

Podcast Episode 1: Gethsemane

QUESTION: What is the significance of what Christ went through in the Garden of Gethsemane? What follows is Denver's eyewitness description, not only of what happened in the Garden of Gethsemane, but also what those events mean to you and me.

DENVER: We know from Isaiah that by His stripes we are healed. God laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He bore our griefs, carried our sorrows, and the chastisement we earned was put upon Him.

Traditionally, Christians have understood that to have been accomplished in the Roman beating, scourging, and crucifixion of Christ. However, many men suffered similarly at the hands of Rome. Christ suffered to remove our sins and repair the fall of mankind. Isaiah's description suggests that this was cosmic and that Christ took the entire burden of mankind's sins upon Himself. Only Luke gives a glimpse into Christ's suffering in Gethsemane. Luke describes it in these words:

"And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." (Luke 22:44).

In an 1829 revelation, Christ explained the price He paid for our salvation. His reflection on that suffering mentions only what happened to Him in Gethsemane, the place where Luke recorded He sweat great drops of blood. Let me read you what Jesus Christ explained of that event in 1829.

"Therefore I command you to repent—repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore—how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit—and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink— Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men. Wherefore, I command you again to repent, lest I humble you with my almighty power; and that you confess your sins, lest you suffer these punishments of which I have spoken." (Doctrine and Covenants 19:15-20)

Christ pleads with us in this revelation to repent of our sins so we do not experience anything like the dreadful price He paid for us. We should let that message penetrate our hearts: God does not want us punished. God wants to relieve us from the bitterness of our sins.

In His kindness and mercy, Christ revealed yet more of His suffering in His atoning sacrifice in February of 2005 and December of 2007. Again, He provided us with a description of what happened in Gethsemane.

This is the account:

“I knew a man in Christ about four years ago who, being overshadowed by the Spirit on the 26th of February, 2005, had the Lord appear to him again. And the Lord spoke to him face to face in plain humility, as one man speaks to another, calling him by name. As they spoke the Lord put forth His hand and touched the eyes of the man and said, Look! The man had opened before him view of the Lord kneeling in prayer. It was in a dark place. The air was heavy and overcast with sorrow. The man beheld the Lord praying in Gethsemane on the night of His betrayal and before His crucifixion.

All the Lord had previously done in His mortal ministry by healing the sick, raising the dead, giving sight to the blind, restoring hearing to the deaf, curing the leper and ministering relief to others as He taught was but a prelude to what the Lord was now to do on this dark, oppressive night.

As the Lord knelt in prayer, His vicarious suffering began. He was overcome by pain and anguish. He felt within Him, not just the pains of sin, but also the illnesses men suffer as a result of the Fall and their foolish and evil choices. The suffering was long and the challenge difficult. The Lord suffered the afflictions. He was healed from the sickness. He overcame the pains, and patiently bore the infirmities until, finally, He returned to peace of mind and strength of body. It took an act of will and hope for Him to overcome the affliction which had been poured upon Him. He overcame the separation caused by these afflictions and reconciled with His Father. He was at peace with all mankind.

He thought His sufferings were over, but to His astonishment another wave overcame Him. This one was much greater than the first. The Lord, who had been kneeling, fell forward onto His hands at the impact of the pain that was part of a greater, second wave.

This second wave was so much greater than the first that it seemed to entirely overcome the Lord. The Lord was now stricken with physical injuries as well as spiritual affliction. As He suffered anew, His flesh was torn which He healed using the power of the charity within Him. The Lord had such life within Him, such power and virtue within Him, that although He suffered in His flesh, these injuries healed and His flesh restored. His suffering was both body and spirit, and there was anguish of thought, feeling and soul.

The Lord overcame this second wave of suffering, and again found peace of mind and strength of body; and His heart filled with love despite what He had suffered.

Indeed, it was charity or love that allowed Him to overcome. He was at peace with His Father, and with all mankind, but it required another, still greater act of will and charity than the first for Him to do so.

Again, the Lord thought His suffering was over. He stayed on His hands and knees for a moment to collect Himself when another wave of torment burst upon Him. This wave struck Him with such force He fell forward upon His face. He was afflicted by this greater wave. He was then healed only to then be afflicted again as the waves of torment overflowed. Wave after wave poured out upon Him, with only moments between them. The Lord's suffering progressed from a lesser to a greater portion of affliction; for as one would be overcome by Him, the next, greater affliction would then be poured out. Each wave of suffering was only preparation for the next, greater wave. The pains of mortality, disease, injury and infirmity, together with the sufferings of sin, transgressions, guilt of mind, and unease of soul, the horrors of recognition of the evils men had inflicted upon others, were all poured out upon Him, with confusion and perplexity multiplied upon Him.

He longed for it to be over, and thought it would end long before it finally ended. With each wave He thought it would be the last but then another came upon Him, and then yet another.

The one beholding this scene was pained by what he saw, and begged for the vision of the Lord's suffering to end. He could not bear to see his Lord suffering in this manner. The petition was denied and the vision did not end, for the Lord required him to witness it.

The man saw that the Lord pleaded again with the Father that "this cup may pass" from Him. But the Lord was determined to suffer the Father's will and not His own. Therefore, a final wave came upon Him with such violence as to cut Him at every pore. It seemed for a moment that He was torn apart, and that blood came out of every pore. The Lord writhed in pain upon the ground as this great final torment was poured upon Him.

All virtue was taken from Him. All the great life force in Him was stricken and afflicted. All the light turned to darkness. He was humbled, drained and left with nothing. It is not possible for a man to bear such pains and live, but with nothing more than will, hope in His Father, and charity towards all men, He emerged from the final wave of torment, knowing He had suffered all this for His Father and His brethren. By His hope and great charity, trusting in the Father, the Lord returned from this dark abyss and found grace again, His heart being filled with love toward the Father and all men.

These great burdens were born by the Lord not only on behalf of mankind, but also as a necessary prelude to His death upon a Roman cross. Had He not been so physically weakened by these sufferings and drained of power from within, the

scourging and crucifixion He suffered at the hands of men could not have taken His life.

It was many hours after this vision closed before the one who witnessed this suffering could compose himself again. He wept because of the vision shown him, and he wondered at the Lord's great suffering for mankind.

The witness reflected for many days upon this scene of the Lord's great suffering. He read many times the account of the Lord's agony given to Joseph Smith, which reads, *"Therefore I command you to repent - repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore - how sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not. For behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer if they would repent; But if they would not repent they must suffer even as I; Which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit - and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink - Nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men."* [D&C 9].

He pondered and asked: Why were there waves of torment? Why did they increase in difficulty? How were they organized as they seemed to fit a pattern?

After long inquiring into these things which he had seen, the Lord, who is patient and merciful and willing to instruct those who call on Him, again appeared to the man on the 20th of December, 2007. He made known unto him that the waves of torment suffered by the Lord came in pairs which mirrored each other. The first of each wave poured upon the Lord those feelings, regrets, recriminations and pains felt by those who injured their fellow man. Then followed a second wave, which mirrored the first, but imposed the pains suffered by the victims of the acts committed by those in the first wave. Instead of the pains of those who inflict hurt or harm, it was now the anger, bitterness and resentments felt by those who suffered these wrongs.

From each wave of suffering, whether as the one afflicting or as the victim of those wrongs, the Lord would overcome the evil feelings associated with these wrongs, and find His heart again filled with peace. This was why, in the vision of the suffering of the Lord, it was in the second waves that there appeared oftentimes to be injuries to His body.

The greater difficulty in these paired waves of torment was always overcoming the suffering of the victim. With these waves the Lord learned to overcome the victims' resentments, to forgive, and to heal both body and spirit. This was more difficult than overcoming the struggles arising from the one who committed the evil. This is because the one doing evil knows he has done wrong and feels a natural regret when he sees himself aright. The victim, however, always feels it is their right to hold

resentment, to judge their persecutor, and to withhold peace and love from their fellow man. The Lord was required to overcome both so that He could succor both.

In the pairing of the waves, the first torment was of the mind and spirit, and the second was torment of mind, spirit and body.

The Lord experienced all the horror and regret wicked men feel for their crimes when they finally see the truth. He experienced the suffering of their victims whose righteous anger and natural resentment and disappointment must also be shed, and forgiveness given, in order for them to find peace. He overcame them all. He descended below them all. He comprehends it all. And He knows how to bring peace to them all. He knows how to love others whether they are the one who has given offense or the one who is a victim of the offense.

In the final wave, the most brutal, most evil, most heinous sins men inflict upon one another were felt by Him as a victim of the worst men can do. He knew how it felt to wrongly suffer death. He knew what it was like to be a mother holding a child in her arms as they are both killed by those who delighted in their suffering. He knew how it was for ambitious men to rid themselves of a rival by conspiracy and murder. He knew what it was to have virtue robbed from the innocent. He knew betrayal, treachery, and abuse in all its worst degrading horror. There was no cruelty, no offense, no evil that mankind has suffered or will suffer that was not put upon Him.

He knew what it is like for men to satisfy their ambition by clothing their hypocrisy in religious garb. He also felt what it was like to be the victim of religious oppression by those who pretend to practice virtue while oppressing others.

He knew the hearts of those who would kill Him. Before confronting their condemnation of Him in the flesh, He suffered their torment of mind when they recognized He was the Lord, and then found peace for what they would do by rejecting Him. In this extremity there was madness itself as He mirrored the evil which would destroy Him, and learned how to come to peace with the Father after killing the Son of God, and to love all those involved without restraint and without pretense even before they did these terrible deeds. His suffering, therefore, encompassed all that has happened, all that did happen, and all that would happen in the future.

As a result of what the Lord suffered, there is no condition physical, spiritual or mental that He does not fully understand. He knows how to teach, comfort, succor and direct any who will come to Him seeking forgiveness and peace. This is why the prophet wrote, *"by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities."* [Isa 53] And again, *"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."* [Isa 53]

He obtained this knowledge by the things he suffered. He suffered that we might avoid sin by being obedient to His commandments. None of us need harm another, if we will follow Him. He knows fully the consequences of sin. He teaches His followers to avoid sin. The prophet Alma taught and understood our Lord's suffering as he wrote,

"And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people. And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities." (Alma 4).

He can bring peace to any soul. He can help those who will come to Him love their fellow man. He alone is the Perfect Teacher because He alone has the knowledge each of us lack to return to being whole and at peace with God the Father of us all after our transgression of His will. Christ is wise to what is required for each man's salvation.

As the Lord made these terrible things known to the man he cried out, Hosanna to the Lamb of God! He has trodden the winepress alone! Glory, honor and mercy be upon the Chosen One forever and ever! I will submit unto anything you see fit to require of me! I will bend my knee in obedience to you! Let thy will, not mine be done! For worthy is the Lamb!" Then, thinking upon how trifling his difficulties and disappointments had been in comparison with the suffering he saw imposed upon his Lord, the man added, Surely goodness and mercy have been mine all the days of my life!

And the Lord responded, And you shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Then the man wept." (Snuffer, Denver C. (2009). *Come Let Us Adore Him.*)

From the foregoing accounts, Christ has finally made it clear to us that His death on the cross was not where He paid the price for our sins. Many have died in that same way and suffered that same dreadful agony. But Christ alone paid for mankind's sins because He alone was able to take on the terrible burden of our terrible failures. He conquered sin.

This is the one about whom the scriptures are speaking. This is the lord who is asking you to come to Him. He is not aloof, and He is not distant. If He'll speak to someone in a military barracks, He'll speak to you--every one of you. And what He has to say to you is far more important than anything I have to say. But I can bear testimony of Him. And I can assure you that He will not leave your petitions unanswered. And I can also assure you that today is once again a day of salvation and He has set His hand again. No matter how unlikely it may

appear, no matter how much reason there is to be skeptical, no matter how many more signs you think may need to be fulfilled, I am telling you He has set His hand again. The heavens are open for business, and the question is whether you're interested in becoming a customer or not.

Christ suffered for our sins in Gethsemane. Christ died on the cross while testifying He was the promised Messiah. Christ rose from the dead to break the bonds of death. Since He was entitled to live forever, His death was an infinite price to pay. Therefore the demands of justice have all been met--and that infinitely. We can benefit from that by accepting the ransom He has paid, repenting, and being baptized.

If you've not been baptized, or if you would like to be re-baptized there are people who have authority to do so, who will do so without charge, without requesting or expecting a donation. Indeed they'd refuse it if you offered it.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's *Christian Reformation Series*, Talk #3, given in Atlanta, Georgia on November 16, 2017; and
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Lecture Series*, Talk #7, entitled "Christ, Prototype of the Saved Man," given in Ephraim, Utah on June 28, 2014.

Podcast Episode 2: Fellowship Diversity

QUESTION: As Christian fellowships are formed, they all seem to be very different. In what ways should they be similar, and in what ways is it OK for them to be diverse?

DENVER: Religion, when it exists, always exists in its true form as a community of believers. Community is required. If we don't have a community then we cannot be willing to mourn for those that mourn. We cannot comfort those that stand in need of comfort. We cannot stand as a witness to one another of God at all times and in all places. We cannot bear one another's burdens that they may be light, as is required by the gospel and by the covenant of baptism. None of this can be done without fellowship.

However, we do not need a new church. The only thing we need is a community of fellowship.

We need to renew a community-- not an organization, but a fellowship. Not a hierarchy, but a group of equals. The community needs to be renewed.

This is in Doctrine and Covenants, section 19: *"I command you that you shall preach naught but repentance,"* [D&C 19:21] and then 29: *"And thou shalt declare glad tidings, yea publish it upon the mountains, and upon every high place, and among every people that thou shalt be permitted to see. And thou shalt do it with all humility, trusting in me, reviling not against revilers. And of the tenants thou shalt not talk, but thou shalt declare repentance and faith on the Savior, and remission of sins by baptism, and by fire, yea, even the Holy Ghost"* [D&C 19:29-31].

That's the gospel. That's what needs to be preached. That's what needs to follow.

But there are tenets. There are tenets to the faith. And those we are commanded also to search into, but not declare as doctrine necessarily. The things about which we need to have unity and absolute agreement is the Doctrine of Christ.

It's necessary to allow creative solutions to be independently functioning among different groups. There was not a single "new testament church." There wasn't, okay? There were "church-es." Each of the twelve, and Paul, established different churches with markedly different emphases. Petrine churches emphasized authority and order. Johanian churches emphasized love. Pauline churches emphasized both evangelical fervor and gentile participation. Jacobian churches emphasized charity. They were all adapted to teach of Christ. There wasn't a central hierarchical command and control. In fact, there is a book and the title of the book really says it all-- it's *The Churches the Apostles Left Behind*.

The idea of a universal catholic church was imposed some centuries later, and it was adopted as the title “catholic” or “universal” in order to try and achieve a missing ingredient of diversity.

The fellowships ought to have diversity. We should not think it as impossible to have godliness with diversity. Nor should we assume that a one-size-fits-all solution is going to work among different groups. There are some groups in which there are a lot of children and the emphasis needs to be directed towards the needs of the children. There are some groups that are primarily childless adults. They need to emphasize what suits them. Every one of them needs to adapt to whatever the local conditions are and to have the freedom to do that, as was once the case with the “church-es”. The beginning of the restoration they were called “church-es,” plural. They were not called “a church.” They were societies of believers in different locations, and they governed themselves differently and locally.

We cannot bear one another’s burdens without fellowshipping with one another. And bearing one another’s burdens presumes that you know what the burdens are that someone else carries. Which means that I have been patient enough, I have been attentive enough, I have been friendly enough, and I have been trusted enough that I can find out what the burden is that they bear.

We are supposed to help one another get through this ordeal of mortality. And it is an ordeal. It is not easy. Even the people that you think that you envy-- if you were living inside their world you would find out that they have burdens they are carrying as well.

Fellowshipping allows us to bear one another’s burdens. And bearing one another’s burdens implies a whole universe of connectivity, trust, confidence, friendship and affection between one another before you get to the point that you even know what their burdens are. But that is supposed to be a blessing, and part of what it means to worship together. Worshipping together by assisting one another allows all of us to feel a great part of what it is that Christ is and does. It allows us to know who we worship, and it allows us to know how to worship Him, and it allows us to know what makes us one with one another.

We should learn how to be loving and equal with one another. The idea of equality is resisted by a lot of skeptics who accuse me of wanting authority and control, when I despise control, but I absolutely welcome fellowship, equality and worship with one another.

This isn’t easy. But it is godly to pursue.

I heard someone comment about how all these fellowships that are gathered here are remarkably diverse. That’s because people are diverse. God went to the trouble-- He went to the trouble of making every single tree here absolutely unique. There isn’t one that is like the other. There isn’t a snowflake that is like another. I would venture to say that when we finally get the mechanism with which to measure and recognize, we will realize there isn’t an atom that is the same.

We are all humans. There is not one of you that is the same. Should a fellowship be put together with a cookie-cutter that says this is what you must do and this is what you must not do, when in fact, the needs are so diverse from one to another? I mean, there ought to be diversity. There ought to be uniqueness. There ought to be recognition of what each group has in terms of contributions, and what each group has in terms of needs. And it ought to be flexible enough to do that.

That is not a bad thing. That is a normal thing. Try to envision yourselves as a temporary family-- a temporary gathering together of members of a family. If you don't have some wonky aunts, and some curious uncles (in fact, maybe an uncle or two that you want to keep the kids away from), I mean every family has some strange folks in it. Consider the fellowships nothing more than an extension of that, and try and love one another.

The fact is that there are going to be those that through their behavior in fellowships, are going to disqualify themselves from being able to be gathered, because they are just not the kind of people that can live in peace one with another. That also is a good thing.

And then there are others who come to the fellowships, and their primary interest is in what they can take, what they can get. And there are others who come with the only idea in their heart being what can I give, how can I serve. And even they may not be able to give or serve much, that's what's in their heart. And you can all recognize that. You can all see that in people. Those are the kinds of people from which the Lord is going to gather and build Zion.

No one in Zion is going to be a threat to someone else. Can't be. It defeats the purpose of it all. To be able to live in peace with one another means that you literally are harmless to one another. And the diversity in which you find yourselves, and the ability to bump the corners off one another in fellowships, those are healthy, good, normal things. And hopefully they run their course, and eventually result in people becoming smoother and becoming easier with one another.

There's some people I admire immensely. And they're tough personalities. And they're difficult to deal with. And there are other people who are hard to deal with because they are too easy going, and they really need to speak up more. They have more to add, but they won't do it until you coax it patiently out of them. And if you don't figure out that you've got to coax it patiently out of them, you are missing the treasure that this person represents. In your fellowships, think of one another as members of a family, and then work out your issues-- because that's how you grow into being a community.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- A regional conference Q&A session held at Big Cottonwood Canyon, UT on September 20, 2015;

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #10, entitled "Preserving the Restoration," given in Mesa, AZ on September 9, 2014; and
- A Q&A session entitled "A Visit with Denver Snuffer" held on May 13, 2015.

Podcast Episode 3: Who is Christ?

QUESTION: As one who knows Christ, how would you describe Him?

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DENVER: If I can help you envision our Lord a little more, let me describe Him in terms of His characteristics. Our Lord was, and is, affable, but He is not gregarious. He was approachable, and He is approachable, and He is not aloof. He is patient. He is willing to guide and He is willing to teach. He is intelligent but He is not overbearing. He is humble in His demeanor, even though the power that He possessed and possesses is undeniable. He is therefore, both a Lamb and a Lion.

Jesus Christ came into the world unexpected and unannounced by men, unanticipated by men, but fully expected by the heavens themselves. There were signs in the heavens, but men were oblivious, largely, and when the shepherds keeping watch over the flocks by nights were interrupted, it was not by an earthly herold, it was by those from beyond the veil. The Savior crept into the world with heaven taking notice, but precious few paying attention to what it what that was afoot in His day.

It's so easy to overlook Him in the cares of this world. I want to assure you that He is real. He exists. He was a man every bit a man as any of us. He had flesh, He had blood, He dwelt among us. Don't doubt that. Trust in Him. Believe in Him. Have confidence in His existence.

He is quick to forgive sin.
He allows all to come unto him.
And He is no respecter of persons.

Because He is quick to forgive sins, it really doesn't matter if you are not good enough, because one of the first orders of business when you come into His presence, is He forgives you. He cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance, but He has the capacity and the ability to forgive sin. Therefore, although your sins may be as scarlet, He can, He will, and He does make you white as snow, no longer accountable. Therefore you needn't fear. But you can approach boldly our Lord.

But He is the prototype, or standard of salvation-- or in other words, He is a saved being. And if He were anything different from what He is, He would not be saved for His salvation depends on His being precisely what He is, and nothing else.

As a consequence of that, to speak of Christ is necessarily to speak of salvation. To understand Christ is to understand salvation. He went from "grace to grace," until He was called the Son of God, before this world, and before He entered into the flesh here, through a long enough period of development that He had sufficient grace to be called the Son of God. And this is the prototype of the saved man. This is what you must be, or else not be saved.

Our Lord, and we're talking about Him in the beginning before the world was, "*received not the fulness at first, but received grace for grace*" [D&C 93:12]. And we think "grace for grace" consists of "I'm going to now obey a principle, and as a result of obeying that principle, I will receive the benefit of the grace that flows from doing so." And that is true enough-- that is a true enough principle. But it is also truer and more accurate to say, in connection with the long preparation that preceded the call of Christ to be the Son of God, that grace to grace is also something that involves the upward scale of a ladder, as Joseph alludes to it.

"He was called the Son of God, because He received not of the fullness at first" [D&C 93:14]. He was "called" to be the Son of God because that wasn't His status before. Therefore He had to be "called" to be the Son of God. And that was true because He "received not of the fullness at first."

Long before the Lord assumed the role and the responsibility of descending here and being the Redeemer of this world, He qualified by grace, doing things that proved, while He was behind the veil, as you presently find yourselves situated, that demonstrated graciousness and faith by obedience to the commandments of God, even though it would a great while yet before He, and now you, would rise up to that level. Still, He lived His life with such grace that He qualified to receive more, and to develop, and to move up.

"He" (Christ) "was in the world and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not" [John 1:10]. And why did the world not know Him? The world did not know Him because the same reason why people would not know a messenger if one were sent today. Because our Lord was so very ordinary. For all the world He was just another itinerant preacher. There had been so many pretenders in the days before them. The Maccabean rebellion-- the family of David had fallen into great disrepute by the time the Lord arrived. When the census was taken and everyone had to go to their own city and he went to the city of David to be enumerated, there was no room for them in the inn. It was in His day as it is in ours.

"The Lord omnipotent who reigns, who was and is from all eternity shall come down from heaven among the children of men and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay" [Mosiah 3:5]. Father is a tabernacle of spirit and glory; the Son descended to be among us in a tabernacle of clay.

How was the Lord able to accomplish all that He did? Abraham 3:19-- the Lord tells you. He says *"I am the Lord thy God, I am more intelligent than they all."* Why is the Lord able to say that He is "more intelligent than they all?" Because our Lord went from "grace to grace" to the point in which He understood all things, because He had been through all things. He had descended below all things, and He had risen above all things. Therefore, He comprehends all things. He's more intelligent than us all because He is more experienced than us all. He has arrived at a state in which He is worthy, holy, sanctified. Having been left to choose between good and evil, He has chosen good.

The Father declares what is true, and the Son does it. And thus the Son became the Word of God, because He did what the Father bid Him do. Would you be a son or daughter of God? Do what He bids you do! This is how the Son worshipped. This is what you must do if you will worship Him also.

He can cleanse any of you, every whit. That He has such power as that so that he can take what is broken and mend it and he can take what is unclean, even scarlet in color, and make it white as snow, by His word, which is the word of the Father, because the two of them are One. He lifts, He raises, He elevates. He endows you. He blesses your lives. He not only created this world, He also suffered to save it. He came beneath all things. He came as someone that was considered renegade, an outsider-- someone that was easy to dismiss, someone that was easy to look at and say "for that, I'm having none of it." You rely on Him. But just remember, when He speaks, this is how He came! He's not going to do it differently. He's not going to make it easy for you.

"He is despised and rejected of men" [Isaiah 53:3], and that will be true-- that will be true of whomever. They will be despised and rejected of men. He was a *"man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"* [Isaiah 53:3]. It's necessary for Him to be so, so that He might know how to understand us. He grieved because of the things He knew He had to offer and none would receive it. It was necessary for him to experience sorrow and be acquainted with grief. *"We hid as it were our faces from Him"* [Isaiah 53:3], that is we turned from Him. We would not give heed to what it was He offered. *"He was despised, we esteemed Him not"* [Isaiah 53:3]. The only person who has ever lived who deserved to have respect given to Him and we esteemed Him not.

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" [Isaiah 53:4]. See, smitten of God-- smitten of God! He was cast out of the synagogue. They were looking to stone Him! I mean, why would you expect that God would honor a man who had been cast out of the synagogue? "Smitten of God, afflicted." *"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; with his stripes we are healed"* [Isaiah 53:4].

You know, don't think you are going to follow that Master and then be spared. He's going to let you understand what it means to follow Him. And that understanding is going to come by the experiences that help you relate to and understand our Lord in a way that you don't understand Him at present. If you're comfortable, He will make you uncomfortable. If you're certain, He will make you uncertain. If you think you've got it all figured out, He will offer up a contradiction, and then He'll leave you to struggle with it. And then when you can bear the contradiction no more, and in the agony and anguish of your uncertainty, He'll delay the answer a little further still, until your heart is finally soft enough to come to Him in meekness. And then He'll speak to you the words that you need to hear-- sometimes only just in time.

He gains the knowledge by which redemption comes through the things that He suffers. Because in suffering for sin, He overcomes and finds the path back from sin. So far as He is

cast out, that is how far He knows the path back to return. There is no burden you bear that He does not know how to solve. There is no dilemma that you confront that He has not already found the way to resolve and come back to peace with God. He did this stuff precisely so that whatever it is that is infirm in you, He can blot it out. Whatever it is that you need to have succor to remedy, He has the knowledge required to do that. He is not experimenting when He deals with us. He knows what He is doing. He has descended below it all in order to acquire the capacity to lift it all. And the things that He intends to lift back include all of you.

He intends to save everything, and by saving everything, allow it to continue on in its course. Those who will receive less will continue on in a lesser course. Those who will receive more will continue on in a greater course. But all will continue on, freely using what God freely gives to both the righteous and the wicked. He makes the sun to shine on the righteous and the wicked. He makes the rain to fall on both the righteous and the wicked. And he does so while merely asking you to repent and turn to Him.

Christ is in all things. Everything that you're acquainted with in this creation is sustained by the Light of Christ. He occupies, He brings the light into-- He is more intelligent than it all and He keeps its organization together by the light that emanates from Him. This is why it is possible for redemption to come through Him. Because when He descended below it all, including death, He has the power then to bring it all with Him back into life.

He is the fulcrum. He is the one which must permeate all things in order for Him to be able to lay hold upon all things, and in order, therefore, to bring you back from the grave. Which means, at this very moment, you are in contact with Him, through His spirit. He is giving you the life which you are presently living. He is not a distant God. He is an immediate, and an intimate God. You say He knows your thoughts, and that is true enough, because He is giving you the ability and the freedom to entertain the thoughts. Therefore, He knows how to judge you, because everything that you have done, you have done using the power and the light He lends to you.

"I say unto you, if ye should serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants" [Mosiah 2:21]. Because the energy being used at present to power this life that you're living is borrowed from Him. It is His light. It is His light, it is His truth, it is His intelligence. He is sustaining you from moment to moment. So this mortal frame that you are walking about it temporarily, belongs to Him. And ultimately He is going to take it back and reduce it back to dust, and reform it into something else and do something else with it. And someday He will resurrect you, but when He does that, that's Him also. Because it will be a long time before you attain to the resurrection of the dead.

He does not demand obedience. He offers you, if you will obey, "grace for grace." That you, too, might receive more of Him in you, He continuously offers you more. But it does you no good at all if you will not hearken to it because it is in the hearkening that you will meet God. You will find redemption. You will hear His voice and you will become a holy vessel because His word will be animated in you. And you will have no doubts about your

salvation because you will hear Him declare it in His own voice and you will know that He's no respecter of persons. And you'll know that you, like any other person, can come unto Him and look to Him, and Him alone, for your salvation and not be dependent upon any other person or system.

Christ is the redemption of all. He's the keeper of the gate. He's the one who is mighty to save. He can tell you what He thinks you need to know, as He has told me what I need to know. Christ is, in fact, holy. And I am deeply aware of the fact that I am not. I can't redeem any of you. But He can. I can testify of Him. I am nothing. I am keenly aware of my own limitations, but I am keenly aware of our Lord.

When I have had discussions with Him, they have invariably been parsing through the scriptures, explaining things. When I have inquired and gotten answers, it has been because of things that are in the scriptures that I do not understand. He's not aloof and He's not distant. If He'll speak to someone in a military barracks, He'll speak to you. Every one of you. And what He has to say to you is far more important than anything that I can say. But I can bear testimony of Him and I can assure you that He will not leave your petitions unanswered. And I can also assure you that today is once again a day of salvation. And He has set His hand again. But I bear testimony to you, I know what I'm talking about. Like Paul I can declare, *"He whom ye ignorantly serve declare I unto you"* [Acts 17:3]. Because He who is more intelligent than them all, has declared to me what the truth of these things is.

I bear witness of Christ. I have seen Him. I know He lives. I know He is coming in judgement. And I know that before His coming He has wanted some things to be declared. I have been as faithful as I can be in declaring the things that I've been asked to declare. I sense keenly my own inadequacy. I beg you to overlook all that. Look at the scriptures. Look at the words of Christ. Look at the explanations we got from Joseph. Look at the things that are true, and go to Him, in faith believing.

When I started out I gave you a description of Him. I want to repeat that. The Lord is affable, but He is not gregarious. He is approachable; He is not aloof. He is patient and He is willing to guide and He is willing to teach. He is intelligent, but He is not overbearing. He is humble and approachable in His demeanor, even though His power is absolutely undeniable. Therefore He is both a Lamb and a Lion. And if you come to Him in the day that He offers redemption, you will be coming to the Lamb. But if you wait for His coming in judgement, you are waiting on the Lion, and you will not like what it is that you will see.

I asked you to remember:

He is quick to forgive sin.
He allows all to come to Him.
He is no respecter of persons.

I said that when I began, I am saying it again as we end today. He is real. He lives! His work of redemption continues right now, just as it continued throughout His mortal life, just as it

continued as He hung on the cross, just as it continued in His resurrection in Palestine and as He came to visit with the Nephites. He's ministered to other sheep. He's called other people. And there are, in fact, "holy men whom ye know not of" that still remain. Please, however, give heed to the scriptures I've read, the words of Joseph I've quoted, and the fact that I do have a witness that He is approachable, and that He is every bit alive today as He was when He walked on the road to Emmaus. And he's every bit as much willing to come and redeem you from the fall as He is willing to redeem anyone.

His work and His glory is culminated in you. His success is redeeming you. If you think that, well, "He's aloof, He's distant, and this is an impossibly high thing to achieve," the fact of the matter is, it is a greater achievement on His end to redeem you, than it is at your end to be redeemed. There's more anxiety, there's more desire. There's more rejoicing in heaven when He redeems someone from the fall than there is here.

He came, He suffered, He lived, He died. He did what He did in order to lift all of creation. And you are inextricably connected to Him. Therefore, trust that. Receive Him. It may start very slow, very small, very distant. Act on that. Hearken to that. It gets louder. You will never wind up in the company of Gods and angels if you're not willing to have faith in those preliminary things that you receive that ask you to go and to do.

When I first got an answer to prayer sitting in a barracks in New Hampshire, if I hadn't acted on that, if I hadn't gone and done, I would never have beheld the Lord, much less been taught by Him. But I did. And I do. And whatever He asks of me, that's what I do now. And it doesn't matter how unpleasant I may find it, or how reluctant in my heart I may be to go and do. I go and I do. You need to do that. It may not even make much sense to you when you're going and you're doing. I can't tell you what sacrifices He may ask of you. But whatever He asks of you, that do you.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #7, entitled "Christ: Prototype of the Saved Being" given in Ephraim, UT on June 28, 2014.

Podcast Episode 4: Contradicting Joseph

QUESTION: Can the words of a modern or current Prophet or Church President supersede or contradict the words of a previous prophet, in particular Joseph Smith?

DENVER: Joseph's doctrines, teachings, revelations and council was supposed to be kept and hearkened to by the church. In the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants, section 41 [actually 14], it says *"Ye have received a commandment for a law unto my church, through him whom I have appointed unto you, to receive commandments and revelations from my hand,"* [D&C 14:1, 1835 ed.] making it clear that when we get something from Joseph we, as a church, were directed by the Lord, to respect what it was that came through him.

In section 32:2 [actually 32:3, 1835 ed.] it says, *"I have entrusted unto you, my servant Joseph, for a wise purpose in me, and it shall be made known unto future generations; but this generation shall have my word through you."* Don't read the word "generation" in that context narrowly, because the word "generation" has sometimes varying meanings. And the safe meaning in that context of that statement to Joseph, includes all those who live after the day that Joseph came and Joseph bore testimony. Therefore, it would include you.

In section 46:1-3 [1835 ed.] it says, *"Behold there shall be a record kept among you, and in it thou,"* (meaning Joseph), *"thou shalt be called a seer, a translator, a prophet, an apostle of Jesus Christ, and elder of the church through the will of God the Father, and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ..."* [46:1] *Wherefore, meaning the church, thou* (the church, you folks), *"shall give heed unto all his"* (singular, personal pronoun "his", meaning "Joseph") *"words, and commandments, which he"* (singular, personal pronoun) *"shall give unto you, as he receiveth them, walking in all holiness before Him [me]: For his word ye shall receive, as if from mine own mouth, and all patience and faith; for by doing these things, the gates of hell shall not prevail against you"* [46:2]. "Shall not prevail against you" provided you give heed to *his* words. Not mine, not another man's. The bastian established by the Lord that is the rock upon which the winds and the rains can beat without causing any harm to the foundation, is the rock of revelation given to us, in this generation, through the prophet Joseph Smith. Everything else turns to sand.

"For thus saith the Lord God, him" (singular, personal pronoun, referring to the individual man, the prophet Joseph Smith-- "Praise to the man who communed with Jehovah," indeed-- him) *"have I inspired to move the cause of Zion in mighty power for good; And his diligence I know, and his prayers I have heard: yea, his weeping for Zion I have seen, and I will cause that he shall mourn for her no longer, for his days of rejoicing are come unto the remission of his sins, and the manifestations of my blessings upon his works"* [46:2]. It doesn't promise Joseph Zion. It doesn't promise him anything of the sort. It promises him rejoicing because his sins are remitted. His sins, not ours. Because at this point-- this is 1835. By 1832 the church was already under condemnation. But Joseph was not. His sins are remitted and that will cause Joseph to rejoice. *"They shall believe on his words, which are given him through me, by the*

Comforter, which manifesteth that Jesus was crucified by sinful men for the sins of the world” [46:3].

So as I read the edition of the Doctrine and Covenants in 1835, sections 14, 32, 46 of that volume, it becomes abundantly apparent that to the extent that the church was a true and living church, it was a true and living church because God owned the words that came through Joseph. And God vouched for the words that came through Joseph. And God cautioned them, and us, about ignoring the words that come through the prophet Joseph Smith.

Section 51:2 [1835 ed.], *“No one shall be appointed to receive commandments and revelations in this church, excepting my servant Joseph Smith, jr. for he receiveth them as Moses; and thou shalt be obedient unto the things which I shall give unto him” [sic].*

Section 84 (again this is the 1835 edition), section 84:2-- this is a revelation given in March of 1833 in which Joseph Smith was called by the Lord, and the words quoting “my son.” *“Verily I say unto you”* (again, personal, individual pronoun identifying an individual by the name of Joseph Smith), *“Verily I say unto you, the keys of this kingdom shall never be taken from you, while thou art in the world, neither in the world to come: nevertheless through you shall the oracles be given to another; yea, even unto the church. And all they who receive the oracles of God, let them beware how they hold them, lest they are accounted as a light thing, and are brought under condemnation thereby, and stumble and fall.”*

What is the definition of oracles? Is the definition of oracles a transient, changing with every whim program that can shift from day to day and person to person, or are the oracles the documents, the commandments, the revelations, the words that are contained in what Joseph Smith handed to us in the *Book of Mormon*, in the revelations given through him?

Be careful about how you interpret the scriptures. Be careful about how flexible you think an unchanging God will be. Be careful about that God who is the same yesterday, today, and forever being so whimsically different that on one day one thing can be asked of you and on another something altogether different can be asked of you. And to the extent that you detect a varying, shifting sand beneath your feet, ask yourself why that is so. And ask yourself, “Where might I go to find the rock upon which to establish my feet that the winds and the rains might not mow me down?” Because God vouched for Joseph Smith. And God vouched for those things committed to you, through him.

Would to God we all took that more seriously and recognize that if there is a prophet whose words we need to give heed to, it begins with the primacy of Joseph Smith, and that all other things, all other revelations, all of your attitudes, all of your notions-- everything ought to be measured against what we receive through him. God vouched for his words. I vouch for his words. I know he was a prophet of God. The extent to which my knowledge of Joseph runs, allows me to say, I know that man has stood in the presence of God. And I know that God has and does vouch for him, still, today.

And if no one else will say it, I'll declare it to you. If you ignore Joseph's words, you ignore it at your peril. And if you allow any man, or men, if you allow any committee, any institution or organization to claim that they have the right to alter, neglect or discard the words of revelation given by God through the prophet Joseph Smith, they will damn you if you listen to them. And they will surely be damned for doing so, because no one has the right to do that.

God's work is the same yesterday, today and forever. And those who would like to throw you about by every whim of doctrine are teaching you merely the commandments of men as if they were doctrine. And they aren't.

When God speaks through Joseph and we forget him, then we have no right to expect, collectively, that he's going to move anything forward for us. The first order of repentance is to remember what God gave to us through Joseph. You do that and then you'll find God's perfectly willing to pick it up and move it forward. You don't do that, and God will simply wait for you to get around to discharge the duty that's devolving upon you.

God vouched for Joseph Smith. God spoke through him. And I don't have the right to move one of his words. But I do have the right to listen to him, to follow what came through him, and to lay hold upon the blessings that were promised as a consequence of remembering him. Because to remember the words of Joseph is to remember your Lord. Remember Him. And don't let anyone tell you that they hold some authority that allows them to neglect, change, discard, veto, forget, or contradict what God told you through the voice of a prophet.

Joseph declared, "Ordinances instituted in the heavens before the foundation of the world and the priesthood, for the salvation of men, are not to be altered or changed. All must be saved on the same principles" [TPJS, p. 308]. The first question this raises is whether Joseph contradicted himself by changing things. The only way to reconcile the many changes he instituted is to take note that he made only additive expansions, finishing and recovering the ordinances instituted in the heavens. He was transmitting what came from above to believers, and it came incrementally. Joseph's changes never took away from the ordinances, but frequently expanded on what was here before.

Joseph never did anything with the ordinances instituted in the heavens, like the LDS church has done. The elimination of the christian minister from the endowment in 1990, along with the abandonment of the penalties from the ceremony at the same time, were purely deductive. Joseph never did anything like that. Likewise, LDS washings and anointings were changed in 2011 to eliminate actual washing and actual anointing, replacing them with simply symbolic references. That was yet another deductive deviation from the ordinances instituted in the heavens. It violated Joseph's principle that they are not to be altered or changed. The original mormonism may have added, but it respected what was previously revealed.

“Behold, I am Alpha and Omega, even Jesus Christ. Wherefore, let all men beware how they take my name in their lips-- for behold, verily I say, that many there be who are under this condemnation, who use the name of the Lord, and use it in vain, having not authority” [D&C 63: 60-62].

And how do you know if someone speaks with authority? How do you know that Joseph is writing a testimony that is authoritative? How do we know if anyone opens their mouth and they speak and God has approved the message that they are delivering?

Go back to that verse 20 of the Joseph Smith History, which happened in 1820, in which Joseph had been tutored. And he had been tutored by the Lord with *“many other things did he say unto me at this time, which I cannot write.”* Joseph already knew, he had already seen, he had already been endowed with a certain understanding that reckons from the other side of the veil. As a consequence of which, Joseph knew a great deal more than what he was saying. But he had an assignment. And the assignment consisted of the obligation to translate the *Book of Mormon*. And Joseph was authorized to accomplish that work. Therefore, if Joseph stepped outside of the bounds of the assignment entrusted to him at the moment that he was doing this work, Joseph would be entertaining a pretense, because the errand given to him at the moment was confined to the *Book of Mormon*. Did he know more? Absolutely! Did he have more at his disposal that he could have entertained people with? Without any question. But he was asked to do a work, and in the fidelity of his heart, he confined himself to that work, until it was first accomplished. And to do more than that would have been a pretense.

So then we get to the answer to the question about how you know whether Joseph is telling us the truth. *“Verily, I say unto you,”* (verse 5) *“woe shall come unto the inhabitants of the earth if they will not hearken unto my words.”* This is Christ owning the words. It’s not Joseph. *“For hereafter you shall be ordained to go forth and deliver my words unto the children of men. Behold, if they will not believe my words, they would not believe you, my servant Joseph, if it were possible that you should show all these things which I have committed unto you”* [D&C 5:5-7]. God owns the words. You wouldn’t believe the rest of it if you won’t believe what’s authorized to be spoken. Joseph confined himself to delivering what Christ wanted delivered and it was up to those who heard to choose. And if they recognized the Master’s voice then they received the message from Him.

“Behold verily I say unto you,” -- oh wait, I left out 8: *“Oh, this unbelieving and stiffnecked generation—mine anger is kindled against them. Behold, verily I say unto you, I have reserved those things which I entrusted unto you, my servant Joseph, for a wise purpose in me, and it shall be made known unto future generations; But this generation shall have my word through you”* [D&C 5:8-9].

Well, in another place, oh heck we might as well get that out...

This is also the letter from Liberty Jail. Section 122:2 *“The pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous, shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from*

under thy hand." This is the Lord's word to Joseph Smith about those who are wise, those who are noble, those who are virtuous. Those are the ones who are going to seek council and authority and blessings under the hand of Joseph. And that is as true at this moment as it was then.

How, then, do we, today, receive blessings under the hand of Joseph? Well if you look at the use of the word "hand," almost invariably it is associated with the words we find in scriptures-- the book of Abraham ("under the hand of Abraham"), the book of Mormon ("under the hand of Mormon"). The hand of Joseph is still the hand we ought to be looking at, if we want to know what God's word was for our generation.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #1, entitled "Be of Good Cheer" given in Boise, ID on September 10, 2013;
- Talk #3, entitled "Repentance" given in Logan, UT on September 29, 2013; and
- The presentation of Denver's paper entitled "Was There an Original", given at the Sunstone Symposium on July 29, 2016.

Podcast Episode 5: Faith

QUESTION: What is faith, and how do we exercise great faith?

DENVER: Everything begins with faith. You don't skip to knowledge. You begin with faith and you progress. The First Lecture on Faith is essentially asserting the primacy of faith as an operative principle of power that exists with God and with all of us.

Okay, you've left home and you've come here. While you're here, your home exists only as a matter of faith to you. You believe it exists. You intend to drive back there. And your family that's there, and your dog that's there, and that infernal parrot that now can mimic the low battery signal on the fire alarm-- she's there too. And so it's a matter of faith that despite the fact that I am here and out of her presence, my bird is waiting for me when I get home.

What you find in really young children is that they don't have the capacity to entertain the fact that it still exists. When it's gone, it's gone forever. And the child-- it takes a while before the child has confidence that what gets removed from their sight continues to exist outside of the presence of their actual observation. It's one of those childhood development things.

Well, God's beyond that. Everything that exists-- faith and faith only-- and I'm using a compilation that was published, I don't know, it's from the Brigham Young University archive-- I just printed it out. In mine, it's verse 11-- excuse me, it's verse 10 of Lecture 1: *"It is faith, and faith only, which is the moving cause of all action, in them."* That is, in all men, but is also the principle by which everything is moved into action.

Verse 12: *"Faith is the moving cause of all action in temporal concerns, so it is in spiritual; for the Savior has said, that truly, that he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved."*

"Through faith," in verse 14, *"Through faith we understand the worlds were framed by the word of God: so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."*

"All things in heaven," in verse 15, *"or earth, or under the earth, exists by reason of faith as it existed in HIM"* [sic]-- Him being God.

17: *"Who cannot see, that if God framed the worlds by faith, that it is by faith that he exercises power over them, and that faith is the principle of power? And if the principle of power, it must be so in man as well as in the Deity? This is the testimony of all the sacred writers and the lessons which they have endeavored to teach to man."*

You're acting, everything that you're doing-- the education that you got, the employment that you have, the plans that you undertake, the things that you design to do-- are all a

product of your faith. You are a being filled with, animated by, and continually upholding everything in your life by your faith. And yet you don't have the faith to see it.

You are a creature of faith. All of you are. And you always have been, and you always will be. Do not be doubtful, but be believing. You are here by reason of God's faith. And you have faith to do the things that you do, continually. Every movement you undertake, every plan you make, is based upon the faith that you have.

Let's skip to the Second Lecture. This is the 2nd verse: *"We here observe that God is the only supreme governor, and independent being, in whom all fullness and perfection dwell; who is omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient; without beginning of days or end of life; and that in Him every good gift, and every good principle dwells; that he is the father of lights: In him the principle of faith dwells independently; and he is the object in whom the faith of all other rational and accountable beings centers, for life and salvation."*

Did you get that? It's not your bishop. It's not Hugh Nibley. It's not your stake president. It's not the catholic priest down the street, the Pope in Rome, or the President of the Church in Salt Lake. It's no man! The principle of faith must be grounded in God, the Supreme Governor. Because if your faith is grounded in anyone, or anything else, you cannot have the faith necessary to attain to salvation. You need to have a connection with heaven.

The scriptures are the authorized accounts given to us that testify to these things. The *Lectures on Faith* are trying to set it forth in a comprehensive way so that we can all get it.

Which brings us then to the Third Lecture on Faith. Verse 2 of Lecture 3: *"Let us here observe, that three things are necessary, in order that any rational and intelligent being may exercise faith in God unto life and salvation."* Faith in God-- not in man, not in men, not in an institution, not in some magic talisman. Faith in God. You have to exercise faith in God unto life and salvation.

There are three things: *"First, the idea that he actually exists"* [verse 3]. You can get that from someone else. *"Secondly, a correct idea of his character, perfections and attributes"* [verse 4]. Any errand that prevents you from having faith; therefore, in order to get that right, it's going to require something of you in the way of study and effort. Look at the word. They italicized it. *"A correct idea of His character, perfections and attributes."* That's what you need to study to show what it is you're going to have faith in.

"Thirdly, an actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing, is according to his will" [verse 5]. You must know this. And you cannot cover the gap by lying to yourself. You can't lie to yourself pretending that you are on God's course, and then have actual knowledge that the course of life you're pursuing is according to His will. Nor can you depend entirely upon what other people are telling you. You're supposed to be asking and getting answers from God. And the answers from God are going to tell you what you need to do. And the sacrifices that He will require of you are unique to you. Because the contribution that you can make for the salvation of yourself and others is unique to you.

There are things that you and only you can do. And if you will sign up with God, He will have you do them. And you may find yourself doing things you would rather prefer not doing. It doesn't matter. If you have faith in Him and you do what He asks, you'll know that the course you're pursuing is according to His will. And doing things He asks of you according to His will invariably produce faith. And they produce faith unto salvation. Because it always grows. Light grows or dims. It never stays static. Therefore, when you set on this course, you never turn back. If you turn back you lose everything that you've gained up to that point.

Look at verse 5: *"For without an acquaintance with these three important facts, the faith of every rational being must be imperfect and unproductive; but with this understanding, it can become perfect and fruitful, abounding in righteousness under the praise and glory of God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."*

Therefore, these three things you need to know: God exists. You need to study until you have a correct understanding of His "character, perfections and attributes", and then you have to live your life so that you actually know that the course you are leading in your life conforms to what He would have.

When you exercise the required faith to permit Him to step out from behind the veil, like the brother of Jared, He'll do that too. He's no respecter of persons. You should not question what your privileges are, nor how far you are authorized to exercise faith in Him, or whether you're authorized to do it at all.

Joseph Smith understood the correct doctrine and he's trying to give you the character, the nature, the attributes of God. Because until you get that correct, you're not going to have the power to exercise faith in Him-- which is why you're going to encounter some amount of resistance between what it is that you need to believe in, and what it is that everyone else in your generation may believe in. It doesn't matter. The responsibility is placed upon you to understand what is truth and what is not. And you have to choose, and you have to sort it out, and you have to come to the correct conclusion. Because it is only by exercising faith in the correct conclusion that you manage to align yourself with that narrow window through which the heavens are open, and up which Jacob's ladder is found to be scaled.

The 6th Lecture-- verse 1: *"Having treated, in the preceding lectures, of ideas of the character, perfections and attributes of God, we next proceed to treat of the knowledge which persons must have, that the course of life which they pursue is according to the will of God, in order that they may be enabled to exercise faith in Him unto life and salvation."*

You see, the course in life that you pursue, you have to know is according to the will of God. *"Such was and always will be the situation of the saints of God, that unless they have an actual knowledge that the course that they are pursuing is according to the will of God, they will grow weary in their minds and faint"* [verse 4].

That's the problem with many of us. We grow weary in our minds and faint because we don't know that the course we are pursuing is according to God. Don't grow weary. Stay on that course. We ought to fear God more than we fear the approval or disapproval, the criticism, the ostracism-- we ought to love God and fear Him. Because it's our relationship to Him and Him alone that matters. And I don't care what the cost is that you count up.

Knowledge of God is worth whatever price you pay no matter when, no matter what, no matter how often. If he takes away your family and he gives you a new family, and then he takes that family away again, it is a small price to pay. God will ask of you whatever He will ask of you. The only thing I can say is, no price you pay while tabernacled here is so great that you should withhold it from the altar. Give what He asks. Because it's only by giving what He asks of you that you can have faith in Him unto life and salvation.

You have to know-- this is verse 2 of Lecture 6: You have to have *"an actual knowledge...that the course of life which he pursues is according to the will of God, is essentially necessary to enable him to have that confidence in God, without which no person can obtain eternal life."* You simply can't do it. Because the place in which you find God, will always be, as to this world, lonely. You are necessarily going to become a stranger and a sojourner here. But you take up residency somewhere else. And you're not left without comfort. It's just that that comfort consists in something that is more refined and more pure, and you're left here muddling through with people who will not understand you and who will think you are eccentric. They'll misjudge your motives, they'll misjudge your heart, they'll misjudge your ambition, they'll misjudge everything there is about you. And Christ said, *"Rejoice, and be exceedingly happy... for so persecuted they the prophets before you"* [Matt 5:12].

"This requires more than mere belief, or supposition that he's doing the will of God, but actual knowledge: realizing that when these sufferings are ended he will enter into eternal rest; and be a partaker of the glory of God" [verse 5]. It does require more than mere belief or supposition, but it's obtained in accordance with this set of principles. And it is purchased by the same price paid by each of us, in turn, on the same conditions. And no one gets in on any other condition.

Your life may be uniquely situated. You may be inside an environment, a group of friends, a family, a neighborhood, an association that is completely unique to you and has nothing in common with anyone else in this room. Inside of that, whatever the sacrifices are that are required, it will be exactly the same as it was for Moses, who gave up everything, and then gave up everything again. It will be the same as for Abraham, who gave up everything, and then gave up everything again. It will be the same. And you'll be called upon to make a sacrifice. Because knowing God requires obedience to Him, and sacrifice to Him-- and not to some man. Certainly not to me; but not to a Pope, not to a President, not to a Priest-- to Him.

"When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has, for the truth's sake, not even withholding his life, and believing before God that he has been called to make the sacrifice, because he seeks to do His will, he does know most assuredly, that God does and will accept his sacrifice and offering, and that he has not, nor will not, seek his face in vain" [verse 7]. And I'll tell you

what is vain-- it is in *"vain for persons to fancy to themselves that they are heirs with those, or can be heirs with them, who have offered their all in sacrifice, and by this means obtain faith in God and favor with Him so as to obtain eternal life, unless they in like manner offer unto Him the same sacrifice, and through that offering obtain the knowledge that they are accepted of Him"* [verse 8].

Verse 10: *"Those, then, who make the sacrifice will have the testimony that their course is pleasing in the sight of God, and those who have this testimony will have faith to lay hold on eternal life, and will be enabled, through faith, to endure unto the end, and receive the crown that is laid up for them that love the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ."* This is the last half of that paragraph 10: *"But those who do not make the sacrifice cannot enjoy this faith, because men are dependant upon this sacrifice in order to obtain this faith; therefore, they cannot lay hold upon eternal life, because the revelations of God do not guarantee unto them the authority to do so, and without this guarantee faith could not exist."* It is a cause and effect. These things are inextricably linked together.

If you make the sacrifice, you can enjoy the faith. But all of us-- every one of us-- were and are dependant upon making the sacrifice. If we don't do that, we are simply unable to lay hold upon eternal life. And the revelations of God don't guarantee you eternal life on any other condition. The way to preserve yourself consists in having faith in God. And the conditions upon which faith in God is obtained are exactly the same for you as they were for Moses and Abraham, and all of those who have ever had faith, Joseph Smith being the latest great example of that.

The 7th Lecture on Faith, 2nd paragraph: *"As we have seen in our former lectures, that faith was the principle of action and of power in all intelligent beings, both in heaven and on earth."* It both motivates you to act, and it produces power when you act. In that same 2nd paragraph, it says: *"No world has yet been framed that was not framed by faith."* God operates on the principle of faith. As I pointed out last night, all of us do, too. It's just inevitable.

"All the hosts of heaven," (this is in paragraph 4): *"It is by reason of this power (faith), that all the hosts of heaven perform their works of wonder, majesty and glory: Angels move from place to place by virtue of this power."* And then 5, it says: *"The whole visible creation, as it now exists, is the effect of faith."*

16: *"These teachings of the Savior most clearly show unto us the nature of salvation; and what he proposed unto the human family when he proposed to save them-- that he proposed to make them like unto himself; and he was like the Father, the great prototype of all saved beings: And for any portion of the human family to be assimilated into their likeness is to be saved; and to be unlike them is to be destroyed: and on this hinge turns the door of salvation."* No human can be saved until that human is like God.

