



TORAH RESTORATION · TEACHINGS

The Promises Made to the Fathers

Why I Keep Torah and Stay in the Church

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When I began keeping the Sabbath on the seventh day and following the clean and unclean food laws of the Torah, the hardest questions didn't come from strangers. They came from people I love, people who sit beside me in sacrament meeting and go through temple ordinances with me. Their questions were honest, and they deserve an honest answer:

If this was truly important to God, why haven't the modern prophets told us about it?

If Saturday is God's Sabbath, why do we keep Sunday?

If clean and unclean foods matter, why aren't they in the Word of Wisdom, or at least mentioned in general conference?

These are fair questions. I asked every one of them myself.

Beneath them is another question that usually goes unspoken, and I think it matters most: *Are you leaving us?*

If you've asked any of these questions, of me or of someone else walking this road, or if you've quietly asked them of yourself, this is written for you. I won't pretend to have every answer. On the most important question, *why* the prophets haven't spoken on these things, I'll tell you plainly that I don't know. But I've found that scripture has a lot to say about how and when God gives His people more light. And I've come to believe that the path I'm on leads further into the covenant, not away from it.

Where I Stand

So let me answer the unspoken question first. No, I'm not leaving.

I still attend sacrament meeting. I still go to the temple and keep the covenants I made there. I now also keep the seventh-day Sabbath, eat according to the Torah's clean and unclean food laws, and observe other commandments God gave to Israel. I don't do these things in place of my covenants as a Latter-day Saint. I do them alongside those covenants, because I've come to believe they belong together.

I used to think of this as waiting for something new to be revealed. I don't see it that way anymore. The Sabbath, the clean and unclean, the appointed feasts: none of these were ever taken away. They are still in our scriptures, in the same Bible we carry to church every week. They don't need to be restored, because they were never lost. Over the centuries they were simply set aside by tradition, the kind of tradition the Savior corrected in His own day, when He told those who held it, "Ye have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition" (Matthew 15:6).

The Lord warned us in our own day that light and truth can be taken from us "because of the tradition of their fathers" (D&C 93:39). And the last thing He asked of Israel through Malachi, just before promising Elijah, wasn't to wait for something new. It was to *remember*: "Remember ye the law of Moses my servant... with the statutes and judgments" (Malachi 4:4).

I can't say why the Church hasn't taught these things. It may be that the prophets already understand them, and that the Lord Himself has told them to wait until His people are ready to receive them. I'm open to that possibility. But anything I said about it would be guessing, and I won't guess about the Church or its leaders.

What I do know is what the scriptures ask of me: to "work out [my] own salvation with fear and trembling before him" (Mormon 9:27; see also Philippians 2:12). I can't wait for anyone else to do that for me.

So yes, I'm still walking this road, and still stumbling. Sometimes I fall, and sometimes I fail. I have a great deal left to remember and relearn. But I trust the Savior's promise that the Holy Ghost "shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance" (John 14:26). It hasn't brought me all things yet, but I believe it will.

Remembering What We Already Have

If these commandments were never lost, the question changes. It's no longer "*Why hasn't God revealed this?*" It becomes "*Why have we forgotten it?*" And scripture has a lot to say about that.

From the beginning, God warned Israel that their greatest danger would not be losing His law but forgetting it: "Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes" (Deuteronomy 8:11). In scripture, remembering God and keeping His commandments go together, and forgetting one means forgetting the other.

We are not exempt from that warning. In 1832 the Lord told the early Saints:

"Your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received—which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation... And they shall remain under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments which I have given them, not only to say, but to do according to that which I have written."

D&C 84:54–57

President Ezra Taft Benson famously applied this passage to our neglect of the Book of Mormon, and he was right to. But the verse names two things to remember, not one: the Book of Mormon *and* "the former commandments." And it doesn't ask us only to say them, but to *do* them.

Notice the last words: "to do according to that which *I have written*." There is one place in scripture where the Lord did more than inspire the writing: He wrote it Himself. At Sinai, Yehovah gave Moses "two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God" (Exodus 31:18). "The writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables" (Exodus 32:16). When Israel broke the covenant and Moses broke the tablets, the Lord didn't write new commandments. He wrote the same words again: "I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables" (Exodus 34:1). Among those words, written twice by God's own hand, is the fourth commandment: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8).

And when the Lord promised a new covenant through Jeremiah, He didn't promise different words. He promised a different place to write them: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts" (Jeremiah 31:33). The same Author, the same law, now written on our hearts.

I'm not claiming to know everything the Lord meant by "the former commandments." But I can't read that phrase without thinking of the commandments He gave to Israel and never revoked: His Sabbath, His appointed times, His instructions about what is clean.

