



## *A Message from the Quorum of Twelve Apostles*

# WHY JOSEPH?

Joseph!

Why do they always talk about Joseph?

Who is Joseph?

What does Joseph have to do with Jesus Christ?

Joseph was the eleventh son of Jacob (Israel), and it is prophesied that his descendants will play an essential role in bringing the whole House of Israel to Christ in the latter days. We know that we are commissioned to first bring Christ's Gospel to Joseph and then, with those of them who will believe, to work to the completion of God's plan.

Through faith and repentance, each of us can access eternal salvation - God's purpose in His plan. Realization of this grace is a profound individual experience, unlike anything else anyone might encounter in this life. But every person in this world – past, present, and future – is the reason for Jesus's love and sacrifice for redemption from sin. Stop for a minute, and contemplate that this involves billions of souls, no one being omitted from the **binary sorting** under the great plan of God which will result in eternal life in heaven for as many as will serve Him but in perdition for those who will not. Knowing what we do, how can we not fully engage God's great work?

Some have asked: "When will God's plan begin to unfold?" In truth, this plan has been underway since Adam and has passed through several eras. **Today we are standing on the inside threshold of the era when the prophecies concerning Joseph will intersect with the restoration of Jesus's Gospel in the hands of believing Gentiles - His church - linking indivisibly to fulfill God's plan to restore the House of Israel and to expose all nations to Christ.** As amazing as our individual salvations are, we ought to be equally impressed to know that God wants each of us to play our parts as His plan rolls on.

Scriptures testify of God's great work through the ages. Think about those who have been chosen by God to fulfill their given roles during every era of time. They have all been instruments in His plan. Many were given prophetic windows to the future which we are blessed to read today being encouraged both by prophecies that have been fulfilled as well as by others which remain as promises. The gifts of the Spirit behind those blessings are still among us as part of the Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ. Through all of this, people have always had free will to choose obedience or not. We read of poor choices leading to detours, temporary domination by agents of the enemy

of our souls, even disappearance of whole nations. But throughout scriptural history, we encounter faithful individuals who never doubted the Lord's omnipotence and commitment to fulfill His plan. We can be today's faithful ones. A review of scripture from the beginning is the best way to gain perspective on Joseph and where we stand today. Doing that completely would be a bigger task than can fit into this message, so let's briefly remember a few of those who God chose and the roles they played in His great work.

In **Adam**, God **set up mankind's special status** giving him dominance with only a single obligation. While Adam's fall changed that status, it also **triggered God's entire plan to have men consciously serve Him**, winning their salvation instead of living a very limited existence of blissful ignorance. *Adam fell that men might be...* (see Genesis Chapters 1-4; 2 Nephi Chapter 2). Because of Adam's fall, **Jesus Christ became mankind's hope** to be restored to God's presence.

With **Noah**, it was **established that man could find God's grace** even while His disappointment in man's wickedness was so great that He repented of ever having created man on the earth. He chose Noah to build an ark whereby **a remnant of the earth's species would be preserved** to repopulate (see Genesis Chapters 5-9).

God promised **Abraham** that his **posterity would be the source of blessing for all the families of the earth**. This blessing, of course, refers to Jesus Christ who would be born as the son of Abraham's descendants. The development of Abraham and his posterity through his son, **Isaac**, and grandson, **Jacob**, is a story of God's Spirit in action. The promises were repeated both to Isaac and later to Jacob – who became known as **Israel**. In a dream, **God promised Israel**: "... *I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.*" (Genesis 28:13-15). Exactly the promises God made to Abraham (see Genesis Chapters 11-28).

Israel (Jacob) had twelve sons and one daughter. As this family grew, the House of Israel became significant. In Jacob's eyes, his eleventh son, **Joseph**, stood out and was loved more than the other children. Meanwhile, **God revealed to Joseph that he really was a person chosen by God**. He saw in dreams that his siblings and his parents would make obeisance to him. Even his father took pause at that revelation, but his brothers, who were already jealous, became intensely resentful and sold him into slavery. Nevertheless, Joseph, while in Egypt enduring slavery, temptation, imprisonment, and abandonment, remained a true man of faith endowed with God's gifts. Ultimately, the prophetic dreams of his youth were fulfilled. Some key points that are important in setting the prophetic template that matches latter day prophecies to be fulfilled (See Genesis Chapters 37-48):

- Joseph became separated from the rest of the House of Israel.