This is paragraph 17, about I don't know, a third of the way down: *"It was this system of faith-- it begins with faith, and continues by faith; and every blessing which is obtained, in*

relation to it, is the effect of faith whether it pertains to this life or that which is to come.-- To this, all the revelations of God bear witness. If there were children of promise, they were the effects of faith: not even the Savior of the world excepted." The savior was produced as an act of faith. "And through the whole history of the scheme of life and salvation, it is a matter of faith: every man received according to his faith: according as his faith was, so were his blessings and privileges; And nothing was withheld from him when his faith was sufficient to receive it."

This is the way in which God is no respecter of persons. This is the way in which you, if you will lay down your ignorance, if you will repent, and turn to God, this is the way in which you can find yourself also the inheritor of blessings and privileges which God will not withhold from anyone who understands and gathers to himself the light and the truth that comes through obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ. *"By their faith, they could obtain heavenly visions, the ministering of angels, have knowledge of the spirits of just men made perfect, of the general assembly and church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven, of God the judge of all, of Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and become familiar with the third heavens, see and hear things which were not only unutterable, but were unlawful to utter" [verse 17].*

Later, Joseph Smith made a comment about-- "Paul said he knew a man who was caught up to the third heaven, but I know a man who was caught up to the seventh heaven. It is sufficient, however, if you commune with those beings."

Paragraph 18: *"How were they to obtain the knowledge of God? (for there is a great difference between believing in God and knowing Him: knowledge implies more than faith. And notice, that all things that pertain to life and godliness, were given through the knowledge of God;) the answer is given, through faith they were to obtain this knowledge; and having power by faith to obtain the knowledge of God, they could obtain all other things which pertain to life and godliness."*

20: *"To obtain the faith," and this is a ways into that paragraph: Because "To obtain the faith by which he could the enjoy the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord, He had to suffer the loss of all things: this is the reason that the Former Day Saints knew more, and understood more of heaven, and heavenly things than all others beside, because this information is the effect of faith--to be obtained by no other means... Where faith is there will be the knowledge of God also, with all things which pertain thereto-- revelations, visions, and dreams, as well as every necessary thing in order that the possessors of faith may be perfected and obtain salvation... And he who possesses it will, through it, obtain all necessary knowledge and wisdom until he shall know God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, whom He has sent: whom to know is eternal life."*

You determine how much light and truth you will receive, and it's predicated upon a law that was ordained before the foundation of the world. Anyone of you can obey it. God is no respecter of persons, and you are authorized to exercise faith in Him unto salvation. You are authorized to exercise faith in Him until you know Him. You are authorized to see His face and know that He is. Every one of you.

If you will receive it, faith in Him comes by hearing the word of God-- not by a pretender, not by someone guessing, not by someone offering up their theory of how this stuff ought to be understood, not by someone sighting you a bibliography-- but hearing the word of God delivered as He would have it delivered by whomever it is that He may choose to deliver it. If you receive it, then you might have faith, and that too, in the Son of God, that you might receive Him. But if you will not-- if you will harden your hearts, if you will blind your minds, if you will not receive what He offers from His mouth in your day, then you don't have faith in Him. And you will fall short of that faith which will bring you to become His son and His daughter.

It is that way. It has always been that way. It will always be that way. There is no other test. Because any of you who will hear and then who will hearken unto their words, you become His seed. You have to hear it, you have to hear it from someone who has been sent. But it does you no good at all if you will not hearken to it. Because it is in the hearkening that you will meet God. You will find redemption. You will hear his voice, and you will become a holy vessel because His word will be animated in you. And you will have no doubts about your salvation, because you will hear Him declare it in His own voice. And you will know that He's no respecter of persons. And you'll know that you, like any other person, can come unto Him and look to Him and Him alone for your salvation, and not be dependant upon any other person or system.

Enoch is told at this point that in this walk that he is assuming, being a person slow of speech and a reluctant draftee, that the mountains will flee before him, and the rivers will turn their course, and Enoch will abide in Him, and the Lord, uh-- Enoch will abide in the Lord and the Lord will abide in Enoch. Well, now this is a statement that is made in 65, but you have to understand that it is some several hundred years later before the word of Enoch has the effect that the Lord says will take place at this point. Because the Lord, who has all things in front of Him, can see where this is going. But Enoch, who is down here, though a seer, isn't there yet. It's not pixie dust. It is acquired in exactly the same way in every generation, by every one who acquires it, and is acquired through the exercise of faith. And the way by which people exercise faith is to conform their actions to the things that they believe in-- even when the actions that they take are difficult, even with what the Lord asks of you something which you're very reluctant to lay on the altar, even when everyone will hate you for what it is that you do.

Saving faith is so rare precisely because it requires courage to engage the opposition in this world, and to cheerfully endure the abuse, lies, threats and fiery darts sent by those who fear your faith, above everything. Faith in God will save you through His grace. It can render every weapon in this world, and hell, powerless. But it takes courage.

Go about your life boldly, nobly, valiantly, because it is only through valiance in the testimony of Jesus Christ that you can hope to secure anything. Not valiance in your fidelity to anything other than Jesus Christ. The fact of the matter is that faith must be based in

Him, and him alone. And it's time now that we stop running away from the conflict. It's time for us to be valiant once again.

Do not be fearful. Cowardice and fear are the opposite of faith. If Joseph Smith, in the ruins of 1838, can write the testimony that we find in the history of Joseph Smith, as an act of audacious courage and faith and confidence in the work of God that he was pursuing, despite the ruin that he saw the church existed in at that moment-- if Joseph could do that, why can't you?

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #1, entitled "Be of Good Cheer" given in Boise, ID on September 10th, 2013
- Talk #2, entitled "The Lectures on Faith" given in Idaho Falls, ID on September 28th, 2013;
- Talk #3, entitled "Repentance" given the next day in Logan, UT on September 29th, 2013;
- Talk #7, entitled "Christ, Prototype of the Saved Man" given in Ephraim, UT on June 28, 2014;
- His talk entitled "The Mission of Elijah Revisited", given in Spanish Fork, UT on October 14th, 2011; and
- His Opening Remarks given at the Covenant of Christ Conference in Boise, Idaho on September 3rd, 2017.

Podcast Episode 6: Repentance

QUESTION: What is repentance, what do I need to repent of, how do I repent, and what happens when I do?

DENVER: Doctrine and Covenants section 93:1 says, *“Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am.”*

“Every soul who forsaketh his sins.” You’re not going to get past your sins until God forgives you, but you need to awaken to the fact that you possess them and turn from them. Because turning from them is repentance-- turning to face Him. You can still have a load that needs to be dropped because we are all heavy laden with sin. But, forsaking your sins means that you would prefer Him over everything else there is. So turn and face Him.

“Cometh unto me.” Well, the only way you can leave that load behind, is to get down in prayer seeking Him and asking Him to free you from the load and to allow you, as Alma recounts in his 36th chapter of the book of Alma, the terrible agony that he felt in calling upon God to be redeemed. And then when God answered, the pain, the distress that he had was equalled by the joy and the exhilaration he felt on the other side of that, being cleansed.

“Calleth on my name.” You have to do that. “And obeyeth my voice.” That would include not merely the things that were given to us by Joseph Smith that you may be neglecting, but obeying His voice in what He tells you here and now. Because your agenda is different from mine. Your needs are different from mine. Your responsibilities are different from mine. You have your own family, you have your own ward, you have your own neighbors, you have your own issues. Fathers and sons, mothers and daughters-- you’re part of a community somewhere, and inside of that, all of you need to listen to the voice of God. Because He loves everyone. God loves all of us, and the agenda that you have, and the people you can affect, and the relief that you can administer, and the needs that go in front of your eyes day by day-- are uniquely yours. And the relief that you can grant to those around you-- that’s yours. It was given to you by God as a gift.

Don’t harden your heart. The fact is, we all are broken. And we are all in need of repair. Come to Him. Because the only repairman that exists in the universe, inside of this matrix, is Christ, whose assignment it is to repair, and to redeem, and to heal us.

Obey His voice, no matter how much it may disagree with the flow of that that goes on all around you. “Obeyeth my voice and keepeth my commandments”-- “my commandments,” given to the prophet Joseph Smith, entrusted to you, should be respected by you. Given by the voice of the spirit to you, asking you to help those around you because the relief that people need sometimes can only come from one source, and that is you, under the inspiration of the spirit, relieving the burdens of those around you.

Why do you think God cares about the widows, and the orphans, and the poor, and the infirm? Be like your Master. Do what you can for those around you who are infirm. They are here in abundance-- the broken-hearted, the families that are in need. If you want to be saved, help the Lord save others-- not by preaching and clamoring and demanding that they view the world like you do, but by giving them a hand. Your most powerful sermon can be in the effort that you make and the time that you take to let people know that you care about them.

If you would like to repent of your sins, take a look around at those in need and do what you can for them. Because you've begun the first step. When your heart is like Him, then you open up so that He can enter in. And when your heart is unlike Him, well there's no room except if He break it, which He will do. You do these things, "you shall see my face and know that I am." *Know*, not believe, but know.

This is still that paragraph 9 of Lectures on Faith--7th Lecture. (It looks like it's only a third of the way down-- it's a long paragraph). It poses the question:

"Where shall we find a saved being? for if we can find a saved being, we may ascertain, without much difficulty, what all others must be, in order to be saved—we think, that it will not be a matter of dispute, that two beings, who are unlike each other, cannot both be saved; for whatever constitutes the salvation of one, will constitute the salvation of every creature which will be saved: and if we find one saved being in all existence, we may see what all others must be, or else not be saved. We ask, then, where is the prototype? or where is the saved being? We conclude as to the answer of this question there will be no dispute among those who believe the bible, that it is Christ: all will agree in this that he is the prototype or standard of salvation, or in other words, that he is a saved being."

Skipping down a couple of lines, *"If he were any thing different from what he is he would not be saved; for his salvation depends on his being precisely what he is and nothing else."* So according to the *Lectures on Faith*, if you would be saved, you have to be exactly, precisely what Christ is, and nothing else.

Now you've been told all your life that that's an impossibility. Well it's an impossibility in one sense, and it's a mandatory requirement in another sense. It's an impossibility because, as it turns out, we all err. All of us err-- we always have. And that's what the Atonement was designed to fix. Because He picks that burden up and He carries it for us. But the fact that He will carry that burden for us doesn't relieve us from the moment that He's taken that away, from then going forward to do good. You can be Christlike. You can administer relief to those around you. You can, as He said, clothe the naked, feed the hungry, visit those who are in prison. That ministrations, that service, elevates the servant. Their heart gets moved with compassion. Your heart needs to be like Christ's-- moved with compassion for others. And the way you do that is imitative at first, and then it is informed by the experience later.

What begins as imitation, and merely that, finds room within to have genuine compassion for the needs of others.

Take a look at Doctrine and Covenants section 93:36: *"The glory of God is intelligence, or in other words light and truth. Light and truth forsake that evil one"* [D&C 93:36-37]. What if instead of repentance being related to your misdeeds, which are so plentiful and persistent and will continue-- what if instead it is related to the acquisition of light and truth, that is intelligence? What if repentance requires you to take whatever it is that you have that is a foolish error, a vain tradition, a false notion, and replace it with the truth?

My suspicion is that whatever it is that is troubling you, it will trouble you considerably less if you begin to fill yourself with light and truth, until at last you arrive at a point where you look back upon your sins and you say "I have no more disposition for that, because I frankly know enough not to do that anymore, and because I prefer the light and because I prefer God's intelligence and glory over that which I used to trade, to substitute for it."

You see, repentance may have a whole lot more to do with your own feeble education in the things of God than it does have to do with the time you spend wasted looking at some vile picture or other. People struggle with some very difficult, very challenging things. You need to try and overcome that by the light within you.

"The glory of God is intelligence." Be intelligent. The fact of the matter is that you can fill yourself with the mind of God. And if you fill yourself with the mind of God, you're going to find yourself in a position where you, like the scriptures recite, have no more disposition to do evil, but to only do good continually. That repentance is as a consequence of the things that you know. That repentance comes as a consequence of the light and truth within you. But the problem is not that God has built within you the desires, appetites, and passions which He does not intend to have you fill. He intends for you to eat. He intends for you to sleep. He intends for you to reproduce. He intends for all of the appetites and passions put within you to be intelligently organized and gratified in a sacred manner in which the purposes of God are advanced. And you find within yourself holiness in everything you do, love and understanding in everything you do.

Repentance is the process of figuring out exactly how and why God made all the things available to you that He made available to you-- each one to be used with prudence and with skill. We're just trying to figure out how it is we move from wherever we are back to a state of being repentant. And that requires you to exercise your effort to learn and obtain glory from God which is intelligence, or in other words, light and truth-- not darkness, dimness, error, missteps, incomplete and inadequate information. You're going to have to face it, and you're going to have to face it with some amount of courage. Because we all labor with a good deal of tradition that had been inflicted upon our minds and upon our hearts. And things that we may love, if they don't conform to the glory of God, intelligence or light and truth, they have to be discarded, too. Because what God wants to do is to bring you back into a state of reconciliation with Him, which comes only from bravely facing light and truth-- the glory of God, the power of Godliness, if you will.

“If any should ask why all these sayings? the answer is to be found from what is before quoted from John’s epistle, that when he (the Lord) shall appear, the saints will be like him: and if they are not holy, as he is holy, and perfect as he is perfect, they cannot be like him; for no being can enjoy his glory without possessing his perfections and holiness, no more than they could reign in his kingdom without his power” [LoF 7:10].

When He appears, you need to be like Him. Lay down the burden of guilt. Lay down the burden of sin. Stop focusing on that stuff and become like Him. And you become like Him by doing His works. And you do His works by serving others, by ministering to the needs of others. And when you do that, it is a natural byproduct of that process, ordained by laws established before the foundation of the world, that light and truth will grow within you. You will have compassion when you minister with compassion to the needs of others. Your heart will open to, and receive within it, light and truth. When your conduct reflects the same conduct as a merciful, and holy, and just God whom you claim to worship, worship Him by imitating Him. Worship Him by doing His works. Worship Him by making a living sacrifice. Set aside the junk that occupies you and go do something that is holy for someone else.

However mundane and trivial it may seem to you, when you relieve the suffering of other people, something changes in you. You become different. You become better. You become more like our Lord. Because when you give-- whatever it is you give away-- you get more in return. But make sure that what you give goes to relieve the suffering of others. Relieve the suffering of others.

You’re going to have to finish that path. You’re going to have to rise up. If you expect to be in His presence when He returns, then you’re going to have to be like Him. Because if you are not like Him, you will not be able to endure His presence.

Take it seriously. Study it through. Seek to be like Him whom you worship. It is possible. Not while you’re carrying a load of sins that trouble you and worry you and distract you, but that’s what the Lord will remove from you. He can take all of that away, but it is entirely up to you to choose, then to do something to draw nearer to Him. You have to choose to be like him. Although He may remove all of the stains upon you, you have to go forward and not stain yourself again, because you can’t stop you from doing that.

You’re free to choose. Therefore, choose the better part. The Atonement isn’t like Tinkerbell spreading some magic dust that will make you rise up. The Atonement will erase your sins and mistakes, but you must rise up. You must acquire those virtues. The glory of God is intelligence, and repentance requires you to acquire that intelligence, that glory of God. And you acquire it by the things that you do in His name and for His sake. And those that are here with you in need, they represent Him. And when you do it to even the least of them, He will credit that as having been done for Him. And no good deed will be gone unnoticed with Him. He even notices when the sparrows fall. So is He not going to notice when your knee bends with compassion, praying for His mercy for someone that has offended you? And

when you pray for those who have offended you, do you think for one moment that that doesn't change your own heart? Paragraph 18:

"How are they to obtain the knowledge of God?...[for there is a great difference between believing in God and knowing him: knowledge implies more than faith. And notice, that all things that pertain to life and godliness, were given through the knowledge of God;] the answer is given, through faith they were to obtain this knowledge; and having power by faith to obtain the knowledge of God, they could with it obtain all other things which pertain to life and godliness" [LoF 7:18].

It is knowledge that saves. Consequently, it is knowledge that you need to repent and obtain. "Knowledge saves a man," said Joseph Smith. "A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge," said Joseph Smith. Knowledge and salvation, knowledge and repentance-- they are all related. If you have it, it is given to make you a minister, a servant, someone the Lord might be able to employ in order to raise up others. Because if you can't elevate others, then you've failed in your effort to be like Him. He came to serve. You serve, too. That's the purpose of the gospel-- to give you knowledge. Therefore, the way to get knowledge is to repent, is to search into, lay hold upon and obtain for yourself knowledge that saves. You have to sacrifice and you have to serve the Lord, and you have to have Him and Him only as the reason for what you do, what you say, how you act. Because He's the one that's going to judge you.

If knowledge saves, then it follows that repentance requires us to learn something. "You must begin with the first and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation" [*King Follett Discourse*, April 7, 1844].

I want to remind you that it is knowledge which defines the millennial glory of man. "*They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea*" [Isaiah 11:9]. Would you like to stand in that day? Would you like to survive that burning which is to come? Then the way to obtain that, and the means to preserve yourself through that, is to obtain that knowledge which saves.

What must you do in order to qualify to be among them? Does anyone other than you have the ability to prepare you? These are the things which God intends to have happen. The culmination of all the prophecies are going to wrap up in a time following the ministration of the prophet Joseph Smith. Soon to come-- not yet, but soon. And here we are. What are you going to do about it? The prophecies cannot be fulfilled unless those who are free to choose, choose to repent and to do something about what great things lay in store, and therefore you need to know *how* great things the Lord intends to do. You need to take this as the beginning point and go on and discover for yourself *how* great things the Lord intends to do.

God's work is the same yesterday, today and forever. When God speaks through Joseph and we forget him, then we have no right to expect, collectively, that He's going to move anything forward for us. The first order of repentance is to remember what God gave to us

through Joseph. You do that, and then you'll find God's perfectly willing to pick it up and move it forward. You don't do that, and God will simply wait for you to get around to discharge the duty that's devolving upon you.

Alma the Younger, a fairly expert source on the subject of repentance-- this is in chapter 42 of Alma: *"And now, my son, I desire that ye should let these things trouble you no more, and only let your sins trouble you, with that trouble which shall bring you down unto repentance"* [verse 29]. Don't trouble yourself unless it is motivational. To have change (and repentance simply means "change")-- to add repentance actually means you turn from the way, the direction you're facing. Whatever the direction is you happen to be facing, change from that and face God. When you turn to God, when you face Him, when that is the object of your focus and attention, then you've repented.

"O my son, I desire that ye should deny the justice of God no more. Do not endeavor to excuse yourself in the least point because of your sins, by denying the justice of God; but do you let the justice of God, and his mercy, and his long-suffering have full sway in your heart; and let it bring you down to the dust in humility" [Alma 42:30]. Therefore, when we look at the voices that would like to call attention to whatever it is that they're trying to draw your attention to, in this world, one of the things that Alma suggests might be helpful are those voices that happen to be saying that there's something amiss, there's something that deserves your attention to repent, to change the course you're on, to turn and face God, and to allow the only One who can offer salvation, to offer salvation.

Our Savior was, and is, first and foremost, a teacher. "By His knowledge," Isaiah and Nephi wrote, "He shall justify many" [Mosiah 14:11; Isaiah 53:11]. By His knowledge. He possesses things which we do not yet comprehend. He possesses things which He would like us to comprehend. How then are we to comprehend the things which only He can teach? By permitting Him to do so; by coming to Him, to recognize that the challenge you face in your life requires you invariably to lay aside those things that pull you away, and that you always turn and face the Lord. That's what repentance means. It means to turn and face the Lord. And you know when you face Him the first time, you're just not going to be that good, or that different than you were the moment before. But if you'll face Him, He'll work with you.

It does not matter how badly damaged you are. That's irrelevant. He fixed the apostle Paul. If you don't think the apostle Paul suffered from pride, then you don't understand the malignancy of pride. He fixed Alma the Younger and the sons of Mosiah, whose deliberate purpose was to overthrow the things of God. I don't care what you've done, the malignancies of those men are highlighted in scripture in order to assure you that you can all be reclaimed. Turn and face Him, and then walk with Him. He does all the guiding, and most of the heavy lifting.

And what is it that you must repent of? The absence of knowledge about God.

You don't know enough yet to be saved. The plan of salvation is the plan of education, the plan of knowledge about God and the principles of Godliness, and the basis upon which all of you can live together and be of one heart and one mind. Because much of what you think matters, doesn't matter one whit to the Lord. And you know what? When you're anxiously engaged in the right cause, you'd be surprised how much of our deepest concerns are merely trivial. The things of the heart are what matters-- the things upon which we are capable of becoming one in love toward one another.

It is His doctrine that all mankind should repent and be baptized in His name for the remission of sins. If you do so, He will be faithful and forgive. Repentance means to turn from whatever else is distracting you and face God. Heed Him. Follow Him, and obey His will. Repentance substitutes virtue for sin, trades weakness for strength, and remakes us heart, mind and spirit, into a new creature, a son or daughter of God.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #3, entitled "Repentance" given in Logan, UT on September 29th, 2013;
- His talk entitled "The Mission of Elijah Revisited," given in Spanish Fork, UT on October 14th, 2011;
- A fireside talk on "The Temple," given in Ogden, UT on October 28th, 2012,
- A fireside talk entitled "That We Might Become One," given in Clinton, UT on January 14th, 2018; and
- His conference talk entitled "The Doctrine of Christ," given in Boise, ID on September 11th, 2016.

Podcast Episode 7: Baptism

QUESTION: Who needs to be baptized, why is it so important, and what is the proper way to baptize?

DENVER: Baptism has always been required from the days of Adam until the present. Baptism is always the sign of acceptance of what it is that God is doing, a penitence, that is turning and facing God, and then walking in a new path. From the days of Adam, it will continue through the end of the millennium. And whenever there has been a believing people upon the earth, they have always been invited to partake of the ordinance of baptism as a sign of their faith.

How then does the authority to baptize come? Well, once John the Baptist came and laid his hands on Joseph, we've had a practice of continuing that and we ought to continue that. But before any of you baptize any other of you, do this-- do this: It's the same thing that Alma did in Mosiah, chapter 18. If you go back to Mosiah, chapter 18, before he baptized, Alma took Helam (this is Mosiah 18:12): *"...stood forth in the water, and cried, saying: O Lord, pour out thy Spirit upon thy servant, that he may do this work with holiness of heart. And when he had said these words, the Spirit of the Lord was upon him"* [verses 12-13]. He got the authority to baptize.

If you're going to use the priesthood, no matter what the church has told you and no matter what quorum leaders and respected others including your own father, perhaps, have taught you-- before you do so, ask God to give you the authority. And if you get it, you get it from Him. And then you're not dependant upon someone else. But get the authority from Him.

Power is required. It must come from Christ. The pattern must be followed. John the Baptist, when he restored the authority in Joseph Smith, verse 69 (*Joseph Smith History 1:69*) said that it *"...holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel of repentance, and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness."*

The gospel of repentance is returning to face God. Baptism by immersion is for the remission of sins. And John's declaration does not say that it will not be taken from the church; it says that it will be not taken from the *earth*. It was restored to remain on the earth. And no matter what happens among those that choose to abuse one another, it needs to be preserved by a faithful few, so that it doesn't cease from the earth.

It is still here, though it has been much neglected and it has been much abused. But with you, renew it. Renew it using Alma's example. He'd been previously ordained as one of the priests in wicked King Noah's court, and he had been ordained by him precisely because he was wicked. He qualified-- he was corrupt. Noah wanted him, and so he got ordained. But before he undertook to use the authority, he asked God to give him power. And God, seeing

penitence on the earth, respected it and poured out His Spirit upon him so that Alma could baptize with authority. And the proof of that consisted not merely in what it was that Alma experienced with the Spirit empowering him to perform the ordinance, but it consisted also in the effect that the ordinance itself had upon both Helam and Alma, who himself went into the water at the same time. The Spirit was poured out upon them.

Continuing then with what Christ said: *“And he said unto them: On this wise shall ye baptize; and there shall be no disputations among you. Verily I say unto you, that whoso repenteth of his sins through your words, and desireth to be baptized in my name, on this wise shall ye baptize them—Behold, ye shall go down and stand in the water...”* [3 Nephi 11:22-23]. I would recommend if it is at all possible, that the water for a living ordinance be living water. I would get out of the buildings that are built by the hands of men and I would use the things of God. You're trying to connect to God. Use the things that He has made.

I recognize there may be circumstances where that becomes impossible. I've been baptized twice-- once in the Atlantic and once in a stream in the Little Cottonwood Canyon. Both times it was so cold my lips were blue. And I recognize that some of you hearty people may not want to experience a baptism that invigorates you to the point of turning your lips blue, but I would recommend when you go down and stand in the water, that it be living water.

“And in my name shall ye baptize them. And now behold, these are the words which ye shall say, calling them by name, saying: Having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen” [3 Nephi 11:23-25]. When I was baptized into the LDS church, the baptismal prayer was, “Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you in name of the Father...” When I was rebaptized, I was rebaptized by one who had authority from Christ. Therefore, in that baptism, the words were, “Having authority of Jesus Christ...”

If all you are going to do is baptize someone again according to the LDS pattern with a commission in a church, don't bother doing it. But if you follow these principles, and if the Spirit empowers you to baptize, then baptize having authority from Christ. And follow His words. We've deviated long enough. It's time to return.

“And then shall ye immerse them in the water, and come forth again out of the water. And after this manner shall ye baptize in my name; for behold, verily I say unto you, that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one; and I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one. And according as I have commanded you thus shall ye baptize” [3 Nephi 11:26-28].

I'm telling you in the name of the Lord, that that commandment is renewed again, by Him, today to you. This is His command. Do it on this wise. Any-- ANY who desire to be baptized, should be baptized. If you have this authority and you practice this, and anyone comes to you, baptize them. Refuse no one. Freely you get from God, therefore, freely give to others. Do not charge to perform an ordinance. The ordinance is between them and God and they

need to have it performed between them and someone God has asked to do it. You become the people God asks to do it.

Before baptism, teach them the doctrine of Christ, which Christ immediately discusses following His instruction on baptism.

“Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you, I will declare unto you my doctrine. And this is my doctrine, and it is the doctrine which the Father hath given unto me; and I bear record of the Father, and the Father beareth record of me, and the Holy Ghost beareth record of the Father and me; and I bear record that the Father commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent and believe in me. And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God. And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and I bear record of it from the Father; and whoso believeth in me believeth in the Father also; and unto him will the Father bear record of me, for he will visit him with fire and with the Holy Ghost” [3 Nephi 11:31-35].

That’s the purpose of the baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost. The doctrine of Christ is connected to this so that once baptized, you can have the testimony of the Father concerning His Son shed upon you by the power of the Holy Ghost.

“And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things. And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them. Therefore, go forth unto this people, and declare the words which I have spoken, unto the ends of the earth” [3 Nephi 37-41].

This is Christ’s doctrine-- nothing more, and certainly nothing less.

The doctrine of Christ requires that we repent and be baptized. This is the sign He asks to demonstrate faith in Him. Faith requires action, or dwindles and is lost. The importance to the Lord that we act on His doctrine cannot be overstated. Repentance and baptism are directly related to salvation and cannot be left undone.

Christ declared His doctrine in 3 Nephi 11:32-40. His doctrine came from His Father, and mentions baptism four times. Only the first is positive. The three subsequent times, it is negative. The first time: *“And whoso believeth in me, and is baptized, the same shall be saved; and they are they who shall inherit the kingdom of God” [verse 33].*

The second time: *“And whoso believeth not in me, and is not baptized, shall be damned”* [verse 34].

The third time: *“And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and become as a little child, and be baptized in my name, or ye can in nowise receive these things”* [verse 37].

And the fourth time: *“And again I say unto you, ye must repent, and be baptized in my name, and become as a little child, or ye can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God”* [verse 38].

This is a 3:1 ratio of negative warning to positive promise. I do not believe the Lord or His Father are negative. This approach is more reflection on us, than on Them. God is extraordinarily positive. But we need the clarity of being told the downside, and to be warned because unfortunately, a positive promise does not adequately motivate us.

Immediately following His doctrine, Christ warns against rejecting, changing, adding to or altering His doctrine. *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, that this is my doctrine, and whoso buildeth upon this buildeth upon my rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against them. And whoso shall declare more or less than this, and establish it for my doctrine, the same cometh of evil, and is not built upon my rock; but he buildeth upon a sandy foundation, and the gates of hell stand open to receive such when the floods come and the winds beat upon them”* [verse 39-40].

His doctrine also includes this commandment: *“Therefore, go forth unto this people, and declare the words which I have spoken, unto the ends of the earth”* [verse 41]. This is what He commanded to be declared unto the ends of the earth before the sermon that we got at Bountiful that mirrored the Sermon on the Mount. If you believe this doctrine of Christ, you’re required to be baptized and then declare Christ’s doctrine to others.

The first time I was visited by the Lord, He showed me just how significant baptism is to abide the day of His return. He showed me baptism is of central importance to preparing for His return. What He revealed did not seem to involve the baptism offered by the LDS church. At the time, I was a devout Latter-Day Saint and did not understand how that could be possible. He revealed future events and therefore, for me to understand, more time needed to pass. The things I saw did not appear to give any greater meaning to baptism offered by the LDS church than baptism by any other denomination. I’ve since come to understand that the form of baptism in the LDS church has been changed and no longer conforms to the doctrine of Christ. Like all other churches, that institution declares both more and less than Christ’s doctrine and claims to establish it as His.

In the intervening years I’ve come to see that the baptism offered by you, this people, appears to be the only one offered on earth that meets the requirements of what I was shown by the Lord years ago. For this reason, it is important for us to baptize as many as will accept the doctrine of Christ. Since we do not ask others to become part of a new institution nor demand they accept anything other than the doctrine of Christ, we can and should baptize anyone willing. We must invite others to join us in baptism. However great

or little our success, others must be invited. Right now, what is most important is to preach the doctrine of Christ and baptize people, so that we at least have someone living at the Lord's return.

Baptism began before 1830. While the mode of baptism by immersion remained constant, both the language and the purposes changed. The original baptism prayer set out in the church *Articles and Covenants* used the identical prayer found in the *Book of Mormon*. The words of the prayer, after calling the initiate by name, included "Having authority given me of Jesus Christ, I baptize you..." and so on. Those words were changed in the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants* to "Having been commissioned of Jesus Christ, I baptize you..." and so on. Once altered, the words were never changed back. The *Book of Mormon* commends one baptismal prayer given by Jesus Christ, and the *Doctrine and Covenants* commends a different prayer.

Proxy baptism of the living for the dead was added in 1840. Originally proxies of either sex could be baptized for both men and women. That later changed, and vicarious proxy work could be done on behalf of the same sex only.

The purpose of baptism grew from remitting sins and joining the church to include rebaptism as a means for rededication and purification, and rebaptism for the healing of the sick. Emma Smith was rebaptized in October 1842 for her health. In April of 1842, another additional clarification limited baptism and rebaptism for rededication for the living to be performed in living waters, like a lake, stream or river. Baptism for the dead or for the healing of the sick were only to be performed in a temple font. So you see, the practice of baptism expanded while Joseph was alive, even though it was perhaps the most stable feature of the original.

There was an example taken from the Book of Mormon in which Alma, who had been ordained in the court of King Noah-- he was chosen precisely because he was wicked. Alma, who probably had a line of authority that was compromised by wickedness that had intervened, went out to baptize Helam. And before he did so, he asked Heaven to give him the power to baptize. Okay? He got the power to baptize, and he baptized Helam.

Everyone who has been ordained in the LDS tradition, who fits in the category that President Boyd Packer in General Conference lamented (that we have done a good job of spreading the authority of the priesthood, but we've done a poor job of getting power in the priesthood)-- go out and obtain from Heaven the connection that gives the power in the priesthood. And let's have those who get the power from Heaven, let's have them go out and baptize again so that we know it is done with power and not done merely with an authoritative tradition, lacking in power that cannot be accepted by Heaven.

The evidence of Alma's authoritative baptism was the outpouring of the Spirit. There had been those who have been baptized and spent their life in mormonism, or some other sect mormon-related, who say they never felt like they had the confirmation of the Spirit. They have gone out, sought for, obtained power from Heaven, baptized, and the ordinances had

an effect upon people. The purpose of renewing baptism is to take what may be a hollow gesture performed by people who have authority with no power, and turn it into an event with power that connects people to Heaven, so that we can renew the Restoration like it was renewed in the days of Alma, through Alma and in the model of the *Book of Mormon*.

I have learned, for example, that there were 24 people baptized on a single Saturday morning in the Boise River. Those were Latter-Day Saints renewing baptismal covenant-making between themselves and God. They didn't intend I think, by that, to depart from membership in the LDS church, but they did intend to reconfirm their commitment to the Lord. And I believe there's *Book of Mormon* precedent for that. I used the example of Alma and Helam from the *Book of Mormon* in which Alma, who had been ordained in the absolutely corrupt court of King Noah (he was ordained precisely because he was one of the priests that would be wicked with King Noah), decided that he was going to repent and he was going to renew his covenant. Before baptizing Helam, he prayed and asked God to give him the power to baptize. It was poured out, he baptized him, and despite the fact that the ordination was defective from an institutionally corrupt place, the baptism was honored and both of them received an outpouring of the Spirit.

If you are unconvinced by your original baptism, have someone renew their priestly ordination by petitioning to Heaven to give power to them. When the power is given, then go out and get baptized again, this time not just by the authority of the priesthood, but also by the authority of Heaven-- the power of Heaven to renew a covenant. Renew the covenant of baptism as a sacrament between you and God, and then attend whatever church you will.

Christ lives. He is the One who redeemed all of us. He has a rightful claim as the Father of us all. In the resurrection, we come forth out of the grave as His children because He purchased, with His blood, our continued life. We symbolize that when we're baptized by going under the water and coming up again to be born again a new creature in Christ, as a preliminary ceremonial, necessary sign that we accept Him.

Take a look at *Doctrine and Covenants*, section 68, beginning at verse 25:

"And again, inasmuch as parents have children in Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized, that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents. For this shall be a law unto the inhabitants of Zion, or in any of her stakes which are organized. And their children shall be baptized for the remission of their sins when eight years old, and receive the laying on of the hands" [verses 25-27].

We believe and practice this doctrine of Christ. We practice baptism by immersion in living waters, meaning lakes, rivers, streams and oceans, where there is life. We prefer living waters for a living ordinance. We have authority from God to perform baptism and other ordinances, such as the sacrament. But we are not jealous with our authority and are willing to share it with any man who is willing to accept and follow the doctrine of Christ.

As to the commandment to be baptized, even Jesus Christ went to be baptized by John *“to fulfill all righteousness”* (Matthew 3:15). *“And now, if the Lamb of God, he being holy, should have need to be baptized by water, to fulfil all righteousness, O then, how much more need have we, being unholy, to be baptized, yea, even by water!”* [2 Nephi 31:5].

If any of you want to be baptized, you can request it through our website and someone local will respond. Baptism is an ordinance between you and Christ, and does not mean you are joining a formal institution, because we have no institution.

Christ’s simple command to “follow me” was given repeatedly. Three times it’s recorded in Matthew, twice it’s recorded in Mark, once in Luke, and twice in John. Christ showed the way, and as part of that He was baptized to, according to his own mouth, “fulfill all righteousness.” It was only after Christ was baptized that the Father commended Jesus and said He was well pleased. Christ also had His disciples baptize His followers. You can read about that in John, chapter 4.

Christ spoke to Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, and converted him by that contact. Following his conversion, Saul was healed of blindness, renamed Paul, and immediately baptized. Paul tied baptism to resurrection in Romans, chapter 6. He declared that to be baptized is to put on Christ, in Galatians 3. There is only one faith, and it is in only the one Lord whom we worship, and it requires one baptism to be included in the body of believers, according to Ephesians. Peter explained that baptism saves us in 1 Peter, chapter 3.

Christians who follow Christ will all be baptized. If you’ve not been baptized or would like to be baptized again, there are those who have authority to administer the ordinance who will travel to you, or there are some locally who are available to perform the ordinance. The ordinance is free, the service is provided without any charge or expectation of any gift or donation.

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The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver’s *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #9 entitled “Marriage and Family” given in St. George, UT on July 26th, 2014 and Talk #10 entitled “Preserving the Restoration” given in Mesa, AZ on September 9th, 2014;
- His conference talk entitled “The Doctrine of Christ,” given in Boise, ID on September 11th, 2016;
- A Q&A session entitled “A Visit with Denver Snuffer” held on May 13, 2015;
- A KUTV television interview that aired on June 15th, 2015;
- The presentation of Denver’s paper entitled “Was There an Original,” given at the Sunstone Symposium on July 29, 2016;
- A talk entitled “Zion Will Come” given near Moab, UT on April 10th, 2016; and

- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #1 given in Cerritos, CA on September 21st, 2017 and Talk #2 given in Dallas, TX on October 19th, 2017.

Podcast Episode 8: Baptism of Fire

QUESTION: What is the baptism of fire, and what is its effect on man?

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DENVER: I've been asked to comment about the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost, a subject that I tend generally to avoid, because it creates more conflict because of strongly held opinions than it ever should. But I'll take a run at it.

In James 5 verse 14 (I'm talking about the King James version of the Bible throughout in this response) it says if you've got any sick among you, have the elders come and pray and anoint with oil. Well, that's followed up in the verse next to that, 15, that it is the "prayer of faith" that will save the sick, "*...and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*" The reason why the sins are forgiven is because the act of healing, the process of healing by the "prayer of faith" invoking the power of the Holy Ghost, means that when the Holy Ghost comes upon the person, one of its acts is to purge from sin. The inner vessel is cleansed. The Holy Ghost cannot abide in an unclean vessel, and so the Holy Ghost cleanses the person, the inner vessel, before the healing takes place.

This is exactly like what happened when Christ healed in Matthew chapter 9. He begins by forgiving the sins of the lame person. That produced some criticism, and He asked which is easier, to say your sins are forgiven or, in verse 5, to say arise, take up your bed and walk? And then the person was healed, but he was healed and his sins were forgiven because the Holy Ghost is a purgative. That's why it's called "fire." Because fire is a purgative element.

If you want to sterilize a blade, you expose it to fire. Fire has a purgative effect that the Holy Ghost represents. In the process of receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost and the visitation of fire, it's not necessary that something dramatic happen. In 3 Nephi 9:20, it says because of the faith of the Lamanites they "*were baptized with fire and with the Holy Ghost and they knew it not.*" Their sins got forgiven them. Their inner vessel got cleansed. They accepted and had poured out upon them the forgiveness of sins. But that doesn't mean that something dramatic happened or something notable to them happened. It means that their inner vessel was cleansed by the Holy Ghost. Their sins were forgiven.

On the other hand, in Acts 2:1-4, on the day of Pentecost, something dramatic did happen that the people could actually observe. In verse 2 it refers to a rushing of wind that everyone felt, noted-- it was apparent to them. In verse 3 it says there were "cloven tongues of fire" that were visible. These things were symbols of the inner presence of the purgative nature of the Holy Ghost. They weren't the Holy Ghost, and they weren't the baptism of fire. They were, however, evidence, outward evidence that some inner cleansing had taken place. It is that inner cleansing that is the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost.

Another example of a visible manifestation of the inner cleansing happens in Helaman chapter 5, where it describes a pillar of fire that descended upon Nephi and Lehi who were

in the Lamanite prison. And that was a manifestation-- a visible manifestation for those people who were there-- of the power of the Holy Ghost cleansing these two men. They were pure vessels. They were people to whom those they were missionary-ing should have given heed, should've listened, should've repented.

Another physical manifestation of it is in Exodus chapter 34. When Moses returns from speaking with the Lord, verse 29 of Exodus 34 says his face was shining. And in the next verse it says people were afraid, and they kept away from him, in verse 30, because his face was shining, and it made them fearful. Well, what they feared was not a shining face-- it was the purity and the cleanliness of a person who was, at that moment, considerably more holy than were they. It intimidated them. But that outward manifestation of the shining face was not the power in Moses, it was the Holy Ghost. He was cleansed. He was forgiven of sin, and he had become like God in the sense that he was clean just as God is clean.

The ceremony of anointing with oil is a symbolic gesture to imitate what the Holy Ghost does. By having the face of the person who was anointed glisten, or shine, it is imitative of the presence of the Holy Ghost, which is the cleansing, the purging, the inner-vessel-fixing instrumentality used by God.

When you go to the doctrine of Christ in 3 Nephi chapter 11, it says that if you repent of your sins and they're forgiven to you by God as a result of your repentance in coming to Him and participating in the physical baptism to manifest the washing away of the sins, then you will be visited by fire and the Holy Ghost, meaning that the inner vessel will be purged as a result of the Holy Ghost's instrumentality. It doesn't mean that you have to have "cloven tongues of fire." It doesn't mean that you have to have a rushing wind. It doesn't mean that your face has to shine. All it means is that God forgives, purges, and cleanses the inner vessel through the power of the Holy Ghost, which He promises to do. But that doesn't mean that you won't, like the Lamanites, "know it not." It doesn't necessarily require that there be some physical manifestation.

And then finally one of the great examples of the fire and the Holy Ghost manifesting itself was Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, in which He, by being filled with the Holy Ghost's purgative nature, was so cleansed that those who looked upon Him saw Him as a transfigured being of light.

All of those things are manifestations of the Holy Ghost. But the power that it manifests, the most desirable thing about the fire and the Holy Ghost, the greatness of the gift, consists of cleansing of the inner vessel and forgiving the sin of the person upon whom it is shed forth.

The foregoing was recorded by Denver Snuffer in Sandy, Utah on March 4th, 2018.

Podcast Episode 9: Embracing Truth

QUESTION: As people from various religious traditions join the Restoration movement, how will that affect our understanding of the scriptures and the gospel?

DENVER: The problem is that when a new religious tradition emerges, it doesn't matter when or where, there's this predecessor culture of religion from which it emerged. And that brings with it all kinds of baggage. Well, right now the only thing that the Reformation, Restoration, Remnant-thing is contending with culturally is baggage from Mormonism. Some of it is fundamentalist, but much of it is LDS. Well, if what comes aboard next are Christians, they're going to be emerging from a completely different tradition with a completely different bundle of baggage that they'll bring aboard with them, and then we'll have to contend with that.

But at the end of the day, one of the primary issues is Luther rejected the errors of Catholicism and then preserved a Lutheran-Catholic theology. Time and time again, when Peter and James and John emerged from Judaism, they kept a great deal of the traditions of Judaism. So much so, that the debates in the New Testament reflect a conflict between those who think that you can preach Christ completely independent of the Law of Moses and those who say, "No, you've got to make a trip through the Law of Moses in conformity to the law in order to emerge on the other side as a Christian" -- the Judaizers (that's what they've been denominated), but we're no different. And the fact is that people would love to have bishops and stake presidents-- I mean, we've got our own little curiosities.

The interesting thing is that the fellowship program that has been recommended to us by a Higher Source, is almost an exact replication of what the New Testament congregations were like-- very informal, very unstructured. They had sacrament, they had baptism, and they had sharing of information and preaching. And they were diffused. In fact, the original model, because it was diffused, was far more resilient against corruption than what happened later when it all got consolidated under one umbrella, with one seat of power. As soon as you consolidate it under one seat of power, all you have to do is corrupt Rome, and the whole thing falls. But if you want to corrupt independent fellowships, you have to corrupt every single one of them because the gospel can continue to survive in a pure form, independently, everywhere. You gotta go kill every single one of them-- you have to corrupt every single one of them. And the farther along it gets and the more numerous there are of both body of teachings and believers, it becomes well nigh impossible to wreck the whole. You can wreck parts of it-- heck, parts of it are already wrecked. But you can't wreck the whole. And as long as the effort and the conferences remind people of what really matters, even where fellowships have gotten a little wonky, they have the opportunity to come, cross-pollinate, repent, return to something that's a little more authentic and simple and Christlike.

And so when we bring aboard Christians, they will present their own unique bundle of challenges. And I hope no one's gonna to turn into a Mormonizer, like the Judaizers, and try and, you know, make warmed-over refugees from Salt Lake out of them all. They might bring with them some really interesting things that are useful for us to take to the Lord.

Some sects of Christianity are a lot more demonstrative and emotional, less inhibited than Latter-day Saints.

WOMAN: Amen.

DENVER: Right. In the conference center "Can I hear an Amen!" is rude, but in some evangelicals, they'll tear your face off at the "Amen" that comes back at you.

MAN 1: Well, along those lines, previously you've mentioned not just Christians, but you start getting Buddhists, and Hindu, and other Eastern religions, and they're going to bring a perspective to the *Book of Mormon*-- Judaism is going to bring a perspective to the *Book of Mormon* and to the *Torah* and so forth that we don't grasp right now.

DENVER: Hindus can do more with the *Doctrine and Covenants* than we've ever dreamt of.

MAN 2: So, why would a Hindu do better with the *Doctrine and Covenants*?

DENVER: Because there are transcendent moments in the description of how God is above all, and He's in all, and He's through all that resonate with the entirety of the Hindu mindset, about God and the process of becoming closer and closer until finally you become one with Him in a very different way than we say you become one. But those doctrines permeate-- I mean D&C 88:84, portions of 107, 76, you go through 130, which is really just an amalgam of sayings that got collected and stuffed together-- you go through that stuff and you put on a Hindu lens and you read it, you start saying "Aum..."-- you know, I'm approaching nirvana. I'm becoming one with God.

If you have seen any of the least of these moving in their majesty, speaking about the planets and the stars and the sun, then you have seen God moving in His glory. That's a really Hindu notion.

When Jesus was an Eastern mystic, He was in effect saying, "Go within yourself, and you'll find God. The kingdom of Heaven is within you, and to fix the problem, stop with this outward behavior, and get into the heart. Don't try not to murder; instead, learn to love. Don't try not to engage in promiscuous immorality; instead, look within and find control of your passion and your love, and direct it towards God. Don't try to gather notice for yourself on the street corner; go within, and find God's approval for yourself, in your heart, in the way you live your life. Because if you find God in your private, personal devotion, then it won't matter if people say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name sake." You can rejoice, and you can be exceedingly glad because that's how they treated the prophets before you. And the prophets had found God.

There are those who (and they write and they publish garbage) that are advocating a kind of Hindu approach to finding God now. The problem with that is that the spark of God may be inside of every one of you, but God is out there, and He would like to have actual contact with you. And so it's not-- the journey is not entirely Hindu, it is not entirely within, but it is within where the spark ignites that resonates with God, and when you find God you will find out that He is other than you. He is outside of you; but He also extends within.

It's like taking a candle and lighting another candle and lighting another candle and another candle. Ultimately 100 candles later, if you bring the flame that is burning 100 candles later back to the first, you'll see that they are similar flames. They both possess identical attributes. And that's what God does. If God has a fulness-- if everything that is possible is in the possession of God, and God is everything, the only way God can increase is to make another one of Him and to let something else also be everything. And so His joy is not limited by the fact that He's full. His joy continues to increase because there is someone else who is likewise full.

These are Hindu ideas. And their religion, at the deepest level-- when they pick up the *Doctrine and Covenants* and read it, they're going to say, "Do you see what's in your scriptures?" And we'll say, "Yeah, aren't you supposed to move to Missouri?" [laughter]. So yeah, people will see things we can't see.

Mormonism announced in its founding book of scripture that it is an incomplete, markedly unfinished religion searching for more truth to achieve its destiny. The completion is to be accomplished primarily by two means: restoring lost scripture and continuing revelation. Of all faiths, Mormonism has the greatest canonical incentive to search for and embrace truth known to others. The keystone of Mormonism is the *Book of Mormon*. That book alerts its readers that there are many others from vastly different places with vastly different scriptures who are nonetheless Christ's sheep. *Book of Mormon* readers are expected to search for, welcome, and learn from them.

Early in the text we learn that our faith, like our scriptures, is unfinished, and to anticipate a flood of additional sacred texts to help remove our ignorance. The portion of the *Book of Mormon* translated by Joseph Smith is carefully censored with its greatest content withheld.

2 Nephi 29:11-12 states: "*For I command all men, both in the east and in the west, and in the north, and in the south, and in the islands of the sea, that they shall write the words which I shall speak unto them.*" We have no way to define the extent to which that has happened. Nor do we have any concept of the number of sacred records that exist somewhere among unknown others, nor any idea what truths they were given that we lack. Mormonism cannot, or at least should not, consider itself the exclusive possessor of *the* sacred canon or that there is only one canon containing God's teachings-- the Gods' teachings. There are words from Heaven spread throughout our world by deliberate planting of the Gods.

Continuing: *“For out of the books which shall be written I will judge the world, every man according to their works, according to that which is written”* [2 Nephi 29:11]. These books hold terrible importance for Mormons because we’re going to be judged by the Gods based on a comparison between our works and that which is written. With such a warning, we Mormons ought to be humble about our claims to know more than other faiths. We should be modest in thinking we are especially graced by the Gods’ words and should be anxious to scour the globe to discover the sacred texts of other cultures. In humility we should invite them to share the truths they value most with us, because we’ve shown that we will respect what they regard as sacred.

To clarify this further, the record continues: *“For behold, I shall speak unto the Jews and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the Nephites and they shall write it; and I shall also speak unto the other tribes of the house of Israel, which I have led away, and they shall write it”* [2 Nephi 29:12]. The lost ten tribes continue to compose scripture, and the records will, in time, be recovered.

This passage then continues by including yet others who are disconnected from any disclosed connection to Israel. *“And I shall also speak unto all nations of the earth and they shall write it”* [2 Nephi 29:12]. Who, when, and what was said?

“All nations of the earth” is broad enough to raise the troubling possibility that the Gods have spoken to others in India, Japan, and China, to the peoples of Persia, Africa, and native peoples of the Americas, Hawaii, Polynesia, and Australia. Imagining Gods who speak to everyone is troubling enough, but for the Gods to expect Mormons to give high regard, even canonical credibility to the records of these truly “others,” begins to buckle the knees and mangle the mantras of today’s Mormons.

An unfortunate Mormon truism is the mistaken idea that we have a better and more complete religion than all “others.” We have the most recent revelation because the Gods spoke last to us. (Uh, well, so far as we know.) Perhaps we have no reason to ever consider those outside of Mormonism as less than Mormons or the least worthy before our Gods.

This humbling revelation of the Gods’ universal attention to all mankind is reinforced by Christ’s words to the Nephites at Bountiful. He declared to them in 3 Nephi 16:1-4: *“I have other sheep, which are not of this land, neither of the land of Jerusalem, neither in any parts of that land round about whither I have been to minister.”* His declaration was every bit as disorienting to the Nephites as was His mention of “other sheep” to the Jews.

Both the *Bible* and *Book of Mormon* make it clear that bodies of “sheep” who have the great Shepherd standing before them are perplexed at the idea that He has yet others He loves as much as them. Are there no favorites? The “sheep” probably considered at least passingly, “You must love us best because you’re here visiting us, right?” But any thought that audience was special is dashed by the Lord’s next sentence:

“For they of whom I speak are they who have not as yet heard my voice; neither have I at any time manifested myself unto them. But I have received a commandment of the Father that I shall go unto them, and that they shall hear my voice, and shall be numbered among my sheep, that there may be one fold and one shepherd; therefore I go to show myself unto them” [3 Nephi 16: 2-3].

Christ was interested in unifying His “sheep.” He sought for one fold that followed only Him. There is no #1 fold among them-- no upper class or special distinct body towering above others. Christ’s visit to the Nephites was over 11 months after His crucifixion. He ministered for 40 days around Jerusalem after His resurrection, but He had nearly 11 months to visit undisclosed “other sheep” before the people of the *Book of Mormon*. For all we know, we have the record of those He visited 10th, maybe 11th. If He took as long with each group as He took with the Nephites, He had time to visit with dozens of other unidentified flocks of His “sheep.”

It’s perhaps a good thing Christ commanded them to write these sayings so we have a record clarifying that “other sheep” are indeed people completely out of view from any scripture in our possession. They exist, they were visited by Christ, they were taught by Him, they recorded what He taught, and we know nothing about any of it, apart from Christ confirming that He did visit and minister to scattered bodies of “other sheep” post-resurrection. He wanted them to become one and understand plain and precious things that have been lost from our present limited version of scripture.

What if the Gods intend to spread knowledge of how to attain divinity among all peoples? That would indeed be a task worthy of the Gods. Consider that for a moment. Have we gentile Mormons been told of God’s “other sheep” for some important reason? If so, is it to alert us that we are no more special nor in any greater possession of God’s words than many others who have been scattered around the world and are known to the Gods but unidentified to us? Is it to make us more careful about how we regard strangers? Ought it to suggest that there are our religious equals in the world? May it suggest there are perhaps religious superiors in the world? In other words, have we received news of “other sheep” to help keep Mormons humble?

If these words from Christ are not enough to make us cautious about dismissing others, in the book of Alma, there’s another reminder of how the Gods deal equally with all mankind. Alma 29:8 states: *“For behold, the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word, yea, in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have.”* The Lord is concerned about all nations, and not merely Israelites in their scattered condition. Each nation in its own tongue has been given a portion of His teachings. It is measured according to what He seeth fit that they should have.

Everyone is remembered by God, and when you close down revelation you get less. Humble people get more. *“He that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word; and he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word,*

until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until he know them in full” [Alma 12:10].

It is abundantly clear that Mormons do not know the mysteries of God in full. The farther back we look in human history, the more appears to have been lost. Earlier stages, including the patriarchal era, knew God and therefore understood His path better. How else would Enoch and Melchizedek have achieved their heavenly breakthroughs? We must at least allow for the possibility that there are “other sheep” who are much better informed than are any of us Mormons. The Gods’ wise counsel does not regulate dispensing truth on things external to us, but on what is internal to us. We determine whether we have hard hearts or open hearts. One of the ways to determine if our hearts are open and not hard is the degree to which we regard those who are “other”-- not only with respect and charity, but also curiosity.

