

Lessons of Pride and Glory from the Doctrine and Covenants

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I am both grateful and humbled to be with you today. It is often the case in Church assignments that the one who is called to serve is not the most qualified; rather, those with a need for growth or insight are given the task. I have been greatly blessed by my preparations—blessed in more ways than I could begin to share in the time allotted. I pray that through the influence of the Holy Ghost you may benefit from what I have learned and that we may all be edified together this morning.

In my preparations I have felt guided to focus my comments on the theme “Lessons of Pride and Glory from the Doctrine and Covenants.” I should clarify at first that this is not intended to be a pep talk about worldly notions of fame and glory or honor and glory. Pride is a sin—the universal sin, as described by President Ezra Taft Benson in his seminal conference address of April 1989 (see “Beware of Pride,” *Ensign*, May 1989, 4–7). I have personally come to believe that pride is Satan’s great counterfeit for glory. As with so many other principles and potential heavenly rewards, Lucifer seeks to deceive us by offering a lesser compromise that may for a moment bring gratification but ultimately leads to remorse and sorrow.

And as for defining glory, we may ask ourselves: What is glory? What is the eternal nature of glory? Why is it mentioned so frequently in the scriptures? Why is it correct and even essential that we aspire to glory, while the very notion of righteous pride is a grievous sin? What are the potential dangers of confusing the two?

Within the Church we refer often to the concept of glory. We speak of the three degrees of glory as described in section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants. In President Joseph F. Smith’s vision of the spirit world, he noted among those assembled to greet the resurrected Lord the presence of “our glorious Mother Eve” (D&C 138:38–39). Many of the hymns that Christians sing invoke glory to God, suggesting a form of praise. In many scriptural passages we are admonished to live with an eye single to the glory of God. Earlier versions of the BYU logo even prominently displayed the scriptural phrase “the glory of God is intelligence” (D&C 93:36), as if to imply a mantra for our pursuit of truth at the university.

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I recall from when I was a teenager and young adult that President Spencer W. Kimball often began his remarks in Church meetings by stating what a glorious occasion it was to be gathered together. I confess that as a teenager I failed to grasp what was so glorious about all those Church meetings, but President Kimball's enthusiasm and insistence that the occasions were glorious always left an impression in my mind.

My point is that we tend to think of glory only in abstract terms without giving careful thought to its full significance. In my personal study of the Doctrine and Covenants, the principles and narratives associated with glory have always commanded my attention. The word seems to jump off the page each instance it appears, inviting me to ponder its meaning.

Before exploring specific passages, I feel impressed to declare my sincere witness and testimony that the voice that speaks to us from the Doctrine and Covenants is that of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As latter-day prophets past and present have boldly declared, Jesus Christ is the true source of leadership and guidance for the Church. This witness from the Holy Ghost burns so brightly and clearly in my heart that I cannot read the text from any other perspective. I love the Doctrine and Covenants. I find it fascinating that so many of the revelations recorded in this volume of scripture were personal blessings given to early members of the Church who were seeking the Lord's guidance. I believe these highly personal instructions are meant to be applicable in each of our lives today as we struggle with similar challenges and questions. I believe that only when we come to hear the voice of Christ speaking to us personally is the true significance of each passage manifest.

In exploring the lessons of glory and its antithesis, pride, I have organized my comments in three phases. First, let's review a couple of well-known scriptural definitions

of glory familiar to even beginning students of the gospel. Second, I would like to focus in detail on references to glory found in relation to the establishment of Zion in Jackson County, Missouri. Finally, we will look closely at a few passages from the Doctrine and Covenants that point to a more important and eternal significance of glory.

First, the review: LDS scriptures offer unique and profound explanations of God's glory that are not found in the Bible. In the book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price, God reveals that His work is devoted to furthering the progression of His children. In language that recalls our opening hymn today, God spoke to Moses, saying:

The heavens, they are many, and they cannot be numbered unto man; but they are numbered unto me, for they are mine.

And as one earth shall pass away, and the heavens thereof even so shall another come; and there is no end to my works, neither to my words.

For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. [Moses 1:37–39]

I have already referred to D&C 93:36, in which the simple yet sublime truth is declared, "The glory of God is intelligence, or in other words, light and truth." Here the concept of glory is linked to principles of knowledge and understanding. This passage offers unique insight into the nature and character of God. Gone is the sectarian notion that God's glory is based primarily on the splendor of His abode.

