

Praise to the Man

President M. Russell Ballard—Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—October 2023

1 How abundantly blessed we are to know all that we know because we have Joseph Smith, the prophet of this last dispensation of time.

2 I'd like to share with you some things that have been in my mind. I have seemed to have the Prophet Joseph in my mind the last few months. I've sat and contemplated his glorious responsibility in becoming the prophet of this, the dispensation of the fulness of times.

3 Because Jesus, our Savior and our Redeemer, spoke to the boy Joseph and opened up this dispensation of time that we now live in, we sing, "Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah!" ("Praise to the Man," *Hymns*, no. 27). We thank the Lord for Joseph Smith and for his courage to go into that grove of trees in 1820, near his home in Palmyra, New York.

I've been thinking about all of the marvelous things that we know and all of the things that we have. My beloved brothers and sisters, my testimony to you this morning is how abundantly blessed we are to know all that we know because we have Joseph Smith, the prophet of this last dispensation of time.

4 We have an understanding of the purpose of life, of who we are.

We know who God is; we know who the Savior is because we have Joseph, who went into a grove of trees as a boy, seeking forgiveness for his sins.

I think it's one of the most glorious and wonderful things that anybody in this world can know—that our Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ have revealed Themselves in this latter day and that Joseph has been raised up to restore the fulness of the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ.

5 We have the Book of Mormon. What a marvelous and wonderful gift the Book of Mormon is to the membership of the Church. It is another witness, another testament that Jesus is the Christ. We have it because Joseph was worthy to go get the plates, was inspired by heaven to translate them by the gift and power of God and to give the book to the world.

6 Though my message this morning is simple, it's deep, and it's full of love for the Prophet Joseph Smith and for all of those, my brothers and sisters, who have sustained him and were willing to sustain him in his youth.

7 I marvel, and I'm sure that many of you do too, at how blessed we are to know what we know about our purpose in life, why we are here, what we should be trying to do and accomplish in our daily lives. We're in the process of trying to prepare ourselves, a day at a time, to be a little better, be a little kinder, be a little more prepared for that day, which will surely come, when we shall pass back into the presence of our Heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

A The Last Dispensation

The question might well be asked, Why does freedom need to be restored as a forerunner to a new dispensation of the gospel of Jesus Christ? The answer is a simple one, for well the Lord knows that without the spirit of freedom in the souls of men, there could be no willing response to the gospel plan. For it is in the culture of freedom and the use of agency in that freedom that men come to know the difference between good and evil. This progress leads to yearnings in the hearts of good men, and eventually to gospel dispensations. This is the pattern to be noted down through the era of the historical writings.

The continued longing for freedom led directly to the period known as the Reformation, which led to the foundation of America and the framing of the Constitution, concerning which the Lord has said:

"According to the laws and constitution of the people, which I have suffered to be established, and should be maintained for the rights and protection of all flesh, according to just and holy principles." ([D&C 101:77.](#))

All of this in its proper order leads directly to the greatest period in the experience of man upon the earth, a new dispensation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This period was foreseen and referred to by the apostle Peter as the times of restitution or restoration of all things involving a new gospel dispensation. Here are his words as he speaks also of the coming of the Lord at this particular time:

"And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

"Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." ([Acts 3:20–21.](#))

The significant feature of the present dispensation was the inauguration of the same by the personal visitation of God the Father and his Beloved Son, Jesus Christ, referred to in the sacred historical writings of this church as the Sacred Grove appearance, which occurred in the spring of 1820 near Palmyra, New York, 152 years ago.

Upon this occasion Joseph Smith became the first of the prophets of this new dispensation of the gospel; and by virtue of divine instruction given then and subsequent appearances of the Son of God and certain ancient prophets who hold keys of understanding pertaining to the gospel plan, he has caused to be established the kingdom of God upon the earth, that any of mankind may come unto it.

The characteristics of this dispensation, as compared with other dispensations, are unique in that it is the last of all dispensations, concerning which the Prophet Joseph Smith received this divine information as contained in a revelation:

"Unto whom I have committed the keys of my kingdom, and a dispensation of the gospel for the last times; and for the fulness of times, in the which I will gather together in one all things, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth." ([D&C 27:13.](#))

The apostle Paul, writing unto the Ephesian saints, speaks also of this important final dispensation in connection with the inheritances that will come to the faithful. I quote what he said and must have seen in vision:

"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him." ([Eph. 1:10.](#))

Alvin R. Dyer 'The Last Dispensation' (April 1972)

<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1972/04/the-last-dispensation>

B Joseph Smith holds the keys of the dispensation of the fulness of times.

"I ... hold the keys of the last kingdom, in which is the dispensation of the fullness of all things spoken by the mouths of all the holy Prophets since the world began, under the sealing power of the Melchizedek Priesthood."

