

# **Claim the Exceeding Great and Precious Promises**

**Elder Spencer J. Condie, CR Oct 2007**

The first principle of the gospel is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This includes faith in His divine birth and heavenly heritage and faith that, under His Father's direction, He created the earth and all things that dwell therein (see John 1:10; Mosiah 3:8). At the very heart of our faith in Christ is the assurance that through His atoning sacrifice, though our sins may be as scarlet, they can become as white as snow (see Isaiah 1:18).

Faith in Christ includes the knowledge that following His Crucifixion, He arose from the tomb, and His Resurrection made it possible for all mankind to live again (see 1 Corinthians 15:21–23). Faith in Christ is the assurance that He and His Heavenly Father appeared to a young man, Joseph Smith, paving the way for the Restoration of all things in the dispensation of the fulness of times. Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, which bears His holy name.

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is evident when we believe His teachings and claim His “exceeding great and precious promises” and become “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). Innumerable promises are proclaimed by His prophets, and the Lord assures us, “My word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled, whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” (D&C 1:38).

In these latter days, the Lord revealed that “when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated” (D&C 130:21). The Lord makes generous promises, and He certifies that He will not vary from these promises, for, said He, “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (D&C 82:10).

## **Exceeding Great and Precious Promises**

The Lord's countless exceeding great and precious promises include forgiveness of our sins when we “confess them and forsake them” (D&C 58:43; see also D&C 1:32). Opening the windows of heaven is a promise claimed by those who pay a faithful tithe (see Malachi 3:10), and finding “great treasures of knowledge” accrues to those who observe the Word of Wisdom (D&C 89:19).

Becoming unspotted from the world is a promise to those who keep the Sabbath holy (see D&C 59:9; Exodus 31:13). Divine guidance and inspiration are promised to those who “feast upon the words of Christ” (2 Nephi 32:3) and who “liken all scriptures” unto themselves (1 Nephi 19:23).

The Lord also promised that “whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, which is right, believing that ye shall receive, behold it shall be given unto you” (3 Nephi 18:20). We are promised that the Holy Ghost will be our constant companion when we “let virtue garnish [our] thoughts unceasingly” (see D&C 121:45–46). We can claim the spiritually liberating promise of

fasting, which will “loose the bands of wickedness,” undo our “heavy burdens,” and “break every yoke” (Isaiah 58:6).

Those who are sealed in holy temples and who faithfully keep their covenants will receive God’s glory, which “shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever” (D&C 132:19).

Sometimes, in our earthly impatience, we may lose sight of the Lord’s precious promises and disconnect our obedience from the fulfillment of these promises. The Lord has declared:

“Who am I, saith the Lord, that have promised and have not fulfilled?

“I command and men obey not; I revoke and they receive not the blessing.

“Then they say in their hearts: This is not the work of the Lord, for his promises are not fulfilled. But wo unto such, for their reward lurketh beneath, and not from above” (D&C 58:31–33).

### **Seeing the Promises Afar Off**

Important components of faith are patience, long-suffering, and enduring to the end. The Apostle Paul recounts the faith of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sara, concluding that “these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (see Hebrews 11:4–13). These faithful Saints knew that this earth life was a journey, not their final destination.

When Abram was 75 years old, the Lord promised him, “I will make of thee a great nation”—this at a time when he and Sarai as yet had no children (Genesis 12:2). He was 86 when Sarai’s handmaiden Hagar “bare Ishmael to Abram” (Genesis 16:16).

And the Lord changed Abram’s name to Abraham and Sarai’s name to Sarah, and when he was nearly a hundred and she was 90 they were promised that Sarah would bear a son to be named Isaac (see Genesis 17:17, 19). Amidst their disbelief the Lord asked: “Is any thing too hard for the Lord?” (Genesis 18:14). And “Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age” (Genesis 21:2), and the Lord promised: “I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore” (Genesis 22:17).

Young Isaac grew into manhood, and when he was 40 years old he married Rebekah. “And Isaac intreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren: and the Lord was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived” and bore twin sons, Esau and Jacob, when their father was 60 years old. (See Genesis 25:20–26.)

As Jacob matured and became of appropriate age, his parents sent him to the household of Laban, where he would meet Laban’s two daughters, Leah and Rachel. Jacob told Laban, “I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter. . . . And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her” (Genesis 29:18, 20).

You will recall how Laban beguiled young Jacob into first marrying Leah and then Rachel. “And when the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren” (Genesis 29:31). And Leah bore Reuben, then Simeon, then Levi, and Judah. Meanwhile, Rachel remained childless (see Genesis 29:32–35).

With ever-increasing envy and mounting desperation, one day Rachel explosively demanded of Jacob, “Give me children, or else I die” (Genesis 30:1). Leah subsequently bore two more sons and a daughter.

### **The Lord Is Not Slack Concerning His Promise**

The Apostle Peter testified that “the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering” toward us (2 Peter 3:9). In this age of one-hour dry cleaning and one-minute fast-food franchises, it may at times seem to us as though a loving Heavenly Father has misplaced our precious promises or He has put them on hold or filed them under the wrong name. Such were the feelings of Rachel.

But with the passage of time, we encounter four of the most beautiful words in holy writ: “And God remembered Rachel” (Genesis 30:22). And she was blessed with the birth of Joseph and later the birth of Benjamin. There are millions on earth today who are descendants of Joseph who have embraced the Abrahamic promise that through their efforts “shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal” (Abraham 2:11).

When heaven’s promises sometimes seem afar off, I pray that each of us will embrace these exceeding great and precious promises and never let go. And just as God remembered Rachel, God will remember you. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.