Week 33 is scheduled for study August 9-15, 2021. This section has a lot of depth to it. Take the time it requires to digest it and you will thoroughly enjoy your studies this week. Our focus this week is on hope in Christ.

Day 1

Doctrine and Covenants 88 - The Lord offers us hope and peace.

President Russell M. Nelson said, "I promise that as you diligently work to remodel *your* home into a center of gospel learning, ... the influence of the adversary in *your* life and in your home will decrease."

It can become so easy to look at what is going on in the world, think about the warnings in the scriptures against the wicked then assume the worst for our own futures. But every now and again the Lord helps us adjust our perspective by giving us glimpses into our own special natures, our relationship with Him as our Father, the overwhelming generosity and love behind the Savior's redemptive acts, and the brightness of the future before us. We would do well to bookmark such passages as section 88 to remind us of the glorious reasons for us being here in the first place.

As an example of the glorious workings of our God, look at this article I wrote after reading section 88. We are usually so concerned with our own redemption that we don't even think about the redemption of other living things made possible through our Savior's efforts.

Section 88 is very long, but the narrative changes in several places to explain related materials. As you read the section try to mentally break it up into smaller sections that you can grasp more easily. Look for those pieces of knowledge about God and mankind that helps you feel more hopeful about your future.

One idea I got from this section is that God specifically created the earth so He could live on it with us. He isn't just exalting us to leave us on our own while He lives elsewhere. This earth was especially created for the purpose of us AND Him living together forever. So this isn't just some random planet like any other. This planet has a glorious future, just like we have the potential for a glorious future. God made the earth just for us to have the best mortal experience, and for us to be able to live with Him for eternity. What love. What kindness. What a statement of how much God loves us!

Day 2

Doctrine and Covenants 88:6-67 - Light and law come from Jesus Christ.

President Russell M. Nelson said, "I promise that as you diligently work to remodel *your* home into a center of gospel learning, ... the influence of the adversary in *your* life and in your home will decrease."

A basic truth of the gospel is that all things spiritual must be revealed to us, for the mortal mind cannot comprehend the things of God. There are reasons behind this we won't get into at this time. Suffice it to say that if we want to come to know who Christ and God are, we must seek them out so the Holy Ghost can reveal them to us a little at a time. Only in this way can we come to know God and Christ, their character, their grandeur, and their love for us. Such things must be revealed to us. And we come to understand their personalities through our efforts to emulate what we understand of them. Over time our understand is refined and enlarged to show us more perfectly the nature of their souls.

As you read and reread verses 6-67, keep thinking in your mind that Christ is describing to Joseph Smith many individual truths, but also one grand truth that is woven throughout these verses. He is demonstrating throughout these verses that all

things receive their very presence in the universe from Christ, who is doing the will of His Father. There is only one source of light in the universe, and that is Christ.

The light that comes from Christ doesn't just give brightness and illumination, but it also provides the laws by which all things are made and governed. This light enables comprehension to God's children and anything else that can grow in capacity. It is this light that emanates from Christ that enables us to catch hold of a spiritual principle or idea and begin to see the possibilities for how we can use that idea to grow and advance in our own righteousness. His light provides us with the power to become more than we could be without it. It invites growth and change. It is the law that governs our agency and the power to repent and be purified.

This literally means that Christ is within each of us, for it is his light, love, spirit, and truth that enlightens our minds and enables us to become like him. He fuels the stars, governs the movements of the galaxies, sets the times and seasons of the birth and death of the stars around us. He is literally in and through all things, the light of life and love. It is through him that the will of the Father is made manifest, that the Father is glorified by His creations and His children. This is why Christ is the beloved of the Father, and why he became the Father's only begotten in the flesh. It was through Christ that the crowning work of all creation was performed in Christ's atoning sacrifice and his resurrection.

So yes, we casually state the Jesus is the great law giver, or that he is our judge. But we often fail to recognize that it is in and through his own power and influence that our very ability to grow spiritually is even possible. If he were to withdraw his light, his influence from any object in the universe, it would cease to be able to function in any way. The matter would simply cease to continue as it was a moment before, because all matter in the universe moves and operates within the laws God has set for its behavior. Without Christ there would be no death, no life, no progress of any kind.