The interrelationship of glory, intelligence, light, and truth is further illuminated in the same section. In it we learn that Christ through His obedience has obtained a fulness of the glory of the Father. As Christ is our model in all things—we learn that we too, through obedience to the commandments, may eventually receive the same fullness:

I give unto you these sayings that you may understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness.

For if you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness, and be glorified in me as I am in the Father. [D&C 93:19–20]

This reference to receiving a fulness of the Father recalls similar scriptures in which the fulness of the Father is tied to a fulness of joy. Speaking to the Three Nephites—disciples given the blessing to linger on earth until His Second Coming—Christ offered this promise and insight:

Ye shall have fulness of joy; and ye shall sit down in the kingdom of my Father; yea, your joy shall be full, even as the Father hath given me fulness of joy; and ye shall be even as I am, and I am even as the Father; and the Father and I are one. [3 Nephi 28:10]

In section 93 our understanding of glory is further enlarged to embrace knowledge as an essential foundation. Just as the glory of God is intelligence and intelligence is light and truth, we also learn that truth is knowledge, “the knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come” (D&C 93:24).

Speaking of the advancement of Zion, the Lord closes section 93 with an admonition of learning:

And, verily I say unto you, that it is my will that you should . . . obtain a knowledge of history, and of countries, and of kingdoms, of laws of God and man, and all this for the salvation of Zion. [D&C 93:53]

Joseph Smith was faithful to the Lord’s commandment to obtain knowledge. Although he and other members of the early Church were burdened with enormous tasks of translating

and publishing scripture, preaching the gospel, building temples, settling cities, and more while enduring bitter persecutions, Joseph still made time to establish a School of the Prophets and even became a serious student of Hebrew. In comparison, how fortunate we are to attend this university and pursue knowledge in circumstances comparatively free of distraction. How glorious, in a way, is our opportunity for learning.

With that brief review, let’s now move to our second subtopic: an examination of promised glory as the early Church endeavored to establish Zion, or the New Jerusalem.

Reference to the New Jerusalem appears in the Doctrine and Covenants as early as section 45, given in March 1831. Section 57 begins with a pronouncement that, in its day (July 1831), must have been stunning and that today is still quite astounding:

Hearken, O ye elders of my church, . . . who have assembled yourselves together . . . in this land, which is the land of Missouri, which is the land which I have appointed and consecrated for the gathering of the saints.

Wherefore, this is the land of promise, and the place for the city of Zion. [D&C 57:1–2]

In the following revelation in section 58, the Lord, speaking of the gathering to Jackson County, offered those who had been called there the following promise of glory and a caution of foreseen tribulations:

Ye cannot behold with your natural eyes, for the present time, the design of your God concerning those things which shall come hereafter, and the glory which shall follow after much tribulation.

For after much tribulation come the blessings. Wherefore the day cometh that ye shall be crowned with much glory; the hour is not yet, but is nigh at hand. [D&C 58:3–4]

The Lord begins section 59, “Behold, blessed, saith the Lord, are they who have come up unto this land with an eye single to my glory” (D&C 59:1).

Please keep these promises in mind, especially those in section 58, which I will refer to again later.

The stage had been set and remarkable promises offered. Those living the experience of this period must have felt enormous anticipation and hope that Christ would soon return to the temple they would build in the New Jerusalem. From March 1831 to October 1838, Joseph Smith received the revelations that are now sections 45 through 124 of the Doctrine and Covenants. Careful examination shows that all of these instructions concerning Zion, which we now interpolate to the present day, are in fact specific references to the early Church members’ attempts to settle in Missouri. In other words, as we study the Doctrine and Covenants today, we generally consider references to Zion as intended for the Church today.

This is appropriate, as Nephi taught that we may liken the scriptures to ourselves (see 1 Nephi 19:23) as we are still endeavoring to establish Zion. In the original context of these revelations, however, *Zion* referred specifically to the efforts to settle in Independence, Missouri, as opposed to the stake of Zion in Kirtland, Ohio. During this period Joseph Smith remained primarily in Kirtland, where he received instruction concerning his work translating the Bible and the building of the Kirtland Temple. Other revelations are directed to the Saints in Missouri, located about 800 miles away.

In order to better understand the efforts to obtain glory in Zion, let’s take a focused look at a section of the Doctrine and Covenants that at first reading might appear insignificant. I refer to section 62, a revelation received in the context of a chance meeting along the road between Independence and Kirtland. In mid-

August 1831 Joseph Smith was returning to Kirtland from Independence when he encountered a group of elders en route to Missouri after having preached the gospel in the surrounding regions. The two groups paused briefly as they crossed paths. In the revelation, the elders who had been preaching were blessed for the testimonies they had borne. They were told that the angels rejoiced over their testimonies and that their sins were forgiven. They were then admonished to continue to gather in Zion and promised the Lord’s blessings if they remained faithful.