Mormon revelation helpfully defines knowledge of the Gods’ mysteries as “riches.” That definition helps explain a prophecy about the coming return of “other sheep.” Newly awakened dormant prophets in the north countries will lead scattered flocks to the boundaries of the everlasting hills. They will bring with them “rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim,” who will welcome them [D&C 133:26-32]. This will not merely be a reunion, but an exchange of treasured wisdom, or in other words, revelation between those who have preserved sacred knowledge. That reunion, however, will depend on a body of believing Ephraimites, established in the everlasting hills, that will welcome such riches. These prophetically described people must be humble enough to be taught, and willing to appreciate sacred information from outside. Apparently, all truth can be circumscribed into one great whole.

Why aren’t people from around the world eager to teach Mormons? What would it be like if Mormons sent out missionaries to inquire if others had any great truths to share with us? We cannot learn anything new when the only sound in the conversation is our own voice. Mormons are a very hard audience-- hard of both head and heart. Most Mormons “know the church is true,” and so what else could possibly matter to them?

It calls to mind Hugh Nibley's observation about BYU students. This is Nibley:

Our search for knowledge should be ceaseless, which means that it is open-ended, never resting on laurels, degrees, or past achievements. “If we get puffed up by thinking that we have much knowledge, we are apt to get a contentious spirit,” and what is the cure? “Correct knowledge is necessary to cast out that spirit.” The cure for inadequate knowledge is “ever more light and knowledge.” But who is going to listen patiently to correct knowledge if he thinks he has the answers already? “There are a great many wise men and women, too, in our midst who are too wise to be taught; therefore, they must die in their own ignorance.” “I have tried for a number of years to get the minds of the Saints prepared to receive the things of God; but we frequently see some of them . . . [that] will fly to pieces like glass as soon as anything comes that is contrary to their traditions: they cannot stand the fire at all [If I] go

into an investigation into anything that is not contained in the Bible . . . I think there are so many over-wise men here, that they would cry 'treason' and put me to death."

That's Hugh Nibley quoting Joseph Smith. But, he asks:

"Why be so certain that you comprehend the things of God, when all things with you are so uncertain?" True knowledge never shuts the door on more knowledge, but zeal often does. One thinks of the dictum: "We are not seeking for truth at the BYU; we have the truth!" So did Adam and Abraham have the truth, far greater and more truth than what we have, and yet the particular genius of each was that he was constantly "seeking for greater light and knowledge" [See, "Zeal Without Knowledge," originally published in *Dialogue: Journal of Mormon Thought*, Summer 1978, subsequently republished in *Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless* (1978)].

I have been greatly impressed with Hinduism. There is a significant overlap in beliefs shared by Mormons and Hindus. Hinduism teaches: *The knowing Self is not born; It does not die. It has not sprung from anything; nothing has sprung from It. Birthless, eternal, everlasting, and ancient, It is not killed when the body is killed* [S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upanishads*, Katha 1.2.18, (Harper, New York: 1994) p. 73]. This compares interestingly with Joseph Smith's statement found in D&C 93:29: "*Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth was not created or made, neither indeed can be.*"

There may be important potential Hindu contributions on the topic of the eternal nature of man's existence that could be of worth to Mormons—if we did not regard them as deluded pagans. Rather than invite a Hindu over to listen to our family home evening lessons, we may obtain greater benefit by asking them over to teach us a lesson.

Long before the Sermon on the Mount taught us to bless those who curse us, and do good for those who hate us [Matt 5:44], *The Dhammapada* taught: *Let us live in joy, never hating those who hate us.* And when Christ said in that same Sermon on the Mount: "*And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?*" [Matt 7:3], several centuries earlier, the writings of Buddha put it this way: *Do not give your attention to what others do or fail to do; give it to what you do or fail to do.*

What higher light illuminated Buddha when he spoke those words? Was it the same light that illuminated our Lord? Well, our Mormon scripture puts all light and truth into one, singular source for this world. That source is the Son of God.

"*For the word of the Lord is truth, and whatsoever is truth is light, and whatsoever is light is Spirit, even the Spirit of Jesus Christ. And the Spirit giveth light to every man that cometh into the world; and the Spirit enlighteneth every man through the world, that hearkeneth to the voice of the Spirit*" [D&C 84:44-46]. Notice this is without any restriction on who can receive the light of the Spirit. "Every man that cometh into the world" receives equally. There is no individual, in any corner of the world, who does not have equal access to obtain "truth" and

“light” from that same Source, who is Jesus Christ. If any soul in any age hearkens, or listens and follows the “voice of the Spirit,” they are in communication with Jesus Christ. To them He bestows light.

The Gods of Mormonism literally mean it when they proclaim: *“He doeth nothing save it be plain unto the children of men; and he inviteth them all to come unto him and partake of his goodness; and he denieth none that come unto him, black and white, bond and free, male and female; and he remembereth the heathen; and all are alike unto God, both Jew and Gentile”* [2 Ne. 26:33]. All, even those swarthy heathens, are included within the ambit of the Mormon Gods’ concern. They speak through the Spirit the same truths to all mankind and have done so since the beginning of creation.

To Mormons the Gods declare: *“I am no respecter of persons”* [D&C 38:16]. To the Hindus the Gods declare: *“None are less dear to me and none are more dear”* [*The Bhagavad Gita*]. Both the Mormon and Hindu Gods respect all mankind equally-- that means all mankind, including the heathen. And none are above others.

We are here to learn. We should rejoice at any chance the Gods give to us to become better informed about Their mysteries. The truth, or rich treasures, from around the world will come to those who welcome it.

One of Islam’s great thinkers taught: *“We ought not be embarrassed of appreciating the truth and of obtaining it wherever it comes from, even if it comes from races distant and nations different from us. Nothing should be dearer to the seeker of truth than the truth itself, and there is no deterioration of the truth, nor belittling either of one who speaks it or conveys it”* [From Abu Yusuf Ya’qub ibn ‘Isaq as-Sabbah al-Kindi (“al-Kindi”) (801-873), known as the father of Islamic or Arab philosophy].

There is a Cherokee prayer: *“Oh Great Spirit, help me always to speak the truth quietly, to listen with an open mind when others speak, and to remember the peace that may be found in silence.”* We speak too much and too loudly, and we listen too little.

We must return to the innocent, child-like quest for the truth where “others” are not dreaded but welcomed with curiosity. We should attract, not repel others by the interest we have for discovering truth, whatever truth they have to offer. Plato observed: *“We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy is when men are afraid of the light.”*

There are indeed “other sheep” who belong to God; they should be welcomed, not scorned. If we do our part, we can awaken and arise and seek for a covenant from God, and then receive in turn from Them “rich treasures” of knowledge. In their present form, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Taoism have not preserved a Christ-centered tradition. Perhaps if we were to recover earlier writings from these faiths in an unaltered form we would find Christological centers were once part of them all. The post-resurrection visit to the Nephites suggests that possibility.

Because of its self-declared lack, the original version of Mormonism, with its confidence and curiosity, remains the *only* faith with any potential to unite within it all truth; therefore, by extension, the unrealized potential to also unite all people.

MAN 3: So you talked about finding truth in other cultures, other religions. You also touched on the idea that there may be truth, but there's also error, in all other religions. So what keys of knowledge, what tools do you use to help discern between truth and error?

DENVER: The most correct measuring stick, in my view, is the *Book of Mormon*. And as long as you have the *Book of Mormon* you have the ability to make a comparison. And if something reaffirms something I find there, then I regard that as having passed the test. If it contradicts that, then I regard that as having failed the test. And if it harmonizes with it, but it extends it beyond anything known to me, then I've got something to pray about. Because the ultimate arbiter of truth is God.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's extemporaneous remarks made during a meeting of the *Christian Reformation Lectures* planning committee on March 4th, 2017; and
- From the presentation of Denver's paper entitled "Other Sheep Indeed," given at the Sunstone Symposium on July 29, 2017.

Podcast Episode 10: Tithing

QUESTION: What is the proper way to handle tithing? What should tithes and offerings be used for, and what should they not be used for?

DENVER: Unlike the institutional Christianity of the 1500s, early Christians were called the *ecclesia*, meaning “a congregation or an assembly.” But early Christians were not institutional and certainly not hierarchical. The first century of Christianity had no formal organization and no central control. Christians met informally in small groups and worshipped together in homes or public places. In this earliest form, small groups led by both men and women, who were called *diákonos*, a word that is translated into English as either “deacon” or “deaconess,” that Greek word means “servant.” It was in these home meetings where original Christians worshipped and learned of Christ and Christianity.

Original Christians had no professional clergy. They operated in a way akin to a method described in the *Book of Mormon*:

"And when the priests left their labor to impart the word of God unto the people, the people also left their labors to hear the word of God. And when the priest had imparted unto them the word of God they all returned again diligently unto their labors; and the priest, not esteeming himself above his hearers, for the preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner; and thus they were all equal, and they did all labor, every man according to his strength. And they did impart of their substance, every man according to that which he had, to the poor, and the needy, and the sick, and the afflicted..." [Alma 1:26-27].

This is how I believe Christianity ought to be practiced today, without a professional clergy diverting tithes and offerings that ought to be used to help the poor, needy, sick, and afflicted. We need to, and can return to, those early days of Christianity.

There was a remarkable event that occurred during the last two weeks of Christ's life. I want to read [to] you and then talk about that:

"And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? None is good, save one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, [that] thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

“Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken” [Luke 18:18-24, 31-34].

That incident occurred when Christ changed the trajectory of His ministry and determined to go up to Jerusalem to be killed. And He knew that’s what He was doing. He invited the young man to “dispose of your property, give it to the poor, and come and follow me.” In the scriptures Luke calls this fellow “a certain ruler.” Matthew calls him “the young man.” Mark describes him as “one who came running.” John doesn’t mention him at all.

What if he had done as Christ invited him to do? He would have been with Christ during the final two weeks of His life. He would have seen Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem. He would have heard the crowds shout, “Hosanna!” He would have heard Christ denounce the scribes and pharisees as hypocrites in the temple. He would have been there for the anointing of Christ to prepare Him for His death. He would have eaten dinner and seen Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. He would have been there when the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper was first introduced by Christ. He would have witnessed the crucifixion. He would have seen the resurrected Lord. And perhaps, most importantly, we would know his name, because he wouldn’t have been able to participate in all those events and remain unnamed in scripture. Now, it’s possible, had he accompanied them, that we would have another gospel having been written by him, as yet another witness of Christ’s passion and resurrection. Instead, he left sorrowful because he cared for his riches.

What Christ asks of us today is no different than what Christ asked of the unnamed man who left sorrowful as he turned to head to Jerusalem. It’s never convenient to follow Christ. It’s never without its anxieties and its sacrifices.

There is a small group of us who believe as we do, in an original form of Christianity. We believe in gathering tithes and donations and then using them to help people among us. We don’t own any buildings, and we don’t anticipate ever owning a building, unless God commands that that new temple in Zion be built by us. But that would be the only thing. We rent places like this [with help] from people who donate to allow the rental to take place. This is being broadcast on the internet by people who have voluntarily come here, brought the resources to do it, and are broadcasting this event right now—people who came down here to prepare the way, paid their own way, and sacrificed to do it.

The only way you can have faith is through sacrifice. You can believe a lot of things, but faith requires you to act on your belief and to act consistent with that belief, which is exactly what the young man did not do. The only reason why he came to Christ as an advisor, to ask of Him, “What can I do to inherit eternal life?” is because he had confidence that Christ

could answer the question and give him the truth. He respected Christ. He believed in Him as a messenger of eternal life. But when he heard the message, he stopped short and retained whatever belief he had-- but he did not develop faith, because faith is acquired in one and only one way, and that is by sacrifice.

“And this Melchizedek, having thus established righteousness, was called the king of heaven by his people, or, in other words, the King of peace. And he lifted up his voice, and he blessed Abram, being the high priest, and the keeper of the storehouse of God; Him whom God had appointed to receive tithes for the poor. Wherefore, Abram paid unto him tithes of all that he had, of all the riches which he possessed, which God had given him more than that which he had need” [JST Genesis 14:36-39].

If you meet in homes, as the early Christians did, and if you gather your tithing (one tenth of your surplus after you have taken care of all your responsibilities, all your needs, whatever is leftover, one tenth of that is your tithe)-- after you gather your tithe, then you ought to look at your brothers and your sisters who are there in your meeting, and you ought to help those who have needs-- who have health needs, who have education needs, who have transportation needs, who have food needs, who have children that need care.

Christians should take care of the poor among them, and no one should be looking at the flock and saying, “I need your money to support myself.” Christian charities should be used to take care of the poor among you and not to engage in acquiring the cares of this world. This is why all Christian churches have become corrupt. They love money and acquiring financial security and church buildings more than caring for the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted.

Like the early Christians, we meet in homes. We ask for tithes or 10% of what you have leftover after you’ve taken care of all your needs, but anything collected is then used to help anyone in the fellowship meet their needs. We hope for there to be no poor among us because we use donations to help one another.

I should explain to those who are listening to this or participating in this for the first time, a little about this group. Everything that goes on is voluntary among us. No one is paid for any service that they provide. Tithes that are gathered among us are used for the poor. Therefore, we have no funds because the tithing money goes to assist the poor.

Tithes ought not be used to support a man. Tithes ought be used to help the poor, and the weak, and the infirm. There is enough and to spare according to the revelation given to Joseph Smith, but only if the purpose for which the tithes are paid are satisfied first-- not to enrich men. It is better to pay than to receive tithes and offerings. It is better to give than to take. And the things of heaven were never intended to be given into the hands of men so that they might profit from them. We are expected to sacrifice for God. A religion that does not require sacrifice is a religion that will not produce faith. And if there is one thing that is going to be necessary for the establishment of Zion, it is going to necessarily be faith.

You obtain it through sacrifice. You do not obtain it through adoration. You do not obtain it through the praise of men. You do not obtain it by sitting in chief seats. You don't obtain it by fairing sumptuously and administering the wealth that is surrendered to you as if you were God. It belongs to God. It is His. You should go get a job to support yourself if you're going to administer the tithes, and leave the tithes alone.

The Lord is exceptionally positive. But He is positive in stating affirmatively the standard that is acceptable to Him. *"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my [name] sake"* [Matt 5:11]. He expected us to be misunderstood, misapprehended, assessed very narrowly just as He was, cast out-- not to be handed money and to be given a chief seat, to be adored, and to be respected.

Our challenge among ourselves, however diminutive we may seem to be, priestcraft can invade our little fellowships every bit as much as it can invade multi-billion dollar institutions.

Beginning in verse 14 of D&C 70, here we have, separate and apart from the description of Zion (they're one heart, there are no poor among them, they are one people), a commandment that says in your temporal things you're going to need to be equal, otherwise the abundance and the manifestation of the Spirit is going to be withheld.

In the section about Zion, this is Doctrine and Covenants section 59, beginning at verse 18, the Lord has this to say: *"Yea, all things which come of the earth, in the season thereof, are made for the benefit and the use of man, both to please the eye and to gladden the heart; Yea, for food and for raiment, for taste and for smell, to strengthen the body and to enliven the soul. And it pleaseth God that he hath given all these things unto man; for unto this end were they made to be used, with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortion"* [verses 18-20]. Or in other words, *excess*, meaning "wealth"; *extortion*, meaning "to compel the poor."

"I am willing to give unto you some charitable thing if you will...." The poor are not to be extorted. It's all His! And He gave it for our use, and our enjoyment, and our betterment, and our blessing. He did not give it to give me power over you.

Moses 7:18 we read before, "One heart, one mind, dwell in righteousness, no poor among you." I know you're all very religious, or you wouldn't be here. Can you be one because you believe in the theory of equality? Can you be one because you believe in the theory of sharing with one another? Can you be one because you believe in the doctrine, or must you act? James chapter 2, beginning at verse 14:

"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith,

and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works” [verses 14-18].

There is an enormous gulf between the content of the material that was revealed to us in the restoration and the religion that you practice daily. That gulf is going to need to disappear.

In order to get from where we are to where we need to be, you can't do it inside the institutions that have trapped your minds. I am not preaching against your faith if you're some fundamentalist, some RLDS member, some Latter-day Saint. Honor your churches. But by degrees you need to begin the process of, by your works, showing what your faith is.

One of the things that happened as a substitute for the law of consecration was a replacement commandment that required the payment of tithes. Doctrine and Covenants section 64, beginning at verse 23 says: *“Behold, now it is called today until the coming of the Son of Man, and verily it is a day of sacrifice, and a day for the tithing of my people; for he that is tithed shall not be burned at his coming.”* This is the statement from which that cliché that “tithing is fire insurance” is drawn from-- because if you're tithed you won't be burned at His coming.

“For after today cometh the burning—this is speaking after the manner of the Lord—for verily I say, tomorrow all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble; and I will burn them up, for I am the Lord of Hosts; and I will not spare any that remain in Babylon. Wherefore, if ye believe me, ye will labor while it is called today” [verses 23-25].

I want to, therefore, encourage you to pay tithing. And I want you, if you are satisfied in paying that tithing to whatever church or organization you belong to, to continue doing so. The act of giving that as an offering to the Lord, I don't think, requires you to supervise what happens with it once you give it to someone. I think they become accountable. For you, it is an act of faith. For them, it is a matter of accountability.

However, some of us are forbidden from paying tithing to our church of choice. Some of us simply refuse to pay tithing because they don't trust the church. Some refuse because they believe the church has neglected the poor. Some refuse to pay tithing because church leaders of the LDS church treat the return that they get on the tithing as investment income and then use it to build shopping malls and buy land holdings.

And by the way, on that, I believe the Lord anticipated that notion in one of the parables that He taught. In Matthew chapter 25, He says:

“The kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and

straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents” [verses 14-16].

The one that had two, he went, and he traded, and he got two. The one that had one, he went and buried it in the earth.

He tells this parable, and then He comes back. The one that turned the five into another five, he says, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant. You’ve been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things” [verse 21]. The one that did two, he gained another two. He commended him, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant. You’ve been faithful over a few things, I’ll make you ruler over many things” [verse 23].

And then the one that had the one that buried it and didn’t do anything to get a return for the Lord, he said:

“I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury” [verses 24-27].

In other words, He owns it. He owns it; He owns the interest, He owns the investment, He owns it. In this parable there is no such thing as investment income. So far as I know, the purpose of the Lord is not well-served by importing Tiffany’s to Salt Lake City, or Porsche Design, or the Rolex outlet in the shopping mall.

There is no divine purpose in neglecting the poor. The purpose primarily of collecting the tithes, and of the yield upon it, is to bless and to benefit the lives of those who are in need.

So, given the fact that you are commanded to pay tithing, and some of you refuse to do so because of the particular circumstances you see out there, and given the fact that the Lord has said “organize yourselves,” I would suggest that one small increment that you could begin, is for you to collect your own tithing. You manage it yourselves among yourselves. You assist the poor who are among you. You, as a group of common believers, pay your tithing into a common fund. And then by the voice of your own group dispose it by common consent, so that everyone knows everything that comes in and everything that goes out, and you begin to have no poor among you. You provide for those who need housing, and food, and clothing, and healthcare, and education, and transportation. And you do it without a leader. Do it by the voice of your own common consent, by your unanimous approval. You do it by united agreement.

You want to know how far you are at this moment, and you want an accurate barometer of what lack you yet? Then organize yourselves, and you, unitedly, gather your tithings into the

storehouse that you maintain, and you, by your common consent, take care of those who are poor among you. You will learn so much, so quickly, that it will astonish you.

And the woman's voice should be equal with the man's. There should not be some ruler among you gentiles saying, "It's this way, it's gotta be this way. I prayed about it. The Lord said I get the money." If that's the way in which you conduct it, you're no better than the rest of the gentiles. You may as well stay in whatever organization you have at present. You may as well pay to support red Cadillac Escalades and shopping malls. You may as well just do that. Dump your money where it does no good.

I know, I know. There are lots of people that get benefitted in lots of ways. But that doesn't excuse the money that those strongmen spend on themselves. The highest paid clergies in the world manage the various denominations of the Latter-day Saint movements. It's just the way it is. I hate to break it to you.

Take the money that the Lord intended for the poor, and you administer it for the poor among you. If you try this experiment, and if there is someone among you who receives rather than gives because they have not, then let me remind those who receive of another statement made in the revelations of this dispensation in Doctrine and Covenants section 42:42: *"Thou shalt not be idle; for he that is idle shall not eat the bread nor wear the garments of the laborer."* If you're the beneficiary, not only should you be grateful, but do what you can in turn.

I talked about paying and administering your own tithes. I want to remind you if you do that, that none of it should go to the priests. None of it should go to any other than to helping with the poor. I talked about organizing yourselves, collecting your own tithing, and managing it yourselves among yourselves. And for you to assist the poor who are among you, and to do this by the voice of your own local group. Do it by common consent. And to provide for those who need housing, food, clothing, healthcare, education, and transportation. Do it without a leader, but by the voice of the united agreement of you all.

There is no reason ever to pay for priesthood service. Serving should require sacrifice, always and continually. We do not pay for ministers. I would recommend that if you choose to participate in a tithing group, that you do it in the same manner that was described in Grand Junction, and you do it among yourselves. Community is necessary. I don't know how you can bear one another's burdens without administering your own tithes, without administering your own fast offerings, without doing things to help people in need. It's hard, I think, to give away what you have to an organization that is purchasing real estate and farms and purchasing and developing shopping centers, and then have anything left over to assist with the poor among you. But if you choose to do that, that's fine, too. But try and care for those among you who have needs.

"There shall be many which shall teach after this manner, false and vain and foolish doctrines, and shall be puffed up in their hearts, and shall seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord" [2 Nephi 28:9].

How might one better “hide their counsels from the Lord” than to conceal all the money that’s gathered from the tithes, all the revenues that are paid to the authorities of the church, and even admonish the paid mission presidents that they must never disclose the revenue benefits that they are receiving? How better to hide your counsel than to conceal it from the very sheep that are being shorn by the people who sit in positions of authority? The church “seeks deep to hide their counsels.” None of them should do it. They should come clean.

“Seek[ing] deep to hide their counsels from the Lord; and their works shall be in the dark” [verse 9], is exactly what the authorities of the LDS church now do. It is exactly a description of the hierarchy of Mormonism. Put your budgets online! Disclose your revenue! Show us what you do with the poor! *“Seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord; their works shall be in the dark,”* indeed.

“And the blood of the saints shall cry from the ground against them. They have all gone out of the way; they have become corrupted. Because of pride, and because of false teachers, and false doctrine, their churches have become corrupted, and their churches are lifted up; because of pride they are puffed up. They rob the poor because of their fine sanctuaries; they rob the poor because of their fine clothing; and they persecute the meek and the poor in heart, because in their pride they are puffed up. They wear stiff necks and high heads; yea, and because of pride, and wickedness, and abominations, and whoredoms, they have all gone astray save it be a few, who are the humble followers of Christ; nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because they are taught by the precepts of men” [2 Nephi 28:10-14].

God loves all of us, and the agenda that you have, and the people that you can affect, and the relief that you can administer, and the needs that go in front of your eyes day by day, are uniquely yours. And the relief that you can grant to those around you, that’s yours. It was given to you by God as a gift. Don’t harden your heart. The relief that people need sometimes can only come from one source, and that is you, under the inspiration of the Spirit, relieving the burdens of those around you.

Be like your Master. Do what you can for those around you who are infirm. They are here in abundance-- the broken-hearted, the families that are in need. If you want to be saved, help the Lord save others. Not by preaching and clamoring and demanding that they view the world like you do, but by giving them a hand. Your most powerful sermon can be in the effort that you make and the time that you take to let people know that you care about them.

If you would like to repent of your sins, take a look around at those in need, and do what you can for them, because you’ve begun the first step. When your heart is like Him, then you open up so that He can enter in. And when your heart is unlike Him, well there’s no room, except if He break it, which He will do.

When He appears, you need to be like Him. Lay down the burden of guilt. Lay down the burden of sin. Stop focusing on that stuff, and become like Him. And you become like Him by doing His works. And you do His works by serving others, by ministering to the needs of others. And when you do that, it is a natural byproduct of that process ordained by laws established before the foundation of the world, that light and truth will grow within you. You will have compassion when you minister with compassion to the needs of others. Your heart will open to, and receive within it, light and truth when your conduct reflects the same conduct as a merciful and holy and just God, whom you claim to worship. Worship Him by imitating Him. Worship Him by doing His works. Worship Him by making a living sacrifice. Set aside the junk that occupies you, and go do something that is holy for someone else.

However mundane and trivial it may seem to you, when you relieve the suffering of other people, something changes in you-- you become different, you become better, you become more like our Lord. Because when you give whatever it is you give away, you get more in return. But make sure that what you give goes to relieve the suffering of others. *Relieve the suffering of others.*

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #3 entitled "Repentance," given in Logan, UT on September 29th, 2013;
- Talk #4 entitled "Covenants," given in Centerville, UT on October 6th, 2013;
- Talk #6 entitled "Zion," given in Grand Junction, CO on April 12th, 2014;
- Talk #10 entitled "Preserving the Restoration," given in Mesa, AZ on September 9th, 2014;
- His talk entitled "Zion Will Come," given near Moab, UT on April 10th, 2016;
- His talk entitled "Opening Remarks," given at the Covenant of Christ Conference in Boise, ID on September 3rd, 2017; and
- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #1, given in Cerritos, CA on September 21st, 2017; and Talk #2, given in Dallas, TX on October 19th, 2017.

Podcast Episode 11: Sacrament

QUESTION: What is the proper way to administer the sacrament? Who can administer it, how should it be done, and what does it mean?

DENVER: Beginning in mid-November 1856 through April 1857, President Young forbade the entire church from receiving the sacrament.

It's a commandment that we partake of the sacrament. It's a commandment that we do it and do it frequently. In fact, if you read the record in 3rd Nephi, one of the things the Lord did was to administer the sacrament with surprising regularity. One time He did it in a miraculous manner because it was that important an ordinance to have take place.

Every time you partake of the sacrament, it's a reminder of the promise that there will at last be some great wedding feast. It's not just in remembrance of the blood and of the body, but it's also a preliminary to the final feast that the Lord intends to offer.

"Yea, a feast of fat things, of wine on the lees well refined, that the earth may know that the mouths of the prophets shall not fail; Yea, a supper of the house of the Lord, well prepared, unto which all nations shall be invited. First, the rich and the learned, the wise and the noble; And after that cometh the day of my power; then shall the poor, the lame, and the blind, and the deaf, come in unto the marriage of the Lamb, and partake of the supper of the Lord, prepared for the great day to come. Behold, I, the Lord, have spoken it" (D&C 58:8-12).

Did you get that? First, they invite the rich and then the learned. And the nations shall all be invited-- the wise, the noble. Doesn't say they enter in. Doesn't say they'll partake. It was prepared, after all, for the poor. And the people who will enter in, who do finally make it into Zion where they get to partake-- then shall the poor (that's who it was prepared for), the lame, the blind, and the deaf come in unto the marriage of the Lamb and partake of the supper of the Lord, prepared for the great day to come.

Well, who are the rich? Who are the learned? Who are those that are presently considered wise, and who are those that make the claim that they are the noble, the elect? They do not enter into the wedding feast in Zion.

And who is it that is the poor? Who is it that is derided, even in today's vocabulary, and accused of being lame? Who is it that is considered to be blind and misled? Who is it that is referred to as being deaf because they cannot hear and respect all the great wisdom that pours forth from these empty cisterns, having nothing but dribble to offer, quoting one another endlessly, as if one misled man on a false path can offer light to a fool following after him? I hope we are the poor. I hope I am speaking to the lame. I hope you are counted among those that are considered blind. And I hope that you have ears not for what any man

has to say, but for what the Spirit alone has to confirm to you. I hope you're deaf to everything in this world but have ears for what our Lord has to say.

As to the sacrament, only an anti-Christ would forbid you from partaking of the sacrament in the way commanded by your Lord. That is an abomination. If you get together, even if it's only in your own family, partake of the sacrament together. Let no one forbid you from partaking in remembrance of Christ, because He commanded that you do it. Follow the pattern that is given to us. In Doctrine and Covenants section 20 verse 76, one of the things that used to be practiced that has since been abandoned and ought to be renewed among you, is that when the sacrament is blessed, kneel. Kneel. Kneel with the church. Remember it. Keep it. Do the things that have been instructed in the pattern that He commanded that they be observed.

If you partake of wine and for some reason you either are opposed to alcohol, or alternatively you have some medical condition, use grape juice. Use red grape juice. Use the symbol of the blood of our Lord. I can tell you that generally, red wine is bitter for a reason. And partaking of that bitter wine in remembrance of the blood that was shed is apt.

"I the Lord say to you...You pray each time you partake of the sacrament to always have my Spirit to be with you. And what is my Spirit? It is to love one another as I have loved you. Do my works and you will know my doctrine; for you will uncover hidden mysteries by obedience to these things that can be uncovered in no other way. This is the way I will restore knowledge to my people. If you return good for evil you will cleanse yourself and know the joy of your Master" (Answer for Covenant).

Priesthood has a really limited bundle of rights and responsibilities that, at its most basic level, involves baptism and blessing the sacrament.

"Again, the husband is to hold priesthood to baptize and bless the sacrament of bread and wine in the home, and the husband and wife are to bless their children together" (Answer and Covenant).

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's talk entitled "Brigham Young's Telestial Kingdom," given at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, UT on April 18th, 2012;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #10 entitled "Preserving the Restoration" given in Mesa, AZ on September 9th, 2014;
- The presentation of "Answer and Covenant," given at the Covenant of Christ Conference in Boise, ID on September 3rd, 2017; and
- His fireside entitled "Cursed, Denied Priesthood", given in Sandy, UT on January 7th, 2018

Podcast Episode 12: Resurrection Morning

QUESTION: What happened on resurrection morning? What follows is Denver's eyewitness account of the events that transpired on Easter morning, as well as some thoughts on what those events mean for all of us.

DENVER: A little over 2,000 years ago something happened that changed the course of history. Christ was resurrected. We have in one generation of people a series of testimonies about Christ and His life, death, and resurrection.

Christ was taken captive in the Garden, and many of those who followed Him fled immediately. Peter took a little time to knock off a servant's ear, which Christ healed and rebuked Peter and told him to put away his sword. By the time He gets to being tried there are only two who hung around for the trial, and on the cross the only ones who followed Him, who remained, were women. And they stood at the feet of the cross until He passed. Upon His death there is no mention of a disciple being involved in His burial. They were cowering. They were hiding. And these were they who spent their time with Him as His chosen disciples.

Everything changed on the first day of the week when something turned cowards into men who would be willing to die for the testimony that they had that He is risen! That testimony changed the world; it changed their lives. They no longer lived as though their Master had been defeated in death. They lived as though their Master had triumphed over death, because He had. Multiple witnesses telling the same story: abject defeat, fear, and cowardice, followed by triumphant, confident, defiant belief in a risen Lord-- many of whom would go to their own deaths rather than to deny their testimony that Christ lives. You have every reason to have confidence in the fact of the resurrection of the Lord. The lives of those disciples are abundant testimony of the fact of His resurrection.

Following Christ's death He was buried and rose on the third day. I know He lives for I have seen Him. He showed me the morning of His resurrection. I testify as a witness that He rose from the dead and ascended to heaven, as the Gospels declare. Like those who wrote the New Testament, I am also a living witness the Lord rose from the dead:

When I saw His resurrection, I was surprised to see it was still dark. I had always thought it occurred at sunup, as the return of daylight symbolized the return of life. But it was dark. The Gospel of John is the only one that mentions the darkness of that morning. Even so, it never registered to me that Christ rose in the darkness of that early morning.... He did rise from the dead. We rejoice because it is true. As so many others have done before, I can add my own witness that He rose from the dead. I was shown it. It happened. He who died on the cross rose from the dead, and He lives still (Snuffer Jr., Denver C. 2010-12-24, Come, Let Us Adore Him, pp. 249, 257).

All four Gospels give accounts of Christ's resurrection:

Matthew tells of two women, both named Mary, who were first to come to the grave, where an angel informed them of the resurrection and told them to go tell others.

Mark states it was also two women, both named Mary, who arrived first to the grave where an angel informed them Christ was resurrected. Other disciples did not believe their testimony.

Luke tells of several women who saw the empty grave, were told He had risen by two angels, and then went to testify to the apostles. But the apostles thought the testimony "seemed as idle tales, and they believed them not" (Luke 24:11).

John wrote that Mary Magdalene saw, even embraced the risen Lord and related to the others her testimony of having seen Him returned to life, resurrected from the dead.

These accounts differ in details. They have similarities and differences. They are universal in the fact that Christ was seen by the women (or a woman) first, and not by His Apostles.

John's account records that Christ told Mary: 'Touch me not.' In the Joseph Smith Translation the words are changed to read: 'Hold me not' (JST-John 20:17). Joseph's change of the text was warranted. I tell you that when Mary realized it was Jesus, she embraced Him joyfully. She did not timidly reach out her hand, but she readily greeted Him with open arms, and He, in turn, embraced her.

It's difficult to describe what I saw of the incident, apart from saying that the Lord was triumphant, exultant, overjoyed at His return from the grave! She shared His joy.

I was shown the scene and do not have words to adequately communicate how complete the feelings of joy and gratitude were which were felt by our Lord that morning. As dark and terrible as were the sufferings through which He passed, the magnitude of which is impossible for man to put into words, these feelings of triumph were, on the other hand, of equal magnitude in their joy and gratitude. He had attained to the resurrection of the dead! Just as He had seen His Father do, He likewise held the keys of death and hell! I do not think it possible for a mortal to feel a fullness of either. And having felt some of what He shares with His witnesses, I know words are inadequate to capture His feelings on the morning of His resurrection.

He had the deep satisfaction of having accomplished the most difficult assignment to be given by the Father, knowing it was a benefit to all of His Father's children, and it had been done perfectly.

Mary and Christ embraced. There was nothing timid about the warm encounters she had with Him. Then He said to her, 'Hold me not' because He had to ascend, return and report to His Father. Joseph Smith was correct when he changed the language.

I then saw Him ascend to heaven. I saw the golden heavenly light glowing down upon Mary as she watched His ascent. All this happened while it was yet dark on the morning He rose from the dead. He has shown this to me and I can testify to it as a witness" (See Come, Let Us Adore Him, pp. 256-7).

The Lord's public execution was designed to humiliate Him. Onlookers were expected to have contempt for anyone executed that way. He foretold "the world shall rejoice" at His disciples' sorrow (John 16:20). In contrast, His triumphant resurrection was private. He appeared only to a few and initially only to women. He endured public shaming, reserving His greatest triumph to quiet privacy between confidants. Our Lord is meek, and although greater and more intelligent than us all, yet He condescends to speak with us in plain humility.

He is the only means for salvation. *"There shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent"* (Mosiah 3:17). Anyone who claims otherwise is deceived or dishonest. I testify of Him in a day when most people do not believe it possible for my testimony to be true. But I do testify truthfully.

As a result of celebrating Easter, I wanted to take some comments from the account of that very first day when the Lord came out of the grave. The fact that Easter is in the springtime I don't think is any accident. I think it's intended to align with the testimony of nature about the promise of eternal life, the promise of the renewal that comes every spring, and I think the Lord intended that His death and His resurrection should associate with spring. And I think it's appropriate that that be the subject that we look at today.

The incident appears in Luke chapter 24, and it begins in chapter 24: *"Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared..."* (Luke 24:1). He doesn't tell us this, but there's a detail you can find over in John chapter 20: *"The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark"* (John 20:1). All that Luke says is it was very early in the morning. John lets us know that this was not only very early in the morning, it was still dark out.

There's multiple versions of what went on on the very first day of the Lord having risen from the dead. In one account we know that the Lord Himself appeared and that, among other things, He told Mary not to "hold" Him. The King James version says, "don't touch me," but Joseph changes that in the inspired version to "don't hold me" because I think implicit in the Joseph Smith change is that she did touch Him. She was not just a witness, but she was someone who felt free to embrace Him. And He said, "don't hold me, I have to go appear to my Father and your Father."

The first witnesses of the resurrection were women. This is another confirmation that the Second Comforter is not inhibited by priestly office or limited in His ministry to the brethren. The first witnesses were women, and that should tell us something. In verse 24: *“And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not”* (Luke 24:24). Sure enough, the tomb was empty. He wasn't there any more, but they didn't see anything. So far you see the men have only the witness of an empty tomb and the testimony of the women. Perhaps faith needed to grow in the brethren before they could get what the sisters had already themselves witnessed.

We have the brilliant, the ingenious capacity for looking out over people and filtering out all the females. It's a gift. I don't know how we manage that, but we do. We do manage that. And the scriptures plainly tell a different story. And it's that different story that's our problem-- not the personal identity of the woman involved or her relation to the Lord or her obvious reaction to Him, and Joseph altering the text to say “don't hold me” as opposed to “don't touch me,” which means that he removed “don't touch me” from the text. She was touching him, and it tells you something else potentially about their relationship. Because if she was embracing and attempting to hold Him, and He was saying “I've got another appointment to keep. I'll be back, but don't hold me,” it suggests something else about what was going on there. I mean, why was she there at that point in the morning? Why was it still dark? And why did He elect that moment to come and rejoin her?

Christ could not, *could not* have done what He did if He had not had a woman who fulfilled a role in relation to Him. *She* anointed *Him* preliminary to His death and His burial. *She* was the first one to encounter Him in the resurrection. You do not get Him through what He needed to go through, without the presence of the woman taking care of some needful things in connection with that.

I would rather understate than overstate the case. But let me end by telling you Christ lives. He died, and He was resurrected. I know this to be true because, like Paul, I have seen Him. I don't tell you that to make this seem sensational. I tell you that to give you cause to believe in Him. He is real. Encountering Him as a resurrected being changed the course of history. It turned cowards into courageous, willing, and enthusiastic witnesses who faced down the Roman empire to their death. They died willingly. They died as evidence of the truth that they were testifying to. That kind of faith needs to return again to the earth. That kind of faith is possible again in our day.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #1 given in Cerritos, CA on September 21st, 2017;
- His conference talk entitled “The Doctrine of Christ,” given in Boise, ID on September 11th, 2016;

- His talk entitled “Christ’s Discourse on the Road to Emmaus,” given in Fairview, Utah on April 14, 2007; and
- Denver’s *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #7 entitled “Christ, Prototype of the Saved Man” given in Ephraim, UT on June 28, 2014.

Podcast Episode 13: Our Dispensation

QUESTION: What “great knowledge” is to be restored in our dispensation?

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DENVER: Go to *Doctrine and Covenants* Section 121. Beginning at verse 26 (these are the neglected verses because we don't pay attention to this stuff anymore): *“God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Spirit, that has not been revealed since the world was until now.”* (Not the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit has been revealed. It's the knowledge that is coming that has not yet been revealed.)

“Which our forefathers have awaited with [anxious] expectation to be revealed in the last times, which their minds were pointed to by the angels, as held in reserve for the fulness of their glory; A time to come in the which nothing shall be withheld, whether there be one God or many gods, they shall be manifest. All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, shall be revealed and set forth upon all who have endured valiantly for the gospel of Jesus Christ. And also, 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 the days of their 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—According to that which was ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before the world was, that should be reserved unto the finishing and the end thereof, when every man shall enter into his eternal presence and into his immortal rest” (D&C 121:27-32).

There is an agenda. That agenda is to be completed. It's to be completed before the coming of the Lord. And it includes a restoration of things that we have hardly yet thought about.

Abraham had the records of the fathers. Look at Abraham 1:31: *“But the records of the fathers, even the patriarchs, concerning the right of Priesthood, the Lord my God preserved in mine own hands; therefore a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the planets, and of the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers, have I kept even unto this day, and I shall endeavor to write some of these things upon this record, for the benefit of my posterity that shall come after me.”*

Since Abraham was acquainted with the priesthood that belonged to the fathers, and since Abraham had a knowledge that was reckoned from priesthood that goes back to the time of the patriarchs, he—as a consequence of possessing that—knew about the beginning of creation, knew about the planets, knew about the stars as they were made known unto the fathers.

Go back to *Doctrine and Covenants* Section 121. It's talking about our dispensation. I want to look at, beginning about verse 28: *“A time to come in the which nothing shall be withheld, whether there be one God or many gods, they shall be manifest....”* Because that's included

within the knowledge that the first fathers had. That's included with what was here at one time.

“All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, shall be revealed and set forth upon all who have endured valiantly for the gospel of Jesus Christ. And also, 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 the days of their 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—According to that which was ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before this world was, that should be reserved unto the finishing and the end thereof, when every man shall enter into his eternal presence and into his immortal rest” (D&C 121: 28-32).

Abraham is not merely talking about something—both in this verse, Abraham 1:31, as well as what we encounter later on in the book of Abraham about the various stars that were shown to him and the relationship between them and his Facsimile #2; as I recollect, that is an effort to lay out a relationship in the heavens between certain positions of glory and authority—but Abraham is testifying that it was part of the original gospel that was entrusted to the fathers and that those records were handed down to him. In *Doctrine and Covenants* Section 121 we find out that that's part of what is supposed to have been included within, and is ultimately scheduled for revelation to, those that will receive the restoration of the gospel when it is fully upon the earth in the dispensation of the fullness of times.

Abraham represents coming to the truth in a generation of apostasy. Abraham represents coming back to the light despite the fact that his fathers taught him idolatry. Abraham represents the challenge that every man who would be saved from that point forward must find themselves within, and then overcome, the idolatry of their fathers. Abraham is the prototype. And so Abraham is acknowledged by that same Jehovah who visited with the *fathers* in Adam-ondi-Ahman and identified Himself again to Abraham who, after apostasy, becomes literally the first—the first to return to the righteousness of the first fathers, the first to return to the religion that belonged in the beginning to mankind, the first to discover *“a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the planets, and of the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers”* (Abraham 1:31).

Abraham was the one who desired to be a follower of righteousness—one who possessed great knowledge, to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess greater knowledge still. It is this which made him a candidate the Lord could speak to. It's this that made him the prototype in his generation of what it takes to turn away from idolatry, to turn away from the kind of corrupt and degrading religions that were then in play on the earth—the fertility cults and the human sacrifices and the vileness that surrounded him. Fundamentally, what distinguishes Abraham and what distinguishes the covenant is the knowledge that he has. Abraham is in possession of something because Abraham knows some things that are true that relate back to the very beginning. And as a consequence of

that, those who are given the same knowledge necessarily have to belong to the same priesthood.

"In thy seed (that is, thy Priesthood)..."—because you become a son of Abraham if you take upon yourself the requirements for the covenant, you inherit that. Just as Abraham inherited it. It comes down from the beginning from the fathers.

Everyone who receives the gospel, this gospel, verse 10 of that Abraham chapter 2: *"As many as receive this Gospel shall be called after thy name..."* You ought to ask yourself, what is "this Gospel?" And are you yet in possession of it? Because it would appear that the promises made to the fathers includes rather more than what we know about as yet.

But it is nevertheless the case that it is through Joseph and Jacob, Isaac and Abraham that the promises remain. You can see that in *Doctrine and Covenants* Section 27. We only need to look at verse 10 of Section 27: *"And also with Joseph and Jacob, and Isaac, and Abraham, your fathers, by whom the promises remain..."* That is, promises are still in play right now as a consequence of what God did in covenant with Joseph, and covenant with Jacob, and covenant with Isaac, and covenant with Abraham. Those promises are still in play. This is what Moroni was talking to Joseph Smith about. And verse 11: *"As also with Michael, or Adam, the father of all, the prince of all, the ancient of days."* Promises that are in play today go all the way back to them.

The covenant which we receive will come as a consequence of *them*—what *they* got secured for *us*—promises which the Lord intends to honor. Therefore, when we are the beneficiaries of those covenants we are going, like Abraham, to have restored to us a knowledge of the beginning of creation, the planets, the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers, and as Section 121 tells us is going to be the case in the dispensation of the fullness of time.

And so the question is, how diligent ought the search be into the things of God? How carefully ought we to consider the things that have been restored to us through the prophet Joseph Smith? The fact is that this stuff is assigned to our dispensation. And I'm reading from the *Book of Mormon*, which the world does not have or accept. I'm reading from the book of Abraham, which the world does not have or accept. I'm reading from the *Joseph Smith Translation*, which the world does not have and accept. All of you have this information in front of you. All of this material has been restored through someone that we claim we honor and regard as a prophet.

If the original Mormonism needed to recover the fulness that was lost, then to revive an original, it will require a recovery of what was lost and more. If recovered, believers will be able to receive a holy spot accepted and defended by God. In that place the religion of Adam will be taught. The promised original religion includes the revelation of everything. Nothing shall be withheld. Today's Mormonism has a great deal withheld. But the religion of Abraham, and therefore the religion of Adam, included a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, as also the planets and of the stars and as they were made known unto the fathers.

The original Mormonism must grow in ancient knowledge and understanding until their understanding reaches into heaven. Not just spiritual understanding but also physical understanding of the layout of the universe. The placement of the lights in the firmament was for signs to man, and therefore were deliberately placed and contain information originally understood by Adam.

By the way, all these things were once part of the gospel—all of this, everything. In fact, the D&C says everything that's above, everything that's on, and everything that's beneath the earth. And beneath the earth means from the surface of the earth. It means those heavenly bodies that fall below the horizon and then re-emerge, like the planet Venus re-emerges. It goes under—it's the evening star, and then it's the morning star; it changes sides that you see the symbol on. All of these things were once part of the gospel. And all of these things will eventually, again, become part of the gospel once more.

"All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, shall be revealed and set forth upon all who have endured valiantly for the gospel of Jesus Christ. And also, 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 the days of their 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" (D&C 121: 29-31).

There's a message up there. It was part of the gospel; it will be restored again. But right now, faith, repentance, baptism, and treating one another kindly and preparing to be the kind of people that are worthy of preservation is far more important than all of that. But, Genesis 1:14 says all that stuff up there was given for signs, and they're talking to us. The only way you can obliterate the testimony that's up there is by our apostasy when we lose light, and we're ignorant, and we can't read it anymore. It's fixed, and it's not going to change. But we can lose light and knowledge such that we can no longer understand that testimony. Any time there's something going on in the heavens, God means something by it even if we're oblivious to it. And the challenge is to not be oblivious to it but to take it in and then assign it its proper weight.

What is going to happen is more affected by your repentance and your faith than anything else. And that's really where the hard work gets done—in the hearts, in our own hearts, in our own lives, in how we treat one another.

When this whole process was set in motion by God on the first day of creation, He had in His heart a plan that was going to unfold through every generation until the end. Three years previous to the death of Adam in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, Adam gathered his posterity together essentially to tell them goodbye. And in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, Christ came and appeared to those that had gathered there. And Adam, despite the fact that he was bowed down with great age, rose up animated by the Spirit that he was taking in from the presence of our Lord, and he prophesied whatsoever should befall his descendants to the last generation. So he was talking about, among others, *you*. That same plan that was

ordained in the heavens before the foundation of the world was revealed through Adam in prophecy in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman. And we're on schedule to keep the appointments. Whether we're going to be on one side of the divide or on the other side of the divide, we're keeping the appointment. And the times have been fixed, and the seasons unfold, and the signs that show up from time to time remind us that despite how hectic and disorganized and how ill-fitted the world may be for the fulfillment of the all prophecies, it's simply going to happen.

A new dispensation of the gospel began with Joseph Smith; it continues today. There are now more revelations and more scripture given to us by Christ. The *Book of Mormon* foretold how the Gentiles would react to new scripture:

"...many of the Gentiles shall say: A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible. Thou fool, that shall say: A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible ...And because that I have spoken one word ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another; for my work is not yet finished; neither shall it be until the end of man, neither from that time henceforth and forever. Wherefore, because ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written" (2 Nephi 29:3, 6, 9-10).

God is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

The purpose of the new dispensation is to make it possible again for mankind to know both God the Father and His Son.

Joseph is receiving in this first interview with the Angel Moroni, an announcement about the first indications of the restoration of God's intent to restore a holy family. God is telling us what He wants. He, God, wants to have upon the earth again His family. But we must respond. *We*—this is your dispensation. This is your time. You came down here with the intent of living and finding the things that will bring you back. This is your opportunity. Don't let some other group claim that it doesn't belong to you. These scriptures are only going to be fulfilled when enough people awake and arise to realize that it is devolving upon you the obligation to find, to heed, to seek, to search, to pray, to obey, and to form what is necessary in order to fulfill the promises and the covenants that were made to the fathers.

I know that the Lord knows a great deal more than do I and that very often I only figure out later what He has had in mind all along. And God is moving systematically. He is taking the measure of the Latter-day Saints, and His hand is about to move again in the affairs of men. We have a window. This is your dispensation. You are accountable. Those prophecies spoken to Joseph Smith by the Angel Moroni in his room aren't going to fulfill themselves. There has to be someone who has faith. There has to be someone who rises up. And when He sets His hand and He invites you to join in, and He wants you to know Him—when He sets that in motion, then you need to respond—not to me, not to any man—you need to

respond to Him. This is His work. He, and only He, will organize it. He, and only He, will roll it forth.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #1 entitled "Be of Good Cheer," given in Boise, ID on September 10th, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #2 entitled "Faith," given in Idaho Falls, ID on September 28th, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #4 entitled "Covenants," given in Centerville, UT on October 6th, 2013;
- The presentation of Denver's paper entitled "Was There an Original," given at the Sunstone Symposium on July 29, 2016;
- His remarks at "A Day of Faith and Connection" youth conference in UT on June 10th, 2017; and
- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #2 given in Dallas, TX on October 19th, 2017.

Podcast Episode 14: The Heavens

QUESTION: What can you tell us about the testimonies written in the heavens?

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DENVER: *“Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar”* (Jeremiah 31: 35). If you look up in the morning sky, right now you can see Orion on the eastern horizon, and that's been true twice a year since the beginning. It's been true that all of the ordinances ordained by God in the heavens above have remained true from the day that He set them there until today. They are so well established, they are so regular, they are so permanent, and they are so far beyond the ability of man to touch, alter, or destroy that the only way to have an apostasy from those ordinances, from our perspective, is for you to forget what knowledge there is that are written in the heavens. But the Lord wrote it there, it remains there, and it's still yet part of what is to be restored.

The ordinances that are referred to here in the heavens, if you go to Genesis 1:14, *“And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.”* And so He sets this up, and He sets this up in order to communicate things.

If you go back to the book of Abraham chapter 4, beginning at verse 14:

“And the Gods organized the lights in the expanse of the heaven, and caused them to divide the day from the night; and organized them to be for signs and for seasons, and for days and for years; And organized them to be for lights in the expanse of the heaven to give light upon the earth; and it was so. And the Gods organized the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, the lesser light to rule the night; with the lesser light they set the stars also; And the Gods set them in the expanse of the heavens, to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night...to divide the light from the darkness. And the Gods watched those things which they had ordered until they obeyed. And it came to pass that it was from evening until morning that it was night; and it came to pass that it was from morning until evening that it was day; and it was the fourth time” (Abraham 4:14-19).

This is not a bunch of gratuitous language. This is describing something that took place with absolutely deliberate intent. Everything that is written in scripture and all of the ordinances that were ordained upon the earth, in the heavens, were reckoned from the position of the earth. It's not that the ancients were ignorant of what's going on in the heavens. It's that they viewed the heavens as being a testimony given to us on the earth. It is a geocentric-- that is, it is from the surface of the earth-- that that testimony is written.

From the surface of the earth, the sun occupies a space-- even though the sun is over 100 times larger than the earth-- the space that the sun occupies in the firmament of the earth is exactly the same as the space in the firmament that is occupied by the moon, although the moon is $\frac{1}{6}$ the size of the earth. From the surface of the earth they are identical in size. So much so, that when you put them on the ecliptic as they are located, one can block out the other entirely in an eclipse. Because all of these things were ordained by God to testify in the heavens about Him and about His work. And those things are bearing testimony, and they are telling you something.

Abraham had the records of the fathers. Look at Abraham 1:31:

“But the records of the fathers, even the patriarchs, concerning the right of Priesthood, the Lord my God preserved in mine own hands; therefore a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the planets, and of the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers, have I kept even unto this day, and I shall endeavor to write some of these things upon this record, for the benefit of my posterity that shall come after me.”

Since Abraham was acquainted with the priesthood that belonged to the fathers, and since Abraham had a knowledge that was reckoned from priesthood that goes back to the time of the patriarchs, he as a consequence of possessing that, knew about the beginning of creation, knew about the planets, knew about the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers.

“According to that which was ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before this world was, that should be reserved unto the finishing and the end thereof, when every man shall enter into his eternal presence and into his immortal rest” (D&C 121:32).

Abraham is not merely talking about something-- both in this verse, Abraham 1:31, as well as what we encounter later on in the book of Abraham-- about the various stars that were shown to him and the relationship between them and his facsimile #2, as I recollect, that is an effort to lay out a relationship in the heavens between certain positions of glory and authority-- but Abraham is testifying that it was part of the original gospel that was entrusted to the fathers and that those records were handed down to him.

In Doctrine and Covenants 121 we find out that that's part of what is supposed to have been included with them and is ultimately scheduled for revelation to those that will receive the restoration of the gospel when it is fully upon the earth in the dispensation of the fulness of times.

If any of you lack wisdom, ask God. He gives to all men liberally. He does not upbraid. That is, he doesn't send you away discouraged, telling you, “Don't do that, don't ask me that.”

We saw in that first talk in Boise that we were commanded to pursue after the mysteries of God. What is more mysterious than what went on in the beginning generations? Because

we have so little left from which to reconstruct that, and yet we have enough to know the pattern that the Lord intended the last days to unfold in accordance with, and that pattern was to return us in the end to what was here in the beginning-- to return us to a state of knowledge about things that He has always had in His heart as the goal, as the ambition, as the desire to fulfill.

When the Lord hung on the cross, and the sun was darkened at noon, if you looked up in the sky to see what was overhead, you would see the sacrificial lamb in the pattern of the stars that we call Aries today. Proceeding forth from under the foot of Aries-- we have renamed it the "bands of Pisces," but it should be more appropriately rendered the "net of Pisces"-- because from under the foreleg of the lamb was cast out a net. And that net gathers in at least two kinds of fish. The larger one that is gathered in the net is circumnavigating the ecliptic and will do so eternally. The larger group in the starfield will never rise up to the north. The smaller group, the smaller starfield of Pisces also caught in that same net, is pointed to the sides of the North where the throne of the Father is found-- the spot around which all things revolve.

