Preexistence According to the Pearl of Great Price

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The Pearl of Great Price is a book of scripture that provides a better understanding to many doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Some doctrines are only discussed in the Pearl of Great Price, while other topics are enhanced and/or simplified. One such topic is the preexistence. Other sources, such as the Bible, have scriptures eluding to a preexistence, but the Pearl of Great Price gives insight into the preexistence that cannot be found in any other body of scripture. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the insights the Pearl of Great Price has about the preexistence, with special emphasis on creation of spirits, the Great Counsel, and the use of the Atonement in the preexistence.

**Spiritual Creation**

The first doctrine that will be discussed from the Pearl of Great Price is the spiritual creation during the preexistence. The general doctrine of the Church is well known by many church members, but the Pearl of Great Price ads much to previous knowledge on this subject. This increase in knowledge can then help understand the worth of souls in the site of our Heavenly Father and how humans should treat one another.

**The Doctrine**

The members of the Church of Jesus Christ believe that Heavenly Father, or God, organized human souls before physical bodies were created. This sentiment is found in Genesis 2:4-5. In Genesis, God discusses how the herbs and plants were made before the creation of the world. With this in mind, all is supposed to be created before the world was formed since life sprung forth from a planet that had no rain or other support of life.

**What Pearl of Great Price Teaches**

While this doctrine has been known since the time of the Bible, the Pearl of Great Price greatly enhances the general understanding of God’s organization of souls. A main point seen throughout this book of scripture is how the soul was created before the physical body. Beginning in Moses chapter three verses five through seven, the Lord expounds upon what is discussed in the Bible. Specifically verse five states “… and not yet a man to till the ground; for in heaven created I them…” This verse states that man was created before coming down to earth, just as the rest of the plants were created in heaven. Moses verse seven and Moses chapter six verse 51 also reiterate that man was created before God created the physical body. Before the world existed, God references standing among the spirits and choosing the noble and great ones (Abraham 3:22-23). This can only be true if spirits were already in existence and organized in a manner that allowed Heavenly Father to council and interact with these spirits. During the creation of the physical body, God “took his spirit” and placed the spirit in the physical body (Abraham 5:7). Something cannot be taken unless it is already in place to be used. Taking also implies displacing something that existed somewhere else. The spirit was created before and then was placed within the human body.

Another concept shown is that God was the one who created man according to His word. The organization of the souls was not a random occurrence, but Heavenly Father thoughtfully planned out and masterfully directed this great organization (Moses 3:7). Moses chapter six verse 36 shows this principle again when Enoch was having a revelation given to him by God. Enoch states, “he beheld the spirits that God had created” (Moses 6:36). Although God created the physical bodies that now walk the earth, Enoch specifically refers to the spirits that were created. God had a hand in the organization of the spirit before the world was thus formed.

Finally, the Pearl of Great Price teaches about the eternal nature of the soul. In the book of Abraham chapter three verse 18, Abraham learns that intelligences are eternal. These intelligences are then what made up the souls put into physical bodies. God did not create intelligences, or the matter that makes up souls. A substance that is eternal is not made then. God simply organized the material that was already present. As shown above, God was needed to bring about what is now known as the spirit. This does not mean that He made a spirit from nothing though. The material needed to make a spirit was present, and God was the organizer.

**How Impacts Attitudes and Behaviors**

The knowledge that the Pearl of Great Price gives about the organization of souls before the physical earth has many implications that change a person’s attitudes and behaviors. Knowing where the soul was created allows a person a sense of origin. So many people search for where they came from and here in the Pearl of Great Price is that answer. Knowing that the soul is an eternal and celestially organized being brings a sense of power and awe in the soul within every person. Every person has this history and is a product of eternal material. This means that every person needs to be treated as such. Even when people have differing opinions or think differently, all deserve to be treated with respect and compassion. Every person is a product of Heavenly Father, and He took the time to organize every person on the earth as well as those who walked the earth before and who will walk the earth. If He cared so much for every person, it is the duty of the people to care for these fellow brothers and sisters and to lift one another up when down trodden or heavy laden.

