

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS: WHAT THE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS SAYS

ROBERT J. MATTHEWS

The “restitution of all things, which God hath spoken [of] by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:21) is a prominent theme of both ancient and latter-day scripture. It is to be accomplished through those who are called of God “as was Aaron” (D&C 132:59), and who have the same holy calling and teach the same doctrines as the ancient prophets. The Restoration will eventually and permanently affect everybody and everything on the earth. That is the only true “new world order” because it is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We live in the modern world of multiple inventions, labor-saving appliances, space travel, rapid earth-travel, and almost instant communication. It is a world of software, hardware, storage, memory, quick retrieval, and split-second timing. These things are all relatively new, and most have been developed in the past half century.

We also live in the dispensation of the fulness of times, which is the fulness of dispensations leading to a culmination of the Lord’s work upon the earth. All previous dispensations were open-ended and will flow into this final dispensation like rivers into the seas. This dispensation is known as the time of “restitution of all things,” when

Robert J. Matthews, former dean of Religious Education, is an emeritus professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University.

The Restoration of All Things

69

the covenants, promises, knowledge, doctrines, priesthood, and divine governing powers that were had by ancient prophets and seers will be established and organized again upon the earth for the benefit of mankind to bring about the purposes of God for the human family. The modern technological developments of travel, and so forth, are inspired by the Lord to assist in His work in this dispensation, which began with the First Vision to Joseph Smith in 1820 and will not end until the earth becomes celestial.

The Book of Mormon uses the concept of restoration (restore, restoring, restored) at least sixty-seven times, often with reference to the gathering and future glory of the house of Israel and also to the plan of salvation, the resurrection of the body, and the Lord's method of rendering a just verdict on the Day of Judgment. The Book of Mormon states that there is a "plan of restoration" which is "requisite with the justice of God; for it is requisite that all things should be restored to their proper order" (Alma 41:2).

Our subject today is what the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants tell us about that restoration. We frequently talk about the restored gospel, the restored Church, and the restoration of all things, but what does all that mean? What will the Restoration eventually mean to the world? How much of the Restoration has already occurred? What does the future hold for us both in spiritual and in physical things because of the Restoration? How will libraries, schools, and study courses be changed? The Prophet Joseph Smith said, "I calculate to be one of the instruments of setting up the kingdom of Daniel by the word of the Lord, and I intend to lay a foundation that will revolutionize the whole world."¹

This is the kingdom of Daniel to which the Prophet Joseph Smith referred: "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.

"Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake 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" (Daniel 2:44-45).

Since the restoration of all things is going to produce a revolution

of worldwide proportions, it should be interesting to find out what is going to happen and what it will mean in our individual lives and activities.

The kingdom of God of which Daniel spoke is much more than a church in the usual sense, for it will replace the political kingdoms of the earth. This kingdom will have political, social, and economic, as well as ecclesiastical, aspects. When the kingdom of God is fully established in the earth, it will have all four of those dimensions. Today we are pleased to speak of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as the kingdom of God on earth, and so it is, but the Church at this time functions primarily in its ecclesiastical dimension. With the restoration of the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthoods, the authority was given to carry out all of the dimensions of the kingdom, and the doctrinal foundation was also made known. Each dimension was actually functional for a short time in the early days of the Church, but some aspects have been withdrawn from full, active operation until a more appropriate day. For example, the economic order was instituted in Ohio and Missouri under the principles of stewardship and consecration of property. These principles and the authority to implement them still exist in the Church, but the active organizational order has been temporarily discontinued. Likewise, the social order that focuses on a patriarchal family organization and celestial marriage (including plural marriage for some), has been temporarily modified. The authority to administer all aspects of the social order is still with the Church but is not completely active at present. The same is true of the civic or political dimension, which had a brief history and now is dormant. These things are not lost; they are simply not in active operation until the Lord commands that they be renewed at a more propitious time and circumstance. The power and authority for all of these activities reside in the keys held by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

What does the Doctrine and Covenants make known to us about the restoration of all things? The word *restoration* means that a previous order and system that was once in operation, but which has been lost to the world, shall be reinstated and become functional again. The Doctrine and Covenants speaks much of a Restoration, or

The Restoration of All Things

71

the reestablishment of the ancient priesthood, ancient councils, ancient ordinances, and ancient doctrines.

THE WORDS OF THE PROPHETS SHALL BE FULFILLED

By reading the Doctrine and Covenants in a short span of time, there comes a growing awareness of the emphasis on ancient prophets, ancient prophecy, and ancient promises. No fewer than thirty-one times is mention made that the words of the “prophets of old” will be fulfilled and that faith such as that possessed by the prophets of old will again be had on the earth (see D&C 17:2; 20:4; 22:3; 27:6; 29:10–21; 33:8; 35:6; 35:23; 42:39; 43:30; 45:10, 15; 49:111–14; 52:9, 36; 58:8; 59:22; 61:13; 66:2; 76:7–8; 84:64, 108; 85:11, 12; 86:10; 98:32–33; 101:19; 109:23, 41, 45; 128:19). Likewise, there are several comparisons of the ancient Church with the modern Church, and the Lord explains the way that former prophets built up the Church in their day (see D&C 64:8; 84:64, 108; 95:9). Declarations are made concerning Adam, Eve, Enoch, Noah, Gabriel, Raphael, Job, Melchizedek, Shem, Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Ephraim, Moses, Aaron, the sons of Levi, Pharaoh, David, Solomon, Nathan, Elijah, Elias, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Malachi, Peter, James, John, Paul, and John the Baptist that implant an ancient character and flavor to the Doctrine and Covenants. These names are not simply mentioned and then forgotten, for in most instances personal, individual, and historical information is given that is relevant to the doctrine and practice of the restored Church.

