

The Great Plan of Our God



Each dispensation has a special lesson that we can include in our personal plans as we prepare for our eternal destiny.

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In the fast pace of today's world, too many people are leaving much of life's experience to chance, without adequate planning and preparation. I find that when I ask some students what their major is, I often receive the answer, "I haven't decided yet. I will make that decision later." I have seen families and individuals fall into traps of debt because they have failed to make a sound financial plan and have lived beyond their means. Others overcommit themselves in activities, lessons, clubs, and athletics. While participation in such organizations can certainly be good, involvement in them can quickly turn frenzied when we fail to plan. In failing to plan, we lose sight of our eternal destiny.

We can find the ultimate example of planning by turning to the scriptures. In Moses 1:39, the Lord declares, "For behold, this is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." His great plan, which includes the atoning sacrifice, is to give immortality to all mankind. Through the gift and power of the priesthood, those who will adhere to and follow His plan will receive life eternal, the greatest gift God can give to His children (see D&C 14:7). The scriptures contain abundant references to this plan.

A history of the process of following that

design certainly testifies of its completeness and consistency. The Lord has carefully instructed His children about the gospel plan during periods of time called dispensations, periods when "the Lord has at least one authorized servant on the earth who bears the keys of the holy priesthood. . . .

" . . . When the Lord organizes a dispensation, the gospel is revealed anew so that the people of that dispensation do not have to depend on past dispensations for knowledge of the plan of salvation."¹

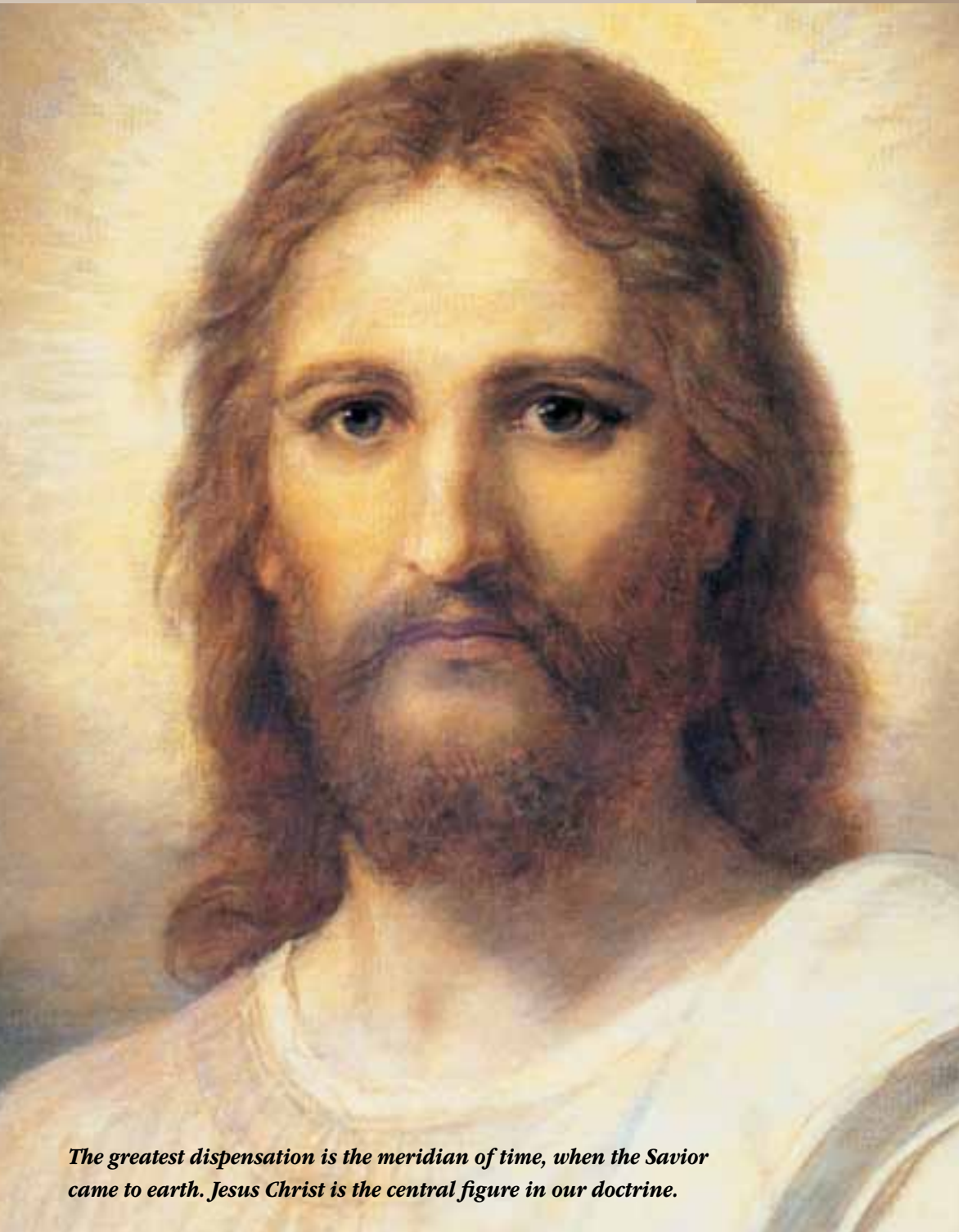
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The Dispensation of Adam: Become Like Our Father in Heaven

