

Here is an advent intended to inspire you with topics to study each day. Each day has a short summary, and maybe a couple references. I encourage you to use these daily subjects to dive in and study each one farther.

This advent is for 24 days, and is separated into three sections – 1) events leading up to The First Vision, 2) The First Vision, and 3) the things that have been restored because of, and after The First Vision.

This first section are the events that happened in preparation of the First Vision. It is a small list of how God has been preparing the world for this event for hundreds of years.

**Start this advent on March 11th, and it will end the day before General Conference**



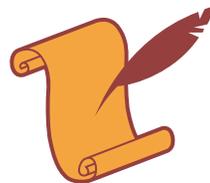
## Record Preservation

### Preserving Manuscripts

“One of the most important ways the Lord prepared the world for the Restoration of His gospel was a manuscript revolution that grew out of the invention and use of papyrus and parchment.

These writing materials made it easy, compared to writing on stone or clay tablets, for scribes to record God's words received through inspired prophets and apostles. Using these writing materials, many countless and unknown scribes diligently copied, transmitted, and preserved sacred writings in multiple copies so that the flames of faith were never extinguished.”

- E. Ballard Jan 2020 Ensign



## Reformation



### The Bible is printed

The very first Bible was printed in 1455, and nearly 100 years later, it was available to common people

### The Reformation

The availability of the Bible gave people the opportunity to read it, and see the discrepancies from the teachings of the Church.

Through much adversity, and in many cases, death, a few brave men spoke out against the Church, gained followers, and divisions and new religions emerged.

This created safety in questioning, and an environment where hundreds of years later, Joseph creating, or restoring, as we know it to be, a new religion was not so dangerous.



## The Promised Land

People inspired, and a land prepared

### Columbus

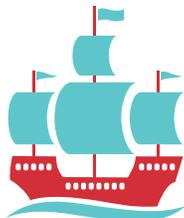
1 Nephi 13:12

Inspired by the desire to set up a new trade route, Columbus set across the ocean. His discoveries opened up the option for Europeans to come to the Americas.

### Pilgrims

In the 1500's all of England separated from the Catholic church and started the Church of England. Everybody in England had to be a part of this church. In 1620 AD, the Pilgrims, looking to break away from this church, and find religious freedom, came across to the Americas.

Because of their motivation for freedom of religion, they lay the ground work for a government that could support the work Joseph would do.



3

## Freedom of Government

### The Declaration of Independence

The 13 Colonies, still under English rule in the 1700's, became increasingly dissatisfied with the oppression, and started to push back, resulting in their signing the Declaration of Independence in 1776, and starting a war.

### The Revolutionary War

1 Nephi 13:15-19 tells of how the Lord was with the colonists in their fight for freedom.

### The Constitution

The Constitution of The United States of America set laws in place that protect religious rights and other freedoms, that could foster The Restoration.

As He did with the Pilgrims & the Colonists, and as He does in our life too, Heavenly Father sometimes allows hardship and discomfort to propel us into a new opportunity. And in this case, it set up a foundation for His work to commence.

4

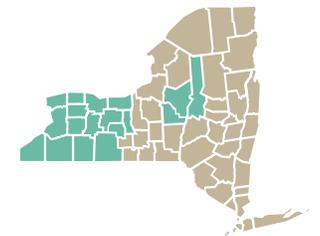
## Religious Excitement

### The Second Great Awakening

The early 1800's sparked a number of reform movements that changed religion in the Americas forever. Ordinary people were encouraged to make a personal connection with God, instead of relying on a minister. Many religions emerged and grew rapidly.

### The Burned-Over District

Western and Central New York became known as the burned-over district because of the extreme religious excitement of the area. Many revivals and reforms created such an excitement it seemed to set the area on fire. But with contradictory doctrine and contention, it also brought its fair share of confusion and hard feelings. This created a polar effect, where many people were passionate about religion, and many others opposed it.



5

## Joseph's Ancestors

Joseph's ancestors paved the way for Joseph to be ready to restore God's church. There are inspiring stories that illustrate that his ancestors were kind, God-fearing people, who often took action to change things for the better.

### Asael Smith

Before Joseph was born, his grandfather, Asael said, "It has been borne in upon my soul that one of my descendants will promulgate a work to revolutionize the world of religious faith."

### Other Resources:

The Church website has wonderful resources about Joseph Smith's ancestors. "Heritage of a Prophet" by Richard Anderson, "The Family of the Prophet Joseph Smith" by E. Ballard, and "Joseph Smith's Family Tree" in Dec 2005 Ensign, are just a few. If you type in their names in the search bar, there are articles you can find about most of them.

### His Parents Move

Again, the Lord moving his work forward through hardship, Joseph's parents lost their crops in New England, and had to move to New York. New York had the increased religious excitement that inspired Joseph to ask God. He was also in walking distance to where the plate were buried.

## Joseph's Preparation

### Prepared before he came to earth

Joseph Smith himself said: "Every man who has a calling to minister to the inhabitants of the world was ordained to that very purpose in the Grand Council of heaven before this world was. I suppose I was ordained to this very office in that Grand Council."

