

**Institute 1-21-20****Joseph Smith's Visions of Angel Moroni: September 22, 1823-1824  
1820-1823**

Three and a half years after the first vision, seventeen-year-old Joseph Smith felt the need to seek another “divine manifestation.” In 1838, he remembered back to his prayer Sept 21, 1823, “[he] had full confidence” that God would answer his prayer (JS-H 1:29). With eleven family members<sup>1</sup> living in the four room Palmyra-log-cabin (the foundation was 24' x 30'), he had another vision that was repeated three times during the night: “I had retired to my bed for the night, I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies, and also for a manifestation to me, that I might know of my state and standing before him” (see JS-H 1:29-34). Both Joseph and Lucy recorded their memories about it the night in 1838 and 1844/45 respectively. Joseph's is canonized in the Pearl of Great Price.

**Joseph Record of Moroni's Visitation—Sept 21/22, 1823**

Unlike descriptions of hallucinations, Joseph's visions have no vagueness, but clear details. He described clothed beings as a resurrected, glorified men with visible characteristics, names, and carried on clear conversations. Joseph's description of Angel Moroni does not fit his cultural understanding of winged ethereal essence:

He had on a loose robe of most exquisite whiteness. . . . His hands were naked, and his arms also, a little above the wrist; so, also, were his feet naked, as were his legs, a little above the ankles. His head and neck were also bare. I could discover that he had no other clothing on but this robe, as it was open, so that I could see into his bosom. Not only was his robe exceedingly white, but his whole person was glorious beyond description, and his countenance truly like lightning. . . . He called me by name, and said unto me that he was a messenger sent from the presence of God to me, and that his name was Moroni (JS-H 1:31-33).

Moroni, like all of Joseph's visionary heralds, had once lived on the earth with a mortal history. Moroni introduced himself as the last Israelite prophet from the New World and an ancient civilization military leader.

**Lucy's Memoirs**

Lucy's memoirs were enhanced as *The History of Joseph Smith by his Mother*, but I'm using the original text and spelling from *JosephSmithPapers*, and Lavina Fielding Anderson, *Lucy's Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith's Family Memoir*, 2001. Lucy included a few other family details about these three years—like the enormous amount of maple sugar the family produced: “We averaged 1000 lbs per year.” (They had 1,500 sugar maples, an orchard including apple trees, and a vegetable garden.) She also delivered her last child, Lucy in 1821. Her memories tell of Joseph's visions of Moroni in 1823 follow (*Lucy's Book* is italicized in this handout)

*The 3 harvest time had now arrived since we opened our new farm and all our sons were actively employed in assisting their Father to cut down the grain and storing it away in order, One evening we were sitting till quite late conversing upon the subject of the diversity of churches that had risen upon the world. . . . Joseph never said many words upon any subject but always seemed to reflect more deeply than common persons of his age upon everything of a religious nature.*

**[\*Lucy's memories appear to mix up Joseph's First Vision and Angel Moroni, giving further speculation that she was not told about the first in 1820 but only learned of it later.]**

*After we ceased the conversation he went to bed <and wile pondering in his mind which of the churches were the true one. But he had not laid there long till <he saw> a bright <light> enter the room where he lay he looked up and saw an angel of the Lord <standing>by him The angel spoke I perceive that you are enquiring in your mind which is the true church . . . the churches that are now upon the Earth are allm an made churches There is a record for you and Joseph but you cannot get it until you learn to keep the commandments of God <For it is not to get gain> But it is to bring forth that light and intelligence which has been long lost in the Earth Now Joseph beware <or> when you go to get the plates your mind will be filld [sic] with darkness and all manner of evil . . . and you must tell your father of this for he will believe every word you say the record is on the side hill on the Hill of Cumorah 3 miles from this place remove the Grass and moss and you will find a large flat stone pry that up and you will find the record under it laying on 4 pillars <of cement> then the angel left him.*

For more see: josephsmithpapers.org, Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845, Page [11], bk. 3

**Prophetic Call**

The Angel Moroni returned to give his ancient record to Joseph. The assignment included the calling of Smith to translate the record through the power of the Holy Ghost. In Smith's words the angel explained,

