

Chapter 4

A SECOND LOOK

According to Jewish custom, each fall commemorates the beginning of the Jewish high holidays, marked by blowing the shofar, or ram's horn, to gather the people. (Some Christian groups call this event the Feast of Trumpets.) Although by no means Jewish, RLDS identify with the custom in an illegitimate way as an occasion for their "gathering." The church had always taught of a gathering that would one day take place, culminating with the construction of the temple in Independence. The belief is that that event will bring together people from all over the world for the formation of Zion. The *Book of Mormon* speaks of the North American continent as the land upon which these things will occur, with simultaneous events occurring in the Holy Land. Susie's unshakeable convictions about me, along with our mutual anxiety about living in the last days made what we had heard in Ohio—and the coincidences associated with it—a great seduction for making a second trip. Our thinking was, perhaps we should gather to Ohio, if indeed Zion was to be built there.

In the RLDS church, the ordinance of "laying on of hands" is used in a number of different ways; for ordination to a specific priesthood office, administration for healing, a patriarchal blessing, or even as a blessing at a time of indecision. One night we called Susie's father, an elder in the church, for a blessing that I might be able to make the right decision about whether or not to pursue the issue. We didn't tell him specifically what our concern was, but merely that I needed a blessing to open my mind to hear more clearly the Lord's instruction. The things he said as he prayed seemed to indicate our need to make a second trip. He spoke of my work for the Lord as unique. Perhaps though, not so much what he said, but rather how we *heard* it, made the impact. I decided that night a second investigative trip should be undertaken.

In early September we finalized our decision to go to Ohio again. Susie was quite emphatic about what she perceived my work for the Lord to be. This time we took our tent and stayed at a nearby campground. It was still warm enough to camp, saving the expense of a motel. We also allowed ourselves more time than the previous trip. As would be expected, I called ahead before leaving Missouri to let Jeff know we would be coming. But upon arriving, his response was "So what do you want?" A bit taken aback by so gruff an attitude, especially in light of the fifteen-hour drive we had just completed, I stated that I had come to hear more of what he had to say. I was sincere, but it was apparent that Jeff was not convinced. His overall demeanor placed me

in the defensive position of having to prove my sincerity, and also of having to ask the questions.

One of the things I had been searching for was a way to tell which of the revelations of the *Doctrine and Covenants* were divinely inspired and which were “man made.” Jeff’s letters explained that by this pattern of chiasmus we could not only tell if something were of God, but it would also open up the hidden meaning deep within the words.

Poems flowed like water out of my pen, at times so fast I could barely keep up. Out of appreciation for what I wrote, people sometimes stated the poems must be inspired of God. As any Christian would, I gave and still give God the credit. They were my way of expressing the God-given passions within my heart. But that day, thinking that if they were inspired in a supernatural sense, they should be able to be measured by this pattern or chiasmus. I gave Jeff a copy of a recently written poem and asked if it fit the pattern. What an absurd thing to do, as what is from the heart can never be measured. Jeff wouldn’t use chiasmus on what I had written, but said he would look at it later. “Later” never came, but Jeff’s deprecating manner eventually would convince me my poems were not of God since they had not been given to me by “an angel.” By way of this interpretation, that meant they were of Satan and needed to be repented of. This set in motion feelings of foolishness and guilt about what I had written. I hope to convey here the importance of never exposing the expressions of our hearts to abuse. This can cause feelings of painful worthlessness should such intimate expressions be rejected, but also can ignite feelings of guilt about their means of origin.

* * *

SOME OF THE FOLLOWING WORDS AND PHRASES were clichés that were prevalent in RLDS scripture, therefore, terms common to us. However, Jeff redefined them and applied chiasmus to their interpretation. So, as with everything else, they too eventually took on new and different meaning.

Terms such as “renewing of the mind,” “having the mind of Christ,” “being transformed/translated,” were presented as a result of discovery, not as a point of intent. Initially, terms seemed to speak of this pattern without requiring division. “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly *dividing* the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). Jeff taught us that God’s word (truth) must be “divided” in order to correctly interpret it. “Whom shall he teach knowledge? And whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breast. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little” (Isaiah 28:10).

We were taught that God’s word is not only twofold, but that it was made that way for the *purpose* of being divided, therefore correctly interpreted. “For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet a man perceiveth it not” (Job 33:14).

Smith's *Inspired Version*³ says Adam was commanded to "keep a book of remembrance...in a language pure and undefiled." This language Jeff interpreted to be chiasmus, a new and yet a very ancient language which *must* be taught by a seer, or interpreter, in order for us to come to the knowledge of God. "For a book of remembrance we have written among us, according to the pattern given by the finger of God: and it is given in our own language" (Genesis 6:47, *Inspired Version*).