**Satan’s Fall**

The next great doctrine discussed about the preexistence in the Pearl of Great Price is the fall of Satan during the Great Council in heaven. This doctrine is seen throughout many differing scriptures, but the Pearl of Great Price brings about a new clarity to what actually happened during the council. This new insight can then affect certain behaviors and attitudes that people exhibit.

**The Doctrine**

Throughout many scripture passages, a war that occurred between Satan and Heavenly Father is alluded to. Satan declared war against the Father for opposing Jesus Christ. In Isaiah chapter 14 verses 12 through 13, Satan wanted to have his station raised above Heavenly Father and be exalted. This led to Lucifer being cast out of heaven. Along with being thrown out of heaven, Satan also took along one third of the hosts of heaven.

**What Pearl of Great Price Teaches**

The doctrine about the council in heaven is expounded upon in the Pearl of Great Price. First, Satan is described as a son of God (Moses 5:13). As previously discussed in this paper, Satan was organized with the spirits during the preexistence. This made the following confrontation much more powerful as the fall of Satan was the fall of one of the children of Heavenly Father.

Next, the great council and purpose of this council are set forth. Heavenly father set forth his plan, which was to send down the souls that he had created to earth. These souls then had to be tested to gain eternal progression. This plan required a savior to be sent down to the earth. When Heavenly Father asked whom He should send, both Christ and Satan volunteered (Abraham 3:24-28). Satan’s plan was to destroy agency so that all would be redeemed through him, and all the glory was to go to Satan. Jesus then stood and wanted to give all the glory to Heavenly Father when people were saved and so Jesus was chosen to go down (Moses 4:1-4). An interesting specific phrase is that Jesus was “Beloved and Chosen from the beginning…” (Moses 4:2). This phrase suggests that Jesus was chosen before this great council. Satan offered to be the savior, but this scripture may be showing that Jesus was already chosen and prepared to be the savior of the world.

When the plan set forth by Satan was denied, he rebelled and had serious consequences. Satan lashed out against the Father after the denial and lost his chance at receiving a body, as well as receiving eternal reward (Abraham 3:28). This was a large loss for Satan as well as the followers who came after Satan (Moses 4:6). Satan became miserable with his loss and became the father of lies and began to lead many down the path of misery with him throughout the rest of the scriptures (Moses 4:4). This is the origin of Satan as the great deceiver and when his purpose as the opposition to Heavenly Father began.

**How Impacts Attitudes and Behaviors**

Understanding of the Great Council and the fall of Satan bring about a change in attitudes and behaviors. Christ was chosen from the beginning and was always understood to be the Savior of the earth. Complete and total trust can thus be given to Jesus Christ. Heavenly Father knew from the beginning that Christ was going to be the savior and be able to perform the necessary duties that this calling requires. If Heavenly Father could put complete trust in Jesus Christ, so can all others who rely on Christ and His atonement. Jesus Christ can understand all and will fulfill all that He has promised. If covenants are kept and people are willing to keep the commandments set forth by Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ will help save every soul. This should give people a greater understanding and power to follow the commandments of Heavenly Father.

Another understanding from these passages of scriptures is how Satan works and why he works so hard to deceive man. Satan was smart and put together a brilliant plan that would save all, as well as give him the great glory. This does not mean his plan was right, but all should know that Satan is cunning and wants to bring down every soul into the eternal damnation that he is condemned. Seeing how selfish Satan is should make all people want to work hard to resist his temptations. Satan is not trying to bring about happiness for those that follow him. He is trying to satisfy his own needs and wants. In order to gain true happiness, Jesus Christ and the plan of the Father are the true and only choices to follow.

**Atonement in the preexistence**

Finally, the Atonement is a Gospel principle seen throughout much scripture, but the Pearl of Great Price brings about new understanding of this principle during the preexistence. The doctrine that is understood outside of the Pearl of Great Price focuses on the use of the Atonement during mortal life. The Pearl of Great Price then broadens this understanding to before earth life and this understanding can bring about large changes in attitudes and behaviors in people who truly understand this principle.