The Doctrine and Covenants also discusses ancient artifacts, such as the gold plates, the breastplate, sword of Laban, the Urim and Thummim, the ball or director (Liahona), and other such very old items. It also speaks of the passing over of the destroying angel, the parting of the Red Sea, the travels of ancient Israel in the wilderness, the tabernacle, the circumstances of Abraham’s offering his son Isaac, the Mount of Olives, the Mount of Transfiguration, the washing of the Apostles’ feet by Jesus, baptism, and other ancient practices. These are not stated merely as interesting items of history but are introduced as having relevance to activities to be performed in the latter-day Church. Furthermore, Oliver Cowdery was to have the “gift of Aaron” and also the same Spirit that inspired Moses (see D&C 3:2–7, 11); and Joseph Smith was to receive revelations “even as

Moses" (D&C 28:2) and to be "like unto Moses" (D&C 107:91). The calling and the preaching of Peter (see D&C 49:11–14) and of Paul (see D&C 18:9) are specified. The ancient gospel of Jesus Christ that was taught by ancient prophets is to be preached by modern teachers through the instrumentality of the Book of Mormon (see D&C 10:44–63).

THE FIRST VISION, SPRING 1820

In the First Vision the Father and the Son appeared personally to the boy Joseph Smith, and in response to his questions about which of the churches was right and which he should join, he was told to join none of them, for none, individually or collectively, was the Lord's authorized Church. None was doing what the Lord wanted done in the earth among mankind in the last days. Because of the worldwide apostate condition, there needed to be a restoration of the ancient gospel, the ancient priesthood, the ancient covenants, and the ancient performances.

THE VISITS OF MORONI, 1823–1827

The angel Moroni, himself a resurrected ancient prophet, quoted to Joseph Smith many passages from the Old and New Testaments respecting the work of the Lord in the last days. Moroni cited passages from Isaiah, Joel, Jeremiah, Daniel, Malachi, Psalms, and Acts, which in every case deal with the reestablishment of the kingdom of God on the earth preparatory to the Savior's Second Coming (see Joseph Smith—History 1:36–41).²

THE PROMISES MADE TO THE FATHERS

The angel Moroni, during a visit to Joseph Smith in September 1823, restated the words of Malachi as follows: "Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers" (D&C 2:1–2).

Malachi had lived about 400 BC Elijah had lived about 800 BC. The fathers to whom the promises were made had lived even earlier, all the way back to Adam, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

The Restoration of All Things

73

The promises spoken of are the covenants of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which are the promises of priesthood, salvation, and exaltation. All of them are contained in the Lord's covenant with Abraham. These ancient covenants were to be planted in the hearts of living persons on the earth in the last days—the children of the ancient prophets. These promises, in connection with the coming of Elijah, are mentioned three more times in Doctrine and Covenants 27:9; 110:14–15; and 128:17–18. Because the particular ancient prophets to whom these promises were made are not specifically named in these passages, it is instructive to note Doctrine and Covenants 27:10, in which it is stated in connection with Elijah's ministry that these prophets are “Joseph and Jacob, and Isaac, and Abraham, your fathers, by whom the promises remain.”

Among the several provisions of the covenant of Abraham was the specific promise of a land inheritance to call their own, a fruitful land of milk and honey, which would be for an everlasting possession (see Genesis 17:8; Acts 7:5). The restoration of all things has brought the renewal of this promise and will yet see the fulfillment of land inheritance. This promise will be defined more clearly below in my discussion of the role of the bishop.

THE RESTORATION OF ANCIENT RECORDS

The earliest evidence of a restoration of ancient records is the Book of Mormon, which is itself a collection of ancient documents, and it tells of other records that will come to light in the last days. These include the sealed portion of the plates that Joseph Smith obtained from the Hill Cumorah, which contain a revelation of “all things from the foundation of the world unto the end thereof” (2 Nephi 27:10). There will be a record of the ten tribes, including the Savior's visit to them. There will also be a complete record of the writings of John the Apostle (see Ether 4:16). The Doctrine and Covenants begins the restoration of John's writing in section 7, which is a translation of a parchment originally written and hidden up by John himself. Furthermore, the larger and more extensive original records of the Nephites and also the complete record of the Jaredites' twenty-four gold plates are yet to be made known. Likewise, a translation of the brass plates of Laban will eventually go to all nations, kindreds, tongues, and peoples (see 1 Nephi 5:17–19; Alma 37:3–5).

While the translation of the Book of Mormon was still in progress in 1829, the Lord informed Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery that when they had finished with it, there were other records to be translated (see D&C 8:11; 9:1–2). These other records included the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible and also the book of Abraham (see D&C 9:2, note *a*).

