

HOW LOVELY WAS THE MORNING:

The Story of the Restoration of the

Gospel of Jesus Christ

NARRATION

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Opening Prayer:

I: Beginnings (Music: Overture thru Lucy's Song)

Overture: Orchestra

Narrator (underscore): Oh how lovely was that morning in April, 1820, when the heavens were once again opened, and the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ began to be restored to the earth.

Any story has many beginnings, and so it is with ours. It begins with prophets of the Old Testament: the Prophet Daniel, who spoke of a stone cut, without hands, from a mountain, which rolled forth and became so great that it filled the whole earth, Daniel 2: 34-35; the Prophet Moses, who reports to us that he spoke with God, "face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend," Exodus 33:11; the Prophet Amos, who tells us, "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets," Amos 3:7.

It begins with Peter's New Testament prophecy of the "times of restitution of all things," Acts 3:21; which could not occur, as Paul explained, "except there come a falling away first," II Thessalonians 2:3.

But in a very real way our story begins with the birth of a child, two days before Christmas in 1805. The child's name was Joseph, a common name. His family's name was Smith, also a common name: Joseph Smith, the fifth child of Joseph Smith, and Lucy Mack Smith of Sharon, Windsor County, Vermont.

Solo and Orchestra: Lucy's Song (Small Hands)

Narrator (no underscore): For three years, the crops planted by young Joseph's father failed. Though Father Smith did not know it at the time, his family needed to be elsewhere. Young Joseph had a work to do, and he could not do

it where the Smith Family then lived. Father Smith had heard of richer lands and a milder climate in Western New York State, then on the frontier of a growing United States. Like many others, the Smith Family headed west.

II: Joseph as a Youth (Music: Father Help Me Walk With Thee)

Narrator (underscore): It was an exciting time—a time of growth. The frontier lands of Western New York State produced food in abundance and plans were being made for the Erie Canal which would soon pass through Palmyra, New York. The Smith Family purchased 100 acres about two miles south of Palmyra and set to work clearing timber and building a modest log home.

Religious revival camps were common. As it happened, in the Spring of 1820, the local ministers staged a large revival in Palmyra. For young Joseph, this was a time of confusion: “It was impossible,” he later wrote, “for a person young as I was . . . to come to any certain conclusion as to who was right and who was wrong.”

One day, while studying the Bible, Joseph found himself reading James Chapter 1, Verse 5, “If any of ye lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”

Joseph tells us, “Never did any passage of scripture come with more power to the heart of man than this did at this time to mine. It seemed to enter with great force into every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again, knowing that if any person needed wisdom from God, I did; for how to act I did not know. . . .”

What was young Joseph to do?

Solo, Chorus and Orchestra: Joseph’s Song (Father, Help Me Walk With Thee)

Narrator (no underscore): Joseph determined to put James’ promise to the test. If God truly would give liberally, he would ask God the question burning in his heart—which was the right church. Accordingly Joseph tells us that “on the morning of a beautiful, clear day, early in the Spring of eighteen hundred and twenty. . . I retired to the woods.” Here he could be alone and pray.

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III. A Pillar of Light (Music: Oh How Lovely Was The Morning)

Duet and Orchestra: Oh, How Lovely Was the Morning, 1st Verse

Narrator (underscore): Joseph tells us that immediately upon kneeling to pray, “I was seized upon by some power which entirely overcame me...so that I could not speak.” “Thick darkness gathered around me, and it seemed to me for a time as if I were doomed to sudden destruction,” but, “exerting all my powers to call upon God to deliver me out of the power of this enemy...and at the very moment when I was ready to sink into despair and abandon myself to destruction. . . I saw a pillar of light exactly over my head, above the brightness of the sun, which descended gradually until it fell upon me.”

Sometimes the words of man fail in describing the things of God. So it was with young Joseph. How could he communicate to man what it was like to speak with God “face to face” as Moses had? Joseph says that immediately upon the light’s appearing, “I found myself delivered from the enemy which held me bound.” “I saw two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description standing above me in the air. One of them spake unto me, calling me by name and said, pointing to the other—This is My Beloved Son, Hear Him!”

