

October 20-26, 2021

## Doctrine and Covenants 121–123

“O GOD, WHERE ART THOU?”

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### Summary:

*Doctrine and Covenants 121. Prayer and prophecies written by Joseph Smith the Prophet in an epistle to the Church while he was a prisoner in the jail at Liberty, Missouri, dated March 20, 1839. The Prophet and several companions had been months in prison. Their petitions and appeals directed to the executive officers and the judiciary had failed to bring them relief.*

*1–6, The Prophet pleads with the Lord for the suffering Saints;*

*7–10, The Lord speaks peace to him; 11–17, Cursed are all those who raise false cries of transgression against the Lord’s people;*

*18–25, They will not have right to the priesthood and will be damned;*

*26–32, Glorious revelations promised those who endure valiantly;*

*33–40, Why many are called and few are chosen;*

*41–46, The priesthood should be used only in righteousness.*

*Doctrine and Covenants 122. The word of the Lord to Joseph Smith the Prophet, while a prisoner in the jail at Liberty, Missouri. This section is an excerpt from an epistle to the Church dated March 20, 1839 (see the heading to section 121).*

*1–4, The ends of the earth will inquire after the name of Joseph Smith;*

*5–7, All his perils and travails will give him experience and be for his good;*

*8–9, The Son of Man has descended below them all.*

*Doctrine and Covenants 123. Duty of the Saints in relation to their persecutors, as written by Joseph Smith the Prophet while a prisoner in the jail at Liberty, Missouri. This section is an excerpt from an epistle to the Church dated March 20, 1839 (see the heading to section 121).*

*1–6, The Saints should collect and publish an account of their sufferings and persecutions;*

*7–10, The same spirit that established the false creeds also leads to persecution of the Saints;*

*11–17, Many among all sects will yet receive the truth.*

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### Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

### What can I learn from the sufferings of Job?

The suffering of  
Joseph Smith in

Liberty Jail was part of becoming a special witness of Jesus. “Thou art not yet as Job; thy friends do not contend against thee, neither charge thee with transgression, as they did Job.” (**Doctrine and Covenants 121:10**) The Jews read the Book of Jonah on Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) every Year. The question then arises about the purpose of such

intense worship at the “Day of Atonement,” one of the holiest periods of a Jewish Year: “The Day of Atonement is the last of the Ten Days of Penitence which begin with *Rosh Ha-Shanah*, and is the climax of the repentance and soul-searching incumbent on every Jew during this period.” “The essence of the day and the reasons for its special prayers and ceremony are expressed in the *Torah*: “For on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins shall ye be clean before the Lord.” The *Torah* commands that on the tenth of

*Tishrei* every Jew must “afflict his soul,” which is understood to mean that eating, drinking, wearing shoes made of leather, washing, anointing the body and marital relations are forbidden.” “In the times of the Temple in Jerusalem, the ritual performed by the high priest was the central feature of the Day of Atonement. The high priest, representative of the people, carried out the special service known as *avodah* (work). He took two identical goats and cast lots to see which would be sacrificed and which would be sent to *Azazel* (demon or evil spirit). After sacrificing one of them, he sprinkled its blood on the altar and then confessed the sins of the people while placing his hands on the head of the live goat. Then the goat was sent into the wilderness...” (to die on its own, carrying the sins of the congregation). (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

### **What is the “door” I must enter for atonement?**

To better understand the Savior’s atonement, let us go back in time. “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” (John 10:9) Jewish tradition indicates that this “scapegoat” was tied with a red ribbon and led through the “Gate of Mercy,” also known as the “Gate of Forgiveness” and the “Gate Beautiful.” It was led into the wilderness to “die on its own,” “bearing the sins of the people.” What is even more interesting is that on this day, the Book of Job is read in its entirety. Jonah’s account is a simple chiasmus—a lesson in opposition. Jonah was sent “up and north” to preach repentance. Instead, he went “down and south.” He went “down into the sea,” “down to his death.” Yet, he was saved. He came back up after three nights and three days. That was the only sign Jesus of Nazareth gave the scribes and Pharisees of his Messianic role as their Redeemer, the author of the plan of atonement. “Then certain of the scribes

and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign. There shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” (Matthew 12:38-40) Carrying such intense Gethsemane suffering, the Savior was crucified and placed in the nearby tomb for three nights—two Sabbaths plus another night. The first Sabbath was Passover, a “High Day.” The second Sabbath was the regular “Friday Night Sabbath.” What we call Saturday was the third night. “The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day, (for that Sabbath day was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.” (John 19:31) The message of the atonement is symbolic and real. The one scapegoat carrying the sins of the people is led away; in His mercy He forgives us. Believing and knowing that is beautiful. After three nights, on the third day, completing the atonement, He arose!

