are of the covenant which the Father made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham: And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed."[11]

7- The Savior explained the importance of their identity as children of the covenant. He said, "The Father having raised me up unto you first, … sent me to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities; and this because ye are the children of the covenant."[12]

8- The covenant God made with Abraham[13] and later reaffirmed with Isaac[14] and Jacob[15] is of transcendent significance. It contained several promises, including:

- ***Jesus the Christ would be born through Abraham's lineage.***
- ***Abraham's posterity would be numerous, entitled to an eternal increase, and also entitled to bear the priesthood.***
- ***Abraham would become a father of many nations.***
- ***Certain lands would be inherited by his posterity.***
- ***All nations of the earth would be blessed by his seed.***[16]
- ***And that covenant would be everlasting—even through "a thousand generations."***[17]

9- Some of these promises have been fulfilled; others are still pending. I quote from an early Book of Mormon prophecy: "Our father [Lehi] hath not spoken of our seed alone, but also of all the house of Israel, pointing to the covenant which should be fulfilled *in the latter days;* which covenant the Lord made to our father Abraham."[18] Isn't that amazing? Some 600 years *before* Jesus was born in Bethlehem, prophets knew that the Abrahamic covenant would be finally fulfilled only *in the latter days.*

10- To facilitate that promise, the Lord appeared in these latter days to renew that Abrahamic covenant. To the ProphetJoseph Smith, the Master declared:

11- "Abraham received promises concerning his seed, and of the fruit of his loins—from whose loins ye are, … my servant Joseph. …

"This promise is yours also, because ye are of Abraham."[19]

12- With this renewal, we have received, as did they of old, the holy priesthood and the everlasting gospel. We have the right to receive the fulness of the gospel, enjoy the blessings of the priesthood, and qualify for God's greatest blessing—that of eternal life.[20]

13- Some of us are the literal seed of Abraham; others are gathered into his family by adoption. The Lord makes no distinction.[21] Together we receive these promised blessings—if we seek the Lord and obey His commandments.[22] But if we don't, we lose the blessings of the covenant.[23] To assist us, His Church provides patriarchal blessings to give each recipient a vision for his or her future as well as a connection with the past, even a declaration of lineage back to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.[24]

14- Brethren of the covenant have the right to qualify for the oath and covenant of the priesthood.[25] If you are "faithful unto the obtaining these two priesthoods … and the magnifying [of your] calling, [you] are sanctified by the Spirit unto the renewing of [your] bodies."[26] That is not all. Men who worthily receive the priesthood receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and those who receive the Lord receive God the Father.[27] And those who receive the Father receive all that He has.[28]Incredible blessings flow from this oath and covenant to worthy men, women, and children in all the world.

15- Ours is the responsibility to help fulfill the Abrahamic covenant. Ours is the seed foreordained and prepared to bless all people of the world.[29] That is why priesthood duty includes missionary work. After some 4,000 years of anticipation and preparation, this is the appointed day when the gospel is to be taken to the kindreds of the earth. This is the time of the promised gathering of Israel. And we get to participate! Isn't that exciting? The Lord is counting on us and our sons—and He is profoundly grateful for our daughters—who worthily serve as missionaries in this great time of the gathering of Israel.

16- The Book of Mormon is a tangible sign that the Lord has commenced to gather His children of covenant Israel.[30] This book, written for *our* day, states as one of its purposes that "ye may know that the covenant which the Father hath made with the children of Israel … is already beginning to be fulfilled. … For behold, the Lord will remember his covenant which he hath made unto his people of the house of Israel."[31]

17- Indeed, the Lord has not forgotten! He has blessed us and others throughout the world with the Book of Mormon. One of its purposes is for "the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ."[32] It helps us to make covenants with God. It invites us to remember Him and to know His Beloved Son. It is another testament of Jesus Christ.

18- Children of the covenant have the right to receive His doctrine and to know the plan of salvation. They *claim* it by making covenants of sacred significance. Brigham Young said: "All Latter-day Saints enter the new and everlasting covenant when they enter this Church. … They enter the new and everlasting covenant to sustain the Kingdom of God."[33] They *keep*the covenant by obedience to His commandments.

19- At baptism we covenant to serve the Lord and keep His commandments.[34] When we partake of the sacrament, we renew that covenant and declare our willingness to take upon ourselves the name of Jesus Christ. Thereby we are adopted as His sons and daughters and are known as brothers and sisters. He is the father of our new life.[35] Ultimately, in the holy temple, we may become joint heirs to the blessings of an eternal family, as once promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their posterity.[36] Thus, celestial marriage is the covenant of exaltation.

20- When we realize that we are children of the covenant, we know who we are and what God expects of us.[37] His law is written in our hearts.[38] He is our God and we are His people.[39] Committed children of the covenant remain steadfast, even in the midst of adversity. When that doctrine is deeply implanted in our hearts, even the sting of death is soothed and our spiritual stamina is strengthened.