Nephi, a major personality of the *Book of Mormon* supposedly used this pattern of language when recording his own account. "Yea, having had a great knowledge of the goodness and the mysteries of God, therefore I make a record of my proceedings in my days: yea, I make a record in the language of my father, which consists of the learning of the Jews and the language of the Egyptians" (1 Nephi 1:1). Jeff identified the term, "learning of the Jews," from this passage as the pattern. They, as God's chosen, were knowledgeable of God's pattern. Yet, the pattern was only the style of writing; the characters used were to have been in "the language of the Egyptians." Jeff taught that Joseph Smith was not only knowledgeable of this mystery-revealing pattern, but declared it to those of the early church movement. "And again, I will give unto you a pattern in all things, that ye may not be deceived; for Satan is abroad in the land, and he goeth forth deceiving the nations" (D&C 52:4b).

It is important here to note that we would later be taught that the center point of a division could be anywhere. But in the beginning we were taught that knowing where the center point was, was a gift only the seer had. Not surprisingly, chiasmus was the vehicle that Jeff would eventually use to establish himself as the chosen seer. The one constant throughout the experience would be our growing total dependence on Jeff, as God's predestined and chosen seer. This established him as a necessary part of our lives and prepared us for the next step: that he was the only one who could explore, or had the spiritual eyes to see a division from just anywhere. In the beginning it was a matter of knowing where the center point was in order to rightly divide the word, but evolved to the point of being able to rightly divide from anywhere, once the "truth" of the words could be discerned. When the center point could be defined as anywhere, divisions were infinite: but only the seer knew the way to the truth within them. Eventually, Jeff became our only source to truth and, ultimately, our only source to love. Nothing would be possible without him.

The list of examples we studied goes on ad nauseam. We thought God was revealing clues to us about a process of reading and interpreting scripture. We believed evidences were abundant within nature and the human body. We were given examples of chiasmus in nature with roots that descend, gripping the earth for support and nourishment, while the upper leaves or branches

³ *The Holy Scriptures: Inspired Version* is a revision of the King James Version Bible with extensive deletions and additions made by Joseph Smith, Jr. from 1831-34. It is the only Bible published by the RLDS church, now named Community of Christ.

reach up and out to the heavens for nourishment there, resulting in bearing fruit. Another example from nature, previously mentioned, was that sometimes a second rainbow could be seen beneath another. In the human body, we were taught chiasmus as the nose being the center point, then an eye opposite an eye, ear opposite an ear; a vertical mirror image. Horizontally, the human body has two arms opposite two legs and ten fingers opposite ten toes.

In the beginning the divisions were simple, without much variation from what one would obtain by simply reading. Initially, although such elementary divisions were not adding new concepts, the process of seeing it continually in use conferred credence to it and developed a sense of normalcy regarding its use. Classes consisted of Jeff teaching division after division so that eventually there existed no other way to study. Soon we believed there to be a great deal more evidence than not, in support of reading scriptures in this manner. This continual emphasis and method of redefining “truth” through use of scriptural study became our only reality.

Much to my dismay, there are still people using this method of thought and reading and they, too, claim it to be a tool for revealing the hidden mystery deep within scripture. However, what I’ve discovered is that what appeared to be the depth of revelation from God’s word was in reality only something that Jeff wanted to exploit. I was blind to it because it was never resident within me to find.

* * *

MY SISTER AND HER HUSBAND attended the RLDS congregation of Slover Park with Dennis and Tonya Patrick in Independence Missouri. The Lundgrens, and Averys whom I had not yet met at this point, also attended the congregation prior to all three families migrating to Ohio. It was not a deciding factor, but it did help to reinforce our decision to move when my sister later expressed what good people these were, and of the spiritual blessings which flowed through them and the congregation.

The thoughts and motivations of the Patricks mirrored those expressed by Jeff. Again, here was another family who seemed so sure of God’s purpose in their life, and equally sure that they were where they needed to be in order to fulfill that purpose. This impressed me. Searching for answers and seeking direction for my own life, I had no idea what that might be. And by the doctrines that I was, at that time, calling scripture, I was convinced it was very important for me to understand exactly what that purpose was.

