

MARCH 22-28, 2021

Doctrine and Covenants 29

“JESUS CHRIST WILL GATHER HIS PEOPLE”

Summary: *Doctrine and Covenants 29. Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, in the presence of six elders, at Fayette, New York, September 1830. This revelation was given some days prior to the conference, beginning September 26, 1830. 1–8, Christ gathers His elect; 9–11, His coming ushers in the Millennium; 12–13, The Twelve will judge all Israel; 14–21, Signs, plagues, and desolations will precede the Second Coming; 22–28, The last resurrection and final judgment follow the Millennium; 29–35, All things are spiritual unto the Lord; 36–39, The devil and his hosts were cast out of heaven to tempt man; 40–45, The Fall and Atonement bring salvation; 46–50, Little children are redeemed through the Atonement.*

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

What precedent is there for General Conferences?

Biblically, “Holy Convocations” (conferences) here special instructional gatherings. “Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, concerning the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, *even these are my feasts.*” (**Leviticus 23:2**) The biblical festivals were different than the ordinary weekly days because it was not permissible to work. During these biblical holy days people were ‘invited’ to participate in large convocations held at the Temple. As a part of the feast-day events, the *Torah* was read publicly. The two more important High Holy Days or convocations were Passover and Sukkot. Both designated by the first full moon after the spring equinox and the first full moon after the fall equinox. In a modern calendar, usually close the beginning of April and October. Other Biblical holy convocations include Sabbath high days of Pentecost, (**Leviticus 23:21**); Passover (**Exodus 12:16; Leviticus 23:7**); and the Feasts of Weeks, Tabernacles, and Trumpets (**Numbers 28:26; 29:1; Leviticus 23:35–36; 23:24**). The Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover) called for two high holy days, one on the first and the other on the seventh day of Passover. (**Exodus 34:18**).

Every year on the tenth day of the seventh Biblical month was the Day of Atonement; Israel was commanded to fast on this day and to gather at the tabernacle or temple.

How can I see that a Temple is more than just a building?

An image of heavenly living may be in the pattern of living in the “City of our Lord” with our Lord. The imagery of dwelling places such as tents with their poles (stakes) and curtains may represent the organized facilities and order of heaven. “The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.” (**Isaiah 60:14**) It seems that the temple, the “camp” of Israel was organized in a “City of the Lord” which was likened to the “House of the Lord.” The families were on the outside; the priests (Levites) were next. They surrounded the holiest place (the Ark) where the Lord’s prophet communed with God. It may be likened to the terms telestial, terrestrial and celestial. It is easy to imagine that ancient Israel lived this way as a preparatory exercise of living with God. “. . . it seems, the ancient Israelites were commanded to build a sanctuary so that God may dwell amongst

them (**Exodus 25:8**). The Tabernacle became the place to which sacrifices were brought in times of joy and in times of sadness. It became the place to which Moses retired when he wanted to communicate with God. When the Children of Israel camped in the desert, the Tabernacle was erected at the very center of the camp; when they moved, the Tabernacle was taken apart, and was moved with them. Physically and spiritually it was the central object for the Children of Israel, and it was through the Tabernacle that they felt their connection with God." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) "The tabernacle, sometimes called the temple, was a very ornate though portable building, which the children of Israel carried with them in the wilderness. It was to this temple that Hannah went to pray and where Samuel ministered. It was the duty of the Levites to take care of this building and keep it in order. They took it apart, carried it and all that pertained to it from place to place as they journeyed in the wilderness, and then set it up again when a new camp was made." (**Doctrines of Salvation, Joseph Fielding Smith, Vol.3, Pg.112**)

How do the Temple and holy convocations relate?