History of the Church, 6:78

"Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was. I suppose that I was ordained to this very office in that Grand Council. It is the testimony that I want that I am God's servant, and this people His people. The ancient prophets declared that in the last days the God of heaven should set up a kingdom which should never be destroyed, nor left to other people. ...

"I calculate to be one of the instruments of setting up the kingdom of Daniel by the word of the Lord, and I intend to lay a foundation that will revolutionize the whole world."

History of the Church, 6:364–65

"I have the whole plan of the kingdom before me, and no other person has."

History of the Church, 5:139

Lucy Mack Smith was present when Joseph Smith preached in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1832. She recalled these words of the Prophet: "I myself hold the keys of this last dispensation, and I forever will hold them in time and in eternity. So set your hearts at rest, for all is well."

Lucy Mack Smith, "The History of Lucy Smith, Mother of the Prophet," 1844–45 manuscript, book 13, p. 5

Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith
'Chapter 44: The Restoration of All Things: The Dispensation of the Fulness of Times'

[<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/teachings-joseph-smith/chapter-44>]

C The Work of the Church during the Millennium

There will be two great works for members of the Church during the Millennium: temple work and missionary work. Temple work involves the ordinances that are necessary for exaltation. These include baptism, the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the temple ordinances—the endowment, temple marriage, and the sealing together of family units.

Many people have died without receiving these ordinances. People on the earth must perform these ordinances for them. This work is now being done in the temples of the Lord. There is too much work to finish before the Millennium begins, so it will be completed during that time. Resurrected beings will help us correct the mistakes we have made in doing research concerning our dead ancestors. They will also help us find the information we need to complete our records.

[<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-principles/chapter-45-the-millennium>]

<https://8ward.eu>

D This final dispensation is of such vast importance that it requires the complete, unselfish dedication of the Saints.

In September 1840, Joseph Smith and his counselors in the First Presidency made the following declaration to the members of the Church: "The work of the Lord in these last days, is one of vast magnitude and almost beyond the comprehension of mortals. Its glories are past description, and its grandeur unsurpassable. It is the theme which has animated the bosom of prophets and righteous men from the creation of the world down through every succeeding generation to the present time; and it is truly the dispensation of the fullness of times, when all things which are in Christ Jesus, whether in heaven or on the earth, shall be gathered together in Him, and when all things shall be restored, as spoken of by all the holy prophets since the world began ...

Here, then, beloved brethren, is a work to engage in worthy of archangels—a work which will cast into the shade the things which have been heretofore accomplished; a work which kings and prophets and righteous men in former ages have sought, expected, and earnestly desired to see, but died without the sight; and well will it be for those who shall aid in carrying into effect the mighty operations of Jehovah. ...

The heavenly Priesthood will unite with the earthly, to bring about those great purposes; and whilst we are thus united in the one common cause, to roll forth the kingdom of God, the heavenly Priesthood are not idle spectators, the Spirit of God will be showered down from above, and it will dwell in our midst. The blessings of the Most High will rest upon our tabernacles, and our name will be handed down to future ages; our children will rise up and call us blessed; and generations yet unborn will dwell with peculiar delight upon the scenes that we have passed through, the privations that we have endured, the untiring zeal that we have manifested, the all but insurmountable difficulties that we have overcome in laying the foundation of a work that brought about the glory and blessing which they will realize; a work that God and angels have contemplated with delight for generations past; that fired the souls of the ancient patriarchs and prophets; a work that is destined to bring about the destruction of the powers of darkness, the renovation of the earth, the glory of God, and the salvation of the human family.

History of the Church, 4:185-187, 609–10

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E The Dispensation of the Fulness of Times

Elder David W. Patten, one of the first Apostles and martyrs in this dispensation, said: "Now the thing to be known is, what the fullness of times means, or the extent or authority thereof. It means this, that the dispensation of the fullness of times is made up of all the dispensations that ever have been given since the world began, until this time. Unto Adam first was given a dispensation. It is well known that God spake to him with His own voice in the garden, and gave him the promise of the Messiah. And unto Noah also was a dispensation given; for Jesus said, 'As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man;' and as the righteous were saved then, and the wicked destroyed, so it will be now. And from Noah to Abraham, and from Abraham to Moses, and from Moses to Elias, and from Elias to John the Baptist, and from then to Jesus Christ, and from Jesus Christ to Peter, James, and John, the Apostles—all received in their time a dispensation by revelation from God, to accomplish the great scheme of restitution, spoken of by all the holy prophets since the world began; the end of which is the dispensation of the fullness of times, in the which all things shall be fulfilled that have been spoken of since the earth was made.

History of the Church, 3:51

[<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/manual/doctrine-and-covenants-student-manual/section-27-when-ye-partake-of-the-sacrament>]