The religion that was established in the beginning and the testimony that was set out in the stars above us-- that testimony remains overhead still. The God of heaven intends for the testimonies that He has given to be understood. And in the beginning they were understood.

Now don't think that you can start doing Google searches, and you can reconstruct what it was they knew. I know 'cuz I've looked at it, and I've looked at the best sources that are out there, and I've bought a library of material to look into whether or not it would be possible. And I can tell you that the resources simply do not exist, and you would probably be better off not trying to reconstruct it at this point because even the constellations are so messed up in what has been bequeathed to us.

One of the earliest ones is a constellation that you can find at an Egyptian format at Dendra, and it's a mess, though the Egyptians tried to preserve the things that came down from the beginning. As we read in the book of Abraham, "*the Pharaoh sought earnestly to imitate the order that came down from the beginning*" (Abraham 1:26). And the Pharaoh succeeded in large measure in doing that. And he was a righteous man. Pharaoh was not out there freelancing. He was trying to imitate something, and Egypt did a good job of preserving some things that have fallen into decay elsewhere.

But the restoration through Joseph Smith, and the promises that were made to the fathers, and the statement that was made by Moroni to Joseph on the evening that he came to him and talked about and reworded the promise given through Malachi-- all of these are pointing to something that is, at this moment, still incomplete; a work that is, at this moment, still undone; a project that remains for us, if we will receive it, to finally receive.

Because the way in which Zion is going to come about is going to necessarily be something that is so comfortable and so familiar on the earth, as a pattern reflecting what it is that

exists in the heavens, that they who come not only do not burn them up, but they fall upon them, and they kiss their necks because at last they have a sister and a brother on the earth united by belief, united by covenant, united by knowledge, united by light and truth, or in other words, the "glory of God," which is intelligence-- because the purpose of the gospel has always been to inform, to edify, to raise up, to instruct. It was never meant to be reduced to something that is merely repetitious. It was intended to challenge you to your very core. And what you do and what you think and how you act-- it's intended to make you godlike in your understanding. And you're not godlike when you're bored out of your mind in a meeting.

"The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." The paths of God lie in the heavens. So if you're going to learn to walk in His paths, you are going to have to learn how to walk in the heavens. "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:2-3).

The ensign that is prophesied to be established in the context, in the meaning of that day, had reference to a zodiacal-- a constellation, a depiction of the heavens themselves. So when an ensign is going to be reared, and it's going to tell you about how to walk in the paths of God, this is talking about something very, very different than what most of us today would envision.

Zion is going to be a connection between heaven and earth, and at that place you will learn of the God of Jacob's ways, and you will walk in His paths. Because heaven and earth will be connected, and the stairway connecting the two will be open. And the heavens and the earth will be reunited again. And this is going to happen in the top of the mountains.

And by the way, that whole thing about Kolob is so mangled-- Kolob was a star. Kolob was a star within sight. From the vantage point of the earth, which is the entire astronomy revealed to father Abraham, it's entirely earth-based looking upward-- from the vantage point of the earth, looking up at that day (because the precession of the equinoxes changes the alignment of the stars), Kolob was a star. Abraham knew the name of the star. God said to Abraham, "You see that star? From where you sit looking there...." It's like saying, "okay, from where my thumb is, looking that way, Shay is sitting by my thumb." That doesn't mean Shay is on my thumb-- he's some considerable distance from my thumb. Tim is in the direction of my index finger. He's not on my index finger, he's some considerable distance there away from-- that's the direction. So if you know the topography of Kolob, you still don't know where God resides. Because where He resides is in a place hidden in the north.

If I were telling you where the throne of God is today, I could tell you that, but I would use a different star because in our day it has a different name. And in our day it has a slightly different alignment because of the precession of the equinoxes. He is out there, but He's in a place that is hidden in the north. And it will require the heavens to be rolled to, like a scroll,

before you finally see past the veils that prevent us from seeing it. But by that time, if you're unprepared, it's too late. Because the glory will be such that you cannot abide it. And when the Lord appears preliminary to the rolling together of the scrolls, He will appear in a hole that is unveiled in which the glory of God in His return is behind Him, along with concourses of angels.

There IS a location. God exists. And Abraham was walked through the geography of heaven, reckoned from the vantage point, or viewpoint, of the earth. And when you leave here, one of the obligations that you have is to find your way back. And in finding your way back, you need to be able to avoid those who seek to bring you back into captivity. Because if you're brought back into captivity, you may find yourself in a telestial kingdom, or the world in which you presently reside, as the temple endowment puts it. And that's a rather unpleasant thing to think about. You may find yourself in a casino in Las Vegas talking about things that really matter, in the presence of a place in which such things are not at all treasured.

I would say that the sign of the eclipse is a rather ominous suggestion. Well, it's part of a pair, you know. There is one Aug 21st of this year, and then there's a following one, and they essentially-- yeah, they make an X across the United States. Well, it's a fairly dramatic celestial event that suggests possible meanings, like the times of the gentiles are coming to an end and they're about to be swept away and replaced as the possessors and the rightful owners of the land.

I am of the view that how we act matters, a lot. I think Nineveh got saved because they repented. And if God will spare Nineveh because they repented, then He ought to be willing to spare other people because they're willing to repent. So the focus of action in what God has been doing shifted from the old world to the new world as a matter of prophecy, as a matter of covenant, as a matter of burden. The focus will be here on this land, primarily, until the Lord's return. And then Jerusalem will re-acquire significance that they once had, as well. But Zion is going to be on this, the American continent.

Since Zion must precede the Lord's return, and since this land is a land that has a restriction on it that requires those who are going to occupy it to serve the God of the land who is Jesus Christ, I would say that the sign of the eclipse is a rather ominous suggestion that we could be crossed out, and we could be replaced-- unless of course we choose to repent.

There are two great symbols that are identical in size and identical in the position they occupy in the heaven above us. One is the sun, and one is the moon. From the surface of the earth they are exactly the same size. Now admittedly, the moon is what, $\frac{1}{6}$ the size of the earth and the sun is hundreds of times bigger. But they were placed in the heavens at the relevant distances so that when you're looking at them, they are identical in the area that they occupy in the heaven above.

The sun is a symbol of Heavenly Father. The moon is a symbol of Heavenly Mother. And they occupy exactly the same position on the ecliptic-- they move in the same position across the

heavens. The movement of the Mother as a symbol is far more complex than the movement of the sun across the sky. Because the dance that the symbol of our Heavenly Mother is performing is both progressive and recessive. She moves constantly across the sky from the east to the west (once she comes into sight), but every night she moves farther east. And so she begins farther to the east every night and then moves across the night sky to the west. So her dance is far more complex than is the Father's. His is stable and relatively stationary and relatively predictable.

The symbol of the Mother blotting out the light of the sun in the eclipse is ominous indeed, because when a mother loses hope for her children, that's a lot more frightening than the father's ire that happens just about every time there's a football game on TV. When a Mother gets worked up enough to send a symbol across the land that suggests the blotting out of the light of the Father, it's something that maybe we ought to sit up and take note about.

And by the way, all these things were once part of the gospel. All of this. Everything. In fact, the D&C says everything that's above, everything that's on, and everything that's beneath the earth. And beneath the earth means from the surface of the earth-- it means those heavenly bodies that fall below the horizon and then re-emerge, like the planet Venus re-emerges. It goes under; it's the evening star, and then it's the morning star. It changes sides that you see the symbol on. All these things were once part of the gospel, and all of these things will eventually again become part of the gospel once more.

Genesis 1:14 says all that stuff up there was given us for signs. And they're talking to us. The only way you can obliterate the testimony that's up there is by our apostasy when we lose light, and we're ignorant, and we can't read it anymore. Because we can't touch that. We can't make copy mistakes, and we can't give a poor transcription or make printing errors with that. It's fixed, and it's not going to change. But we can lose light and knowledge such that we can no longer understand that testimony.

I think that any time there's something going on in the heavens, that God means something by it, even if we're oblivious to it. And the challenge is to not be oblivious to it, but to take it in and then assign it its proper weight.

The problem with biblical literalism is not necessarily that what is in the Bible is untrue, but it may be that what is in the Bible is speaking using a vernacular that mankind is unacquainted with. In the vernacular of scripture, the earth is moving in two ways. It is circling the sun on a tilt. Twice a year that tilt aligns so that we have an equinox, which means that there's exactly twelve hours of sunlight and twelve hours of darkness on that one day twice a year. And then there are solstices when, in the north, the days are the longest 'cuz it's leaning towards the sun. And when it gets to the other side it's leaning away, and at that moment the nights are very long, because in the north, you're leaning away from the sun.

As it makes this movement in one direction, it's also wobbling at the poles. The earth is not perfectly stable in how its axis fits. It wobbles. It takes 25,900 years (roughly) for it to complete one wobble at the pole. In the ancient vernacular, because of that wobble, we have a pole star. It happens at this moment to be Polaris. But if you go back several thousand years we had a different pole star. That pole star changes. We also have around the circumference, a group of constellations that everyone on earth can see. Doesn't matter if you're in the south, doesn't matter if you're in the north-- south being below the equator, not Atlanta, or the north, not meaning Canada, it means everything, the northern hemisphere and the southern-- there are a group of constellations everyone can see. There are twelve of them. All twelve of them had a story behind them in the beginning. All twelve of them have symbols that represent Christ.

When the pole star changes, which happens about seven times every 25,900 years-- when the pole star changes, anciently that change was called a "new heaven." Likewise, there is a different constellation that appears at sunrise on the vernal equinox and that constellation tells you what age you're in. Starfields overlap, and sometimes there are gaps. Right now we are in an overlap between-- Christ said, "I will make you fishers of men," and the constellation that that age was identified with is Pisces, two fish. One fish caught in the net is endlessly circling the equator. But another fish, and it's much smaller-- this other fish is headed to the north where you will find God. That constellation is going to be replaced by the "one who is coming." We call him Aquarius, we also call him the "Waterman"-- he is pouring out. A new age will come. If you go back far enough, what he is pouring out is two streams: one stream is water, which gives life, and one stream is fire. "He who is coming" in the great day of the Lord is coming for the great (the water) and dreadful (the fire) day of the Lord to pour something out.

Well it just so happens that the starfields of these two overlap. If you date the return of the Lord by the starfield of Aquarius at its earliest star, then the first sign of the "times of refreshing" would have been about in the 1840's when Joseph Smith was saying that Christ appeared to him and gave him a message to preach. We have not yet fully exited the starfield of Pisces.

Now all of that is to make this comment: When there's a new pole star, that's called a "new heaven;" when there's a new constellation on the horizon at the vernal equinox, that's called a "new earth." There will be a "new heaven" and there will be a "new earth" when Christ returns. And all of these are given, as Christ said in Genesis 1:14, "for signs and for seasons." And everything testifies of Him. There's a lot of scientific proof, but there's a lot of material in the Bible that is simply misunderstood.

This earth is pretty old. And how long it existed before it was considered sufficiently complete for man to occupy it, is not to be measured in days. It's to be measured in epochs of time referred to generically as "a day," meaning a period, meaning an agenda.

I'm here as a witness to tell you God is working. There are signs in the heavens above. There are signs on the earth below that testify that He intends to come again.

More will be given in a temple where mankind's understanding of things kept hidden from the world will be greatly increased when God directs one be built to His name.

There was a time when Christians recognized that the stars of heaven bore witness of the significance of Mary, Christ's earthly mother. Few Christians now look at the constellations as signs set in the firmament of God as His testimony. The light that was meant to shine on the earth was to illuminate both the eyes and mind of man. Man in the first generations understood this, and a knowledge of the beginning of the creation and also of the planets and of the stars as they were made known unto the fathers, was written by Abraham who received that same understanding.

At the time of Christ's birth, there were those who understood the testimony written in the lights of the firmament. They reported they saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him. These wise men watched and waited for the heavenly alignment to testify of the birth of a promised King. The Matthew text makes such casual mention of this that we give it little notice. Today Christians and Mormons alike have little understanding of the lights in the firmament, and so, give little heed to the signs set by God in the heavens above. Our ignorance does not mean these signs are meaningless. It only means we are poorly informed of God's full message.

John's Revelation mentions two of the heavenly signs that testify of Mary. One of these is on the ecliptic and since earliest times has been identified as a virgin woman, called by us the constellation "Virgo." The "circle of heaven" is divided into the north and the south at the ecliptic. On the ecliptic, from the north to the south poles, there are twelve constellations that can be seen everywhere on earth. Some constellations cannot be seen from one of the hemispheres, but those twelve on the ecliptic are ever-present overhead. These move in the same plane as the sun, moon, and wandering planets. Most of those who discuss these twelve constellations allocate 360 degrees of the "heavenly circle" into 12 equal, 30-degree segments, allocating for each constellation on the ecliptic the same distance. Today, these twelve constellations are called the Zodiac.

Unlike the equal division between the twelve constellations of the Zodiac, the starfields of these twelve constellations are unequal in size. The two largest starfields belong to Virgo and Aquarius. These two largest of the Zodiac constellations are heavenly witnesses testifying of Christ's Mother, Mary, and the returning Christ. For Christ's first coming, the heavenly testimony focuses the greatest part of the starfield on His Mother. We should reflect on what that may mean. We ought to contemplate why Christ's first coming was symbolized on the heavenly ecliptic by the Virgin Mother. Why was She the focus?

Christ's Second Coming is the largest starfield on the ecliptic. He will return to pour out judgment, blessing those who follow Him and destroying those who rebel. The destruction of the wicked is what Christ identified as "the end of the world." Aquarius has two outflows from the water-bearer's urn. One represents water (giving life) and the other represents fire (purging).

Traditionally we interpret the constellation Virgo as a woman holding a sheaf of wheat in her left hand. The sheaf represents her seed. The brightest star in the constellation, a magnitude 1 star, is "Spica"-- "the seed of the woman." That star is placed on the ecliptic. Most other stars in Virgo are located above the ecliptic. "The seed of the woman" represents Christ. His star on the ecliptic represents that everything in the firmament is divided in relation to Him. All of heaven is either above or below the ecliptic. The position of His star, like His role as Judge, divides the heavens.

Traditionally Virgo is drawn looking down at the earth, facing us. This view places the seed of the woman in her left hand. The left hand is usually a symbol of cursing. The right hand symbolizes blessing. If the seed of the woman is meant to be in her right hand, then she would be drawn looking up, heavenward, and her back would be facing us. Reorienting Virgo to face upward-- with the seed of the woman in her right hand-- is more fitting.

John described Virgo and the movement of other lights on the ecliptic as follows: *"And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars"* (Revelation 12:1). The sun and the moon move on the ecliptic through the constellation Virgo and at times "clothe" her and at other times appear "under her feet." This "wonder" John described is overhead in the starry firmament of heaven as one of the signs put there to testify of heavenly things.

Christ's Mother, Mary, is a figure of such preeminence, that testimony of Her is emblazoned upon the ecliptic in an enduring, towering figure outlined in the stars. This is not happenstance. It is God's witness to us. We should accept it as meaningful and ponder on the meaning.

Another of the constellations John mentions is a woman who brought forth a son, who is then caught up to the throne of God. This is also depicted in another constellation. One of the constellations immediately associated with Virgo, located next to her in the northern sky, is a constellation anciently depicted as a mother seated on a throne holding a son in her hands. This image of a woman seated on a throne with her son is located just to the north, above Virgo. It suggests both the mother and her son descended from a throne they once occupied in heaven, and is destined to return again there. If you can accept the witness written of them in the stars of the firmament, then She came to earth with Her Son. And She will return again to a throne in the north. Contemplate what this witness of Mary could mean. Taken at full value, Mary, like Her Son, condescended to come here.

The sun and the moon are symbols of the Father and Mother planted overhead as a testimony from Them to Their children. From the surface of the earth they occupy equal space in the firmament. Although the circumference of the sun is approximately 400 times larger than the moon, the moon is approximately 400 times closer to the earth. As a result, they are visibly equal in size and occupy the same path on the ecliptic. This is why the moon is able to eclipse the sun.

The Father, represented by the sun, is stable, unchangeable, reliable, and predictable. The sun rises every day on the horizon in the east and sets every evening on the horizon in the west. He is unvarying in his course from day to day and year to year. The Mother, represented by the moon, changes each day. She waxes and wanes. She does not just move from east to west, but the moonrise also constantly moves in the opposite direction from west to east. Every day she reappears further to the east before beginning her movement to the west. She moves approximately 50 minutes eastward each day.

Her complex movements overhead were part of the reason she was known anciently as “the Great Dancer.” Her movements display constantly changing motions, contrasting with her companion sun. This contrast between the movements of the sun and the moon reminds me of the quip by cartoonist Bob Thaves about Ginger Rogers, the dancing partner of acclaimed Fred Astaire: “Sure he was great, but don’t forget that Ginger Rogers did everything he did...backwards and in high heels.”

We are often told that life on earth depends on the sun. But life here is equally dependent on the moon. Without the moon slowing the earth’s rotation, we would have only 6 to 10 hour days. The shorter days would result in the earth being much colder, as the sun would have less time to warm the earth’s surface. This would cause a dramatic decrease in plant and animal life. Tides would be eliminated; weather would be more violent. The stable rotation of the earth would change, and we would no longer rotate on a constant axis. The poles and equator would no longer exist or would be constantly changing. The earth’s tectonic plates, continents, and mountain ranges are all formed by the effect of the moon on the earth. Without the moon, there would be less variety in the earth’s habitats. Many life forms could not exist.

Richard Lathe, a molecular biologist at Pieta Research in Edinburgh, UK, advanced a theory in 2003 explaining that life on earth could not have happened without the moon. A number of astronomers believe that life on any planet throughout the universe requires a nearby moon, and without this nighttime companion for the sun, life cannot exist.

Remember also that the brightest star in Her constellation is in Her hand – the “seed of the woman.” The stars testify of Her but point to Her “seed” as the greatest light for us here and now.

The moon reflects the light of her sun, just as Mary did in Her psalm. This physical example testifies to the glory of the Father and the faithful reflection of the Mother. It is the sun that provides the light, heat and gravity governing the planets of this creation under its influence. It is the moon that stabilizes and makes life possible.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #2 entitled "Faith," given in Idaho Falls, ID on September 28th, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #4 entitled "Covenants," given in Centerville, UT on October 6th, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #6 entitled "Zion," given in Grand Junction, CO on April 12th, 2014;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #8 entitled "A Broken Heart," given in Las Vegas, NV on July 25th, 2014;
- His remarks at "A Day of Faith and Connection" youth conference in UT on June 10th, 2017;
- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #3, given in Atlanta, Georgia on November 16, 2017; and
- Denver's conference talk entitled "Our Divine Parents," given in Gilbert, AZ on March 25th, 2018.

Podcast Episode 15: Jacob's Ladder

QUESTION: What is Jacob's Ladder? And, why did Joseph Smith refer to it as the "first principles" of the gospel?

DENVER: Everything begins with faith. You don't skip to knowledge. You begin with faith and you progress. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* on page 348 says: "When you climb a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel."

The principles of the gospel are not supposed to be comprehended in one bite. You progress. And the ladder that he's talking about climbing is, in fact, the ladder that is ordered and that Jacob referred to. Jacob's ladder is something that we refer to, and it's an ordered process. But whenever you begin that climb you begin it at the bottom. And so you find yourselves here. Notwithstanding finding yourselves here, there are absolutely, invariably, and we'll get to this eventually, seven rungs on Jacob's ladder, and we find ourselves at present at the bottom of it.

The responsibility is placed upon you to understand what is truth and what is not. And you have to choose. And you have to sort it out. And you have to come to the correct conclusion. Because it is only by exercising faith in the correct conclusion that you manage to align yourself with that narrow window through which the heavens are opened and up which Jacob's ladder is found to be scaled.

Go about halfway down in verse 19 of Section 132, there's a dash, and after the dash it says-- and it's talking about conditions that you need to fulfill and covenants that you need to have-- it says: "*Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection ...*" and it says "*shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths.*"

Well, these are not just words. These are descriptions of various levels of activity that take place in the afterlife. A "throne" is not the same thing as a "kingdom," nor a "kingdom" the same as a "principality," nor a "power" the same thing as a "dominion." These are describing different things, different levels, until finally you arrive up to the state of the Seraphim, which dwell in fire. They are the flaming ones.

Doctrine and Covenants Section 109 has something to say about that. I want to look at that. Section 109:79: "*And also this church, to put upon it thy name. And help us by the power of thy Spirit, that we may mingle our voices with those bright, shining seraphs around thy throne.*" See "around the throne" it is a place of everlasting, eternal burnings. Therefore, the Seraphs who gather there have to be "the flaming ones." They have mounted up to that point.

Isaiah chapter 6 beginning at verse 1: "*In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.*" The Lord sitting

upon the throne would be this condition of glory. *"Above it stood the seraphims..."* The Seraphims are ones who are flaming, the ones who dwell in this everlasting burning. *"Each one had six wings..."* (verse 2). This is metaphor because these folks have climbed through six stages of the ladder, Jacob's ladder, to arrive where they were.

Joseph translates, or Joseph refers to, a statement in the *New Testament* by the Savior: *"Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect"* (Matthew 5:48). That will change in the Sermon in Bountiful, and Christ will say in 3 Nephi: *"Be ye therefore perfect even as I, or your Father in heaven is perfect"* (3 Nephi 12:48). Because by the time He preached in Bountiful, He had finished the climb up the ladder.

And I want to remind you of a statement that we read in Boise that Joseph gave, found in the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* on page 348: "When you climb a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel--you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned them." Well isn't that interesting? So now you have to pass through the veil to learn some things. It's not all to be comprehended in this world.

There is within the structure of the afterlife, different rungs on Jacob's ladder. And they leak through in our scriptures, though Joseph never bothers parsing them. And whether you are talking about an angel, or an archangel, or a principality, or a power, or a dominion, or a throne, or a Cherubim, or a Seraphim-- it doesn't matter which one you are referring to, it is appropriate to refer to any and all of them as "Powers." The "Powers of Heaven." Whatever rung these ministers may be upon, they are all "Powers." So I want to suggest to you, that the real definition of priesthood is an association between mankind, on the one hand, and those on the other side of the veil, on the other hand. And the real definition of priesthood is the connection between-- a fellowship between-- the "Powers of Heaven," on the one hand, and you, on the other.

I want to turn to *Doctrine and Covenants* Section 132 and take a look at that because in here we then run into a brief description of some of that "Powers" that exist. This is in *Doctrine and Covenants* 132:19, and it's about in the middle of that verse. It says you come forth in the first resurrection to inherit, and here are the words: *"Thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths--"* Those are, in fact, referring to different steps in the process of rising up to the place where God is. This is telling you something about the map to the afterlife. This is telling you something about how there is a hierarchy that is organized there, and you proceed, as Joseph said, from one step to the next. When you begin to climb a ladder, you always begin at the bottom, and you go step-by-step until you reach the top.

In any event, the ranking goes: angels, and then archangels, and then principalities, and then powers, and then dominions, and then thrones, and then Cherubim, and then Seraphim-- the Seraphim being those who dwell in everlasting burnings, the glorious ones,

the ones who are flaming. For a description of them, we've already looked at that in *Doctrine and Covenants* 109:79. I'm not going to go there.

But in any event, here you have in Section 132, a listing of some of the things which get inherited. And you think that we have a singular afterlife that consists of heaven and hell. Or, oh no-- you're Mormons, therefore you've got three of them. You've got your Telestial, which kingdom you're presently occupying, by the way. You've got your Terrestrial-- we hope to manage to get there sometime during the Millennium, also occupying this same globe. And you've got your Celestial, which, you know, apparently you'll be all garbed up and glowing and wearing a robe and nicely put.

However, this is suggesting a much more complex afterlife, in which literally the ascent is by degrees as you move upward. As Joseph said, and I read that in Boise, it'll be a great time after we have crossed through the veil before we will have learned all that needs to be learned in order to qualify for our salvation and exaltation.

Well, let's go to Moses 7:27: "*Enoch beheld angels descending out of heaven, bearing testimony of the Father and Son; and the Holy Ghost fell on many, and they were caught up by the powers of heaven into Zion.*" There they show up again. "The powers of heaven"-- plural, in the same verse where it's talking about angels descending. This is the kind of thing that is littered throughout the scriptures if you have the eyes to see it. Because there is actually a structure there.

There are within what we regard as priesthood two brotherhoods or two fellowships. One is between men or women. It is a fellowship that exists among us here, on this side. There is a second one. There is a second fellowship-- that exists with us to the other side. And on that other side, there is a fellowship or a priesthood. And by and large, when the scriptures speak about priesthood having authority, priesthood having power, that is connected by a mortal with a fellowship that extends into the immortal, to the other side. It's a relationship with "the Powers of Heaven."

The first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: faith, repentance, baptism, laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. We know that because Joseph wrote that in the *Wentworth Letter*. We lifted it out of there, we put in the back of *The Pearl of Great Price*, and it's now *The Articles of Faith*, right? The "first principles and the ordinances of the gospel." Now he's talking about "*about which so much has been said.*" That's because in the "restorationist" environment in which the gospel was restored, everyone was talking about the first principles of the gospel. "The first principles of the gospel are..." And you could have gone to Sidney Rigdon long before Sidney was baptized a member of the Church of Christ when (that was what it was called in Joseph's beginning era), and Sidney Rigdon would have told you that the "restorationist" movement all believe that the first principles of the gospel are faith, repentance, and baptism. That was a mantra. Parley Pratt, who was also one of the restorationist Cambelite ministers, would have told you the same thing.

That was a rallying cry for people that said that the *New Testament* needs to be restored. The *New Testament* church needs to be returned. It needs to be revitalized. It needs to be restored and reconstituted. And the first principles as we find in the *New Testament* church are these. And so Mormons largely were drawn out of the same environment, and they're talking about it. And Joseph conceded the point, and he used that. That's what he put into the Wentworth Letter when he sent the Wentworth Letter off.

But now we're far along in the process. Now we're in 1844, and Joseph will be dead about 60 or 90 days after this talk is given. This is the end of his ministry; this is not the beginning of his ministry. And so now he's talking to people that have been aboard for a while. They've heard him preach. They know something more about what God intended. They had the *Book of Mormon*; they'd been converted through it. They had more revelations that have rolled forth. They've been taught for a while. And so he returns now, and he says "that first principles about which so much has been said, now let me tell you what they really are." They really are resurrection from the dead, becoming gods, walking in the same path as our Lord walked. *This is the first principles of the gospel*. That's why he wished he had the trump of an archangel with which to declare it. He didn't have that. But I read his words as if they came from an archangel.

"You thus learn some of the first principles of the Gospel, about which so much hath been said. When you climb a ladder, you must begin at the bottom, and ascend step by step, until you arrive at the top; and so it is with the principles of the Gospel--you must begin with the first, and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. But it will be a great while after you have passed through the veil before you will have learned them all. It is not all to be comprehended in this world; it will be a great work to learn our salvation and exaltation even beyond the grave."

Wilford Woodruff recorded the same talk, and in the Wilford Woodruff account:

"You've got to learn how to make yourselves God, king and priest by going from a small capacity to a great capacity, to the resurrection of the dead, to dwelling in everlasting burnings. I want you to know the first principle of this law, how consoling to the mourner when they part with a friend to know that they lay down this [he misspells "body"] it will rise and dwell with everlasting burnings to be an heir with God and joint-heir with Jesus Christ and join the same rise, exaltation, and glory until you arrive at the station of a God. What did Jesus Christ do? The same thing as I see the Father do. See the Father do what? Work out a kingdom. When I do so too, I will give the Father which will add to His glory, He will take a higher exaltation, I will take His place and am also exalted. These are the first principles of the Gospel. It will take a long time after the grave to understand the whole. If I should say anything but what was in the Bible, a cry of treason would be heard."

Thomas Bullock reports:

"This is eternal life to know the only wise and true God. You have got to learn how to be Gods yourself and to be king and priest to God, the same as all have done by going from a small capacity to another, from grace to grace until the resurrection and sit in everlasting power as they who have gone before. And God in the last days, while certain individuals are proclaiming His name is not trifling with us. All earthly tabernacles should be dissolved, that they shall be heirs of God and joint-heirs of Jesus Christ to inherit the same power and exaltation until you ascend the throne of eternal power the same as those who have gone before. You thus learn the first principles of the Gospel. When you climb a ladder you must begin at the bottom."

This is the basics of the Gospel. This is the foundation upon which salvation itself rests. This is the way through which *you* must tread in order for you to be like Him. If you understand Christ, you understand salvation. He's the prototype, and therefore you must be like that prototype in order for you to be saved.

Our Lord-- and we're talking about Him in the beginning before the world was-- "*received not the fullness at first but received grace for grace.*" And we think "grace for grace" consists of, "I'm going to now obey a principle and as a result of obeying that principle, I will receive the benefit of the grace that flows from doing so." And that is true enough-- that is a true enough principle. But it is also truer, and more accurate, to say-- in connection with the long preparation that preceded the call of Christ to be "the Son of God"-- that "grace to grace" is also something that involves the upward scale of a ladder, as Joseph eludes to it. He was "called the Son of God," because He "received not of the fullness at first." He was "called" to be the Son of God because that wasn't His status before. Therefore, He had to be "called" to be the Son of God. And that was true because He "received not of the fullness at first."

"And I, John, bear record, and lo, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove, and sat upon him, and there came a voice out of heaven saying: This is my beloved Son. And I, John, bear record that he received a fulness of the glory of the Father; And he received all power, both in heaven and on earth, and the glory of the Father was with him, for he dwelt in him. And it shall come to pass, that if you are faithful you shall receive the fulness of the record of John. I give unto you these sayings that you may understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness. For if you keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness, and be glorified in me as I am in the Father; therefore, I say unto you, you shall receive grace for grace" (D&C 93:15-20).

Long before the Lord assumed the role and the responsibility of descending here and being the Redeemer of this world, He qualified by grace-- doing things that proved while He was behind the veil, as you presently find yourselves situated, that demonstrated graciousness and faith by obedience to the commandments of God. Even though it would be a great while yet before He, and now you, would rise up to that level, still He lived His life with such grace that He qualified to receive more and to develop and to move up.

There are going to be some people who qualified before the foundation of the world, that will be qualified to come and to teach about some things. And they're going to be called before the foundation of the world, like His Son was called before the foundation of the world, to be pointing to His Son who will come into the world. And this qualification occurs before the world is. But it's done so that you can understand and have faith in His Son-- *"being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God"* (Alma 13:3). Why does God have foreknowledge about these things? Why does God know that given the trust, they will be true to it? Why does God know that these are the kinds of people to whom trust can be given, and it will not be broken?

Why does God have such foreknowledge? It's not based upon conjecture. It's based upon proof. It's not based upon merely hope; it's based upon the knowledge of God, because He's not asking lead to do what He knows only iron can accomplish. Therefore, He chooses a suitable instrument based upon His foreknowledge, *"prepared from the foundation of the world."*

And what is God's foreknowledge known? On account of their *"exceeding faith and good works in the first place"*-- that is, before the foundation of this world.

Long ago, on some other rung of this ladder-- long ago a great while in the past: *"In the first place, [they were] left to choose good or evil; therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceedingly great faith, are called with a holy calling, yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such"* (Alma 13:3). You have to redeem them in order to have them reclaimed, so that they can come back and perform what they need to do.

There has been a preparatory redemption. They have chosen what's right. And the game's afoot, and you're in it, and you're here, and this is now, and you have the opportunity on account of your own *"being left to choose between good and evil,"* having the opportunity to choose good. And at this moment you have the opportunity to exercise exceedingly faith. And you have the opportunity at this moment to be identified and proven by God, so that His foreknowledge of you hereafter includes within it a record of your exceeding faith and good works.

"And thus they have been called to this holy calling on account of their faith, while others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their minds, while, if it had not been for this they might have had as great privilege as their brethren" (Alma 13:4). You may only achieve a limited amount of grace in this life, but that limited amount of grace you must hold fast to. You cannot receive more if you will not receive what's offered now. And if you'll receive what's offered now, you'll be added upon.

"Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children, for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life and shall

obtain favor of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul, all they that hate me love death" (Proverbs 8:32-36).

These interesting words do not mean just discovering the abstract presence of "wisdom" as a characteristic attributable to the Mother in Heaven. Instead, they require us to discover Her existence and to acknowledge Her-- otherwise we've not "found" Her. When She declares "*whoso findeth me findeth life and shall obtain favor of the Lord,*" it should be taken literally.

There are seven stages of development through which God's children must pass. It is not all to be done in this life. Christ is the "prototype of the saved man," and He qualified by passing through these stages of development. We should not be surprised that the Heavenly Mother was responsible for planning and creating these developmental opportunities for Her children.

"Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars, she hath killed her beasts, she hath mingled her wine, she hath also furnished her table." (Proverbs 9:1-2).

When any of us arrive at the end of the journey through the seven rungs of Jacob's ladder, we will discover that the Mother was present throughout that journey. She declared: "*I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment"* (Proverbs 8:20). She's present all along the way through the seven pillars. This recognition of the Heavenly Mother requires wisdom.

Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 2:2-3: "*And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.*" "All nations," in this context, means all the 12 tribes of Israel. The "nations" are the 12 tribes of Israel.

"The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, let us go up to the...house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." The paths of God lie in the heavens. So if you're going to learn to walk in his paths you are going to have to learn how to walk in the heavens.

The ensign that is prophesied to be established (Isaiah 5:6), in the context, in the meaning of that day, had reference to a zodiacal, a constellation, a depiction of the heavens themselves. So when an ensign is going to be reared, and it's going to tell you about how to walk in the paths of God, this is talking about something very, very different than what most of us today would envision.

Zion is going to be a connection between heaven and earth. And at that place you will learn of the God of Jacob's ways, and you will walk in His paths. Because Heaven and earth will be

connected. And the stairway connecting the two will be opened. And the heavens and the earth will be reunited again. And this is going to happen in the top of the mountains.

The fact is that a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of smoke by day is an allusion, an attempt to refer to things we are familiar with to describe things that we are not familiar with-- a conduit that reaches up into heaven, as the temporary appearance of the Lord to Joseph in the First Vision, is intended to be a permanent connection at some place. It will be one of the reasons why people say, "let's not go up against the people of Zion because Zion is too terrible." The presence of God is dreadful to the wicked-- it's frightening to them. They get near it, and it convicts them of their unworthiness. They dare not go up. But the pure and the humble and the noble are drawn to it. They will want to be there. And so that conduit, that fiery pillar, that stairway to heaven, Jacob's ladder, the chariot of fire-- all of those things are an attempt to describe that heavenly connection, that heavenly presence.

To the unworthy and the ungodly looking at it, they may or may not be able to see anything about it. But they will sense extraordinary dread. It will frighten them. To the worthy there will be something enlightened about the very presence of the place. It will not seem to them to just be another place. It will seem as though the God of Heaven has some base established there. That's when you know that an ensign has been established in the tops of the mountains to which nations will flow saying, "Come, let us go up and learn from the God of Jacob." Because that ensign is actually something godly, holy, edifying, instructive, revelatory, filled with light, and redemptive. And the God who dwells there is going to be the Lord.

Our ancestors, our kindred dead-- they need to be redeemed. They all have an interest in you and your life. And the work that is being done needs to be done. But the gulf that needs to be bridged through the work of Elijah, in the words of Joseph Smith, is "to form a bond or a connection." And of course, now who is the last one who lived on the earth, not to hold the sealing power, but to ascend to heaven and to draw together heaven and earth by his ascent, representing the opening of that way through which Zion above and Zion below will be connected with one another-- who was the last guy as a mortal man to have walked this path? Because when the Lord comes, He's coming with an entourage. And the path needs to be opened beforehand. And the path, once it's opened, allows men on the earth to be prepared for the coming again of those who are Zion above. Well, Elijah answers, because Elijah is the one who made that connection.

There has to be an opening that occurs in order to prepare the way. The opening at this end is going to be handled by someone who has remained behind and the opening at the far end is going to be the one to whom the assignment was given to open the way for His return-- Elijah, the one who was promised. John will have a role, but the work of Zion is the work of flesh and blood. Men have to extend the invitation for God to return so that men who extend that invitation are worthy of His return and the Lord can safely come without utterly destroying all who are upon the earth.

Therefore, you need Zion, among other reasons, in order for there to be a place and a people to whom the Lord can safely return without utterly destroying the earth at His coming. However small, however diminutive it may be, there needs to be a Zion that extends the invitation for the Lord to return.

This is the day in which we need to be prepared so that those who went before and ascended up the ladder can return and fall upon your neck and kiss you, and you fall upon their neck and kiss them. A sacred embrace through the veil, evidencing fellowship between you here and them there-- the Lord promising and covenanting these things are going to happen. But notice, there has to be a tabernacle. He has to come and take up His abode. There has to be preparation made. These things require some effort to be made here in order to prepare for His return.

You're going to have to finish that path. You're going to have to rise up if you expect to be in His presence when He returns. And He is coming in judgment. Then you're going to have to be like him, because if you are not like Him, you will not be able to endure His presence. Take it seriously. Study it through. Seek to be like Him whom you worship. It is possible-- not while you're carrying a load of sins that trouble you and worry you and distract you, but that's what the Lord will remove from you. He can take all of that away, but it is entirely up to you to choose, then to do something to draw nearer to Him. He can't do that because that would violate your free will. *You* have to choose to be like Him. Although He may remove all of the stains upon you, you have to go forward and not stain yourself again. Because He can't stop you from doing that. You're free to choose. Therefore, choose the better part.

The atonement isn't like Tinkerbell spreading some magic dust that will make you rise up. The atonement will erase your sins and mistakes, but *you must rise up*. You must acquire those virtues. The glory of God is intelligence. And repentance requires you to acquire that intelligence, that glory of God. And you acquire it by the things that you do in His name and for His sake.

Another place Joseph said "A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity by some evil power in the other world, as evil spirits will have more knowledge, and consequently more power than many men who are on the earth. Hence it needs revelation to assist us, and give us knowledge of the things of God" (TPJS, p. 217).

The problem that we have is our profound ignorance. And what the gospel offers defies ignorance, subdues it, challenges it, destroys it, leaves it in the dark. And so let's try and search into and obtain some illumination.

I want to read a passage from Job and misapply it, if you will. I want you to imagine that what I am reading is not merely a description of a mortal horse. What I am reading is a description of those horses which pull the chariot upon which Elijah ascended to heaven. This is the horse you need to ride in your quest for heaven. This is the way in which you,

too, are to mount up:

“Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder? Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? the glory of his nostrils is terrible. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword. The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet. He saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting” (Job 39:19-25).

As the battle engages, ride the horse. Not away, but toward the sound.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver’s talk entitled “The Mission of Elijah Revisited,” given in Spanish Fork, UT on October 14th, 2011;
- His fireside entitled “Cursed, Denied Priesthood,” given in Sandy, UT on January 7th, 2018;
- Denver’s *40 Years in Mormonism* Series, Talks #1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 given during 2013 and 2014; and
- His conference talk entitled “Our Divine Parents,” given in Gilbert, AZ on March 25th, 2018.

Podcast Episode 16: The Remnant

QUESTION: Who are the Remnant groups, and what are the prophecies concerning them in our dispensation?

DENVER: Why does the remnant, which will build Zion, tear in pieces and trample under foot the Gentiles? Why do they do that? Start thinking about the image of Babylon that is going to be “torn in pieces and trodden under foot.” You do not need anything other than the truth to “tear in pieces” the Gentile’s kingdom. And it will be trodden under foot by the truth.

“And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left” (2 Nephi 21:10-11). Well this shall shortly come to pass. Not then, not that day, but by and by.

You know, when a branch is spoken of, if you look at John 15:1-6-- I’m not going to do that because our time is far spent-- but Christ gives a sermon about Him being the “true vine” and how you cannot bear fruit unless you’re connected to the true vine. Once again, that is a genealogical term. That is a family of God term. That is a son of God term. And He intends to make many sons of God.

This is what has not yet been fulfilled that is soon to come. *“And it shall come to pass afterward, [beginning at verse 28 of chapter 2 of Joel] that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call”* (Joel 2:28-32).

Now one of the things that we perhaps take for granted, but we have to give credit to Joseph Smith for doing, is distinguishing between all these references to Jerusalem and these references to Zion. Until Joseph spoke, it was assumed that that was the same thing. It’s not. And we know that there will be Zion, on the one hand, and we know that there will be Jerusalem, a gathering there, on the other hand. And we know that this prophecy concerning your sons, your daughters, prophecy, dreams, visions-- all of this being poured out-- this is something that is yet to happen, but it is soon to come to pass. We have a great deal to look forward to that the angel Moroni, instructing Joseph Smith, covered with him on that night when he first appeared to him, promising that these things were going to come to pass, and they still had not yet come in.

Going back to 3 Nephi 21: *“But if they will repent and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance...”* (verse 22). They are the Gentiles. They are Ephraim. You.

“And they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob, and also as many as the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem. Then shall they assist my people that they may be gathered in, who are scattered upon all the face of the land, into the New Jerusalem. And then shall the power of heaven come down among them; and I will also be in their midst” (verses 23-25). The word “powers of heaven” is talking about the angels. In this circumstance, the “power” is singular. Not only because they are one, but because among them will be our Lord Himself. And where He is, there is the power of Heaven. And it is singular.

“And then shall the work of the Father commence at that day, even when this gospel shall be preached among the remnant of this people” (verse 26). Because when you gather to hear what you’re going to hear there, this is the final stage in the Father’s work. This is the work that requires holiness to accompany even its teaching.

“Verily I say unto you, in that day shall the work of the Father commence among all the dispersed of my people, yea, even the tribes which have been lost, which the Father hath led away out of Jerusalem. Yea, the work shall commence among all the dispersed of my people, with the Father to prepare the way whereby they may come unto me, that they may call on the Father in my name. Yea, and then shall the work commence, with the Father among all nations in preparing the way whereby His people may be gathered home to the land of their inheritance. And they shall go out from all nations; and they shall not go out in haste, nor go by flight, for I will go before them, saith the Father, and I will be their rearward” (3 Nephi 21:26-29).

Again and again the notion that this work can be hastened is denounced. Again and again it's to be a place in which the preparations are done first. Again and again it suggests that before we can gather together we must have that heart, that mind which can make us one.

Turn back and look at the results-- *Doctrine and Covenants* 45, beginning at verse 65: *“And with one heart and with one mind, gather you up your riches that ye may purchase an inheritance which shall hereafter be appointed unto you. And it shall be called the New Jerusalem, a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the Most High God; And the glory of the Lord shall be there, and the terror of the Lord also shall be there, insomuch that the wicked will not come unto it, and it shall be called Zion”* (verses 65-67). They won't come unto it because to go there is like Acts chapter 5-- you cannot endure that environment if you're abiding a telestial law. You'd be consumed.

“And it shall come to pass among the wicked, that every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety. And there shall be gathered unto it

out of every nation under heaven; and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another. And it shall be said among the wicked: Let us not go up to battle against Zion, for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible; wherefore we cannot stand. And it shall come to pass that the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations, and shall come to Zion, singing with songs of everlasting joy” (D&C 45:68-71).

Think about what it would take to transplant various populations, from various locations (not in haste), with everything having been prepared in advance. And in our currently fragmented society, unless you're willing to experiment with your own effort to live the law of tithing by organizing yourselves and governing yourself, miscellaneous groups will never make it. But people of God will.

Every dispensation of the gospel has left only a remnant behind. Christ's work is designed to preserve a remnant and at the end, gather all remnants together again. The restoration that was given to the prophet Joseph Smith has likewise put itself in a position where now it can only produce a remnant-- but one that will be preserved and not abandoned.

In 3 Nephi 21 the Lord talked about some things that become exceptionally relevant in light of what we've covered today:

“And verily I say unto you, I give unto you a sign, that ye may know the time when these things shall be about to take place—that I shall gather in, from their long dispersion, my people, O house of Israel, and shall establish again among them my Zion” (verse 1).

This is addressing all of those various remnants wherever that they may be found so long as they are some residue of the house of Israel.

“And behold, this is the [thing] which I will give unto you for a sign—for verily I say unto you that when these things which I declare unto you, and which I shall declare unto you hereafter of myself, and by the power of the Holy Ghost which shall be given unto you of the Father, shall be made known unto the Gentiles...” See, the Gentiles had to first receive some things. “...that they [the Gentiles] may know concerning this people who are a remnant of the house of Jacob, and concerning this my people who shall be scattered by them [the Gentiles]; Verily, verily, I say unto you, when these things shall be made known unto them [some constituent group of Gentiles] of the Father, and shall come forth of the Father, from them unto you” (verses 2-3).

It can't come from any source other than from the Father. The Father and Christ being One, the authority to administer and to deliver it coming from Them, the power to baptize being brought forth from some remnant of the gentiles who care to bear it.

“For it is wisdom in the Father that they [the Gentiles] should be established in this land, and be set up as a free people by the power of the Father, that these things might come forth from them unto a remnant of your seed, that the covenant of the Father may be fulfilled which he hath covenanted with his people, O house of Israel” (verse 4).

“O house of Israel” is much more. “O house of Israel” is that same inclusive of all bits and remnants wherever they may be found. I talked about covenants when we were in Centerville and about the fulfillment of the covenants. All of the covenants which apply to people scattered everywhere-- all of those included within the previous remnants-- they need to be gathered into one constituent group.

“Therefore, when these works and the works which shall be wrought among you hereafter shall come forth from the Gentiles...” Not their book, their works. Not their book, the works bringing to pass the doctrine of Christ, establishing repentance, declaring and baptizing by the authority of Christ, having people visited by fire and the Holy Ghost-- these are the works. These are the works.

“...shall come forth from the Gentiles unto your seed which shall dwindle in unbelief because of iniquity; For thus it behooveth the Father that it should come forth from the Gentiles, that he may show forth his power unto the Gentiles...” That’s what He needs now to do. That’s what He intends to do, if you will receive it.

“For this cause that the Gentiles, if they will not harden their hearts, that they may repent and come unto me and be baptized in my name and know of the true points of my doctrine, that they may be numbered among my people, O house of Israel” (verses 5-6).

You can’t get there except through the power of the doctrine and the power of the ordinance that God has given, in the way that it has been given, performed with the exactness, fidelity, and language that has been given to us by Christ Himself.

“And when these things come to pass that thy seed shall begin to know these things—it shall be a sign unto them, that they may know that the work of the Father hath already commenced unto the fulfilling of the covenant which he made unto the people who are of the house of Israel” (verse 7). All of them-- it’s a witness that His work has commenced.

“And my people who are a remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles, yea, in the midst of them as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, if he go through both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. Their hand shall be lifted up upon their adversaries, and all their enemies shall be cut off. Yea, wo be unto the Gentiles except they repent; for it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Father, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots; And I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strongholds; And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thy land, and thou shalt have no more soothsayers; Thy graven images I will also cut off..thou shalt no more worship the works of thy hands; And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee; so will I destroy thy cities. And it shall come to pass that all lyings, and deceivings, and envyings, and strifes, and priestcrafts, and whoredoms, shall be done away. For it shall come to pass, saith the Father, that at that day whosoever will not repent and come unto my Beloved Son, them will I cut off from among my people, O house of Israel [that’s all remnants gathered together]; And I will execute vengeance and fury upon

them, even as upon the heathen, such as they have not heard. But if they [speaking of the Gentiles] will repent and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance” (verses 12-22).

Because every time there's a covenant there is always a land. And this is the land that God covenants He will give, and the people to whom He will give it are those that come back and receive the covenant, including the Gentiles in whose ears this first shall sound, if they will come. It will require a covenant. It will require adoption. It will require sealing. It was what Joseph looked forward to have happen at some point in the future during the days of his prophecy.

“And they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob, and also as many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem. And then shall they assist my people that they may be gathered in, who are scattered upon all the face of the land, in unto the New Jerusalem. And then shall the power of heaven...” In this case, it is the singular, it's not the “powers,” because when you have Him present with you, you have all the authority, *“...then shall the power of heaven come down among them; and I also will be in the midst. And then shall the work of the Father commence at that day...”* (verses 23-26).

Christ will come. Once the covenant has been renewed, the city of Zion will follow. The Lord's presence will come, and then the final stage begins.

“...even when this gospel shall be preached among the remnant of this people. Verily I say unto you, at that day shall the work of the Father commence among all the dispersed of my people, yea, even the tribes which have been lost, which the Father hath led away out of Jerusalem. Yea, the work shall commence among all the dispersed of my people, with the Father to prepare the way whereby they may come unto me, that they may call on the Father in my name. Yea, and then shall the work commence, with the Father among all nations in preparing the way whereby his people may be gathered home to the land of their inheritance. And they shall go out from all nations; they shall not go out in haste, nor go by flight, for I will go before them, saith the Father, and I will be their rearward” (verses 26-29).

It's not going to happen in haste, and the work of the Father that will commence in those nations, to commence the possibility for the gathering, will involve destroying a great deal of political, social, and military obstructions that prevent the gathering, that prevent even the preaching to those that would gather if they could hear. But the work of the Father-- and it's always masculine when it comes to destruction-- the work of the Father is going to bring this to an end. All the scattered remnants will be brought back again. The original unified family of God will be restored again. The fathers will have our hearts turned to them because in that day, once it's permitted to get that far, we will be part of that family again.

Now, having said all that, let me read to you some things which the Lord said concerning this moment. Because He's talking about an event that will happen. This is from Matthew 22, beginning at verse 2:

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.

"And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen"
(Matthew 22:2-14).

Now, several things about this. This is one of those places in scripture in which remnant is used in a negative way. A remnant. God invites all to come to the wedding feast of His son. This is when the kingdom is going to be established in the last days. He invites all to come and from among all of those people who had been invited, there's a remnant of those who still hold onto the restoration, and they are the worst of all. They have the hardest hearts. They are the ones who will not come. And after the Lord deals with them, then He goes out and invites everyone to come. Everyone, come in. And included among those that are invited in are as many as they found both bad and good. They're all invited to come in, and there is no excluding the bad, speaking after the judgments of this world. Bad people get invited in. And when they come, and when they arrive, it's not whether they are a bad person or a good person that determines whether they get to stay or not; it's the presence or absence of a wedding garment. Those that are invited will not come. They'll even abuse those who try to take them in. But there are plenty of folks in the byways who are only kept from the truth because they don't know where to find it.

This is your responsibility. This is your work to do. This is the day in which these things need to be done.

The work is beginning again. I suppose it was necessary that what began in Joseph's time had to run down to the condition that it's in at present-- that it had to become a leaky ruin

of a farm that Joseph himself no longer even wanted, before it was possible for the Lord to say “at this moment we turn a new leaf.” But my word, can’t you see the signs of the times? Can’t you look about and see that the whole world is waxing old like a garment? Can’t you see that there is, right now, a balance of things that are kept at bay only to preserve the possibility that a remnant might be claimed? God promised He would do this.

“For behold, I say unto you that as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord; and as many of the Jews as will not repent shall be cast off; for the Lord covenanted with none save it be with them that repent and believe in his Son, who is the Holy One of Israel... For the time speedily cometh that the Lord God shall cause a great division among the people, and the wicked will he destroy; and he will spare his people, yea, even if it so be that he must destroy the wicked by fire.” That’s in 2 Nephi chapter 30.

Zion will include people who are willing to receive revelations from God and obey commandments. God does this to bless His people.

“Blessed are they whose feet stand upon the land of Zion, who have obeyed my gospel; for they shall receive for their reward the good things of the earth, and it shall bring forth in its strength. And they shall also be crowned with blessings from above, yea, and with commandments not a few, and with revelations in their time—they that are faithful and diligent before me.” That’s from Doctrine and Covenants Section 59.

Christ said that:

“It behoveth the Father that it should come forth from the gentiles.” He says: *“The gentiles, if they will not harden their hearts, that they may repent and...be baptized in my name and know the true points of my doctrine, that [the Gentiles] may be numbered among my people”* (3 Nephi 21:6).

In the dedicatory prayer to the Kirtland Temple, Joseph Smith dedicated the temple and identified the Latter-day Saints as “we who are identified with the Gentiles.” If we enter into, as Gentiles, a covenant, so that we know the true points of Christ’s doctrine, then the Gentiles who do so may “be numbered among my people.”

If we’ll *“...repent and hearken to my words and harden not [our] hearts, I will establish my church among them and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among this...”* [remnant] *“this, the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for an inheritance”* (3 Nephi 21:22). It’s talking about the Gentiles, but it’s talking about establishing His word, which is a prerequisite to establishing His people.

“...numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance; And they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob, and also as many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be

called the New Jerusalem” (verses 22-23).

Take another look at 3 Nephi 21, and in particular, pay attention to how the words and the covenant play into the fulfillment of the prophecies and the reclaiming of the Gentiles to become part of His covenant and then those who likewise inherit as their possession this land.

MAN:

“It is not enough to receive my covenant, but you must also abide it. And all who abide it, whether on this land or any other land, will be mine and I will watch over them and protect them in the day of harvest, and gather them in as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. I will number you among the remnant of Jacob, no longer outcasts, and you will inherit the promises of Israel. You shall be my people and I will be your God and the sword will not devour you. And unto those who will receive will more be given until they know the mysteries of God in full” (Answer and Covenant, p. 7).

DENVER:

“Now, hear the words of the Lord to those who receive this covenant this day: All you who have turned from your wicked ways and repented of your evil doings, of lying and deceiving, and of all whoredoms, and of secret abominations, idolatries, murders, priestcrafts, envying, and strife, and from all wickedness and abominations, and have come unto me, and been baptized in my name, and have received a remission of your sins, and received the Holy Ghost, are now numbered with my people who are of the house of Israel. I say to you:

Teach your children to honor me.

Seek to recover the lost sheep remnant of this land and of Israel and no longer forsake them. Bring them unto me and teach them of my ways, to walk in them.

And I, the Lord your God, will be with you and will never forsake you and I will lead you in the path which will bring peace to you in the troubling season now fast approaching.

I will raise you up and protect you, abide with you, and gather you in due time, and this shall be a land of promise to you as your inheritance from me.