Doctrine and Covenants 93 verses 6 and 18 speak of the Church yet receiving the “fulness of the record of John.” It is not completely clear whether this is a record of John the Baptist (that was the interpretation by President John Taylor, Elder Orson Pratt, and Elder Bruce R. McConkie)³ or whether it is the writings of John the Apostle. It may very well mean both. In Doctrine and Covenants 107:57, the record of Enoch is spoken of with the promise that it will be available “in due time.” Thus the Doctrine and Covenants gives great expectation for much additional reading of ancient documents in the future. None of these are new documents; they are ancient documents revealed anew.

The Book of Mormon makes clear that the Old Testament record once had more books than at present, and even the books it now contains have been reduced in size in some instances. In the restoration of all things, these Old Testament books will be available in their original purity and correctness. A beginning has already been made with the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible, which gives us a new glimpse of the writings of Enoch, Joseph, and Moses. We now have thirty-nine books in the Old Testament and twenty-seven in the New, making sixty-six books in all in the King James Version of the Bible. This will no doubt be enlarged in days to come.

In our present four-year cycle of the Church Sunday School curriculum, we take one year each to study the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants, and then we repeat the process. The Brigham Young University curriculum provides two semesters for Old Testament and two semesters for the New Testament, making a total of four semesters (eight credit hours) for study of the Bible on the undergraduate level. There are also graduate-level courses for another seven credit hours of Old Testament and six credit hours of New Testament.

With the restoration of ancient records, it will someday require a much longer time to study the Bible, both in Sunday School and also

The Restoration of All Things

75

in Church schools. I expect that at some future time the Brigham Young University religion curriculum for the Old Testament will contain not only the present courses but Brass Plates 303 (five hours) with an emphasis on the prophecies of Joseph and of Zenos. We now have a course specializing in Isaiah. When the brass plates are restored, we will need Old Testament 305, specializing in Zenock; 306, Zenos; 307, Neum and Ezias—each of these courses being three credit hours each. At this rate, it could take a student four years just to study the beginning courses in the Old Testament alone. Instead of the current twenty-one hours in the Old Testament offering, there could easily be as many as forty hours. An equal enlargement would be necessary in the New Testament with additional courses on the teachings of Jesus, a course on the writings of John the Apostle, and another on the writings of John the Baptist. There would also have to be courses in Lost Tribes 101, 102, and 103, two hours each, using as the text the record yet to be revealed that is spoken of in 2 Nephi 29:7–14 and 3 Nephi 17:4.

The Book of Mormon curriculum will also have to be enlarged when the complete restoration finally descends upon us. In addition to the two beginning courses 121 and 122 now in the curriculum, there will have to be a 123, Readings from the 116 Lost Pages (two credit hours); Book of Mormon 124, The Twenty-four Gold Plates of Ether (four hours); and a special course for advanced students, Theology 500, The Sealed Plates (five hours, with labs and seminars). Advanced courses might also be given about the large plates of Nephi. For example, 501, The Book of Lehi; 502, Mosiah; 503, Alma; 504, Helaman, and so on through the entire collection. Today we offer a total of sixteen credit hours in Book of Mormon. In the time of restoration, there could be forty to fifty credit hours in Book of Mormon alone.

But that is not all. The restoration of ancient records will bring forth a large number of books that will be studied in Doctrine and Covenants and in Pearl of Great Price classes. These will include the Book of Remembrance, with the fulness of the writings of Adam, Enoch, and others. Furthermore, there will be the extended writings of Abraham and of Joseph of Egypt. The Book of Remembrance, which was started by Adam, will present not only historical items of great importance but also doctrinal and theological concepts that will

require many scholars to revise their present viewpoints of the early patriarchs and concede that those patriarchs were indeed very knowledgeable and great. Abraham said he had records that contained marvelous things: "But I shall endeavor, hereafter, to delineate the chronology running back from myself to the beginning of the creation, for the records have come into my hands, which I hold unto this present time. . . . [And] the records of the fathers, even the patriarchs, concerning the right of Priesthood, the Lord my God preserved in mine own hands; therefore a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the planets, and of the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers, have I kept even unto this day" (Abraham 1:28, 31).

There will be other wonderful things, for the Lord has said: "Yea, verily I say unto you, in that day when the Lord shall come, he shall reveal all things—things which have passed, and hidden things which no man knew, things of the earth, by which it was made, and the purpose and the end thereof—things most precious, things that are above, and things that are beneath, things that are in the earth, and upon the earth, and in heaven" (D&C 101:32–34).

The documents containing such information will offer a comprehensive doctrinal perspective that will add a great deal to our understanding. Thus there could be information-packed courses in Revelation 501, Enoch; Revelation 502, Writings of John; and such other things as Book of Remembrance 503; Creation 504, and so forth.

We have so far spoken only of the manner in which the promised restoration of ancient records will affect the Sunday School curriculum and the BYU Religious Education curriculum; however, these additional records will shed light on all facets of life and learning, including mankind's origin and history and significant matters of human culture. These records will demonstrate mankind's high intelligence and civilization from the very beginning. The additional records will confirm what we already know from the scriptures we now have and will also give much more information. Hence, there will be a need for revised courses in ancient history, anthropology, biology, and all courses that deal with the origin of mankind, the origin of language, the origin of writing, and so forth. These subjects will then be looked upon with a new perspective. Present courses that teach

that mankind is the product of organic evolution will no doubt be viewed as erroneous. It appears that almost all subject matter areas of the university curriculum will be shaken by the effects of the restoration of ancient records.