In the first dispensation, the Lord created Adam and Eve, placed them on earth, and gave them opportunities to choose (see Moses 3:17). They were commanded not to



RIGHT: CHRIST'S IMAGE, BY HEINRICH HOFMANN; COURTESY OF C. HARRISON CONROY CO.; BELOW, FROM LEFT: ADAM AND EVE IN THE GARDEN, BY LOWELL BRUCE BENNETT; CITY OF ZION TRANSLATED, BY DEL PARSON; NOAH'S REACHING SCORNED, BY HARRY ANDERSON



The greatest dispensation is the meridian of time, when the Savior came to earth. Jesus Christ is the central figure in our doctrine.

LESSONS FROM GOSPEL DISPENSATIONS

The Dispensation of Adam: Become Like Our Father in Heaven

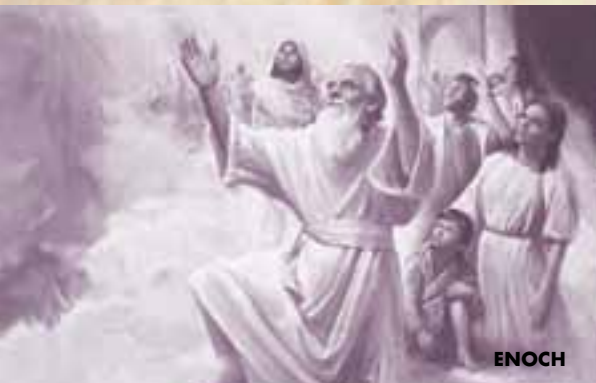
The Dispensations of Enoch and Noah: Choose Righteousness over Wickedness

The Dispensation of Abraham: Make and Keep Covenants

The Dispensation of Moses: Follow the Lord's Prophets

The Meridian of Time: Let Your Light Shine

The Dispensation of the Fulness of Times: Rejoice in the Fulness of the Gospel



ENOCH



NOAH

partake of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for they were told they would be cast out of the garden if they did. But partaking of the fruit would give them mortality. They partook of the fruit.

The Fall was not a disaster. It wasn't a mistake or an accident. It was a deliberate part of the Lord's plan of salvation. As a result of the Fall, we are subject to temptation and misery as a price to comprehend authentic joy. Without tasting the bitter, we would never be able to understand the sweet (see 2 Nephi 2:15). We required mortality's discipline and refinement for the next step of our development to become more like our Father.

What does this first dispensation teach us? We are the literal spiritual offspring of our Heavenly Father. When we are born into mortality, we receive physical bodies created in His image (see Genesis 1:27). We are promised that if we receive the necessary ordinances, keep the covenants, and obey God's commandments, we will enter into exaltation and become like Him.

We also learn that as sons and daughters of an Eternal Father, we can communicate with Him through prayer and receive answers through inspiration and revelation. Included in our life's plan should be constant and regular communication with our Father.

The Dispensations of Enoch and Noah: Choose Righteousness over Wickedness

The second dispensation is known as that of Enoch, who "walked with God" (Genesis 5:24). He established the city of Zion, which became a powerful symbol of the righteousness that can be obtained on earth as well as in heaven (see Moses 7:18–21).

Next in line is the dispensation of Noah. Noah lived in times of great wickedness, and although he cried to the people to repent, they did not heed his words. When the flood came, only Noah and his family were saved (see Genesis 7:23).

The second and third dispensations teach us great

lessons about what comes from choosing good over evil. Enoch and all who were with him were blessed mightily as a result of their righteousness. The people who would not follow Noah found that destruction follows the sinner.