The Earth will yield her increase, and you will flourish upon the mountains and upon the hills, and the wicked will not come against you because the fear of the Lord will be with you.

I will visit my house, which the remnant of my people shall build, and I will dwell therein, to be among you, and no one need to say, Know ye the Lord, for you all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

I will teach you things that have been hidden from the foundation of the world and your understanding will reach unto Heaven.

And you shall be called the children of the Most High God, and I will preserve you against the harvest.

And the angels sent to harvest the world will gather the wicked into bundles to be burned, but will pass over you as my peculiar treasure” (Answer and Covenant, p. 11-12).

Accepting the covenant is not the final step, our choices will determine whether we are bitter or natural fruit. That will decide our fate. Just as the ancient allegory foretold [Jacob 5], the covenant makes us servants and laborers in the vineyard (verse 61). We are required to, this is from the covenant: *“Seek to recover the lost sheep remnant of this land and of Israel and no longer forsake them. Bring them unto [the Lord] and teach them of [His] ways to walk in them.”*

If we fail to labor to recover them, we break the covenant. We must labor for this “last time” in the Lord’s vineyard. There is an approaching, final pruning of the vineyard (verse 62). The first to be grafted in are Gentiles so that the last may be first, the lost sheep remnant next, and then Israelites, so that the first may be last (verse 63). But grafting is required for all, even the remnants, because God works with His people through covenant-making.

We have an opportunity. We have a bonafide, actual, offer from God, to allow us to be that generation in which the promises get fulfilled. But we have the freedom of choice that allows us to elect to be stubborn, to be contentious, to be agents of destruction, and to discourage and break the hearts of those who would willingly accept the challenge to repent and follow God.

Now it’s also possible, in fact it’s probable, that at some point what the Lord will do is gather out a remnant of a remnant-- gather out a few. And how many are essential in order for the promises to be fulfilled? I’m certain there is a minimum. I’m fairly confident that the minimum can be counted on your two hands. But there is no maximum. We’re not going to just have eight people on the ark. There can be more. There could be many more. The upper limit is practically limitless. There is a minimum, but heavens, why would anyone want that?

Continuing with the Heavenly Mother’s declarations in Proverbs 8: *“I love them that love me and those that seek me early shall find me. Riches and honor are with me, yea, durable riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold and my revenue than choice silver” (verse 17-19).*

Of all our Mother’s “fruit” the most valuable to fallen man is without doubt the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. The account of how Jesus Christ came into the world begins with a virgin and an angel. There is more to this than Christians have noticed. The prophecy relied on to

identify the birthplace of Christ in Bethlehem continues with a description of His Mother. It was prophesied that only when “...*she which travaileth hath brought forth; then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel*” (Micah 5:3). Because of the labor and travail of His Mother, the prophecy of Israel returning to God was fulfilled. She made His entry into this world possible. The redemption of the remnant is as much the consequence of Her as of Her Son.

What was Mary’s role? Who was she? Is it possible she was “the mother of God” before she came into mortality? These are important questions that ought to be asked. If we can learn the answers they would indeed be glorious.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver’s talk entitled “The Mission of Elijah Reconsidered,” given in Spanish Fork, UT on October 14th, 2011;
- Denver’s *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talks #1, 2, 6 and 10, given during 2013 and 2014;
- Denver’s conference talk entitled “Things to Keep Us Awake at Night,” given in St. George, UT on March 19th, 2017;
- Denver’s “Opening Remarks” and the presentation of “Answer and Covenant,” both given at the Covenant of Christ Conference in Boise, ID on September 3rd, 2017;
- A fireside talk entitled “That We Might Become One,” given in Clinton, UT on January 14th, 2018; and
- Denver’s conference talk entitled “Our Divine Parents,” given in Gilbert, AZ on March 25th, 2018.

Podcast Episode 17: Prayer, Part 1

QUESTION: To whom do we pray? How should we pray? Why do we pray? And what happens when we pray correctly?

DENVER: Christ is the Father. Think of the word "Father" as a role and not identity. If you take it as a role, and not identity, all the problems go away. If you hear the voice of God speaking to you telling you (Psalms 2:7): "*Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten [you],*" the voice you will be hearing will be Christ's. No one gets out of this world back into the family of God in eternity without Christ as their Father. We're all descendants of Adam, which means we're going to die. But if we become sons of God, we become sons of that God who won the victory over the grave, who becomes our Father. Which is why the *Book of Mormon* calls Him the "very Eternal Father" because Christ has to be your father in order to escape the doom that belongs to Adam.

If you track the genealogy back of every one of us, you're going to find at the head of all that is a dead man who offended the Father. But Christ worked out His salvation right down here among us. When you read in John, He's talking about Himself. He said "I can of my own self do nothing; what I see the Father do, that do I."

The closing verses of Matthew, after He's resurrected, after He's ascended back to the Father, after He's reported to the throne, He comes back, and He says, "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth." He no longer says, "I need to follow what the Father did." He says, in essence, "I have completed the ascent. I am at the throne of God. I am now the one who will rescue you. I have the power to rescue you. I have conquered death on your behalf."

Christ is the Father when you think of it as "role" instead of "personality" or "identity." When you get into personality or identity, you wind up with a mess in your head.

MAN: You then as you just said, in our prayers, when we open up the prayer in the name of the Father, in doing that, then the concept of the role, then it is, changes the whole...

DENVER: There is no reason why that Father to whom you address should not be expected to have wounds in His hands and in His side and in His feet. If you hope to be rescued from the grave, He's going to be the Father that gets you out of that. You address the "Father," but He has become the Father.

The problem that we have is that we want to assign a personality; we want to assign a role. We do not want to accept a status. We want personality instead of a role that gets played. Christ is the Father. Christ was the Son. Christ-- He had to come in a subordinate position. He had to come into the world contaminated with blood. He had to have within Him the seeds of mortality in order to have the capacity to die, because without the capacity to die,

He couldn't die. But His death had to be unjust so that it violated the law of Justice. Justice had to be offended by the death of the Lord so that He, going into the grave, could say, "An eternal wrong has been committed." Because someone upon whom... "The wages of sin is death and I committed no sin. I did not earn the wages of death. Therefore I have the power to lay claim upon my life and take it up again, because that is the law of Justice." And Justice had to surrender to His resurrection.

So Christ comes out of the grave and is resurrected, and He wants to pull you out of the grave. And Justice says, "No, she is a sinner." And He says, "Wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute. Justice has been satisfied. I was entitled to eternally live. What you took away from me when you killed me, when you took my life, was eternal. You robbed me of eternal life. Therefore, I can claim her, too because the infinite of what you stole from me satisfied you infinitely. I am giving her a pass because, Justice, you offended me infinitely." And Christ did this in order to bring us all back. But the only way we're getting out of here after we shed these and return from the grave, is through Him. And He becomes the Father.

"As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:22). He's going to do it as a free gift to everyone. The only question is, what will the quality of the afterlife then be? Because that's based upon a law that was predicted before the foundation of the world, upon which infinite blessings are conferred.

"Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children, for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life and shall obtain favor of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul, and all they that hate me love death" (Proverbs 8:33-36).

These interesting words do not mean just discovering the abstract presence of "Wisdom" as a characteristic attributable to the Mother in Heaven. Instead they require us to discover Her existence and to acknowledge Her-- otherwise we've not "found" Her. When She declares, *"Whoso findeth me findeth life and shall obtain favor of the Lord,"* it should be taken literally. This does not mean we now pray to Her, for we are commanded to pray to the Father. But it does mean when we use the word "Father" to describe God, we finally regard God to be both "male and female"-- the original "image of God."

When something provokes a person to inquire of the Lord, particularly when what they are inquiring about is something that really matters to them about which they would really like to get an answer, they're struggling-- an interior lighting problem with your barges, for example. That's a pretext used by the Lord in order to get you in a circumstance in which you are petitioning and open so that He can tell you something that really matters. "We'll take care of your interior lighting problem right there. Now what did you see? Okay, let's get after it. Now let's talk about redemption of you, Mahonri, from the fall, taking you back into My presence, and then let's give you a plenary tour through the endowment, so that you can know how everything fits together." But the problem that he approached Him with was interior lighting.

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5). Let him ask of God. God gives "to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." I can ask God; God will give to me. God will give to me liberally. God will not tell me, "There are lines here you musn't cross. There are things about which you must not inquire. There are things your heart is not yet prepared to receive." He gives liberally. He can let you know what you need to know from your study and inquiry into the truth. And no man can stop that! Because this is a matter between you and God. It has always been a matter between you and God. There is no friar with a brown frock that you need to bend the knee to in order to please God.

Well, when you're laboring, as verse 11 suggests, and when you hit the right verse, as verse 11 recites, then verse 12 confirms how you get answers to these kind of inquires. *"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..."* (JS-H 1:12).

You know, turn back to *Doctrine and Covenants* Section 76, and look at verse 18. This is the vision of the redemption of the dead that gave us the three degrees of glory. They're reading in John. And he gives you the verse in John that they were reading, in verses 16 and 17. And look at 18: *"Now this caused us to marvel, for it was given unto us of the Spirit."*

The Spirit cannot lean upon you and cannot focus your mind upon the revelation that you are entitled to receive, unless you use the scriptures as they were intended to be used: as a Urim and Thummim, as the basis from which you draw out the truths of God. And the best version of that is, of course, the *Book of Mormon*.

It entered (this is back, verse 12 of the *Joseph Smith- History*), it entered into his heart *"...with great force (of) every feeling of my heart. I reflected on it again and again..."* Now that's an interesting statement because it doesn't appear that this "labor" was a one-off event. But it occurred over and over as he sought more understanding, searching deeper and deeper into trying to understand what it was he ought to do and how it is he ought to accomplish it.

"Again and again, knowing if any person needed wisdom from God, I did..." You should be asking God so that you can understand scripture. You shouldn't be trusting the expositions of anyone, myself included. These scriptures have a message for you. God has a message for you. God would like to talk to you, not through me or any other man-- God would like to talk with you. To be saved by knowledge, then the things you need to know are uniquely situated. The things you have the right to get from God are uniquely situated.

Your lives should be filled with wonder. Be not faithless, but be believing. And be of good cheer. He knows you better than you know yourself.

The Stake President asked me a few weeks ago about whether I was praying at the time that I had one of the encounters he and I discussed. And I said, "It's not a fair question. I wake up

in the morning, and I start to pray. Throughout the day, I will take care of a thousand things, and whenever I am free, my mind will revert back to the prayer, and we'll continue the dialogue. And it goes on all day. There is not a moment in my life in which I am not being prayerful." And so the answer to the question is, I suppose, yes, I was praying. Because there's hardly a moment when I'm idle, when I am not praying.

Well, God intends to speak to each of us about us, and about what matters to us, and about what matters to you. He, unlike us, is not bounded by the linear existence that we have. All things past, present, and future are continually before the Lord.

In fact, it's really sort of an interesting study. If you take and you look at what the Lord does in 3 Nephi, He has this agenda that He's been assigned by the Father. And Christ discharges the agenda. And He goes through, and as you read the chapters in 3 Nephi, it's really structured, it's really orderly. And then He announces, "Now I have finished with what the Father told me to deliver to you," and He just begins to talk. And as He begins to talk, what unfolds is non-chronological. It's topical, but it's past, present, and future. His thoughts are not like our thoughts. They aren't. They're nonlinear. And sometimes it's not easy.

"At length," he says in verse 13, *"I came to the conclusion I must either remain in darkness and confusion, or else I must do as James directs, that is, ask of God."* And so it is for all of us. You want to know the truth of a proposition? You ask God. And don't be fearful. If you ask, He'll answer. But you better be prepared for the answer, because the battle that is already upon us is going to require valiance.

Well, here now we have this peculiar scene where a young lad put at ease by the Almighty, calling him by an intimate name, putting him in the position where he's been drawn into intimacy with Almighty Himself, is then given a pause. You see, They're not quick to speak. You see, They'll wait. And They waited. And so now you have the lad: *"My object in going to inquire of the Lord was to know which of all the sects was right, that I might know which to join. No sooner, therefore, did I get possession of myself, so as to be able to speak, than I asked the Personages who stood [before] me..."* (JS-H 1:18). We don't know how long this took. We don't know how long it takes a lad to get himself composed. To God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, it didn't matter. God is in no hurry. And He's in no hurry to fix you. He will wait on whatever it is you need to be allowed to dispose of to come along. And He will wait.

Joseph Smith said: "I advise all to go on to perfection and search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of godliness" (TPJS p. 364).

Turn to *Doctrine and Covenants* Section 8. This is one of those interesting little notes. Oliver wanted to translate. This was in April of 1829. He had arrived to become the scribe to Joseph shortly before this, and he tried to translate. It didn't work out so well. He told him in verse 2: *"I will tell you in your mind and your heart by the Holy Ghost"* and so on. He talks about a gift that he has, "the gift of Aaron," (verse 6). That's the rod-- he was able to use a divining rod. We're kind of embarrassed about that now, and we don't really preserve that much anymore, because we think gifts like that are kind of wacky. And yet here it is in

scripture.

And some of you probably have gifts that you find a little odd. And yet, you all have gifts. And not everyone has the same gift. And if it gives you access to information from a divine source, you ought to trust it. And it doesn't matter that the way in which you do it, and the way in which someone else does it, is differently situated. No one had ever thought about a seer stone until Joseph Smith encountered it and then found it ratified in the *Book of Mormon*, in the book of Mosiah.

Well, in any event, I'm interested in verses 10 and 11 in the revelation given to Joseph in April of 1829, where it says: *"Remember that without faith you can do nothing; therefore ask in faith. Trifle not with these things; do not ask for that which you ought not."* So okay, you've got to be careful. Don't you ask for something that you ought not be asking for! For goodness sake! Es prohibido! Okay? Followed immediately by this statement: *"Ask that you may know the mysteries of God."* That's a commandment. And anyone that tells you, "You ought not be searching deeper and deeper into the mysteries of God," well I think we've just read about them in Luke, didn't we (Luke 11:52)? You don't enter in yourself, and you don't suffer those that are entering in to be permitted to go. Because you do not understand the power of godliness. You deny the power of godliness.

I declare to you in the words of scripture: *"Ask that you may know the mysteries of God!"* That's a commandment, given to us by revelation, enshrined in the scriptures that you folks claim to believe in. Stop denying the power of godliness. And stop falling for the sophists and lawyers who would deceive you by suggesting that you should not inquire into the mysteries of God. They are anti-Christ. They are opposed to the doctrine of salvation. They deny the power of godliness.

Everything that's going on in the Restoration comes back to James 1:5. Why don't you ask God who giveth to all men liberally? And He would like you to know a great deal more than you presently do. He doesn't upbraid. He doesn't scold you; He doesn't say the mysteries are off-limits. He says, "Come and learn of me." He says, "I command you to ask and inquire into the mysteries of God." He says, "Salvation itself is dependent upon knowledge." *"And this is life eternal that you may know Christ"* (John 17: 3). How can you serve the Master you don't know?

"So on the above mentioned night of 21 September," this is verse 29 on the next page, *"...I retired to bed for the night, I betook myself to prayer and supplication to Almighty God for forgiveness of all my sins and follies..."* So he had waited, but he waited until he got to the point in which he had some apprehension about his standing before God, because it had been a long time. But notice that it's Joseph who is driving the events that will occur now on the autumnal equinox, when he makes an inquiry involving his sins. And he's asking, he's supplicating for forgiveness of his sins, and he also wants to know of his state and standing before Him, saying at the end of verse 29: *"I had full confidence in obtaining a divine manifestation, as I previously had one"* (JS-H 1:29).

If Joseph Smith can go get a divine manifestation respecting his standing before God, so can you. If Joseph Smith can go out and inquire to know of God what church to join, so can you. Moroni 10:4-5, particularly 10:5, tells you that: *"By the power of the Holy Ghost you may know the truth of all things."* The truth of *all* things. There is nothing off limits. There's nothing about which you're going to be upbraided and told, "Don't ask. Don't inquire. I won't tell." Now you may ask for something that you are unprepared to hear the answer for because there's some preparation yet left. But if you ask, you set in motion on the other side permission to fix what's wrong with you.

Have you read the 10th Parable ("The Missing Virtue," *Ten Parables*, Denver C. Snuffer)? If you've read the 10th Parable you know there is a time lag in which a missing virtue gets supplied as a consequence of real world experience. The answer gets set in motion as a consequence of the laws of God, upon which all blessings are predicated, which mandate as we're seeing here in this verse, that you must ask.

And by the way, the answer to the question that you ask from God will always be "yes." However, if you're not ready for the "yes," then you're going to go through a period of renovation and repair. How long you need to be renovated and repaired depends upon just how much of the toxic nonsense you've drunk in and how much of it you continue to drink in that opposes the ability of God to speak to you. So soon as you will lay down that nonsense and in faith be believing, so soon will God be able to plug the leaks, repair the hinge, fix the broken window.

He really does have a house of order, or better put a temple, that is holy *"...which temple ye are"* (1 Corinthians 3: 17). It's not built by human hands. It was built by God in the womb of your mother. And you were endowed with it when you took your first breath. That-- you're wearing it now-- is His temple. The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple, but it must not be defiled. Clean yourselves up.

If you want to know what your state and standing is 'cuz you're uncertain-- we're reading in the Joseph Smith testimony. Look at the next verse. *"While I was thus in the act of calling upon God..."* ([JS-H 1:30). In the act of calling upon God! If you are in the right way, with the right faith, looking for the right answers, you don't even get to finish the sentence. God knows what you have need of even before you ask. It's from the Sermon on the Mount. Christ tells you that. That horrible aching, that longing, that hollowness, that emptiness within you, is what Christ was designed to fill. That's His purpose in coming to His temple.

The extent of any man's knowledge concerning the character and glory of God depends upon the diligence and the faithfulness of the individual until

"... like Enoch, the brother of Jared, and Moses, they shall obtain faith in God, and power with him to behold him face to face. We have now clearly set forth how it is, and how it was, that God became an object of faith for rational beings; and also, upon what foundation the testimony was based which excited the inquiry and diligent search of the ancient saints to seek after and obtain a knowledge of the glory of God; and we

have seen that it was human testimony, and human testimony only, that excited this inquiry, in the first instance, in their minds. It was the credence they gave to the testimony of their fathers, this testimony having aroused their minds to inquire after the knowledge of God; the inquiry frequently terminated, indeed always terminated when rightly pursued, in the most glorious discoveries and eternal certainty” (Lectures on Faith 2:55-56).

And what is "the most glorious discovery?" It is the person of God. And what is the "eternal certainty" that you want? It is your own salvation. Because no man can give that to you, but God can.

At the time of the First Vision the Lord says to Joseph: *"This is my beloved son, hear [ye] him."* And then you have the Father and the Son, and a pause. "No sooner had I collected myself than..." Joseph writes (JS-H 1:18). He goes on and asks his question. You have the controlling power of the universe on standby, waiting for Joseph to formulate and ask the question. That ought to tell you something.

The Lord clearly prefers a dialogue with us. He doesn't pontificate. He talks, He communicates, He wants it to be... I mean, He insists upon prayer for a reason. He'd like to hear from you, because in the process of hearing from you, you expose something to Him, and you expose something to yourself, about yourself. He almost insists on treating us like we're equals, even though clearly we're not. And that ought to tell you something about yourself, as well. All of these things are extraordinary revelations that the Lord is giving to us about who we are and who He is.

The work of salvation is not achieved by your ignorance and indifference. And the gospel of Christ is not limited to making you feel better about yourself. Quite frankly, my wife and I marvel all the time at how unprepared and unworthy she and I feel in everything that has gone on. But I know God. And therefore, because I know God, I am confident that you can know Him, too. Absolutely confident that you can know Him, too. And that He will speak to any one of you, just as He spoke to Joseph Smith and that He will answer any earnest seeker. No one is sent away disappointed.

Do you think the Lord, who would not turn away the blind and the halt, the crippled and the leprous-- do you think the Lord who, seeing the widow whose only son was being carried away dead and was moved with compassion to restore the life of that young man so that she, in that circumstance, in that culture, in that environment, she now had future security because she had a son to look out for her-- Do you think that that Lord doesn't intend to answer the prayers of the earnest seeker? My suspicion is that God has answered, and you've turned a deaf ear to much of what you've looked for because you want something other than the answers He's already given in the material that sits in front of you unexamined. My suspicion is, that if you would spend time looking into the revelations given us by the Prophet Joseph Smith, and studying the history, however perilous that may be a prove to you, that you will conclude that God's already had an answer to the inquiry that you've made. And that with a little effort, you can find it. And when you find it, you'll

hear the voice of God saying, "There it is. Now was that so hard? Why don't you keep going and see what else is in there for you."

When I finally got around to taking it seriously, and I finally got around to hesitatingly praying about whether or not this stuff I had been hearing was true-- and you need to understand I had been visited and pamphleted and filmstripped back in those days for about nine months before this, so I had heard a lot of the message that the missionaries wanted to deliver. It didn't take, I wasn't particularly interested, I was merely polite. But I had heard a lot. So when I finally got around to praying about it, the fellow who had originally-- I had made the mistake of complimenting-- loaned me his journal. And he wanted me to read about his conversion, because in his journal he had his testimony of how he had come to realize that is was the truth. I was in the military at the time, and Steve, whose journal had been loaned to me, was converted while he was serving in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. I don't think he was in Vietnam proper; I think he was in Cambodia, but he was in an outpost, and it was under fire, and he was converted on the night of a firefight, while he's on the perimeter praying to know if the *Book of Mormon* was true.

And I had this journal, and I was alone. I was in a military barracks at night and reading the journal and felt again inclined to pray and ask if this stuff was true. And so I knelt, I prayed, and then I got up from the prayer, and there was no pillar of fire, and there was no conduit into heaven. In fact, it was rather uneventful at the moment. And I sat on the bed and just thought about what the missionaries had been saying and what they'd been asserting and the verses that they'd encouraged me to read. Back in those days there were quite a few biblical sources used by the missionaries.

So after praying with nothing happening, I sat down and I contemplated what it was the missionaries had been saying. And I first concluded that Joseph Smith couldn't be a prophet because there weren't going to be any more prophets. I mean that's *Bible* stuff; that's not today. That doesn't happen. As I thought about that, a verse and a question came to mind. The verse being, "*By your fruits ye shall know them*," from the New Testament. And the question was, Well if there is a test to apply in order to determine whether or not this is a prophet, the presence of the test suggests the possibility of a prophet. I mean, why would you get a test if there is not going to be another prophet? So "by their fruits ye shall know them" suggests the possibility that there will in fact be someone you better apply that test to-- someone about whom that test will become both relevant and important. So I couldn't categorically dismiss, okay, I can't say, "Joseph's not a prophet because there's not going to be another one." Therefore, what is his "fruits"?

Now, I had no universe to draw from to apply the test of Joseph Smith's fruits other than the missionaries that had been teaching me and those families whose houses I had been taught in. Okay? Now you have to understand, I'm young. I'm still a teenager. I'm sitting in a barracks, and I'm trying to figure this stuff out, and I apply the fruits test to what little sampling I had. And you know, those missionaries were so earnest, and they were my age, and they were giving up two years of their lives. I was serving in the military, but they were

servicing in a church organization without being paid. They had the same military haircut I had. They had a disciplined life. They didn't smoke, and they didn't drink, and I couldn't say that at the time about myself or about the people I associated with. But I could tell the difference between the lives of these young men and the lives of those that I served with and myself. I also could see a difference between the families whose houses I had been taught in, and the families I knew from my background-- although I had a wonderful family that I grew up in. I'm the son of the man whom I regard as heroic. My father was really the exception and not the rule among my friends. My father's families were populated by abusers and alcoholics and a variety of other shortcomings, none of which I saw in any of the families whose houses I had been taught in. So my conclusion was, "Well there's some fruit. I don't know what the standard is by which you measure fruit, but there's some fruit that suggests that Joseph Smith had a rather positive influence on these people's lives."

Well then I went on to think, "Wait a minute, the last verse of the New Testament says you can't add to the *Bible*. So, Joseph Smith added a whole lot to the *Bible*. I mean, when they carry their scriptures, the Mormons bring the *Bible*, and then they bring this other thing that's almost the same size, and Joseph did that, so you know, that can't-- there's something wrong with that." So I got the verse out, I looked at the verse, I thought about it, and what became apparent to me was that the verse doesn't say that God can't add more scripture whenever God chooses to do so-- it says man is not supposed to do this. And so if God, through Joseph, chose to add, then He certainly has the ability to do that.

Well, to make a long story short (and I give an account of this in the little vignettes in the book *The Second Comforter*), after about a little over two hours of sitting on the bed and going through doubt and question after doubt and question, and each time being able to come up with an answer to, or a solution-- a solution from the scriptures themselves to every doubt, to every apprehension, to every question that I had-- my final question sitting alone that night was, "How do I even know there is a God? I could be spending this whole wasted effort, and there isn't even anyone up there." And that quick, as soon as I finished the thought, the thought came to me, "Who do you think you've been talking to for the last two hours?" It was a startling thought.

God speaks to us in our own language, in our own tongue, according to our own understanding. And He doesn't use an editor. He talks to us the way we talk. Let me tell you, the thought that I had been talking with and had received an answer from God was a startling moment to me. It was startling, first of all, because it suggested that God was willing to talk to even some guy sitting in a barracks in New Hampshire, long away from where they grew up, on the topic of whether or not Mormonism was true. And so it took a long time for me to be able to see the pattern, but the pattern in which the Lord reveals and discusses new truth is the same in every generation. And so when He came in answer to prayer and spoke to me sitting in a barracks, despite the fact that there were no fireworks, no pillar of fire, no shining man in a robe, He used the scriptures and expounded them to increase my understanding.

When I have had discussions with Him, they have invariably been parsing through the scriptures, explaining things. When I have inquired and gotten answers, it has been because of things that are in the scriptures that I do not understand.

The brother of Jared, like we saw yesterday, went to the Lord to inquire about a practical matter. And the Lord, in response to the inquiry about the lighting, first of all, asks him if he's going to believe Him-- asks the brother of Jared if he's going to accept the words (in other words, the covenant) which He is about to put into the hands of this man. And then once he agrees to the conditions, there is this revelation that unfolds to the brother of Jared in which God makes known to him all of His revelations. Okay?

What happens with the brother of Jared once the revelation begins to roll forth has nothing to do with the problem that brought him in prayer to the Lord. He wanted to solve a lighting problem inside a barge. The revelation has nothing to do with the lighting problem inside the barge. It has to do with all of God's revelations.

Joseph Smith went into the Sacred Grove trying to find out which church to join. In answer to the revelation about which church to join, he was told to join none of them and that they were all corrupt and that he would be the means of bringing something else about.

When Joseph prayed to find out what his state and standing was before the Lord, and the angel Moroni came, perfunctorily the inquiry that he made was answered, "Your sins are forgiven." Then he goes on to tell him about everything, including the existence of the plates of the *Book of Mormon*. So the subject about which someone inquires in going to the Lord does not necessarily control the content of what the Lord is going to reveal.

But when you submit to the rule of God, and you place yourself in a position in which you must be dependent upon Him, every one of you realize your own weakness. Every one of you has to grapple with the uncertainty, "Is this right, or is this wrong?" Every one of you has to grapple with the fact that in answer to some questions, there is silence, and you're forced to choose. And if you choose right, you don't know that you chose right because He refused to tell you. And then you act in reliance on that going forward, only later to be told, "If you had made the mistake, I would have corrected you. But you needed that experience."

God answers prayers. And sometimes He forces you to make choices. And very often (I can't tell you how often), very often I make the wrong choice. It's almost like I got a compass pointing south; I don't know what the deal is there. I choose wrong, and then I get an answer. But I got an answer because I made a mistake.

Let me give you a description of the Prayer for the Covenant. It took months of pondering, testing, questioning beforehand, before I even dared to ask. The idea that presented itself to my mind was that Joseph's prayer at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple was a pattern to be followed when some great event involving God was to take place. The House of the Lord was one such event in Kirtland, but having a new volume of scripture was at least equally

important to that. Therefore, a prayer to God asking for His acceptance was an idea that continued to press upon my mind.

But it concerned me that the idea of my offering that prayer may be based on my own will and not Heaven's. Before proceeding, I questioned my motive, my desire, and why I would even ask. I was haunted by the continuing impression that it needed to be done and was required of me. Finally, when the idea could not be shaken from my mind, I determined it was not my own thought but God's beckoning voice telling me that this was an obligation I needed to act upon and not suppress. I want you to think of Joseph's description that says: *"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 heart. I reflected on it again and again"* (JS-H 1:12).

Joseph did not act hastily when the impression came to him. He couldn't shake it. It persisted. He reflected upon it again and again. I don't know whether that's days, weeks, or months, but I can tell you before the Prayer for the Covenant was offered, for me it was months, because if it isn't of God I have no right to step forward and do something. I ought not be volunteering for things of that nature.

At length I determined that I should act on the impulse, and therefore, I ought to offer a prayer for the acceptance of the scripture. When I began to compose the prayer the content was provided by inspiration from Heaven and not my own words. It took me nearly 200,000 words to write a history of the Restoration from the time of Joseph to the present, in a book that's fairly lengthy. The Prayer for the Covenant, coming by inspiration, only took a few pages and stated in more concise terms, more correctly, the history of the Restoration from the beginning until now. The Prayer for the Covenant, the prayer for the scriptures, is not me being clever and insightful and succinct. The words were given, and the words are God's view of what has happened.

Twenty-seven years of preparation and pursuit was involved before I found God, which then brings this point: If a group of prayerful people spend months focused on a challenge and then many hours together, and individually, discussing, searching, praying and looking to Heaven for guidance, and then reach a conclusion they can all individually and collectively testify came from Heaven, how can I adequately test their outcome without giving it careful, solemn, ponderous thought and take the time to test and retest the answer we get? People who can make truly inspired snap decisions are far better at obtaining God's voice than am I. For gravely important matters it takes me a great deal of wrestling with Heaven before I can trust that I am humble enough before God to accept what He has to offer, and to exclude all of what I want, all of what I hope, and all of what I expect. Those who have a "short order cook" for their God can do what I cannot.

In a letter on August 24, 1834, Joseph Smith described the only way falsehoods could be avoided. He wrote: "If the Saints are very humble, very watchful and very prayerful, that few will be deceived by those who have not authority to teach, or who have not the Spirit to

teach according to the power of the Holy Ghost, in the scriptures” (*JS Papers, Documents* Vol. 4, p. 117).

The Atonement isn't like Tinkerbell spreading some magic dust that will make you rise up. The Atonement will erase your sins and mistakes, but *you* must rise up. You must acquire those virtues. The glory of God is intelligence. And repentance requires you to acquire that intelligence, that glory of God. And you acquire it by the things that you do in His name and for His sake. And those that are here with you in need, they represent Him. And when you do it to even the least of them, He will credit that as having been done for Him. And no good deed will be gone unnoticed with Him. He even notices when the sparrows fall. So is He not going to notice when your knee bends with compassion, praying for His mercy for someone that has offended you? And when you pray for those who have offended you, do you think for one moment that that doesn't change your own heart?

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The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's comments during a fellowship meeting in Sandy, UT on February 22, 2015;
- His talk entitled "Christ's Discourse on the Road to Emmaus," given in Fairview, Utah on April 14, 2007;
- His talk entitled "The Mission of Elijah Reconsidered," given in Spanish Fork, UT on October 14, 2011;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism* series, given during 2013 and 2014;
- A fireside talk on "Plural Marriage," given in Sandy, UT on March 22, 2015;
- His conference talk entitled "The Doctrine of Christ," given in Boise, ID on September 11, 2016;
- His fireside talk entitled "That We Might Become One," given in Clinton, UT on January 14, 2018; and
- His conference talk entitled "Our Divine Parents," given in Gilbert, AZ on March 25, 2018.

Podcast Episode 18: Prayer, Part 2

QUESTION: What is earnest prayer like, and what can happen as a result of crying to the Lord?

DENVER: Throughout the record of the brother of Jared, never once does the word "pray/prayer" appear. When the voice of Moroni emerges into the narrative, the word "prayed" appears in Moroni's aside. But in the record of the brother of Jared, he does not ever use the word "pray" or "prayer." He "cried."

Consider for a moment the difference between being someone who prays to God and someone who "cries" unto God. Consider the position in which the petitioner has voluntarily placed himself, when instead of coming in prayer, he comes rather "crying out unto the Lord."

Keep that word in mind. Eleven times it's mentioned in the book of Ether in the account that's dealing with the brother of Jared. The only time the word "prayer" appears is in the interlude. That's the way you can know that Moroni is abridging a record that belongs to someone else, because he doesn't use the same word as the person whose record he's abridging. He uses "prayer," one time.

This is what he cried out: *"O Lord, thou hast said that we must be encompassed about by the floods. Now behold, O Lord, and do not be angry with thy servant..."* (Ether 3:2). Crying, asking Him not to be angry, reducing himself to being merely a servant, because of his "weakness before thee." What is this man's attitude? How is this man approaching the throne of God? What does he view himself as? How does he regard God? Why does this man have such faith? Why does this man attract the attention of God? Why is God willing to speak to such a man, such a vessel as this? What is it about this, this attitude that this man possesses, that tells you his heart is right before God? He is willing to receive.

Some of you fear your own weakness. You are closer to God than those who are self-confident, proud of your understanding, and think yourselves better than others.

"...for we know that thou art holy..." This is the contrast: "my weakness"--"your holiness." *"...and dwellest in the heavens, and that we are unworthy before thee; because of the fall our natures have become evil continually; nevertheless, O Lord, thou hast given us a commandment that we must call upon thee, that from thee we may receive according to our desires."*

"I'm doing what you asked because you commanded me. I don't think myself qualified, but I'm obeying what you told me to do." This is the attitude of the man. This is what the heart of the man reflects. And these words are why he "cries" to God.

"Behold, O Lord, thou hast smitten us because of our iniquity, and hast driven us forth, and for these many years we have been in the wilderness; nevertheless, thou hast been merciful unto us. O Lord, look upon me in pity, and turn away thine anger from this thy people, and suffer not that they shall go forth across this raging deep in darkness; but behold these things which I have molten out of the rock" (Ether 3:3).

There is no pride here. There is no resentment for being chastened. There is acceptance of the chastening hand of God. There is no proclamation that this man is worthy-- quite the opposite; he says he is unworthy. There is no resentment for having been punished. It is the opposite; he recognizes that every stumble along the way is justified, is reasonable, is earned, was appropriate. Because God, who cares for His children, upbraids and disciplines His children.

We don't know enough to be "good" in His sight. We aren't intelligent enough. We think that some pseudo-virtues that arise out of our culture are good indeed, when in fact, that behavior on display in the halls of heaven would be deeply offensive. And some of the things that we think are offensive to God are not at all. Not at all! And so our righteousness, at best, is pseudo-righteousness. And much of what we feel guilty about was given to us in order to give us the humility to come down here. And it will not last past the resurrection. Everything that you have been put through and every challenge that you have been given and every weakness that you possess have been given to you in a studied way to bring you, hopefully, to your knees-- to bring you, hopefully, to feel the chastening hand of God, so that you, in your day, in your circumstance, can look upon that as a gift, because it surely is.

"I give unto men weakness, that they may [come unto me,] and if they'll humble themselves [and come unto me], I'll make weak things...strong" (Ether 12:27). That's also in the Book of Ether, and that's an aside in which Moroni is complaining that the gentiles aren't going to believe this book. The gentiles aren't going to believe this record. They're going to say, "This stinks."

Ether 12:26: *"When I had said this, the Lord [God] spake unto me, saying: Fools mock, but they shall mourn; my grace is sufficient for the meek, that they shall take no advantage of your weakness; And if men come unto me I will show unto them their weakness" (Ether 12:26-27).* That's an unavoidability. That's an inevitability. You stand in the presence of a just and holy being, you're going to realize your weaknesses. You are going to recognize what you lack.

"I give unto men weakness that they may be humble; and my grace is sufficient for all men that humble themselves before me; for if they humble themselves before me, and have faith in me, then will I make weak things become strong unto them" (Ether 12:27).

How do weak things become strong? Not by fighting a battle that you're going to lose. It's by appreciating, as the brother of Jared did, the fact that none of us can come into the presence of God without feeling keenly this scripture. "I..." (this is Christ speaking), "I give unto men weakness" for one purpose, "I give unto men weakness that they may be strong."

The anvil that you're dragging around, that anvil was given to you. Don't curse it. Pray for God to come and lift it. You are never going to be able to get far carrying it anyway. You may not even be able to lift it, but in the economy of God, that is a gift. It's a gift-- not for you to act upon and surrender to, but for you to fight against in humility and meekness and to say, "I'm not winning. I haven't won. It goes on and on, and yet still I fight against it."

When will you finally come to Him and cry out? When, in the bitter anguish of your soul, like Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail, "How long must I endure this? How long do I have to suffer from the abuse of the guards? How long do I have to sit inside a gated room, in a dungeon, to hear stories about the rape of the people who followed me and the murder of the people that believed what I was teaching?"

There's an incident that I think one word-- one word in this incident really explains a great deal of what I have been talking about in this installment. This is an event that occurs within the *Book of Mormon* that may seem otherwise quite puzzling. But now that we've looked at the Ether 3 material, and we go back, and we look at this incident, it suddenly begins to have a connection to it.

This is in Alma 22. It involves Lamoni's father, the king. I want you to look at the father beginning in verse 17 of Alma 22: *"And it came to pass that when Aaron had said these words, the king did bow down before the Lord, upon his knees; yea, even he did prostrate himself upon the earth, and cried [and cried] mightily, saying...."*

It's not the words of the prayer that provoked or gathered the attention of heaven, though the prayer is, in fact, needed, relevant, and exactly what the Lord answered-- it's what came before.

This is the king. This is the king that can have people killed if he chooses to do so. This is the one who, like God among his people, exercises the power of life and death. This is the one who can exact from them taxes. This is the one who has absolutely no reason to do what he's doing here. But look what he does-- he prostrates himself upon the ground, and he "cries out mightily." He doesn't pray. He mirrors exactly what the brother of Jared did when he approached God. In the depths of humility and in the sincerity of his heart, showing absolutely his appreciation for the difference between himself, on the one hand, and God, on the other.

Don't mistake me-- I do not think it is necessary to physically engage in this kind of display. When the display is an extension of what is in the heart, that is absolutely fine. But when what is in the heart is right, it doesn't matter how it's displayed, because God looketh on the inner man. This king was so overtaken by what he had heard, that he was not ashamed to prostrate himself in front of the missionaries. He was not ashamed to cry out in the depths of humility. He didn't care who saw it. He didn't do this for to be seen. He didn't care that he was being seen. He did this because at that moment, that was what he was. He was seeking

grace from the throne of Grace.

"O God, Aaron hath told me that there is a God; and if there is a God, and if thou art God..." Do you see this? This isn't someone who's certain. This is someone who is convicted of his own inadequacy. It may not be that you don't know enough, it may actually be that you know too much that's wrong. It may be that what you lack-- it's all going to be erased and started over anyway. If you could gaze into heaven for five minutes, you'd realize that people that have been writing about this stuff since the beginning of time, who haven't gazed into heaven, don't know what they're talking about. The suppositions and the connections and the ideas that get floated around are not only false, many of them are offensive to God. They're not right. The board's going to be erased. God's going to re-order it. You're going to see things in a completely different light when it happens. It's not that you're brilliant and a shining light of knowledge-- it's what's in your heart, and how has your heart been prepared, and if your heart is open to receive.

"I will give away all my sins to know thee, that I may be raised from the dead, and be saved at the last day. And now when the king had said these words, he was struck as if he were dead."

And then look what happens when he recovers, because as he was struck as if he were dead, he's converted. The Lord ministers to him, and in verse 23: *"...the king stood forth, and began to minister unto them. And he did minister unto them, insomuch that his whole household were converted unto the Lord."* This is what happens when converted to the Lord. You can't stand to look about you and see other people who are left in the dark. You want to invite them, rather as Nathaniel was invited, "Come, and see for yourself." *You* come to the Lord, *you* come and see for yourself. This little bit of skeptical praying, if there's a God, "If thou art God, will you make yourself known to me?" That worked! But not because this is a magic incantation.

Those folks who go through ceremonies think that ceremonies have some powerful mojo, some compelling voodoo. But the purpose of ceremony is to teach you a precept. The precept is what you ought to find within your heart. Rites and ordinances are intended to testify to a greater truth. It was anciently among the Jews, it is an Aaronic priesthood function to turn around and look at the ordinance as if it were an end in itself. It is not an end in itself. It is intended to be a symbol reminding you of some great truth concerning our God.

The capstone of the ceremonies that were restored through Joseph involving a dialogue between you and the Lord in which you're brought back into His presence, and then following that, you're taken away and you're sealed for eternity-- those are lofty concepts. They are powerfully portrayed in the ordinances and the rites. They are intended to convey to you the reality that all of this is possible because God does, in fact, intend to preserve you and all of those associations that you prize, so long as they're worthy.

Don't think you lack the faith! If this king, with this prayer, can go to God and can ask and get an answer, that's not the impediment. The impediment is the pride of your heart, the hardness of your heart, the self-reliance that you think that you own, the traditions that bind you down, the arrogance of your heart, the unwillingness to cry out mightily to God and then to be open to receiving an answer. This was enough, and you, too, can do enough.

The Lord tells a story in Mark. This is Mark 9. Beginning at verse 17, there's this fellow who comes to Christ and says, "Master, I have brought thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit. The spirit overtakes him; he foams at the mouth and gnashes his teeth. I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; they could not." And Christ says: *"O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?"* (Mark 9:19). They brought the boy unto him. He saw him; straightway the spirit tore him, and he fell on the ground, wallowed foaming. He asked the father, "How long has it been since this came unto him?" And he said: *"Of a child. And oftentimes it cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do anything, have compassion on [him], and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth....Straightway the father of the child cried out,"* cried out, *"and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief"* (Mark 9:21-24). Help thou mine unbelief.

You don't need more of what you already have. Why are you here? Look at this man whose heart was broken on this day. He cried out, "Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief. I have a desire, I have a willingness. But it is so fragile; it is so frail. I don't think it's enough." That's not the problem. Cry out; ask Him.

Remember His disciples who'd been following Him, His disciples who were His faithful followers-- His disciples couldn't fix this boy. And they had given up everything to come and follow Him! Jesus healed Him. After the incident the disciples came to Him and said, "Why could we not cast him out?" Christ answered to them: *"This kind can come forth by nothing, but prayer and fasting"* (Mark 9:29).

Why do you have to be afflicted by prayer and fasting if you're a follower of the Lord, in order to get to the point that you can accomplish this? Because you don't fall prostrate, crying out with tears. If this man, in this condition, can say "I believe, help thou mine unbelief," if this man can do this and have the Lord on his behalf work a miracle, you, too, can believe enough. You, too, can accomplish what you desire. You, too, can come to Him.

Matthew covers the same incident, but in Matthew he picks up-- this is Matthew chapter 17, beginning at verse 19: *"Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Howbeit this kind [come] not out but by prayer and fasting"* (Matthew 17:19-21).

Faith as a grain of mustard seed was what the Lord said they needed. The defect does not consist in the absence of faith in the Lord. The defect consists in the arrogance and

hardness of the heart that prevents you from crying out, in the realistic and anguish of your heart, looking to God who is trying to bring you to Him. That depth of humility, that status of being someone who is utterly harmless, that condition in which you present no threat to the righteous, you are harmless as a dove, you seek only the betterment of others-- that is who God is, and what you must become in order for God to be able to redeem you to be like Him. That's you voluntarily changing to be that person, by your submission to Him. Because there is no reason to give to the proud, the vain, and the warlike the ability to torment and to afflict others. There is every reason to give to someone who would ultimately be willing to give the rain to fall on the righteous and the wicked and make the sun to shine on both the righteous and the wicked-- the power of God. Because the power of godliness consists in this kind of a heart. And in this kind of a heart, God can accomplish anything.

All of these examples, the petition that is made to God is not prayer-- all of these examples are crying out to Him. In Romans chapter 4, he's talking about Father Abraham. And in verse 3 he talks about Abraham believed God; it was counted unto him for righteousness. Faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. Verse 13-- the promise that he should be an heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. Because Abraham believed in God, he trusted in Him, therefore he inherited, he inherited it all, the world. He's the father of the righteous. Beginning at verse 17:

"[As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,] before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which [were] not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Romans 4:17-21).

There was no proof that an aged-- "dead," that is-- now impotent, old man could sire a child with a barren, post-menopausal Sarah. But Abraham doubted not, and you have before you promises spoken by the voice of an angel concerning the things God has in store for your day, and you doubt? And you question? And you think God not able to bring about what He has said He intends to do?

The very day that they have looked forward to, from the beginning of the days of Adam down till now (as we looked at in Centerville)-- you doubt that God can bring this to pass? You doubt that what I have been talking about since we began in Boise and have now arrived here-- if God can send someone to declare these things to you, in the confidence and the faith and the knowledge that I'm speaking to you on His errand, and I can do it in this room, in this building, in this city-- salvation comes to you today by the word of God. And you doubt that God can make a holy place somewhere that has not been trodden under the foot of the gentiles? You doubt that God can bring to pass His work in culminating the ages?

Have the faith of a grain of mustard seed, because it is coming. It is going to happen, and if you lack the faith, you will not be invited.

This required Abraham to endure the test of his faith. It is not easy. I want to take you back into an incident, remarkable in its own way, really. 1 Samuel 17. Entire armies of Israel had been put to shame. And David, bringing cheese and bread to his brothers, hears what's going on, and he says, "Well, I'll go out, and I'll smite that godless Philistine."

And so it was that in verse 34 of chapter 17 of 1 Samuel:

"David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep...there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by the beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine" (1 Samuel 17:34-37).

So this is David, who had every confidence-- despite everyone else hanging back, looking across the valley, and saying, "I'll pass"-- David says, "Yeah, I'll go out. I'll take care of him. I've killed a bear, I've killed a lion, I could kill this guy. I mean, there's no difference here, really." Because David did not see this necessarily as a conflict between man and man, mano a mano. He saw this as a conflict between man and God. All that was required was that someone go out there who believed in God, and God would take care of the fight. The battle is the Lord's. It always has been. The battle is the Lord's, and therefore, the Lord is able to deliver. But here is where it gets interesting.

Skip to verse 39: *"David girded his sword upon his armor, and assayed to go; for he had not proved [them]. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. David put them off him..."* He got rid of the sword; he got rid of the armor; he got rid of everything. *"And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine"* (1 Samuel 17:39-40). So on his way out to the battle, he stops at the brook, and he picks up five stones. Okay?

Skip ahead to verse 49: *"David put his hand in his bag, took thence a stone, slang it, smote the Philistine in his forehead."* He needed one. David needed one. David approached him by picking up five. David believed that the Lord would kill Goliath, but David picked up five stones. He had enough faith. But it doesn't mean he had such confidence that he armed himself with one stone. 'Cuz when you cross the brook, and you head on in, where are you going to find another smooth stone? And it's a smooth stone, preferably round, that's going to carry the trajectory true. He's a slinger. He knew that he needed that kind of stone. So as he crossed the brook, he picked up five.

In all of these examples, you see exactly the same thing. You see you. That's what you see. Oh, the great and the mighty and the powerful, and the miraculous and the wonderful, and the ones about whom we read-- they're *you*. They have the same insecurities as you. "I'll give away all my sins to know you." That's a bargain worth making, and then it's a bargain worth keeping.

Be believing. You have faith enough, but also have faith enough in what we read earlier. I want to read it again. *"Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, according to his own will"* (D&C 88:68). He, and not you, control that.

Many of those to whom these promises are made will receive the vindication of the promise in the last moments of their life. Alvin, as he lay dying, had angels come minister to him. Joseph would later see him in the celestial kingdom, but it was in the throes of death when angels ministered to brother Alvin.

Stephen, when he was being stoned, had the heavens opened to him. In the last moments of his life, suffering a brutal form of execution, he's praying because he's so filled with the Spirit by what he's beholding, having the heavens opened to him, that he's praying for those who were in the process of killing him.

St. Francis of Assisi, living in an apostate era, in an apostate church, believed and followed the Sermon on the Mount. His heart was pure and as the last month of St. Francis' life drew to a close, angels came and ministered to him.

Our idea of what it takes to be pure before God is not the same thing as God's view of what it takes to be pure before Him.

Turn to Luke chapter 18, because there the Lord pretty much tells you how it is He evaluates whether someone has purified themselves before Him. This is a story that the Lord makes up in chapter 18 of Luke, telling a parable to those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous.

Beginning at verse 10:

"Two men went into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:10-14).

God can only exalt the meek because only the meek can be trusted. This is what it means to sanctify yourself. Our idea of purity and Christ's idea are entirely based on different criteria. Why is meekness required of a God, by a God? What would happen if God Himself were not patient, willing to suffer abuse, and be rejected? What would happen if God were egotistical? What would happen if God did not return blessings for cursings? What would happen if God were not exactly what He preached in the Sermon on the Mount? What if God did not bless those who despitefully used and abused Him? What would happen if God did not submit Himself to fall into the hands of wicked men, to be despised and rejected? And then to be killed in shame, hanging naked on a cross, in full view of the world, while people spit upon Him and mocked Him and ridiculed Him, saying, "If you really are what you say you are, come down from the cross; then we will believe."

Woe unto all those who say, "If you really are who you say you are..." when the voice of God is sounding in their ears, they would have rejected the Lord as well. They would have crucified the Lord as well. They are not His sheep because they do not hear His voice. If they were His sheep, they would hear His voice.

If we're required to develop the attributes of Christ, how is it possible for us to do so unless God patiently tries to persuade us to voluntarily be like Him? And how can you hope to be like Him if you refuse to be persuaded?

God came as one of the weak things of this world. The only way He is ever going to invite you is through one of the weak things of this world, speaking in weakness, asking you to be persuaded. It doesn't matter how earnest I am, I know my standing before God. What matters is your willingness to be persuaded. Over that, I have no control and want no control. Over that, I simply put the case as the Lord has put it to me, in the hopes that what He has to offer and what He says needs to be said will get through to you. But your relationship and your accountability is not to me, it's to Him. Therefore, be persuaded. Be persuaded.

In Christ's example of praying (I'm talking about His example now, I'm not talking about what He said), Christ, in the Sermon on the Mount, told you that prayer ought to be done in secret. "*When thou prayest,*" this is Matthew [6] beginning at verse 5, "*And when thou prayest thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. When ye pray, use not vain repetitions,*" and so on (Matthew 6:5-7).

So, look, I've given opening prayers in sacrament meeting. I've given opening prayers in High Council meetings. I've given opening prayers in Stake Conferences. I've given opening prayers one time in a meeting Bruce R McConkie was the visiting general authority for. I've given opening prayers in a lot of settings, and I have to tell you, when praying in secret, I don't have to worry about what anyone else thinks about my vocabulary, content, incomplete sentences, dangling participles, stupid notions. I don't have to worry about any

of that. It is between me and God. But when I'm standing on the corner, or in the pulpit, or before people and praying, you may be better than I am, but I have never been able to pray in public in those settings without at least some concern about the words coming out of my mouth and their effect upon the audience. I have always felt like I was delivering more of a sermon than a prayer to God. That's a weakness I have you may have, too. Christ deals with that by how He teaches us to pray.

Our Lord's example of prayer was so private that His disciples had to come to Him and say, "Lord teach us how to pray." They witnessed Him praying. When the Lord went to pray, He went out alone, apart. Sometimes He spent all night praying. But the fact that He prayed, while that was known, the content of the prayer was gone. What He said was not known. There are two examples that we have. We have the example that He gives us in the Sermon on the Mount which is largely in response to the question of, "Teach us how to pray." He tells you how to pray. And then there is the forlorn prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, where He's begging to have a cup removed from Him.

When our Lord prayed, even though prayers might have lasted overnight, they were in private. He lived what He taught. He did what He said. And I don't want to tempt people to surrender the same weakness I have, and that is, to do so for to be seen of men, simply because men are listening.

Go to John chapter 17. This is another thing about the prayer-- the prayers of Christ. Verse 1-- this is the Great Intercessory Prayer. *"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven."* When Christ prayed, He didn't bow His head or fold His arms. He addressed His Father who's in heaven, and He looked; His eyes were lifted up.

Go to John, back to chapter 11 again. This is in John chapter 11 verse 41: *"Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me."* Again, addressing His Father by lifting His eyes up.

Now I understand in some of the examples of contrition that we've looked at that they fell prostrate on the ground. I know that they had bowed themselves, saying that they didn't, in Christ's example, not so much beat on their breast, and not so much as lift their eyes up to heaven. But the presumption implicit in the example the Lord gives is that His eyes should be lifted up to heaven when he's addressing the Father.

How would you like it [turning his back to the audience, bowing his head, and folding his arms] if I talked to you like this? Maybe I'll finish the talk this way. [Returning]

Look, pray to Him. Pray to Him and realize that as you reach up to Him, He would rather reach down to you with greater enthusiasm than any of you can muster. But in order to establish the necessary conditions for our development, there was a law ordained before the foundation of the world upon which all blessings are predicated. And that law is as easily accessible by the father of King Lamoni as it is accessible to the father of the young

man who was overtaken and fell into the fire and fell into the water. It is as accessible to the brother of Jared as it is accessible to you. Because when the law before the foundation of the world was ordained, it was intended for all men to possibly receive of God's fullness. And if receiving of His fullness required a course in rabbinical reasoning or an advanced theological degree, there would be almost none who are saved. But the *Book of Mormon* gives us account after account. And what happens to those who do not possess the required soft heart and willingness to bow? They come away saying, "[God] maketh no such thing known unto us" (1 Nephi 15:9). And like Laman and Lemuel, they establish for themselves, with their iron necks and their brass bowels, an inability to look up unto God and be saved.