Every Sunday we renew a covenant that uses this same language. We promise to "always remember him and keep his commandments which he has given [us]" (Moroni 4:3; D&C 20:77). Remembering Him and keeping His commandments are joined in the very prayer we hear every week. I've simply begun asking which commandments that includes.

A Starting Place, Not a Stopping Place

One of my family's questions was: *If clean and unclean foods matter, why aren't they in the Word of Wisdom?* I think the Word of Wisdom itself suggests an answer.

When it was given in 1833, it came "not by commandment or constraint" (D&C 89:2). It was "adapted to the capacity of the weak and the weakest of all saints, who are or can be called saints" (D&C 89:3). It began as counsel. Only decades later did the Church make it a requirement for entering the temple. The Lord gave His people a starting place they could manage, and over time He asked more of them.

That's not new to our dispensation. When the first Gentiles came into the early Church, the apostles met in Jerusalem to decide what to ask of them. They settled on four things: to abstain from food offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality (Acts 15:20, 29). Many read this as the complete list. But listen to the reason James gave for stopping there: "For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day" (Acts 15:21). The new believers would hear the law of Moses read every week. The four requirements were where they started, not where they were expected to end.

The Book of Mormon describes the same pattern, with a warning attached:

"I will give unto the children of men line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little; and blessed are those who hearken unto my precepts... for unto him that receiveth I will give more; and from them that shall say, We have enough, from them shall be taken away even that which they have."

2 Nephi 28:30

I don't read the Word of Wisdom as the Lord's final word on what we eat. I read it as a floor, not a ceiling: the first step for "the weakest of all saints," given in the expectation that we would keep climbing. The rest of the instruction was already written in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, and has been all along.

The Promises Made to the Fathers

Malachi's book ends with a promise every Latter-day Saint knows: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers" (Malachi 4:5–6).

When Moroni appeared to Joseph Smith in 1823, he quoted that promise differently: "And he shall plant in the hearts of the children *the promises made to the fathers*, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers" (D&C 2:2). Elijah came, as promised, to the Kirtland Temple in 1836 (D&C 110:13–16). We rightly see the fulfillment of that promise in temple work and family history, in sealing children to parents across the generations.

But what are "the promises made to the fathers"? They're the covenants: the promises God made to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and renewed with Israel at Sinai. Abraham himself sought "the blessings of the fathers" back to "the first father, even Adam" (Abraham 1:2–3). When the resurrected Savior taught the Nephites that the law of Moses was fulfilled in Him, He was careful to add that "the covenant which I have made with my people is not all fulfilled" (3 Nephi 15:8). The sacrifices ended, but the covenant didn't.

So I've come to see two sides to Elijah's mission. One is outward: sealing our families together in the temple. The other is inward: our hearts turning toward the covenants our fathers made, and toward the way those fathers lived them. And remember where Malachi placed that promise. It comes in the verse directly after "Remember ye the law of Moses my servant" (Malachi 4:4). When the Savior gave these chapters to the Nephites, He included that verse too (3 Nephi 25:4).

I don't think this replaces the way we've understood Elijah's coming. I think it deepens it. The children's hearts turn to the fathers, and the children remember.

For me, this isn't only doctrine. In 2017 I learned that both of my grandmothers' families were Jewish, families who had turned away from the covenant of their fathers in order to survive persecution in Europe. Generations later, without knowing any of that, I found my own heart turning back. I can't read Malachi now without seeing my own family in it.

An Invitation to Remember

I'm not asking anyone to accept something new. I'm not asking anyone to leave the Church, to doubt the prophets, or to follow me. I'm only asking us to read again what we already have.

The Sabbath is still in our Bibles. So are the appointed feasts, and the Lord's instructions about what is clean. The Savior still says, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matthew 5:17; 3 Nephi 12:17). And the Lord still asks us, in our own Doctrine and Covenants, to remember "the former commandments... not only to say, but to do."

Whether my grandmothers' Jewish line flows in my veins or not, I know where I stand. Paul taught that those who come to Christ are grafted into the olive tree of Israel and "partake of the root and fatness" of it (Romans 11:17), and that "if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29). That's true of every Latter-day Saint who has received a patriarchal blessing declaring their lineage in the house of Israel. The promises made to the fathers belong to us. So do the commandments the fathers were given.

If these questions have stirred something in you, I'd invite you to start simply. Read the weekly Torah portion alongside your other study. Try keeping one Sabbath on the seventh day, without leaving anything behind, and see what the Spirit teaches you. Ask the Lord, as Joseph did, and let Him answer.

To my family and to anyone who worries that this path leads away from the covenant: I believe it leads further into it. We're not on different sides. We're children of the same fathers, heirs to the same promises, still learning together to remember.