Narrator (underscore continues): “Two Personages, whose brightness and glory defy all description.” Not two “spirits,” for these beings were as real and as tangible as you and I. And not two “people,” for these two beings had “a brightness and glory which defy all description.” In truth, there are no words in the common language of man which fully and accurately describe this very real and very personal experience. Simply put, young Joseph saw and talked with God the Eternal Father and his resurrected and immortal son, Jesus Christ.

Chorus and Orchestra: Oh, How Lovely Was the Morning (4th Verse)

Narrator (no underscore): If you are hearing this story for the first time you may wonder at this account. You may have been taught that no, the Heavens are sealed, God no longer speaks with man. You may have been taught that God is a spirit only, or perhaps only a feeling, or a thought, or a force for good.

Young Joseph had been taught these same things. Now he knew differently. Young Joseph now knew that God the Eternal Father and His Son Jesus Christ are real.

IV: The Resurrected Christ (Music: I Believe in Christ)

***Narrator (underscore):* If you have studied the Bible, you know that after Christ's resurrection he stayed among his disciples for a period of time until his ascension into Heaven. You also know that He showed his disciples the crucifixion wounds in his hands and in his feet so that they would know that He truly was the resurrected Christ. You also know that He ate and drank with his disciples and that after a short time among them many people witnessed his ascension into Heaven.**

You may have wondered what became of the resurrected body of Jesus Christ after his ascension and you may have been taught, as Joseph had been taught, that whatever became of the body Christ showed to his disciples, He has no body today and is a spirit only, just as God the Father is a spirit only.

Young Joseph now knew differently. He now knew that God the Father and his son Jesus Christ are as real as you and I. He now knew that God the Father and his son Jesus Christ have bodies which, though glorified beyond anything our language can describe or our eyes can comprehend, are as real and as tangible as you and I. He now knew that the resurrected and immortal Jesus Christ is still the resurrected and immortal Jesus Christ.

Soloist, Chorus and Orchestra: I Believe in Christ

V: Christ in America (Music: His One Begotten Son)

***Narrator (underscore):* The New Testament Book of John reports to us that during his mortal ministry Christ said to his disciples, "other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd," John 10:16.**

Bible scholars have puzzled over this statement. Most have assumed that Christ must have been speaking of an unrecorded mission to lands outside of Palestine, or perhaps indirectly of Paul's later apostolic missions to Rome, to

Ephesus, or to other locations far beyond the boundaries of Palestine. In a few years young Joseph would learn that, instead, Christ was speaking of Christ's own mission to the Americas as the resurrected and immortal Jesus Christ, an event not recorded in the Bible but reported instead in the Book of Mormon, the book which gives members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints their nickname--the "Mormons."

In a unique way, the Book of Mormon is tangible, physical proof of the reality of young Joseph's experiences. The Book of Mormon teaches us that the three days of Christ's entombment at Jerusalem were days of earthquake, fire, and then darkness in America, after which the survivors of these calamities experienced the joy of actually visiting with the resurrected Christ; of feeling the nail prints in His hands and in His feet, of His healing their lame, their blind; of His teaching them His gospel; of His blessing their little children--events so powerful that the people lived together in peace for the next two hundred years.

Soloists and Orchestra: His One Begotten Son, Verses One through Four

***Narrator (underscore):* After two hundred years of peace, this people gradually returned to wars among themselves. These wars led to the destruction of one group--the Nephites--by another group--the Lamanites. Mormon was a commander of the Nephite armies and shortly before the destruction of his armies he gathered together the records of his people and condensed them into a book which he engraved on metal plates so that his words would endure. The book which he wrote bears his name: The Book of Mormon. After Mormon's death, his son Moroni added a few words of his own and placed the plates in a stone box in a hill not far from what would become--fourteen hundred years later--young Joseph's New York home.**

***Narrator (no underscore):* Today our world struggles with many doubts. Doubts that Jesus Christ was even a real historical figure and if real, doubts that He was anything other than a moral philosopher. Among those who accept Jesus Christ as the Son of God, there are doubts about his teachings: doubts that He meant what he said and doubts that any one truly understands what He taught. Oh what a second witness could do to erase these doubts--to affirm that the Jesus Christ of the Bible is indeed real, that He is indeed the Son of God, and that a correct understanding of his teachings is truly within reach of all who desire it.**

Seven years after Joseph spoke personally with the Father and the Son, Mormon's son Moroni, himself a resurrected being, permitted young Joseph to retrieve the plates from the stone box where he had placed them fourteen hundred years earlier. Witnesses who saw and handled these plates tell us that each plate was very thin, like a leaf; that the plates had been finely engraved; and that the plates appeared to be made of gold.