So if the apostle Paul, who is so ill-fitted to Christianity that he's going about trying to kill Christians, can qualify for God's miraculous intervention in his life, then a person of faith, as long as they are headed in the right direction, should be able to get the attention of God and angels. So it did not surprise me at all when Joseph went out to pray in the grove, and as he began that search, he got attacked by the adversary, and then calling upon God with all his strength he got delivered-- it did not surprise me when I got attacked by a malevolent source before I encountered an angel. And it didn't put me off the trail-- it, in fact, I was again stupid enough to say, "Oh, this is kind of like what happened when Joseph was trying to approach God, he encountered opposition." So to me, the opposition suggested the presence of God and God's reality and God's bonafide existence and work. Because if the enemy is there, there has to be the opposite of the enemy also. It was some time later that I encountered an angel. And I haven't talked much about the miraculous things that have gone on because I don't think that it's particularly helpful to put a lot of details out about any of that stuff.

But I want you to know that it does happen. And it happens as much today in people of faith as it happens in the course of the scriptures. I do not believe for one moment that God carefully limits and cautiously apportions the things that come from Him to a select few. I think that God's abundance is met for everyone, and the regulator, the inhibitor, the limiter isn't up there, it's within us.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #8 entitled "A Broken Heart," given in Las Vegas, NV on July 25th, 2014; and
- Denver's remarks at "A Day of Faith and Connection" youth conference in UT on June 10th, 2017.

Podcast Episode 19: Angels, Part 1

QUESTION: What are Angels like, how do we interact with them, what are they here to do, and how are they different from us and from other heavenly beings?

DENVER: One of the things that Joseph talked about in the Nauvoo era was about how angels sometimes have a hard time visiting with men because they stink and that we really ought to clean ourselves up because we'll offend the sensibilities of the angels. There's a notion for you.

It was intended to be a gathering-- I mean that the little seed grows up into the great mustard plant into which the birds (or as Joseph put it, the angels) were intended to come and watch. It was intended to be a super structure for housing contact between the Divine and the mortal. It was intended to be the moment of intersection between all that is in eternity and the life of the mortal. It was intended to be the journey into the Holy of Holies, into the presence of God.

The temple was designed to lead you to the presence of the Lord. The presence of the Lord is intended to bring you to the presence of the Father. And the purpose of bringing you to the presence of the Father is to have you clean every whit. Because when there is a group of people with whom it is possible for the angels to dwell, there will no longer be any reason for angels to stay aloof. There will be no reason for the Lord to delay the bringing of Zion, because the Lord is going to dwell there. One of the definitions of Zion, when you get past having all things in common, is the fact that the Lord will dwell there.

"For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me" (D&C 93:36). I want to suggest that throughout scripture, almost invariably, the word "servants" is referring to angelic ministrants. And so angels minister (that would be Aaronic), and then Christ ministers (that would be sons of Moses). *"And he that receiveth me receiveth my Father"* (verse 37), because it is the purpose of the Son to bear record of the Father. It is the purpose of the Son to bring others to the Father so that there might be many sons of God. *"And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom"* (verse 38).

If you have read the tenth parable (*Ten Parables*, Denver C. Snuffer), the thing which caused the stirring to begin was the notice the angels took that here on the ground, on the earth, there was something that looked like Heaven. There was a man and a woman whose experience and circumstances mirrored the same kind of thing that the angels who were watching recognized from where they come from. And they went, and they got the Lord, and the Lord came, and He evaluated, and He said, "We're going to save this one. Here's the to-do list. Now get busy."

Begin at verse 8 of chapter 22: *"Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy."* The parable starts with the Lord (who's trying to get

people to come to the wedding) telling the servants, "The wedding is ready, but those that I've asked are not worthy." *"Go into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid [them] to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways...."* Always the servants, always angels do this work-- they do the gathering *"...and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there was a man which had not a wedding garment: ...saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king, Bind him hand and foot, take him away, cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping, [wailing], gnashing of teeth"* (Matthew 22:8-13).

So I want to put that on the table. Because in this part of this parable, you have anyone who will come being invited, because the people who were targeted for attendance simply aren't worthy to come. So anyone gets to come. And now you have among them someone who doesn't have on a wedding garment. And for that I want to refer you to Luke chapter 15, because in Luke chapter 15, we run into the Lord talking about a robe being supplied. This the son who found himself having been in a far-off land, filling his belly *"...with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him."* He comes to himself, says, *"How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!"* So when he goes back to see his father, look at what happens in verse 22 of Luke chapter 15: *"But the father said to his servants...."* Again, it's the angels that do this, *"Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet...."*

You see, this I think has to be kept in mind-- whenever you're looking at someone who has arrived at the feast, bidden from the highway, who arrives and doesn't have on the robe, the Master is the one that wants you to wear it. The Master is one that will furnish it. Don't think that the purpose of the Lord is to judge. The purpose of the Lord is to redeem, and for that purpose, He is infinitely patient and willing, if you will respond, with forgiveness of your sins, as He does consistently throughout the *Book of Mormon*.

There is this net that has been cast out to gather together all manner of fish. But as the Lord tells the parable, the angels are going to come, and they're going to pick through all manner of fish, and they're going to keep the good, and the rest are going to be scheduled for burning (Matthew 13: 47-50). And so the question is, how diligent ought the search be into the things of God? How carefully ought we to consider the things that have been restored to us through the Prophet Joseph Smith? Well, they who come will burn up those who are unprepared. And therefore, what should we be doing in order to make sure that we are included among those who are prepared?

And there is no reason to expect that you can take people and gather them and then try to produce Zion. It makes a whole lot more sense, as the scriptures seem to indicate, that first, people are taught repentance. And then some few repent. Then they are gathered-- one of a city, two of a family. Then they are gathered, and they are gathered by those who are the angels to whom the keys are entrusted to do that gathering. Then you put them together.

“And through the whole history of the scheme of life and salvation, it is a matter of faith: every man received according to his faith-- according as his faith was, so were his blessings and privileges; and nothing was withheld from him when his faith was sufficient to receive it” (Lectures on Faith 7:17). This is the way in which God is no respecter of persons. This is the way in which you, if you will lay down your ignorance, if you will repent and turn to God-- this is the way in which you can find yourself also the inheritor of blessings and privileges which God will not withhold from anyone who understands and gathers to himself the light in the truth that comes through obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

“By their faith they could obtain heavenly visions, the ministering of angels, have knowledge of the spirits of just men made perfect, of the general assembly and church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven, of God the judge of all, of Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and become familiar with the third heavens, see and hear things which were not only unutterable, but were unlawful to utter” (Lectures on Faith 7:17).

Later Joseph Smith made a comment about, “Paul said he knew a man who was caught up to the third heaven, but I know a man who was caught up to the seventh heaven.” It is sufficient however, if you commune with those beings.

Skipping then over verses 9-11, I’m going to go to beginning at verse 28: *“And after God had appointed that these things should come unto man, behold, then he saw that it was expedient that man should know concerning the things whereof he had appointed unto them.”* He wants us to know. The glory of God is intelligence, or in other words, light and truth, which is knowledge of things. He wants us to know these things. *“Therefore [because this is God’s desire] he sent angels to converse with them, who [this is the angels] caused men to behold of his [God’s] glory”* (Alma 12:28-29).

So the office of the angels is to educate and to prepare and then to cause man, who receive and entertain the angels, to then behold the glory of God-- the glory of God being intelligence, or in other words light and truth. Ultimately, the greatest truth is God Himself. And if you entertain angels and if the angels instruct you and if you have been in their presence, you acquire from them the strength, the fortification, the knowledge (or in other words, the ordination) by which you are able to go on and pass by them (because they surely are sentinels) and enter into the glory of the Lord. And so, if you will give heed to the process, it really should not matter that you are left in a dispensation in which the only authority gives you the ministering of angels. Because the ministering of angels is sufficient to bring you into the glory of God, if you will receive them, if you will give heed to them. That’s the office of their ministry. That’s what they’re responsible to do.

“And they began from that time forth to call on his name; therefore God conversed with men” (verse 30). It’s part of the title to the first book I wrote, *Conversing With the Lord Through the Veil*. That’s the object. That’s what the “lesser priesthood” can equip you to accomplish, left behind with nothing but a relic.

And what did Joseph say about all of the prophets of the Old Testament? He said they all held Melchizedek priesthood, and they were all ordained by God Himself. Because they functioned inside a society that was defective, limited, excluded from the presence of God. But not those who received and entertained angels. They were brought up to where they need to be, and God Himself ordained them. Should you not have hope? Should you not rise up above the level of those who are content to have less? Should you not be willing to mount up on that fiery mountain? Despite the thunderings and lightnings, despite the earthquakes, despite the fact that you do not believe yourself to be worthy, you're still capable of coming aboard.

Look at Moroni chapter 7, beginning at verse 29: *"Because he hath done this, my beloved brethren, have miracles ceased? Behold I say unto you, Nay; neither have angels ceased to minister unto the children of men. For behold, they [the angels] are subject unto him, to minister according to the word of his command, showing themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness. And the office of their ministry is to call men to repentance [REPENTANCE!] to fulfil and to do the work of the covenants of the Father..."* (verses 29-31). Because when you move from repentance, you move into covenants, which is why this process has been undergoing for the last year, unfolding how you get back into the presence of God. Because it surely is necessary for there to be a rescue mission, and the rescue mission is designed to raise you, to elevate you, to redeem you.

"...the work of the covenants of the Father, which he hath made unto the children of men, to prepare the way among the children of men, by declaring the word of Christ unto the chosen vessels of the Lord, that they may bear testimony of him. And by so doing, the Lord God prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ, that the Holy Ghost may have place in their hearts, according to the power thereof; and after this manner bringeth to pass the Father, the covenants which he hath made unto the children of men" (Moroni 7:31-32).

In a word, those who receive and entertain angels have an obligation, then, to declare the words so that others might, likewise, have faith in Him. That word having been declared unto you, gives you the hope, the faith, the confidence that you, likewise, can do so. So that the covenants that are made by the Father can be brought to pass.

"Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, according to his own will" (D&C 88:68). He, and not you, control that.

Many of those to whom these promises are made will receive the vindication of the promise in the last moments of their life. Alvin, as he lay dying, had angels come minister to him. Joseph would later see him in the celestial kingdom, but it was in the throes of death when angels ministered to Brother Alvin.

Stephen, when he was being stoned, had the heavens opened to him. In the last moments of his life, suffering a brutal form of execution, he's praying because he's so filled with the

Spirit by what he's beholding, having the heavens opened to him, that he's praying for those who were in the process of killing him.

St. Francis of Assisi, living in an apostate era, in an apostate church, believed and followed the Sermon on the Mount. His heart was pure, and as the last month of St. Francis' life drew to a close, angels came and ministered to him. Our idea of what it takes to be pure before God is not the same thing as God's view of what it takes to be pure before Him.

Turn to Luke chapter 18, because there the Lord pretty much tells you how it is He evaluates whether someone has purified themselves before Him. This is a story that the Lord makes up in chapter 18 of Luke, telling a parable to those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous.

Beginning at verse 10:

"Two men went into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:10-14).

God can only exalt the meek because only the meek can be trusted. This is what it means to sanctify yourself. Our idea of purity and Christ's idea are entirely based on different criteria.

"Wherefore, my beloved brethren, have miracles ceased because Christ hath ascended into heaven, and hath sat down on the right hand of God, to claim of the Father his rights of mercy which he hath upon the children of men? For he hath answered the ends of the law, and he claimeth all those who have faith in him; and they who have faith in him will cleave unto every good thing; wherefore he advocateth the cause of the children of men; and he dwelleth eternally in the heavens. And because he hath done this, my beloved brethren, have miracles ceased? Behold I say unto you, Nay; neither have angels ceased to minister unto the children of men. For behold, they are subject unto him, to minister according to the word of his command, showing themselves unto them of strong faith and a firm mind in every form of godliness. And the office of their ministry is to call men unto repentance, and to fulfil and to do the work of the covenants of the Father, which he hath made unto the children of men... And by so doing, the Lord God prepareth the way that the residue of men may have faith in Christ... And Christ hath said: If ye will have faith in me ye shall have power to do whatsoever thing is expedient in me. And he hath said: Repent all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me, and be baptized in my name, and have faith in me, that ye may be saved. And now, my beloved brethren, if this be the case that these things are true which I have spoken unto you, and God will show unto you, with power and great

glory at the last day, that they are true, and if they are true has the day of miracles ceased? Or have angels ceased to appear unto the children of men? Or has he withheld the power of the Holy Ghost from them? Or will he, so long as time shall last, or the earth shall stand, or there shall be one man upon the face thereof to be saved? Behold I say unto you, Nay; for it is by faith that miracles are wrought; and it is by faith that angels appear and minister unto men; wherefore, if these things have ceased wo be unto the children of men, for it is because of unbelief, and all is vain. For no man can be saved, according to the words of Christ, save they shall have faith in his name; wherefore, if these things have ceased, then has faith ceased also; and awful is the state of man, for they are as though there had been no redemption made” (Moroni 7:27-38).

Moroni discussed the ministering of angels. And if you go through those verses and you look at what he’s saying, it requires a “firm mind in every form of godliness.” A firm mind can be descriptive of a variety of things including someone that’s just stubborn. But it’s not stubbornness; it’s a firm grasp on the things that lead to godliness-- not excesses, not foolishness. But their purpose in ministering is to equip the person who has an audience, and those who hear the message, to be called to repentance; not a lot of flowery, fancy things but repentance. Because essentially, without repentance-- that is turning to face God in all you do-- none of us are going to make it. But he goes on to say that the purpose of calling people to repentance is to *“fulfil and do the works of the covenants”* (Moroni 7:31).

There is sort of a pattern here in what is happening. Angelic ministrants come to people of a firm mind in every form of godliness, call repentance in order to fulfil and in order to do the work of the covenants. *“To fulfil and to do the work of the covenants of the Father,”* and that requires that people bear testimony of Him. These are the essential things that are needed. It doesn’t require a fanciful or a flowery imagination. It does not require that we bear testimony of ourselves. It doesn’t require us to do something other than to fulfil and do the work of the covenants. Therefore, I would suggest this is a pretty good guide to consider when you’re evaluating all of the competing claims that are now being made by people, to having inspiration or revelation or the word of God to them.

Salvation is a mortal challenge. Whether or not we’re saved depends upon what we do. We don’t have angels running around fixing all our errors. We have no immortals that are going to come to our rescue, except for the Second Coming of course, to destroy the wicked and to visit with those who are wheat. But the best way to understand it is, once the lifetime of the three Nephite disciples who asked to tarry on the earth ended, the way they continued their ministry was to minister to prophets-- mortals-- and then the mortals ministered to others. They came, and they visited with Mormon, for example, but the people to whom Mormon ministered didn’t see them. They ministered to Moroni, but those to whom Moroni ministered didn’t see them. They become as a ministering angel, and the ministering of angels is predicated upon the faithfulness of people.

I mean, you can read about how the system of salvation works-- it’s in Alma. Angels minister to those who are supposed to then preach salvation to others, in order to inform them about the conditions that are needed to be met for the salvation of others. John the

Beloved has become a ministering angel, and he has a ministry. And there are those people who expect them to step out in public and to do what people of flesh and blood are obligated to do. Well, that's kind of unfair to that generation, and an apology will be owed to every other generation if the angels suddenly assume the obligation to accomplish things which from the days of Adam had been primarily the obligation of mortals to accomplish, with some to whom angels minister, ministering to others.

You know, I was raised by a Baptist mother and got Bible verses read at me every morning before I went to school throughout childhood. When Mormon missionaries came and told me about the Joseph Smith story, and when Mormon missionaries assured me that Joseph saw God, and that if you follow James 1:5 and you ask God, He'll give you an answer; and if you will pray about the *Book of Mormon*, God will make it known to you whether it's true or not-- I accepted that. I was young still, I was still a teenager, but I accepted that as literal. I accepted that as possible. I had faith that that could happen. I'm not a theologian. I do believe God not only talks in sentences but can make Himself known to man, literally. I believe all that. I believe that God did appear to Joseph. I believe that He did appear to Isaiah. Having that understanding, I did not think there was anything unusual when an angel appeared to me, because an angel did appear to me.

This much I know: The angel said, "On the first day of the third month in nine years, your ministry will begin, and so you must prepare." Those are the words. I can quote them still. He spoke; he spoke in a sentence.

The Lord has never appeared to me in a dream. I have always been awake, fully aware of my surroundings, and with my senses unimpeded. When awakened during the night, sleep has always fled, and following such an encounter I was always unable to return to sleep. The Lord does everything according to His higher way of teaching. By beginning with a vision of His return, He set out the foundation for understanding His course, which is one eternal round. Since His first appearance, He has sent divers angels from Adam, or Michael, to Hyrum and Joseph Smith, giving line upon line, to confirm my hope in Christ.

When Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, and Egypt had a thorough knowledge of information that they had preserved that came down from an imitation from the beginning, one of the things that they have-- if you look at Facsimile #1, underneath the lion couch-- are these four idolatrous gods that have their angelic counterparts in Daniel and the Book of Revelation, and this is an echo of a truth. There's four great angels who preside over four corners of the earth. And they're showing up here, but they're called idolatrous gods. They appear in various forms-- that they're the four sons of Horus, they're the four elements of the four cardinal directions, they're the four guardians-- the point is that in this context, they are idolatrous. And the Egyptians had no hesitation about petitioning, praying to, and asking for guidance from the guardians, the sons of Horus, the angels.

If you look at verse 13 of [D&C] 132, we are warned that "*everything that is in the world, whether it be ordained of men,*" and then we get this language: "*...by thrones, or principalities, or powers, or things of name, whatsoever they may be, that are not by me or by my word, saith*

the Lord, shall be thrown down...." This language he's using about "thrones, principalities, powers or things of name" is a reference not to what men do; it's a reference to what the angels do. Angels are, in fact, actual authoritative custodians along the way. But at the end of the day, I don't care who the angel is-- I don't care if he's Gabriel, who became Noah. I don't care if he's Rafael, who became Enoch. I don't care if he's Michael, who became Adam-- at the end of the day, he's a fellow servant. He is not Christ, and he is not the Father. Okay?

So out of Egypt, they are taken, and what's the first thing that the Lord clarifies with Moses on the Mount? He tells him, "Okay, here's the way it's going to work now, Moses." *"I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me."* Okay? *"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments"* (Exodus 20:2-6).

So the first thing he says is, you're emerging from a culture in which there was this multiplicity of gods or angelic beings or whatever-- you're emerging from that culture; don't continue that. Don't petition to have the sentinels come, because God is jealous. When the three Nephites ministered to Mormon and Moroni, Mormon and Moroni ministered to the people. Because people are supposed to minister to people. We're supposed to find our way out of this dark hole, and the work of salvation is to be done by men in the flesh. These three Nephites ministered like angels to the prophet father and son, bearing the words of Christ, but the people heard the words of Christ from Mormon and Moroni, from their fellow man. There is absolutely nothing wrong with the ministering of angels, but I think there's something wrong with praying for angels, because it is exactly what Moses on the Mount was told: "Don't do that." And so if Moses on the Mount was told, "Don't do that," I don't think we ask for angels. I think we pray to God, and we ask God, and if God sends an angel, then the angel needs to come and identify his purpose. I mean, Gabriel, when he shows up in the temple to talk to Zacharias, says, "I am Gabriel who stand in the presence of God" (Luke 1:19), making it very clear who he was, where he came from, what his commission was, what his authority was.

John, on the Isle of Patmos, has this angel appear to him, and he falls down to worship him, and the angel says, "Oh, get up. Stop that. I'm just a servant like you. I'm just another man." So he stands up, and he starts delivering his message. And his message is, *"I am [the] Alpha and [the] Omega, [I am] the first and [I am] the last"* (Revelations 1:11). Okay so, okay now what you are is a recording of the Lord delivering it in the first person language of the Lord, so I'm getting God's words; I'm not getting yours. The guy I was just trying to worship, I'm not getting your words; I'm only getting the words of the Father.

When you put it all together, angels minister. They really do. Angels work, but they work largely behind the scenes. And if an angel has a message for all of us and had it in

connection with this lesson, my supposition would be that the angel would come to you and talk to you and tell you what to tell us about these verses, and then you'd come and say, like we read in the *Book of Mormon* very often, "Last night when the angel visited me, he told me I needed to teach you this." This is King Benjamin talking. This is Jacob talking. This is Nephi talking. This is ever so many of them. "Last night-- now I'm going to give the lesson so, the night before the angel came and delivered to me..." and then you'd talk to us. What I would not expect is that a true angel would come and interrupt your lesson and say, "Now hold on, I got something to add here, and it's really pretty cool. And by the way, did you notice I glow in the dark, and I've got authority?" Because that appearance as an angel of light, when that is the thing that is relied upon, generally is counterfeit. It is the substance of the content that determines the truthfulness of the message. And if the being attracts your adoration, they better be pretty quick about correcting you.

Don't do that. That's not how this works. They know that worshipping an idol will damn the worshipper. And if they're sent on an errand from the Lord, and they manage to get people to worship them-- "O trust me, I can never lead you astray. You must follow what I have to say. I will save you; I will rise up of the congregation of the North; I will sit with those that lead and you will be safe if you follow me"-- is exactly what the adversary teaches. It's not what the Savior does-- meekness, pure knowledge, gentleness, persuasion.

No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of any pretensions to authority. If you can't persuade people by the content of the message, then the message doesn't have the voice of God in it. And if it does have the voice of God in it, then they're hearing the Master's voice, and you're irrelevant. They hear the Master's voice, and they respond to that, then it's between them and God, and they are hearing someone that is of God.

And some angels are busy people. And some are-- they have every kind of personality you'd ever want to run into. Some are brusque and busy and have a hard time doing their job, and some enjoy immensely any opportunity to interface with humanity. They're just like people. They are people.

The foregoing are excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's talk entitled "Christ's Discourse on the Road to Emmaus," given in Fairview Utah on April 14, 2007;
- His talk entitled "The Mission of Elijah Reconsidered," given in Spanish Fork, UT on October 14, 2011;
- A fireside talk on "The Temple," given in Ogden, UT on October 28, 2012;
- The presentation of Denver's paper entitled "Cutting Down the Tree of Life to Build a Wooden Bridge," given at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, UT on August 2, 2014;

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talks 2, 3, 4 and 8, given during 2013 and 2014;
- A regional conference Q&A session held at Big Cottonwood Canyon, UT on September 20, 2015;
- Denver's extemporaneous comments given at a fellowship meeting in Sandy, UT on December 6, 2015;
- His conference talk entitled "The Doctrine of Christ," given in Boise, ID on September 11, 2016;
- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #1 given in Cerritos, CA on September 21, 2017;
- A fireside talk entitled "The Holy Order," given in Bountiful, UT on October 29, 2017; and
- A fireside talk entitled "That We Might Become One," given in Clinton, UT on January 14, 2018.

Podcast Episode 20: Angels, Part 2

QUESTION: What are angels like, how do we interact with them, what are they here to do, and how are they different from us and from other heavenly beings?

DENVER: There's also, in scripture, a teaching that says that all priesthood is one, the original name for which was the Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God. It's all that. But there are different degrees or portions of that one, unified priesthood. Therefore, if you have anything, if you have any priesthood at all, you have some portion of the Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God, however limited that may be.

I gave a talk in Orem in which I explained that the best way to regard priesthood is as a fellowship. You can have priesthoods among all kinds of people. Women can have priesthoods-- it's a fellowship of women. But fellowship determines priesthood. If you have a fellowship with men, you have a priesthood of men. If you have a fellowship with angels, you have a priesthood that involves something called the "keys of the Aaronic priesthood" because your fellowship with angels has extended into the angelic realm. If you have fellowship with the Son of God, you have priesthood that's associated with that. And if you've been in the presence of the Father, you have an association with Him, and you hold priesthood that is a Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God. And the degree to which a priesthood conferral upon a person takes effect is dependent upon the heed and diligence that they pursue the things of God and the degree to which they acquire fellowship with such heavenly things.

Joseph Smith said: "All priesthood is Melchizedek, but there are different portions or degrees of it. That portion which brought Moses to speak with God face-to-face was taken away but that which brought the ministry of angels remained. All prophets had the Melchizedek priesthood and were ordained by God himself." That's in *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* on pages 180-181.

Also, "*all they who receive this priesthood...*" In the singular-- now we're talking about that which is the fulness. We're now talking about something other than the different portions. We're talking about this priesthood. "...Receive me, saith the Lord" (D&C 84:35). Take the words literally, and say to yourself, if you've got this, if this is what you have managed to accumulate, then one of the evidences of having accumulated it will be receiving the Lord.

"For he that receiveth my servants receiveth me" (verse 36). I suggested in Centerville that the word "servants" in this context meant "angels." An "angel," the word is derived from a Greek word that simply means "messenger." And the messenger can't be on their own errand. They have to have a message that is being brought from another, the other being the Lord. Therefore, if the message originates with the Lord, and the message is delivered by a messenger, it does not matter if the one delivering the message is a mortal, as we find in the *Book of Mormon* where King Benjamin, I believe, said, "Last night the Lord told me this," or

"Last night the angel taught me this, and so today I'm going to teach you this"-- in that context, King Benjamin was the angel. And therefore, as long as they bear a message from the Lord, they fit the definition.

"He that receiveth my servants receiveth me." That is, if it's the voice of God, and it's coming to you from Him, and it's authentically His message, and you receive it as if it were from His own mouth, then you've received from Him, at least, His voice. But it doesn't end there.

"He that receiveth me receiveth my Father" (verse 37). In this context, what he's talking about is the same thing that you find in the 14th chapter of the book of John, in which Christ says that He will not leave you comfortless, but He will come to comfort you. And then He and His Father will "take up their abode with you" (John 14:23). This is not an abstraction. The idea that this is something that happens in your heart, you can read in the *Doctrine and Covenants*, is an old sectarian notion and is false (D&C 130:3). It means a literal appearance of these holy beings to minister, to comfort, and ultimately to take up their abode.

"He that receiveth my Father..." and I would add, while yet in the flesh, *"...receiveth my Father's kingdom; therefore all that my Father hath shall be given unto him. And this is according to the oath and covenant which belongeth to the priesthood"* (verses 38-39). And what is that oath and that covenant? It is the Father's word which cannot be broken. It's not something you aspire to, but it's something you accept by the conditions that are set out in Doctrine and Covenants section 84. It is something which, received by an oath and a covenant, given by the one who can give covenants-- just as we talked about in Centerville-- it's a covenant which originates from God. It is His word which cannot be broken. Therefore, when the Father covenants that you're going to inherit, it is a covenant that will surely come to pass.

This is Doctrine and Covenants 121:36, *"That the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected with the powers of heaven, and that the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness."* I want to suggest to you that the word "Powers of Heaven" is a proper noun and not just a phrase encompassing some abstraction. If you are an Elder or you are a High Priest or you are a Seventy or you are a member of the Quorum of the Twelve-- whatever that office is, it is appropriate to refer to you by the nomenclature *Elder*-- Elder LeGrand Richards, Elder McConkie.

In any event, there is within the structure of the afterlife different rungs on Jacob's ladder. And they leak through in our scriptures, though Joseph never bothers parsing them. And whether you are talking about an Angel or an Archangel or a Principality or a Power or a Dominion or a Throne or a Cherubim or a Seraphim-- it doesn't matter which one you are referring to, it is appropriate-- just like it is appropriate to refer to all those offices as *Elder*-- to refer to any and all of them as *Powers*-- the "Powers of Heaven." Whatever rung these ministers may be upon, they are all Powers.

Well, let's go to Moses 7:27, *"Enoch beheld angels descending out of heaven, bearing testimony of the Father and Son; and the Holy Ghost fell on many, and they were caught up by*

the powers of heaven into Zion." There they show up again-- the "Powers of Heaven," plural, in the same verse where it's talking about angels descending. This is the kind of thing that is littered throughout the scriptures if you have the eyes to see it, because there is actually a structure there.

If you go to Doctrine and Covenants 84:26, it talks about: *"The lesser priesthood continued, which priesthood holdeth the key of the ministering of angels and the preparatory gospel."* Even the lesser priesthood holds some connection with heaven. Even the lesser priesthood holds forth the opportunity to have some link with the Powers of Heaven. Therefore, in the lesser priesthood there is an association, a fellowship, that is anticipated.

And of course, the greater priesthood that we looked at before in those verses (describing what Moses...) is that a priesthood that has a power of godliness that gets manifest unto men, in the flesh, "for without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father and live." Don't let anyone deceive you into believing that this association is merely meant for the afterlife. If it were so, the words "in the flesh" (D&C 84:21) would not appear here and other places in the scriptures that I pointed out to you as I have gone through these various talks. It was meant to be laid hold upon here. And as a consequence of laying hold upon it here, you qualify to receive that in the world to come. And if you fail to lay hold upon that here, then "wo unto you." That doesn't mean that you are condemned forever. That just means that you've wasted *an* opportunity, and therefore, the struggle for you will continue.

Okay, if you view priesthood as a brotherhood or an association, then I want to suggest that the way in which you should parse the three orders of priesthood, is to parse them this way: As among men, it's merely a brotherhood of men. As between mankind and the heavens, the first order is an order in which there is an association between men and angels. The second order is an order in which there is an association between mankind and the Son of God. And the third order, the highest order, the patriarchal order, brings one into contact with the Patriarch, who of all the names that He could choose to be called by, chooses to have us call Him "Our Father who art in Heaven"-- the third grand order being sonship to the Father, an association with Him who sits in the bosom of eternity and sustains all the creation.

The highest priesthood is an association with the Father, brought about as a consequence of the Father calling "My son." It is the Holy Order after the Son of God, because those who inherit that become, by definition, His Sons. They are the Church of the Firstborn because they are in association with, and made by the Father equal to, all those who rise up to be Firstborn.

I want to mention that beyond there being a fellowship of man (or males) and a brotherhood, there is also a fellowship that is extended, as well, to women. If you find a woman in scripture who has had the ministry of angels, you have a sister who has joined in that association. I won't take time to do so, but if you look in Judges 13:2-5, you have Samson's mother being ministered to by an angel, promising the coming of the one who would be a judge in Israel. You have in Genesis 18:9-15, Abraham's wife with angelic

ministrants. And the most obvious case being Mary in the book of Luke 1:26-31, in which Mary is ministered to by Gabriel, one of the Elohim, who came to announce that she would conceive and bear a child though she knew no man.

There's this interesting set of verses beginning in verse 8 of D&C 1: *"And verily I say unto you, that they who go forth, bearing these tidings unto the inhabitants of the earth, to them is power given to seal both on earth and in heaven, the unbelieving and rebellious; Yea, verily, to seal them up unto the day when the wrath of God shall be poured out upon the wicked without measure-- Unto the day when the Lord shall come to recompense unto every man according to his work, and measure to every man according to the measure which he has measured to his fellow man."* These are all negative. These are all sealing up unto destruction. These are all condemnations. These are all, in a word, Aaronic. But bear in mind the Aaronic priesthood is not without hope, because within in it is the power to baptize, which is an ordinance of hope. Primarily, however, the purpose of Aaronic priesthood is to condemn.

"There are three grand orders of priesthood referred to here. First, the king of Shiloam (Salem) had power and authority over that of Abraham, holding the key and the power of endless life. Angels..." now remember what I said earlier about there being different ranks, "...Angels desire to look into it, but they have set up too many stakes" (*TPJS*, page 322).

See, the angels were unwilling to receive what they might have received, and as a consequence of that, they could not go. Look in Doctrine and Covenants 132:16, *"Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory."* Angels, in this context, if you will hear it, are included within Joseph's description of "Angels desire to look into it but they have set up too many stakes." As a consequence of their unwillingness to receive what God freely offers to all, and they're hedging up their own way by their failure to develop that faith and confidence necessary to lay hold upon the blessings of heaven, because they believe that those blessings are reserved for others and not for them. Because as the de-canonized now *Lectures on Faith* suggest, they fear that they do not have the power to lay hold upon all the blessings which were entirely reserved and promised to them. Because they have not that faith required, they become limited in what they seek for and therefore, what they obtain.

Joseph Smith also said, "John wrested the keys, the kingdom, the power, the glory from the Jews, by the holy anointing and decree of heaven." That's *The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, page 276. Doctrine and Covenants 84:28 points out that John: *"...was ordained by the angel of God at the time he was eight days old unto this power, to overthrow the kingdom of the Jews, and to make straight the way of the Lord before the face of his people, to prepare them for the coming of the Lord, in whose hand is given all power."*

John was sent forth, and in part, was sent forth to be rejected of the Jews so that he could wrest "the keys, the kingdom, the power and the glory from the Jews, and this by the holy

anointing and decree of heaven," because an angel had established it and because it was the Powers of Heaven that were behind it.

Look what happens to Moses: *"Behold, thou art my son; wherefore look, and I will show thee the workmanship of mine hands; but not all, for my works are without end, and also my words, for they never cease"* (Moses 1:4). Look at that! God's words never cease. Even when silence is caused to reign because the Powers of Heaven are so disgusted with humanity that they withdraw themselves, God's words don't cease at all! His words do not stop. And even if the angels refuse to minister, communicate, visit, yet will God still speak unto men.

Some people asked the question about God speaking to Cain as a result of the talk I gave at Idaho Falls, referring to your privilege of talking to God because He spoke to Cain. It doesn't say that God appeared to Cain; it says that God spoke to Cain. Cain heard the voice of God speaking to him. He didn't get caught up to the throne of God; he did not have a throne theophany; he was not brought back and redeemed from the fall; but he heard the voice of God. God spoke to Cain after the murder of Abel. The angels withdrew from him. The angels were grieved. They would have nothing to do, and yet God still spoke to him. His words are endless.

I don't care what malignancy you think you carry around within you. The fact is, none of you have done the same crap that Cain did, because Cain possessed greater knowledge that you did, at the time of the murder that he committed. And yet God spoke to him still. Therefore, have the confidence, even if you grieve angels, that God will talk to you: *"...My words for they never cease."* Yeah, God is talkative. God desires us to know more than we know, if we will receive it. And the minute we tell Him to be quiet and withdraw and leave us alone, we are in the very act of damning ourselves. Because what we're saying is, "That which you offered unto us, we would prefer to be silence instead." Don't do that.

This is in section 132, beginning at verse 19: *"And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise...."* Then they are promised about midway through that verse that they'll *"...inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions."* And it goes on to say: *"They...."* Notice it's not "he" and notice it's not "she"-- it is "they" because if you're going to pass by, you're going to have to be "they" and not "he" or "she", *"...they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever. Then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye abide my law ye cannot attain to this glory."*

The notion that you are going to succeed in acquiring the glory that is likened to God in a separate and single state is nowhere found as a promise in scripture. It's not a reasonable expectation. It's a non-scriptural expectation. It is a foolish hope, because it does not reckon

to the things God created. Understand, those verses that we read in Genesis-- those verses were before the Fall. And the condition in which Adam and Eve found themselves at the time that those incidents took place-- they were immortal, they had not yet fallen. The marriage and the union of the two of them was intended to last forever because death had not yet entered into the world. And as God put it, it was "good." "Marry a wife," "sealed," "Holy Spirit of Promise," "pass by the angels," "enter into exaltation," "glory," "fullness"-- all of these words are applicable only to the man and the woman, together, as one. It's only applicable to the exalted state of a marriage that is worthy of preservation into eternity.

Everything that you hope to receive into the next life, even your expectations, all of that has to be obtained from God by covenant. I mentioned in answer to a question in Ephraim that the role of the woman was significant, even in the life of Christ. I mentioned that she anointed Him preliminary to His death and burial. One of the things that gave Him the expectation of coming forth out of the grave was the anointing that promised to Him-- why do you think in the temple the rites include preserving some of the functions of the body? It's not to make you healthy here and now; it's so that you can lay claim upon this as an expectation in the eternities. Because if you do not have the expectation conferred upon you by the Holy Spirit of Promise, you'll have to get that in some other cycle. Because the only thing you will be able to take with you into eternity you obtain in this manner. Everything has to be obtained by a covenant.

Look at verse 13: *"Everything that is in the world, whether it be ordained of men, by thrones, or principalities,...."* It doesn't matter if it's ordained by men, and it doesn't even matter if someone sitting in eternity on a throne, who has authority in the presence of God, ordains it. Does not matter. *"...or principalities...."* That is talking about angels. That is talking about people from the other side. Even if they are in a position of authority in the presence of God, it doesn't matter--*"Everything that is in the world, whether it be ordained of men, by thrones, or principalities, or powers, or things of name, whatsoever they may be, that are not by me or by my word, saith the Lord, shall be thrown down, and shall not remain after men are dead, neither in nor after the resurrection, saith the Lord your God" (D&C 132).*

The Keeper of the Gate is the Holy One of Israel, indeed! These words should mean something to you if you've listened to or read the text that we reviewed in Orem on priesthood. You should understand what God is saying here. You should understand that when it comes to some things that you hope to have continue into eternity, it is not enough to have even one of the "noble and great," even one of those who we regard as an Archangel, it doesn't matter. God, and God alone, holds the keys of death and hell. Christ paid that price. Christ has to be the one because He is the only one qualified to do this. He has to be the one. This is a non-delegable responsibility by He, who by virtue of bringing you back and promising you, becomes your Father in Heaven. If Christ is going to become your Father in Heaven, He's got that same responsibility to you that He imposed upon you as a parent in Zion, that we looked at before the break. He doesn't spare Himself.

"For whatsoever things remain are by me; and whatsoever things are not by me shall be shaken and destroyed." That's Christ's word. That's what He says is going to happen.

"Therefore, if a man marry him a wife in the world, and he marry her not by me nor by my word, and he covenant with her so long as he is in the world and she with him, their covenant and marriage are not of force when they are dead, and when they are out of the world; therefore, they are not bound by any law when they are out of the world" (D&C 132:14-15).

Although God is talking about the eternity of the marriage covenant, He extends this into everything. *Everything*, even your associations-- all of them are obtained by a covenant from Him because His word and His word, alone, will endure.

"Therefore, when they are out of the world they neither marry nor are given in marriage; but are appointed angels in heaven, which angels are ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory" (D&C 132:16). Partners in such marriages become angels that are ministering servants. Angels look to receive the things that God has offered to men, but unless they come down and participate here, they cannot obtain them, for they are only to be had here.

Verse 19: *"And again, verily I say unto you, if a man marry a wife by my word, which is my law, and by the new and everlasting covenant, and it is sealed unto them by the Holy Spirit of promise... [skipping down...] they shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths... [skipping down...] they shall pass by the angels, and the gods, which are set there, to their exaltation and glory in all things, as hath been sealed upon their heads, which glory shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever."*

You cannot receive these things unless you enter in by the gate, the Keeper of whom is the Holy One of Israel who employs no servant. If you do that however, *"...then shall they be gods, because they have no end; therefore shall they be from everlasting to everlasting, because they continue; then shall they be above all, because all things are subject unto them. Then shall they be gods, because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them" (D&C 132:20).*

These are people who have qualified for the kind of trust from God that makes sure that eternity will not be infected by the kinds of abuse, by the kinds of neglect, by the kinds of unworthiness that typifies those things which God wants to throw down-- those things that God wants to have come to an end-- not because He's mean, but for the protection of yourself, for the protection of eternity, for the protection of the potential offspring that may arise as a result of the continuation of the seed.

The Powers of Heaven-- and this is the reason why that third form of priesthood is so rare a commodity, because even the angels desire to inquire into it, but the angels don't possess it. And it doesn't matter if in that hierarchy of those that exist on the other side of the veil you manage to wrestle something from those who are Powers there and possess thrones or principalities-- God is saying in this revelation, if you can understand the words, that even His angels and those who have ascended far up must, in every case, only establish that which comes by the will and covenant of the Son and the Father-- the Son, because He

possesses the keys to do so, the Father, because He is the one from whom the original covenant began in the preexistence. You have to connect up with the Father.

The connection that needs to be formed is between you and the fathers who dwell in glory. And who are the fathers who dwell in glory? Well, if we go back to the revelation in which Joseph Smith received the sealing power (and he received the sealing power sometime before 1831), in that portion of the revelation known as Doctrine and Covenants 132:49, just before that portion of the revelation, in verse 37, he talks about Abraham, he talks about Isaac, and he talks about Jacob. And then concerning those three, the Lord says to Joseph: "*Because they did none other things than that which they were commanded, they have entered into their exaltation, according to the promises, and sit upon thrones, and are not angels but are gods*" (verse 37). This is Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These are the ones who are gods.

God doesn't judge righteousness the way we do. If you've read the 10th parable (*Ten Parables*, Denver C. Snuffer), what was it that attracted the attention of the angels? They looked at the marriage, and they said, "This! This looks like what we come from! This-- this relationship, this marriage, the man and the woman-- this is what heaven itself consists of. And look! Look, it's on the earth!" And the angels go, and they bring the Lord. And they say, "Behold the man and the woman!" And the Lord set in motion everything that was needed.

What more do you need to see from the theme of the *Book Mormon* than this passage in order to realize that when it comes to the relationship of marriage, this is the image of God? This is what God would like to preserve into eternity. It is so much easier to take people who have this kind of a marriage and to preserve them into eternity, than it is to take someone who may know all mysteries but whose marriage is a tattered ruin and attempt to preserve them.

And now it says in passing, they're given in marriage, and He blessed them according to these promises (4 Nephi 1:11). Well, what's he telling us? Yeah, it's the covenant of Abraham-- it's the temple marriage. He's saying that these people enter into the covenant of marriage, and as a consequence of the covenant of marriage, they realize the benefits of the promises made. And what are the promises made that you associate with the covenant of Abraham? Well, it's not just benefits that pertain to this life; it's benefits that pertain to all eternity. It's the promise of exaltation. It's the promise that you become part of the Church of the Firstborn; you become part of the general assembly. You become part of the citizens, not just of a society here on this earth, but a society that includes a heavenly body. And you have the right to commune with all of those that are participants in this, in this larger organization.

You need to go through and read the descriptors of those in D&C 76, beginning at verse 66-- and I apologize, I do have a set of the D&C from the RLDS church, but it's at home, and I didn't bring it with me, so I can't give you the cross reference-- but D&C 76 beginning at verse 66: "*These are those who are come unto Mount Zion....*" See Zion, in this context, is a mount because it's up, a symbolic elevation of the way folks live, "*...Mount Zion and unto the*

city of the living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all.” Oh my. “These are they who have come to an innumerable company of the angels, to the general assembly and the church of Enoch, and of the Firstborn. These are they whose names are written in heaven, where God and Christ are judge of all. These are just men made perfect.”

Now while this is a description in Section 76 of the afterlife and the ultimate arrival, the description, as is often the case, is not merely a description of the afterlife alone, because verse 117 of this same revelation, after talking about those who love Him and purify themselves before Him, it’s added: *“..to whom he grants this privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves; that through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, while in the flesh, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory.”*

So, keep that in mind as you read verse 11: *“..blessed according to the multitude of the promises, which the Lord had made unto them” (4 Nephi 1)*. These now are citizens with dual citizenship. They may be born in Mexico, but they have a work permit in the United States. They are still confronted with the obligation of enduring to the end, but they have a residency prepared for them elsewhere, and these folks, tying the marriage covenant and the blessings, according to the multitude, the multitude of the promises which the Lord had made unto them, should not be constricted.

“Behold, thou art Nephi, and I am God. Behold, I declare it unto thee in the presence of mine angels...” because this decree, in this circumstance, may require those who are watching to obey the word of the man. Therefore, the angels, the Powers of Heaven, must give heed because God is declaring it in the presence of the Hosts, who are standing before Him. *“I declare it unto thee in the presence of mine angels that ye shall have power over this people, and shall smite the earth with famine, and with pestilence, and destruction, according to the wickedness of this people” (Helaman 10:6)*. That is a rather Aaronic behavior.

“Behold, I give unto you power, that whatsoever ye seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven; and thus shall ye have power among this people” (Helaman 10:7). This is rather Melchizedek because you can seal up unto eternal life. This is the positive side. This is the thing which those who are given this authority seek earnestly to do.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver’s talk entitled “Christ’s Discourse on the Road to Emmaus,” given in Fairview Utah on April 14, 2007;
- His talk given at the “Zion Symposium” in Provo, Utah on February 23rd, 2008;
- His talk entitled “The Mission of Elijah Reconsidered”, given in Spanish Fork, UT on October 14th, 2011;
- Denver’s 40 Years in Mormonism Series, Talk #1 entitled “Be of Good Cheer” given in Boise, ID on September 10th, 2013;

- Denver's 40 Years in Mormonism Series, Talk #2 entitled "Faith" given in Idaho Falls, ID on September 28th, 2013;
- Denver's 40 Years in Mormonism Series, Talk #5 entitled "Priesthood" given in Orem, UT on November 2nd, 2013;
- Denver's 40 Years in Mormonism Series, Talk #9 entitled "Marriage and Family" given in St. George, UT on July 26th, 2014;
- The presentation of "Answer and Covenant", given at the Covenant of Christ Conference in Boise, ID on September 3rd, 2017; and
- His talk entitled "Other Sheep Indeed", given at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, UT on July 29th, 2017.

Podcast Episode 21: Angels, Part 3

QUESTION: What are angels like, how do we interact with them, what are they here to do, and how are they different from us and from other heavenly beings?

DENVER: There's a time involved in the visit and the dialogue between the angel and Zacharias. We tend to somehow think that spiritual phenomenon are outside of time and space, and while they are outside of time and space because we don't control them in our environment, they control this environment; we don't control theirs-- the fact is that when they come to our time and space, they are in our time and space, and time lapses. And this dialogue took a while.

But we have a problem with Zion, because when the Lord sets about to destroy, the Lord cannot destroy the righteous. And He's going to obliterate life on the earth, except for those who are in the Ark or those in Zion. The wicked can't come against them, and all are going to be destroyed.

So what do you do? Well, we've got a new status for humanity. And the new status is you take them into heaven. But you don't take people into heaven without an associated calling. There is no reason ever to take a person off the earth, even if they're righteous. Abraham died-- Abraham died and was buried. Christ died, and He was more righteous than any who ever lived-- you don't take them off the earth unless they have a calling to minister. So we have a calling to minister. Enoch in his city (who could not be destroyed when the Lord was going to destroy) and his city were called. And they were given two callings: their first assignment is as ministering angels, not only here but elsewhere; and their second calling-- I don't want to appear irreverent, but they're really, I mean they're the crowd, they're the cheering group backing up the Lord at His coming. They are the ones-- when He comes in the clouds with the angels-- that group is Enoch's people. They are the certifiers; they are the testifiers; they are the chorus; they are the entourage.

You know, there's a reason why our tin-horn dictators and our phony idols have an entourage-- it's to mimic the real deal. Because when the Lord comes again in His glory, He's going to come with an entourage. So they got the job, Enoch and his folk.

So while he was in the act of calling upon God, he discovered a light appearing in his room *"which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noonday, when immediately a personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the [ground]"* (Joseph Smith-History 1:30). As an interesting aside, I want to ask the question, Why? Why did Moroni stand in the air, his feet not touching the ground? It's an interesting topic we're not going to talk about here. It's off-subject, it won't get us Zion anyway, but there's "stuff" here.

Oh, and look at this: *“He had on a loose robe of most exquisite whiteness. It was a whiteness beyond anything earthly I had ever seen; nor do I believe that any earthly thing could be made to appear so exceedingly white and brilliant. His hands were naked, 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 he had no other clothing on but this robe, as it was open, so that I could see into his bosom”* (Joseph Smith-History 1: 31). Notice this-- this is not ceremonial garb. As a consequence of which, I can tell you that it's okay to be buried without temple regalia, because you're not going to be wearing that stuff in the resurrection anyway, if you inherit what the angels of God, including Moroni (who is certainly exalted), wear.

You can read about the description of what Christ wears in the scriptures as well. Ceremonial garb is just that-- it is ceremonial garb. It is designed to teach you about the creation, to endow you with certain knowledge about the process of being exalted. But it is not the attire that you'll see on the streets of heaven. I actually think-- I think they look Egyptian. I think their attire looks Egyptian, but that's neither here nor there.

This is a guy who is wearing only a robe. It's not ceremonial. He doesn't have shoes on his feet; he doesn't have a bonnet on; he doesn't have a variety of things that we would associate with ceremonial dress. You can read a description of Christ's attire in 3 Nephi 11:8. And the description there is very much like the description that we have here-- Christ and Moroni wearing the same kind of thing.

And then, hey, just for the fun of it, let's go back to Exodus 28. I want to revert back to my Cecil B. DeMille-esque stuff [spoken in vocal imitation]: *“And these are the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a brodered coat, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. And they shall take gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen”* (verses 4-5) ...and yellow and green and purple and orange and white and.... (Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat). I'm sorry. You can read it, it's in here. Ooh, the *“ouches of gold,”* and the *“chains of pure gold at the ends; of wreathen work...”* (verses 13-14)-- I mean, He dresses you in funny attire, okay?

God goes through in the ceremonial attire, and He dresses you up. And the purpose of the dress is ceremonial, to communicate to you through symbolism, knowledge about certain things. But they are not an end, they are a symbol: six days of creation, six articles of clothing, each one of which can be associated with one of the days of creation. Therefore, as you enter through the veil it is as if the entirety of all creation is redeemed in your person. You represent salvation for the entirety of creation, because in you-- should you be able to be rescued-- creation, itself, continues. These are symbols. They communicate to the mind ideas, ideas that are eternal. They're not ends in themselves.

Once again, Joseph is called by name-- this is verse 33. He was afraid; the fear soon left him. The reason he was afraid was because he was seeking forgiveness of his sins. A perfectly white, bright lit individual appears, who represents the cleanliness of heaven itself. Joseph,

in contrast to that, he's inquiring to know about his sins. Now a visibly cleansed being stands before him; he's afraid. And why was he afraid? Because, once again, you see the remarkable contrast. "I know what lies in my heart. I know what failings I have had, and I know this being can see through me. Therefore, I need something that will remove from me my fear." *"He called me by name."* It's the same thing. Moroni dispels it by letting him know, "We have a brotherhood; we have a relationship." *"Fear soon left me. He called me by name..."* He tells him about the stuff, the accoutrements that he's going to be handed in verse 34 and 35. But then he gets in verse 36, and this is where-- ooh, this is where we got something now. This is Moroni delivering a message.

We have a great deal to look forward to that the Angel Moroni, instructing Joseph Smith, covered with him on that night when he first appeared to him, promising that these things were going to come to pass, and they still had not yet come in. Going back to *Joseph Smith-History* 1:41, when he referred to Joel, he says that: *"...the fullness of the Gentiles was soon to come in."* The "fullness of the Gentiles" is something different than "the times of the Gentiles." The times of the Gentiles have been with us. The fullness of the Gentiles is when we turn a leaf, and their opportunity comes to an end.

Notice that in addition in verse 41, that there were many other passages of scripture and many other explanations that he doesn't mention here that the angel offered. How often, when an angel comes to instruct, does the angel simply open the scriptures? When you look at what happened with the Lord on the day of His resurrection before He appeared to the twelve, and He walked the afternoon on the road to Emmaus with Cleopas and, I believe, Luke-- He spent the afternoon opening to them the scriptures. Angels instruct using the scriptures. The Lord, on the day of His resurrection, spent the afternoon talking about the scriptures. Joseph Smith, when he was trying to figure out which church he should join, labored over the scriptures. And yet, we think we needn't perform that same labor or become familiar with that same canon of scripture. And I'm telling you, that the more you have inside you in familiarity with the words of scripture, the more able you are to comprehend the doings of God in your own life and in the lives of all those around you and in the time in which you live. So don't let it be lost on you that what the angel Moroni spent the night doing with Joseph was discussing scripture. And don't let it be lost on you that he returned again to deliver, another time, a message involving expounding the scriptures.

In any event, back in those days, I thought all you people had these things. And then there was the patriarchal blessing that I got which said, and this is a quote, that "you will again be in the presence of your Father in Heaven, while in the second estate." That's in my patriarchal blessing. And I thought, "Well, of course, it belongs there. That's what we do, isn't it? We're Mormons! I mean, we're on God's team! God likes us; He's paying really close attention to us." In any event, I thought we were related to God in an intimate way because, well, the heavens were open. And therefore, it was not to me shocking when I encountered an angel. And I have encountered many of them. And all of them leave a vivid and permanent impression. I can tell you that it's been nearly 40 years since the first time I met with an angel, and I can still close my eyes and see the scene this minute.

This stuff happens. My experiences matter only because I can testify that it happens. The authenticity of God's message is not proven by the means of delivery. Even if an angel comes-- an angel can come and mislead you. The only way to distinguish between what is and what is not of God is through the medium of sacrifice. Because when you do this, the vessel is clean. And when the vessel is clean before God, then even an angel of light cannot mislead you. Because what they offer is darkness, and you can tell it, because they have not the power to mislead.

Everyone can be misled unless the course in life that they pursue is according to God's will. All gifts can be compromised. Look at Mormon chapter 9. I want to go to verse 27 of Mormon chapter 9: *"O then despise not, and wonder not, but hearken unto the words of the Lord, and ask the Father in the name of Jesus for what things soever ye shall stand in need. Doubt not, but be believing, and begin as in times of old, and come unto the Lord with all your heart, and work out your own salvation with fear and trembling before him. Be wise in the days of your probation; strip yourselves of all uncleanness; ask not, that ye may consume it on your lusts, but ask with a firmness unshaken, that ye will yield to no temptation, but that ye will serve the true and living God."*

You don't acquire favor with God in order to consume what He gives to you on your lusts, to satisfy your ambition, to become someone great in the eyes of everyone else. It doesn't happen that way. And if you try to turn it in that way, you'll meet the same kind of unfortunate end that we see happening time and time again by the ambitious and the unscrupulous, the knavish and the foolish. Be wise in the days of your probation. Strip yourselves of all uncleanness. Check your thoughts. Focus them on something that is light and true and pure. Because in the end, none of us have anything to be proud of. In the end, the only thing that matters is if God will vouch for us in the day of judgment. And if He will and if He does, then it's a gift.

Oh, I want to do this one, too. Go to Moses chapter 1. Look at verse 8: *"And it came to pass that Moses looked, and beheld the world upon which he was created..."* Moses beheld the world-- why, to me this is very interesting because he's describing a view that is very often in scripture referred to as being "caught up into an exceedingly high mountain." This is a view up and looking down, in any event. Move to verse 18: *"And again Moses said..."* Now he's talking, because Satan has come during this interlude appearing as an angel of light, tempting him. Verse 18, Moses said: *"I will not cease to call upon God, I have other things to inquire of him: for his glory has been upon me, wherefore I can judge between him and thee. Depart hence, Satan."* The defect that Moses perceived in what Lucifer was saying, tempting him, did not consist merely in the presence of the-- I mean, this is an angel.

