

1. Defining Moses in God's "Similitude" (Moses 1; Abraham 3)

The account of God's meeting with Moses face to face contains a mystery of godliness layered with profound truth. The threefold mention of God's acknowledging Moses as "in the similitude" of his Only Begotten (Moses 1:6, 13, 16) informs us that Moses had attained the highest spiritual category possible for any soul to reach in this mortal world. His backstory up to that point, in other words, must have been one of exceeding valor in order for him to now come into God's presence while still living on this earth in the flesh.

In fact, the only ones spoken of in the scriptures as being in the "image" (Hebrew *tzelem*), "likeness" (*demut*), or "similitude" (*demut*) of God in the flesh are Adam and Eve (Genesis 1:26–27; 5:1), Moses (Moses 1:6), and the brother of Jared (Ether 3:15). They nevertheless a form part of a spiritual category of souls who have other godlike characteristics. Of them, for example, the scriptures say that they are persons who see God "face to face." These include Enoch (Moses 7:4), the brother of Jared (Ether 3:13; Doctrine & Covenants 17:1), Abraham (Abraham 3:11), Jacob (Genesis 32:30), Moses (Exodus 33:11), and Moroni (Ether 12:39). They are also persons whom God shows the end of the world from the beginning—Enoch (Moses 7:4, 21, 41), the brother of Jared (Ether 3:25), Ether (Ether 13:1–13), Moses (Moses 1:27–29), Isaiah (Ascension of Isaiah), John (Revelation 1–22), Nephi (1 Nephi 11–14), and Moroni (Mormon 8:35). Additionally, they are persons who minister in the priesthood after the holy order of God—Enoch (Doctrine & Covenants 76:57), Melchizedek (Alma 13:14–18), Alma (Alma 4:2), and the 144,000 end-time servants of God (Doctrine & Covenants 77:11). Many of these persons are translated to seraph or angelic status—Enoch and his people (Hebrews 11:5; Moses 7:21), John (Doctrine & Covenants 7:6), Nephi the son of Helaman (Helaman 10:16), and Jesus' three Nephite disciples (3 Nephi 28:12–15). They are also able to exercise power over the elements—Enoch (Moses 7:13), Moses (Exodus 14:21–27; Numbers 20:11; Moses 1:25), and Nephi the son of Helaman (Helaman 10:7–9). In a word, they match those who attain what Paul calls "the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

Although man was created in God's image "in the beginning" (Mosiah 7:27)—that is, as spirit children of heavenly parents—nowhere do the scripture say this of *mortal* men except in the case of those mentioned. The mortal world, in other words, is the place God has provided where they may grow into God's image and likeness in the flesh as they keep his commandments that are the terms of his covenants with them.

God showed Abraham a hierarchy of spiritual categories of humanity when he said to him, "If two things exist, and there be one above the other, there shall be greater things above them; therefore Kolob is the greatest of all the Kokaubeam that thou hast seen, because it is nearest unto me. . . . These two facts do exist, that there are two spirits, one being more intelligent than the other; there shall be another more intelligent than they; I am the Lord thy God, I am more intelligent than they all" (Abraham 3:16–19). As one of the "noble and great ones" among God's children, God made Abraham and others like him humanity's "rulers." Called "souls"—in contrast to other "spirits" and "intelligences" (Abraham 3:22–23)—they attained a higher spiritual category than others because of their exceeding faith and good works: "Being called and

prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil; therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceedingly great faith, are called with a holy calling” (Alma 13:3).

If everyone in this earth’s mortal sphere, therefore, was already made in God’s image and likeness, why would Paul bid the saints “to be conformed to the image of his Son” in order that he might be “the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29)? Why would he exhort them to “put on the new [man] . . . after the image of him who created him” (Colossians 3:10)? And if the Son, after having atoned for humanity’s transgressions, is now “in the express image” of the Father and sits “on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:1–5; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:14–15), then we, if we would become “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Messiah” (Roman 8:17), have untold progress yet to make in our ascent toward divinity.