

BH Porter  
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John 17:4-8

## Discovering our Life's Work or Mission

4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

4. I have glorified thee while I' was on earth by completing the work thou gavest me to do.

[That is the way we ~~gim~~ give Glory to God--not just wiht our mouths but by DOING the works he asks of us, the work we were sent to do.

Thus we "glorify" Him just as he glorifies us with eternal life & exaltation which give HIM Glory--the WORK is the GLORY ~~even~~ for God!

This is very interesting—Nibley's translation tells us that Jesus prayed unto the Father saying, "I have glorified thee while I was on earth by completing the work Thou gavest me to do.

Nibley's commentary says: "The way we give glory to God is by DOING the works He asks of us."

In other words, we are to be doing the works we were sent here to do from the pre-existence, which is not the job we have, but is somehow connected to the Gospel plan of coming unto Christ and bringing others unto Christ. We all said we would come down to earth and participate. The Church has a three-fold fundamental mission:

### Proclaim the Gospel, Perfect the Saints, and Redeem the Dead

I believe every one of us has a talent and ability in one of those three things. Not only do we have a talent and ability in one of those three things, but also a time of life in which we can accomplish it and accomplish it well. We need to figure out what that work is, and what it is that we are good at. Then we can excel at the work we ought to be doing. As Nibley says,

"Thus we glorify Him just as He glorifies us with eternal life and exaltation which gives Him glory — the work **IS** the glory, even for God."

Speaking of the work that we must do, **Alma 13** provides some greater insight. Traditionally, we have taught that the high priests Alma talks about are the high priests in every ward — pffffft! There are no more high priest quorums, only Elders Quorums. (*much laughter*)

What Alma is talking about are the high priests to their families, the patriarchs, acting as prophets, priests and kings to their families, each responsible for the temporal and spiritual welfare of their families. **Alma 13** also refers to the grand patriarchs and high priests like Enoch, Melchizedek and Abraham.

1 And again, my brethren, I would *cite your minds forward* to the time when the Lord God gave these commandments unto his children;

To '*cite your minds forward*' means to look back to the pre-earth life. Look back to the time when we understood these things in the pre-earth Council.

and I would that ye should remember that the Lord God ordained priests, after his Holy Order, which was after the order of his Son, to teach these things unto the people. (See D&C 76:57)

2 And those priests were ordained after the order of his Son, in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption. **(Everything is focusing back on Christ.)**

3 And this is the manner after which they were ordained—being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works;

**Joseph taught:** 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. (TPJS, p 365)

3 **in the first place** being left to choose good or evil; therefore, they having chosen good, and exercising exceedingly great faith, are called with a holy calling, yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such. **(These people were good in the pre-earth life, they were good when they came here; they were set apart there, and they were set apart with a holy calling here.)**

4 And thus they have been called to this holy calling on account of their faith, while others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their minds, while, if it had not been for this they might have had as great privilege as their brethren. **(There were those in the pre-earth life who chose not to attain to such a privilege as their brethren.)**

### **Abraham 3:18**

18 Howbeit that he made the greater star; as, also, if there be two spirits, and one shall be more intelligent than the other, yet these two spirits, notwithstanding one is more intelligent than the other...**(intelligence is not I.Q.)**

The intelligence of spirits is defined as that ability to seek for, receive, and be obedient to light and truth. This is a key principle. That ability is the intelligence that existed in our spirits before we ever came here. What Alma is teaching is that some spirits had a greater propensity to seek for, receive, and be obedient to light and truth than others.

[these spirits] have no beginning; they existed before, they shall have no end, they shall exist after, for they are *gnolaum*, or eternal. (Abr 3:18)

### **Abraham 3:19**

19 And the Lord said unto me: These two facts do exist, that there are two spirits, one being more intelligent than the other;**(one has more propensity to seek for, receive, and be obedient to light and truth)** there shall be another more intelligent than they; I am the Lord thy God, I am more intelligent than they all. **(Christ obtained a fullness of light and truth.)**

I'm going to talk about Christ for the next few minutes.

In our last session we read a few verses about becoming a son or daughter of God by choosing to accept the Gospel, and eventually receiving a fullness of light and truth (D&C 93:26-27, 36). Christ was capable, before He even came here, to seek for, receive and be obedient to light and truth. His character was such that He would be obedient to that fullness of light and truth. Thus, He *becomes the first* Son of God. He was prepared and worthy to become such before He even came here.