If you go to Section 76 and the description-- an angel, in a position of authority in the presence of God, was cast out. That is not a being who, to look upon, would appear to be a vile creature. That would be someone who, to look upon, would appear to be a being of light, a being of glory, an angel of light. The reason Moses could discern between them had nothing to do with the appearance-- it had to do with the content. It had to do with the Spirit. It had to do with what he radiated. And what Moses was able to discern was that this

was not the source of something which he, Moses, chose to take in, as a consequence of which he could judge between him and say, "You-- you I disprefer."

When you look at the *Joseph Smith-History*, "thick darkness"-- I talked about this last time. The Orson Hyde account of that talks about the thick darkness that gathered around him. It consisted of the adversary benighting his mind with doubts, brought to his soul all sorts of improper pictures. The reason why it is possible to do that, and more easily so with many of us, is because we have ingested into ourselves all kinds of improper images which can then be summoned back up.

Look at 2 Nephi chapter 9. This is one of the early sermons given by Jacob, and we're going to look at verse 9. *"And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself; yea, to that being who beguiled our first parents, who transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light, and stirreth up the children of men unto secret combinations of murder and all manner of secret works of darkness."* It's not the physical appearance nor the transformation that takes place. It is the content, which is why you need to know that the course that you are pursuing is in accordance with the will of God. Because once you have made the required sacrifice, you acquire the required knowledge.

Look at Alma chapter 30. This is an explanation given at the bad end of Korihor, as judgments were upon him, and he was writing his final confession for his death. Verse 53 of Alma chapter 30: *"But behold, the devil hath deceived me; for he appeared unto me in the form of an angel, and said unto me: Go and reclaim this people, for they have all gone astray after an unknown God. And he said unto me: There is no God; yea, and he taught me that which I should say. And I have taught his words; and I taught them because they were pleasing unto the carnal mind; and I taught them, even until I had much success, insomuch that I verily believed that they were true; and for this cause I withstood the truth, even until I have brought this great curse upon me."*

You see, he was convinced by the devil, who appeared unto him in a form of an angel. It's not always that the adversary comes to you with murderous intent. Sometimes he comes to appeal to your vanity, to your pride. Well, pride is such a sinkhole it can get most people there-- oh, you can have acclaim, you can have wealth. No, you acquire what you need to acquire as a consequence of sacrificing for God. And in that process, you will endure criticism, rejection, opposition, the world's hatred. You may even be cast out. But you obtain what you obtain from God *by* sacrifice.

In 12-- verse 12, or paragraph 12-- of this Lecture 6: *"But those who have not made this sacrifice to God do not know that the course which they pursue is well pleasing in his sight; for whatever may be their belief or their opinion, it is a matter of doubt and uncertainty in their mind; and where doubt and uncertainty are there faith is not, nor can it be. For doubt and faith do not exist in the same person at the same time; so that persons whose minds are under doubts and fears cannot have unshaken confidence; and where unshaken confidence is not*

their faith is weak; and where faith is weak the persons will not be able to contend against all the opposition, tribulations, and afflictions which they will have to encounter in order to be heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus; and they will grow weary in their minds, and the adversary will have power over them and destroy them." Well, he'll darken their minds, and after having darkened their minds, leave them in a position in which they are simply unable to have faith, at least in the right things, in order to understand the things of God.

Look in verse 9 of this Sixth Lecture. About halfway through there's a sentence that begins: *"And in the last days before the Lord comes...."* So this is before the Second Coming of the Lord, but it's in the last days, *"...he is to gather together his saints who have made a covenant with him by sacrifice."* Not a covenant *to* sacrifice. You can go make a covenant *to* sacrifice every day the temple is open. Making a covenant *to* sacrifice is not at all the same thing as making a covenant *by* sacrifice. It's only through actually sacrificing that it is possible for the Lord to make a covenant with you.

"Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice" (Proverbs 50:3-5). That gathering will be made-- not by man or men or institutions-- that gathering will be made by the angels of heaven who hold the keys of responsibility for that. That you can read in D&C 77:11.

Joseph saw the Father and the Son, and he testified about it, and he described them. I've seen the Father, and I've seen the Son, and they've both spoken with me. The only reason I mention that is to give you confidence that it can happen. It should happen to you. You should be talking with Them. They can tell you what you need to know. And don't be at all surprised if the subject about which you need to converse with the Lord consists almost entirely of a discussion about the scriptures. Don't be surprised if an angel comes to minister to you, if the topic about which the angel would like to converse involves the scriptures. And don't be surprised if the Lord authorizes someone to deliver a message, and the message consists in expounding the scriptures. Because on the road to Emmaus, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, what Christ did was open up to them how all things testified of Him. Well, all things testify of what is currently getting at last underway. And make no mistake about it, it is getting underway. And I don't care where you look, I don't care what society you look at, I don't care what economy you observe, what culture you observe-- the earth and all of the people on her are waxing old like a garment. And do you know what they do with garments that are old? They're burned. The way to preserve yourself consists in having faith in God, and the conditions upon which faith in God is obtained are exactly the same for you as they were for Moses and Abraham and all of those who have ever had faith, Joseph Smith being the latest great example of that.

Now, I want to take another detour into parsing things in a way that you might not have considered before. And for this I want to go to Doctrine and Covenants section 128, and I want to look at verse 21. This is Joseph-- this is Joseph writing a letter that got canonized. And he's talking about all the stuff that had gone on in the process of getting the restoration

fully established on the earth. And he mentions in this letter that he writes these things: *"And again, the voice of God in the chamber of old Father Whitmer, in Fayette, Seneca county, and at sundry times, and in divers places through all the travels and tribulations of this Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints..."* So the voice of God has been there throughout all of this, as Joseph presided and as the Church rolled forth. *"And the voice of Michael [Mich-a-el] the archangel; the voice of Gabriel ["El" being the name of God], and of Raphael, and of divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time, all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little; giving us consolation by holding forth that which is to come, confirming our hope!"*

So, I want to suggest to you that Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael are known to us as those who have come, though they were part of the "El,"-- or in the plural form, the Elohim-- they came, and they served here. They came, and they ministered here. *Michael* descended, and he came to the earth, and he was known as Adam in mortality. *Gabriel* came to the earth, and he was known in mortality as Noah. There is a big debate over the identity of the *Raphael*. I'll tell you what I think, and you can take it or leave it. *Raphael* is the name that was given to the man who in mortality we know as Enoch.

Now there are four angels who preside over the four corners of the earth. And Joseph surely knew that. And Joseph mentions the names of three of the four, but he leaves the fourth one out. And I find the absence of the fourth one rather extraordinary. The fourth one's name is *Uriel*, also one of the Elohim. And although there are those who will absolutely cry heresy, throw dirt on their hair, tear their clothes because they are scholars, and they are bonafide, and they know I'm talking out of my hat (but I'd remind you Joseph talked out of his hat, too)-- that fourth and missing, unmentioned angel is *Uriel*, who in mortality was known to us as John.

Adam is the one in the East, the angel who is considered the one who presides over and has control of the air, which is apt because into Adam was given the breath of life in the beginning. *Raphael* is in the South, and he is associated with the power of fire, which is apt because of his fiery ascent with his people into heaven. *Gabriel* is the angel in the West who has the power over water, which is apt because in mortality, he managed through the flood. And *Uriel*, though not mentioned, is the one who in the North has the power over the earth, which is apt because he remains upon the earth, and he is the guardian at one gate, with *Elijah* at the other end. But you can take and leave all that as you will. I find the mention here in this letter by Joseph of these individuals and these powers and these four, three of whom are named, to be interesting. Though he does mention "divers angels from Michael or Adam down to the present time."

MAN 1: *"As this vision closed, the heavens were again opened to their view, and they saw and beheld, and were endowed with knowledge from the beginning of this creation to the ends thereof. And they were shown unspeakable things from the sealed record of Heaven which man is not capable of making known but must be revealed by the Powers of Heaven. They beheld Michael, the archangel; Gabriel and Raphael, and divers angels, from Michael or Adam*

down to the end of time, showing in turns their dispensations, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the Powers of their Priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept; endowing them with knowledge, even here a little, and there a little; holding forth hope for the work God was yet to perform, even the revelation of all things which are to come upon the earth until the return of the Lord in glory with His holy angels-- to pour out judgment upon the world, and to reward the righteous" (Answer and Covenant, p. 4).

MAN 2: *"And the angels are given charge to watch over and protect my people" (Answer and Covenant, p. 9).*

DENVER: *"I will visit my house, which the remnant of my people shall build, and I will dwell therein, to be among you, and no one will need to say, Know ye the Lord, for you all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. I will teach you things that have been hidden from the foundation of the world and your understanding will reach unto Heaven. And you shall be called the children of the Most High God, and I will preserve you against the harvest. And the angels sent to harvest the world will gather the wicked into bundles to be burned, but will pass over you as my peculiar treasure" (Answer and Covenant, p. 11-12).*

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's talk entitled "Christ's Discourse on the Road to Emmaus," given in Fairview, Utah on April 14, 2007;
- His talk entitled "The Mission of Elijah Reconsidered," given in Spanish Fork, UT on October 14, 2011;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #1 entitled "Be of Good Cheer," given in Boise, ID on September 10, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #2 entitled "Faith," given in Idaho Falls, ID on September 28, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #5 entitled "Priesthood," given in Orem, UT on November 2, 2013; and
- The presentation of "Answer and Covenant," given at the Covenant of Christ Conference in Boise, ID on September 3, 2017.

Podcast Episode 22: New Jerusalem

QUESTION: What is the New Jerusalem? Where will it be? What will happen there? And how will the New Jerusalem become Zion?

DENVER: Well, they who come will burn up those who are unprepared. And therefore, what should we be doing in order to make sure that we are included among those who are prepared?

I want to look more into Enoch. So let's go back to the book of Moses. Moses chapter 7, beginning at verse 60: *"And the Lord said unto Enoch: As I live...."* This is covenant language. This is God swearing by his own life. This is God promising that if He lives, so shall this word live. If He's alive, He shall vindicate what He's about to say.

"As I live, even so will I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance, to fulfil the oath which I have made unto you concerning the children of Noah; And the day shall come that the earth shall rest, but before that day the heavens shall be darkened, and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth; and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth; and great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but my people will I preserve; And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men; and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, even unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem. And the Lord said unto Enoch: Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there."

These are they who, when they come, will burn up those unprepared for their coming so that it leaves neither root nor branch.

"We will receive them into our bosom, and they shall see us; and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other; And there shall be mine abode, and it shall be Zion, which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made; and for the space of a thousand years the earth shall rest. And it came to pass that Enoch saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, in the last days, to dwell on the earth in righteousness for the space of a thousand years; But before that day he saw great tribulations among the wicked; and he also saw the sea, that it was troubled, and men's hearts failing them, looking forth with fear for the judgments of the Almighty God, which should come upon the wicked" (Moses 7:60-66).

This is the Lord describing to Enoch what would happen by way of covenant, the Lord swearing “as I live, even so will,” and He tells him what’s going to come to pass in the last days.

This is among the promises that were made to one of the fathers. And this *is* one of the fathers. And these are the covenants whose time is now upon us. This is the day in which we need to be prepared, so that those who went before and ascended up the ladder can return and fall upon your neck and kiss you, and you fall upon their neck and kiss them-- a sacred embrace through the veil, evidencing fellowship between you here and them there, the Lord promising and covenanting these things are going to happen.

But notice, there has to be a tabernacle. He has to come and take up His abode. There has to be preparation made. These things require some effort to be made here in order to prepare for His return. If there is no one here who is willing to engage in what's necessary to bring this to pass (because everyone looks around and expects someone else to do it), then you're neglecting the duty that's devolving upon you as one of those who was assigned to come down in this day, in order to honor the fathers and honor the Lord by allowing the covenants that have been made to be fulfilled.

A restoration through Joseph Smith and the promises that were made to the fathers and the statement that was made by Moroni to Joseph on the evening that he came to him and talked about and reworded the promise given through Malachi-- all of these are pointing to something that is at this moment still incomplete, a work that is at this moment still undone, a project that remains for us (if we will receive it) to finally receive. Because the way in which Zion is going to come about is going to necessarily be something that is so comfortable and so familiar on the earth as a pattern, reflecting what it is that exists in the heavens, that they who come not only do not burn them up, but they fall upon them, and they kiss their necks. Because at last, they have a sister and a brother on the earth united by belief, united by covenant, united by knowledge, united by light and truth, or in other words, the glory of God, which is intelligence.

Because the purpose of the Gospel has always been to inform, to edify, to raise up, to instruct. It was never meant to be reduced to something that is merely repetitious. It was intended to challenge you to your very core. And what you do and what you think and how you act-- it's intended to make you godlike in your understanding. It's about preserving a family of gods. It's about creating a circumstance in which it is possible that the work which began an eternity ago can continue to go on for an eternity from now because you were saved, because you were redeemed, because you tied into that same connection that unifies all of the Gods who have gone before.

There is absolutely no reason to gather in order to fail again. We do not need another Jerusalem. We do not need another Rome. We do not need another Antioch. We do not need another Kirtland. We don't need another Jackson County; we don't need another Nauvoo; and we certainly don't need another Salt Lake. We need Zion. And there's no reason to gather if the gathering is going to be to fail again.

I want to remind you, however, that throughout the scriptures, when it comes to the establishment of Zion, there is no such thing as "hastening the work." It can't be done in haste. 3 Nephi chapter 20, the Lord speaking, verse 42: *"For ye shall not go out with haste nor go by flight; for the Lord will go before you, and the Lord God of Israel shall be your rearward."* This is the Lord speaking. He's quoting Isaiah, but it is the Lord speaking.

Doctrine and Covenants 101:68-69: *"Nevertheless, as I have said unto you in a former commandment, let not your gathering be in haste, nor by flight; but let all things be prepared before you. And in order that all things be prepared before you, observe the commandment which I have given concerning these things-- Which saith, or teacheth, to purchase all the lands with money, which can be purchased for money."* There's going to be an excess, ultimately, from your gatherings if you will undertake it. And there will be a place prepared but not in haste.

Going back to 3 Nephi, in chapter 21 verse 29: *"And they shall go out from all nations; and they shall not go out in haste, nor go by flight, for I will go before them, saith the Father, and I will be their rearward."* It cannot be done in haste.

But look at what gets done if it is done in the way in which the Lord would have it be done. Doctrine and Covenants section 133, beginning at verse 25, is the description of the results if there is a people who get prepared. This will be the result-- 133 beginning at 25: *"And the Lord, even the Savior, shall stand in the midst of his people, and shall reign over all flesh. And they who are in the north countries shall come in remembrance before the Lord; and their prophets shall hear his voice, and shall no longer stay themselves; and they shall smite the rocks, and the ice shall flow down at their presence. And an highway shall be cast up in the midst of the great deep. Their enemies shall become a prey unto them, And in the barren deserts there shall come forth pools of living water; and the parched ground shall no longer be a thirsty land. And they shall bring forth their rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim, my servants. And the boundaries of the everlasting hills shall tremble at their presence. And there shall they fall down and be crowned with glory [in this context, it's an ordinance] even in Zion, by the hands of the servants of the Lord, even the children of Ephraim. And they shall be filled with songs of everlasting joy. Behold, this is the blessing of the everlasting God upon the tribes of Israel, and the richer blessing upon the head of Ephraim and his fellows" (D&C 133:25-34).*

Ephraim the proud; Ephraim the headstrong; Ephraim the one who is constantly in rebellion. Ephraim must come back, must heel to, must at last allow the Lord to rule over him. Because Ephraim has got to rise up in order for this to happen-- not in haste; never in haste-- "crowned with glory," or in other words, with intelligence, or in other words, light and truth or the knowledge of God, so that no one need tell you, "Know ye the Lord," because you're all going to know Him, from the least to the greatest.

Going back to 3 Nephi chapter 21: *"But if they will repent and hearken unto my words, and harden not their hearts, I will establish my church among them, and they shall come in unto*

the covenant and be numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance” (verse 22). “They” are the gentiles. “They” are Ephraim-- you.

“And they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob, and also as many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem. And then shall they assist my people that they may be gathered in, who are scattered upon all the face of the land, in unto the New Jerusalem. And then shall the power of heaven come down among them; and I also will be in their midst” (3 Nephi 21:23-25).

The word “powers of heaven” is talking about the angels. In this circumstance, “the power” is singular, not only because they are “one” but because among them will be our Lord Himself. And where He is, there is the Power of Heaven, and it is singular. *“And then shall the work of the Father commence at that day, even when this gospel shall be preached among the remnant of this people”(3 Nephi 21:26).* Because when you gather to hear what you’re going to hear there, this is the final stage in the Father’s work. This is the work that requires holiness to accompany even its teaching.

“Verily I say unto you, at that day shall the work of the Father commence among all the dispersed of my people, yea, even the tribes which have been lost, which the Father hath led away out of Jerusalem. Yea, the work shall commence among all the dispersed of my people, with the Father to prepare the way whereby they may come unto me, that they may call on the Father in my name. Yea, and then shall the work commence, with the Father among all nations in preparing the way whereby his people may be gathered home to the land of their inheritance. And they shall go out from all nations; and they shall not go out in haste, nor go by flight, for I will go before them, saith the Father, and I will be their rearward” (3 Nephi 21:26-29).

Again and again, the notion that this work can be hastened is denounced. Again and again, it’s to be a place in which the preparations are done first. Again and again, it suggests that before we can gather together, we must have that heart, that mind, which can make us one.

Turn back and look at the results. Doctrine and Covenants 45, beginning at verse 65: *“And with one heart and with one mind, gather up your riches that ye may purchase an inheritance which shall hereafter be appointed unto you. And it shall be called the New Jerusalem, a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the Most High God; And the glory of the Lord shall be there, and the terror of the Lord also shall be there, insomuch that the wicked will not come unto it, and it shall be called Zion...”* They won't come to it because to go there is like Acts 5. You cannot endure that environment if you're abiding a telestial law. You would be consumed.

“...And it shall come to pass among the wicked, that every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety. And there shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under heaven; and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another. And it shall be said among the wicked: Let us not go up to battle against Zion, for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible; wherefore we cannot stand. And it shall come to pass

that the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations, and shall come to Zion, singing with songs of everlasting joy" (D&C 45:65-71).

Think about what it would take to transplant various populations from various locations (not in haste) with everything having been prepared in advance. And in our currently fragmented society, unless you're willing to experiment with your own effort to live the law of tithing by organizing yourselves and governing yourself, miscellaneous groups will never make it, but people of God will.

Doctrine and Covenants 65:5, *"Call upon the Lord, that his kingdom may go forth upon the earth, that the inhabitants thereof may receive it, and be prepared for the days to come, in the which the Son of Man shall come down in heaven, clothed in the brightness of his glory, to meet the kingdom of God which is set up on the earth. Wherefore, may the kingdom of God go forth, that the kingdom of heaven may come, that thou, O God, mayest be glorified in heaven so on earth, that thine enemies may be subdued; for thine is the honor, power and glory, forever and ever. Amen" (D&C 65:5-6).*

If you read that and you know that the Lord is going to come to that, you realize that He cannot come unless it exists. If it doesn't exist, He cannot come to it. If He cannot come to it, then He delays the day of His coming. And generation after generation may come and go, never having accomplished what the Lord invites us to do, what the Lord invites us to be.

Moses 7-- this is the Lord speaking to Enoch in a vision, recorded subsequently by Moses by revelation. But it is a restoration of the book of Enoch, and the conversation speaker is the Lord, beginning in Moses 7:60, *"And the Lord said unto Enoch: As I live, even so will I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance, to fulfil the oath which I have made unto you concerning the children of Noah."* This is the Lord's oath to Enoch. He's going to come-- He's going to come in the last days.

"And the day shall come that the earth shall rest, but before that day the heavens shall be darkened, and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth; and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth; and great tribulations shall be had among the children of men, but my people will I preserve; And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men; and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood"-- a thing that is possible now by you sitting at a keyboard anywhere in the world. You can cause the truth to flood the earth.

"...to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle [in this context, the tabernacle to be built is His house] and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem. And the Lord said unto Enoch: Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there, and we will receive them into our bosom, and they shall see us; and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other." This is the second return of Enoch, as well. First His house, then Enoch.

“And there shall be mine abode, and it shall be Zion, which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made; and for the space of a thousand years the earth shall rest. And it came to pass that Enoch saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, in the last days, to dwell on the earth in righteousness for the space of a thousand years” (Moses 7:60-65).

Zion exists before these things can happen. If Zion does not exist, these things will be delayed. They will not be prevented because the Lord has, by a covenant, ensured that they will happen. But the fact that the Lord has, by a covenant, ensured that it will happen is no guarantee that we will see it. Because we will only see it if we undertake to abide the conditions by which He can accomplish His work.

This is the Joseph Smith translation of Genesis chapter 9: *“And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant, which I made unto thy father Enoch; that, when men should keep all my commandments, Zion should again come on the earth, the city of Enoch which I have caught up unto myself. And this is mine everlasting covenant, that when thy posterity shall embrace the truth and look upward, then shall Zion look downward, and all the heavens shall shake with gladness and the earth shall tremble with joy. And the general assembly of the church of the first-born shall come down out of heaven, and possess the earth, and shall have place until the end come. And this is mine everlasting covenant, which I made with thy father Enoch” (JST Genesis 9:21-23)*-- the covenant that God made again with Noah, the covenant that He made originally with Adam, the covenant which some generation will rise up to receive. Whether that's you, or whether you go to the grave without realizing it or not, is entirely up to you.

If you look at D&C 133, beginning at verse 26: *“And they who are in the north countries shall come in remembrance before the Lord; and their prophets shall hear his voice, and shall no longer stay themselves; and they shall smite the rocks, and the ice shall flow down at their presence. And an highway shall be cast up in the midst of the great deep. Their enemies shall become a prey unto them, And in the barren deserts there shall come forth pools of living water; and the parched ground shall no longer be a thirsty land. And they shall bring forth their rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim, my servants. And the boundaries of the everlasting hills shall tremble at their presence. And there shall they fall down and be crowned with glory, even in Zion, by the hands of the servants of the Lord, even the children of Ephraim. And they shall be filled with songs of everlasting joy. Behold, this is the blessing of the everlasting God upon the tribes of Israel, and the richer blessing upon the head of Ephraim and his fellows” (D&C 133:26-34).*

Heaven will protect the last days' Zion. It will belong to Him, and therefore, God will not allow it to be overtaken or overcome. D&C 45 has another prophecy about the last days Zion beginning at verse 66: *“And it shall be called the New Jerusalem, a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the Most High God; And the glory of the Lord shall be there, and the terror of the Lord also shall be there, insomuch that the wicked will not come unto it, and it shall be called Zion. And it shall come to pass among the wicked, that every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety. And*

there shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under heaven; and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another. And it shall be said among the wicked: Let us not go up to battle against Zion, for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible; wherefore we cannot stand" (D&C 45:66-70).

Heaven protected Zion in its first iteration, and heaven is going to protect the last days' Zion. As a consequence of that, the time is going to come when it will not be the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt that people cite as evidence of the power of God. You see, Egypt had to be subdued. Moses was sent to subdue them because Egypt was at the time the greatest kingdom, the greatest nation on the earth. And Moses was sent to them to establish the government of God. When you confront the government of God against the most powerful nation on the earth, it's the most powerful nation that must yield the field and not the Lord.

Well, in the last days Jeremiah prophesied the time is going to come when the talk about the power of God is no longer making reference to what the Lord did anciently with Egypt-- it's going to be what the Lord intends to do with the last days' Zion.

This is Jeremiah chapter 16, beginning at verse 14: *"Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers" (verse 14-15).* That will be the reference point to which people will point as evidence of God's intention to establish His rule, His reign upon the earth, His authority over the nations of the earth.

Well, it is going to come to pass. Rest assured that God intends to establish in the last days, a Zion in which we will see the return of exactly what was here at the beginning. There will be a return. I mean, the reason why they're coming to the children of Ephraim in the everlasting mountains is because there will be a New Jerusalem. They will bring rich treasures when they come because they have records that they, themselves, are going to need to have translated. And they are going to be crowned because the family of God consists of people who are, in fact, kings and priests.

All of that infrastructure has to be put in place by the Lord before His return. And therefore, He intends to accomplish this work. And when He accomplishes this work, you're not going to find at the top of it a king, like the gentiles expect. You're going to find something or someone or some group who are meek and lowly, who are rather more like our Savior than the kings who ruled during our Savior's day. You won't find a Caesar, and you won't find a local potentate; you'll find a servant.

Well, there's a parable. It's just one verse-- it's a very short parable. It moves along, but it's a response that Christ gave to the question that was put to him by his disciples, asking him, "Tell us what the signs of your return is going to be." And He goes through a list of things, but He ends with a little parable at the end. And our translation makes it seem kind of morbid, so I'm going to substitute "body" for "carcase," because it sounds like what you're

dealing with in the current King James version is morbid, not a living body. But He says one of the signs that is going to be at His return is “where the body is, that’s where the eagles will gather” (Matthew 24:28). The “body” is the New Jerusalem. The “eagles” are going to be angelic ministrants who are going to come. There has to be an opening that occurs in order to prepare the way. The opening at this end is going to be handled by someone who has remained behind, and the opening at the far end is going to be the one to whom the assignment was given to open the way for His return-- Elijah, the one who was promised.

Now, I want to be really clear. I don't expect either of those individuals to have any public ministry again. They have a role in Zion, and those who dwell in Zion are going to have some contact with them. John will have a role, but the work of Zion is the work of flesh and blood.

Men have to extend the invitation for God to return, so that men who extend that invitation are worthy of His return, and the Lord can safely come without utterly destroying all who are upon the earth. Therefore, you need Zion, among other reasons, in order for there to be a place and a people to whom the Lord can safely return without utterly destroying the earth at His coming. However small, however diminutive it may be, there needs to be a Zion that extends the invitation for the Lord to return.

Now the good news is that Zion will be preserved. And the even better news is that all of those good people of the earth who live in ignorance but who would've accepted the truth if it were brought to them, they will be preserved, also. There will be a mission field into the millennium.

But the really, really bad news is, in the laundry list of those whom the Lord intends to destroy at His coming, that is the description of those who are telestial and therefore, cannot endure His presence when He shall come-- all of the liars, all of the whoremongers, all of the people who have taken our Lord's name in vain having not authority, all those who have preached for hire and practiced priestcraft-- one of the reasons it needs to be eradicated before you get to Zion is so you're not ignited like a torch head to the amusement of everyone else that is in Zion. There has to be an end of all that nonsense.

The concern I always have is that, in the days of Joseph, we made some foolishly laughable mistakes. Because when we had a man like Joseph walking among us, it was so easy to take our eyes off of the Lord and put them upon the man, that when Joseph got up to talk to the Relief Society in 1842, he said, “Your minds are darkened because you’re neglecting the duty that’s devolving upon yourselves. You are depending too much upon the prophet.” If we don't learn anything from that past example of failure, then we can expect the exact same outcome. We may get Kirtland; we may get Nauvoo; we may get Salt Lake City; but we will not get the New Jerusalem. We have to learn from the past errors. We have to determine not to repeat at least those. We may make new and inventive mistakes of our own, but at least they will belong to us and not be caused by our arrogance and stupidity in simply repeating what we have seen gone on before.

I don't care how cleverly you parse the scriptures. God, and God alone, is responsible for causing them to be written in the first place. And He has a meaning in mind behind them. And He has a work that He intends to do that they will vindicate when the work is done.

If you think that you can out-think the Lord, and you can arrive at the right place at the right time, then go ahead and buy some farmland in or around Independence, Missouri and wait for the burning, because you're not going to be at the right place. If Independence, Missouri was where the Lord intended Zion to be, He wouldn't have told them in January of 1841 that He was going to make Nauvoo the corner of Zion. It is *portable* until it is *fixed* by Him.

And Adam-ondi-Ahman is not simply a location that you can find on a map in Missouri. It is a description of an event. The event is Adam in the presence of Son Ahman, Christ. Wherever that happens, that is, and will be, Adam-ondi-Ahman. So buy all the land you want, build all the bleachers you expect to build. But the fact of the matter is, that when Adam (the Ancient of Days) returns, there is going to be an orderly process in which a king, a mortal king (it necessarily begins there) surrenders the jurisdiction of the earth back to those who once presided over it-- in turn, ultimately back to the Ancient of Days. That's why he's going to be here. And he, in turn, will surrender it to the Father, the Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the increase of whose government there shall be no end.

Christ, when He returns, will have the lawful, the legal right, to possess this earth, to rule it, and to govern it. And He will come to govern it. But before that day, groundwork has to be laid. There is a process.

The religion of Adam was the objective of Mormonism. Joseph Smith was unable to fully restore that first religion of man. Joseph predicted the religion would include a future gathering in the everlasting hills (in all probability the Rocky Mountains), where returning tribes would be crowned with glory in a New Jerusalem, be God's last Zion. The returning tribes did not gather in Kirtland, Jackson County, Far West, or Nauvoo. And Joseph was dead before the trip westward to Salt Lake. Even the most ardent defender of the LDS version of Mormonism must concede that things were expected, even promised and prophesied to happen, that were left unrealized when Joseph died.

Because of prophecies made to the patriarchal fathers, the right to found this future city of peace descends from a specific ancient line. There will be an heir descended from both Jesse and Joseph who will accomplish it. Occupants of the community will likewise have lineal qualification. The last days' Zion is an accomplishment promised earlier to the patriarchal fathers, and it is through their descendants God intends to vindicate the promises. The result of this alignment will be a priestly city of Zion that will "return to that power which she has lost."

If we'll: *"Repent and harken to my words and harden not [our] hearts, I will establish my church among them and they shall come in unto the covenant and be numbered among [this*

remnant], this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for an inheritance.” It’s talking about the gentiles, but it’s talking about establishing His word, which is a prerequisite to establishing His people.

“Numbered among this the remnant of Jacob, unto whom I have given this land for their inheritance; And they shall assist my people, the remnant of Jacob, and also as many of the house of Israel as shall come, that they may build a city, which shall be called the New Jerusalem. And then shall they assist my people that they may be gathered in, who are scattered upon all the face of the land, in unto the New Jerusalem. And then shall the power of heaven come down among them; and I also will be in their midst” (3 Nephi 21:22-25).

So, let me read the list again of what we’re not to be. We cannot be built up to get gain; we cannot be built up to get power over the flesh; we cannot be built up to become popular; we cannot seek the lusts of the flesh or the things of the world; and we cannot do all manner of iniquity. Those are the things that must be avoided. And those who avoid it, however few, however small, that is who the Lord is looking for. That is the group who will be inclined to gather, receive commandments, and obey them.

One of the interesting things about the gathering into Zion is that apparently although there may be yet more revelations and commandments that roll out. Apparently it will be in Zion where the rich treasures of the records of other scattered tribes are to be brought in order for that information or body of material to be reclaimed. If the revelations and the prophecies are correct, the records of the Jews and the records of the Nephites-- they get gathered. And they are the first. But eventually there will be many others that get gathered in. The description that’s given of bringing the rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim in the everlasting mountains is a description of bringing them into the place that will be built by a covenant people who have the legal right to the land.

And first of all, I believe we could choose, as a people, a place to build a temple, and we would get exactly the same response that we see in the Doctrine and Covenants that was given to Joseph when the Nauvoo Temple began. “The sight that you have selected is acceptable to me.” And we’d probably reach exactly the same conclusion. I will not, therefore, choose a site. If God doesn’t choose a site, it will remain unchosen. If God chooses the site, it’s His. And then He has the responsibility to defend it.

If you read about the sites selected in Nauvoo, in the Nauvoo site the Lord said, “Yea, that’s acceptable to me, and if..., and if..., and if..., then...” But if God chooses the site, it’s His. There’s no “if.” Well, there might be one “if.” And that one “if” is, “Now if you want to live and not be slain by me on the land that I’ve chosen, then you better be careful.” But it’s His land. It’s His to defend; it’s His choice; it’s His house; it’s His Zion; it will be His New Jerusalem. And therefore, no man is going to say (and if they do say, I’m going to have nothing to do with them), “Is this acceptable to you, Lord?” It’s got to be His. And if it is His, it carries the weight of God having chosen it. He’s known where it is for millenia now. And He’s had prophets describe it. It’s in the everlasting mountains; it’s not on the plains of Missouri. And the people that are going to go there are going to say, “Let us go up to the

mountain where the Lord has an ensign erected." And that will be His house. And He will come, and He will accept it, or we won't have Zion.

Zion cannot be established by isolated and solitary figures proclaiming a "testimony of Jesus" from their home keyboard. The challenge of building a community must be part of a process. Zion is a community, and therefore, God is a God of community, and His people must learn to live together with one heart, one mind, with no poor among us. Isolated keyboardists proclaiming their resentment of community can hardly speak temperately of others. How could they ever live peacefully in a community of equals?

We must become precious to each other.

Although the laborers in this final effort are "few," you will be the means used by the Lord to complete His work in His vineyard (verse 70). You are required to labor with your might to finish the Lord's work in His vineyard (verse 72). But He will labor alongside you (Jacob 5).

He, not a man or a committee, will call you to do work. When He calls, do not fear-- but do not run faster than you have strength. We must find His people in the highways and byways and invite them to join in. Zion will include people from every part of the world. This conference is broadcast worldwide as part of the prophecy to Enoch that God would send *"...righteousness and truth will [he] cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem"* (Moses 7:62). We must proclaim this to the world.

Do not despair when further pruning takes place. It must be done. Only through pruning can the Lord keep His tree of life equal, without those who are lofty overcoming the body (verse 73). The lofty branches have always destroyed equality to prevent Zion.

The final result of the Lord's labor in His vineyard is declared by the ancient prophet in unmistakable clarity: *"The trees have become again the natural fruit, and they became like unto one body and the fruits were equal and the Lord of the vineyard had preserved unto himself the natural fruit which was most precious unto him from the beginning."* Mark those words. That's verse 74 (Jacob 5).

When the Lord explained this to me I realized how foolish it was to expect "natural fruit" worthy of preservation in an instant. The Lord works patiently, methodically and does not require any to run faster than they have strength.

We cannot allow ourselves to be drawn in to inequality when the result of this labor is to make us one body, equal with one another. We cannot imitate the failures of the past by establishing a hierarchy, elevating one above another, and forgetting that we must be of one heart, one mind, and no poor among us.

The restoration was never intended to just restore an ancient Christian church. That is only a halfway point. It must go back further. In the words of the ancient prophet, God intends to do, *“According to [His] will, and [to] preserve the natural fruit, that it is good, even like as it was in the beginning”* (verse 75). This means the beginning, as in the days of Adam, with the return of the original religion and original authority. Everything must be returned as it was in the beginning. Civilization began with a temple as the center of learning, law, and culture. The temple was the original “university” because it taught of man's place with God in the universe.

God will return the right of dominion, once held by Adam, to man on earth to make us humble servant-gardeners, laboring to return the world to a peaceful paradise. The covenant received today restores part of that right. There is a land inheritance given to us as part of the covenant, and therefore, if we keep the covenant, we have the right to remain when others will be swept away.

Ultimately, all rights given to us must be turned back to the fathers who went before, who will likewise return them to Adam, who will surrender them to Christ. When Christ returns, He will come with the right to exercise complete dominion over the earth and exercise judgment over the ungodly.

Things set into motion today are part of preparing the way for the Lord's return in glory. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #4 entitled “Covenants,” given in Centerville, UT on October 6, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #6 entitled “Zion,” given in Grand Junction, CO on April 12, 2014;
- His talk entitled “Zion Will Come,” given near Moab, UT on April 10, 2016;
- The presentation of Denver's paper entitled “Was There an Original,” given at the Sunstone Symposium on July 29, 2016;
- Denver's conference talk entitled “Things to Keep Us Awake at Night” and Q&A given in St. George, UT on March 19, 2017; and
- His talk entitled “Opening Remarks,” given at the Covenant of Christ Conference in Boise, ID on September 3, 2017.

Podcast Episode 23: Growing Zion

QUESTION: How will Zion get started, and how will it grow to fill all of North and South America and, eventually, the world?

DENVER: The finish line is Zion. There is no moment of separation between either restoration or apostasy. You're actively involved in one, or you are actively beginning the other. It is either restoration, or it is apostasy. There is not a second's hesitation between those two. You can't hold onto something. If you try to hold onto something, that's called apostasy-- because it doesn't work that way. So, if we want an institution, we can keep all of [D&C] 107, or we can create something that is modeled on anything that is organizational or hierarchical.

If the objective is only Zion or nothing else, then the attributes of Zion are one heart, one mind, and all things in common. Most people think of all things in common as an economic proposition. I think the economic proposition will follow, in natural order, if you have all things in common based upon these first two and coming to an understanding about that.

I believe the only way you get to have Zion-- and ultimately to have Zion overcome the world-- is that you have a small gathering in which a group of people (who are sufficiently contrite and humble and willing to be taught) gather together in a place where a temple gets built. And they work out all of the differences that exist between them so that the division, the backbiting, the jealousies, the clamor, and all of that wind up being resolved. And after they get it right, which will take some while, then you take another family and you bring them in, and you disrupt the order of things, and you create chaos until they figure out how to do it, which will probably (with the first time you expand this) be a formidable problem. And then you bring in another family, and you go through the chaos again because you have expanded the group-- except you've now learned how to do it because you've been through it once. And so the second time you do it, it's a little easier. And then you bring in a third family, except now you become reasonably adept, and you may even begin to identify the major interpersonal conflict issues that happen as you transition from out there to in here, and you repeat this process until this body is big enough to split.

And then you take half of whatever this is, and you move it into another group, and you leave half behind. And then these people take one family, and these people take one family, and the pace has just doubled. But you brought with you the competency from that group and the learning from that group over to this one, and so the satellite begins to pursue and work through the problems. And you repeat that, and you repeat that, as you bring them aboard. And eventually you get to the point that-- where once again you can create satellites. Except now, you have four different communities into which you bring people, and you teach them the new way of life-- all of which is predicated upon what happened.

And the challenge for Zion is always the first one: The seed. You'll never get anywhere unless you get the first one done. If you can get over that hurdle, everything else will happen in course, and the rate at which this grows is geometric as soon as you reach the point that you've divided it once. From then on, everything will follow until the whole of North and South America is filled with Zion.

So what we need is to establish something that gives people enough understanding so that as this moves incrementally forward, we wind up in a position where what's going to eventually

begin as a single, very small seed-- there isn't a text that can be used to bludgeon us out of pursuit of the only principles upon which it is possible to construct Zion, because we're too fixated on institutionalism, hierarchical governance, and distracted by everything that we should not be distracted by, and left in an unequal position where we cannot be of one heart, one mind, and all things in common.

The three greatest holders of dominion in the history of the world were Christ and Adam and Moses-- none of whom exercised inappropriate control, dominion, or compulsion, but all of whom had some fairly important things to say. But there's a difference between Christ having fairly important things to say, on the one hand, and Christ saying, "I'm King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and I'm going to issue my edicts." Everything He did, He did by persuasion, by long-suffering, by meekness, by pure knowledge, and by demonstrating that there is a better, a higher, a more noble way in order to behave or to solve any given problem.

Adam was so respected by his posterity, that although Cain murdered Abel to secure the birthright, he never dreamed of touching his father Adam, because he recognized in Adam that there was something there that commanded his respect.

In order to get from where the people were at the time of Enoch or where the people were at the time of Melchizedek, their only claim in getting people to that point was that they were teachers and preachers of righteousness. There is no indication anywhere in scripture that either of them had a hierarchy. Now, there was enough respect shown to Melchizedek that they called him the Prince of Peace, and they called him the King of Salem, but Joseph Smith clarified that those are simply descriptors of their respect for what the man had done or said or taught. Because he didn't own the land, and the only thing that they focused on in all the preaching and teaching was the idea of repentance. That's it. That's the message: "Gotta repent." And that was enough, eventually, to get people to say, "Alright, we're in agreement."

None of them attempted to metastasize Zion. The prophecy for the last one is that it's going to fill the whole earth. But the challenge is to get the first one. If you can get the first one in, and bring in others, eventually you can fill the whole earth. And they might have been able to do the same thing, except both of them fled. The third one is not going to flee. The third one is here in order to prepare the way for the return.

So all of those kinds of issues (which are on the table when you begin looking at the great revelation on Priesthood) take you back to what the eight verses talk about-- what happened in the valley of Adam-Ondi-Ahman, which is an event that is supposed to happen again. Except this time, the place in which Adam will be in the presence of Son Ahman is going to be in the temple, a re-creation of the sacred space in which Adam was originally put when his government was established. And in that sacred place when that takes place, the government-- the right of dominion which was handed Adam in the beginning-- has to be surrendered back, in turn, to Adam, who surrenders that right back to Christ. So that when Christ comes, He's not overthrowing any legitimate government, but He's exercising the right of the original government-- a right which He has given to a sequence of people to whom that right properly belongs, from whom (because His house is a house of order) it must be returned faithfully in order for the end to mirror the beginning. And the journey back to the start gets accomplished in the way that it was originally set up to be accomplished.

And all of this has enormous doctrinal implications on a whole bunch of fronts and drives what ultimately demands a temple. Because much of what implements the program can only be had in a place where God and angels and mortals are able to mingle with one other.

And in the world, there is not sufficient sacred space prepared so that the Lord can come and visit with people. Hence the need very often for people to be "caught up," because being caught up removes you from a place where everything is perverse and profane and polluted. And God can cleanse a place, and has done so, in order to meet with men on occasion. But this Zion and this temple is not intended to be a temporary nexus. It is intended to be the connecting point from which the actual return is going to be staged-- the connecting point of the fiery corridor that will allow a return that's going to unleash fire on the earth that will destroy the wicked and reclaim it as the Lord's property, and what have you.

And I can tell you what my present understanding is as long as you don't hold me to it. Because as things change, things change. And the Lord reacts to what's going on at this instant, and so what's going on then may be a little different then.

In all of the restoration Mormon groups that exist-- from the Community of Christ in its present form to any of the fundamentalist groups-- the way in which the structure of the people has been organized is with a top-down system, in which you have some function that takes place at the very top of this, and that's what radiates down to fill and to control the entirety of whatever group it is. And we know this doesn't work. If this kind of a system could be fixed by putting a righteous man at the top, then we could have fixed Catholicism, and we didn't need a new church. This organization has its inherent flaws.

In addition, the fundamental problem with this is that you have an inequality that is structurally built into the system, and you can't escape that. It just is. I mean, to look at that is to know that what you've developed is a model in which there is inequality. The only way

in which you can have equality is if everyone is regarded to be on the same level. There's no higher, and there's no lower-- there is only one.

If you look at the example of the Savior who came to minister, the way in which the Savior ministered, literally, was to put Himself below and then to labor to raise everyone else. In fact, if you're looking at the model of the Savior-- if you're going to draw a connecting line, the connecting line would turn this entire model upside down. Because He knelt to serve, and He knelt to raise, and He served beneath everyone else. And His objective was to treat them all as if they were those to whom He came to minister. And He didn't assume a different role.

In fact, if you pay close attention to the relics of what we have leftover of the post-apostolic era, the Christian churches (that got established by the apostles that knew Christ) were built like this. They had exactly the same look and feel as the fellowships that we have. They met in homes. On occasion, they would go into someone else's synagogue or someone else's facility to teach. But they were a home-based, level community in which everyone was on an equal footing. And the bishops were elected by the common consent to serve temporarily. It would be like electing someone to be president or bishop or Grand Poobah of the upcoming Boise conference who then serves in whatever that role is until the conference ends, and at the end of that, they drop back into-- and their purpose is simply to facilitate something. Their purpose isn't to, "Great me, little you."

So, the model of Zion, in my view, has to be a model that assumes the equality of the participants. In my view, at this point in history, there can only be one definition of success, and that is the New Jerusalem, Zion, and the return of the Lord. If success is defined as getting a movement going, we have every different flavor of movement. The infinite variety of religious errors is inexhaustible. The proof of doing, believing, and acting in the way that pleases the Lord, satisfies the covenants that got made long ago to other people, and achieves what the fulfillment of all the ages anticipate, is the New Jerusalem, Zion, and the return of the Lord. If we define success as anything other than that, then we're really looking for the wrong thing-- which again is one of the reasons why I really don't think numbers matter.

Now if you want to see with clarity what the imagination of mankind gives you for a dystopian future, all you have to do is watch TV or go to any movie, because they are propounding a view of a dystopian future that ranges from Mad Max to The Maze Runner. But they all have the same thing and that's that we're all going to die ugly, horrid deaths, and it's our own fault. That's the theme of our adversary.

So the question is, given where we are now (which is not Zion, and at some points even in this process, as the scripture incoming email demonstrates dutifully, we're not anything like it)-- the problem we have is in envisioning what-- I mean, with some realistic degree of appreciation for the challenge-- envisioning what it would take to get us from where we are to "there." And if I were to draw one thing that represents an indispensable accoutrement for the accomplishment of it, I would say that the one thing that's required has to be the

temple. Without a temple to ground the society, to provide the basis for the structure of a new society, a differently ordered one-- I mean, this is the prophecy: *"...the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law"* (2 Nephi 12:2-3).

See, you have to have this in order to learn something. And what it is that you learn there is so valuable that those who come and receive it regard what they have been given as a law.

I don't know how many times in scripture the Lord says, "Eye hath not seen, nor hath ear heard, nor yet hath it entered into the heart of man, what great things the Lord has prepared for you." And how often does He tell us that there are things that have been kept hid from the foundation of the world that He would like to give. And then we have the prophecy that says, the time is going to come when you're not going to need to say to me, and I'm not going to need to say to you, "Know ye the Lord," for everyone will know Him, from the least to the greatest.

A temple serves as the basis for orienting a society that gets built around, and centered in, the temple. It's a different way of living. It's a different way of thinking. It's a different way that reorients you-- instead of to this, orients you to that.

Let's go learn about the path of God. You have to have this in order to structure a society around this. And I don't think it's going to be easy. I think that when you get this, and you manage to establish that, and to get one of them, that what you have is only a seed.

Let's assume that (and I'm just going to pick entirely arbitrary numbers; these don't mean anything except to illustrate a point)-- let's assume that the ideal community consists of a minimum of 100 families. Okay? And let's assume that in your first seed you manage to get 25 families to come together. And you work out all of your social, economic, interpersonal-- all of your challenges. And it takes a while. But your ideal community is 100, not 25. As soon as you settled down and you figured it out, and then you bring in your next family, and you disrupt the order of things. And it takes a while for the new people to be acclimated into this, because they bring with them all of the dreadful things that the first 25 have managed to shed because they haven't gone through that process. So, now you are back having your old nightmares again, because you've got a foreigner in your midst, and they're reminding you of all those things you used to love and prefer and want. And it's Uglyville again. But eventually you settle down, and you acclimate them, and so you bring in another. And the whole nightmare starts over again, except you've been through this once before, and you learned a few lessons last time. Except these people are weird, and these people were not, and so they brought a new bundle of crap. And so you've got to work that through. But you are a little better at it. And you bring in another. Same thing repeats itself. And you have to work it through, but you're gaining skills. And another. And another. And another, until finally you've reached your ideal community of 100. And so now you have

100 people in your ideal community in size, and you've worked through all of the problem-solving that goes along with it.

Fifty of them stay there, and 50 of them move nearby, because you're still going to need the temple in order to teach. And now you bring in a new family to disrupt the two communities, except now you're doing it twice as fast, and you've adapted because you learned from your earlier experience how to problem-solve, and the pace at which you increase these communities expands because you're more adept, and you have a cultural background, and you know how these "foreign people" need to be dealt with in turning them into citizens of this differently oriented, differently governed, differently situated community in which coming to one heart and to regarding one another as equals is the rule of the day-- some of whom have strongly held religious views that you have to overcome in order to make them become equal. And when you finally have grown this group, you divide them again, all of them situated around the temple. But now the seed has grown, and the pace at which it begins to expand is four times (in effect because you're adept, four times and then some)-- more quickly than what happened when you grew the first community. And eventually this grows to fill the whole world. And the pace at which this grows after a tipping point is remarkable.

The challenge is right there. The world has never managed to get right there. Never. And that includes communities of monks, nunneries-- that includes ascetic people, Walden Pond. Everyone who has tried Utopia, everyone who has envisioned Utopia, has failed because they haven't had the seed that is constructed around the mountain of the Lord's House with the law that will go forth out of Zion. Because Zion is differently situated.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's extemporaneous remarks given at a Scripture Committee Meeting on April 19, 2017; and
- Denver's extemporaneous remarks given at a meeting of the Covenant of Christ Conference organizing committee in Burley, Idaho on May 13, 2017.

Podcast Episode 24: Visions

QUESTION: Today Denver discusses three visions which relate to our dispensation.

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DENVER: I accepted the invitation to speak here because the time has come to testify of the things shown me by the Lord in His first appearance of the night of February 12th-13th of 2003. I saw His return in glory and recorded what He revealed:

I was at home lying in my bed when the Lord spoke to me, calling me by name. When it ended I was commanded to write an account. As I wrote, the words were given to me, and I recorded the following:

On the 13th of February 2003 I saw the Lord coming in His glory. At first, a sign appeared in the heavens-- a light emanating from a single point and turning first this way and that. All the world saw it, and men debated over its meaning. At length the light turned upon us, and within it was the Lord, showing His glory, with concourses of angels and the hosts of heaven following in His wake.

And when we saw that it was the Lord, we rejoiced and were filled with joy. I turned to my wife and said, "Look, it is Christ!" and she said, "Yes, it is!" And we were filled with joy and peace of mind, for the long awaited day of the Lord had come.

But others were filled with dread. They feared and lamented and wanted the mountains to cover them and hide them from His presence, for He was clothed in red and came in judgment. And Christian ministers knew they had taught falsely and that their faith could not save, and they begged for relief from the saints.

This caused me to marvel at how this could be. It was given unto me to understand that without the ordinances of salvation through the authorized ministers of the gospel, it was not possible for men to shed their sins. And they could not look upon a just and Holy Being without being racked with torment and guilt for their sins. And they pled with the saints to minister to them, but we could not, for we were constrained by the Spirit and were forbidden to do so. For this was the day of judgment which the Lord had in His heart, and He was now come to preach His own sermon, clothed in red, and to deliver those who waited on Him and to convict and condemn those who had not.

I write this with my own hand and bear solemn testimony that it is true, Amen.

When I finished recording the foregoing account, I replied to the Lord that it was not complete, and that I could give a much fuller account. The Lord replied, "When the time comes to bear testimony of this, these are the words you shall use." And many other things

were told to me that cannot be written.

These are the words I can use to testify of that event. Therefore, this is my testimony of that visit in early 2003.

The first appearance of the Lord was in the 50th year of my life-- an age considered suitable for more than a thousand years for a man to qualify for service in the Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God.

The Lord has visited with and taught me on many occasions since then but never at my insistence. I have never controlled His appearing. My experience is that He cannot be conjured nor controlled. I can petition, but He comes when He decides.

The Lord has never appeared to me in a dream. I have always been awake, fully aware of my surroundings, and with my senses unimpeded. When awakened during the night, sleep has always fled, and following such an encounter I was always unable to return to sleep.

The Lord does everything according to His higher way of teaching. By beginning with a vision of His return, He set out the foundation for understanding His course, which is one eternal round. Since His first appearance, He has sent divers angels from Adam, or Michael, to Hyrum and Joseph Smith, giving line upon line to confirm my hope in Christ.

The most important thing for us is to repent, be baptized, and let virtue and righteousness guide our thoughts, deeds, and words. We ought to deal fairly with one another and to be kind. You may remember abuses from priesthood "leaders" in your last church. Do not bring that with you. Leave behind all the sins and errors found in other organizations, and show Christ-like patience and charity to one another.

We follow Christ to become more like Him. He requires faith, repentance, and baptism and bestows the Holy Ghost to bring all things back to our remembrance. When we hear Christ's message to repent and be baptized, it is our duty to respond and then warn others so they can escape the coming judgment. The whole world struggles under a burden of sin that we are powerless to remove without Christ. He suffered and overcame the sins of the world so we can avoid the consequences of sin, on condition of repentance and baptism.

I recently had a vision that began as a dream. In it I was traveling in a small car up a mountain road. The road was steep but straight, and it grew steeper as it climbed upwards. On the left side of the road there was a railroad track running parallel. As we drove the small car upward, I noticed a sharp bend in the railroad tracks ahead that interrupted the otherwise straight course of the line. I saw a train approaching from uphill in the distance, coming downhill rapidly, and it seemed to be going far too fast to safely negotiate the sharp bend in the tracks.

The small car we drove was not quite to the bend when the rushing train hit the bend, leapt from the tracks, and violently crashed in front of us. Our little car narrowly escaped a collision as the train's wreckage spread about. As the small car continued upward, the train

crash worsened-- at first beside the car and then, as we accelerated, closely behind us. The little car got ahead of the continuing wreck of the moving train, and I could see the train was full of passengers who, uphill from the wreckage, were enjoying themselves. They were paying no attention to the disaster already befalling their train. We began to shout out of the windows of our car, trying to warn the occupants in the doomed train, but they gave no heed. They laughed and partied aboard the train with no concern for their impending destruction.

I could see the wreckage behind me in the mirror as the violence of the wreck threw shattered railcars about, some onto the road behind us making the road now impassable. We were powerless to save those aboard the train because they would not hear the warnings we shouted to them.

As we reached the top of the mountain, the last of the train went by, and I stopped the little car. We got out and stood in the roadway, looking down the mountain, and watched as the last of the train was destroyed. While mourning over the many lives that had been lost, I awoke from the dream and sat up on my bed, but the vision continued.

I next saw in the distance, beyond the train wreckage, an overpowering flood, as if it was a great fire, consuming and destroying all the country, coming from the east. Although we had survived the train wreck, it appeared certain we would all be killed in the coming flood.