Even in the Book of Mormon, such an organized camp could be imagined as a place where special holy convocations were held. "And it came to pass that when they came up to the temple, they pitched their tents round about, every man according to his family, consisting of his wife, and his sons, and his daughters, and their sons, and their daughters, from the eldest down to the youngest, every family being separate one from another. And they pitched their tents round about the temple, every man having his tent with the door thereof towards the temple, that thereby they might remain in their tents and hear the words which king Benjamin should speak unto them;" (**Mosiah 2:5-6**)

We can see this also in the Old Testament. "Balaam . . . stood on a lofty summit overlooking the camp of the People of Israel in the plain below . . . Balaam blessed the nation, predicting its victory over Edom and Moab . . . Balaam, seeing Israel's tents arranged in such a way that each family was assured of its privacy, praised the nation he had come to curse, with the words: 'How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, thy dwelling places, O Israel!'" (**Numbers 24:5**) (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

How can I internalize the Temple into my neighborhood, my home?

Is it possible that the areas of responsibility and assigned living were "staked" out, that there were stakes, poles or standards that identified the living areas? "The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron saying 'The Israelites shall camp each with his standard under the banners of their ancestral house' (Numbers 2:2). The standards borne by the 12 tribes served the same purpose as heraldic devices. Their colors and emblems were: Reuben red; emblem mandrakes. Simeon green; emblem the town of Shechem. Levi white, black and red; emblem the Urim and Thummim (Deuteronomy 33:9). Judah azure; emblem a lion. Issachar black; emblem a strong boned ass or sun and moon. Zebulun white; emblem a ship. Dan sapphire; emblem a tent or a lion. Naphtali rose; emblem a hind. Asher aquamarine; emblem an olive tree. Ephraim and Manasseh black, embroidered with a picture of Egypt; emblem: Ephraim, a bullock and Manasseh, a wild ox. Benjamin 12 colors; emblem a wolf." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) In the ancient days, the inner two courtyards were draped or had curtains draped between the stakes or poles and cords so that the sacredness and dignity of the priestly area and the Lord's habitation were maintained. "Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine

eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.” (Isaiah 33:20) “The Bible uses a variety of Hebrew terms when speaking of the place where God and Israel communed: *Mishkan* - ‘Dwelling’ [God’s dwelling place among the people of Israel]. *Mishkan ha-Edut* - ‘The dwelling place of the Testimony’ [the place where the two tablets containing the Ten Commandments were kept]. *Ohel Mo’ed* - ‘Tent of Meeting’ [where God reveals Himself to Israel]. It should be noted that the words *Mishkan* and *Ohel* are synonyms. In the Bible they are both used to denote the Tabernacle. *Mikdash* - ‘Sanctuary’ or the ‘Holy Place’; and especially *Kodesh ha-Kodashim*, the most holy place within the Tabernacle. Some traditional commentators and many critical scholars believe that these terms may refer to more than one place.”

(**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) In the latter-days, an organizational unit called “Stakes of Zion” may have the same purpose in reminding us to live in dignity and sacredness and commune with God as a community. “Until the day cometh when there is found no more room for them; and then I have other places which I will appoint unto them, and they shall be called stakes, for the curtains or the strength of Zion.”

(**Doctrine & Covenants 101:21**)

What is the eternal significance of the “Twelve?”

Through the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls we find the motivation of those many call the Essenes, was to move away from wickedness and establish a singular community of righteousness. Their organization had a shadow of biblical organization. Their leader was called the “Teacher of Righteousness” and he had two assistants. There was also a council of “Twelve Overseers.”

They had an order following the ‘righteous king’ which is said in Hebrew, “*Melech Zedek*.” The Dead Sea sect shunned others, and probably evoked one of the Savior’s comments in the Sermon on the Mount. There is a powerful advantage in comparing the Sermon on the Mount given in Israel with the same instructions given in the Book of Mormon lands. In the Galilee, Jesus spoke to the Twelve. “And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him:” (**Matthew 5:1**) In Israel, a shepherd has “lead sheep” with bells around their necks to assist in leading the flock. These are older sheep from the previous year. They have more experience and know their shepherd better than the flock. In a possible shepherd’s model, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, gave the Sermon on the Mount, apparently to the twelve disciples. In turn, their mission was to teach the multitudes. In the Book of Mormon lands he spoke to the multitude and the Twelve he choose from them, “. . . (now the number of them who had been called, and received power and authority to baptize, was twelve) and behold, he stretched forth his hand unto the multitude, and cried unto them, saying: Blessed are ye if ye shall give heed unto the words of these twelve whom I have chosen from among you.” (**3 Nephi 12:1**)

What three truths had to be restored?