The revelation closes with some personal instruction that might seem irrelevant today, but I believe it actually contains a priceless lesson, one which will help us better understand the nature of glory and how to distinguish glory from pride.

As with so many other revelations, this counsel appears to have been given in response to a specific request, one that is easy to imagine as we envision these elders who, on a hot and humid mid-August day, were probably walking along a dusty road:

I, the Lord, am willing, if any among you desire to ride upon horses, or upon mules, or in chariots, he shall receive this blessing, if he receive it from the hand of the Lord, with a thankful heart in all things.

These things remain with you to do according to judgment and the directions of the Spirit. [D&C 62:7–8]

What do horses, mules, and chariots have to do with glory? Why would a revelation given during a chance meeting along the roadside be preserved for our instruction today? Here is the lesson that I believe is still crucial. The Lord desires to bless us in all our efforts to build His kingdom. If we have need of tools, resources, or some advantage in our stewardships, the Lord is eager to grant us our needs and desires. But the Lord does not offer a solution without any effort on our part. First,

we must have faith; second, we must receive such blessings from the hand of the Lord with a thankful heart; and, finally, the task remains with us, and we must use judgment as directed by the Spirit. I will come back to this lesson in a minute.

Unfortunately, time will allow only a cursory examination of the promised glory of Zion. Due to a variety of complications, including human frailties and intense persecutions, by 1838 repeated efforts to establish Zion in Missouri had all failed. The exterminating order issued by Governor Lilburn Boggs in October 1838, the Haun's Mill Massacre shortly thereafter, and the incarceration of Joseph Smith and other Church leaders in Liberty Jail left the Saints no alternative. The next place of gathering would become Nauvoo, Illinois. It is difficult to imagine, but we should try to understand how devastating and discouraging this setback must have been for the early members of the Church. Almost everyone involved probably lost much of their life's wealth and possessions. How chastened they must have felt when they realized that the establishment of the New Jerusalem would be postponed.

As I ponder the evolution of events that has brought the Church to its present situation—from Missouri to Nauvoo, the migration to Utah, and eventually to the current worldwide expansion—I often wonder how those who lost the vision of Zion in Missouri and the promised glory of section 58 would judge us today. Would they look at our prosperity and feel that after the forewarned trials and tribulations, Zion has finally been redeemed? If they could walk with us here on this beautiful campus, if they could visit all the Church facilities and the holy temples found in many lands throughout the world, if they could visit our spacious and finely appointed homes, what would they think of our circumstances? If they could behold modern transportation and technology and how these have facilitated the growth of the Church and advanced its mission, would

they feel that we have arrived at the promised glory they were not permitted obtain?

I can only imagine that the early Saints would have been amazed if in their time they could have seen how far we have come today. Still, I do not know if all that we enjoy today constitutes a full realization of the promised glory of section 58.

Remember how I opened my address today: I argued that pride is a counterfeit and deception for glory. I worry that we as a people can mistake worldly wealth and advantage for glory when, in fact, these are shallow illusions that can cause us to miss the mark. A decade has passed since President Benson's discourse on pride, yet his warning is still urgently relevant. As President Benson noted, the Lord warned us in the Doctrine and Covenants to "beware of pride, lest ye become as the Nephites of old" (D&C 38:39). An entire sermon might be devoted to an analysis of the pride of the Nephites in the Book of Mormon. Suffice it to say that the nature of their cyclical problem was an inability to prosper and grow wealthy as to the things of the world without becoming distracted and losing sight of God's greater blessings. Their wealth became a self-serving preoccupation leading to hypocrisy and contention. President Benson taught:

The central feature of pride is enmity—enmity toward God and enmity toward our fellowmen. Enmity means "hatred toward, hostility to, or a state of opposition." It is the power by which Satan wishes to reign over us. ["Beware of Pride," 4]

Let's return to Joseph and the elders as they met by chance on that hot and dusty road between Independence and Kirtland. Remember the lesson: the Lord does truly desire to bless us. I personally believe that when it comes to the establishment of Zion or the building of His kingdom here on earth, He delights in providing us our righteous desires when we ask in faith, are grateful, and seek

the guidance of the Spirit in performing our labors. I believe this is one process by which an earthly and temporal measure of glory is realized; indeed, this is part of the process that has enabled us to reach our current situation. When we seek the Lord's counsel and assistance to do His will, He can and does bring to pass remarkable accomplishments. But there is a fine line between glory and pride. When we place our own personal vanity and greed before the will of the Lord, we confuse glory with pride and fall into the trap that plagued the Nephites of old. Confusing personal ambitions with the Lord's designs for His kingdom can also lead to the enmity that President Benson warned against.