RESTORATION OF THE AARONIC PRIESTHOOD

The next topic, in order of sequence in the Doctrine and Covenants, is the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood on May 15, 1829, as recorded in section 13. The conferral was done by no less than John the Baptist, the greatest example of the powers of the Aaronic Priesthood of which we have record. John was, as we know from the New Testament, a direct descendant of Aaron of the tribe of Levi and thus a legitimate bearer of the Aaronic Priesthood and the requisite keys. When John conferred this priesthood on Joseph and Oliver, he spoke of its future relevance to the sons of Levi (see D&C 13:1). Furthermore, the powers and prerogatives of this Aaronic Priesthood are repeated in subsequent revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants. For example, in Doctrine and Covenants 68:14–21, the Lord explains that the office of bishop is of the Aaronic order and rightly belongs to those who are literal, flesh-and-blood descendants of Aaron. It also indicates that at some future time, the literal seed of Aaron will function in that role in the Church.

A statement concerning the continuation of the Aaronic Priesthood from Aaron to John the Baptist (about thirteen hundred years) is given in Doctrine and Covenants 84:18–28, with an emphasis on the hereditary nature of this priesthood throughout all the generations of the seed of Aaron and also that the specific keys and powers associated with the Aaronic Priesthood are reserved for the firstborn among the sons of Aaron (see D&C 68:14–21; 107:13–20). Aaron is mentioned twenty-four times in the Doctrine and Covenants, with considerable said about the hereditary nature of the priesthood that bears His name as well as that men must be called of God “as was Aaron” (D&C 132:59; see also 27:8; 28:3). The emphasis on the hereditary nature of the Aaronic Priesthood is not idle academic exercise. It will someday have very literal application in the Church and kingdom.

THE WORK OF THE BISHOP

The office of bishop was first made known in this Church, and the first bishop, Edward Partridge, was called in 1831. His duties were given in connection with the consecration of properties and the arranging of land inheritances (see D&C 41:9–10). Of particular note is the declaration in Doctrine and Covenants 58:14, 17: “Yea, for this cause I have sent you hither [to Missouri], and have selected my servant Edward Partridge, and have appointed unto him his mission in this land. . . . And whoso standeth in this mission is appointed to be a judge in Israel, *like as it was in ancient days*, to divide the lands of the heritage of God unto his children” (emphasis added).

By this statement we learn that the bishop has the same responsibilities in the fulness of time as in ancient times. The assignment given to Aaron and his sons was not for their day only or even for the duration of the Old Testament and law of Moses but was a perpetual role that will continue among the seed of Aaron, the sons of Levi, in the restoration of all things.

The Doctrine and Covenants leaves no doubt that the office of bishop belongs to the Aaronic Priesthood, that the bishop presides over the quorum of priests, and that he holds the keys of the Aaronic Priesthood. The Lord explains in some detail that the priests’ office rightly belongs to the literal seed of Aaron and that the keys are held by the “firstborn among the sons of Aaron” (D&C 68:16). Because the Lord has not as yet designated to the First Presidency in this dispensation a specific person who is a literal descendant and firstborn of Aaron who should serve as the Presiding Bishop, the Lord has explained that a high priest of the Melchizedek Priesthood can function as a bishop. It is clearly stated, however, that the bishop’s office is hereditary and someday will be filled by a literal descendent of Aaron when properly designated by revelation to the First Presidency (see D&C 68:15–21; 107:13–20).⁴

The role of bishop is to be a judge and also to be an administrator of the temporalities of the Church. He receives the sacred tithes and offerings and divides the inheritances of land and properties among families when the principles of consecration and stewardship are functioning. That is the economic dimension of the kingdom we spoke of earlier. When the laws of consecration and stewardship are again formally employed, and the Church is large, there will be need

The Restoration of All Things

79

for many bishops engaged in the dividing of the lands of inheritance in Zion. It appears that they, at least the Presiding Bishop, will be literally descended from Aaron.

ETERNAL LAND INHERITANCES

It was noted earlier that the covenant to Abraham included the promise of a land inheritance to Abraham and to his seed for an everlasting possession. The Lord renewed this theme in several of the latter-day revelations as part of the restoration of all things. We read as follows: “And I hold forth and deign to give unto you greater riches, even a land of promise, a land flowing with milk and honey, upon which there shall be no curse when the Lord cometh;

“And I will give it unto you for the land of your inheritance, if you seek it with all your hearts.

“And this shall be my covenant with you, ye shall have it for the land of your inheritance, and for the inheritance of your children forever, while the earth shall stand, and ye shall possess it again in eternity, no more to pass away” (D&C 38:18–20).

And also: “And the earth shall be given unto them for an inheritance; and they shall multiply and wax strong, and their children shall grow up without sin unto salvation” (D&C 45:58).

