

Elder Russell M. Nelson

The Creation

We will long remember this inspiring conference in the new Conference Center. Not long ago, there was only a deep hole in the ground where this building now stands. We have watched its construction with interest and awe.

The process of construction is truly inspiring to me. From conception to completion, any major building project reflects upon the work of the Master Creator. In fact, the Creation—of planet Earth and of life upon it—undergirds all other creative capability. Any man-made creation is possible only because of our divine Creator. The people who design and build are given life and capacity by that Creator. And all materials used in the construction of an edifice are ultimately derived from the rich resources of the earth. The Lord declared, “The earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all things.”¹

It is difficult for mortal minds to comprehend the majesty of the Creation. It is much easier for us to think about good things to eat or fun things to do. But I would like to stretch our minds to think of things beyond our easy grasp. The creation of man and woman was wondrous and great.² So was the creation of the earth as their mortal dwelling place.

The entire Creation was planned by God. A council in heaven was once convened in which we participated.³ There our Heavenly Father announced His divine plan.⁴ It is also called the plan of happiness,⁵ the plan of salvation,⁶ the plan of redemption,⁷ the plan of restoration,⁸ the plan of mercy,⁹ the plan of deliverance,¹⁰ and the everlasting gospel.¹¹ The purpose of the plan is to provide opportunity for the spirit children of God to progress toward an eternal exaltation.

Components of the plan

The plan required the Creation, and that in turn required both the Fall and the Atonement. These are the three fundamental components of the plan. The creation of a paradisiacal planet came from God.¹² Mortality and death came into the world through the Fall of Adam.¹³ Immortality and the possibility of eternal life were provided by the Atonement of Jesus Christ.¹⁴ The Creation, the Fall, and the Atonement were planned long before the actual work of the Creation began.

While visiting the British Museum in London one day, I read a most unusual book. It is not scripture. It is an English translation of an ancient Egyptian manuscript. From it I quote a dialogue between the Father and the Son. Referring to His Father, Jehovah—the premortal Lord—says:

“He took the clay from the hand of the angel, and made Adam according to Our image and likeness, and He left him lying for forty days and forty nights without putting breath into him. And He heaved sighs over him daily, saying, ‘If I put breath into this [man], he must suffer many pains.’ And I said unto My Father, ‘Put breath into him; I will be an advocate for him.’ And My Father said unto Me, ‘If I put breath into him, My beloved Son, Thou wilt be obliged to go down into the world, and to suffer many pains for him before Thou shalt have deemed him, and made him to come back to his primal state.’ And I said unto My Father, ‘Put breath into him; I will be his advocate, and I will go down into the world, and will fulfil Thy command.’”¹⁵

Although this text is not scripture, it reaffirms scriptures that teach of the deep and compassionate love of the Father for the Son, and of the Son for us—

attesting that Jesus volunteered willingly to be our Savior and Redeemer.¹⁶

The Lord God declared, "This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man."¹⁷ He who, under direction of the Father, had created the earth, subsequently came into mortality to do the will of His Father¹⁸ and to fulfill all prophecies of the Atonement.¹⁹ His Atonement would redeem every soul from the penalties of personal transgression, on conditions that He set.²⁰

Phases of the Creation

Each phase of the Creation was well planned before it was accomplished. Scripture tells us that "the Lord God, created all things . . . spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth."²¹

The physical Creation itself was staged through ordered periods of time. In Genesis²² and Moses,²³ those periods are called *days*. But in the book of Abraham, each period is referred to as a *time*.²⁴ Whether termed a *day*, a *time*, or an *age*, each phase was a period between two identifiable events—a division of eternity.²⁵

Period one included the creation of atmospheric heavens and physical earth, culminating in the emergence of light from darkness.²⁶

In period two, the waters were divided between the surface of the earth and its atmospheric heavens. Provision was made for clouds and rain to give life to all that would later dwell upon the earth.²⁷

In period three, plant life began. The earth was organized to bring forth grass, herbs, trees, and vegetation—each growing from its own seed.²⁸

Period four was a time of further development. Lights in the expanse of the heaven were organized so there could be seasons and other means of measuring time. During this period, the sun, the moon, the stars, and the earth were

placed in proper relationship to one another.²⁹ The sun, with its vast stores of hydrogen, was to serve as a giant furnace to provide light and heat for the earth and life upon it.³⁰

In period five, fish, fowl, and "every living creature" were added.³¹ They were made fruitful and able to multiply—in the sea and on the earth—each after its own kind.³²

In the sixth period, creation of life continued. The beasts of the earth were made after their kind, cattle after their kind, and everything which "creepeth upon the earth"—again, after its own kind.³³ Then the Gods counseled together and said:

"Let us go down and form man in our image, after our likeness. . . .