Three principles disappear when true religion apostatizes. They are the identity of God, the identity of Satan and the concept of life before and after mortality. The explainable concept of God and Satan have basically disappeared in modern Judaism. That, of course, would be Satan’s main goal. Yet the concepts of good and evil are still basic to Jewish life. First, the anthropomorphic nature of God, which was known to the Jews at the time of Jesus, because the Old Testament, as

well as the Dead Sea Scrolls contain several references to God in 'human terms'. By the time the Crusaders were approaching the Holy Land, a prominent Jewish philosopher, Moses Maimonides, began collecting the writings and interpretations of other Jewish sages to codify and centralize them. In his work "The Guide to the Perplexed," Maimonides included 'Thirteen Articles of Faith'. The first three articles declared that God cannot be explained. That is probably the first published Jewish work that (in most Judaic studies) eliminated reference to the anthropomorphic nature of God. "The great Jewish philosopher Maimonides argued for the existence of God from the idea of motion. Everything in the universe is moving, and since we know that movement is finite, it must have started somewhere; hence the idea of the Prime Mover, i.e., God." "In the final analysis, however, there is no direct positive evidence of the existence of God. It can be argued that if there were such evidence then there would be no virtue in believing in Him. Ultimately it is a question of faith." "Perhaps the most famous of the various formulations of dogmas is the Thirteen Principles of Faith of Maimonides. Originally written in Arabic, this creed is the basis of the *Yigdal* hymn which is part of the daily service and is usually recited at the conclusion of the Friday evening synagogue service." The first three of the thirteen articles of faith are: (1) The existence of God, which is perfect; (2) God is "one" in every sense of the word; (3) God has no body or physical attributes. The last three articles state: (11) God rewards and punishes; (12) the Messiah will ultimately come; and (13) the dead will be resurrected. However, modern Jewish thinking has changed: "Many thinkers who have associated themselves with the Reform and Reconstructionist movements have suggested changes which should be

made in the wording of traditional prayers. They have chosen to eliminate or to reinterpret prayers for the Resurrection of the Dead, the coming of a personal Messiah, the restoration of animal sacrifices." ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How were citations about Satan changed?

References to Satan as a personage have also largely disappeared from Jewish thought. "In the Talmud, Satan is at times identified with the *yezer ha-rah* (the evil inclination), but he also assumes certain aspects of a fully personalized entity. Thus, he is the angel of death, or he is the tempter lying in ambush not only for Job but also for Abraham and all the biblical personalities. Or he is the accuser, *ha-mekatreg*, constantly waiting for man to sin so as to bring down upon him the wrath of God. "Several references to Satan have found their way into the liturgy, for example the plea in the *hashkivenu* prayer of the evening service to 'remove from us the enemy, pestilence . . . and Satan.'" "Neither great personalities nor simple folk are immune to the power of the *yezer ha-ra*, which in rabbinic literature, is usually depicted as the influence of Satan. The function of Satan is to tempt all humanity and to test a person's sincerity. The rabbis taught that one must therefore always be aware of the power of temptation, for the *yezer ha-ra* can grow and become a bad habit. At first it resembles the thread of a spider's web, the wise men tell us—fragile and barely visible. If not controlled it will become as strong as a stout rope. Judaism places a high value on the good that results from man's victory over his evil inclinations. 'Who is mighty?' ask the sages. 'One who subdues his inclinations.'" "In its original application in the Bible, 'Satan' appears not as a proper name, but rather as a common noun denoting an adversary who opposes or obstructs. Its related verb also has the

function of describing the actions of an antagonist in the most general sense. However, in the later books of the Bible (Zechariah and Job), 'The Satan' can be found as the accepted name of a particular angel—a prosecutor in the heavenly court. Thus it is 'The Satan' who asks for and is given permission by God to test Job's piety by inflicting upon him a whole series of personal ordeals. He is, however, definitely subordinate to God and unable to act without divine permission." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

What about "Heaven and Hell?"

