

## Chapter 7

# NEW IDENTITY

**D**uring this time of becoming more unified in “one heart and one mind,” Jeff began associating each of us with various Biblical identities. As an additional blessing to us, we would be able to receive chiastic divisions. Through Jeff, these divisions would reveal our “true” identities. We were all part of an end-time climax and the characteristics, failures, and future blessings were all revealed long ago for this awaited day. Our perception of this, as well as our acceptance of it, grew as Jeff continued building upon this topic in his classes.

My identity was Pergamos (Revelation 2:12–17), known as the “fortified tower.” I had faults which needed to be repented of, in that God’s faithful martyr had been slain in my region, a region “where Satan dwelleth.” The irony here is that the Avery’s were murdered at the farm where Jeff’s headquarters (or “seat”) was, and by this time we too had moved there. Such parallels and symbolism are easily found in Revelation. Richard was the church of Ephesus, Danny, the church of Smyrna, Damon, Jeff’s oldest son was Thyatira, Dennis was Sardis, Greg was the church of Laodicea, and Jeff was Philadelphia. These identities were assigned to us prior to the drought of 1988 and helped to create in us the scenarios which best suited Jeff’s purposes for us.

Applying the name Philadelphia to himself, along with what would become an ever-increasing abundance of scriptural identities, Jeff also took upon himself the name Cyrus. Cyrus was the king of Persia who defeated Babylon and thereby enabled the restoration of Jerusalem. Cyrus is the contemporary pronunciation of the name; the Aramaic pronunciation would be Kores or Koresh. Vernon Howell, the leader of the Davidian cult in Waco, Texas, changed his name to David Koresh for much the same reason as Jeff. Both claimed to be Deliverers for the restoration of Jerusalem (see Appendix A). Jeff’s mission was that we had to be prepared to come into the presence of his god.

In teaching, Jeff would take a specific precept that he knew we would not be ready to receive, and plan a series of thirty to forty classes as building blocks up to that particular precept. Once the blocks were in place, he could teach the precept that was the purpose behind the preparatory classes. After that precept was taught and accepted, it became a building block in yet another structure. One thing I’ve learned is that I greatly underestimated the irrationally of evil. Before moving to Ohio, I could not comprehend anyone doing anything solely for the purpose of destruction. But if the lie is big enough it becomes all the more believable. Most of us look for a motive to

explain anything bad that happens. I have learned to not assume it to simply be beyond us, as in “God’s will,” but now question such “bad things” as possibly being the work of pure evil in an effort to destroy our lives and happiness.

We thought Jeff was imparting God’s interpretation of scripture, in accordance with God’s timing and will. Equally important was our belief that God’s revelation of these interpretations was strictly in accordance with our righteousness; or rather, purging sin from our lives. Even sin became a relative term, determined by Jeff’s warped logic and his necessity to humiliate or threaten us. Mostly, I think it was due to his own inability to become that which he claimed to be. In other words, he could never be the choice seer of the *Book of Mormon* and he knew it, so he used the position as a means to elevate himself.

Jeff was building within us a structure of his own design by means of a preplanned, surreptitious process. In true Christianity, the process within us is created by the workings of the Holy Spirit to the renewing of the mind.

“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” (2 Corinthians 5:1)

“And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” (Ephesians 4:23–24).

With many ex-cult members, trust in God is so damaged by this intense deception that their faith becomes fragile, if not altogether destroyed.

The concept of destroying a person’s past while forming a new identity within them is not at all new. In the book of Daniel, we read how certain vessels of the Lord were stolen from the temple in Jerusalem and taken back to Babylon in order to place them before their god. Likewise, certain choice vessels, in the form of royal children, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednigo, were also taken and placed before King Nebuchadnezzar. But prior to their entrance, they were given new identities (Daniel 1:7). These new identities were not merely for convenience, they were cunningly assigned to contradict their previous names. Quite obviously, these children were of far greater character than myself. They managed to victoriously sustain the truth they had within their hearts. I give God thanks that through their experience we have a vicarious account of success recorded to benefit us.