"So the Gods went down to organize man in their own image, in the image of the Gods to form they him, male and female to form they them."³⁴

Thus, Adam and Eve were formed.³⁵ And they were blessed to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."³⁶

The seventh period was designated as a time of rest.³⁷

The Creation testifies of a Creator

I testify that the earth and all life upon it are of divine origin. The Creation did not happen by chance. It did not come *ex nihilo* (out of nothing). And human minds and hands able to build buildings or create computers are not accidental. It is God who made us and not we ourselves. We are His people!³⁸ The Creation itself testifies of a Creator. We cannot disregard the divine in the Creation. Without our grateful awareness of God's hand in the Creation, we would be just as oblivious to our provider as are goldfish swimming in a bowl. With deep gratitude, we echo the words

of the Psalmist, who said, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches."³⁹

Purpose and destiny of the earth

This earth is but one of many creations over which God presides. "Worlds without number have I created," He said. "And I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten."⁴⁰ Grand as it is, planet Earth is part of something even grander—that great plan of God. Simply summarized, the earth was created that families might be. Scripture explains that a husband and wife "shall be one flesh, and all this that the earth might answer the end of its creation."⁴¹

And as part of the planned destiny of the earth and its inhabitants, here our kindred dead are also to be redeemed.⁴² Families are to be sealed together for all eternity.⁴³ A welding link is to be forged between the fathers and the children. In our time, a whole, complete, and perfect union of all dispensations, keys, and powers is to be welded together.⁴⁴ For these sacred purposes, holy temples now dot the earth.

Though our understanding of the Creation is limited, we know enough to appreciate its supernal significance. And that store of knowledge will be augmented in the future. Scripture declares:

"In that day when the Lord shall come [again], he shall reveal all things—

"Things which have passed, and hidden things which no man knew, things of the earth, by which it was made, and the purpose and the end thereof—

"Things most precious, things that are above, and things that are beneath, things that are in the earth, and upon the earth, and in heaven."⁴⁵

Yes, further light and knowledge will come. The Lord said:

"If there be bounds set to the heavens or to the seas, or to the dry land, or to the sun, moon, or stars—

"All the times of their revolutions, all the appointed days, months, and years, . . . and all their glories, laws, and set times, shall be revealed in the days of the dispensation of the fulness of times."⁴⁶

Eventually "the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory."⁴⁷ At the Second Coming of the Lord, the earth will be changed once again. It will be returned to its paradisiacal state and be made new. There will be a new heaven and a new earth.⁴⁸

Our responsibilities

Meanwhile, brothers and sisters, we should understand our significant responsibilities. Both the creations of God and the creations of man teach us the importance of each component. Do you think that the absence of one piece of granite from the face of this building would be noticed? Of course it would!

So it is with each son or daughter of God. We cannot let "the head say unto the feet it [has] no need of the feet; for without the feet how shall the body be able to stand?"⁴⁹ Just as "the body [has] need of every member,"⁵⁰ so the family has need of every member. All members of a family are to be linked, sealed, and "edified together, that the system may be kept perfect."⁵¹

The Creation, great as it is, is not an end in itself but a means to an end. We come to the earth for a brief period of time, endure our tests and trials, and prepare to move onward and upward to a glorious homecoming.⁵² Our thoughts and deeds while here will surely be more purposeful if we understand God's plan and are thankful for and obedient to His commandments.⁵³

As beneficiaries of the divine Creation, what shall we do? We should care

for the earth, be wise stewards over it, and preserve it for future generations.⁵⁴ And we are to love and care for one another.⁵⁵

We are to be creators in our own right—builders of an individual faith in God, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and faith in His Church. We are to build families and be sealed in holy temples. We are to build the Church and kingdom of God upon the earth.⁵⁶ We are to prepare for our own divine destiny—glory, immortality, and eternal lives.⁵⁷ These supernal blessings can all be ours through our faithfulness.