The concept of "Heaven and Hell" in most religions is very general and often vague. Even though there is little discussion of after life among the Jews, heaven and hell appear in much Jewish commentary. Again, in context to this lesson, let us review. "The exact nature of this afterlife is the subject of great discussion in classical Jewish sources. All agree that after death the soul continues to live. The souls of the righteous enter paradise, or *Gan Eden* [Garden of Eden] as it is generally called. In that state 'there is no eating or drinking... no envy, hatred or competition but only this: that the righteous sit with crowns on their heads and delight in the splendor of God's presence' (**Talmud**). The souls of the wicked enter hell, or *Gehinnom*, as it is known, where they undergo purification before they too can enter paradise. The general view is that the stay in *Gehinnom* is not longer than 11 months and can only be permanent in the case of exceedingly wicked persons." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) "On the subject of temptation and repentance, one of the most important theological doctrines of both the Bible and the Talmud is that if a sinner repents of his bad deeds, God will forgive him." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

How does the Lord emphasize the innocence of Children?

Upon a closer look, the saving nature of Jesus' mission is reflected in his personality. He must have made many friends in the Galilee; after all, thousands followed Him. It is conceivable that the very first ones to gather around Him when He came out or arrived to speak were the little children. He might have had special names or nicknames for them, for he called Simon Bar Jonah, *Peter*, a name denoting rock, "Rocky!" (Maybe Simon's physique was like a rock. Later the "rock" would sink, and Jesus, the Rock of Salvation, would save him.) It was a child of the synagogue leader whom Jesus called "*Talita*," little lamb, as he brought her to life again. The importance of children is emphasized during Passover, likely the best family Jewish holiday. In the Passover manual called the "*Haggadah*" there are artistic creations to capture and anchor a child's memory, bringing our children back to a recollection of the greatest deliverance in our history. The account of baby Moses being saved during an extermination order by the Pharaoh parallels the account of the baby Jesus being saved during an extermination order by King Herod. Moses becomes a "type" of the deliverer. He was raised to deliver Israel from bondage. Jesus of Nazareth raised all people from the bondage of physical and spiritual death. He is the real deliverer. "Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward." (**Psalm 127:3**). In Jewish tradition, the central purpose of marriage is to have children. Children are considered a great blessing; they are the hope and the promise of continuing life. "Responsibilities of a man, a woman and of children are stated in the scriptures, Talmudic and oral traditions. In many religious Jewish families, the father blesses his wife and children on a weekly basis. Women and children are to be cherished and blessed. They have different responsibilities, yet they should share an honorable status without

preference.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

What can I learn from Jewish family duties to children?

“The father's duty is to provide for his children, to give them a proper education, to teach them a trade, and to prepare them for marriage. Some authorities require that the father teach his son to swim. The father is morally accountable for the behavior and the sins of his children until they reach the age of their own responsibility—bat mitzvah at the age of 12 for girls, and bar mitzvah at the age of 13 for boys. The father retains responsibility in legal matters for his son until the age of 20 and for his daughter until she marries.” “Great emphasis is placed on the importance of education and religious training, which should begin early in the home. The mother's role is vital since she is the one who creates the home atmosphere in which basic values are fostered and transmitted. She trains her sons and daughters in *mitzvot* and prepares them for formal education. The rabbis advised parents to be loving but firm in the upbringing of their children, and warned against showing favoritism. Children are obliged to treat their parents (known as *semikhah*).” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

with honor and respect. Children must provide dependent parents with food, clothing and personal attention if it is necessary. This obligation is removed from a daughter when she marries.

“Judaism considers the establishment of a family a holy task. Children are a gift from God and childlessness the greatest misfortune that could befall a marriage. The virtues of domestic bliss have been frequently extolled by the rabbis, and the close-knit Jewish family, where the home has been the center of religious practice and ceremony, has greatly helped the survival of Judaism and preserved the moral integrity of the Jews.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) “In the same way that priests lift their hands in blessing, so parents place their hands on the heads of their children when they bless them. (For example, in the Bible, Jacob blessed his grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh, by placing his hands on their heads.) Placing the hands on another person is symbolic not only of transferring blessing but also of passing on authority. In Talmudic times, scholars received their rabbinic ordination through the symbolic act of placing of the hands