\* \* \*

LATE IN THE TIME PERIOD OF OUR WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE, I had a conversation with Dennis Patrick, the recollection of which speaks more to me today than it did at the time. Dennis and Tonya had been seriously abused as a married couple, though at the time it was accepted as “loving chastisement” so

they might be more fitting vessels for the Lord. Dennis had begun to be “acceptable” to Jeff (read: acceptable to god) and this acceptability restored to him responsibilities and privileges within the group that he had previously lost. As we talked one day about the hopeful progress of the group toward our common goal, I expressed my concern regarding Richard Brand. Richard had fallen into a heavy series of chastisements. As Dennis and I talked about these chastisements (within the guidelines of which we were allowed), he told me how he, too, had worked and studied quite closely with Jeff upon his arrival in Ohio. Dennis began to tell me how, at the arrival of Richard, he was replaced as Jeff’s more immediate partner for the Lord. This same replacement process seemed to have occurred with my arrival, to Richard. In my case, the emphasis was on grounding me into a confidence toward chiasmus. Once established, I could be brought up to speed with the mysteries of God’s word that the others had already been taught. It was emphasized that my family be prepared for God’s purpose in our lives, as were the others in the group. I see now a quite different purpose. Any new initiate into such a group is seen in need of nurturing, yet in need of close observation. I believe Jeff took new members under his wing in order to observe them more closely. Getting to know them intimately would allow him to assemble a strategy for controlling them.

We have characteristics that make us individuals, so what works as a control agent of one person may be counter-productive for another. Jeff had good skills when it came to the management of people (as I suppose would be the case with most any cult leader). Jeff coddled each new member according to the need. Perhaps some members were seen as more useful to Jeff in his delegation of authority than others. There may have been an appearance of a second-in-command relationship, but I’m quite confident that the only real second in command, if anyone, was Alice. Any other perceptions were only a temporary facade in order for Jeff to keep people organized and busy. Eventually, I was labeled as Jeff’s spokesman. I don’t really know why he placed this title on me; I never did anything in fulfillment of what the spokesman was to do. However, I did see its impact on me and on others of the group. By labeling me his spokesman it offered the illusion to all that we were moving toward the goal.

We were all used in different ways at different times. Once so initiated, it was less important for the leader to exercise immediate close observation. This was what took place with Dennis prior to my involvement with the group, and with Richard when I arrived. Perhaps if the group had stayed together for a longer period of time, someone else would have replaced me. With the use of chiasmus and Jeff’s imagination, I’m certain he would have had no problem justifying my replacement—and probably already has—for those who still believe in his divine appointment. My death had been prophesied, so that too, could have been an option if at any point it would have served his purposes.

KEITH JOHNSON AND HIS FAMILY ARRIVED AFTER ME, but they received the indoctrination so quickly that I believe Jeff trusted them not to retaliate against the deeper aspects of his agenda. Perhaps Jeff already had formed intentions of taking Keith's wife, Kathy, away from him. They embraced his doctrines rapidly. I'm certain Jeff saw no need to pull Keith in close, and equally saw no need to give him any position within the group. Jeff gave status within the group to whomever he decided to give status, and likewise, dished out humiliation to each in the same way. His agenda was quite opaque to us, and much like a god, he exalted and abased as he saw fit.

Our studies through the remainder of 1988 explored many areas revealing our true identities. "Spokesman" was more a title than a name. Our real names were to be revealed to us through the seer's eyes. It was considered a great blessing for the eyes of the seer to be opened for the revelation of the mysteries of God. For them to be closed would mean his people were in a state of sin. Jeff was not inclined to give blatant "thus saith the Lord" instruction to us. He seldom shared the things he had experienced (or claimed to) which related to his call as seer, yet when doing so he avoided detail. Experiences were presented as being intimately sacred, and not to be loosely spoken of. This aspect of Jeff's propaganda process is, perhaps, unique. To hold foundational experiences as supremely sacred is not at all uncommon, but Jeff used his imaginative skills through the words themselves. In fact, he even taught the necessity of this very principle by way of the chiasmic process.

We already believed the scriptures we were using were God's word, therefore Jeff was merely "opening" them to us. We both saw and heard the word of God revealed to us. We were taught this was necessary. We would "see" the words before us while "hearing" the interpretation of them through God's chosen seer.

"And behold, the heavens were opened, and they were caught up into heaven, and *saw and heard* unspeakable things. And it was forbidden them that they should utter: neither was it given unto them the power that they should utter the things which they saw and heard." (3 Nephi 13:25–26; see also 3 Nephi 8:18)

The passage quoted is an illustration from only two verses of many throughout the *Book of Mormon*, which speaks of how chosen ones saw and heard the things of God that were revealed to them. This principle was combined by Jeff through chiasmus and various class topics to be applied not only to a vision of sorts, where one would enter and experience the kingdom, as with Isaiah 6:1–3. But for us it was to be applied to the written words alone. "And blessed are they because of their exceeding faith in the words alone which thou hast spoken unto them" (Mosiah 11:123). We were to exercise exceeding faith upon "the words alone," as we "saw" them on the written page and "heard" them expounded by Jeff's voice.

