

Hello, in There

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Thank you, President Lewis, so very much for that generous introduction. Thank you, Brother Downs, for that beautiful music. Thank you, my brothers and sisters, for sharing this hour with me. The introduction made me reflect back on my life. Many of the events mentioned in it sound better in the telling than in the doing, but I'm grateful that they would be mentioned.

What We See Versus What We Know

I had an experience the other morning that has resonated in my mind since that time. My son, for some reason, kind of got the missionary spirit and decided he'd do some things around the house. The current thing is to put mirror tile in the bathroom. Tile goes up quickly, so I brought some home, and my son stayed late one night putting it up. I got up early the next morning to clean up, but I didn't realize that the mirror tile had already been placed on one wall of the bathroom. Now, my wife has a strong nightlight in the bathroom. I'm not sure just what the psychological significance of that is. It's like a searchlight; if you walk in there you're well revealed. I was sleepy; I didn't pay much attention to the light. As I leaned over, I put one hand on the bathtub and was just removing my unmentionables

when out of the corner of my eye I caught this figure standing before me. Everything happened so quickly I couldn't really maintain the aplomb that usually characterizes me. I saw this haggard, scrawny figure standing before me nude, and I jumped about three feet in the air. Then I recovered my poise. I thought the figure looked slightly familiar. I looked at it rather carefully and struck a pose or two. Then I studied it still more carefully. I walked over and looked at those broad shoulders, that noble brow, that resolute jaw, those gentle, earnest, warm, brown eyes. I reflected for a moment on the fact that, although the figure in the mirrors had not changed, there had been a change in the way that I perceived it. I wondered which one was the more accurate of the two. Which one was the real Woodbury, the essence of the person inside?

And as I thought about that, I remembered something that had happened when I was much younger. My little boy Lexon, fifteen years ago, was slithering around the floor in his diaper while I was lying on the couch. He

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came paddling across the floor (I was serving on President Lewis's high council at the time, as a matter of fact) and crawled up to me. His hot little breath raked the side of my face, and then he stood up to put his cheek against mine. I pretended to be asleep, but he lifted one eyelid. He looked inside, and then he let it fall back. Just learning to talk, he cupped his little mouth against my ear and gently whispered, "Hello, in there." I thought, isn't it interesting that he would say, "Hello, in there"? He knew that I wasn't really outside. I wasn't in my hands or in my feet or even in my eyeballs. He knew that there was some inner dimension, a part of me that he was trying to reach—the same part I was trying to discover in the mirrors. You see, we all want to learn who we are and what we're about.

I think of the art that we create for one another. There are two broad categories of art that can be sketched on canvas. One is the kind that is a representation of what we see, such as a painting of disappearing railroad tracks. It has proper perspective. The figures in the foreground are larger than those in the background, and we say, "Gee, he's a pretty good artist," because that's the way we think we see. But, you know, realistic representation is a fairly recent development in artistic practice. For a much longer period of time artists created a form of art that we now call primitive (although I don't think it's primitive at all), in which the elements of the picture are divided into three distinct segments. You're likely to see the Virgin Mary seated in the center; she's the largest element in the picture. Then, in front of her, but much smaller (and that's why we think it primitive), are three wise men and three shepherds. In the third segment, above, still much smaller (although they're usually behind her), are naked seraphim and cherubim singing the glory of the coming Lord, the birth of our Savior. But Mary is the largest figure in the picture. Why? Because she is the most *important* figure in the picture. We call that hieratic art, or

the art of painting, not what we see, but what we *know*. We *know* that Mary and the baby Jesus are more important than the three wise men or the three shepherds. So we have two ways of representing reality: what we see, which is what I first saw in the mirror; and what we know, which is what I saw later on.

Now, isn't that an important distinction to make? We go through life distinguishing between what we see and what we know. I had a friend at the University of Iowa who was a psychologist. He once brought to me some optical illusions. The interesting thing about them is that they don't depend upon translation; they don't depend upon language. They look the same to all, no matter what language they speak. "Lael," he said, "What do these look like?"

