotten Son to atone for our sins.

Doctrine and Covenants 20:21

21 Wherefore, the Almighty God gave his Only Begotten Son, as it is written in those scriptures which have been given of him.

I believe we may underestimate the meaning of "the Almighty God gave his Only Begotten Son" (D&C 20:21). We may feel that because He is God and all-knowing, that somehow He is exempt from the feelings and emotions that each of us experience. Somehow, we may feel, His knowledge, exempts Him from the pain and sorrow that we feel. Nothing could be further from the truth. If fact, because He is God, His feelings may even be more powerful, even more tender than ours. In this regard, I share the following words for your consideration.

Melvin J. Ballard states,

"[Referencing the experience of Abraham and Isaac, he states], Our Father in Heaven went through all that and more, for in His case, the hand was not stayed. He loved His Son, Jesus Christ, better than Abraham ever loved Isaac, for our Father had with Him His Son, our Redeemer, in the eternal worlds, faithful and true for ages, standing in a place of trust and honor, and the Father loved him so dearly, and yet He allowed his well-beloved Son to descend from His place of glory and honor, where millions did Him homage, down to the earth, a condescension that is not within the power of man to conceive. He came to receive the insult, the abuse, and the crown of thorns...

"I ask you, what father and mother could stand by and listen to the cry of their children in distress, in this world, and not render assistance? I have heard of mothers throwing themselves into raging streams when they could not swim a stroke to save their drowning children, rushing into burning buildings to rescue those whom they loved.

"We cannot stand by and listen to the cries without its touching our hearts. The Lord has not given us the power to save our own. He has given us faith, and we submit to the inevitable, but He had the power to save, and He loved His Son, and He could have saved Him. He might have rescued Him from the insult of the crowds...when the crown of thorns was placed upon His head...He saw the cruel nails driven through hands and feet, and the blows that broke the skin, tore the flesh, and let out the life's blood of His Son. He looked upon that.

"In the case of our Father, the knife was not stayed, but it fell, and the life's blood of His Beloved Son went out. His Father looked on with great grief and agony over His Beloved Son, unto there seems to have come a moment when even our Savior cried out in despair: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

"In that hour I think I can see our dear Father behind the veil looking upon these dying struggles until even he could not endure it any longer; and, like the mother who bids farewell to her dying child and has to be taken out of the room so as not to look upon the last struggles, so He bowed His head and hid in some part of His universe. His great heart almost breaking for the love that He had for His Son.

Oh, in that moment when He might have saved His Son, I thank Him and praise Him that He did not fail us, for He had not only the love of His son in mind, but He also had love for us. I rejoice that He did not interfere, and that His love for us made it possible for Him to endure to look upon the sufferings of His Son and gave Him finally to us, our Saviour and our Redeemer. Without Him, without His sacrifice, we would have remained, and we would never have come glorified into His presence. And so this is what cost, in part, for our Father in heaven to give the gift of His Son unto men." ("The Sacramental Covenant," in *Melvin J. Ballard--Crusader For Righteousness*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966, 136-137).

f. If we believe, repent, love and serve God, and endure to the end, we will be justified and sanctified through the grace of Jesus Christ and saved in the kingdom of God.

Doctrine and Covenants 20:29-31

29 And we know that all men must repent and believe on the name of Jesus Christ, and worship the Father in his name, and endure in faith on his name to the end, or they cannot be saved in the kingdom of God.

30 And we know that justification through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true;

31 And we know also that sanctification through the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is just and true, to all those who love and serve God with all their mights, minds, and strength.

Joseph Fielding McConkie and Craig J. Ostler state regarding Justification and Sanctification,

"*Justification*. There cannot be a kingdom of God without a system of government and laws. To hold citizenship in that kingdom we must abide by the laws of that kingdom. We are justified when we have complied with the requirement of the law. If our actions are in question, we are justified if those actions, as judged by God, are ratified or approved. Thus we stand innocent or vindicated by the law. The purpose of this verse is to sustain the necessity of the laws and ordinances of the gospel. It is to affirm that the grace of Christ does not dispense with the necessity of obedience to the laws of God.