### His life preserved

Early in his life, he had an infection in his leg that could have taken his life, or left him without a leg. The Lord preserved his life, and provided the one doctor who had the experimental procedure to preserve his life and his leg.

### Parent's teachings

His mother taught him to read and love the Bible. And his father encouraged him to build a personal relationship with the Lord.

### Religious Confusion

He went to many churches seeking truth, and instead found conflicting doctrine and contention, which caused him to question what was true.

## The Spirit of God

In reading Joseph's account in the Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith – History, verses 11-12, there is no denying the Spirit inspired him when he read James 1:5.

Heavenly Father set things in motion hundreds of years before Joseph was even born. He helped build a nation, a region, and a family to foster Joseph Smith's freedoms, safety and curiosity. God created an opportunity – a scripture written thousands of years ago, protected through millennia and corrupt translations, to inspire Joseph with an answer – to ask God.

Then Joseph took action. He planned a day, and a location, then said a prayer that would change the world.



## The First Vision

This next section goes through 8 truths that were restored during the First Vision.

A lot of this section is taken from the February 2020 Ensign.

## God's Image

**God our Father is a personal being, and men and women were made in His image.**

Understanding the nature of God is important for a few reasons. One, if we know he is a real person, not something unknowable and untouchable, but rather someone who we can talk to, someone who loves us – our Father – who gives us hope, peace, and a safe haven and a person we can rely on. Two, it helps us realize our own divinity, and our potential.

### Other resources:

There is a quick video on the church website titled: "Teachings of Joseph Smith: The Nature of God"

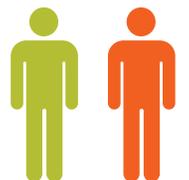
# 10

## The Godhead

**Jesus is a personage, separate and distinct from the Father.**

The world at this time believed that God the Father and Jesus Christ were one being. The first thing Joseph sees is "two Personages"

Understanding the nature of Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ, and their relationship, is a doctrine that is a building block to so many other doctrines – the creation, the atonement – even prayer, and Jesus being our mediator and advocate. Joseph restoring that doctrine helped add clarity to so many other truths. As Elder Oaks said, "it is the key to everything else in our doctrine."



## The Only Begotten

### Jesus Christ was declared by the Father to be His Son.

This is another truth, as to the nature of God. Heavenly Father and Christ are not the same being. They are separate, and they have a family relationship – a loving Father and His Son.

Jesus was and is the literal son of Heavenly Father, even in his mortal life. That relationship is what gave Christ the power over death. That is how He was able to stay alive through the atonement, and everything after that. That power is what gave Jesus Christ the power to resurrect.

What a powerful doctrine this is. And knowledge of this doctrine helps us understand a little bit more about the nature of Heavenly Father, about the nature of Jesus Christ, and a little more about the atonement and resurrection.

# 11

# 12

## God Introduces His Son

### Jesus was the conveyor of revelation, as taught in the Bible.

The couple times Heavenly Father appears on earth, He does so to introduce His Son. In the case of the First Vision, He introduced His Beloved Son, then Jesus proceeded with the teachings.

Because of The Fall, and the subsequent separation from God, Jesus Christ has been our mediator, giving Heavenly Father's words to us, and relaying our words and prayers back to Him. Jesus has been the one who appears to give visions and revelations. It is Jesus who suffered for us. It is Jesus who will be our advocate, to help us return to a caring Father in Heaven, who will excitedly and lovingly wrap us in His arms upon our return to Him.

## A Promise Fulfilled

# 13

### The promise of James to ask of God for wisdom was fulfilled.

“The Prophet Joseph Smith set a pattern for us to follow in resolving our questions. Drawn to the promise of James that if we lack wisdom we may ask of God, the boy Joseph took his question directly to Heavenly Father.”

–Pres. Nelson, Apr 2018 Conference

Heavenly Father is ready and eager to talk to us, and He waits until we prepare ourselves, and are ready to ask.



# 14

## Satan is Real

**Joseph learned of the reality of an actual being from an unseen world who tried to destroy him.**

“Satan, or Lucifer, or the father of lies—call him what you will—is real, the very personification of evil. His motives are in every case malicious, and he convulses at the appearance of redeeming light, at the very thought of truth. ... He is eternally opposed to the love of God, the Atonement of Jesus Christ, and the work of peace and salvation. He will fight against these whenever and wherever he can.”

—E. Holland, Apr 2011 Conference

Satan would rather people not know about him, and especially not know about his tricks. Like a magician, once you know their tricks, you will no longer be tricked by them. If you know that Satan's number one goal is to keep you from salvation, then when he tempts you, you can tell him to buzz off.

## The Apostasy

**There was a falling away from the Church that was established by Jesus Christ.**

“The Apostasy, or falling away from the original Church organized by the Lord, ... was prophesied by those who helped to establish the Church in the first place. Paul wrote to the Thessalonian Christians who were eagerly anticipating the Second Coming of the Savior that ‘that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first’ (2 Thes. 2:3).”