- Joseph suffered greatly having lost everything and being imprisoned in a far land.
- Through it all Joseph remained faithful to God without compromise.
- God's spiritual gifts to Joseph led him to become second only to Pharaoh in Egypt.
- Meanwhile, Israel and family fell into desperation during famine unknowingly appealing to Joseph (whom they believed had died) for natural salvation.
- **It was Joseph who saved the House of Israel and became reunited with them.**

The House of Israel remained in Egypt and thrived there. However, as generations passed and the memory of Joseph faded, they were no longer welcome friends but were forced into servitude under rigorous conditions, including the Pharaoh's attempts at genocide. God chose **Moses** to **lead Israel back to the land that He had promised** to Abraham. God treated Moses like no other prophet in that he spoke to him directly and knew him face to face. God gave **Moses** the **Ten Commandments and the Laws** under which Israel was commanded to live. Under these laws and Moses's inspired leadership, **Israel grew to become the great nation that God promised to Abraham**. No external obstacles could hinder their progress. Their army numbered over 600,000 and marched in the strength of the Lord over all the peoples who stood in their way. However, internal murmuring and rebellion among the people provoked the Lord greatly, causing Him to lead them in a very circuitous route to the promised land. (See Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy)

Let's pause our review for a moment. At this point (Moses), it has been roughly two and a half millennia since Adam fell, including almost 500 years since God spoke to Abraham, and it will be almost another one and a half millennia before Christ is born. As observers, we might say that God's plan is unfolding very slowly. Yet, upon looking closer at important details, we will agree that there are points where things move very fast – even instantly. For example:

- One day immortal Adam dwelt in Eden without a care in the world; the next he is out, destined to die, and left to provide for himself from ground which has been cursed.
- One day the earth was corrupt and filled with violence; a few months later only Noah's family remains along with the animals he has saved on the ark.
- One day Abraham's wife Sarah was a near-centenarian who had never born a child, struggling to believe the promises God made to her husband; the next day she has conceived the son who will inherit those promises.
- **One day Joseph was a forlorn prisoner with no earthly hope of release; the next day he is overseer of all the wealth of Egypt – second only to the Pharaoh himself – positioned to save the House of Israel from perishing in famine.**

We might conclude that key turning points in God's plan tend to occur suddenly and rapidly, not necessarily without prediction but nonetheless catching many by surprise. Keep this thought in mind.

During the next eight centuries, the House of Israel faced external enemies while continuing to waiver between faith and faithlessness before the Lord. God chose men – prophets, judges, and even kings – to try to keep them faithful. But the overall spiritual condition of Israel continued to

decline. The kingdom of Israel divided into two kingdoms: Israel comprised of 10 tribes and Judah comprised of Benjamin and Judah. Because of continuing disobedience, two huge events resulted in the House of Israel losing control of their promised land and suffering again under other oppressive nations.

- During the 8th Century BC, the **Assyrians carried off the people of Israel** northward to Assyria as slaves. Eventually, they were dispersed further. Those ten tribes became lost to humanity. Only God knows where they are today (see II Kings Chapter 12). It is noteworthy that the same Assyrians could not prevail against Judah at that time as their good King Hezekiah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. The angel of the Lord slew 185,000 men of the Assyrian army in one night thereby ending the siege of Jerusalem (see Chapters 18 and 19).
- **Judah remained** intact, but after Hezekiah passed, his son became king and reigned for 55 years leading his people back to rampant pagan religious practices as had been in place before Hezekiah. The people of Judah offended the Lord so greatly that He determined to let Judah fall into the hands of their enemies. Many prophets, including Jeremiah and Ezekiel, foresaw that **God's wrath would render Jerusalem desolate, the people to be carried away**. This transpired early in the 6th Century BC (see Chapters 20-25). (Eventually, a remnant of Judah was allowed to return to Jerusalem and rebuild, but the domination of other nations continued. By the time Jesus was born, the Romans ruled over Judah and the land of Israel.)