"*Sanctification*. Through the grace of Christ those who have been justified can be cleansed from sin and be made holy. The test extends this promise to those who serve God with all their might, mind, and strength. Sanctification comes through the Holy Ghost, who purges from the souls of men both the desire for sin and its dreadful effects (B/M, Alma 13:12)." (*Revelations of the Restoration*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2000, 163-164).

Hyrum M. Smith and Janne M. Sjodahl add,

"Justification is a judicial act, whereby God declares that the sinner who repents and by faith accepts the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, and who is baptized according to the Word of God, is acquitted and received into His Kingdom.

"Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit by which he who is justified is enabled to keep the Commandments of God and grow in holiness (B/M, Helaman 3:35)." (*The Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1951, [Revised Edition, 1962], 104).

These two processes work in tandem for we become justified as we repent and enter the waters of baptism, but it is through the process of sanctification that, once we are pure, we are then able to continue to keep the commandments.

How blessed we are to have a Father in Heaven who loves us and is concerned about our eternal progress. It is because of His love for us that He sent His Son, to suffer for our sins. It is through His atonement and our obedience to the commandments that we may merit His grace and return to the kingdom of Our Father.

VII. Conclusions

The Church is organized in the latter days: April 6, 1830, was a very special day in the lives of those few who sought to be members of the Restored Church of Jesus Christ. It was the day when the Church of Jesus Christ was organized upon the earth. Thousands of years had passed since the death of Apostles. With their death, came the loss of the authority to act in God's name. Now the darkness had ended. The light of truth had dawned. The day of rejoicing had arrived. Once again, the true Church of Jesus Christ was

upon the earth, and with it, the authority to act in God's name.

It had been prophesied by ancient prophets that the day would come when once again the Church of Jesus Christ would be restored to the earth.

The day, April 6, 1830, had finally arrived. All was in place. The date Jesus Christ himself had designated for His Church to again be organized upon the earth.

The Lord commanded Church members to follow the Prophet:

From the very beginning, it was made clear by the Lord that only Joseph Smith was to be his spokesman. There was to be no confusion in His Church who was to be His mouthpiece. Joseph was the seer, translator, prophet, apostle, and First Elder in the new Church. These gifts continue even today with the Prophet and President of the Church.

When we as members of the Church of Jesus Christ follow the direction and word of those whom we sustain as Prophets, Seers, and Revelators, rather than our own will, we will be blessed.

The Lord encourages Church members to meet together often to partake of the sacrament: On the first day the Church was organized, the members who had gathered, partook of the emblems of the sacrament. Then, as now, we do so in order to renew the covenants we made at baptism, to remember the sacrifice of Our Lord and Savior, and to receive a remission of our sins. As we partake of the sacrament with a singleness of mind and purpose, we are renewed in our desire to always remember Him in word and deed, that we may always have His Spirit to be with us.

Who could ever forget His suffering or the drops of blood shed for us. It was for our sins that He suffered for He was without sin. Only as we are clean, can we truly be blessed with His Spirit to guide and strengthen us as we face the vicissitudes of life.

The Lord explains the duties of Church members: To become members of the Church of Jesus Christ means being changed in word and deed. Membership is not a coat to be worn only on Sunday, but it is to be worn each day of the week. Through our words and actions, we seek to exemplify the teachings of Jesus Christ. Kindness to others, reaching out

to the poor and needy, letting the light of Christ shine through us, in all we say and do, is our commitment and creed.

Though there are times when, despite our best efforts, we do not measure up. At those times, we humbly acknowledge our error, seek forgiveness, and strive to do better.

Our Relationship with God, the Father: While we seek to be like Christ in all we do, we know that we are children of an Eternal Father in Heaven, who loves us. Because of Him, we were given the opportunity to come to earth that we may continue our progression. We are created in His image and have the potential and attributes within us to someday become like Him. We are so grateful to Him for providing the plan of salvation, providing our Savior, and giving us the opportunity, if we are faithful and follow His plan, of returning back into His presence.

It is through His gospel, taught by His appointed servants, in His Church, that true happiness is within the reach of all His children. We are truly grateful to have His restored Church again upon the earth.

Our next lesson [D&C#10] addresses the need for each of us to follow His counsel, as taught in the scriptures, as we seek to develop divine attributes in our lives.