### **Who are those who “Sink to New Heights?”**

On one occasion, a professor of religion went to the Western (wailing) Wall, microphone in hand, and began asking religious Jews why they were chosen. One responded, “We are chosen to suffer.” Later, speaking to the Jerusalem Branch, he made a point about the Lord’s suffering. Yet, the difficulties, calamities, and sufferings of the Jews will ultimately bring them closer to the Lord who covenanted to remember and save His people. Sufferings bring us closer to Him and those having the highest responsibilities of serving Him often suffer

more. They “sink to new heights.” “And if thou shouldst be cast into the pit, or into the hands of murderers, and the sentence of death passed upon thee; if thou be cast into the deep; if the billowing surge conspire against thee; if fierce winds become thine enemy; if the heavens gather blackness, and all the elements combine to hedge up the way; and above all, if the very jaws of hell shall gape open the mouth wide after thee, know thou, my son, that all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good. The Son of Man hath descended below them all. Art thou greater than he?” (**Doctrine and Covenants 122:7-8**)

### **How significant is documenting “false witness?”**

False witness is mentioned often in the Bible. It is always something bad. “Thou shalt not bear false . . . is the ninth of the Ten Commandments. (**Exodus 20:16**). False witness, or a false report, is being allied with the wicked (**Exodus 23:1**). It is equated with violence. (**Psalms 27:12**), (**Proverbs 25:18**) and discord (**Proverbs 6:19**). False witness is lying. (**Proverbs 14:5**) “The (Jewish) court warns the witnesses that bearing false witness is a serious crime and each witness is investigated and interrogated separately in order to make sure that he is not lying. If it is established that the witnesses have testified falsely, they are disqualified from ever bearing witness again and, under certain circumstances receive . . . the same punishment the accused would have received had he been convicted. If one witness should contradict another, or say something contradicted by fact—the testimony is rejected. The Bible declares that in order to convict, the evidence must be given by at least two witnesses. However, in certain cases such as those requiring an oath, a single witness is valid. A testimony must be given by the witness himself and not by another who says that he heard such a testimony. Acceptable witnesses who sign a document render it valid. (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

### **How is the power of the priesthood to be manifested?**

The restored priesthoods give worthy human beings the power to act in the name of God, His names include Merciful, Gracious, Help or Helper, Exemplar, and Forgiveness. Exercising the priesthood represents Him and compels us to act like Him. “The exercise of mercy is an obligation for all Jews. By this it is meant that they must act with compassion and forgiveness towards all mankind and

perform deeds of charity and kindness. This quality is an essential characteristic of God who is known as *Rahum* (Merciful) and, in accordance with the tradition which sets as man's goal the imitation of God: 'As He is merciful, so be you merciful.' Just as God is bound by His covenant of mercy with His people, so is the Jew bound by specific commandments to act mercifully to the oppressed, the alien, the orphan, the widow, and indeed, every living creature." "The Hebrew word for justice is *zedek*, and indicative of Judaism's attitude is the fact that another form of the same root *zedakah*, means 'charity.' For justice must be tempered with mercy and indeed the main attribute of God is His integration of justice and mercy. Yet another Hebrew word derived from the same root is *zaddik*, which means 'righteous.' The righteous man is one who is both just and merciful. "The stress placed upon this quality is evident both in the many charitable institutions existing in Jewish communal life, and in the daily prayers which implore God to deal compassionately even with the undeserving man. Human beings are frail, imperfect creatures constantly open to error, and so they are totally dependent on God's mercy."  
**(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)**

### **How can I have the constant companionship of a member of the Godhead?**

The concept of the "Holy Ghost" is unclear for Jews, yet the Hebrew term "Ruach Elohim" means the Spirit of God. The Hebrew word for breath and wind is closely related to spirit. There are several Biblical verses using these words. One of my favorites is in the vision of dry bones. "So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise,

and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them. Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus, saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So, I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army . . . And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD." **(Ezekiel 37:7-14)** Ezekiel spoke of breath and of wind bringing life into a dead skeleton. As the sticks (*ETZ-emet*) of the body are clothed again with flesh and come alive again, so shall the stick (*ETZ*) of Judah, the dead skeleton of a once true and living religion come together with the stick of Joseph. This symbolizes the true religion and with the "breath" of the Lord (His spirit), a resurrection and a new life begins. Each member of the Godhead, Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost work together for our salvation and ultimately, to our resurrection. They "breath" on us!

### **How beautiful are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings?**

My home in Jerusalem is close to where Isaiah lived, walked and bore testimony of the Savior. Isaiah, who knew the mountains of Judah, also knew the Lord and combined the majesty of both in teaching us about the Savior. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good

tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" **(Isaiah 52:7)** Looking at the sacred event that redeemed us from the sins of life, bruises of experience, captivity of conscience, blindness of bigotry, hurt of hearts broken, poverty of stinginess and the imprisonment of self-pity, we are drawn to the Mount of Olives. Two thousand years ago, He sank below all things, experiencing deeper depths than we would ever reach so that we would never have to. Bleeding from every pore of His body, he was stained for us. How

beautiful upon the Mount of Olives are the feet of Him who brings good tidings. Good tidings are the "good news," the gospel of joy. Isaiah wrote the words of the Savior's testimony, seven hundred years before the Savior would speak them. "The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;" **(Isaiah 61:1)**