Meanwhile, **Lehi**, another prophet, was also given to warn Jerusalem of the pending destruction. **Lehi was a descendant of Joseph**. God led Lehi to take his family and escape the demise of his homeland, **thus preserving a remnant of Joseph separate** from the rest of the House of Israel. Lehi's youngest son (at the time), **Nephi**, believed all the revelations God gave to his father and began to receive his own experiences. God led their party to His choicest promised land – the Americas. We read of their journey, their establishment in the American continents, and the development of their people over the next 10 Centuries in their record: *The Book of Mormon*.

From the destruction of Jerusalem forward, **God's works are recorded in two records**. In the Bible, we read of Jesus' birth, ministry, death, and resurrection. We read of the hope of salvation He brought. We read of the works of His followers. Eventually we read that the Gospel spread from Jerusalem to the Gentiles in surrounding lands. In The Book of Mormon, we read of the establishment of Christ's church among the Seed of Joseph in the Americas even before His birth. We read that His followers were made aware of His birth and His death. We read that **Jesus visited the descendants of Joseph in the Americas after His death and presented His entire ministry and Gospel – setting up His Church among them as He had in Jerusalem. Both records tell of the apostasy wherein God's authority would be removed from the earth and foretell the restoration that would occur in the latter days when the Gentiles would bring Joseph back to Christ.**

As of today, the Restored Gospel is in the hands of believing Gentiles: The Church of Jesus Christ. That **restoration occurred on this land, where the remnant of Joseph remains** – their

traditions include apostate religions as well as remnants of spiritual history reflecting the time when Jesus visited their ancestors telling them of their promises.

When **Jesus** visited the remnant of **Joseph** after His crucifixion, he told them of the latter days, the Gentiles' role, and their restoration. For example, see 3 Nephi 21:1-7: *And ... I give unto you a sign, that ye may know the time when these things shall be about to take place - that I shall gather in, from their long dispersion, my people, O house of Israel, and shall establish again among them my Zion; ... when these things which I declare unto you, and ...which shall be given unto you of the Father, shall be made known unto the Gentiles that they may know concerning this people (Joseph, the native peoples of the Americas) who are a remnant of the house of Jacob, and concerning this my people who shall be scattered by them; Verily, verily, I say unto you, when these things shall be made known unto them of the Father, and shall come forth of the Father, from them unto you... that these things might come forth from them unto a remnant of your seed, that the covenant of the Father may be fulfilled which he hath covenanted with his people, O house of Israel; Therefore, when these works and the works which shall be wrought among you hereafter shall come forth from the Gentiles, unto your seed which shall dwindle in unbelief because of iniquity; For thus it behooveth the Father that it should come forth from the Gentiles, that he may show forth his power unto the Gentiles, for this cause that the Gentiles, if they will not harden their hearts, that they may repent and come unto me and be baptized in my name and know of the true points of my doctrine, that they may be numbered among my people, O house of Israel; And when these things come to pass that thy seed shall begin to know these things - it shall be a sign unto them, that they may know that the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he hath made unto the people who are of the house of Israel.*

We can see that the Lord has never turned His eyes away from mankind and that He has kept a remnant of Joseph to be used again in His great work. Throughout the ages, the great plan of salvation has been grinding forward. Can you grasp the "Great Work of the Lord?" Can you form a mental picture of progress through the centuries leading to our time? Can you see why Joseph is so prominent in the work of the Church today? As He did in eras past, the Lord continues to reveal His will to the Church to encourage us and to direct us so that we can fulfill our roles in His great work and share in the inheritance of His promises to Israel. We can trust that He will bless us as we endeavor to remain sanctified and to focus upon Jesus Christ and His plan for all.

In the love of God,

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