

November 8-14, 2021

Doctrine and Covenants 129–132

“WHEN WE OBTAIN ANY BLESSING FROM GOD, IT IS BY OBEDIENCE”

Summary: *Doctrine and Covenants 129. Instructions given by Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Nauvoo, Illinois, February 9, 1843, making known three grand keys by which the correct nature of ministering angels and spirits may be distinguished. 1–3, There are both resurrected and spirit bodies in heaven; 4–9, Keys are given whereby messengers from beyond the veil may be identified.*

Doctrine and Covenants 130. Items of instruction given by Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Ramus, Illinois, April 2, 1843. 1–3, The Father and the Son may appear personally to men; 4–7, Angels reside in a celestial sphere; 8–9, The celestial earth will be a great Urim and Thummim; 10–11, A white stone is given to all who enter the celestial world; 12–17, The time of the Second Coming is withheld from the Prophet; 18–19, Intelligence gained in this life rises with us in the Resurrection; 20–21, All blessings come by obedience to law; 22–23, The Father and the Son have bodies of flesh and bones.

Doctrine and Covenants 131. Instructions by Joseph Smith the Prophet, given at Ramus, Illinois, May 16 and 17, 1843. 1–4, Celestial marriage is essential to exaltation in the highest heaven; 5–6, How men are sealed up unto eternal life is explained; 7–8, All spirit is matter.

Doctrine and Covenants 132. Revelation given through Joseph Smith the Prophet, at Nauvoo, Illinois, recorded July 12, 1843, relating to the new and everlasting covenant, including the eternity of the marriage covenant and the principle of plural marriage. Although the revelation was recorded in 1843, evidence indicates that some of the principles involved in this revelation were known by the Prophet as early as 1831. See Official Declaration 1. 1–6, Exaltation is gained through the new and everlasting covenant; 7–14, The terms and conditions of that covenant are set forth; 15–20, Celestial marriage and a continuation of the family unit enable men to become gods; 21–25, The strait and narrow way leads to eternal lives; 26–27, The law is given relative to blasphemy against the Holy Ghost; 28–39, Promises of eternal increase and exaltation are made to prophets and Saints in all ages; 40–47, Joseph Smith is given the power to bind and seal on earth and in heaven; 48–50, The Lord seals upon him his exaltation; 51–57, Emma Smith is counseled to be faithful and true; 58–66, Laws governing plural marriage are set forth.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

How are angels as well as spirits of God part of human history?

References to angels are no exceptions in Middle Eastern religions. Both Moslems and Jews have “angels” in their folklore, despite their sparse understanding or acceptance of an afterlife. “Islam, the name given by Muslims to their religion, means ‘submission’ (to the will of God). Muhammad, a seventh century C.E.

merchant of Mecca, and founder of Islam, is considered by believers to have been the last of a line of prophets starting with Adam, and the one who revealed to the world the divine doctrine of the Koran, said to have been given him from God by the **angel** Gabriel. Acceptance of Muhammad's teaching implies belief in Allah as the only god; in the **angels**; in the divine inspiration of the holy books (including the Bible); in the prophets (including such Jewish and Christian figures as Abraham, ‘the merciful friend’

and the first to profess monotheism, Moses, and Jesus); in the day of judgment; and in Allah's predetermination of good and evil. (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**) Another reference to angels is in this example of hospitality. "Abraham, for example, broke off a conversation with God Himself in order to receive guests (the three **angels**), and though weak in health, ran out to meet them, personally washed their feet, served them food, and made them feel welcomed and honored. "In literary tradition the Jewish People is one large family descended from Jacob, who was given the name 'Israel' in honor of his mysterious and victorious struggle with the **angel** of God". "When the first man was to be created, says the Aggadah, God consulted the **angels**. Some favored his creation, because of the love and mercy he would show; others were opposed—because of the falsehood and strife he would stir up. In the end, for reasons best known to Himself, the Holy One decided to create man. "A delightful Talmudic sermon has it that two **angels** accompany a man on his way back from synagogue, one good and one bad. When they arrive home, if the table is laid nicely and all the Sabbath preparations have been made, the good **angel** says, 'May it be so next week'" and the bad **angel** is forced to say, 'Amen!' If, however, the home is not Sabbath-like, the bad **angel** invokes: 'May it be so next week,' and the good **angel** has to answer 'Amen!' This *aggadah* (non-legalistic explanation) is the basis of a special Sabbath hymn recited in the home on return from prayers. It was written by the kabbalists of Safed and welcomes the **angels** into the house." ". . . **angels** are assigned to countries, and thus there are **angels** who must not leave *Erez* (land of) Israel; **angels** walk upright and speak Hebrew; and they have no needs or free will. Man, because he does have free will and must conquer his evil inclination, is considered more important than the **angels**." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

How are angels manifested?

