
Joseph Smith—History — the Boy in the Grove, the Angel at the Bedside, and the Oldest Pattern of All

Joseph Smith—History: extracts from Joseph Smith's 1838 history, recounting the religious confusion of his youth near Palmyra, New York; the First Vision (spring 1820); the visits of the angel Moroni (September 1823); the obtaining of the plates (September 1827); and the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood under the hand of John the Baptist (May 1829).

The most personal book in the Pearl of Great Price: a prophet telling, in his own plain words, how God first spoke to him. A fourteen-year-old farm boy read a verse, walked into the woods to pray about it, and came out having seen the Father and the Son. Everything the Restoration is rests on what happened in that grove — and the SHAPE of his story is the shape of the oldest prophetic-call narratives in scripture.

Insights

- 1:8 — the confusion.** Torn by competing revivals, the boy can't tell "who was right and who was wrong." He wants to be right with God and can't find the door.
- 1:11-13 — James 1:5.** "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God... and upbraideth not." The verse enters "with great force." The whole Restoration begins with a boy taking one Bible verse literally enough to act on it — God gives liberally, and won't scold you for asking.
- 1:15 — darkness at the threshold.** Before the light, a power of darkness binds his tongue and nearly overwhelms him — exactly the adversary's resistance at the threshold of Moses' theophany (Moses 1:12-22). The pattern holds.
- 1:16-17 — the Father and the Son.** A pillar of light; two Personages; the Father pointing to the other: "This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him!" The same sentence spoken at the Jordan, the Mount of Transfiguration, Bountiful, and the council before the world. The oldest sentence in scripture.
- 1:68-69 — authority restored.** Asking about baptism, Joseph and Oliver receive John the Baptist — the same John who baptized Jesus, now resurrected — conferring the Priesthood of Aaron. Every step forward comes by asking; every answer by heavenly visitation.

Word Studies

aite / **hap** (Greek) (αἰτέω / ἀπλῶς) — **to ask, request / liberally, simply, single-heartedly 1:11-13 (James 1:5).** Two Greek words in the verse that changed everything. **Aite** is the ordinary word for "ask" — to make a request, the way a child asks a parent. It's not the language of ritual or qualification; it's the language of simply *asking*. And **hap**, translated "liberally," is a rich little word: its root means "single," "without folds" — so it carries both "generously" and "single-heartedly, without reservation." God gives **hap** — open-handedly, without holding back, without the catch the boy half-expected. And the verse promises he "upbraideth not" — God won't scold you for asking, won't shame the ignorance behind the question. Think about what that did to a fourteen-year-old paralyzed by competing preachers, each sure the others were damned: here was a verse saying the answer is available to anyone who will simply, single-heartedly ask, and God won't think less of him for needing to. The whole Restoration begins with a boy taking one Bible verse literally enough to act on it. That's worth sitting with — the dispensation opened not with a credential or a vision granted to the worthy, but with an honest question asked in faith. "Ask, and it shall be given you" (Matt. 7:7) stopped being a slogan and became an experiment.

"Behold, my Beloved Son" / "Hear him" (cf. Matt. 3:17; 17:5; Moses 4:2; 3 Ne. 11:7) — the Father's eternal confession of the Son 1:17. The words the Father speaks — "This is my Beloved Son, hear him" — are not new in 1820. They are the same words spoken at the Jordan when Jesus was baptized ("This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Matt. 3:17), and on the Mount of Transfiguration ("hear ye him," Matt. 17:5), and at the temple in Bountiful when the Father introduced the resurrected Christ to the Nephites ("Behold my Beloved Son... hear ye him," 3 Ne. 11:7), and — Abraham was shown — in the council before the world (the "Beloved and Chosen from the beginning," Moses 4:2). So when the Father says these words over a boy in a New York grove, he is saying the one thing he has always said, in every dispensation, at every threshold: *here is my Son; listen to him*. The First Vision isn't an odd nineteenth-century event dropped into history. It's the Father doing again, for a new dispensation, exactly what he has done at the opening of every dispensation — presenting the Son and commanding the world to hear him. Joseph's vision takes its place in a line that runs from the council of heaven through Sinai and Jordan and Bountiful, all saying the same sentence.

Apocryphal & Ancient Correlations

Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1; Moses 1; 1 Nephi 1; Acts 9 (canon). The prophetic-call form is old and consistent: a heavenly light or throne, the adversary or the prophet's unworthiness pressing in, a divine Personage, a commission, a sending. Joseph's grove is the SAME form. He didn't invent a strange new theophany; he reports the oldest kind.

1 Enoch 14; 2 Enoch; Apocalypse of Abraham. The Jewish ascent literature: a mortal caught up, met by light and heavenly Persons, shown and sent — the genre the Restoration's theophanies (Moses 1, Abraham 3, the First Vision) belong to, much of it unavailable to Joseph (2 Enoch, Apocalypse of Abraham).

The thread of the whole study. The man whose REVELATIONS keep matching buried books (Mahujah in the Book of Giants, the Apocalypse of Abraham's ascent, Jubilees' Eden-temple) is himself called in the ancient prophetic pattern. The form of his call and the content of his revelations point the same way.

The First Vision rests on its own witnesses — Joseph, and the Father and the Son. The old books illuminate the call FORM; they don't establish it. Read per D&C 91. A made-up theophany tends to look like its inventor's expectations; Joseph's looks like Isaiah's and Ezekiel's.

Where the threads lead

The oldest sentence. JS—H 1:17; Matthew 3:17; 17:5; 3 Nephi 11:7; Moses 4:2 — “This is my Beloved Son... hear him,” spoken at every dispensation's threshold.

The method, for everyone. JS—H 1:11-13 (James 1:5); Moroni 10:3-5 (ask with real intent and you will know) — the First Vision's method offered to every reader.

How the chapter changes the reader

Joseph Smith—History hands the ordinary believer two gifts. The doctrine of asking: the whole Restoration began because a boy took James 1:5 literally and found that God really does give, liberally, without scolding the asker — the standing invitation behind Moroni's promise. And the Father's word over the Son: whatever else the First Vision restored, its center is the simplest thing in it — the Father pointing to Christ and saying “hear him,” the oldest sentence in scripture, still the whole assignment.