As you read today's verses again, see if you can catch a glimpse of what I have rambled on about within these verses. The Lord moves from subject to subject within this passage, but there is a unifying theme that runs throughout these verses that paints a tapestry of God's omniscience and omnipresence in all things. Jesus, I am discovering, is much, much more than I ever imagined.

Day 3

Doctrine and Covenants 88:62-126 - Prepare every needful thing

President Russell M. Nelson said, "I promise that as you diligently work to remodel *your* home into a center of gospel learning, ... the influence of the adversary in *your* life and in your home will decrease."

One of the impressions I got from reading these verses is that the Lord really does think in holistic ways. Unlike Western medicine that tries to treat just one symptom, He looks for the overall health of the person. With that in mind, let's look at the manual's list of remedies the Lord gives in these verses for our mental and spiritual health.

Draw near to God

When we learn to keep the commandments we become justified before the law. That means the law has no hold on us. We are free, because we are keeping the law. But to become sanctified happens when we practice living the virtues of godliness within those laws God has given us. It is becoming more refined in our characters, behaviors, attitudes, and thoughts that purifies us and helps us to become more holy.

This process of becoming justified and sanctified are not two completely separate things. There is a lot of overlap. It is expected that they are happening at the same time. But justification is either achieved or it isn't. It may take some time, and we will need to do some repenting when we break a commandment, but once we are in harmony with God's laws we are justified before the laws He has given us.

Sanctification on the other hand is a lifelong effort that keeps us on the path towards perfection in the distant future. It consists of learning to find joy in keeping God's commandments, learning to love as Christ loves, forgiving others, becoming more tolerant of people, and less tolerant of sin, and searching out all the Christlike virtues and learning how to incorporate them into our lives. This process will never be completed in this life.

Becoming Justified is our first step in drawing closer to God, but it is the practice of godly virtues in our life that sanctifies us and builds our confidence in our relationship with God. This is one of the reasons the Lord tells us that as we draw near to Him He will draw near to us. We must take the first step, but for every step we make to come closer to Christ, he will confirm our faith, bless our life, and draw that much closer to us. This is the process by which we become "one" with God as the Godhead is one with each other. This is how we practice becoming unified and a Zion people with each

other. It happens when all of us are working to be more like God and Christ. Becoming one as a people is the natural result of such lives.

Resolving a conflict

In some places in the scriptures the Lord tells us that it is through the simple and weak things of the earth that His great plans are accomplished. He calls Joseph Smith one of those weak things. Yet how many of us can say we have become as educated and as worldly wise as Joseph became? He learned languages, became learned in politics and government, and he studied all the time to learn of history and all things. He may have begun as one of the weak things of the earth, but he certainly wasn't one when he died.

The Lord tells us that we need to learn of languages, politics, history, science, and all the knowledge of the world. Why? God may be able to use the weak things of the earth to accomplish great things, but it is up to us to seek wisdom and to better ourselves so we can be of greater use to the Lord. If we are to become like Him, the acquisition of knowledge in all fields must become something we crave and are willing to seek after. You can't govern an earth or kingdom in ignorance. Knowledge is a must, and the Lord expects us to begin wherever we are and learn more, much more.

Think about the apostles He has called to serve His purposes. Some of them were called from the medical field, others were lawyers, judges, engineers, etc. The world is a complex place, and people are complex. God needs us to want to seek to be better armed with knowledge and wisdom that enables us to properly use that knowledge. Frankly speaking, if we have no interest in learning, we have no interest in being like God. Those two things are inseparably paired.

Prophecies

The Lord wants us to be prepared for what He has already told us is going to happen in our dispensation. But we can't be prepared if we are ignorant of what has been taught to us already by the prophets from Adam's day on down to the present. We need to seek out the Lord's statements about how the world will be, what will keep us safe, and how to protect our self and our loved ones from the dangers that are to come and that already surround us.