**Question:** *So, Christ became the first Son of God among all those spirits that were organized? And all spirits, no matter their intelligence, have the ability to become exalted?*

That is right. We will see more of this concept as we continue.

“These two facts do exist, that there are two spirits, one being more intelligent than the other: there shall be another more intelligent than they; **I am the Lord thy God, I am more intelligent than they all.**”

Jesus had a fullness of light and truth before He ever came here. He was never going to fail, and God knew that. He became, as everyone must, a son of God. He was worthy to become that before He ever came here.

### **From Abraham 3:22-23**

22 Now the Lord had shown unto me, Abraham, **the intelligences that were organized** before the world was; and **among all these** there were many of the noble and great ones;

23 And God saw **these souls** that they were good, and he stood in the midst of them, and he said: **These\*** I will make my rulers; for he stood among those that were **spirits**, and he saw that they were good; and he said unto me: **Abraham, thou art one of them;** thou wast chosen before thou wast born.

\* These souls had a greater propensity for seeking for light and truth than did the others. They would become the rulers on this newly created earth. The grand patriarch, Abraham, was chosen before he was even born. (Christ, the most unique One, had already obtained a fullness of light and truth, and *became the first* Son of God.)

What the Lord is saying is, “Look, there is a separation of spirits who have different propensities to seek for, receive, and be obedient to light and truth. Some are greater than others, and some greater than them, and there’s the noble and great ones who have even greater abilities to seek for, receive, and be obedient to light and truth — Abraham, you are one of these. Therefore, from these I will make my rulers, i.e., the patriarchs and the high priests Alma was referring to in **Alma 13:1-2**.

Alma is talking about those who were worthy and set apart to come to earth and become the High Priests. You don’t take a child who is a genius and place him in a remedial library — you put him in an environment where he can progress as fast as he can. People ask the question: “Why was I born in the United States rather than in Africa or the middle of Australia? From what we have just discussed, there are different types of spirits, some having a greater ability to

seek for further light and truth than others. The Lord said these noble and great ones would become His rulers. Even the weaker intelligences have the potential to become like God (TPJS, p 354). Jacob tells us that where there is no law there is no punishment (2 Ne 9:25). They cannot be held accountable to Gospel Law.

The time will come when everyone who has ever lived will have the opportunity to hear and understand the Gospel. Alma tells us that there is space between death and the resurrection (Alma 40:21). Even in the spirit world all will have the opportunity to hear and understand the Gospel plan perfectly without any misconception or misunderstanding. When they accept the Gospel, they will be able to receive the same wages as the one who began laboring in the field at the beginning of the day (See the parable in Matt 20:1-16).

Being born in the Church or here in the USA is an environment where those who had that greater propensity to seek for, receive, and be obedient to light and truth could excel and advance in gaining the knowledge necessary. Joseph Smith said a man is saved no faster than he gains knowledge (TPJS, p 217).

So those in the pre-earth life were given “a holy calling and were ordained to the highest order of the Priesthood, while others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their minds” (Alma 13:4). We see the same instruction in D&C 121:36:

36 That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness.

37 That they may be conferred upon us, it is true **[like Cain]**; but when we undertake to cover our sins, **[Am I my brother's keeper?]** or to gratify our pride, **[Surely my brother's flocks shall fall into my hands.]** our vain ambition **[I will no longer have to listen to my priesthood leader.]**, or to exercise control or dominion or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, **[Swear by your heads or your throats that ye tell it not.]** behold, the heavens withdraw themselves; the Spirit of the Lord is grieved; and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man.

38 Behold, ere he is aware, he is left unto himself, to kick against the pricks, to persecute the saints, and to fight against God.

39 We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion.

40 Hence many are called, but few are chosen.

It all comes back to John 17:4 — “I have finished the work Thou hast sent me to do.” All have talents and abilities — are we engaged in doing the work we said we were going to do? Those who share the Gospel or perfect the Saints, or work towards redeeming the dead are those who are doing the work they were sent here to do.

Cain should have been the next patriarch, and as such he would have been responsible for his father's (Adam's) posterity, but when asked where his brother Abel was, he replied, “I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?” (Moses 5:34) He was inactive in his priesthood responsibility.

## John 17

5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee **before the world was.**

What Jesus just said is interesting. To be glorified with the same glory that He had before the world was means He was already a God; He was already a Son of God, and God knew He would be obedient without failing, because He was “more intelligent than they all” (Abr 3:19).