21- The greatest compliment that can be earned here in this life is to be known as a covenant keeper. The rewards for a covenant keeper will be realized both here and hereafter. Scripture declares that "ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, … and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven … [and] dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness."[40]

22- God lives. Jesus is the Christ. His Church has been restored to bless all people. President Thomas S. Monson is His prophet today. And we, as *faithful* children of the covenant, will be blessed now and forever. I so testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. The Moscow Russia Stake was created on Sunday, June 5, 2011. 2. Vyacheslav Efimov was president of the Russia Yekaterinburg Mission from 1995 to 1998. He died on February 25, 2000. 3. See Doctrine and Covenants 138:57. 4. Doctrine and Covenants 130:21. 5. For example, after the great Flood, He stated that "the bow shall be seen in the cloud: and I will remember my covenant, which I have made between me and you

… ; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh” (Genesis 9:14–15, footnote 15b; from Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 9:20). 6. See Doctrine and Covenants 66:2; 133:57. 7. See John 3:16. 8. See Abraham 3:25. 9. Acts 3:25. 10. See 3 Nephi 20:26. 11. 3 Nephi 20:25. 12. 3 Nephi 20:26. 13. See Genesis 17:1–10, 19; Leviticus 26:42; Acts 3:25; Bible Dictionary, “Abraham, Covenant of.” 14. See Genesis 26:1–5, 24. 15. See Genesis 28:1–4, 10–14; 35:9–13; 48:3–4. 16. See references listed above in endnotes 13–15. 17. Deuteronomy 7:9; 1 Chronicles 16:15; Psalm 105:8. 18. 1 Nephi 15:18; emphasis added. 19. Doctrine and Covenants 132:30–31. The Lord also told the Prophet Joseph Smith, “As I said unto Abraham concerning the kindreds of the earth, even so I say unto my servant Joseph: In thee and in thy seed shall the kindred of the earth be blessed” (Doctrine and Covenants 124:58). 20. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7. 21. See Acts 10:34–35. 22. See Exodus 19:5. 23. Scripture declares that “I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise” (Doctrine and Covenants 82:10). 24. On September 21, 1823, this covenantal concept was first revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith. The angel Moroni declared that Elijah the prophet would come as a messenger from heaven to plant in the hearts of the children a knowledge of promises once made to the fathers of the house of Israel (see Doctrine and Covenants 2:1–3). 25. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–34, 39–40 26. Doctrine and Covenants 84:33. 27. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:35, 37. 28. See Doctrine and Covenants 84:38. 29. See Alma 13:1–9. 30. See 3 Nephi 29. 31. 3 Nephi 29:1, 3. 32. Title page of the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ. 33. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (1997), 62. 34. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:37. 35. “We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, … that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins” (2 Nephi 25:26). 36. See Galatians 3:29; Doctrine and Covenants 86:8–11. 37. This concept pertains to us: “Many generations after the Messiah shall be manifested in body unto the children of men, then shall the fulness of the gospel of the Messiah come unto the Gentiles, and from the Gentiles unto the remnant of our seed—and at that day shall the remnant of our seed know that they are of the house of Israel, and that they are the covenant people of the Lord; and then shall they know and come to the knowledge of their forefathers, and also to the knowledge of the gospel of their Redeemer, which was ministered unto their fathers by him; wherefore, they shall come to the knowledge of their Redeemer and the very points of his doctrine, that they may know how to come unto him and be saved” (1 Nephi 15:13–14). 38. See Isaiah 55:3; Jeremiah 31:33; Romans 2:15; 2 Corinthians 3:2–3; Hebrews 10:16. 39. See Psalm 95:7; 100:3; Jeremiah 24:7; 31:33; 32:38; Ezekiel 11:20; 37:23, 27; Zechariah 8:8; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Hebrews 8:10. 40. Mosiah 2:41.

Covenants

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When we realize that we are children of the covenant, we know who we are and what God expects of us.

1- One week after a recent assignment to create the first stake in Moscow, Russia,[1] I attended a district conference in St. Petersburg. While speaking about my gratitude for early missionaries and local leaders who brought strength to the Church in Russia, I mentioned the name of Vyacheslav Efimov. He was the first Russian convert to become a mission president. He and his wife did wonderfully well in that assignment. Not long after they had completed their mission, and much to our sorrow, President Efimov suddenly passed away.[2] He was only 52 years of age.

2- While speaking of this pioneering couple, I felt impressed to ask the congregation if Sister Efimov might be present. Far in the rear of the room, a woman stood. I invited her to come to the microphone. Yes, it was Sister Galina Efimov. She spoke with conviction and bore a powerful testimony of the Lord, of His gospel, and of His restored Church. She and her husband had been sealed in the holy temple. She said they were united forever. They were still missionary companions, she on this side of the veil and he on the other side.[3] With tears of joy, she thanked God for sacred temple covenants. I wept too, with full realization that the everlasting unity exemplified by this faithful couple was the righteous result of making, keeping, and honoring sacred covenants.

3- One of the most important concepts of revealed religion is that of a sacred covenant. In legal language, a covenant generally denotes an agreement between two or more parties. But in a religious context, a covenant is much more significant. It is a sacred promise with God. He fixes the terms. Each person may choose to accept those terms. If one accepts the terms of the covenant and obeys God’s law, he or she receives the blessings associated with the covenant. We know that “when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated.”[4]

4- Through the ages, God has made covenants with His children.[5] His covenants occur throughout the entire plan of salvation and are therefore part of the fulness of His gospel.[6] For example, God promised to send a Savior for His children,[7] asking in turn for their obedience to His law.[8]

5- In the Bible we read of men and women in the Old World who were identified as children of the covenant. What covenant? “The covenant which God made with [their] fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.”[9]

6- In the Book of Mormon we read of people in the New World who were also identified as children of the covenant.[10] The resurrected Lord so informed them: “Behold, ye are the children of the prophets; and ye are of the house of Israel; and ye