And finally: “But blessed are the poor who are pure in heart, whose hearts are broken, and whose spirits are contrite, for they shall see the kingdom of God coming in power and great glory unto their deliverance; for the fatness of the earth shall be theirs. . . .

“And their generations shall inherit the earth from generation to generation, forever and ever” (D&C 56:18, 20).

Title and possession of such lands for an everlasting possession are not for sale in the open market or at the real estate office but are obtained only by covenant, by consecration, and by obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ (see Abraham 2:6). We learn from the Doctrine and Covenants that the arrangement of these inheritances is the work of the bishop.

THE RESTORATION OF THE MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD

Although the exact date of the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood by the ancient Apostles Peter, James, and John is not given in the Doctrine and Covenants nor in Church history, it is

known to have occurred within a few weeks after the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood. With the Melchizedek Priesthood, the Prophet Joseph Smith could move ahead as he was directed and lay the foundation for the entire kingdom, in all of its social, ecclesiastical, economic, and political dimensions. Duties of the various priesthood offices, quorums, and councils are made known in Doctrine and Covenants 84 and 107. As a result of the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood, all of the ordinances and covenants that were ever made in ancient times could again be enjoyed on the earth. These are contained within the covenant of Abraham, which includes all of the ordinances and covenants necessary for the living to have full salvation as well as the performance of those same ordinances by proxy for the dead.

The ancient character of the priesthood is demonstrated by the statement that the modern Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and First Presidency hold the keys “in connection with all those who have received a dispensation at any time from the beginning of the creation; for verily I say unto you, the keys . . . have come down from the fathers” (D&C 112:31–32).

It becomes apparent from a chronological study of the Doctrine and Covenants that oftentimes doctrines and ordinances were made known to the Prophet Joseph for a considerable time before he was able to implement them in the Church. And as we have noted, some things are still held in abeyance even now, after more than a century and a half of this dispensation.

THE NEW AND EVERLASTING COVENANT

The new and everlasting covenant is the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is made up of a number of individual covenants such as baptism, priesthood, marriage, and so forth. Soon after the Church was organized in April 1830, some wanted to unite with the Church without new baptism. The Lord revealed that baptism was “a new and an everlasting covenant, even that which was from the beginning” (see D&C 22:1). This language is consistent with the whole concept of restoration. Things are “new” to this dispensation but are everlasting and were in existence from the beginning.

The Lord said that authoritative baptism is required of all who join the Church (see D&C 22:2–4). The Lord further clarified the mean-

The Restoration of All Things

81

ing of the phrase “new and everlasting covenant,” saying it was “the fulness of my gospel” (D&C 66:2) and that it has stringent laws, bounds, conditions, and covenants that were worked out, decided upon, and ordained by the Father and the Son before the foundation of the earth (see D&C 132:5–12).

CELESTIAL MARRIAGE

We do not know the exact date on which the doctrine of celestial marriage (including plural marriage) was revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith. It was sometime in 1831, although the written document, Doctrine and Covenants 132, was not composed until July 12, 1843 (see headnote to D&C 132). The eternal nature of the marriage relation and the sealing of children to parents in an eternal family is part of the social dimension of the kingdom. This family connection includes the nature of the marriage ceremony and the patriarchal order with the husband presiding in the home, the eternal nature of each family unit, and the sealing of generations together like links in a chain from Adam and Eve to the latest generation of their posterity on the earth.

The celestial marriage covenant is part of the covenant of Abraham. It is the type of marriage for eternity that Abraham had. Abraham himself is mentioned no fewer than twenty times in section 132 alone and thirty-five times in the entire Doctrine and Covenants. The keys for instituting this type of marriage and family covenant were given in the Kirtland Temple, as recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 110:12, and are there called the “gospel of Abraham.”

The temple endowment, the celestial marriage covenant, and the sealing of families and generations are interwoven in the plan of salvation and are all included within “the restoration of all things,” which means that these very ordinances and promises were known and practiced by ancient prophets, beginning with Adam (see Abraham, facsimile 2, fig. 3). We note these particular phrases in the revelations:

“And also with Elias, to whom I have committed the keys of bringing to pass the *restoration of all things* spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began, concerning the last days” (D&C 27:6).

“And, if you will receive it, this is Elias which was to come to gather together the tribes of Israel and *restore all things*” (D&C 77:9).

“Therefore your life and the priesthood have remained, and must needs remain through you and your lineage *until the restoration of all things* spoken by the mouths of all the holy prophets since the world began” (D&C 86:10).

“For there is not a place found on earth that he may come to and *restore again* that which was lost unto you . . . even the fulness of the priesthood” (D&C 124:28).

“I am the Lord thy God, and I gave unto thee, my servant Joseph, an appointment, *and restore all things*. Ask what ye will, and it shall be given unto you according to my word. . . . For I have conferred upon you the keys and power of the priesthood, *wherein I restore all things* and make known unto you all things in due time” (D&C 132:40, 45).