Jeff had explained chiasmus briefly on our first visit, with a mild hint that it was able to unlock the hidden mystery of God’s word. Now, on this second visit, he spoke of specific instruction that could only be found by the use of chiasmus. The claim he made in class that night was that he had applied the Pattern and received the Instruction. The class topic he was teaching was “actually feeling and seeing Christ;” not simply the amazement of such an event, but the extreme salvation-pending necessity of it. The necessity to “feel and

see” would become a common term to us. Anyone who had not experienced this as Jeff taught was considered spiritually dead. It was not that he had claimed to “feel” and “see” but that he had to wait on us to do so; the first of many tools he would use for continuing abuses in instilling guilt to us. This was the essence of the class taught that night, though the conviction of it and the depth of all that it meant were still very far from us.

Jeff asked us what we thought about coming into the presence of Christ. Susie asked Jeff how he knew that it “really worked”—how he knew that this process of chiasmus would unlock what needed to be known in order for the Endowment⁴ to take place and save the world. He stated that he’d found adequate proof and was certain of it. But Susie pushed a little further and asked, “But how do you *know* that it works”? With this, Jeff broke down in tears and stated that he had done it—he’d seen the Lord. In addition, he said the Lord told him that he was to lead others to do likewise. (The *Book of Mormon* character, Moroni also told Joseph Smith to bring others.)

I didn’t understand what he was attempting to say that night, and it would be months before I would be able to grasp Jeff’s concept of the necessity to see Christ and to feel the nail prints in His hands and feet. However, I was persuaded that Jeff had experienced something that had a tremendous impact on him. Naïvely, I wasn’t aware that such emotional scenes about things of God could be nothing more than an act. Perhaps the answers I had been praying and fasting for were being taught that night. I felt the need to hear more. We weren’t in Kirtland simply as tourists; we were there in a sincere and fervent desire to know the truth about Zion. When would it occur and why hadn’t it been built? The “own due time of the Lord” is proclaimed several times in the *Book of Mormon*, yet, always associated with the faith and state of righteousness within the church.

That night Susie and I used the opportunity to get acquainted with Jeff’s other followers who’d become convinced their spiritual destiny was to move to Ohio. We accompanied Jeff and his family back to their home that night desiring to hear more. What a pity: to have such a love and passion toward God, and yet so little vision of truth. Several other people (absent the Averys) from the class that night sat around Jeff’s dining room table while he continued to declare his views. I recall how no one but Jeff and I had any input. I now know the others who were there had already become accustomed to the process of instruction being a one-way exchange from Jeff. My excitement belied how little, if anything, which I had to say was given credence. Before long I would come to know better than to *speak*, when I could *listen* to God’s chosen seer.

The events that would occur long after this class and many others were not for the purpose of merely “coming into the presence of God.” Rather, they

⁴ “Endowment” was an empowering spiritual event or experience for the RLDS priesthood prophesied to happen in the Temple as a prelude to Christ’s return. —*Editor*

emphasized the *necessity* of such an encounter in order for there to be any hope for mankind.

We were all fervent with desire to serve God. The assurance expressed by each as being where he truly felt he should be at that point in time was refreshing. The next day we heard testimonies of those who had moved there. The night before, I was impressed by a statement made by Greg Winship, also a tour guide at the Temple. I asked him how long he intended to stay there as a guide. I remember phrasing my question as, “How long are you planning to be here?” The look of dedication in his eyes, along with his answer, took me by surprise. “As long as it takes.” While I’d addressed his plans as a tour guide, he addressed plans of service to God. This dedication and energy was unmistakable. They’d all sacrificed good jobs and homes. They’d all moved on faith in their relocation to Ohio, with that faith as their only promise of success. God had indeed provided.

* * *

JEFF TOLD US THAT TRADITIONAL PRAYER WAS OF NO REAL VALUE. He said that we could only speak through our own corrupt speech and since “no unclean thing can enter the kingdom of God,” our spoken prayers could not reach God and were only darkness. “Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge,” as expressed in the book of Job. We were told it was necessary to learn to speak chiastically in order for your language, and therefore your prayers, to enter God’s presence as pure and undefiled.

My ignorance allowed me to fall blindly into the snare. This perception of prayer did not mean that we had no communication with God but rather that our hearts spoke for us because our utterance was not pure. Therefore, the desires of our heart were the truest sense of prayer, and if we acted upon our desires toward God, then we would learn His perfect language and thereby learn to utter back to Him the words that He wanted us to say (by way of the pattern). This became, in time, a fundamental aspect of all we believed. Another topic we all too quickly embraced was that of the “mountain.”