I said, "They look like a bunch of scratches on a piece of paper."

He said, "I know, but if you were forced to a decision, what figures would you say these look like?"

I said, "Well, I don't know. They look like squares—just a group of squares to me."

Then my friend got a grant from the government, went to South Africa, went deep into the bush as far from civilization as he could get, and he held these same optical illusions before the people there and asked, "What do you see when you look at this?"

In whatever language they use, they said, "We see essentially vertical forms."

Then he came back and said, "I don't know how to understand this. People in America tend to see rectangles when they look at the optical illusion; people in Africa tend to see vertical structures when they look at it. Why is this so?" He concluded that it is due to the fact that people in America live in what he calls "carpentered societies." Americans live in a world of rectangles. You're looking at one now. You're seated in one. The floor is one, the shape of the proscenium arch is square. This is an easy way to build. It's the cheapest form of

construction. You and I are used to seeing rectangles, whereas those who live in jungles, I suppose, are used to seeing vertical forms. This illustration lends emphasis to the concept that we see, not really what we *see*, but what we *know*. In other words, what we think we see is determined by what we know, or what happens in front of the eye is not as important as what happens in the back of the eye.

My brothers and sisters, what do you know about yourself? Have you ever been to a party where they were doing some hypnotism things? We know now from reading the *New Era* that that's not a very healthy activity, but I went to a party once where some people were hypnotized. They put a chair here, they put a chair there, and they hypnotized a boy and laid him across the two chairs, his head on one chair and his heels on another. The hypnotist said, "You are rigid." He made him *know* that he was rigid. That's an important point. Because he knew it, he became rigid. People jumped up and down on his belly. Can you imagine that! He had extraordinary ability in his body. I can't endure people jumping up and down on my belly even when I'm flat on the floor.

I read once of a woman who was washing dishes while looking out her kitchen window. Her boy was changing a tire out in back. He had jacked the car up by the bumper and very unwisely had crawled underneath to work. His mother saw the car slowly move backward. The bottom of the car was coming down on his chest and began crushing the life out of him. This little mother ran out of the kitchen, grabbed the back bumper of the car, lifted it up, and said to her son, "Get out of there as quick as you possibly can," or words to that effect. He crawled out. His life was saved. She then dropped the car and was taken to the hospital where she spent several months recovering from a broken back. Now, the point is that she didn't know she couldn't lift the back end of an automobile. I *know* I can't. I've had to change tires. I have trouble getting the hubcaps

off and on because I know just how little power I really have. But a person can lie with his heels on one chair and his head on another and people can jump up and down on him. There's no question in my mind that inherent within each of us is the ability to lift a weight as heavy as an automobile.

My brothers and sisters, if a loved one lifts your eye or whispers into your ear, "Hello, in there," who responds? Who is in there in your head—that part of you that is inseparably connected with the body that your earthly father and mother prepared and that part of you that will leave when that body is laid to rest for a while?

Brothers and sisters, what do you see when you look at yourself, when you look into a mirror? Oh, I know. I know what you see because I've seen the same things myself: school problems, bad grades, flunking out of college, money problems, a poor complexion, an acute case of bad breath (and it's got to be pretty bad if you can see it in a mirror). Do you see what you *see*, or do you see what you *know*? Do you know who is in there? When you look at such images or think about them do you see the person inside? Stop and think about this problem for a minute, because if you think it through you can change your life, my brothers and sisters. If you know who is in there and remember it and act accordingly, you can become a different person.