I testify that God lives! Jesus is the Christ and Creator! He is Lord over all the earth. He has established His Church in these latter days to accomplish His divine purposes. Joseph Smith is the great prophet of the Restoration. President Gordon B. Hinckley is the Lord's prophet today, whom I sustain with all my heart, in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 104:17.
2. See Russell M. Nelson, "The Magnificence of Man," *Ensign*, Jan. 1988, 64–69; see also Conference Report, Oct. 1998, 110–14; or *Ensign*, Nov. 1998, 85–87.
3. See *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, ed. Joseph Fielding Smith (1976), 349–50, 365.
4. See 2 Nephi 9:13; Alma 34:9; Abraham 3:22–27.
5. See Alma 42:8, 16.
6. See Jarom 1:2; Alma 24:14; 42:5; Moses 6:62.
7. See Jacob 6:8; Alma 12:25–34; 17:16; 18:39; 22:13; 29:2; 34:16, 31; 39:18; 42:11–13.
8. See Alma 41:2.
9. See Alma 42:15, 31; 2 Nephi 9:6.
10. See 2 Nephi 11:5.
11. See Revelation 14:6; Doctrine and Covenants 27:5; 36:5; 68:1; 77:8–9, 11; 79:1; 84:103; 99:1; 101:22, 39; 106:2; 109:29; 65; 124:88; 128:17; 133:36; 135:3, 7; 138:19, 25; Joseph Smith—History 1:34.
12. Latter-day revelation affirms that Michael (known also as Adam; see D&C 27:11; 107:54; 128:21) participated in the process of creation as well.
13. See 2 Nephi 2:25; Moses 6:48; Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 6:49.
14. See 2 Nephi 2:21–28.
15. "Discourse on Abbatôn by Timothy, Archbishop of Alexandria," in *Coptic Martyrdoms etc. in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*, ed. and trans. E. A. Wallis Budge (1914), 482. Timothy, archbishop of Alexandria, died in A.D. 385. Brackets are included in Budge's English translation.
16. See John 3:16; 10:14–15, 17–18.
17. Moses 1:39.
18. See 3 Nephi 27:13.
19. For a comprehensive study of the prophecies of prophets pertaining to Christ, see D. Kelly Ogden and R. Val Johnson, "All the Prophets Prophesied of Christ," *Ensign*, Jan. 1994, 31–37; *Liahona*, Apr. 1994, 10–18.
20. See 2 Nephi 9:20–27; Mosiah 26:21–23; Doctrine and Covenants 138:19.
21. Moses 3:5; see also Moses 6:51.
22. See Genesis 1:5–2:3.
23. See Moses 2:5–3:3.
24. See Abraham 4:8–5:3.
25. Abraham likened one day in the Lord's time to 1,000 years (see Abraham 3:4).
26. See Genesis 1:1–5; Moses 2:1–5; Abraham 4:1–5.
27. See Genesis 1:6–8; Moses 2:6–8; Abraham 4:6–8.
28. See Genesis 1:9–13; Moses 2:9–13; Abraham 4:9–13.
29. See Genesis 1:14–19; Moses 2:14–19; Abraham 4:14–19.
30. See Henry Eyring, "World of Evidence, World of Faith," in *Of Heaven and Earth: Reconciling Scientific Thought with LDS Theology*, ed. and comp. David L. Clark (1998), 59.
31. Abraham 4:20–21.
32. See Genesis 1:20–23; Moses 2:20–23; Abraham 4:22–23.
33. See Genesis 1:24–31; Moses 2:24–31; Abraham 4:24–31.

34. Abraham 4:26–27.
35. Note that the Lord called the first man *and woman* “Adam” (see Genesis 5:2; Moses 6:9).
36. Genesis 1:28; Moses 2:28; see also Abraham 4:28; Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 1:30.
37. See Genesis 2:1–3; Moses 3:1–3; Abraham 5:1–3.
38. See Psalm 100:3.
39. Psalm 104:24.
40. Moses 1:33; see also Doctrine and Covenants 76:23–24.
41. Doctrine and Covenants 49:16.
42. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:15.
43. See Doctrine and Covenants 2:2–3; 49:17; 138:48; Joseph Smith—History 1:39.
44. See Doctrine and Covenants 128:18.
45. Doctrine and Covenants 101:32–34.
46. Doctrine and Covenants 121:30–31.
47. Articles of Faith 1:10.
48. See Revelation 21:1; Ether 13:9; Doctrine and Covenants 29:23–24.
49. Doctrine and Covenants 84:109.
50. Doctrine and Covenants 84:110.
51. Doctrine and Covenants 84:110; see also 1 Corinthians 12:14–26.
52. See Psalm 116:15; Alma 42:8.
53. See Doctrine and Covenants 59:20–21.
54. The Lord has entrusted us to care for the earth. He said: “It is expedient that I, the Lord, should make every man accountable, as a steward over earthly blessings, which I have made and prepared for my creatures. I, the Lord, stretched out the heavens, and built the earth, my very handiwork; and all things therein are mine. And it is my purpose to provide for my saints, for all things are mine” (D&C 104:13–15; see also Revelation 7:3).
55. See John 13:34–35; 15:12; Romans 12:10–13:8; Galatians 5:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 John 3:11–4:12; Mosiah 4:15; Doctrine and Covenants 88:123.
56. See Joseph Smith Translation, Matthew 6:38 (King James Version, Matthew 6:33, footnote a).

57. See Romans 2:7; Doctrine and Covenants 75:5; 128:12; 132:19–24.

President Monson

Elder Russell M. Nelson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles has just spoken to us.

As we conclude the conference, we express appreciation to the Tabernacle Choir, the combined choir from Brigham Young University, and the men of the Tabernacle Choir joined by returned missionaries, and their conductors and organists for the beautiful and inspiring music.

We thank our city officials for the cooperation given this conference; the doctors, Church Health Unit nurses, and ambulance services which have been on hand to render assistance; the ushers and interpreters; and those who are responsible for the beautiful flowers on Temple Square and in the Conference Center.

We also express appreciation to local and national media representatives for their coverage of the conference and to the owners and operators of the many radio and television stations, cable systems, and Internet services who have given time and made facilities available to carry sessions of this conference to many countries.

As you leave the conference session this afternoon, we ask you to obey traffic rules, to use caution, and to be courteous in driving.

President Gordon B. Hinckley, our beloved prophet, will be the concluding speaker for this conference. Following President Hinckley’s remarks, the choir will sing “Sing We Now at Parting.” The benediction will then be offered by Elder Ronald T. Halverson of the Seventy. This conference will then be adjourned for six months.