Br. Nibley's translation says:

5. And give me the glory, Father, which I had ~~before the world was~~ when I was glorified, by thy side; (para sou) before the world was.

## Hymn of the Pearl

I've added this next section because it goes along with what Christ just said. I don't know if you know much about India, but India has quite a few Christians. The tradition is that Thomas went to India, like Philip went to Egypt, Peter and Paul go to Rome, and John into Turkey. Thomas was in India and those Christians in India hark back to the time when Thomas was there. There have been two texts found — the Acts of Thomas and the Gospel of Thomas. The Gospel of Thomas was and still ought to be in the scriptures. Almost everything in the Gospel of Thomas is basically scriptural.

India pays for members of certain religions to go on their pilgrimages. I was in Israel one time when twenty thousand Christians from India were there. Twenty Thousand Indians were in the country at the same time — the whole country smelled like curry!

*[Brother Porter then shared with the class the ancient text of the Hymn of the Pearl. Please see the attached file containing this text from the Acts of Thomas the Apostle.]*

If Jesus completed the work that He was sent here to do, have we discovered or realized what it is we're supposed to be doing? **Hint...**it is not the job or family we have, or our place in the community.

6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

6. I have revealed (made known, displayed, ephanerosa) THY name to the men and women (anthopous, common gender) whom you gave to me OUT of the World.  
/ 1.1 They were yours (first) AND YOU GAVE THEM TO ME

Christ never said the Apostles were His; rather they were the Father's. They were given to Him to support Him in the work He had to do.

7 Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

8. Now they recognize that everything you have given me really comes from you.

Christ is not glorifying Himself. He is attributing all honor, glory and conversion to His Father, God Himself.

8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

8. Because I have given them the teachings (rhemata) that you gave me, and they have accepted them, and recognized clearly (alethos) that I did come from you, and believed that it was you who sent me.

9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

9. I am asking for their sakes, NOT for the world, but only for those you gave me, because they are yours, and whatever you have I have and whatever I have you have. So in them I have been glorified (What is your work and glory is also my work and glory)

11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we *are*.

Now Jesus is coming back to the atonement — becoming one with God. Nibley's translation says:

11. I am no longer in the world, but they ARE still in the world, while I return to you. Holy Father, KEEP them in thy NAME  
[Beza adds: And when I was with them, I kept them in thy Name.]  
With which (why dat.?) you have endowed (edokas) me, (endowed)  
THAT They may be ONE JUST AS WE ARE ONE.

Jesus is acknowledging that He has given them with the same endowment with which He had been endowed —

### Additional questions asked during class:

**Question:** *As to the intelligences (spirits) having no beginning, it would mean that all the spirits that will ever exist already exist, is that right? (Abr. 3:18)*

Keep in mind when Joseph referred to the intelligence of spirit, he used the word intelligence and spirit synonymously. Intelligence in the context of Abraham's revelation is the spirit's ability to seek for, receive, and be obedient to light and truth. Joseph Smith taught: (See Priesthood/Relief Society Manual, 2008; *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith*, p 209-211.)

"I am dwelling on the immortality of the spirit of man. Is it logical to say that the intelligence of spirits is immortal, and yet that it has a beginning? The intelligence of spirits had no beginning; neither will it have an end. That is good logic. That which has a beginning may have an end. **There never was a time when there were not spirits.**

“. . . I take my ring from my finger and liken it unto the mind of man—the immortal part, because **it** had no beginning. Suppose you cut it in two; then it has a beginning and an end; but join it again, and it continues one eternal round. So with the spirit of man. As the Lord liveth, if **it** had a beginning it will have an end. All the fools and learned and wise men from the beginning of creation, who say that the spirit of man had a beginning, prove that **it** must have an end; and if that doctrine is true, then the doctrine of annihilation would be true. But if I am right, I might with boldness proclaim from the house-tops that **God never had the power to create the spirit of man at all**. God himself could not create himself.

“Intelligence is eternal and exists upon a self-existent principle. **It is a spirit from age to age and there is no creation about it**. All the minds and spirits that God ever sent into the world are susceptible of enlargement.