These two dispensations teach us to seek after that which is good and wholesome. In our plan for life, certainly our objective will be to absorb as much of the good as we can find on this earth. We can find much of this good by searching the scriptures daily. They will lead us to life eternal.

The Dispensation of Abraham: Make and Keep Covenants

The next dispensation was that of Abraham. Like Adam, Enoch, and Noah, Abraham received a divine commission from the Lord. The Lord also made covenants—or binding, firm agreements—with Abraham:

"Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee. . . .



"And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee above measure, and make thy name great among all nations, and thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and Priesthood unto all nations;

"And I will bless them through thy name; for as many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name, and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father;

FROM LEFT: ABRAHAM ON THE PLAINS OF MAMRE, BY GRANT ROMNEY; CLAWSON; MOSES PARTING THE RED SEA, BY ROBERT BARRETT; LIGHT AND TRUTH, BY SIMON DEWEY; BROTHER JOSEPH, BY DAVID LINDSEY; CHRIST IN GETSEMANE, BY HEINRICH HOFMANN; COURTESY OF C. HARRISON CONROY CO.

“And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed (that is, thy Priesthood), for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body) 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 2:3, 9–11).

Latter-day Saints are a covenant people. We have agreements with the Lord in which He promises us many blessings on condition that we commit ourselves to obey His laws and commandments. Our plan for life should include making and keeping covenants. We can do this in part by always living worthy of holding a current temple recommend.



The Savior died, was buried, and rose on the third day to make the atoning sacrifice for all mankind so that death would not hold permanent power. Because of that act, all would rejoice and enjoy immortality.

Through these and other lessons from the Lord, Moses became an effective leader.

We too can become effective leaders. Leadership requires balance in our lives. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008)



JESUS CHRIST



JOSEPH SMITH

The Dispensation of Moses: Follow the Lord’s Prophets

Moses was one of the mightiest men who ever lived. He walked and talked with God. He was chosen by God to deliver Israel from the bondage of Egypt (see Exodus 6:13). He was privileged to receive for mankind the great law contained in the Ten Commandments (see Exodus 19; 20).

outlined the responsibilities we should consider when allocating and balancing our time to achieve success:

- A responsibility to our families.
- A responsibility to our employers.
- A responsibility to the Lord’s work.
- A responsibility to ourselves. This was particularly interesting to me.

President Hinckley noted that we must allot time for

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rest, exercise, recreation, study, meditation, and temple worship in order to be balanced in our lives.²

The dispensation of Moses teaches us and prepares us to follow prophetic leadership and to develop ourselves into more effective tools in building our Father in Heaven's kingdom on earth.

The Meridian of Time: Let Your Light Shine

Of course the greatest dispensation is the meridian of time, when the Savior came to earth. Jesus Christ is the central figure in our doctrine. He was more than just sinless, good, and loving. He was more than just a teacher. He ministered on earth as a man, though He was the Son of God. He died, was buried, and rose on the third day to make the atoning sacrifice for all mankind so that death would not hold permanent power. Because of that act, all would rejoice and enjoy immortality.

Among the many things the Savior taught us was that we are the light of the world and that we should let our light shine before others (see Matthew 5:14–16). We have been

blessed to receive His gospel. Let your light shine that others may see your good works and want to learn more of God's eternal plan.

The Dispensation of the Fulness of Times: Rejoice in the Fulness of the Gospel

We are living in the remarkable age of the dispensation of the fulness of times, when the gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored in its fulness (see D&C 27:13). Our generation also has the benefit of all previous dispensations on which we can build our lives as we understand God's dealings with His children.

The words of the Lord, as they have been given to us through the ages from His holy prophets, have guided us in a plan the Lord has established for us. That plan is complete from the beginning of time until we have an opportunity, if we live worthily, to live with Him in the eternities to come.

You are children of promise. I hope that you do not plan to be just common but that you plan to excel. There is no place in this world for mediocrity; we need to strive for perfection. You can obtain perfection in so many areas as you seek and work toward the goals you have established.

You have a rich heritage; do not be afraid to think and act according to the principles of the gospel and to enjoy its blessings as you fulfill the measure of your creation as a child of God. God bless you that you may have the desire to go forward and seek salvation under this great plan He has given us. ■

From a devotional address given at Brigham Young University on October 30, 2007.

NOTES

1. Guide to the Scriptures, "Dispensation"; available at www.lds.org in the Gospel Library under "Scriptures."
2. See Gordon B. Hinckley, "Rejoicing in the Privilege to Serve," *Worldwide Leadership Training Meeting*, June 21, 2003, 22–23.