Jeff stated that a man would one day walk into the Temple and converse with God by way and use of the pattern, and that the result would be a great earthquake which would thrust the Temple up into the heavens. Though this is a bizarre concept, it was that outrageousness that made it so believable. Hadn’t every holy prophet had a high place or a mountaintop? The second chapter of Isaiah opens with a vision of “the mountain of the Lord’s House.” Having believed from earliest childhood that the Kirtland Temple was the Lord’s House, it was only a small step to quite literally believe Isaiah’s mountain as the vehicle that could lift the Kirtland Temple above all surrounding mountains and hills. Would anyone be so completely brazen as to propose such a thing, unless perhaps it were true? Known as the “Big Lie” theory, Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels found that the bigger the lie, the more believable it becomes. I guess there’s deceptive power in audacity. It will be

difficult for anyone with a less mystical background to comprehend its acceptability but I believed this ridiculous prospect. Unfortunately, there's more.

Along with the actual raising of this mountain, there was also to be an entryway opened up to a supernatural library. Section 101 of the *Doctrine and Covenants* speaks of a library and its keeper. This was the basis of thinking that at one time there was actually a library of ancient records. This was not a new concept to accepted church teachings. In fact, an elderly RLDS priesthood man made the claim of having gone into the library himself. His experience, in keeping with the more traditional belief, occurred in a region of Central America. Due to his respectability, many people within the church embraced his claims for years. He claimed he'd been shown the library by the three Nephites. But when Jeff made the claim of the library being in Ohio rather than in the Central American region, we believed him in the same context that we did of Kirtland being the authentic location of Zion, rather than Independence. In other words, Jeff didn't come up with these ideas; they were long-accepted (though bizarre) concepts that had been conceived, embellished, and embraced by church leaders, teachers and members for decades.

According to Jeff, the location of the "library" was at the area rock quarry where the stones were cut that had been used to build the Temple. The quarry is preserved by the local MetroParks and is also considered a historical site for people who embrace the Mormon belief system. Susie and I went there on this second visit and as I stood mentally savoring the activity that must have taken place in the 1830s on the very ground, it seemed as though I could feel the passions of the people who labored to construct the Temple—it was as though someone passed by me, but as I looked, no one was there. When we shared the effects of this pleasant emotion with Jeff later that day, he suggested it was much more than that. Turning to Section 101 he said that it was possibly not really the stir of emotion from a historic event, but rather the actual presence of the library keeper. He introduced to me the thought that it could have been the keeper of the library that I felt walk past me. It seemed to place us in touch with our religious roots.

The "sealed portion" was a major curiosity to me in those days and the prospect of actually finding, or rather, being given access to the library, would be a major step in receiving the sealed portion. Again, supernaturally, I was receiving answers to issues I had long prayed about. Zion had been a dream and passion within me since I began going on witnessing ventures. The topic of the library, along with many others, became an intrinsic part of everything else that Jeff would later teach. During this trip however, Jeff finally suggested that he could really say nothing else until we either made the move or decided against learning more.

Here we met confident people; confident because they had moved on faith and it had worked. There really was nothing more that could be said. It simply became a matter of would I move or not? I'd been searching for direction and this seemed to be it. Bible history is full of people who risked life-altering moves and the sacrifice that goes along with it. Mormon history is full

of faith in action as the Latter-Day Saints often relocated hundreds of miles from their home territories with nearly always an element of sacrifice involved. During our short time together, many areas of doctrine had been touched upon. It all seemed to return to one thing—to move felt right.

* * *

I REMEMBER MY HANDS TREMBLING as I wrote my letter of resignation in Branson. Six years in the Navy had prepared the way for getting that job. Yet, it appeared I needed to re-establish priorities and shed my worldly desires in order to allow God to work in my life. I never liked being in debt, so our debts were few and small. We managed to sell one of our two cars, leaving us the one that was paid for. Other adjustments were made in order to leave for Ohio as debt free as possible, although finding a job quickly would be essential. The unknown was frightening, but our families, without any opposition, embraced the circumstances of our move.

My dad had been very concerned which sections of the *Doctrine and Covenants* were true and which were merely creations of men to meet needs of the times. We brought back some of Jeff's divisions which we believed exposed the lie of changes within certain sections, thereby giving credence to Jeff's idea that the pattern can reveal fallacy. As dad looked at what I showed him, his voice broke as he said, "This is beautiful!" The doubts he would later have about it were not resident in what I observed in his eyes that night. By my own misinterpretations and many to follow, I sensed approval from him. What was "of God" and what was "of man" in the *Doctrine and Covenants*? The pattern gave the appearance of being that method of definition. Within two weeks, our journey began. A U-Haul truck, with our car hitched behind, moved our young family of four to Ohio.