<sup>1</sup> Lucky Mack and Joseph Smith Sr., had 12 children: Unnamed, Alvin (1798), Hyrum (1800), Sophronia (1803), Joseph (1805), Samuel (1808), Ephium (b. and died, 1810), William (1811), Katherine (1813), Don Carols (1816), Lucy (1821)

God had a work for me to do . . . He said there was a book deposited, written upon gold plates, giving an account of the former inhabitants of this continent, and the source from whence they sprang. He also said that the fulness of the everlasting Gospel was contained in it, as delivered by the Savior to the ancient inhabitants. . . . He told me, that when I got those plates of which he had spoken—for the time that they should be obtained was not yet fulfilled—I should not show them to any person . . . if I did I should be destroyed. While he was conversing with me about the plates, the vision was opened to my mind that I could see the place where the plates were deposited, and that so clearly and distinctly that I knew the place again when I visited it (JS-H 1:33-34, 42).

Moroni ended his visitation by quoting several biblical prophecies including references to Act 3:22-23; Isa11; Joel 2:28-29; and Malachi chapters 3, and 4, with a slightly modified version of 4:1, 4:5, 4:6.

#### **Lucy's memories of Sept 22, 1823**

Lucy's Book adds more details about Moroni's instructions regarding her husband (that *Saints* picks up) about and the farming routine the following morning:

*The next <day> he <and his father> and Alvin were reaping in the field suddenly <suddenly>[sic] Joseph stopped and seemed to be in a deep study for sometime Alvin hurried <him> saying Joseph we must keep to work or we shall not get our task done Joseph worked again diligently then stopped in the same way <a second time> when <his father> Saw that he was very pale and urged him to go the house and tell his mother that he was sick he went a short distance till he came to a green sward under an apple tree here he lay down <on his face> for he was so weak he could go no farther*

*The personage whom he saw the night before came to him again and said why did you not tell your father what I told you Joseph and he saw afraid his father would not believe him [,] he will said the angel believe every word you say to him . . . an evil Spirit will try to crowd your mind . . . <but you must keep your mind always staid upon God that that [sic] no evil may come into your heart> Joseph then promised to do as he was told by the angel . . . when his Father went to him Joseph rehearsed to him all that he had and seen and heard.*

#### **Joseph Knight's Memories**

Joseph Knight was a beloved and faithful friend of Joseph Jr.'s from these years through his death. Sometime between 1833 and 1847, he recorded t Joseph Jr.'s visit from Angel Moroni on Sept 22, 1823, to Hill Cumorah:

From thence he went to the hill where he was informed the Record was and found no trouble for it appeared appears plain as tho he was acquainted with the place it was so plain in the vision that he had of the place. He went and found the place and opened it and found a plane Box. He oncovered it and found the book and took [it] out and laid it Down By his side and that he would Cover the place over again thinkinking there might be something else here. But he was told to take the Book and go right away. And after he had Covered the place he turned round to take the Book and it was not there and he was astonished that the Book was gone. He thot he would look in the place again and see if it had not got Back again. He had heard people tell of such things. And he opened the Box and Behold the Book was there he took hold of it to take it out again and Behold he could not stur the Book any more then he could the mountin. He exclaimed "why Cant I stur this Book?" and he was answerd, "you have not Done rite; you should have took the Book and a gone right away. You cant you cant have it now." Joseph says "when can I have it?" The answer was the 22nt Day of September next if you Bring the right person with you. Joseph says, "who is the right person?" The answer was "your oldest Brother" [continued page 5]

Joseph Knight alone remembered that Moroni told Joseph to return the next year with Alvin. But when Alvin died, Nov 19, 1823 (possibly 1824, see *Lucy's Book*, p350-351, note#39), so that became impossible. Joseph looked in his seer stone and realized he was to bring Emma Hales, which he did in 1827. As this and other details unique to this account alone, I do not know if Knight remembered it exactly right. The years appear to be telescoped. For more see: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1819&context=byusq>. From Lucy Mack Smith's original transcript:

#### **Sept 22, 1824-25**

Between *Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844-1845*, and Joseph Knight's "Recollection of Early Mormon History," we learn more details about each of the four years that Joseph visited with Angel Moroni on Hill Cumorah—including, why Joseph did not receive the plates each year. The accounts do not add up to all five Septembers, but they all share the same conclusion. In short, the angel taught Joseph Jr. several very hard and clear lessons about the need for complete and exact obedience. Moroni taught Joseph so profoundly, that the young prophet learned that to do the Lord's work requires a prophet to act exactly as commanded.