And although an unlearned young man, Joseph, through the gift and power of God, translated Mormon's book into English. That book stands today as a tangible witness of both the historical reality and the divinity of Jesus Christ.

We invite all to read this book, to test it, and to decide for themselves whether it is the fictional work of an unlearned youth or truly the words of Christ and his ancient American prophets.

(Begin underscore) “. . . [A]nd he took their little children, one by one, and blessed them, and prayed unto the Father for them. . . . “And he . . . said unto them: Behold your little ones. . . . and they saw the heavens open, and they saw angels descending out of heaven as it were in the midst of fire; and they came down and encircled those little ones about, and they were encircled about with fire; and the angels did minister unto them,” III Nephi 17: 21-24.

Solo and Orchestra: His One Begotten Son Reprised, Verses Five and Six

Narrator: Matthew Chapter 3 tells us that Jesus sought out John “to be baptized of him,” John 3:13. “But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?,” John 3:14. Christ then said to John, “Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness,” John 3:15.

Obeying this instruction, John baptized Jesus, and “Jesus, when he was baptized, went straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him” 3:16. “And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” 3:17.

(Begin underscore) No other event from the life of Christ has created more debate than this simple account. Why did Christ need to be baptized? Why

did Christ seek out John for his baptism? And what of baptism itself? How is it to be performed?

Through his translation of the Book of Mormon, Joseph learned the answers to these questions. Christ was baptized to set an example for us—to teach each of us the importance of baptism. John baptized Christ by complete immersion. Jesus sought out John because John held the Priesthood of Aaron—an authority which was essential to perform the ordinance of baptism. With the translation of the Book of Mormon came the restoration of the Priesthood of Aaron, the same priesthood John held, so that once again it was possible to truly understand and follow Christ's example.

*VI: Joseph and Emma (Music: VIA Joseph and Emma's Song
VIB Thy Perfect Lullaby
VIC Emma's Song)*

Narrator (no underscore): About this time, another wondrous and miraculous event occurred in young Joseph's life—he fell in love. Work had taken Joseph to Harmony, Pennsylvania and there he had met Emma Hale. Their marriage occurred about the time Joseph received the metal plates. Joseph called Emma “the choice of my heart.” Though others would also assist, Emma wrote for Joseph, hour after hour, as he translated the first words from the golden plates. Later, Emma would stand by Joseph through everything which came: mobbings; death threats; and forced relocations. There is no finer example of love and loyalty than that given by Joseph and Emma.

Duet, Piano and Solo Violin: Joseph and Emma's Song (Softly as Morning's Sun)

Narrator (no underscore): Sixteen months after their marriage, Emma bore their first child, Alvin. Little Alvin died at birth.

Duet and Orchestra: Thy Perfect Lullaby

Narrator (no underscore): The next year Emma gave birth to twins, Thadeus and Louisa, who also died at birth. Joseph and Emma then adopted Joseph and Julia, newborn twins whose mother had just died. Finally Emma began the joys of raising a family.

Solo and Orchestra: Emma's Song (Lullaby)

Narrator (no underscore): Less than a year after Joseph and Emma adopted little Joseph and Julia, a mob stormed the Smith home. The mob beat, tarred and feathered Joseph. In the chaos the door was left open. Little Joseph died a few days later from exposure.

Of Joseph and Emma's eleven children, only five would survive to adulthood.

Narrator (underscore): Time permits only the briefest summary of the events of the next years: events which saw the formal organization of Christ's restored Church as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the forced migration of the Church first to Ohio, next to Western Missouri, and then, under a literal extermination order from the governor of that state, to the State of Illinois, where on the banks of the Mississippi River the "Mormons," as they were now called, drained a piece of swamp land and got to work building a town.

The town was called Nauvoo, a Hebrew word meaning beautiful, restful place. So enterprising were the Mormons, and so successful were their missionary efforts, which already reached as far as Europe, that within a few years Nauvoo the Beautiful was the largest town in the State of Illinois, even larger than Chicago.