The seers spoken of within the *Book of Mormon* were greater than ordinary prophets in that they could translate various languages by a tool called “interpreters,” which ability to see through them was also a gift from God. The way in which we eventually viewed Jeff is documented in the following passage.

“For he has wherewith he can look, and translate all records that are of ancient date: and it is a gift from God. And the things are called interpreters and no man can look in them, except he be commanded, lest he should look for that he ought not, and he should perish. And whosoever is commanded to look in them, the same is called a seer. And behold, the king of the people that is in the land of Zarahemla, is the man that is commanded to do these things, and who has this high gift from God. And the king said, *that seer is greater than a prophet*. And Ammon said, that a seer is a revelator, and a prophet also; and a *gift which is greater, can no man have*, except that he should possess the power of God, which no man can; yet a man may have great power given him from God. But a seer can know of things which have past, and also of things which are to come; And by them shall all things be revealed, or rather, shall secret things be made manifest, and hidden things shall come to light, and things which are not known, shall be made known by them; And also, things shall be made known by them, which otherwise could not be known. Thus God has provided a means that man, through faith, might work mighty miracles; therefore, he becometh a great benefit to his fellow beings.” (Mosiah 5:72–81)

These passages illustrate how the gift of the seer was not limited to merely translating from one language to another. According to the passages quoted, what these seers did was to reveal the deeper, or hidden interpretations of God’s recorded word. The words “translate” and “interpret” become interchangeable as to the gift of the seer (Omni 1:35, 44).

Jeff was to have seen Christ, who supposedly asked him, “Where are your brethren?” Therefore, it became increasingly paramount in Jeff’s belief, as well as ours, that Jeff was that seer, provided for our day and time in order to interpret these scriptures of ancient date. As the *Book of Mormon* records Jesus’ teaching when He visited the inhabitants of this continent, words were no longer to be chronologically divided, or even divided by chapters and verses. By chiasmus, the division of God’s word was infinite, without dimensions and limitations, therefore, all words became one. “And now it came to pass that when Jesus had expounded all the scriptures in one, which they had written, he commanded them that they should teach the things which he had expounded unto them” (3 Nephi 11:1). Jeff’s purpose was to follow the command to expound all words into one, as he had been shown by Christ, and as had been recorded by others.

All scripture took on a texture of infinity to its application of finding truth. As seer, Jeff was to reveal to us the truth, by rightly dividing. This included the revelation of our true identity. As was quite often the case, if his eyes were not open, or if what he was seeing was not able to be shared with

his people, it was an indication there was sin in the camp. I'm sure that even with Jeff's imagination, it became laborious to continually come up with something new. However, it became quite an effective method for creating guilt and humiliation within us, as well as feelings of failure and inadequacy. Mormonism is a works-oriented religion, with only the thinnest shred of emphasis upon the gift of grace offered to us through the sacrifice of Christ. Jeff played upon this ignorance by drawing us farther away from our already limited view of grace and into complete reliance upon him as our sole connection with salvation, not to mention the burden of salvation of others. When we were blessed with being able to receive instruction from the word, with Jeff as the seer, he would divide areas of the Book of the Revelation in the Bible. Jeff taught the literal interpretation of the seven servants (Revelation 2 and 3) who would prepare the seven churches for the return of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, Revelation is commonly used by manipulative people due to the ambiguity of its cloaked message as well as the sheer magnificence of what it proclaims.

As the vessels spoken of in the book of Ether, our "construction" would not be complete until there was no light in us. "And he cried unto the Lord, saying, O Lord, behold, I have done even as thou hast commanded me; and I have prepared the vessels for my people, and behold, there is no light in them" (Ether 1:53). Only then did the vessels receive light. "And thus the Lord caused the stones to shine in darkness, to give light unto men, women and children, that they might not cross the great waters in darkness" (Ether 3:3). There's quite a complex story that surrounds the two passages. People encamped on the shoreline of a large body of water had a great obstacle presented to them. God told them to build eight vessels that would carry them across the waters. They were to be constructed in accordance to God's instruction and detail. But upon completion of the vessels, it was noticed that there was no light in them. Therefore, the spiritual leader of the people (the brother of Jared) carved sixteen transparent stones out of an exceeding high mountain. Being transparent should indicate that they would allow the sunlight to shine through them (Ether 1:61), yet this was clearly not the point. They needed to actually radiate light, as well. Jeff's mission, as it related to this passage, was to construct vessels completely void of any light within them. Each vessel that the ancient Jaredites fashioned would house two stones. By Jeff's interpretation of scriptures, we were those vessels. As such, we were to have our two eyes (stones) illuminated to a new identity, a new perception of reality. We were not immediately aware that this was what he was striving for, but through hours upon hours of indoctrination, that is exactly what occurred. We were to be prepared to come into the presence of his god, yet in a sewer of logic<sup>6</sup> sort of way, his god appeared to be the True and Living God. However, Jeff's god is not the Living God, but rather a god of destruction and death (2 Corinthians 4:4). I believe this god is the author of the majority of Mormon