"Whenever God has called and authorized men to perform a work in any age or dispensation, it has been done by revelations, and not by mere impressions, or some undefinable, internal feelings, which leave the mind in uncertainty and doubt. Noah was called by the word of the Lord to be a preacher of righteousness, and to build an ark. Abraham, Lot, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, were called by revelation to perform a great variety of duties. Moses and Aaron were called to the priest's office by the word of the great Jehovah. Seventy elders of Israel were called by revelation to assist Moses. Joshua was appointed by the word of the Lord through Moses to be his successor in leading Israel. The successors of Aaron were appointed to the priesthood by revelation. The Judges of Israel were called by visions, by **angels** and by the inspiration of the Spirit. Samuel was called by the voice of the Lord. And finally, all their officers, wise men and prophets, down to the days of Malachi, were called by new revelation." (**Orson Pratt Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon, No. 2 (1850), p.17**) When angels appeared to frightened shepherds on the hills of Bethlehem, the message was joyful and comforting. "And, lo, the **angel** of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the **angel** said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." (**Luke 2:10-11**) "Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do." (**2 Nephi 32:3**) ". . . While we were thus employed, praying and calling upon the Lord, a messenger from heaven descended in a cloud of light, and having laid his hands upon us, he ordained us, saying: Upon you my fellow servants, in

the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.” (Joseph Smith History 1:68-69)

How can I be like an angel?

“The rabbis of the Talmud described the righteous as individuals whose behavior went beyond merely fulfilling the letter of the law, and as those who were scrupulous in monetary matters. They praised the righteousness of *zaddikim* (righteous ones) as being greater than that of the ministering angels and attributed the continued existence of the world to them. According to an *aggadah* (non-legalistic explanation) in the Babylonian Talmud, in each generation there are exactly 36 righteous men -- *Lamed Vav Zaddikim* -- who received the Divine Presence and whose righteousness sustains the world. In the folklore of the *Kabbalah* and later that of *Hasidism*, the idea of these *lamedvavniks*, as they were commonly called, assumed great significance. They were believed to be anonymous saints who remained unnoticed by other men because of their humble nature and vocations.”

(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) As to the timing of these “angelic” events; “In answer to the question--Is not the reckoning of God's time, **angel's** time, prophet's time, and man's time, according to the planet on which they reside? I answer, Yes. But there are no **angels** who minister to this earth but those who do belong or have belonged to it.” (Doctrine & Covenants 130:4-5)

What have Jews said about the anthropomorphic nature of God and revealing Himself?

“Revelation, the act by which the hidden, unknown God shows himself to man. There is no specific term corresponding to ‘revelation’ in the Bible or in rabbinic Hebrew. God is said to ‘appear’ to the patriarchs and prophets, and the appearances are described by a series of anthropomorphic (i.e., human) expressions and concrete images. Sometimes God manifests Himself ‘in a vision’ or ‘in a dream’ or he appears through the mediation of an angel. However, the Bible emphasizes that no direct, sensory perception of God is possible. Thus, various phrases are used when describing appearances of the Divine, for example *kavod* (‘glory’) or *shekhinah* (Divine Presence) or *davar* (word of God). “Any event in which the Divine presence is felt is called a revelation, but the term is applied more particularly to communications of the Divine will as revealed through God's messengers, the prophets. The Bible itself, and later the rabbis, discerned among the prophets a hierarchy of form and degree, with that of Moses as supreme and unique. At Sinai, the principal revelation of God to man took place. At that time, all the assembled ‘heard’ the Voice of God, and through the mediation of Moses (who, according to the rabbis, functioned there as a scribe), received the complete text of the Torah and its interpretation, the Oral Law.”

(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) Revelation has no time limits. It is a gift of seeing the past, present and future and may result in prophecy. There is also an assigned order for revelation; some revelation is for the people as authorized by the Lord through

His prophet. "The phenomenon of prophecy is founded on the basic belief that God makes His will known to chosen individuals in successive generations. A prophet is a charismatic individual endowed with the divine gift of both receiving and imparting the message of revelation. A prophet does not choose his profession but is chosen, often against his own will, as in the case of Jonah, to convey the word of God to the people regardless of whether they wish to hear it. The prophet, although conscious of being overwhelmed by the divine word and of being involved in an encounter with God, is still capable of reacting and responding, and may even engage God in dialogue." (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

What traditions reflect the eternal nature of marriage?