The Illinois legislature granted Nauvoo a strong city charter and Abraham Lincoln, a member of the Illinois State Legislature, congratulated the Mormons on their accomplishments. The Nauvoo City Council promptly enacted an anti-discrimination ordinance which made religious persecution of anyone--whether Christian, Muslim, or of any religious sect or denomination--a fineable offense. People of other religions settled in Nauvoo with the Mormons, and for a time there was peace.

VII. A Night in Nauvoo (Music: Oh What Songs of the Heart, Turkey in the Straw, Simple Gifts)

Narrator (no underscore): Join us now for a Night in Nauvoo.

Barbershop Quartet, Orchestra and Chorus (action): A Night in Nauvoo (*Oh What Songs of the Heart, Turkey in the Straw, Simple Gifts*)

VIII. The Nauvoo Temple (Music: Songs of the Heart Reprise)

Narrator (underscore): In Nauvoo, the Mormons set to work building a temple. The Nauvoo temple would not be a chapel or a meeting house. It would,

however, answer a question posed for centuries by those seeking to understand the doctrine of Christ: If baptism truly is essential, what of the millions upon millions of people who have lived upon the earth without ever having heard of Jesus Christ, let alone accept His baptism. The prevailing answer in Joseph's day was that the souls of these people were simply lost. But through revelation Joseph knew otherwise. In the Nauvoo temple, the ordinance of baptism for the dead, a practice Paul mentions in First Corinthians would be performed. Through this ordinance, the living are baptized, by proxy, for those who have died without baptism and these have the choice of accepting baptism just as if they had done so during their lives.

Also in the temple, marriages, not just "until death do you part" but for time and for all eternity would be performed. Family ties thus created would endure beyond this life and throughout the eternity of life to come.

Narrator (no underscore): In the Old Testament, the Prophet Malachi prophesied of the turning of "the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers...." Malachi 4:6. Mormons believe that this prophecy is fulfilled through the work which takes place in modern day temples. It is for this reason that members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints embrace genealogy work—why today the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sends teams throughout the world to copy birth, marriage and death records—why today the Church's genealogy library in Salt Lake City, Utah is the foremost genealogical research facility in the world.

IX: The Nauvoo Tragedy (Music: Small Hands Reprise)

Narrator (underscore): The peace and prosperity the Mormons enjoyed for a time in Nauvoo would be short lived. Historians would look back and puzzle over the events which literally drove the Mormons from Nauvoo: Events which saw "the Mormon question" become a highly political one. Events which saw Joseph appeal for his people's rights as American citizens just to be left alone, but which also saw those appeals rebuffed for jealousy, anger, and fear.

Narrator (no underscore): The drama then unfolding included two key players who would go on to national prominence: Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas. As a judge, Stephen A. Douglas had dismissed an illegal writ against Joseph. Later he and Joseph talked in depth about the events which drove the

Mormons from Missouri to Nauvoo. During this visit Joseph told Judge Douglas that unless the United States “[redressed] the wrongs committed upon the saints in the State of Missouri. . . in a few years [that] government will be utterly overthrown.” He also told Judge Douglas that he, Douglas, would one day, “aspire to the presidency of the United States.” Joseph said to Judge Douglas, “if you ever turn your hand against me or the Latter-day Saints, you will feel the weight of the hand of the Almighty upon you, and you will live to see and know that I have testified the truth to you.”

Narrator (no underscore): Joseph eventually concluded that his enemies wanted to destroy him personally and that the best hope for the safety of his friends would be for him to leave Nauvoo. With this in mind, Joseph and his Brother Hyrum crossed the Mississippi River into Iowa only to be persuaded to return and rely on the governor’s promise of safe passage to Carthage, Illinois, the county seat of Hancock County. On returning to Nauvoo, Joseph said, “I am going like a lamb to the slaughter; But I am calm as a summer’s morning; I have a conscience void of offense towards God, and towards all men. I shall die innocent, and it shall yet be said of me—he was murdered in cold blood.” At about 4:15 in the afternoon of June 27, 1844, a mob with painted faces rushed the Carthage jail. Joseph and his brother Hyrum were shot and killed. Five months later, Emma gave birth to David Hyrum Smith.

Soloists and Orchestra: Small Hands Reprise

Narrator (no underscore): With few exceptions, newspapers throughout the State of Illinois expressed shock and outrage at the murders of Joseph and Hyrum. Nevertheless, these expressions were not enough to secure justice. No conviction for these crimes ever occurred.

