



A Message from the Quorum of Twelve Apostles

GET REAL!

A common expression, usually spoken when one or more persons in a discussion seem to be expressing ideas or holding to hopes and beliefs that are based in extreme unlikelihood. The strange fact is that anyone can have his own version of reality. One person's reality might seem complete fantasy to another.

How can that be? The dictionary definition of reality seems pretty straightforward:

- the quality or fact of being real
- something that is real; fact
- the quality of being true to life

Basic understanding of natural reality relies upon our physical senses. Something is real to everyone who can see, touch, hear, taste, or smell it. At the next level, something we cannot see, touch, hear, taste, or smell - such as gravity - is real if, using those same five senses, we can witness its effects in some consistent way. Accordingly, starting in early childhood, each of us has developed a personal belief of reality from life experiences.

Another level of widely accepted reality is based on data and science, including mathematical calculations. These versions of reality are generally accepted for long periods of time, but they also are vulnerable to new discoveries and updated calculations that resolve defects found in previously theorized truths. (E.g., At a time in the past, the accepted reality was that the sun revolves around the earth.)

Society tends to accept that which arises out of currently available data and the prevailing conventions used for interpretation and calculation. An example of this is current conventional wisdom which accepts that it has been 13.8 billion years since the Big Bang. Note that, by far, the majority of people who accept this as reality cannot begin to expound on the various rules of physics and mathematics that are used to prove it. Nevertheless, it remains the commonly understood reality. (This writing is neither meant to support nor dispute this. That is an argument for another day.)

This brings us to another form of accepted reality which is based on what "everyone" else believes. This may be the most powerful version of truth and can be dangerous when influencers persuade people to accept false realities, often using simple twists of the truth – additions and omissions –

that fall favorably upon itching ears. Disciples of these influencers tend to persuade others until significant segments of society accept a false reality just because so many others seem to accept it. History is replete with examples of this kind of false reality and the damage that can be done. Extreme manifestations of this were seen in nazism and various racist practices that have prevailed in segments of society. As the Apostle Paul prophesied, the Apostasy sprung out of such distortion of truth. (See II Timothy 4:3-4)

Examining this last form of reality, we ought to recognize the great overlap between our perceptions of natural reality and spiritual reality. In fact, there is only one reality: In the beginning God created...and God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. (Genesis 1:1-31) From the most basic fact discerned by our physical senses to the most elegant theory backed only by sparse data and complex calculations, all of natural reality is merely a subset of God's reality. Although we tend to be profoundly confident in the nature of things (natural reality), everything is subordinate to the will of God. As Moses stood amazed before the bush that burned continuously without being consumed, he enquired as to the identity of the voice that called out and instructed him, and the Lord answered: I AM THAT I AM. (Exodus 3:2-15)

At another time and place, from the midst of impenetrable darkness which covered this land for three days upon His crucifixion, Jesus introduced himself to the Nephites: Behold, I am Jesus Christ the Son of God. I created the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. I was with the Father from the beginning. I am in the Father, and the Father in me; and in me hath the Father glorified His name...I am the light and life of the world. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. (3 Nephi 9:15-18)

God made all the rules of nature, and He supersedes them whenever He wants to. We know this, but it is no small thing to maintain within our hearts and minds the reality that is God's truth. Peter, as he actually walked on water, struggled to dwell within that level of reality which empowered him to do so. The boisterous sea drew his mind back into the boundaries of natural reality; dominated by fear, he could not continue to believe, and he began to sink. Note that, even with his diminished faith, he still called on Jesus to save him, and Jesus, while catching him, admonished: O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? (Matthew 14:22-33)

It is clear that faith is not just a yes or no but a matter of how much the mind of Christ dominates the carnal mind within each of us. (1 Corinthians 2:16) It is our faith or lack thereof that determines each of our personal versions of reality. In other words, what we believe or how completely we believe in Christ determines how closely our perception of what is real matches the Lord's truth.

Faith being the key, Alma laid out a wonderful template to follow in order to develop faith from just a desire to believe until continuous nourishment of the word of God within us takes root and grows like a tree springing up to everlasting life. (Alma 32) One of the implications of this chapter is that we should not be satisfied with reaching the next level of belief/faith but rather regard each step upward in faith as having acquired new knowledge (something discernable, a reality), a solid basis from which to aspire to the next level.

Perfection being the goal, Paul wrote to the Philippians: Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after,...forgetting those things which are behind, and

reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:12-14)

It is this engagement, this faithful desire and pursuit of greater alignment with the Lord, that enables us to envision our salvation and the fulfillment of God's promises as part of our own spiritually enhanced reality. What level can we aspire to? Well, remember the Brother of Jared asking for the Lord's touch upon the stones he had prepared, God said: ...never has man come before me with such exceeding faith as thou hast; for were it not so ye could not have seen my finger...(Ether 2:9)

Brothers, Sisters, and friends, we live in an era of time that has been prophesied. Although we cannot pinpoint precisely where we are in the timing of God's plan, we know we are very much closer to fulfillment than were those of whom we read in scriptures. Moreover, we are actually witnessing many elements in the sequence of events prophesied in God's word, and He has been generous with dreams and revelations encouraging us to prepare our hearts right now.

Our June Apostles meeting was blessed with manifestations of the Spirit of God providing clear direction for the Church which the Apostles embraced thankfully for immediate follow up. Like the "cloud of witnesses" in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, we have every reason to be living the life of the believers. Rather than being bound by the limits of natural understanding, they received a good report through their faith. Despite not having received the promises during their natural lifetimes, their reality was aligned with God's such that they were able to see those promises afar off. (Hebrews 11) Wherefore...let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. (Hebrews 12:1-2)

We are reminded of an old hymn, number 194 in the *Saints Hymnal*:

*Tho' life's changing values may vanish away,
and things that were real become dreams,
How blessed to walk with the Lord day by day,
And know He is real as He seems.*

***Jesus is real to me, Yes, Jesus is real to me; I never will doubt Him, Nor journey
without Him, For He is so real to me.***

Jesus, His kingdom, His miracles, and all of His promises are reality! Let's get real!

In the love of God,

The Quorum of Twelve Apostles

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