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Rel. 225

Meservy

Top Ten Foundations of the Restoration

**Introduction**

Throughout this semester I have enjoyed learning about the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I have changed the way I view this early portion of the ongoing phenomenon and I feel that I come away with a better understanding of what made those early seasons special and resonant to all members for generations. There are many events and doctrines that have had immense impact to them at that time and to us, but I believe that these ten that I have picked out are among the most impactful and prominent that there are, if not the most impactful.

**Top 5 Historical Foundations**

**Historical Event #1: [The Kirtland Endowment]**

The events of Kirtland endowment include a promise of a blessing to all the saints, the construction of the temple there, and endowments and miracles ensuing to all who were present. The reason why I find this event so foundational to the restoration is because it exhibits an important instruction to all saints for all time and teaches us the importance of the temple. First, the Lord promised blessings to the saints, but it was under the conditions of obedience to their exodus to Kirtland and the sanctifying of themselves. It was required of them to prepare themselves to receive this great gift, much like how we must prepare ourselves to enter the temple. As the Lord commanded the construction of the temple, and as they neared the end of that construction it became clear to the saints at that time that the promised blessings that they would receive was tied to the temple. And then finally, they were able to preform the temple ordinances that we hold so critically important to this day. Truly, the Lord was not only providing these blessings to these saints in that time, but also teaching us the pattern of blessings and how those blessings are inextricably connected to the temple. This impacted the church at that time by setting the temple as on of the main centerpieces of worship in the church and that same attitude has persisted to today. Every good missionary knows that baptism is only the beginning for those they teach, and that they should have the goal be the temple for enduring conversion in those new converts. And that’s why I think this event is so critical to the foundation of the gospel, because it established the temple as a house of blessing, conversion, and worship.

**Historical Event #2: [The first vision]**

I think it is hard to talk about the beginning of the restoration without quickly finding your way on the topic of the first vision, where Joseph Smith, seeking which church to join reaches out to heaven for the answer and received the amazing answer of the appearance of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ telling him that he should join none and that soon the true church will come forth soon, thus kicking off the restoration. I feel that despite how familiar this story is, it is still one of the most profound experiences we can learn from, and that the restoration would have been vastly different without it. The first and biggest lesson we can learn from this event is that the heavens were not sealed with the death of the apostles as many Christians believed at that time and that God does talk to man. It also taught that God knew and loved his children, the most foundational doctrine that I can think of. But I also think that it was crucial to the shaping of Joseph himself, because from that time on he began to think differently, began to behave differently and more than anything, gave him an unshakable testimony in Jesus Christ, one that will be tested and tried all his mortal life. This singular event has preluded and in some ways dictated the whole of the restoration and it still effects every single person who comes in contact with it to this day because it is one of the basic lessons that missionaries teach.

**Historical Event #3: [The restoration of the priesthood]**

The restoration of the priesthood is another well known and basic aspect of the restoration. Essentially, heavenly visitors came to Joseph and Oliver and gave them the Aaronic and Melchizedek priesthood initially, and then later, when the temple was built, early biblical prophets came and restored to them additional priesthood keys. This is foundational because without the priesthood, our church would be much like any other Christian church. We do not have a monopoly on truth or correct doctrine and so the only thing that makes us the “true church’ is that we have ordinances and the proper priesthood to enact those ordinances, but without that, we would just be another good congregation trying their best to follow Christ and promote good. This restoring of the priesthood is integral to our religion and has affected every life that has come in contact with it.

**Historical Event #4: [The Joseph Smith translation]**

Compared to the previous two historical events, it may seem that Joseph Smith’s process of translating the Bible, and by extension the Pearl of Great Price, isn’t as critical to the foundation of the restoration, but I believe that it is quite critical to the restoration. Essentially, this translation took place over a long period of time, which period was critical to the shaping of the church and the learning of the saints as a whole. The time that the saints spent in Ohio and Kirtalnd are both seen as some of the most enlightening parts of church history and it probably has to do with the volume and quality of revelation that Joseph was receiving and that is now published in the Doctrine and Covenants. The translation process of the Bible inspired Joseph to ask more questions of the Lord and inquire about more things, and it is for that reason that I believe that this event is foundational. Not only does it teach us that inspiration comes from asking questions from the Lord and through diligent study, but also because of the doctrine that has been revealed during this time. A large portion of the Doctrine and Covenants became to be through the process of Joseph going through the Bible and seeking revelation from the Lord, including many of my personal favorite sections of the book of scripture. This event serves as a powerful lesson for receiving revelation and as a tool to deepen conversion for anyone willing to study and learn about the doctrines that came forth because of this event.

**Historical Event #5: [The succession crisis]**

Before the start of this class I didn’t think much of the process of Joseph Smith translating the Bible. Nor did I think much of the succession crisis that took place after the Martyrdom of the prophet. I had heard the transfiguration stories and thought they were cool, but I didn’t think that there were many cool lessons to gain from that. But after studying it in this class, I feel it is one of the most crucial parts of the early church history. This was a critical time for the church. With their prophet dead, the saints in uncertainty, and no clear answer on who the successor should be this was one of the moments that could make or break the future of the Kingdom of God. Fortunately, God was intent on making sure his church would make it. What I find important in this is that God could have easily inspired Joseph before his death and released a revelation proclaiming how He wanted His church to be run and who should succeed Joseph, but He didn’t. I believe he wanted for the saints to grow in this thing and to receive a personal witness on who to follow. That’s why he let the saints wrestle with this issue for a while before manifesting the miracles He did and letting the saints know who to follow. I imagine that if God had just told the prophet and His people who was going to succeed Joseph that many probably would have had a hard time following Brigham because they didn’t have a personal conviction like they most likely did with Joseph. Many probably would have fallen away, but because He allowed the saints to receive the personal witnesses that He did, the testimonies of those who believed were solid. Solid enough to traverse America and set up in Utah. This not only blessed those present at that time, but their solid testimonies laid the foundation on which future generations could build their testimonies from.