You Were Valiant in the Preexistence

Do you know that in you there is one coeternal with God—uncreate intelligence? You were not created and you cannot be destroyed. I don't know how to reconcile that concept with the feelings of a person who's got a case of eczema or a figure problem or can't get a date for next Friday night. They are two different concepts—two different dimensions. But the first is more accurate than the second because the second will pass on in a short while, but the first remains forever. Can you

see yourself as one who was present and who shouted when the foundations of the earth were laid? Do you know why you shouted? You shouted for joy. I know what you shouted. The prophets have told us. I used to think we all shouted “Hurray” or “Hallelujah,” but we shouted the “Hosanna Shout.”

Are you one who fought and was valiant in the great battle in heaven? I think you were. I think each of you had to make that decision. I think there was a debate about it. I think you fought and were valiant. I think that our Father laid his hands upon your head and set you apart and gave you special stewardships and responsibilities and blessed you as you came to this world. He did so just as you probably were blessed by your father when you came to Brigham Young University, or went on a mission, or were about to pick a marriage partner. Do you see in the mirror one who kept his first estate when a third of your brothers and sisters were not sufficiently valiant to make that kind of choice? When’s the last time you looked at yourself and saw that truth about yourself?

Do you see yourself as one foreordained to the holy priesthood? That’s one of the most humbling, awesome insights the gospel gives me. I was foreordained to the priesthood that I hold. I was foreordained by God the Father. I think that I sat in a chair or a throne and that God the Father put his hands on my head, along with my Elder Brother Jesus Christ (and while I’m just supposing, I suppose that Father Adam and Joseph Smith—since I was born into his dispensation—and my earthly father, Raymond Woodbury, and perhaps a few other choice persons who were interested in me were also there), and conferred the priesthood upon me and foreordained me to the responsibilities that I have in this world today. The same is true of every person, male or female, seated here, I believe. I think that the doctrines of our restored church support that view.

When we look in the mirror we should see someone who is an heir in the house of Israel.

I’m an Ephraimite. Do you know what it means to be an Ephraimite? Do you know that Ephraimites are different from Jacobites and Manassehites? Each of us has our own blessings and responsibilities, and I know what mine are. I know the special kinds of talents that I’m supposed to have as an Ephraimite—not all of them, because Brigham Young just happened to say a few things about some of them that we really can’t comprehend. But I know what some of them are, and that knowledge inspires me. I’m a better man knowing that I am an heir in the house of Israel. And I know that I am because I’ve been told in my patriarchal blessing that I shall become a priest and a king and a god.

You Can Work Miracles

If someone addresses you, do you know that he is speaking to the Lord’s anointed? I once sat in the Provo Tabernacle and heard a man from Hawaii tell a story that is deeply embedded in my mind. He may be the biggest liar in the world—I don’t know. I just know that this is what he said. He said, “I own some land in Hawaii, and I have dedicated part of that land as tithing—the best tenth part. About fifteen years ago [and I know this is true], there was a huge tidal wave that originated up in Alaska, swept down through the Pacific Basin, and killed many people. I was in Hawaii working on my property at that time. I didn’t think much about the weather; it was a nice day. Suddenly I heard my wife drive up behind me in our old rattletrap truck. She said, ‘We must leave immediately.’

“I said, ‘Why?’

“She said, ‘I just heard over the radio that there’s a huge tidal wave coming this way and we just have time to get away.’ I looked out to the ocean, and sure enough, I could see it. I don’t know how tall it really was. It looked as if it were three hundred feet tall—a wall of solid water coming right toward me with a tremendous roar.”

Then he told me how he reacted. In the telling of what he did, he made me analyze what I would do, because this man knew who he was and what powers he could command. I wondered if that was the same conclusion I would have come to, or if I'd have seen myself as just another puny man of the twentieth century—about to be overcome by the population explosion and pollution and the decay of the government and all those other problems that preoccupy our conversation—and therefore I would have gotten in the truck and run away. That may not have been such a bad choice, except that this man knew who he was and what he was about. He said, "I don't know why I did this, but I said to my wife, 'Get in the truck and leave.'

"She said, 'No, no, you must come.'