---

<sup>6</sup> The origin of the term "sewer of logic" is explained in Chapter 8, page 59.

doctrine. There are many interpretations and misrepresentations in these doctrines that can lead people astray. Mormon doctrines exalt a proposed seer, not the actual Messiah (2 Nephi 2:8). There is, however, an essential and foundational truth within the Bible, which does not coincide with the Mormon message. The Living God, through His Son Jesus Christ, builds a house of habitation for life and beyond. “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:1–2).

\* \* \*

ONE EVENING DURING THE SPRING OF THAT YEAR, a tremendous clap of thunder aroused everyone at the farm. A number of us were performing assigned chores. Damon and I had been working in the barn, others were in the house and still others were out on the lawn. The lightening was extremely close, but that was not the greatest importance of what transpired. A short distance from the farm and within eyesight, there is a hill where Jeff claimed to go in order to commune with God. All the major *Book of Mormon* characters had an “exceeding high” mountain, a holy hill of sorts, from which they could call upon the Lord. Jeff, too, claimed such a mountain; conveniently within walking distance of the farm. This particular hill in Kirtland has a radio tower, and its summit is appropriately clear of trees. As the sound of the thunder resounded in our ears, we all gathered from our various areas to investigate whether it had caused damage.

At the very moment of audible thunder, the sun was shining brightly, yet the sky directly overhead was darkly clouded. Knowing those were ideal conditions for a rainbow to be seen, I walked around the barn to see if one was visible. Jeff had recently taught on the subject of rainbows and how they, along with nature as a whole, tell a story, reveal a praise, and glorify God as creator. “Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein” (Isaiah 44:23). If one truly had spiritual ears, they would be able to hear these praises of God. Conversely, to not hear these praises in quite the literal way meant deafness, due to one’s sin and, basically, death from God. At a point later than this, I was given permission to visit Niagara Falls in order to hear the Hallelujah Chorus that Jeff claimed he heard the falls sing. Upon arriving back at Kirtland the next day, I had to shamefully report that I still had the ears of a Gentile. All I heard was water falling.

But that evening, Damon and I noticed that the others were also standing around, looking in the direction of Jeff’s holy hill. I’ve never seen a more perfect example of the natural occurrence of a double rainbow than that day. All of us were amazed at the beauty and brilliance of the display as it arched over the very location of Jeff’s sacred mount. Rainbows are not fixed at a location, but merely reflections of light through a prism created by moisture present in the atmosphere. However, this rainbow was taken as a sign that we all were

quite literally where we needed to be. Jeff was certain that it meant even more. From the book of Ezekiel we find an illustration of God’s presence within the rainbow, the symbol of God’s covenant.

“As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake.” (Ezekiel 1:28)

Of course, this was not to be taken as a literal rainbow, but rather, an example of what Ezekiel experienced. We, too, were to look for the hidden purpose and grow to observe nature for the message and presence of God that was revealed from it.

Those of us who were at the farm that night gathered around the kitchen table, investigating a few passages which Jeff believed to apply. Needing the necessary amount of time to fabricate a manipulation of the written word, it was the class topic the next night. Amazingly, Jeff associated the previous day’s event with Revelation, chapter 6, as the actual breaking of the first seal.

“And I saw when the lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.” (Revelation 6:1–2)

We were coming into place, the seer, his servants, and now the breaking of the first seal with all the unimaginable ramifications that would develop from it. It had begun.

That rainbow brought back remembrance of our friends’ videotape of the Aurora Borealis the previous summer. But this time it was as though the Aurora Borealis and the Aurora Australis were performing in a large and global way—the chiasmic reflections in vivid double rainbows. Susie and I had such passion for God’s word to be fulfilled, for Zion to be begun, for people to be prepared for the coming of the Lord, and for His glorious return in a way not unlike the account recorded of the Nephites. We’d spent hours in fasting and prayer for it. We’d forsaken good employment and financial security in a day when such things were hard to come by. We’d moved far from family to an area where we knew no one, quite literally “chasing rainbows,” and now, ironically, we had found one. We’d been blessed with employment and new friends. “Go to the Ohio; and there I will give unto you my law” (D&C 38:7b.). Many things seemed to indicate that we were where God wanted us to be. The reality is that God’s word has already been fulfilled (Matthew 5:17). By the merits of Jesus upon the cross, “it’s done” (John 19:30; Revelation 21:6).