Let's now move on to the third phase in our consideration of glory. Of all the references to glory in the Doctrine and Covenants, two attract my attention with special strength and persistence. After chastising some in the Church for irreverent use of His name, the Lord declared, "These things remain to overcome through patience, that such may receive a more exceeding and eternal wait of glory" (D&C 63:66). In this reference the Lord does not elaborate. We are left to ponder what eternal nature of glory is reserved for the faithful and repentant.

A similar description is found in section 132, a major revelation on the new and everlasting covenant of eternal marriage. In describing the state of those who marry for eternity as opposed to those who are married by an earthly contract, the Lord declared, "[these] are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory" (D&C 132:16). Could this be the glory spoken of in section 58? "Ye cannot behold with your natural eyes, for the present time . . . the glory which shall follow after much tribulation" (D&C 58:3). In D&C 132:19, the Lord gives a glimpse into this eternal nature of glory. Again referring to the righteous who marry in the new and everlast-

ing covenant, the Lord reveals the following concerning their state in the world to come:

And they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever.

The fulness mentioned here probably refers to the fulness of the Father's glory, knowledge, and joy discussed earlier. As we ourselves are spiritual children of our Heavenly Parents, we understand the continuation of the seeds to be the eternal binding of family relations and the eventual capacity to bear spirit children of our own. While the full extent of these blessings is beyond our present comprehension, I believe there are great lessons to be learned when we begin to link the importance of families with our quest and expectations for glory. Our priorities in life can become clear and, by treasuring our families, we can taste a measure of heavenly glory here on earth. On the other hand, if we equate our quest for glory to temporal and worldly measures of wealth, possessions, power, and influence, you can see how easy it is to be deceived and to fall into traps of pride and hypocrisy.

I conclude by sharing a recent experience I had with a young family that I home teach. Let me introduce the family of Corom and Jennifer Hughes. Corom and Jennifer have three lovely young daughters: Koula, Marsalina, and Sophia. Corom and Jen are the salt of the earth. They live humbly in a basement apartment, yet they constantly reach out to others in service and sharing. Neighbors in the ward are often invited to share Sunday dinners at their home. On a recent occasion I brought along some cookies to contribute to the meal. Their oldest daughter, Koula, age three, loves to eat—she takes her food very seriously and relishes every bite. When the time came to set out the

cookies, Koula was full of excitement. I will never forget the expression on her face of absolute joy and eager anticipation as she reached across the table for one of the cookies.

Wise and responsible parents that Corom and Jen are, and being cautious about sugar intake, Koula's father intercepted the large cookie she had selected and proceeded to break it in half. In the same way that I will never forget Koula's excited anticipation, I will never forget the instant change in her countenance at receiving only half the cookie she had hoped for. Those with toddlers of their own are all too familiar with the scene that followed. Koula's fleeting joy quickly dissipated into protests of anger and uncontrollable tears.

We are all familiar with moments like this. There was an awkward silence and despondence in Corom's face as he looked at me with a sense of apology as if to say, "Well, isn't this just glorious?" The moment was too much to resist—I looked at him and said, "Corom, you are the man, you have family!" Corom is a humble and unassuming person. He is work-

ing hard to establish a career. He even commutes to Eastern Washington University every week in order to complete a master's degree and improve his employment options. Given the awkwardness of the moment, it was easy to understand that he seemed a little discouraged about his situation. I did my best to reassure him that the worldly advantages he may lack at present matter little in the eternal designs of our Heavenly Father. Many worldly enticements can even be dangerous counterfeits for the true treasures of glory to be found in our simple, sometimes problematic, and always imperfect family relations.

I close with my witness of God's love for all of His children. How wonderful and joyful it is to know that Christ speaks to each of us personally through the revelations of the Doctrine and Covenants. I pray that our Savior's blessings will be with each of us as we aspire to return to His presence with our families and partake of His eternal and exceeding weight of glory and happiness. I ask this blessing humbly in the name of Jesus the Christ, amen.