X: Westward Again (Music: Come Come Ye Saints)

Narrator (under-solo): Joseph’s death did not appease his enemies. In the dead of winter, 1846, the first company of Mormon Pioneers, under the direction of Brigham Young crossed the frozen Mississippi River and headed

west. Members of the Church left behind their beloved Nauvoo, and their warm, comfortable homes, to start over, once again, in a new place. The Nauvoo Temple was burned by an arsonist and eventually demolished.

Chorus: Come, Come Ye Saints

Narrator (no underscore): To the disappointment of Joseph's enemies, his murder did not stop the growth of the church. By 1857--ten years after the first Mormon pioneers arrived in the valley of the Great Salt Lake--100,000 Latter-day Saints called Utah their home.

Narrator (no underscore): In an interesting and historically significant turn of events, false rumors about the Church began to circulate in the East and "the Mormon question," once again, became a political one. In 1857, Stephen A. Douglas, now a prominent, national political figure, returned to Springfield, Illinois where he was invited to speak about the politics of the day, including the Mormons. Douglas was known to have been a political friend of the Mormon Prophet Joseph Smith. Perhaps being overzealous to distance himself from the Mormons, Douglas said, among other things, that when official reports proved the rumors to be true, quote, "the knife must be applied to this pestiferous, disgusting cancer. . . . It must be cut out by the roots, and seared over by the red hot iron of stern and unflinching law. . . ."

Narrator (no underscore): In 1858, Douglas bested Lincoln after their famous Lincoln-Douglas debates while competing for a seat in the United States Senate. But in 1860, when as Joseph had foretold Douglas actually did "aspire to the Presidency of the United States," his party fractured badly. He received only one electoral vote--that of Missouri--and Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States. Seven months later, Douglas died of typhoid fever at the age of forty-eight.

XI. Legacy (Music: Praise to the Man)

Narrator (underscore): Very often in our lives, if we are patient, humble, and willing to learn from the lessons which life teaches to each of us, we see good things come out of bad. So it was with the Mormons. In December, 1860--the month after Lincoln's election as President--South Carolina declared its succession from the union, and while the now dis-United States fought a

terrible and bloody civil war, the Mormons were safe and living at peace in the Rocky Mountains.

Narrator (*underscore continues*): We began our story with the Prophet Daniel who spoke of a stone “cut out . . . without hands” that “became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.” Daniel 2:34-35. Daniel tells us that this stone represents a kingdom set up by the “God of heaven. . . which shall never be destroyed” but “shall stand for ever.” Daniel 2:44-45. The story you have just heard fulfills part of Daniel’s prophecy.

(*end underscore*) Today, almost 14 million members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints live and worship in countries around the world. More than 50,000 missionaries serve full-time missions for the Church and each year more than a quarter million converts are baptized into the Church.

Today Thomas S. Monson, the sixteenth President and Prophet since Joseph Smith, and a quorum of twelve apostles, preside over Christ’s church—the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Today more than 130 temples dot the earth. The Nauvoo Temple has been re-built and friendships in the areas described in our story today have been restored. We cherish the examples of our forebears and have no ill will toward anyone.

We thank our Father for the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and we thank our friend, brother and Prophet—Joseph Smith.

Chorus and Orchestra: Praise to the Man

Narrator (no underscore): To you, today, we would ask this simple question: What if it’s true?

What if you truly are not alone in this life? What if your life truly has an eternal purpose? What if the Heavens truly are no longer sealed and God once again reveals his will to us through living prophets as in days of old?

It is our testimony to you that these things are true.

Brief Testimonies

Stake President Remarks

XII: Our Prayer for You (Music: May Thy Peace be as the River)

Narrator (underscore): The Old Testament First Book of Kings tells us that after fleeing for his life, Elijah sought and found the Lord not in “a great and strong wind,” nor in an earthquake, and not in a fire, but in “a still small voice.” I Kings 19:11-12. If our story has spoken peace to your heart, if it has given you hope for you or for your family, we would invite you to follow that still small voice and find greater peace in your life.

Chorus and Orchestra: May Thy Peace be as the River

Closing prayer

XIII. Postlude, Orchestra Only, His One Begotten Son, beginning at Measure 137.