

Honoring our Heritage

So! Speaking of heritages, I thought it might be a good idea to establish in our minds *what* it is that we've got here. If we come to really understand what are heritage is and where we got it from, we can have a much better chance of doing it justice. So I'm going to tell you guys a story than I came across in my personal study...you'll probably recognize it.

Once upon a time...or out of time. Actually I'm pretty fuzzy on the **time** aspect of this bit, so I'll skip over it. At any rate, there were these intelligences. We, were these intelligences, and then God organized us into spirits, and we lived with him for a while.

So the really neat thing here is something that is easy to forget but important to keep in mind:

Not only are we *going to live forever*, we've *already lived forever*. The very core of who we are is intrinsically eternal...and I think that knowledge helps to keep things in perspective (however difficult it is to really get your mind around).

Anyway, we lived in heaven for some....period, and then there was a war in heaven: we all fought on the right side, gold stars all around.

The part of this story where I really want spend my time is incidentally where time actually enters into the equation — so I actually can say once upon a time — on this earth.

Once upon a time, there was a man named Adam. Now the really special thing about Adam to my view is not just that he was the first man, but that he was the first man *who had to deal with the veil*. Up until he came along,

the sum total of humanities experience was with God, presumably with a fairly good idea of: our relationship to him, our purpose, the nature of ourselves and God -- all these questions that are so difficult for us to find answers for here on earth. Anyway, Adam comes down, passes through the veil, and arrives here without any parents, without a community, without all of the cultural preconceptions that we get out of the box in this day and age.

Now, there have been a number of scientific studies trying to understand the nature of man, intelligence, and its origins, that try to get a group of children who have never had exposure to some element of human life -- say, language -- and see if they come up with it on their own. Essentially; if you take away all of the support structures that we have in today's society, do you still end up with the same sorts of things?

Adam is of course the ideal case study, and I think this account can provide a lot insight into our lives today, however long ago it occurred.

So: Adam is placed in the garden, without any memories, just a clean slate. Fortunately, God is there, gives him a few pointers, gives him Eve, and tells him to take care of the garden. Soon after, the first earthly choice is made! Helped along of course by our good friend and brother Lucifer. And

sin entered the garden.

So now I'll make an effort to veer back on topic so I don't get kicked out — Heritages. What aspects of the story so far are important aspects of our heritage?

- Eternal origin
- *take care of the garden*
- women ;) or more correctly, a spouse — right from the outset, marriage is a big part of the plan
- commandments
- agency
- sin

And this final one I want to emphasize because I just love it: - **Satan getting beaten by God** From the outset, it's clear that God is in control; Moses 4:6

“And Satan ... sought also to beguile Eve, *for he knew not the mind of God, wherefore he sought to destroy the world.*”

Our omniscient beneficent Heavenly Father has this totally under control, and Satan totally fails to “destroy the world”.

So, back to the story, the Lord God spake to Adam (and I'm paraphrasing a bit) "because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, ... thou shalt surely die." (Moses 4:23,25). Perhaps I was a bit too liberal with the paraphrasing. What I'm trying to get at here is *consequences* — not of listening to your wife, but of going against the commandments that the Lord has set out. In this instance, our loving father sets up this controlled situation to teach his children about the world they're going to inhabit. You have agency, you have accountability, you have consequences...And Adam matures. Having started out I'm sure "as a little child", Adam now learns about consequences, about commandments, good and evil, hard work, and mortality. I'm pretty sure that sums up what we all want our children to learn in order to be a good responsible adult — I'm speaking of course to the Bishopric, as they are the only ones here who are supposed to be having children :).

So in that are a few more puzzle pieces of our heritage:

- (here's a big one) Mortality. "thou shalt surely die"
- Hard work — which, like it or not, is not only useful to get you money, is also vital to learning responsibility.

So just bear with me a little more and we'll have this microcosm of human experience just about summed up.

Adam and Eve are thrust out, they begin to multiply and replenish the earth (in obedience with another commandment), Adam offers sacrifices — he’s really getting the hang of obedience by this point (I guess he learned his lesson), because when asked why he was offering sacrifices, he responds “I know not, save the Lord commanded me.” (Moses 5:6) — and then he learns about the Atonement:

This little lesson that an angel gives to Adam is I think important to pay attention to; as Adam was “like a child”, God still had to teach him, in the same way he teaches us. Moses 5:7-9

“And the angel spoke, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth.

Wherefore, thou shalt do all that thou dost in the name of the Son, and thou shalt repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore.

And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying: I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever, that as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will.”

So what do we have here? Lots of good stuff; a major emphasis on Christ — “do all that thou dost in the name of the Son”; “repent and call upon God in the name of the Son forevermore”; the Holy Ghost bearing record, and the big one: “thou mayest be redeemed”.

Adam and Eve then start to realize the Big Picture, Moses 5:10-11

Now Adam and Eve touch on a lot of great aspects of our heritage, but the one that really sticks out to me is “Joy”. We haven’t really covered joy yet, but Adam says... [ad lib on joy]

Now “joy of redemption”. I’m not sure I’ve ever heard of it like that before — I mean, we all know Lehi says “there must needs be opposition in all things”, and there’s all this stuff about bitter and sweet, but to say “we must needs become fallen to experience the joy of redemption?” God looks out for us at *every turn*. Which isn’t to say that we should become any more fallen ;) In Romans during the section on Grace, Paul is adamant about shutting down anyone who says “So, because of Grace, it’s ok if we sin, right?” To quote Paul “God Forbid!” We are *already fallen* just by being here, so let’s not give ourselves more pain than is really necessary.

But we’re not quite done yet! If you read a little ahead (or you can’t so I will for you) we get the final plot twist.

Moses 5:12-13

Man! They’ve got this all lined up, and Adam and Eve are expounding

upon the Gospel and praising God and then their children go ahead and **listen to Satan!!**

Now I'm sure he said a little bit more than 'Hey I'm also a son of God, how about you worship me instead; your parents are fools'. Although given the natural state of teenagers, that may very well have worked. But he tries that line with Moses in the beginning of this Book and Moses shuts him down! Where is your glory, Satan? I am the **son of the living God!**

And he clearly gives up that line pretty quickly; he comes to Cain and preys upon his pride, upon his jealousy.

So we've got it all here. I wasn't kidding about microcosm before; birth, mortality, commandments, consequences, the gospel, and Satan comes to mess things up. (disobedient children are a theme pretty much throughout the scriptures).

But brothers and sisters, we are sons and daughters of a living God! And that knowledge is so wonderful! He has this glorious Plan of Happiness, and his entire purpose is to bring us Joy!

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