



What We Know about

PREMORTAL LIFE

The basic truths about life before we came to earth bless us with wonderful insights.

By Norman W. Gardner
Seminaries and Institutes

A young man who had decided to get married rather than serve a mission was persuaded to obtain his patriarchal blessing first. “During the blessing, he had a glimpse of who he was in the premortal world. He saw how valiant and influential he was in persuading others to follow Christ. Knowing who he really was, how could he not serve a mission?”¹ This is just one example of how knowledge of premortal life can make a difference for us.

“How old are you?” is easy to answer. Birthdays measure the age of our physical body. But really, we’re much older than that. Each of us “is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents” with “a divine nature and destiny.”² Before our spirit bodies were created, we each existed as “intelligence,” which “had no beginning, neither will it have an end.”³

Knowing that we are eternal beings with heavenly parents changes our lives by helping us see ourselves and our lives from a truly eternal perspective.

In our premortal life, we were taught lessons that prepared us to assist Heavenly Father in bringing about the salvation of His children (see D&C 138:56). We also had the agency to follow and obey God. Some of Father’s children distinguished themselves through their “exceeding faith and good works” and were foreordained, or given assignments, to serve in specific ways on earth (Alma 13:3). The greatest of those who followed Heavenly Father back then was His firstborn spirit son, Jesus Christ—or Jehovah, as He was known there.

The Prophet Joseph Smith explained that while in our premortal state, we were all present when God the Father

explained His plan for the salvation of His children. We learned that a Savior would be needed to overcome the problems brought on by the conditions of mortal life.⁴

Our Father in Heaven asked, “Whom shall I send [to be the Savior]?” Jesus Christ answered, “Here am I, send me” (Abraham 3:27). He was the Father’s “Beloved and Chosen from the beginning” (Moses 4:2) and was always meant to fulfill this role. But Lucifer interrupted and offered himself along with a proposal that would have destroyed the agency of man and exalted Lucifer above the throne of God (see Moses 4:1–4). Heavenly Father responded, “I will send the first” (Abraham 3:27). Lucifer rebelled and became known as Satan.

Division among spirits caused a war in heaven. A third part of God’s children turned away from Him and

followed Satan (see D&C 29:36–37). These rebellious spirits were denied physical bodies, were cast down to the earth, and continue to make war against the Saints of God (see D&C 76:25–29). The rest of God’s children shouted for joy because they could come to earth and because Jesus Christ was chosen to overcome sin and death (see Job 38:7).

In premortal life, we obtained gospel knowledge, testimony, and faith in the Savior and His Atonement. These things became an important protection and strength in the war in heaven. Those who followed God overcame Satan and his angels “by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony” (Revelation 12:11). When we learn the gospel and gain a testimony here on earth, we are essentially relearning what we once knew and felt in our premortal life.

Knowing that everyone on earth chose to follow the Savior in the premortal life changes our lives by helping us when we do missionary work. As Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has said: “Every child of God in mortality chose the Savior’s plan. Trust that given the opportunity, they will do so again.”⁵

Much like we cannot remember the first few years of mortal life, our memory of premortal life has been withheld. This was necessary to help us learn to walk by faith and prepare

us to become like Him. But we can be assured that we knew and loved our Heavenly Father. President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) promised that “nothing is going to startle us more when we pass through the veil to the other side than to realize how well we know our Father and how familiar His face is to us.”⁶

Knowing that Heavenly Father knew and loved us changes our lives by making our prayers more personal and intimate.

President Boyd K. Packer, President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, has taught: “There is no way to make sense out of life without a knowledge of the doctrine of premortal life. . . . When we understand the doctrine of premortal life, then things fit together and make sense.”⁷

How has your understanding of premortal life blessed you? ■

NOTES

1. Randall L. Ridd, “The Choice Generation,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 57.
2. “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
3. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 210; see also *Doctrine and Covenants* 93:29.
4. See *Teachings: Joseph Smith*, 209.
5. Richard G. Scott, “I Have Given You an Example,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2014, 34.
6. Ezra Taft Benson, “Jesus Christ—Gifts and Expectations,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1988, 6.
7. Boyd K. Packer, “The Mystery of Life,” *Ensign*, Nov. 1983, 18.

OUR PREMORTAL LIFE

Here are some scriptures that relate to different aspects of the premortal existence:

Spirit Children

- Romans 8:16–17
- Doctrine and Covenants 93:23, 29, 33–34
- Abraham 3:22–23

Foreordination

- Jeremiah 1:5
- Alma 13:3
- Doctrine and Covenants 138:55–56

Jesus Christ—Firstborn

- John 1:1–2; 8:56–58; 17:5
- 1 Peter 1:19–20
- Doctrine and Covenants 93:7, 21

Council in Heaven

- Doctrine and Covenants 121:32
- Moses 4:1–4
- Abraham 3:24–28

War in Heaven

- Revelation 12:4, 7–11
- Doctrine and Covenants 29:36–37
- Doctrine and Covenants 76:25–29