The concept of restoration is firmly implanted in the Doctrine and Covenants, and because it states that “all things” will be restored, we must conclude that the Restoration includes every eternal gospel doctrine, practice, ordinance, and facet of the kingdom of God that ever was upon the earth in any former dispensation. This restoration does not include some factors of the law of Moses, which were temporary in nature.⁵

The Prophet was well aware of the difficulty that would arise in implementing the doctrine and practice of plural marriage. The following is from an account by Heber C. Kimball’s daughter: “[There was a] sensation caused in Nauvoo, one Sabbath morning [in 1840 or 41] . . . by a sermon of the Prophet’s on ‘the restoration of all things,’ in which it was hinted that the patriarchal or plural order of marriage, as practiced by the ancients, would some day again be established. The excitement created by the bare suggestion was such that Joseph deemed it wisdom, in the afternoon, to modify his statement by saying that possibly the Spirit had made the time seem nearer than it really was, when such things would be restored”⁶

Because this earth will be a celestial kingdom, and Abraham and others, including Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and Heber C. Kimball, each of whom had plural wives, will live here, plural marriage will exist again on the earth in that kingdom. That does not

The Restoration of All Things

83

mean that everyone will be required to live that law. It may not be for everyone.

THE TEMPLE ENDOWMENT

Concerning the endowment, which was given for the first time in this dispensation in the Red Brick Store in Nauvoo, Illinois, on May 4, 1842, the Prophet Joseph Smith explained: "I spent the day in the upper part of the store, that is in my private office . . . in council with General James Adams, of Springfield, Patriarch Hyrum Smith, Bishops Newel K. Whitney and George Miller, and President Brigham Young and Elders Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards, 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 this council was instituted the ancient order of things for the first time in these last days."⁷

It is to be noted that the Prophet Joseph Smith said that these things, which we recognize as the temple endowment, are the "ancient order of things" and pertain to the "Ancient of Days," who is Adam.

THE ROLE OF PRIESTHOOD QUORUMS AND COUNCILS

In the revelation on priesthood, also known as Doctrine and Covenants 107, priesthood councils or quorums are defined and set forth. This revelation is dated March 28, 1835, but some of it was revealed as early as November 1831 (see headnote to D&C 107).

Specifically mentioned are the Seventy, the Twelve, and the First Presidency. The revelation explains that the unanimous decisions made by each of these councils are binding (see D&C 107:27–30). Of special importance is the statement that the presiding quorums which are established in the latter-day Church and kingdom are patterned after *ancient* Melchizedek Priesthood quorums (see D&C 107:29), not modern inventions but part of the restoration of ancient

things. Concerning the order of ancient priesthood councils, the Prophet said:

“I had never set before any council in all the order in which it ought to be conducted, which, perhaps, has deprived the councils of some or many blessings. . . .

“In ancient days councils were conducted with such strict propriety, that no one was allowed to whisper, be weary, leave the room, or get uneasy in the least, until the voice of the Lord, by revelation, or the voice of the council by the Spirit, was obtained, which has not been observed in this Church to the present time. It was understood in ancient days, that if one man could stay in council, another could; and if the president could spend his time, the members could also; but in our councils, generally, one will be uneasy, another asleep; one praying, another not; one’s mind on the business of the council, and another thinking on something else.”⁸

THE POLITICAL OR CIVIL DIMENSION OF THE KINGDOM

At present the priesthood of the Church functions as an ecclesiastical organization—that is, as a church. Nonetheless, the power is inherent in the priesthood and the keys to function in a political manner when circumstances permit. Such was the case with Adam, Noah, the Nephites, and Moses. Concerning the children of Israel under Moses, the Prophet Joseph Smith said:

“Their government was a theocracy; they had God to make their laws, and men chosen by Him to administer them; He was their God, and they were His people. Moses received the word of the Lord from God Himself; he was the mouth of God to Aaron, and Aaron taught the people, in both civil and ecclesiastical affairs; they were both one, there was no distinction; so will it be when the purposes of God shall be accomplished: when ‘the Lord shall be King over the whole earth’ and ‘Jerusalem His throne.’ ‘The law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.’

“This is the only thing that can bring about the ‘restitution of all things spoken of by all the holy Prophets since the world was’—‘the dispensation of the fullness of times, when God shall gather together all things in one.’”⁹

That is the civil or political dimension of the kingdom of God on earth, which is not operative at the present time.

The Restoration of All Things

85

The important distinction or separation that sometimes has to exist between civil and ecclesiastical matters was referred to by the Savior when He was questioned by Pilate about His kingship and His kingdom. Surely no believer can doubt Jesus' right to rule the world and the universe as Lord of lords and King of kings. The Jewish rulers, however, wanted to make trouble for Jesus in the eyes of the Roman Empire. They wanted Jesus to be charged with treason against Rome because He was the king of the Jews. A dialogue on this topic between the Roman governor Pilate and Jesus is found in John 18:33–38:

“Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?”

“Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?” [That is, Jesus asked, Are you speaking as a Roman official or citing what the Jews have said? Are you asking a political question or an ecclesiastical question or?]

“Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?” [Pilate's response, “Am I a Jew?” means, I am not asking as a Jew; I am asking politically as a Roman official.]

“Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

“Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

“Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.”

What all that means is, Yes, I am a king, and eventually my kingdom shall fill the whole earth, but not now. Therefore, I have not set up a kingdom that will rival or threaten the present Roman Empire.