“The spirit of man is not a created being; it existed from eternity and will exist to eternity. Anything created cannot be eternal”. (TPJS, p 158)

A Seventy, Elder B.H. Roberts, wrote all the manuals for the Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Association, and published articles in the Improvement Era in the early 1900’s. In such he even said that what was he was proposing was not doctrine, but his ideas became doctrine about 20 years later. He was the one who began the teaching that both the spirit and intelligence were separate. He later became the Church Historian, and his writings and thoughts became widely accepted and adopted. Not only were his writings contrary to Joseph Smith, but his ideas created the idea of a pre-existence to a pre-existence, and Joseph Smith never taught that. From D&C 93, revealed in May 1833, we learn that “man was in the beginning with the Father, and that intelligence, the light of truth, was not created or made, neither can be”. (v 23 and 29.) [The Book of Abraham was published in periodicals beginning as early as 1835. It was formally published in 1842 in England and was canonized by the Church in 1880 as part of the Pearl of Great Price.] We’ve all heard that the spirit is born, and the intelligence is what animates the spirit, and the spirit is what animates the body. There’s one little problem with this line of thought — it creates a pre-existence to the pre-existence. This is why we must let the scriptures speak for themselves!

**Question:** *What about the Holy Ghost?*

In June of 1844, Joseph Smith gave a sermon in the grove near the incomplete Nauvoo Temple. There was a member present by the name of George Laub. He recorded in his journal Joseph’s statement about the Holy Ghost: (*spelling in original*)

“But the holy ghost is yet a Spiritual body and waiting to take to himself a body, as the Savior did or as god did or the gods before them took bodies for the Saviour Says the work that my father did do i also & those are the works he took himself a body & then laid down his life that he might take it up again & the Scripture Say those who will obey the commandments shall be heirs of god & Joint heirs with of Jesus Christ (Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, p 382).

Joseph’s statement implies that the Holy Ghost is connected to this earth, for as we read in D&C 130:5, “there are no angels who minister to this earth but those who do belong or have

belonged to it.” If you think about it, the Holy Ghost is never talked about in the Temple unless it is connected through a ratification of a blessing — “in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost”. That is the only time He is even mentioned in the Temple — the only time.

Joseph’s statements about the Holy Ghost imply that there will be an end to His responsibility. His responsibilities include assisting mankind to come unto Christ, to give them inspiration and direction, and to testify of the divinity of Christ. The Holy Ghost, in essence, brings us unto Christ, and Jesus declares, “No man cometh unto the Father but by me” (John 14:6). [That is the culmination of our endowment of power as we stand at the veil.]

Think of the Temple as the Celestial Kingdom. We’ll put the old initiatory outside of the temple (as in OT times, i.e., Exodus 40:12-13). The Holy Ghost brings us to Christ and the Christ brings us to the Father. Joseph’s statements again imply that there is a representative of the Godhead on every world to assist them to come unto Christ and receive that exaltation when they come unto the Father. The scriptures tell us that as one earth passes away, so does another world come into existence — God’s works never end. (Moses 1:38) This is why I believe the Holy Ghost is not mentioned in the Temple other than in the ratification of an ordinance.

**Question:** *Why is it a sin to blaspheme against the Holy Ghost but not Jesus Christ?*

A witness from the Holy Ghost is more sure than even a vision or manifestation of Jesus Christ. The witness of the Holy Ghost is more binding than a vision of Christ.

**Question:** *Does our behavior in the pre-existence have anything to do with the tribe or lineage to which we have been assigned?*

Not necessarily. We’re all the children of Israel, and the tribes were descendents of Abraham. Each tribe has different responsibilities. For example, Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh), have the responsibility for the temporal and spiritual welfare of all the remainder of the tribes because He was the patriarch. Levi was given the responsibility of the Aaronic Priesthood. If a literal descendent of Aaron is found he would have the legal right to hold the keys of the presidency of the Aaronic Priesthood and act independently in that office without counselors (D&C 107:76). During the Millennium there will be 12,000 from each tribe who will be temple workers, ordained to administer the everlasting Gospel (see D&C 77:11-12). They will probably be responsible for doing the work for the tribe to which they belong. To find out the responsibility of each tribe look at the end of Genesis and at the end of Deuteronomy.

**Question:** *What do we make of all the good people throughout history; people like Confucius or those other sages and philosophers?*

I believe there had to be good people along the way or else the world would have turned out like it was before the flood. People claim that Mohammed was a prophet, and many believe that he was. However, a true prophet of God will bear witness and testify of Jesus Christ. But it does not mean that he was not good. Before the time of Joseph Smith there was Emmanuel Swedenborg in Europe, who died about 50 years before the First Vision. He saw and understood things the same as Joseph Smith. He was living in a time and place where religious freedom could not exist. Many of the early Brethren would quote from Swedenborg in their conference addresses.