

“Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.” (Jeremiah 1:5)

Introduction

Throughout the ages of the world individuals have looked out into the night sky and beheld the magnificent display of God’s creations. With wondering awe they have asked themselves simple questions that lead to profound truths: “Who am I?” “What is my purpose here?” “Why are these things so?” So too did our great father Abraham wonder and question as he pondered the night sky. With the Urim and Thummim (lights & perfections) as his aid he received knowledge and truth from the Lord that is recorded in a precious book called the Pearl of Great Price. We may not individually have a Urim and Thummim, but the truths found in the Pearl of Great Price can enlighten our eyes and perfect our souls if we choose it. Thus the scriptures can in effect serve as a Urim and Thummim, a personal Liahona, for each of us. Our lesson today will briefly explore a few of the key doctrines (pre-mortal existence, free agency, creation and foreordination) found in the Book of Abraham and the Book of Moses that answer the fundamental questions of existence.

Who Am I?

“Who am I?” Moses queried as he stood before the burning bush (Ex. 3:11). In reality, Moses was standing before the Lord when he asked this profound, searching question. This incident may symbolize one of the clearest ways to answer the question of our own identity, i.e. what is our relationship to the Lord? Perhaps we can add an additional question to probe our identity, “what is our relationship *with* the Lord?”

As recorded in the Book of Moses, Moses learns who he is. He is defined and identified based on his relation to God. In fact, his identity is enwrapped with the identity of God.

And God spake unto Moses, saying: Behold, I am the Lord God Almighty, and Endless is my name; for I am without beginning of days or end of years; and is not this endless?
And behold, *thou art my son.* (Moses 1:3-4)

Each of us is a child of God in Heaven. Who He is helps to define who we are. We each are begotten spirit children of heavenly parents and thus we lived a pre-earth existence with them before we began our sojourn in this second estate known as mortal life on earth.

God taught these fundamental truths to Abraham in a unique way and they are recorded for our perusal in Abraham 3. While pondering upon the majesties of the stars and the heavens the Lord revealed to Abraham the order and relationship of the stars. During this time of divine tutoring God explained a foundational principle:

If two things exist, and there be one above the other, there shall be greater things above them. (Abraham 3:16)

God later applied this principle to things spiritual:

These two facts do exist, that there are two spirits, one being more intelligent than the other; there shall be another more intelligent than they; I am the Lord thy God, I am more intelligent than they all. (Abraham 3:19)

In the midst of these marvelous revelations the Lord reached out to Abraham and said, “my son, my son” (Abraham 3:12). Like he did for Moses, the Lord defined Abraham based on relationships, particularly in relationship to God. ((If we carefully note the context of these revelations, God taught this principle with heavenly bodies as well. God defined all of the stars based on their relationship to him and to each other. However, the star nearest unto him was the greatest of all those in the order to which our earth belongs. This star is Kolob and it is a governing (noble) star. Later, God shows Abraham the intelligences that were organized before the world was and we see again that those who were the most noble (perhaps nearest unto God in their relationship to Him) were chosen and foreordained to be rulers. God uses many methods to teach the truth and such is manifestly evident in Abraham 3. I must add, however, that nearness to God in spiritual terms is only attained through faith, humility and righteousness, all gained by exercising our agency.)) Soon thereafter God revealed to Abraham

the intelligences that were organized before the world was; and among all these there were many of the noble and great ones; And God saw these souls that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: These I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were spirits, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: Abraham, thou art one of them; thou wast chosen before thou wast born. (Abraham 3:22-23)

The mighty doctrine of foreordination underlies this pure knowledge offered unto Abraham and now available to each of us. We will discuss foreordination more fully in the section *What Is My Purpose Here?*

What Is My Purpose Here?

Immediately after declaring Abraham’s pre-mortal existence and foreordination to greatness God explained how the creation and the divine gift of free agency interact with foreordination to give our lives purpose and meaning:

We will go down, for there is space there, and we will take of these materials, and we will make an earth whereon these may dwell; And we will prove them herewith, to see if they will do all things whatsoever the Lord their God shall command them; And they who keep their first estate shall be added upon; and they who keep not their first estate shall not have glory in the same kingdom with those who keep their first estate; and they who keep their second estate shall have glory added upon their heads for ever and ever. (Abraham 3:24-26)

This revelation makes clear that the creation was established for us to exercise our free agency to choose God and his commands. We are foreordained to have glory added upon our heads for ever and ever on the condition of faithfulness to God in assisting him in his great work. For blessings and foreordinations specific to your life consult your personal scripture from the Lord known as your patriarchal blessing.

What is foreordination? Neal A. Maxwell declared:

Foreordination is like any other blessing—it is a conditional bestowal subject to our faithfulness. Prophecies foreshadow events without determining those outcomes, because of a divine foreseeing of that outcome. So foreordination is a conditional bestowal of a role, responsibility, or a blessing that, likewise, foresees but does not fix the outcome. ((Maxwell, Neal A. *Things as They Really Are* (Deseret Book Company: Salt Lake City, 1978), p. 24.))

Harold B. Lee taught:

Now a further word about this matter of foreordination. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the grand council of heaven before this world was” (Joseph Smith’s Teachings, p. 365). So likewise declared the Apostle Paul, “For whom he did foreknow . . . them he also called” (Romans 8:29-30). But do not misunderstand that such a calling and such foreordination pre-determine what you must do. A prophet on this western continent has spoken plainly on this subject, “Being called and prepared from the foundation of the world, according to the foreknowledge of God on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil” (Alma 13:3). This last passage makes the others preceding more understandable. God may have called and chosen men in the spirit world or in their first estate to do a certain work, but whether they will accept that calling here and magnify it by faithful service and good works while in mortality is a matter in which it is their right and privilege to exercise their free agency to choose good or evil. ((Lee, Harold B. *Decisions for Successful Living* (Deseret Book Company: Salt Lake City, 1973), pp. 168-169.))

Why Are These Things So?

This pure question was once posed by Moses unto the Lord (Moses 1:30). In response the Lord gave the most simple, yet powerful reply: “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). Herein is expressed the Lord’s purposes in all things. We are begotten sons and daughter of an Exalted, Immortal Father. We have been granted the divine gift of free agency and foreordained by God’s omniscience unto righteousness, greatness and nobleness, if we choose. Creation was instituted for us to have greater opportunity to exercise our agency and to assist God in his marvelous work of bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. The greater our measure of contributing to this work, the greater our happiness and joy and the more fully we fulfill our own foreordained purposes in this life.

Let us ever be faithful in this great cause.