We know that ultimately Jesus' kingdom is “of this world,” for He said that the meek shall inherit the earth (see Matthew 5:5; D&C 88:17), and in the Revelation of John the promise is made that the faithful shall become kings and priests unto God and “shall reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:10). The time will come when the kingdom

spoken of by Daniel, and by Jesus, and by John, and by Joseph Smith, will fill the whole earth and will replace all the kingdoms of the earth. That is what the Twelve in Jerusalem had in mind when they asked Jesus, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). Jesus answered, in effect, not at this time—but later (see Acts 1:7). The time is not yet, but it will occur sometime in this dispensation. As expressed in Doctrine and Covenants 65:2, 5–6:

"The keys of the kingdom of God are committed unto man on the earth, and from thence shall the gospel roll forth unto the ends of the earth, as the stone which is cut out of the mountain without hands shall roll forth, until it has filled the whole earth. . . .

"Call upon the Lord, that his kingdom may go forth upon the earth, that the inhabitants thereof may receive it, and be prepared for the days to come, in the which the Son of Man shall come down in heaven, clothed in the brightness of his glory, to meet the kingdom of God which is set up on the earth.

"Wherefore, may the kingdom of God go forth, that the kingdom of heaven may come, that thou, O God, mayest be glorified in heaven so on earth, that thine enemies may be subdued; for thine is the honor, power and glory, forever and ever. Amen."

And Doctrine and Covenants 87:6 indicates that the Lord has decreed eventually "a full end of all nations," to be replaced by the Lord's own kingdom.

THE GATHERING OF ISRAEL

A major accomplishment of the restoration of all things will be the literal gathering of the literal seed of Israel. It will be done because of the promise God made to the fathers that He would look after their posterity. Modern Israel has descended from ancient Israel, and are "lawful heirs, according to the flesh" (D&C 86:9). Special blessings were given to the sons of Jacob that have carried down through the years and will reach a fulfillment in the final gathering and restoration of Israel. Judah was given the scepter and the power to govern. From him came David the king, with a promise that from his seed would come the kings that would reign in Israel (see Jeremiah 33:17; Psalms 89:3–4; 35–36; 132:11–12). The Doctrine and Covenants affirms that Jesus Christ came of that very lineage and is

The Restoration of All Things

87

the son of David, the stem of Jesse (see Isaiah 9:6–7; 11:1; Luke 1:30–33; D&C 113:1). It was absolutely necessary that Jesus, as King of kings, come through the lineage of Judah and David, in addition to being the Son of God.

The sons of Levi, especially Aaron and his sons, have had a special role in earlier dispensations and will yet have a major role in the restoration of Israel and the consecration of properties, as we have already discussed. It is just as important that a future bishop be of the lineage of Aaron as it was that Jesus be of the lineage of David. Likewise, the descendants of Joseph have the right to be the first to hear the gospel in the last days. Joseph's lineage has the Joseph like responsibility to gather the tribes of Latter-day Israel by giving them the "bread of life" similar to the way Joseph preserved his brothers anciently. Therefore Ephraim, who was given the birthright in ancient times, has the richer blessing and the particular responsibility to gather Israel (see D&C 133:26–35). It is no accident or coincidence that Joseph Smith and most of the Latter-day Saints are literal blood descendants of ancient Joseph. That is part of the restoration of all things.

CHANGES IN THE EARTH ITSELF

If the covenant people are to be gathered, the land must become productive enough to sustain them. The Lord, through the prophets of old, spoke of the land becoming fruitful and the desert blossoming "as the rose" (Isaiah 35:1).

Genesis 10:24 states that at a certain time the land was physically divided and no longer remained as one land. Doctrine and Covenants 133:23–24 states that in the last days "the islands shall become one land . . . and the earth shall be like as it was in the days before it was divided."

If we contemplate the plan of God on the earth since the beginning and consider the importance of multiple witnesses, we can view the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the record of the lost tribes as three major witnesses for the work of the Lord. These three separate testimonies came as the result of these peoples being separated by great distances of land and with the oceans as natural barriers. Who can say but that the division of the land into continents and islands separated by large oceans was done in the wisdom of God to bring

about the condition in earlier dispensations whereby there would be separate witnesses, or records, from various branches of the house of Israel? Now, in the fulness of times, when the tribes of Israel are to be gathered and their records are also to be gathered—and since the rapid transportation of the last days makes the oceans no longer such major barriers—the need for separation is past. Therefore, as part of the restoration the land shall come together again, “like as it was before it was divided.” The Lord has designed to “gather together in one all things, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth” (D&C 27:13; see also Ephesians 1:10).

Furthermore, the earth when created was paradisiacal, before the Fall of Adam. The promise is that “the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory” (Articles of Faith 1:10). The Prophet Joseph Smith said the earth is to be renovated.¹⁰

This glorification of the earth is spoken of in the Doctrine and Covenants as follows: “And the end shall come, and the heaven and the earth shall be consumed and pass away, and there shall be a new heaven and a new earth. For all old things shall pass away, and all things shall become new, even the heaven and the earth, and all the fulness thereof, both men and beasts, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea; and not one hair, neither mote, shall be lost, for it is the workmanship of mine hand” (D&C 29:23–25; see also 101:23–34).