—E. Ballard, Apr 2000 Conference

# 15

## A Witness

**Joseph Smith became a witness for God and His Son, Jesus Christ.**

Joseph Smith – History 1:25  
I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true; and while they were persecuting me, reviling me, and speaking all manner of evil against me falsely for so saying, I was led to say in my heart: Why persecute me for telling the truth? I have actually seen a vision; and who am I that I can withstand God, or why does the world think to make me deny what I have actually seen? For I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it, neither dared I do it; at least I knew that by so doing I would offend God, and come under condemnation.

**Another Resource:**

D&C 76:22-23

# 16

# Things restored after and because of The First Vision

This is a small list of some of the truths and blessings that have been restored in our day.

The church website [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org) has great resources for church history. If you go to the library, and click on Church History, there is a whole library of resources.

## The Priesthood

The authority to use God's power here on earth was restored. The restoration of the Priesthood brought innumerable blessings, including the power to work miracles, and the power to perform ordinances.

### The Aaronic Priesthood

The Aaronic Priesthood was restored May 15, 1829, and along with it, the power to baptize, and bless and pass the sacrament.

### The Melchizedek Priesthood

The Melchizedek priesthood was restored several days after the Aaronic Priesthood. With the Melchizedek Priesthood restored, so many more blessings are available, including Patriarchal Blessings, Temple work, and blessing the sick.

# 17

## Temple Work

# 18

We now know what temples are for, and the sacred work that is done in the temples. We also know the eternal value that this work has, for us individually, and for mankind as a whole.

### Washing and Anointing

The first Washing and Anointing was in the Kirtland Temple in 1836.

### Endowment

Because he feared his life would be taken before the Nauvoo Temple was completed, Joseph administered the first Endowments on May 3, 1842 in his red brick store.

### Sealing Families Together Forever

In 1843, Joseph recorded the revelation about families being sealed together forever.

### Work for the Dead

In 1840 Joseph revealed that our dead could be baptized. In 1841, Joseph received revelation that this work was to be done in the temples.



## Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon was published in 1830. There were many things restored through the coming forth of the Book of Mormon.

### The Lord led righteous people to a promised land

There were a few groups of people the Lord led across the ocean – the Jaredites, the Mulekites, and Lehi and his family.

### Christ visited another country/people

The greatest revelation of the Book of Mormon is that Christ came to another country after he was resurrected. The Book of Mormon is a second witness that Christ is our Savior, and was in fact resurrected.

### Clarity to the words of the Bible

There was confusion in the interpretation of the Bible's passages. The Book of Mormon helps add clarity.

### The Doctrine and Covenants

Many of the first few sections of the D&C are a result of questions that came up as Joseph translated the plates.

19

20

## Plan of Salvation

The age old questions of Who am I? What is the purpose of life? Where do we go when we die? was knowledge that was restored through Joseph Smith. One of his visions of The Plan was on February of 1832 and is recorded in D&C section 76.

### Pre-Earth Life

We lived as Spirits in the presence of our Father in Heaven before we came to earth.

### This Life

This life is the only way we could progress and become like God. Our purpose is to learn to become like him, receive our physical bodies, and to overcome our natural tendencies.

### Three Kingdoms

After this life, we get to be resurrected, and receive a kingdom of glory. A loving Father prepared a way for all to be happy in a kingdom of glory.



## The Atonement

21

Christ suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane for the effects of sin. What a blessing it is to have the knowledge of the Atonement and what it is, and how we use it. One of the jewels of the restoration, the Book of Mormon, and modern-day revelation is to understand the mission of Christ, and the Atonement a little more.

### Other Resources

Mosiah 3:11-12, 16

Alma 7:12-13

James E. Faust, "The Atonement: Our Greatest Hope," Ensign, Nov. 2001



enochstudies.com

# 22

## Missionary Work

The Standard of Truth has been erected; no unhallowed hand can stop the work from progressing; persecutions may rage, mobs may combine, armies may assemble, calumny may defame, but the truth of God will go forth boldly, nobly, and independent, till it has penetrated every continent, visited every clime, swept every country, and sounded in every ear, till the purposes of God shall be accomplished, and the Great Jehovah shall say the work is done.

—Joseph Smith Jr.



# 23

## Added Scripture

### Doctrine & Covenants

A book of revelations for our day that gives us great insight on the doctrines found in ancient scripture.

### Pearl of Great Price

A small book with profound importance. It includes the Articles of Faith, Joseph Smith's History, a couple longer JST chapters, and the books of Abraham and Moses, which gave us more insight about The Creation and Adam & Eve.

### Joseph Smith Translation

Insight to many mis-translations in the Bible.

### Modern day revelation and scripture

Let us continue to look forward to the writings and teaching of the prophets of our day.



## Revelation

God still talks to us! The Heavens are not closed. How joyous a statement. How comforting it is that He didn't leave us to figure out this ever-changing world alone!

### Apostles and Prophets

He has his Prophets and other leaders to lead the church, speak His words to us, prepare us and guide us in a troubling time. What a blessing it is that we get to listen to them this weekend.

### Personal Revelation

He also still talks to us individually, as we seek Him. It is a great gift to know that when we talk to Him, He can and will speak to our hearts. Use that spirit of personal revelation, and learn how He speaks to you.

# 24