This means that in order to be prepared for the events of this dispensation we need to study the scriptures, read the words of the prophets, stand in holy places and be not moved. We need to be exercising our faith in as many ways as we can to strengthen it.

That means we need to trust in God and keep His commandments, living them day by day and believing in the directions we get from our rank and file leaders in the Church. We need to be ministering to each other's needs and looking for service opportunities, taking them on with grateful hearts. This is all part of God's holistic approach to our spiritual health.

Temples

Finally, there is the temple. It can be easy to get complacent about temple worship and attendance. But attendance at the temple needs to be every bit as needful for us as attendance at Church each Sunday. And when I say attendance at Church EACH Sunday, I mean just that. Occasional attendance, when it is possible to attend every week, is not demonstrating a willingness to seek out being closer to God. Occasional attendance is lazy spirituality, and only partial commitment. Such behavior is usually indicative of someone who only occasionally opens their scriptures, and who is lax in many other areas of the gospel. We cannot expect full blessings without full participation in the patterns of change the gospel can offer us. If we are happy where we are at then plan on being in the kingdom for which you currently qualify for. Only those who decide to fully commit to the gospel can hope for a celestial reward. (Just being honest here.)

FHE/Personal Study

Doctrine and Covenants 88:14-33, 95-101 - The resurrection

The resurrection is the fulfillment of the promise made to all of us in the premortal world as the reward for keeping our first estate. It doesn't matter how we behave in mortality, we will all receive the gift of the resurrection. This was promised to one and all, without exception, to those who kept their first estate. The atonement was to open the door to exaltation, the other promise made in the premortal world.

The atonement and the resurrection are a package deal, though two very distinct parts. Both parts could only be done by the Christ. The atonement came first, followed by the resurrection. The payment for our sins had to be completed before Jesus died, so he could be resurrected.

There is something significant that I still don't understand that required Jesus to die as part of his sacrifice for sin. Perhaps that is why he says that greater love hath no man than that he lay down his life for his friends. Someday I plan of figuring out how his required death is part of his personal payment for our sins. For now I just know that there is a connection, even though I can't fully explain it. Maybe it is as simple as the fact that you can't be resurrected if you haven't died first. I don't know.

For the present purpose, I will just state that the atonement and resurrection is the whole point of mortality. Resurrection is what allows us to be brought back into the presence of God to be judged and given eternal glory. If you take all other things, including the atonement, and set them aside, you will see that the resurrection is the only event that can return us to God once we are cut off from His presence by coming to mortality.

It is sad that the world at large has lost all sight of the importance of Christ's resurrection. They focus on his suffering and death, but pretty much leave it at that. But his death, though important for the reasons of exaltation, is not the only focus of mortality. The atonement is useless without a way to become gods, and that requires resurrected bodies, like God's. This is why God said that His work and His glory is to bring to pass the immortality (through the resurrection) and eternal life (through the atonement) of man.

So these two gifts Christ give us are inseparable, and without peer. They not only open the door to a physical and glorified body for eternity, but the atoning sacrifice enables us to repent and change as often as we need to to become more like God and qualify for celestial glory as well.

The resurrection is the pivotal part of the atonement, the kingpin that gives life its meaning (Hah! I made a pun and didn't even notice it - the resurrection gives life). Without a resurrection we are forever cut off from the presence of God. We are forever damned. Without a resurrection the grave wins our souls, and Satan would be our eternal ruler. Life in the eternities would be completely bleak and dismal. It is the resurrection that promises us that we will receive the promise God made to us that those of us who kept our first estates would be added upon, meaning we would receive a resurrected and glorified body.

This promise of the Lord of a glorified body doesn't mean a celestial body, just a body of glory, which is what telestial and terrestrial bodies are. It is the resurrection coupled

with the atonement that provides for the celestial possibilities. Only celestial bodies have the ability to have glory added upon them forever and ever. Refer back to Abraham 3 for references.

I suppose this is why Joseph Smith taught that the testimony of the atonement (which includes the resurrection of Christ) is the main doctrine of the gospel, and all other teachings are an appendage to it (See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith,* sel. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 121).

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Establish … a House of Order

Week 33