From: *Josephsmithpapers.org*, Lucy Mack Smith, History, 1844–1845, Page [12], bk. 3 through 4)

### Sept 24-25, 1823

When Joseph came in the evening he told all the <whole> family all that he had made known to his *father* in the field. we sat up up very late and listened attentively to all that he had to say to us but his mind had been so exercised that he became very much fatigued When *Alvin* saw this he said now brother let us go to bed and we will get up early in the morning and go to work so as to finish our days labor by an an hour before sunset & if *Mother* will get our suppers early we will then have a fine long evening to <and> all set down and hear you talk The next day they <we> worked with great ambition <\*> <by sunset were ready to be seated and give our atten undivide[d] to Josephs recitals. and this pro before he began to explain to us the instructions which he had received he told charged us <not> to not to mention what he told us out of the family as the world was so wicked that if they when they did come to a knowledge of these things they would try to take our lives and as soon as we obtained the plates our names would be cast out as evil by all people . . . From this time forth Joseph continued to receive instructions from time to time and every evening we gathered our children together And gave our our time up to the discussion of those things which he imparted <un> to us I think that <we> presented the most peculiar aspect of any family that ever lived upon the Earth all seated round in a circle *father Mother* sons and Daughters listening in breathless anxiety to the <religious> teachings of a boy 16 <19> yars of age who had never read the Bible through by course in his life for Joseph was less inclined to the study of books than any child we had but much more given to reflection and deep study We were convinced that God was about to bring to light something that we might stay our minds upon some thing that we could get a more definite idea of than anything which had been taught us heretofore and we rejoiced in it with exceeding great joy Uni the sweetest union and happiness pervaded our house no jar nor discord disturbed our peace and tranquility reigned in our midst In the course of our evening conversations Joseph would give us some of the most ammusing recitals which could be immagined he would de[s]cribe the ancient inhabitants [p. [1], bk. 4] . . .

### Sept 22, 1824

The angel informed him at one time that he might make an effort to obtain the plates <on> the <22<sup>nd</sup> of the> ensueing September and if <he visited the place where the plates were laid and> <thinking> he could keep every commmandment given him <supposed> that it would be possible for him to take them from their place and carry them home<)> but said the divine messenger you must take them into your hands and go straight to the house without delay not and not stopping <and put them in immediately and lock them up> Accordingly when the time arrived he went to the place appointed and removed the moss and grass from the surface of the rock and then pryed up the flat stone according to the directions which he had received he then discovered the plates laying on on 4 pillars in the inside of the box <\*> he put forth his hand <and> took them up <but> when he lifted them from their place the thought flashed across his mind that there might be something more in the box that might would be a benefit to him in a pecuniary point of view in the excitement of the moment he laid the record down in order to cover up the box least some one should come along and take away whatever else might be deposited there When he turned again to take up the record it was gone but where he knew not nor did he know by what means it was taken away he was much alarmed at this tha and <he and> kneeled down <&> asked the Lord why it was that the record was taken from him The angel appeared to him and told him that he had not done as he was commanded in that he laid down the record and in order to to secure some imaginary treasure that rema [p. [2], bk. 4]ined <x> <x after some further conversation Joseph> Joseph was then permitted to open th raise the stone again and there he beheld the plates the the same as before He reached forth his hand to take them but was hurled back <thrown (the angel gone—> to the ground— <\*> <when he recovered he went ered was the angel was gone and he arose and went to the house.> We were much disturbed by this as it showed to us more strikingly than anything which had previously come to our understanding. the insinuations & power of the adversary. And we doubled our diligence in prayer before God that Joseph might be more fully instructed and preserved from all the wiles and machinations of the Power of the Him who lieth in wait to deceive. [p. [3], bk. 4] . . .