"But I repeated, 'Get in the truck and leave.'

"She got in the truck and left. I went up and I stood on the tenth part that I had consecrated to the Lord. I don't know why. I really don't think that land is any more sacred than any other; I just felt better there. I stood on that particular piece of consecrated land, and I raised my hands forward and out at shoulder level."

I thought, "Why would he raise his hands like that? We don't do that in the Church." I wondered if maybe he'd recently seen Charlton Heston in *The Ten Commandments*. But apparently it made him feel better to raise his hands like that, and in every move and every choice he was making, he was revealing the kind of person he saw when he looked in the mirror. He said, "I raised my hands like this and said these words: 'In the name of Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood which I hold, I command these waters to part.' You can come right now and look at my property and see the destruction that happened here and the destruction that happened there, but my land was preserved." What interested me was that he knew who he was—uncreate intelligence, a potential father of gods who had kept his first estate and was

living in the last days, an incipient priest and king. He was one who would eventually be endowed, not with the five small senses that you and I use now, but maybe with twenty senses, or thirty, or forty.

You Can Increase Your Powers of Perception

I once read a very provocative statement by Orson Pratt. By sharing it with you I hope to arouse you to a lively perception of who you are and who you will become if you keep the commandments. One of the best ways I know to keep the commandments is to know why and who you are, as well as where and how. Orson Pratt said:

Suppose He should give us a sixth sense, a seventh, an eighth, a ninth, or a fiftieth. All these different senses would convey to us new ideas, as much so as the senses of tasting, smelling, or seeing communicate different ideas from that of hearing. [Journal of Discourses, 2:247]

Orson Pratt spoke of the ability to obtain and consider many different ideas at the same time instead of thinking in a single channel only and of following only one course of reasoning. Elder Pratt said:

Knowledge will rush in from all quarters; it will come in like the light which flows from the sun, penetrating every part, informing the Spirit, and giving understanding concerning ten thousand things at the same time; and the mind will be capable of receiving and retaining all. . . . Not one object at a time, but a vast multitude of objects rush before his vision [the vision of a celestialized soul], and are present before his mind, filling him in a moment with the knowledge of worlds more numerous than the sands of the sea shore. Will he be able to bear it? Yes, his mind is strengthened in proportion to the amount of information imparted. It is this tabernacle, in its present condition, that prevents us from a more enlarged understanding. [Journal of Discourses, 2:246]

Elder Pratt continued by explaining that celestial beings have the ability to perceive with all parts of their bodies:

The spirit [like the eye] is inherently capable of experiencing the sensations of light. . . . I think we could then see in different directions at once, instead of looking in one particular direction; we could then look all around us at the same instant. [Journal of Discourses, 2:243]

When I first read this, I remembered I'd read something similar—Philo Dibble's statement that Joseph Smith told him, after receiving revelation, "My whole body was full of light and I could see even out at the ends of my fingers and toes" (cited by N. B. Lundwall, comp., *The Vision* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft Publishing Company, n.d.], p. 11). Then suddenly I knew why the angel Moroni had hovered in the air when he was visiting Joseph. He wanted to see where he was going. He could see out of his toes. That makes me think of the familiar promise in the Doctrine and Covenants, section 88: "And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things" (D&C 88:67).

Dean Clark guided me to a statement by Brigham Young, who said something similar:

I long for the time that a point of the finger, or motion of the hand, will express every idea without utterance. When a man is full of the light of eternity, then the eye is not the only medium through which he sees, . . . nor the brain the only means by which he understands. When the whole body is full of the Holy Ghost, he can see behind him with as much ease, without turning his head, as he can see before him. If you have not that experience, you ought to have. It is not the optic nerve alone that gives the knowledge of surrounding objects to the mind. . . . I shall yet see the time that I can converse with this people, and not speak to them. . . . We are

at present low, weak, and grovelling in dark, but we are planted here in weakness for the purpose of exaltation. [Journal of Discourses, 1:70–71]

Again, Parley P. Pratt, in his book *Key to the Science of Theology*, says that we will move from one place to another without a loss of time by willing ourselves to be there: "There is no apparent limit to the speed attainable by the body when unchained, set free from the elements which now enslave it, and dictated by the will" (5th ed. [Liverpool: John Henry Smith, 1883], p. 162).