Marriage in Jewish custom has always been regarded as forever. It may be considered that the ring is used as a symbol of "eternity." In any case, words such as "Until death do you part" are not part of Jewish wedding ceremonies. The ring is examined by a Rabbi and is considered "*kosher*" only if it is unblemished and with no pits. A "*huppah*" or canopy is used, probably to symbolize the Temple. A glass is shattered, symbolizing the destruction of the Temple. Both the bride and groom are addressed by their Hebrew "special names." The "*tallit*" (prayer shawl or robe) is used. To some, it is customary to drape the "*tallit*" over the couple. It may be considered symbolic that the "*tallit*" is the remaining remnant of garments used in the ancient temples. "In Ashkenazi tradition it is not just the bride who wears white on her wedding day. The groom, too, stands under the canopy wearing his white *kitel*, or robe, over his wedding finery. The day of their marriage is a solemn one for the bride and groom. They pray that their past sins will be forgiven, and they can start

their life together afresh. The white of their clothing symbolizes the purity and the forgiveness of sin for which they are hoping. For this reason, a similar garment is used to clothe the dead for burial. The *kitel* therefore also serves to remind the wearer of how brief life is, and of the necessity for atonement." "Judaism believes that man must serve God with his soul and his body. A person's soul is that part of him that loves God and His goodness and wants to be like Him, and a person's body is the physical container of his soul on earth. Nearly all the *mitzvot* which God gave are to be performed with the body. Thus the physical actions of man are sanctified. This applies to all the physical aspects of life: even sex when it is practiced in the proper framework, marriage, is in accordance with the will of God and is a *mitzvah* (blessing, commandment). "Detailed legislation concerning sexual behavior can be found in the Bible as well as in the Talmud and subsequent rabbinic literature. Celibacy (complete abstinence from all sexual activity) is discouraged as an unnatural state and detrimental to the human personality. The primary restriction of sexual activity in Jewish law is that it should take place within marriage, as an expression of love between husband and wife as well as out of a desire to fulfill God's commandments. An element of holiness is added by the laws of *niddah* (separation during the period of menstruation) which ensure that the couple does not indulge in sex on impulse but rather directs the act to holiness." (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

How is marriage an image of God's and Israel's relationship?

Jeremiah used the favorite image of an earlier prophet, Hosea, comparing the relationship between God and Israel to that of husband and wife. Israel, in not keeping its responsibilities, deserted the true faith

and had become like an unfaithful wife. Both husband and wife have a commitment to each other that should be like God's and Israel's dedication to one another, forever. "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. Yet, as Judaism spread without the guidance of living prophets, some discrimination became evident. "The woman's legal status, as defined in the Bible, is generally the same as that of man, as is her moral responsibility but certain laws do discriminate both for and against her. For example, special attention was paid to injury suffered by a pregnant woman, and the conditions applicable to a woman sold into slavery were far better than those of a male slave. The owner was expected to marry her himself or have one of his sons marry her and he had to treat her as a daughter-in-law." "The strong Jewish tradition about women places them on a lofty pedestal. "It is said that a man without a wife lives without joy, blessing and good, and that a man should love his wife as himself and respect her more than himself. Women have greater faith than men and greater powers of discernment. The *Torah*, the greatest joy of the rabbis, is frequently pictured as a woman and is represented as God's daughter and Israel's bride." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

Who holds the sealing powers and how have they been used?

Since Hebrew is such a small language,

knowing the multiple meanings of words can improve our perception. For example, "to seal or the sealing powers;" to seal up, fasten up by sealing, to lock up and to be stopped. The Apostles and Prophets of God have and do have these powers. Isaiah speaks clearly about this within the five powerful verses in his twenty-second chapter. The term "house of David" honors him who purchased "Temple Square" and gathered the materials to build the "House of the Lord." The sealing powers of the Lord are referred to as "he shall open" and "he shall shut." The Lord will be nailed surely (there is written and archaeological evidence that the Romans nailed in the hands and in the wrists to make the crucifixion stronger). The "Glorious throne of His Father's House" means the Lord was willing to take the sins of all mankind upon Himself. We are blessed in that we can "fasten our sins" upon him. Apparently, in ancient times these sins were symbolically collected, small sins in cups, larger ones in flagons, so that they could be disposed of. Sometimes this was done by placing them on a lamb or goat and letting it escape out the Gate of Mercy (as previously mentioned, also known as the Gate of Forgiveness and the Gate Beautiful) to die on its own. "And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall the nail that is

fastened in the sure place be removed, and be cut down, and fall; and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off: for the LORD hath spoken it.” **(Isaiah 22:21-25)** In response to the faithlessness of Israel, the “sealing” prophet, Elijah, used his God-given authority to seal the heavens and stop the rains. The physical phenomenon of drought and losing their crops reflected the spiritual phenomenon of disregarding

the still small voice. “Sealing” is a covenant referred to by Nehemia; “And because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it.” **(Nehemia 9:38)** The keys given to the leading servants of the Lord include this ability, both physically and spiritually.