### Alvin Smith

. . . On the 15 of Nov *Alvin* was taken very sick with biwith about 10 oclock in the day with the bilious cholick and came to <the> house in great distress and requested his *Father* to go for a p[h]ysician which he accordingly did but as the *Doctor* whom generally attended upon our family being absent he was compelled to

go farther than he expected however he found in the next village one Dr. Greenwood who when he came immediately administered to him although the patient objected much against it a heavy dose of Calomel this lodged in his stomach and all the power [p. [3], bk. 4] medicine which was afterwards prescribed by 4 skillful physicians could never <not> remove it on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day Doc [Dr. Mackentire \[Alexander McIntyre\]](#) the favorite of the family a man of Great skill and experience was brought and with him 4 others professors of Medicine but all their exertions were of no avail as [Alvin](#) declared to them and us For said <he> the calomel is still lodged in same place and you cannot move it consequently it must take my life. He then called [Hyrum \[Smith\]](#) to him and said [Hyrum](#) I must die and now I want to say a few things to you that you you must remember I have done all that I could do to make our dear Parents comfortable I now want you to go on and finish the House take <of> care them in their old age and do not let ever let them work hard any more. he then called [sophronia \[Smith\]](#) he said [Sophronia](#) You must be a good Girl and do all that lays in your power for mother [Father](#) & [Mother](#) never forsake them they have worked hard and they are now getting old be kind to them and remmember what they have done for us When in the later part of the 4 night he called for all the children and again exhorted them separately to the same effect as before but to Joseph I he said Joseph I am going to die now the distress which I suffer and the sensations that I have tell me my time is very short I want you to be a good boy & do everything that lays in your power to obtain the records be faithful in receiving instruction and keeping a every commandment that is given you Your brother [Alvin](#) is must now leave you but he remmember the example which he has set for you and set a good example for the children that are younger than you & always be kind to [Father](#) & [Mother](#) he then asked me to take his <up> little sister [Lucy \[Smith\]](#) up this child was the youngest of the Family and he was extremely fond of her which naturally attached her [p. [4], bk. 4] to him She could not then talk plain and always called her brother [Amby](#) I went to her and said [Lucy Amby](#) wa[n]ts to see you she started out of her sleep & screamed out Oh! [Amby Amby](#) We took her to him & <when> she sprang from my arms and caught him round the neck & cried out Oh My [Amby](#) a[nd] kissed him again and again [Lucy](#) said <he> you must be the best girl in the world and take care of [Mother](#) you cant have your [Amby](#) any more [Amby](#) is going away he must leave little [Lucy](#) he then Kissed her and Said take her away I think my breath offends her we took hold of the child but she clenched hold of him with such a desperate Grasp that it was was very difficult to disengage her hands as I turned he said [Father Mother](#) brothers sisters farewell I can now brathe out my life as calm as a clock and immediately closed his eyes in death just the [child](#) still cried to go back to [Alvin](#). One present said he [Alvin](#) is gone an angel has taken his spirit to Heaven when the babe heard this She renewed her cries and as I bent over his corpse she again threw her arms round it and kissed him repeatedly screaming as before— and untill the Body was taken from the House she continued constantly crying and showing such manifestation of affection & terror at the scene she presented before <her> as is seldom witnessed in a child and She would run out of the house and drag in a board and lay beside the corpse then take a white cloth and wrap herself in it and lay down on the board by his side. this harrowed up our feelings almost to distraction for he was a youth of such singular goodness of disposition and Moral character Kind and amiable maners <so much so> that lamentation and Mourning <filled> the whole neighborhood where we lived then it is not to be wondered at if <and of course> more than usual Grief filled the hearts of those from whose immediate [p. [5], bk. 4] circle he was taken those who felt as & saw the effects of His nobleness and generosity every hour of his existence It was the wish of the principle physician that he should be opened to ascertain the cause if possible of his disease and death when this was done they found the calomel lodged in <the> upper bowels & untouched by anything which he had taken to carry it off, as near in its natural State as it could be surrounded as it was with by the highest gangrene [Dr. Mcintire](#) & Dr. Robinson performed the operation the last named Dr. was 70 years old of age he Spoke long and earnestly to the younger physicians upon the danger of administering powerful Medicines without a thorough knowledge of <the practice of> physick here said he is one of the loveliest youths that ever trod the streets of [Palmira](#) destroyed Murdered as it were by the hand him at whose hand relief was expected. cast off from the face of Earth by a careless quack who even dared to trifle with the life of a fellow mortal. When the time for interment arrived the inhabitants of the surrounding country gathered to gather and during the funeral obsequies they the gave the most affectionate manifestations of thier sympathy but there was one that felt our grief more deeply than the rest a lovel[y] young woman who was engaged to him be married to my [son](#) shortly after the time in which he died the disconsolate girl was rendered most desolate by his unexpected Death and as long as we knew her she never recovered her wonted animation and Good spirits