**The Doctrine**

The Atonement is a keystone of the Gospel of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Jesus Christ atoned for the sins of the world in the Garden of Gethsemane, as well as on the cross during the crucifixion. These great acts have allowed all imperfect people to be forgiven of his or her sins and return again to the Father. Without this great act, no one would be able to gain the highest degree of glory in the Celestial kingdom, because no impure person can live with God. The Atonement was performed when Christ died, but those who lived on the earth before Christ could use the healing and cleansing powers of the Atonement by showing faith in Christ.

**What Pearl of Great Price Teaches**

To fully understand why the Atonement was necessary in the preexistence, the Pearl of Great Price talks about the differences seen between spirits. No two spirits were the same, even from the creation. In Abraham chapter 3 verses 18 through 19 and 22 through 23, Abraham sees a vision that shows that some spirits were more intelligent than other spirits. This then implies that there were choices in the preexistence. Some spirits chose more wisely than other spirits, or some made better choices than others. Along this same path, Abraham saw that God had chosen noble and great spirits to be rulers and leaders. This could not be possible if spirits did not grow and learn differently, with some being more inclined to righteousness. With this presumption, there must have been mistakes made and wrong decisions chosen. Any wrong choice thus needs to be atoned for.

Many prophets than were able to see the Savior make His great sacrifice, such as Enoch in Moses chapter seven, but the Pearl of Great Price shows exactly how Christ’s atonement was used at the foundation of the world. Adam learned that he was forgiven of his transgression in the Garden of Eden because of Christ’s Atonement. Christ’s Atonement would not occur for many more centuries, but the power of the Atonement is eternal and can thus work retroactively (Moses 6:52-54). Those spirits coming into the world are thus made “whole from the foundation of the world” (Moses 6:54). Previously discussed is how there must have been mistakes made in the preexistence. The only way then for a spirit to come into the world whole once more is through the power of the Atonement during the preexistence in the spirit world. The power was thus used before even Adam, the first man on the earth. Heavenly Father added His testimony to the divine and eternal power of the Atonement by saying “mine Only Begotten is and shall be the Savior…” (Moses 1:6). The key word is “is.” Heavenly Father was telling Moses that Christ already was the Savior of the world, although Christ had not even stepped foot on the earth yet. Christ’s power was already in effect. This power could be utilized before the earth was created to the present daytime and all are instructed to be cleansed through Jesus Christ.

**How Impacts Attitudes and Behaviors**

The knowledge that the Atonement could be and was used in the preexistence can greatly affect the attitudes and behavior of those who understand this great principle. The Atonement is so powerful that all who came to earth have already used the cleansing powers it posses. If a soul was able to use this power during the preexistence, there is no reason that a soul would not be able to use it now. Some may be intimidated or feel that they do not understand how to use the Atonement, but the truth is that all have already used the Atonement at least once. Being born to this earth is a testament that the Atonement was used. Christ was able to forgive all men of their sins before He even preformed His great sacrifice. The act has been done now for over two thousand plus years and His grace is no more less in effect today. His power is infinite and has no bounds. This means all can be forgiven and receive the fullness of Heavenly Father’s glory. Knowledge of this great power can bring assurance that the power of the Atonement is real and works. Man need not be afraid that his sins are too much or unforgiveable. The Savior is willing and able to redeem all men and wants to do so. All people need to do are turn to the Savior and ask to be forgiven with a sincere heart.

**Conclusion**

Although the Pearl of Great Price is the smallest book of scripture in the book of scriptures studied by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, it is rich in information, especially about the preexistence. The Books of Moses and Abraham bring new key points never before known about how Heavenly Father organized the souls of man before the earth. Also, the council and ultimate decline of Satan are plainly laid out in great detail throughout the Pearl of Great Price. Finally, the majestic and eternal power of the Atonement is truly shown by the information given on the use of this great gift during the preexistence. These attributes of the preexistence are key principles that can help bring hope, strength, and understanding to those who study and ponder the inspiring words of the Pearl of Great Price.