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Of the Seventy

The Sacred Place of Restoration

Palmyra was the stage of the Restoration, where the Father's voice would be heard after nearly two millennia.

A good friend of mine who was a Church member tried for years to teach me the gospel of eternal families. It wasn't until I attended the São Paulo Temple open house in October 1978 and entered a sealing room that the doctrine of eternal families came into my heart, and for days I prayed to know if this was the true Church.

I was not religious, but I had been raised by parents who were, and I had seen what was good in other religions. At that point in my life, I thought all religions were acceptable to God.

After my visit to the temple open house, I sought an answer through prayer, having faith and a sure confidence that God would answer me, which was His Church on earth.

After a great spiritual struggle, I finally received a clear answer. I was invited to be baptized. My baptism happened on October 31, 1978, the night before a session of the São Paulo Temple dedication.

I realized that the Lord knew and cared about me as He answered my prayers.

The next morning my wife and I went to São Paulo to attend a dedicatory session of the temple.

We were there, but I did not really know how to appreciate that wonderful opportunity yet. The following day we attended an area conference.

We had begun our journey in the Church, and we found good friends who welcomed us during this life transition.

The new member classes we attended in our Sunday meetings each week were wonderful. They filled us with knowledge and made us wish for the week to pass quickly so on Sunday we could have more of that spiritual nourishment.

My wife and I eagerly looked forward to entering the temple to have our family sealed for eternity. That happened one year and seven days after my baptism, which was a wonderful moment. I felt as if the eternities had been divided at the altar between what came before and what came after the sealing.

Having lived legally on the East Coast of the United States for a few years, I was acquainted with some of the cities, and they were mostly small.

When I read or heard about the events leading up to the First Vision, crowds of people were mentioned, which did not make sense to me.

Questions began to arise in my mind. Why did the Church have to be restored in the United States and not in Brazil or Italy, the land of my ancestors?



Where were those crowds of people who were involved in the revivals and in the confusion of religions—all of which had happened in such a peaceful and calm place?

I asked a lot of people about it but got no answer. I read everything I could in Portuguese and then in English but found nothing that could calm my heart. I continued to search.

In October 1984, I attended general conference as a counselor in a stake presidency. After, I went to Palmyra, New York, eager to find the answer.

Arriving there, I tried to understand: Why did the Restoration have to be here, and why such a spiritual uproar? Where did all the people mentioned in Joseph's account come from? Why there?

At that time, the most reasonable answer to me was because the U.S. Constitution guaranteed freedom.

That morning I visited the Grandin Building, where the first edition of the Book of Mormon was printed. I went to the Sacred Grove, where I prayed a lot.

There was hardly anyone on the streets in that small town of Palmyra. Where were the crowds of people that Joseph had mentioned?

That afternoon I decided to go to the Peter Whitmer farm, and when I got there, I found a man at the window of a cabin. He had an intense glow in his eyes. I greeted him and then began to ask those same questions.

He then asked me, "Do you have time?" I said yes.

He explained that Lakes Erie and Ontario and, farther east, the Hudson River are located in that region.

In the early 1800s they decided to build a canal for navigation which would pass through that region, stretching more than 300 miles (480 km)



to reach the Hudson River. It was a great enterprise for that time, and they could rely only on human labor and animal power.

Palmyra was a center for some of that construction. Builders needed skilled people, technicians, families, and their friends. Many people began to pour in from the neighboring towns and places farther away, such as Ireland, to work on the canal.

That was such a sacred and spiritual moment because I had finally found the crowd. They brought their customs and their beliefs. When the man mentioned their beliefs, my mind was enlightened and my spiritual eyes were opened by God.

At that moment, I understood how the hand of God our Father, in His immense wisdom, had prepared in His plan a place to bring the young Joseph Smith, putting him in the midst of that religious confusion, because there, in the Hill Cumorah, the precious plates of the Book of Mormon were hidden.

This was the stage of the Restoration, where the Father's voice would be heard after nearly two millennia in a wonderful vision, talking to the boy

Joseph Smith, when he went to the Sacred Grove to pray and heard: "This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!"¹

There he saw two personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description. Yes, God revealed Himself to man again. The darkness that covered the earth began to dissipate.

The prophecies regarding the Restoration began to be fulfilled: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people."²

In a few short years, Joseph was led to the records of prophecies, covenants, and ordinances left by ancient prophets, our beloved Book of Mormon.

The Church of Jesus Christ could not be restored without the eternal gospel revealed in the Book of Mormon as another testament of Jesus Christ, even the Son of God, the Lamb of God, who took away the sins of the world.

Christ said to His people in Jerusalem:

"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold."³

“I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.”⁴

When leaving the Whitmer farm, I do not remember saying good-bye. I just remember tears running freely down my face. The sun was setting in a beautiful sky.

In my heart an immense joy and peace calmed my soul. I was filled with gratitude.

I now clearly understood why. Once again the Lord had given me knowledge and light.

During my trip home, scriptures continued to flow into my mind: the promises made to Father Abraham that in his seed all families of the earth would be blessed.⁵

And for this, temples would be erected so that the divine power might

be conferred upon man once again on the earth so that families could be united, not until death do us part but together for all eternity.

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.”⁶

If you who hear me have any questions in your heart, do not give up!

I invite you to follow the example of the Prophet Joseph Smith when he read in James 1:5, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally.”

What happened at Cumorah was an important part of the Restoration, as Joseph Smith received the plates which

contained the Book of Mormon. This book helps us get closer to Christ than any other book on earth.⁷

I bear witness that the Lord raised up prophets, seers, and revelators to guide His kingdom in these latter days and that in His eternal plan families are meant to be together forever. He cares about His children. He answers our prayers.

Because of His great love, Jesus Christ atoned for our sins. He is the Savior of the world. Of this I testify in the holy name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. Joseph Smith—History 1:17.
2. Revelation 14:6.
3. John 10:16.
4. John 10:14.
5. See Genesis 12:3; 17:2–8; Galatians 3:29; 1 Nephi 15:14–18; Abraham 2:9–11.
6. Isaiah 2:2.
7. See introduction to the Book of Mormon.