Brigham Young, in another statement, said that we can move instantaneously to any point in time:

The brightness and glory of the next apartment is inexpressible. . . . They [our youth] move with ease and like lightning. If we want to visit Jerusalem, or this, that, or the other place . . . there we are. . . . If we want to behold Jerusalem as it was in the days of the Savior; or if we want to see the Garden of Eden as it was when created [and notice we're not only moving through space, we're moving through time], there we are, and we see it as it existed spiritually, for it was created first spiritually and then temporally, and spiritually it still remains. . . . We may behold the earth as at the dawn of creation, or we may visit any city we please that exists upon its surface. [Journal of Discourses, 14:231]

You Are Building for Eternity

My brothers and sisters, fellow sons and daughters of the living God, that is how I perceive you. Now I see you as my brothers and sisters in a way I did not before. Can you see within yourselves our brotherhood? Can you see the divine person that you are? You are now in eternity. Now is eternity, though not beyond the veil, which is obviously a part of eternity. But eternity doesn't *begin* at the veil; it *continues* there. That distinction makes all the difference in the world. This earth today is a part of heaven. You're not *going* to heaven; you *are* in heaven. *Now!* Today

is tomorrow. You are now housed in your eternal body. It's imperfect, that's true, but it's yours. Some of us say of our bodies, "I'd like to trade it in." But they will be perfected. That process isn't something that happens only when we move through the veil. By celestial marriage and parenthood, *you*—as God did before you—are *now* in the process of peopling worlds and creating eternal families of gods. Now, today! I have started that process. There are four spirits that live in my home. My hope for exaltation rests with those four spirits—not my only hope, but a large part of it. If I'm going to create gods, if I am a god, if I'm a descendant of God, heir to a race of gods, this heritage does not end when I come into this existence and begin again when I leave it; it is now.

My brothers and sisters, single your eye to his glory. If you do, your whole body shall be filled with light and there shall be no darkness in you. "And that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things." I bear you my testimony that God lives. And that's why artists create. It isn't enough to say, "I bear you my testimony that God lives." Language is often inadequate. I would like to sing to you my testimony, or dance it for you, or paint it for you. I think that's why we *shout* it. A shout should be said loud. (Do you know that the Saints in the Kirtland period often began their meetings by offering the Hosanna Shout instead of singing a hymn? They shouted it aloud. They didn't whisper it.)

When I attended the dedication of the Provo Temple I felt we had lost something

which I think our prophets tried to help us to recover when they said, in a recent issue of the *Ensign*, that we should say *amen* out loud. Do you remember reading that? Say *AMEN*; don't whisper "amen." There comes a time when you have to shout, you have to sing, you have to dance.

I know that God lives, that he at this moment is near, that he knows what's being said here, or else he could not know the content of all of the creations. And I know that he loves you. Brigham Young said, "Give up all your hearts to God, and become sanctified throughout, and be led by the Holy Ghost from morning until evening, and from one year's end to another" (*Journal of Discourses*, 2:134). By definition, you then are perfect if you will do that. "Be ye therefore perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

Here's how to be perfect: when you behave as well as you possibly can, according to your knowledge. God himself cannot be any more perfect than he knows how. According to President Young, "The sin that will cleave to all the posterity of Adam and Eve is, that they have not done as well as they knew how" (*Journal of Discourses*, 2:130). May we resolve from this hour to keep that covenant—the covenant that we have already made—to do as well as we know how. That we may know who we are, why we are, where we are, and what we are about is my humble prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.