The circumstances of this Death aroused the neighborhood to the subject of religion

*Now will the reader indulge me in a few reflections Thus was our happiness blasted in a moment when we least expected the blow it came upon us the pointed shaft entered our very hearts core and diffused its deadly effect throughout our veins we were for a time almost swallowed up in grief so much so that it seemed impossible for us to interest ourselves at all about the concerns of life the feeling of every heart was to make speedy preparation to follow him who had been too much the Idol of our heart<s> and then if it pleased God to take us also we would receive the call as a favor at his hands from whom it came*

*Alvin had ever manifested a greater zeal and anxiety if it were possible than any of the rest with regard to the plates record which had been shown to Joseph and he always showed the most intense interest concerning the matter With this before our minds we could not endure to hear or say one word upon that subject for the moment that Joseph spoke of the record it would immediately bring Alvin to their <our> minds with all his kindness his affection his zeal and piety and when we looked to his place and realized that he was gone from it to return no more in this life we wept <all> wept with one accord our irretrievable loss and it seemed as though we could not be comforted because he was not about About this time there was a great revival in religion and the whole neighborhood was very much aroused to the subject and we among the rest flocked to the meeting house to see if there was a word of comfort for us that might relieve our overcharged feelings but as there was <at this time> a man then laboring in that place to effect a union of all the churches that all denominations might be agreed to worship God with one mind and one heart This I thought looked right and tried to persuade My Husband to join with them as I wished to do so myself and it was the inclination of them all except Joseph he refused from the first to attend the meeting [p. [7], bk. 4] with us The He would say Mother I do not wish to prevent you from going to meeting or joining any church you like or any of the Family who desire the like only do not ask me to go <do so> for I do not wish to go But I will take my Bible and go out into the woods and learn more in two hours than you could if you were to go to meeting two years . . .*

### **Joseph Knight's Memories [continued from page 2]**

But before September came his oldest brother died then he was disappointed and did not know what to do but when the 22nd day of September came he went to the place and the personage appeared and told him he could not have it now but the 22nd day of September next he might have the book if he brought with him the right person Joseph says who is the right person the answer was you will know then he looked in his glass and found it was Emma Hale Daughter of old Mr Hail of Pennsylvania a girl that he had seen before for he had been down there before with me

Joseph then went to Mr Stowels where he had lived sometime before but Mr Stowel could not pay him money for his work very well and he came to me perhaps in November and worked for me until about the time that he was married which I think was in February 8 and I paid him the money and I furnished him with a horse and cutter to go and see his girl down to Mr Hails and soon after this he was married and Mr Stowel moved him and his wife to his father's in Palmyra Ontario county

Nothing material took place until toward the forepart of September. I went to Rochester on Business and returned by Palmyra to be there about the 22nd of September. I was there several Days. I will say there [was] a man near by the name Samuel Lawrence. He was a Seer and he had been to the hill and knew about the things in the hill and he was trying to obtain them. He [Joseph Smith] had talked with me and told me the Conversation he had with the personage which told him if he would do right according to the will of God he might obtain [the plates] the 22nd day of September Next and if not he never would have them Now Joseph was somewhat afraid of him [Samuel Lawrence] that he might be a trouble to him he therefore sent his father up to Sams as he called him near night to see if there was any signs of his going away that night he told his father to stay till near Dark and if he saw any signs of his going you tell him if I find him there I will thrash the stumps with him. So the old man came a way and saw no thing like it. This is to show the troubles he had from time to time to obtain the plates"

(Dean Jessee, *BYU Studies* vol 17, "Joseph Knight's Recollections of Early Mormon History," 1-1-1977; <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1819&context=byusq>; accessed 1-20-84)