**Top 5 Doctrinal Foundations**

[Go through your top five doctrinal teachings. Key to good grade: for each selection include 1) a concise summary of the doctrinal teaching and 2) your best evidence and reasoning to justify why this doctrinal teaching is “foundational” to the Restoration. *Why does it matter? What does it add to our understanding and practice in the Church? How would we be worse off for not know this doctrine*, etc.? Make sure each doctrine has its own heading as outlined below.]

**Doctrinal Teaching #1: [The new and everlasting covenant]**

The first doctrine that I believe to be one of the most important from the restoration is the teaching of the new and everlasting covenant. This doctrine teaches that there is only one way to be celestialized in the kingdom of heaven and that is through the new and everlasting covenant. This covenant encompasses the whole gospel as we know it, the teachings, the ordinances, and the covenants required to return to live with God again. This may seem obvious or like a cheap answer saying that ‘all doctrine is foundational doctrine’, but the part that I think is foundational to it is that this is the only way possible to return to Heavenly Father. The reason I think that is the most important part is because it fuels the ‘why’ of a lot that we do in the church. Why do we send missionaries to preach the gospel. Because this is the only way. Why do we do temple work for the dead? Because this is the only way. Why do we strive to become like Christ in all that we do and say? Because there is no other way by which we can achieve the design of our existence and return to live with our father above. Without this aspect of the gospel, there would be no need for the church, because if you can get to heaven by just being good then our church doesn’t need to exist, there are other churches that help individuals be good.

**Doctrinal Teaching #2: [The nature of revelation]**

The next foundational doctrine that was taught throughout the early days of the church was the nature of revelation. Being such a big topic, I’m only going to touch on a couple of the points in the doctrine, the first being that God will give revelation to all his children. A couple of the other points are that revelation is always in response to external stimulus and especially in response to questions, and that revelation doesn’t just solve everything. The reason why I think that these aspects of revelation are so foundational to the restoration is because of the implications they have to individuals throughout the history of the church and in specific the apostates of the faith. We have talked about many stories of people who fell away from the church because they held a specific assumption about revelation which didn’t match reality, but many of those who fell away wouldn’t have if they had understood these few points. These also are important as ever for saints to understand today, that God will speak to them and teach them even as they did the prophet, that revelation doesn’t come spontaneously, and that just because they received revelation that doesn’t mean they don’t have to work through their own problems.

**Doctrinal Teaching #3: [The Law of consecration]**

The law of consecration asks that we consecrate or dedicate all that we have to the Lord. That is the long and short of the doctrine of the church. But the practices of the law of consecration has taken on a different form throughout the generations, but the foundational doctrine is that we strive to give our time, our property, and ourselves over to the Lord. This is foundational because it details what it means to come to Christ and to be reborn in Him. Of course, this doesn’t happen overnight, but it shows us the how in our attempts to become like Him and to follow Him. Without this doctrine it is very likely that each of us would end up walking in our own ways, rather than the right way that brings us the most joy in life.

**Doctrinal Teaching #4: [Temple work for the dead]**

Tying into doctrinal Teaching #3 temple work for the dead is one of the most crucial parts of what we do in temples. To quote a scripture that has been recorded in every one of the standard works, “If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.”(D&C 2:3). This, talking about the work on behalf of the dead, is clear that if we did not do this that the earth would be wasted because our time here isn’t just about us and our salvation. It’s doing our best to make sure that the whole human has the opportunity to return to God. Again, this is so foundational because it teaches us what we are to do, and I think without it we would have the tendency to just do the bare minimum for our salvation and just call it good, not really becoming a new creature in Christ.

**Doctrinal Teaching #5: [The love of God]**

As I mentioned before I believe the doctrine that God loves all of us to be the most foundational doctrine to the restoration, and to all of life. The doctrine is simple but sublime: God loves all his children. And because he loves them, he wants them to find the most joy possible. And that is the ‘why’ behind all that God does and all that we have here on earth. Why did Heavenly father appear to Joseph Smith and restore his church? Because He loves all of us. Why does he ask us to do temple work? Because He loves all of us, even those who have passed. Why would God answer my prayer? Because He loves you. Any aspect or part of the gospel you analyze, you can trace it back to the unconditional love that God has for each of us as individuals, and without this eternal truth there wouldn’t be much to life, it would just be suffering, or numbness. But because God loves us, He restored His gospel on the earth, so that we can learn to have joy.

**Conclusion**

There are many aspects that go into the restoration, both events and doctrines, but these ten points have made a difference in my life. I have received a stronger determination to follow my savior, to receive personal revelation, to help others, and to be a better disciple. Through learning and reviewing these principles I believe that I now have a firm testimony on the restoration and why it happened the way it did, both the good and bad.