Also: “Nevertheless, he that endureth in faith and doeth my will, the same shall overcome, and shall receive an inheritance upon the earth when the day of transfiguration shall come; when the earth shall be transfigured, even according to the pattern which was shown unto mine apostles upon the mount; of which account the fulness ye have not yet received” (D&C 63:20–21).

THINGS NEVER BEFORE REVEALED

Not only will the ancient order be reestablished on the earth but the final dispensation will be given things never before revealed. We read in Doctrine and Covenants 121:26–28, 31–32:

“God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, that has not been revealed since the world was until now;

“Which our forefathers have awaited with anxious expectation to

The Restoration of All Things

89

be revealed in the last times, which their minds were pointed to by the angels, as held in reserve for the fulness of their glory;

“A time to come in the which nothing shall be withheld. . . .

“All their glories, laws, and set times, shall be revealed in the days of the dispensation of the fulness of times—

“According to that which was ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before this world was, that should be reserved unto the finishing and the end thereof.”

When speaking of the restoration of all things, we must understand that it is the ancient promises, the ancient priesthood, and the doctrinal teachings that are to be renewed. The Restoration does not mean that clothing styles, building construction, and traveling conveyances must revert to those of earlier times. We are not going to live in Abraham-style tents and travel by camel. The Restoration is of eternal things, the promises of eternal glory and exaltation that were made to Adam and to Abraham, as well as the ordinances and covenants by which such blessings can be secured by individuals living today.

In preparation for the Restoration, the Lord moved among the nations of the earth, causing the Renaissance and the Reformation and establishing the United States of America. All of this preparation and the modern inventions we now enjoy were inspired of God to assist in the restoration of all things. Because of the Restoration there has been as much improvement in doctrinal understanding over what churches believed 150 years ago as there has been in communication and travel over what people had 150 years ago.

God lives in a perfect, celestial society with all the advantages and enjoyments of perfect intelligence, rapid communication, rapid travel, and the very best in building construction and utility. The high state of twenty-first-century technology, which exceeds anything this earth has ever known, is very primitive compared with what is yet to be revealed when the earth becomes a celestial world. Because of both present and future technological development, we in this dispensation will be able to do a great many things not possible in earlier times.

True prophets of every dispensation have been working hand-in-hand with each other and with the Lord Jesus Christ in the same cause, as explained by the Prophet Joseph Smith:

“The building up of Zion is a cause that has interested the people of God in every age; it is a theme upon which prophets, priests and kings have dwelt with peculiar delight; they have looked forward with joyful anticipation to the day in which we live; and fired with heavenly and joyful anticipations they have sung and written and prophesied of this our day; but they died without the sight; we are the favored people that God has made choice of to bring about the Latter-day glory; it is left for us to see, participate in and help to roll forward the Latter-day glory, ‘the dispensation of the fulness of times, when God will gather together all things that are in heaven, and all things that are upon the earth,’ ‘even in one,’ when the Saints of God will be gathered in one from every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue, when the Jews will be gathered together into one, the wicked will also be gathered together to be destroyed, as spoken of by the prophets; the Spirit of God will also dwell with His people, and be withdrawn from the rest of the nations, and all things whether in heaven or on earth will be in one, even in Christ. The heavenly Priesthood will unite with the earthly, to bring about those great purposes; and whilst we are thus united in one common cause, to roll forth the kingdom of God, the heavenly Priesthood are not idle spectators, the Spirit of God will be showered down from above, and it will dwell in our midst. . . . [We are laying the foundation of] a work that God and angels have contemplated with delight for generations past; that fired the souls of the ancient patriarchs and prophets; a work that is destined to bring about the destruction of the powers of darkness, the renovation of the earth, the glory of God, and the salvation of the human family.”¹¹

SUMMARY

The Prophet Joseph Smith said that the work the Lord called him to do would revolutionize the world. The Lord called His work “my act, my strange act” (D&C 101:95; see also 95:4; Isaiah 28:21). He also called it “a marvelous work and a wonder” (2 Nephi 25:17). The Restoration is strange to those not of the Church, and it is marvelous to those who are of the Church. Even so, most of us have perhaps had but peripheral comprehension of the marvelous changes that will yet take place in the earth and in the Church in order to bring about the restoration of all things spoken of by the mouths of all the

The Restoration of All Things

91

holy prophets since the world began. Such is the role of this dispensation. The restoration of all things is a reality. It has begun, and much has been revealed. There is still much to be implemented that has already been revealed, and there is more yet to be revealed.

NOTES

1. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974), 366.
2. See *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (1835), nos. 5, 7, and 10, containing a letter of Oliver Cowdery; and Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:355.
3. See also John Taylor, *The Mediation and Atonement of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1882); Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses* (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854–86), 16:58 (May 18, 1873); Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965), 1:70–71. A discussion of this subject is also found in Robert J. Matthews, *A Burning Light* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1972), 79–81.
4. See also Smith, *Teachings*, 112.
5. See Smith, *Teachings*, 173.
6. Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Stevens & Wallis, 1945), 328.
7. Smith, *Teachings*, 237.
8. Smith, *Teachings*, 69.
9. Smith, *Teachings*, 252.
10. See Smith, *Teachings*, 232.
11. See Smith, *Teachings*, 231–32.