I looked about for any sign of hope we might survive and noticed beside the roadway a great rock with an opening. I led the small party to the rock and discovered the opening was for a cavern that went upward within the shelter of the rock. We entered the cave and climbed upward. Inside the cavity of the rock, our small group waited as the flood approached, unsure whether we would live or die.

The noise of destruction outside was deafening as the flood approached, and then the opening of the cavern went black, and we were left in complete silence and darkness. We waited. In a few moments the light returned, but silence remained. After a few more moments, our small group emerged from the rock's cavern to see what had transpired with the world.

The scene of destruction was astounding. The entire landscape was transformed. It was destroyed. The wrecked train, the tracks, and the road had all been consumed. Everything appeared barren. Then suddenly, new life began to spring forth in the widespread desolation. Barren trunks brought out new limbs, blossoms, and leaves. Flowers sprang from the earth. As we watched, the earth was quickly transformed, and in a short time the denuded desolation was full of life, beauty, and fertility much beyond what had gone before the flood of fire had destroyed the landscape.

At this point the vision ended, and I was given the interpretation. The train is the false religions of the world. The occupants of the small car are those who repent and accept

baptism. The protective rock with the cavern is Christ.

We must invite others to join us in baptism. However great or little our success, others must be invited.

You must each decide whether I am sent by Him and acting as a true witness or whether I am just another of the many deceivers who use God's name in vain, having no authority. I claim to testify to the truth and do not deceive you; and I claim that He has sent me to preach deliverance from sin by obedience to Him. It is His doctrine that all mankind should repent and be baptized in His name for the remission of sins. If you do so, He will be faithful and forgive.

Repentance means to turn from whatever else is distracting you, and face God. Heed Him, follow Him, and obey His will. Repentance substitutes virtue for sin, trades weakness for strength, and remakes us heart, mind, and spirit into a new creature-- a son or daughter of God.

Covenants traditionally involve cutting. And covenants in the Old Testament involve the shedding of blood. And covenants with our Lord, at some point, in some contexts, with some reaches, require that we suffer.

Now I tell that as background, because I recently had another experience in which I spent, as it turned out once again, 40 days in pain. And while in a great agony, I could not take pity on myself. I couldn't. What I thought about was the suffering of our Lord in Gethsemane. And I found myself measuring my own physical misery against what I know our Lord went through there, and I lay in bed praying and thanking the Lord for what He had done on our behalf-- thanking the Father for sending His Son and standing down to permit it to go forward.

And while in prayer, I saw a great mountain, and upon the top thereof was the glory of the Fathers. To reach the top, all were required to enter through a narrow pass. In the pass was a great beast, cruel and pitiless. The Lord brought people whom He had chosen to the mouth of the pass, and there He told them to wait for Him, and He went away. The people did not wait for Him but began to move forward into the narrow pass. The beast killed some and injured others, and none were able to pass through. After great losses, many deaths, and terrible suffering, the people chosen by the Lord withdrew and departed from the mountain.

After four and five generations, the Lord again brought some few back to the pass and again told them to stay at the mouth of the pass and wait on Him. But again, there were those who tired of waiting, for they could see in the distance the glory of the Fathers, and they desired to be there. These, being overtaken by their zeal, did not wait but moved into the pass, where again the beast killed some or hurt them.

Among those who waited, however, was a man who knelt and prayed and waited patiently for his Lord. After a great time, the Lord came to this man and took him by the hand and led him into the pass where the great beast guarded the way. As the Lord led, however, the beast was ever occupied with attacking others, and therefore its back was turned to the Lord and the man. And so they passed by unnoticed, safely to the top.

The Lord sent the man to the Fathers who, when they saw the man, inquired of him, "How came you to be here and yet mortal? For the last who came here were brothers who had been slain, and you are yet alive." And the man answered, "I waited on the Lord, and He brought me here safely."

Well, for some reason, that was given in time to be read here this evening. And I can't say who the man is-- maybe it's President Thomas Monson, maybe it's President Packer, maybe it's one of you-- I just can't say. But the fact of the matter is, that it is the glory of the Fathers which Joseph was trying to explain in the last two talks he gave in Nauvoo.

The promise made by Elijah is about reconnecting us to the Fathers. Joseph called them the Fathers in Heaven. These are not our kindred dead because our kindred dead are required to be redeemed *by us*. These are the Fathers in Heaven. Among them would be Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and, because of this dispensation being what it is, Peter, James, and John.

The purpose of the Holy Ghost is to allow you to see things in their true light, with the underlying intent behind them, and to allow you to do that without distortion and without confusion. The temple is a ceremony designed to teach you about the path back to God-- the very same thing that the *Book of Mormon* teaches repeatedly. The path back to God is so that you can meet with and be instructed by our Savior. The purpose of our Savior is to prepare us in all things so that we can, at last, become Zion. Because if your heart is right and my heart is right, and if I'm looking to God and God only, and you're looking to God and God only, then the trivial things of having things in common are of so little import that they matter not.

If you're faithful to the Lord, you have no reason to pick a fight with anyone else. Our Lord was a peacemaker. We ought to be peacemakers as well. And I have a stronger testimony of the restoration today than I did the day I was baptized. I believe it more fervently. And I know a great deal more about the mysteries of God than I ever thought possible.

I don't think I'm special. If you really knew enough about me to realize that this preaching is not the full definition of who I am, you would probably agree that you're better people than I am. But I wanted to know Him, and I was willing to give away anything and everything, and I'm still willing to give away anything and everything.

There is nothing that I value above the Lord. And I hope that everyone here understands that statement.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's conference talk entitled "The Doctrine of Christ," given in Boise, ID on September 11, 2016; and
- His fireside talk on "The Temple," given in Ogden, UT on October 28, 2012.

Podcast Episode 25: Sacrifice

QUESTION: What is sacrifice, why is it so important, and what kind of sacrifice does God want us to offer Him?

DENVER: We believe that sacrifice is necessary if a person is to have faith. You can believe a lot of things, but if you're going to have faith, it's the order of heaven that you have to make sacrifice to demonstrate your faith.

Joseph Smith said (and this goes hand in hand with that Mormon 9:2-5): "A man is his own tormentor and his own condemner. The torment of disappointment in the mind of man is as exquisite as a lake burning with fire and brimstone" (*TPJS*, p. 357). The quickest way to achieve that is to act in this life like the coward who is unwilling to be valiant in the testimony of Christ. And to stand up when opposed by those who tell you it ought not to be so. Valiance is the only way by which you secure the blessings of God.

When Uriah was killed, he was killed with a message sent by King David, delivered by the hand of Uriah himself to Joab. In the integrity of his heart, King David knew Uriah could be trusted with the order condemning him to die. And Uriah, faithful to his king, carried the message to Joab. There are accounts-- not the one we have in our Old Testament version-- there are accounts that suggest that when Joab opened the message and read it, that he read it to Uriah. And Uriah knew he was sent to his death. And in those accounts, the men who died with Uriah died with him wittingly. It's one of the few places in scripture where the word "valiant" appears. Those men went "where the valiant men were." And the unworthy king forfeited something in his cowardice.

Don't be cowards. Stand, and be valiant no matter what it is. In the day of judgment you will find yourself wanting. And in this life you will find you lack the power of godliness, unless you obey the law upon which all blessings are predicated. You make sacrifices. You obey *Him*. And to obey Him is to find yourself oddly incongruent with everything about you-- not about *you*, *about* you, meaning the external world in which you find yourself moving about within.

Well, keep that in mind because you're here to be trained. You're here to learn something. You're here to learn about the power of godliness. And by "here" I don't mean this room tonight, although I think that is certainly true. I'm talking about this lifetime in which you find yourself-- this place, this terrible fallen world, this glorious opportunity in which sacrifice is actually possible. You don't avoid it, and you don't necessarily seek it out. But when it comes upon you, you face it down bravely. And you stand where God places you. And you don't let any man move you from where it is that God would have you be. Because therein lies salvation. You are obeying a law ordained before the foundation of the world. You can't lay hold upon such blessings unless you obey the law upon which it is predicated. There will always be, in absolute numbers, only a few who will find that straight and

narrow path. There will be an overflowing abundance of those who will fight against it, because they serve their master. You don't have time to worry about them. You serve yours. And that Master needs to be Christ.

"And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying, Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said... I know not, save the Lord commanded me. And then the angel spake, saying, This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth; ...thou shalt do all that thou doest, in the name of the Son. And thou shalt repent, and call upon God, in the name of the Son for evermore" (Lectures on Faith 2:23-24).

Verse 2 of Lecture 3: *"Let us here observe, that three things are necessary in order that any rational and intelligent being may exercise faith in God, [faith in God] unto life and salvation."* Faith in *God*, not in man, not in men, not in an institution, not in some magic talisman-- faith in God. You will never be saved because you relied upon some guy to elevate you. The only way in which that will happen is when you connect with God. You have to exercise faith in God unto life and salvation.

There are three things: *"First, the idea that He actually exists."* You can get that from someone else.

*"Secondly, a **correct** idea of his character, perfections and attributes."* Any error in that prevents you from having faith. Therefore, in order to get that right, it's going to require something of you in the way of study and effort. Look at the word, they italicized it-- a *correct* idea of His character perfections and attributes. That's what you need to study, to show what it is you're going to have faith in.

"Thirdly, an actual knowledge that the course of life which he is pursuing is according to his will." You must know this. And you cannot cover the gap by lying to yourself. You can't lie to yourself pretending that you are on God's course and then have actual knowledge that the course of life you're pursuing is according to His will. Nor can you depend entirely upon what other people are telling you.

You're supposed to be asking and getting answers from God. And the answers from God are going to tell you what you need to do. And the sacrifices that He will require of you are unique to you, because the contribution that you can make for the salvation of yourself and others is unique to you. There are things that you and only you can do. And if you will sign up with God, He will have you do them. And you may find yourself doing things you would rather prefer not doing. It doesn't matter. If you have faith in Him and you do what He asks, you'll know that the course you're pursuing is according to His will. And doing things He asks of you, according to His will, invariably produce faith. And they produce faith unto salvation, because it always grows-- light grows or dims; it never stays static. Therefore, when you set out on this course, you never turn back. If you turn back, you lose everything that you've gained up to that point.

Look at verse 5: *“For without an acquaintance with these three important facts, the faith of every rational being must be imperfect and unproductive; but with this understanding it can become perfect and fruitful, abounding in righteousness, unto the praise and glory of God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Therefore, these three things you need to know:

1. God exists;
2. You need to study until you have a correct understanding of his character, perfections, and attributes;
3. And then you have to live your life so that you actually know that the course you’re leading in your life conforms to what He would have.

Four, towards the bottom of that: *“Nothing short of an actual knowledge of their being the favorites of heaven, and of their having embraced that order of things which God has established for the redemption of man, will enable them to exercise that confidence in him, necessary for them to overcome the world, and obtain that crown of glory which is laid up for them that fear God” (Lectures on Faith 6:4).*

Because we ought to fear God more than we fear man. We ought to fear God more than we fear the loss of anything that is down here. We ought to fear God more than we fear the approval or disapproval, the criticism, the ostracism. We ought to love God and fear Him, because it’s our relationship to Him, and Him alone, that matters.

This requires more than mere belief or supposition that he’s doing the will of God but actual knowledge, realizing that when these sufferings are ended, you will enter into eternal rest and be a partaker of the glory of God. It does require more than mere belief or supposition. But it’s obtained in accordance with this set of principles. And it is purchased by the same price, paid by each of us, in turn, on the same conditions. And no one gets it on any other condition.

Your life may be uniquely situated. You may be inside an environment, a group of friends, a family, a neighborhood, an association that is completely unique to you and has nothing in common with anyone else in this room. Inside of that, whatever the sacrifices are that are required, it will be exactly the same as it was for Moses, who gave up everything... and then gave up everything again. It will be the same as for Abraham, who gave up everything... and then gave up everything again. It will be the same. And you’ll be called upon to make a sacrifice. Because knowing God requires obedience to Him and sacrifice to Him and not to some man-- certainly not to me, but not to a pope, not to a president, not to a priest. To Him. You’re not trying to get to know me, or if you are, you’re damn fool. You’re supposed to be getting to know the Lord. You’re not supposed to be getting to know some local presiding authority.

So paragraph 6: *“For unless a person does know that he is walking according to the will of God, it would be offering an insult to the dignity of the Creator were he to say that he would be a partaker of his glory when he should be done with the things of this life. But when he has this*

knowledge, and most assuredly knows that he is doing the will of God, his confidence can be equally strong that he will be a partaker of the glory of God."

"Let us here observe, that a religion..."-- not an institution, not an organization, not a club, not a fraternity-- "...a religion that does not require the sacrifice of all things never has power sufficient to produce the faith necessary unto life and salvation; for, from the first existence of man, the faith necessary unto the enjoyment of life and salvation never could be obtained without the sacrifice of all earthly things. It was through this sacrifice, and this only, that God has ordained that men should enjoy eternal life; and it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things that men do actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God. When a man has offered in sacrifice all that he has for the truth's sake, not even withholding his life, and believing before God that he has been called to make this sacrifice because he seeks to do his will, he does know, most assuredly, that God does and will accept his sacrifice and offering, and that he has not, nor will not seek his face in vain" (Lectures on Faith 6:7).

And I tell you what is vain: *"It is in vain for persons to fancy to themselves that they are heirs with those, or can be heirs with them, who have offered their all in sacrifice, and by this means obtained faith in God and favor with him so as to obtain eternal life, unless they, in like manner, offer unto him the same sacrifice, and through that offering obtain the knowledge that they are accepted of him" (verse 8).*

The authenticity of God's message is not proven by the means of delivery. Even if an angel comes, an angel can come and mislead you. The only way to distinguish between what is, and what is not, of God is through the medium of sacrifice. Because when you do this, the vessel is cleaned. And when the vessel is clean before God, then even an angel of light cannot mislead you. Because what they offer is darkness, and you can tell it, because they have not the power to mislead. Everyone can be misled unless the course in life that they pursue is according to God's will. In the end, the only thing that matters is if God will vouch for us in the day of judgment. And if He will, and if He does, then it's a gift. My belief is that every one of you have lived lives so much more worthy of the Lord's recognition than my own, that for the life of me I can't understand why you don't have the faith and confidence to realize that He loves you, and you are more lovable than am I. He probably finds it a lot easier to love you than me.

Have faith. Be believing. Trust in Him. Go to Moses chapter 1. Look at verse 8: *"And it came to pass that Moses looked, and beheld the world upon which he was created..."* Moses beheld the world-- why, to me this is very interesting because he's describing a view that is very often in scripture referred to as "being caught up to an exceedingly high mountain." This is a view up and looking down. In any event...

Move to verse 18: *"And again Moses said..."--* now he's talking, because Satan has come during this interlude period as an angel of light, tempting him-- Verse 18: *"...Moses said: I will not cease to call upon God, I have other things to inquire of him: for his glory has been upon me, wherefore I can judge between him and thee. Depart hence, Satan."*

The defect that Moses perceived in what Lucifer was saying, tempting him, did not consist merely in the presence of the... I mean, this is an angel. If you go to Section 76 in the description, an angel in a position of authority, in the presence of God, was cast down. That is not a being who, to look upon, would appear to be a vile creature. That would be someone, who to look upon, would appear to be a being of light, a being of glory, an angel of light. The reason Moses could discern between them had nothing to do with the appearance. It had to do with the content. It had to do with the Spirit. It had to do with what he radiated. And what Moses was able to discern was that this was not the source of something which he, Moses, chose to take in, as a consequence of which, he could judge between him and say, "You, I disprefer."

When you look at the *Joseph Smith History*, the thick darkness I talked about this last time-- the Orson Hyde account of that talks about the thick darkness that gathered around him. It consisted of the adversary benighting his mind with doubts, brought to his soul all kinds of improper pictures. The reason why it is possible to do that, and more easily so with many of us, is because we have ingested into ourselves all kinds of improper images which can then be summoned back up.

Look at 2 Nephi chapter 9. This is one of the early sermons given by Jacob: *"And our spirits must have become like unto him, and we become devils, angels to a devil, to be shut out from the presence of our God, and to remain with the father of lies, in misery, like unto himself; yea, to that being who beguiled our first parents, who transformeth himself nigh unto an angel of light, and stirreth up the children of men unto secret combinations of murder and all manner of secret works of darkness"* (verse 9). It's not the physical appearance nor the transformation that takes place. It is the content, which is why you need to know that the course that you are pursuing is in accordance with the will of God. Because once you have made the required sacrifice, you acquire the required knowledge.

Look at Alma chapter 30. This is an explanation given at the bad end of Korihor-- his judgments were upon him, and he was writing his final confession for his death. Verse 53 of Alma chapter 30: *"But behold, the devil hath deceived me; for he appeared unto me in the form of an angel, and said unto me: Go and reclaim this people, for they have all gone astray after an unknown God. And he said unto me: There is no God; yea, and he taught me that which I should say. And I have taught his words; and I taught them because they were pleasing unto the carnal mind; and I taught them, even until I had much success, insomuch that I verily believed that they were true; and for this cause I withstood the truth, even until I have brought this great curse upon me."*

You see, he was convinced by the devil, who appeared unto him in the form of an angel. It's not always that the adversary comes to you with murderous intent. Sometimes he comes to appeal to your vanity, to your pride. Oh, you can have acclaim; you could have wealth. No, you acquire what you need to acquire as a consequence of sacrificing for God. And in that process you will endure criticism, rejection, opposition, the world's hatred. You may even be cast out. But you obtain what you obtain from God, *by* sacrifice.

In 12-- verse 12 (or paragraph 12) of this Lecture 6: *"But those who have not made this sacrifice to God do not know that the course which they pursue is well pleasing in his sight; for whatever may be their belief or their opinion, it is a matter of doubt and uncertainty in their mind; and where doubt and uncertainty are there faith is not, nor can it be. For doubt and faith do not exist in the same person at the same time; so that persons whose minds are under doubts and fears cannot have unshaken confidence; and where unshaken confidence is not their faith is weak; and where faith is weak the persons will not be able to contend against all the opposition, tribulations, and afflictions which they will have to encounter in order to be heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ Jesus; and they will grow weary in their minds, and the adversary will have power over them and destroy them."* Well, he'll darken their minds and, after having darkened their minds, leave them in a position in which they are simply unable to have faith, at least in the right things, in order to understand things of God.

Verse 10: *"Those, then, who make the sacrifice, will have the testimony that their course is pleasing in the sight of God; and those who have this testimony will have faith to lay hold on eternal life, and will be enabled, through faith, to endure unto the end, and receive the crown that is laid up for them that love the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

"Them that love the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" is talking about not just the Second Coming but is talking about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ whenever He should come, to whomever He should choose to come to, when He chooses to do that. And it is supposed to be an ongoing event.

I understand that we got off on rather a ragged foot at the beginning of the restoration of the gospel. How fully we got off on that ragged foot is really not well enough appreciated by Latter-day Saints who choose to see a sort of uniform continuity of progression from that moment until today, in a rather uninterrupted course of forward momentum. When in fact, Joseph Smith had to fight against terrible opposition inside of the church to get the doctrine (that he was trying to establish) established. Ezekiel chapter 14 was a topic that he raised early. And he raised it again at the time of the Relief Society organization in Nauvoo. Go read Ezekiel chapter 14. Go look at what Joseph Smith was concerned about. And he's talking to people who accepted him as a prophet. And yet they were more interested in getting from him what they wanted instead of receiving from him what the Lord wanted to give.

Well, look in verse 9 of this 6th Lecture. About halfway through there's a sentence that begins: *"And in the last days before the Lord comes..."* So this is before the Second Coming of the Lord, but it's in the last days. *"...he is to gather together his saints who have made a covenant with him by sacrifice."* Not a covenant to sacrifice. You can go make a covenant to sacrifice every day the temple is open. Making a covenant to sacrifice is not at all the same thing as making a covenant by sacrifice. It's only through actually sacrificing that it is possible for the Lord to make a covenant with you.

"Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth,

that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice" (Proverbs 50:3-5). That gathering will be made not by man or men or institutions. That gathering will be made by the angels of heaven who hold the keys of responsibility for that; that you can read in D&C 77:11.

Well, this is the last half of that paragraph 10: *"But those who do not make the sacrifice cannot enjoy this faith, because men are dependent upon this sacrifice in order to obtain this faith: therefore, they cannot lay hold upon eternal life, because the revelations of God do not guarantee unto them the authority so to do, and without this guarantee faith could not exist" (Lectures on Faith 6).* It is a cause and effect. These things are inextricably linked together. If you make the sacrifice, you can enjoy the faith. But all of us, every one of us, were and are dependent upon making the sacrifice. If we don't do that we are simply unable to lay hold upon eternal life. And the revelations of God don't guarantee you eternal life on any other condition.

The good news is that we have the *Lectures on Faith*, and they make these things clear. The good thing is that every one of you, I suppose, has been baptized. The good thing is, I suppose, that every one of you believe in the Prophet Joseph Smith, the restoration of the gospel, the *Book of Mormon*, the *Doctrine and Covenants*; therefore, you have an enormous leg up. The only question is, will you allow it to become a living, breathing faith? Will you allow it to lay hold upon you? Will you allow it to become alive, animated, a fire again burning upon the earth today?

When He appears, you need to be like Him. Lay down the burden of guilt; lay down the burden of sin; stop focusing on that stuff, and become like Him. And you become like Him by doing His works. And you do His works by serving others, by ministering to the needs of others. And when you do that, it is a natural byproduct of that process, ordained by laws established before the foundation of the world, that light and truth will grow within you. You will have compassion when you minister with compassion to the needs of others. Your heart will open to, and receive within it, light and truth when your conduct reflects the same conduct as a merciful and holy and just God whom you claim to worship. Worship Him by imitating Him. Worship Him by doing His works. Worship Him by making a living sacrifice. Set aside the junk that occupies you, and go do something that is holy for someone else.

However mundane and trivial it may seem to you, when you relieve the suffering of other people, something changes in you. You become different. You become better. You become more like our Lord, because when you give whatever it is you give away, you get more in return. You have to sacrifice and you have to serve the Lord and you have to have Him, and Him only, as the reason for what you do, what you say, how you act. Because He's the one that's going to judge you.

"God cursed the children of Israel because they would not receive the last law from Moses. The sacrifice required of Abraham in the offering up of Isaac, shows that if a

man would attain to the keys of the kingdom of an endless life; he must sacrifice all things” (TPJS, page 322).

There is so much more that has to go on and be understood if you are going to save yourself and any soul in this generation in that kingdom which we claim we would like to inherit. And we claim we would like to inherit it without any idea of the consequences of what it would take in order to ascend there or without any regard to the fact that you don't take one of the "El" and bring them down into mortality pain-free. You say that the Son of God condescended to come and be here, and I say so did Michael and so did Raphael and so did Gabriel. Because coming down and condescending to be here on a rescue mission by those who dwell in glory is an act of service and sacrifice that we simply take for granted out of the abundance of our ignorance.

There is an enormous gulf between the content of the material that was revealed to us in the restoration and the religion that you practice daily. That gulf is going to need to disappear. And you think-- you think you're trapped. In order to get from where we are to where we need to be, you can't do it inside the institutions that have trapped your minds. I am not preaching against your faith. If you're some fundamentalist, some RLDS member, some Latter-day Saint-- honor your churches. But by degrees, you need to begin the process of "by your works" showing what your faith is.

Doctrine and Covenants Section 64 beginning at verse 23: "Behold, now it is called today until the coming of the Son of Man, and verily it is a day of sacrifice...For after today cometh the burning—this is speaking after the manner of the Lord—for verily I say, tomorrow all the proud and they that do wickedly shall be as stubble; and I will burn them up, for I am the Lord of Hosts; and I will not spare any that remain in Babylon. Wherefore, if ye believe me, ye will labor while it is called today" (D&C 64:23-25).

Because as long as you're down here in this veil, clothed in this flesh, with the capacity to make sacrifices and the ability to exercise faith in Him, you will be amazed at the grace you can acquire if you will only do so while in this dark place. You're here to accomplish a great deal. When I first got an answer to prayer sitting in a barracks in New Hampshire, if I hadn't acted on that, if I hadn't had gone and done, I would never have beheld the Lord, much less been taught by Him. But I did, and I do. And whatever He asks of me, that's what I do now. And it doesn't matter how unpleasant I may find it or how reluctant in my heart I may be to go and do, I go, and I do. You need to do that. It may not even make much sense to you when you're going, and you're doing. You may think you're giving offenses when you absolutely do not intend to do so. You may find the people that you love rejecting you, finding a new family, and then having that family reject you again. I've laid it all on the line for the Lord, and I've done it twice now in a single lifetime. I can't tell you what sacrifices He may ask of you, but whatever He asks of you, that do you.

"And now I, Moroni, bid farewell unto the Gentiles, yea, and also unto my brethren whom I love, until we shall meet before the judgment-seat of Christ, where all men shall know that my garments are not spotted with your blood. And then shall ye know that I have seen Jesus, and

that he hath talked with me face to face, and that he told me in plain humility, even as a man telleth another in mine own language, concerning these things" (Ether 12: 38-39). This is that Lord who, when you get past the thunderings and lightnings, you'll speak with. He talks in plain humility. It is not His position to cause fear in your heart but to bring to you comfort. His purpose is not to leave you comfortless but to come and to comfort you. It's you that presents the barrier. It's you that presents the fear and that rightly so, because we ought to fear. And what we should fear is our own weakness and our own sins. Because our greatest sin is our ignorance.

"And only a few have I written, because of my weakness in writing. And now, I would commend you..."-- this is Moroni commending you, the Gentiles, who are going to receive this book-- *"...I would commend you to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father, and also the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in you forever" (Ether 12: 40-41).* He asked for grace to be given; God cannot give it. Then he turns, and he says, "You gentiles, please, seek for His grace; it cannot otherwise be given you."

The *Book of Mormon's* assessment of us is sober indeed. And the arrogance with which we read that book blinds us to the predicament in which we find ourselves.

The plea: "seek for grace." It is through grace that we obtain charity. And it is through charity we're able to bless others. Because the fact of the matter is, you can't bless anyone nor hold that priesthood primarily designed to administer blessings and not cursings, unless you have charity for others, unless you are willing to do things you would rather not do, unless you are willing to subordinate your will to the will of the Father. Because it is the purpose of the Father to bless all of His offspring. Therefore, it is only through grace you acquire what you need to be of use to God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ.

You generally hail from a tradition that assures you that you're in the right way. You generally come from a tradition that says you're better than others. You are able to look down your nose at other people who stumble about in the dark because they don't have all the great truths that you have. The fact of the matter is, you (generally, not specifically, because there are some to whom this absolutely does not apply-- your hearts are right before God, but there aren't many)-- you've been handed this tradition. And the wicked one cometh, and he takes away light and truth, and he does it because of the false traditions you have been handed. The greatest among us is wholly inadequate. The greatest among us can't be trusted with the power of God; not yet, anyway. The greatest among us is still in need of repentance.

Every one of us should walk fearfully before God, not because God isn't generous, but because what He offers can turn you into a devil. The only way to be prepared and not fall is to realize the enormous peril that you present potentially to the universe. Before you get in a position to enjoy the status that God offers to us all, you need to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, exactly like Paul said. You need to purge, remove, reprove.

This attitude we see in this man, in this account [the brother of Jared]-- this is the man of God! Christ may be the prototype of the saved man, but I know of no record anywhere in scripture that exposes the heart of the real disciple of Christ as well as does this chapter expose the heart of this man. This is what we should become. This is why the Lord could open up to him. This is why this man became, in the history of the world coming up to this moment, despite the fact the Lord came to Adam-ondi-Ahman and administered comfort to Adam in the Valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman-- here He came and showed Himself as He truly was, as a preexistent spirit, possessing a soul as tangible as man's, and ministered to him in a way which, if you understood what it takes for a quickened being to condescend into the present and make Himself known as He does here, was an enormous sacrifice by our Lord.

Marriage was the first ordinance. It was introduced before the Fall; it was introduced before man was instructed on sacrifice. Go back to the book of Moses in chapter 4, and in verse 27 after they had transgressed, but before they had been sent out of the Garden, we learn in verse 27 of Moses chapter 4: *"Unto Adam, and also unto his wife, did I, the Lord God, make coats of skins, and clothed them."* Now it's important that, while the account sometimes refers to "Adam" by meaning both "Adam and Eve," in this case, it was necessary for a clarification to be made. The garment that was given unto them to clothe their nakedness is also referred to in the temple as the garment of the Holy Priesthood. And God wants the record to be clear: *"Unto Adam, **and also unto his wife**, did I, the Lord God, make coats of skins, and clothe them."* Therefore, Adam was not clothed and then told, "You go and do this, and clothe your wife," God clothed them both. God did not expect Adam to intercede when it comes to the clothing of the woman. God treated her as if she, too, were about to embark upon a journey into mortality that would require her likewise to understand the principle of sacrifice. Because think about it for one moment-- you learn (we'll look at this in just a moment)-- you learn that they practiced sacrifice thereafter, but when were they taught the principle of sacrifice? They were taught at this moment.

There are legends about the animal that was chosen by God to slay and to offer as a sacrifice in order to clothe them with the skins of an animal. And I rather like the theme of many of those. The theme is that when the animals were brought to Adam, and Adam named the animals, there were some that he really liked more than others. But there was one particular animal that he liked above all the rest. It was that animal, and that animal's consort, who were slain in order to provide the clothing for Adam and Eve, so that Adam and his wife Eve could understand that the principle of sacrifice came at an enormous price. And so the animal was no longer able to exist in this sphere, having been used originally, while yet in the Garden, to provide the coats and to drive home the point about the sacrifice that's required in order to clothe the nakedness of the man and the woman.

So if you turn over to Moses chapter 5, beginning at verse 5, this is talking about after they had been expelled from the Garden. It says: *"And he gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God, and should offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord. And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord. And after many days an angel of the Lord appeared unto Adam, saying: Why dost thou offer sacrifices unto the Lord? And Adam said unto him: I know not, save the Lord commanded me."*

And then the angel spake, saying: This thing is a similitude of the sacrifice of the Only Begotten of the Father, which is full of grace and truth."

So that sacrifice that was performed that brought such sadness in verse 27 of chapter 4 that occurred before they were driven out of the Garden was simply a commandment to do which Adam and Eve then did. And it was some time later, many days later. And "many days" is not defined. It appears to me from the context as we go further, that "many days" in this context means "many years." In fact, it means more than "many years," it means "many generations." There were many generations of men alive on the earth while Adam and Eve were there before the definition of the explanation of why they were offering sacrifice is finally given to them. And *you're* impatient. And you want to know more, and you want to know it now. And you don't think that God tries the patience of all those to whom He will eventually come.

So this occurs *before* the baptisms of Adam and Eve. Go to Moses chapter 6, beginning at verse 51. This is Enoch now, and Enoch is talking about this stuff. Enoch, in his record, is reminiscing about what went on before. We still don't have the full record of Adam and Eve, but we have enough snippets; if you begin to gather them together you can reconstruct the picture. And so beginning at verse 50: *"God hath made known unto our fathers that all men must repent. And he [that is God] called upon our father Adam by his own voice, saying: I am God; I made the world, and men before they were in the flesh. And he also said unto him: If thou wilt turn unto me, and hearken unto my voice, and believe, and repent of all thy transgressions, and be baptized, even in water, in the name of mine Only Begotten Son, who is full of grace and truth, which is Jesus Christ, the only name which shall be given under heaven, whereby salvation shall come unto the children of men, ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, asking all things in his name, and whatsoever ye shall ask, it shall be given you" (verse 50-52).*

So this was what God said to Adam preliminary to Adam being baptized, which was still later than when Adam learned about the purpose behind the sacrifice that he was offering. So he's told about it, then look at when it happened-- which again, this is not Enoch, this is going back to what Moses says about when it occurred. This is the voice of the Lord saying that it's going to happen. When it happened is in verse 64. And this, again, is the record of Enoch, and this is still Moses 6:64 (we'll go back to the earlier incident in just a moment-- we'll do that next).

Verse 64: *"And it came to pass, when the Lord had spoken with Adam, our father, that Adam cried unto the Lord."* Understand that word "cried," after what we talked about yesterday, should mean something to you. Because the pattern is the same, and it doesn't matter which scripture you look at. Adam "cries" unto the Lord. *"And he was caught away..."*-- and what he "cried unto the Lord" is not known, but clearly when the Lord had told him about baptism, this is exactly what Adam wanted, and therefore he cried unto the Lord for a purpose. And look what happens:

“...he was caught away by the Spirit of the Lord, and was carried down into the water, and was laid under the water, and was brought forth out of the water. And thus he was baptized, and the Spirit of God descended upon him, and thus he was born of the Spirit, and became quickened in the inner man. And he heard a voice out of heaven, saying: Thou art baptized with fire, and with the Holy Ghost. This is the record of the Father, and the Son, from henceforth and forever; And thou art after the order of him who was without beginning of days or end of years, from all eternity to all eternity.”

This is Adam's baptism; confirmation; this is Adam's gift of the Holy Ghost; this is his baptism of fire; and this is his ordination by the voice of God out of heaven, ordaining him after the order of Him who is without beginning of days or end of years. This is all in one, at one moment. And this is many years later. There are generations of descendents of Adam and Eve that exist at the time this takes place. Okay?

Well the effect of that, when it happened, is picked up by Moses. This is Moses 5:9, *“And in that day the Holy Ghost fell upon Adam, which beareth record of the Father and the Son, saying: I am the Only Begotten of the Father from the beginning, henceforth and forever, that as thou hast fallen thou mayest be redeemed, and all mankind, even as many as will.”*

So these are the events that took place in that first generation of Adam and Eve among their descendants. Now together, look at verse 12: *“And Adam and Eve blessed the name of God.”* And how did they do that? They did that by a ritual. They did that by offering sacrifice. They did that by observing what they understood-- but they did it together.

Zion can only come about as a consequence of consecration and sacrifice and not as a result of seeking to get gain. In fact, when you are in the employ of the Lord you ought to be sacrificing; it shouldn't be gainful. It should cost you in order to serve.

To accomplish purity, there are absolutes that are necessary. Sacrifice is absolutely necessary, and equality is necessary, as well. Or at least, there be no poor among us. My guess is that among us sitting in this room here today, there are those who have significant issues with financial needs, and there are some sitting here today who could help in solving those.

In Alma chapter 1 it talks about the circumstance in which the priests served. Alma 1, beginning at verse 26:

“And when the priests left their labor to impart the word of God unto the people, the people also left their labors to hear the word of God. And when the priest had imparted unto them the word of God they all returned again diligently unto their labors; and the priest, not esteeming himself above his hearers, for the preacher was no better than the hearer, neither was the teacher any better than the learner; and thus they were all equal, and they did all labor, every man according to his strength. And they did impart of their substance, every man according to that which he had, to the poor, and the

needy, and the sick, and the afflicted; and they did not wear costly apparel, yet they were neat and comely” (verse 26-27).

They prospered in this, and they were blessed because of it. We should learn from their example when they were prospering about what it was that they did that was right that brought it about. The ideal is not to have a professional class of clergyman. The ideal is to have every one of us be equal.

There is no reason ever to pay for priesthood service. Serving should require sacrifice always and continually. We do not pay for ministers. I would recommend that if you choose to participate in a tithing group that you do it in the same manner that was described in Grand Junction, and you do it among yourselves. Community is necessary. I don't know how you can bear one another's burdens without administering your own tithes, without administering your own fast offerings, without doing things to help people in need.

The first wedding garment, if you want to call it that, is the original garment that was given to Adam and Eve in the Garden to cover their nakedness and to cover their shame before God-- all of which is an allegory.

The covering required the sacrifice of an animal to teach them the principle of sacrifice and to foreshadow the death of our Lord that would be required in order to restore us back to a state before God. And so what the covering given to Adam and Eve in the Garden represented was the sacrifice of our Lord. It was our Lord's atoning sacrifice which makes it possible for us to be covered so that our shame is no longer there. Instead, God looks upon the righteousness of His Son who has clothed us and not upon our own guilt and our own weakness and our own shortcomings. He beholds the image of His Son in the garment that we have put on.

I would dare not participate in a ministry in which service and sacrifice wasn't compelled. I wouldn't dare do that. There's a hardness that is associated with taking pay for what you do. There is an arrogance that sets you above the flock. It is better to pay than to receive tithes and offerings. It is better to give than to take.

It is our relationship to, and our connection with, God that matters. And you form that not through me or through some other man and not through the groups to which you belong. The groups to which you belong are a place to render service. They're a place where you can sacrifice to help others. And I don't care if that group is Methodist, Presbyterian, Latter-day Saint, or one of the fellowships that have been organized. That is of little consequence. You can be a Christian soul wherever you are, serving whoever you happen to be in contact with.

And the things of heaven were never intended to be given into the hands of men so that they might profit from them. We are expected to sacrifice for God. A religion that does not require sacrifice is a religion that will not produce faith. And if there is one thing that is going to be necessary for the establishment of Zion, it is going to necessarily be faith. You

obtain it through sacrifice. You do not obtain it through adoration. You do not obtain it through the praise of men. You do not obtain in by sitting in chief seats. You don't obtain it by fairing sumptuously and administering the wealth that is surrendered to you as if you were God. It belongs to God. It is His.

There are ambitious men who offer to lead others hastily into new paths, claiming to be so mighty and strong that they can offer great rewards in the afterlife in exchange for following them here. I offer you no such thing. You must look to Christ for forgiveness of your sins, and follow His example of self-sacrifice, patience, obedience, and virtue. I can only urge you to patiently allow the True Shepherd to guide us all into His pastures, showing Him the respect due to a Redeemer.

If you participate in a fellowship, you're probably losing money. If you're conducting a conference, you're probably losing money. If you're giving talks as I do, or you're writing as I do, or you're assisting in projects as I do, you're probably losing money. I think you'd be surprised at how much money I've lost trying to do some good in the world. And I won't tell you the number because I think that ought to remain between me and the Lord. Far from being supported, I work hard to produce a living so I can afford to do some preaching.

There are churches that are built up to get gain. *We can't do that.* We can't do that. We shouldn't even tempt one another to do that. Realize that every one of us is required to sacrifice, and that's a good thing. That's a godly thing. That's a reflection of the sincerity of your heart. If you're losing money because of this, then you're probably pleasing the Lord. And if you're building something up to get gain, well, I read you the punchline-- you're going to be burnt like stubble, so enjoy the gain.

Take courage. Life was meant to be a living sacrifice, to be lost in the service to God. Only by losing your life will you find it. Saving faith is so rare precisely because it requires courage to engage the opposition in this world and to cheerfully endure the abuse, lies, threats, and fiery darts sent by those who fear your faith above everything. Faith in God will save you through His grace. It can render every weapon of this world and hell powerless. But it takes courage.

When friends betray you and fear overtakes your associates and causes the knees to buckle under the weight of the burdens God allows to be imposed upon you, remember the Lord descended below it all, and when He cried out asking for the bitter cup to be removed, there was no relief. He is the prototype of the saved man. And the Father loved Him for His sacrifice.

It was the Lord's sacrifice for us that perfected His love for us. He values us because of the great price He paid for each one of us. If you love God, you will be given the opportunity to prove your love. You will be proven by the things you endure for His name's sake. Do not fail.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Nine of the lectures given in Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series* during 2013 and 2014;
- His talk entitled "Zion Will Come," given near Moab, UT on April 10, 2016;
- His conference talk entitled "The Doctrine of Christ," given in Boise, ID on September 11, 2016;
- Denver's conference talk entitled "Things to Keep Us Awake at Night," given in St. George, UT on March 19, 2017;
- His "Opening Remarks," given at the Covenant of Christ Conference in Boise, Idaho on September 3, 2017; and
- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #1, given in Cerritos, CA on September 21, 2017.

Podcast Episode 26: Defending Zion

QUESTION: With all of the wars and destruction prophesied for the end of the world, how will the Lord defend and protect Zion?

DENVER: Mormon wrote his book and had us in mind as his audience. After Mormon finished his book, there was one reader, and that was his son Moroni, who buried it. Everything Mormon did, he did for this audience today-- the last days, the gentiles. As he's finishing up his record (this is in Mormon 8:31), he talks about us and says: *"There shall be many who will say, Do this, or do that, and it mattereth not, for the Lord will uphold such at the last day. But wo unto such, for they are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity."*

There is a right way, and it will be done according to the Lord's will. And the Lord is actively working to bring that about right now, in our day. The potential for Zion and the covenants being fulfilled in our day is as great as it has been in any generation from the days of Adam until now. And yet, in all those generations, there have only been two successes that the scriptures have captured.

Well, the original priesthood and the original pattern will have to return in order for the last-days Zion to exist. The first Zion, in Moses 7:13, *"So great was the faith of Enoch that he led the people of God, and their enemies came to battle against them; and he spake the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled, even according to his command; and the rivers of water were turned out of their course; and the roar of the lions was heard out of the wilderness; and all nations feared greatly,... so great was the power of the language which God had given him."*

When the government of God is upon the earth in the form of Zion, then God protects and defends it. God will be the force with which the nations of the earth must contend if they intend to do harm to Zion. Because it is His government, it is His handiwork, and it is an affront to Him to challenge His authority in attacking Zion. Hence Enoch's ability to speak the word of God and to have those that would bring harm upon Zion vanquished.

Hence further, the reason why, before the Flood, it was necessary to remove Zion. Because God cannot destroy the righteous. The wicked can destroy the wicked. The wicked can destroy the righteous. But when Zion is here, the wicked cannot destroy Zion, because God is asserting His government. And because the wicked cannot destroy Zion, and God will not do so, Zion necessarily was taken up into heaven. The same thing happened with Melchizedek's city.

The Lord lamented: *"How oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chicks under her wings, and ye would not!"* (Matthew 23:37; Luke 13:34; 3 Nephi 10:4-6; D&C 43:24). There have been occasions on which it would have been possible to have established Zion,

but men would not. And when that happens, and men will not, the same rules apply as applied at the beginning. Hence the necessity for removing Moses out of the midst of Israel, because through Moses we could have had Zion, but the children of Israel were not interested. Hence the reason why Elijah was taken up into heaven, because Elijah was an opportunity in which it would have been possible for Zion to have been established.

Well, that same priesthood which was in the beginning that allowed Melchizedek to establish the city of peace, the city of righteousness, the city that God Himself would defend, necessarily must return. If you look at D&C 133, beginning at verse 26:

“And they who are in the north countries shall come in remembrance before the Lord; and their prophets shall hear his voice, and shall no longer stay themselves; and they shall smite the rocks, and the ice shall flow down at their presence. And an highway shall be cast up in the midst of the great deep. Their enemies shall become a prey unto them, And in the barren deserts there shall come forth pools of living water; and the parched ground shall no longer be a thirsty land. And they shall bring forth their rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim, my servants. And the boundaries of the everlasting hills shall tremble at their presence. And there shall they fall down and be crowned with glory, even in Zion, by the hands of the servants of the Lord, even the children of Ephraim. And they shall be filled with songs of everlasting joy. Behold, this is the blessing of the everlasting God upon the tribes of Israel, and the richer blessing upon the head of Ephraim and his fellows” (D&C 133:26-34).

Heaven will protect the last-days Zion. It will belong to Him, and therefore God will not allow it to be overtaken or overcome. D&C 45 has another prophecy about the last-days Zion, beginning at verse 66:

“And it shall be called the New Jerusalem, a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the Most High God; And the glory of the Lord shall be there, and the terror of the Lord also shall be there, insomuch that the wicked will not come unto it, and it shall be called Zion. And it shall come to pass among the wicked, that every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety. And there shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under heaven; and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another. And it shall be said among the wicked: Let us not go up to battle against Zion, for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible; wherefore we cannot stand” (D&C 45:66-70).

When they came to arrest the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane after His suffering, even though He intended to submit Himself and to be abused and ultimately killed, when they entered, the Apostle John records that Christ, despite the ordeal He had just concluded, stood up, confronted them in their arms, and said: *“Whom seek ye?”* And they said: *“Jesus of Nazareth.”* And He said: *“I am he” (John 18:4-6).* And they stumbled backwards, tripped over one another's feet, and they fell down.

An armed group bearing swords and weapons were intimidated by the Lord identifying Himself. He made no attempt to defend Himself, but had He elected to do so, they could not

have taken Him. He went as a lamb to the slaughter, because He intended, though the Lion of Judah, to submit Himself to become the Sacrificial Lamb.

Heaven protected Zion in its first iteration, and heaven is going to protect the last-days Zion. As a consequence of that, the time is going to come when it will not be the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt that people cite as evidence of the power of God. You see, Egypt had to be subdued. Moses was sent to subdue them because Egypt was, at the time, the greatest kingdom, the greatest nation on the earth. And Moses was sent to them to establish the government of God. When you confront the government of God against the most powerful nation on the earth, it's the most powerful nation that must yield the field and not the Lord.

Well in the last days, Jeremiah prophesied the time is going to come when the talk about the power of God is no longer making reference to what the Lord did anciently with Egypt, it's going to be what the Lord intends to do with the last-days Zion. This is Jeremiah 16, beginning at verse 14: *"Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them: and I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers"* (verses 14-15).

That will be the reference point to which people will point as evidence of God's intention to establish His rule, His reign upon the earth, His authority over the nations of the earth.

Well, *it is going to come to pass*. In your enthusiasm, it would be better to demonstrate the virtue of patience as the Lord brings His work about than to exhibit the character flaw of impatience and enthusiasm in trying to bring about what the Lord intends Himself to cause to happen. Because you cannot give birth prematurely to a living Zion, or it will choke, and it will die because it is unable to be viable outside of the hands of the Lord. We have to wait on Him.

If the original Mormonism needed to recover the fullness that was lost, then to revive an original it will require a recovery of what was lost and more. If recovered, believers will be able to receive a holy spot, accepted and defended by God. In that place the religion of Adam will be taught. The promised original religion includes the revelation of everything. Nothing shall be withheld.

Today's Mormonism has a great deal withheld. But the religion of Abraham (and therefore the religion of Adam) included *"a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the planets, and of the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers"* (Abraham 1:31). The original Mormonism must grow in ancient knowledge and understanding until their understanding reaches into heaven-- not just spiritual understanding but also physical understanding of the layout of the universe. The placement of the lights in the firmament was for "signs" to man and, therefore, were deliberately placed and contain information originally understood by Adam.

Because of prophecies made to the patriarchal fathers, the right to found this future city of peace descends from a specific ancient line. There will be an heir descended from both Jesse and Joseph who will accomplish it. Occupants of the community will likewise have lineal qualification. The last-days Zion is an accomplishment promised earlier to the patriarchal fathers, and it is through their descendants God intends to vindicate the promises. The result of this alignment will be a priestly city of Zion that will return to that power which she has lost.

The original iteration of Mormonism was apocalyptic. But it was oddly practical about the apocalypse, assuming there were things that could be done to prepare-- not in haste, which was condemned, but it was a physical and spiritual enterprise to be accomplished by the hard effort of those interested in welcoming the Lord's return.

A temple is the Lord's house. It's not actually a temple unless He comes to, visits, and accepts it. And then it is His house until it has been profaned. Therefore, when it is the Lord's, the timing of when it is to be built, where it is to be built, how it is to be built, and exactly what it is that He wants to be built are entirely within His control.

We don't have the right to select a spot. I mean, if you read carefully the word of the Lord in D&C 124, He does say to the people in Nauvoo, "The site that you have chosen for the building of the temple is acceptable." But remember that the Lord has everything in front of Him, and therefore, it's acceptable. In other words, "Yeah that site will do, just like any other site you want to choose will do, given where I know you're headed! Given the end result of this massively stupid experiment that you've got under way at present, build the temple there, build it anywhere. It's acceptable to me; go for it."

"Now I want you to know something," the Lord goes on to say, "if you will do it, and if you'll follow me, and if you'll do-- if you meet the conditions, I will come there, and I will not only make it my house, I will protect you. You will not be moved out of your place. I will be the one who establishes you in this spot, and I will protect and defend you, and this will become the corner of Zion."

And He meant it when He made the promise. But again, He knew what was about to happen. He knew the hearts of the people that were involved. And it doesn't matter how eager or earnest Joseph or Hyrum were; it doesn't matter. You don't have a temple without a people, and we did not have the required people at the time.

One of the interesting things about the gathering into Zion is that apparently, although there may be yet more revelations and commandments that roll out, apparently it will be in Zion where the "rich treasures" of the records of other scattered tribes are to be brought in order for that information or body of material to be reclaimed. If the revelations and the prophecies are correct, the records of the Jews and the records of the Nephites-- they get gathered, and they are the first. But eventually there will be many others that get gathered in.

The description that's given of bringing the rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim in the everlasting mountains is a description of bringing them into the place that will be built by a covenant people who have the legal right to the land.

And first of all, I believe we could choose, as a people, a place to build a temple, and we would get exactly the same response that we see in the *Doctrine and Covenants* that was given to Joseph when the Nauvoo Temple began: "The site that you have selected is acceptable to me." And we'd probably reach exactly the same conclusion. I will not, therefore, choose a site. If God doesn't choose a site, it will remain unchosen. If God chooses the site, it's His, and then He has the responsibility to defend it.

If you read about the site selected in Nauvoo, in the Nauvoo site the Lord said, "Yeah, that's acceptable to me...and if..., and if..., and if..., *then...*" But if God chooses the site, it's His. There's no "if"-- well, there might be one "if." And that one "if" is, "Now if you want to live and not be slain by me on the land that I've chosen, then you better be careful." But it's His land-- it's His to defend. It's His choice. It's His house. It's His Zion. It will be His New Jerusalem. And therefore, no man is going to say (and if they do say, I'm going to have nothing to do with them), "Is this acceptable to you, Lord?" It's got to be His. And if it is His, it carries the weight of God having chosen it.

He's known where it is for millennia now, and He's had prophets describe it. It's in the everlasting mountains; it's not on the plains of Missouri. And the people that are going to go there are going to say, "Let us go up to the mountain where the Lord has an ensign erected." And that will be His house. And He will come, and He will accept it, or we won't have Zion.

If you go to the book of Enoch-- the Enoch vision chapters of the book of Moses-- Enoch is in heaven, and he's looking down at the mess that is going on on the earth. And while he is beholding the earth, there is a voice that comes out of the earth itself. So this is the voice of the earth, and it's a female. It's a she. Our earth is a feminine creature-- creation. The earth says: "*Wo is me the mother of men*" (*Moses 7:48*). And she laments the wickedness that is upon her by what men are doing. The earth would rather rejoice at our presence and yield her abundance to us.

One of the reasons why there is no paradise on earth as there was in the Garden of Eden is because the earth herself knows the wickedness of men-- the destructiveness of man. And so she withholds her abundance because of our wickedness. She asks in that Enoch account, "When shall righteousness return to my face?" If a group of people give the earth reason to rejoice that they are there on her surface, the earth can reward those people; indeed, the earth can protect those people. And if need be, the earth can destroy whatever comes against the people she decides to protect. Rivers can turn out of their course, as happened with Enoch's Zion. Mountains can be moved out of their place.

Okay. This is just an exercise for those of you that are willing to entertain the exercise. Go sometime onto YouTube and do a search for videos of landslides. Watch a few videos of landslides, and ask yourself, what army could come up against that? If mountains are

moved out of their course, there is no weapon formed against that that can prosper. It will obliterate anything.

Well, the earth has an incentive to protect Zion because the earth wants righteousness to return again upon her face. It's one of the reasons why I think Zion necessarily has to be built in the mountains, because it's built in a place that the earth herself can protect the residents of Zion.

It becomes increasingly clear that the target of the first missionary effort had nothing to do with stopping at Independence, Missouri. It had a great deal to do with going into the western mountains, the Rocky Mountains, and establishing Zion. But the good Reverend Isaac McCoy, the father of the Indian Relocation Act, whose daughter was there on the scene, who was married to a minister, who had a grievance motivated by false religious ideals (and the best way to oppose Zion is always to have false religious ideas)-- were right on the spot at the very moment when, at its incipient stage, under the guidance of Joseph Smith, some effort could have been made to establish the New Jerusalem. But they couldn't.

If you take a look at Doctrine and Covenants 124, Joseph was told that when they located in Kirtland, that it would be temporary. And the location in Kirtland was temporary. When they went out, and they found the "center place," (and that was found not by Joseph Smith; that was found by the four missionaries-- five, because another guy joined them as a result of proselytizing in Kirtland, and so they had five when they got there)-- they said, "We can go so far and no further, and at this spot we are in the center." And so that spot, given all the legal entanglements and prohibitions, that spot became as close as you could get. They established a trading post where they would trade with the Indians. And the idea was that since they couldn't go into the Indian territories to proselytize them, that they established a trading post, and they traded with them fairly-- that the Indians would cross the border (which they were not prohibited from doing), and they could come to their trading post and get a fair price. And so if the Mormon missionaries established a trading post and dealt with the Indians fairly, they'd have a chance to proselytize when they came to them. These are not ideal circumstances, and as it turns out, not much was able to be done.

Later (and this is during 1841)-- this is in Nauvoo, and a temple is being required of the saints in Nauvoo. There's this interesting statement within the revelation about constructing the temple in Nauvoo: *"And ye shall build it on the place where you have contemplated building it, for that is the spot which I have chosen for you to build it. If ye labor with all your might, I will consecrate that spot that it shall be made holy. And if my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place"* (D&C 124:43-45).

So what this opportunity in the Nauvoo temple represents is: We'd lost Kirtland. We'd been forcibly expelled from Missouri. We had attached the idea of a center temple where God would come to dwell with this people, and a place that would be a refuge that would be preserved by the power of God, to that location. But we got kicked out of there, and we

went back across the Mississippi to Nauvoo. And the Lord said, "You going to build the temple in Nauvoo? I'll command you to do that. You build it; I'll give you sufficient time within which to do it. And if you go to and you do it, I'm going to consecrate *that* spot. And I will make *that* spot holy to you. And I will make it so that you cannot be moved out of *that* spot by your enemies. And I will come there, and I will restore to you what has been lost-- the fullness. I will give that to you, and I will do it in Nauvoo." And it didn't happen. And the flow of events took over.

I want to read you from Joseph Smith's history, at the very end of his life on Saturday, June 22 (five days before he would be slain)-- June 22 of 1844. You can read this in the *Documentary History of the Church*, at volume 6, page 547:

"Saturday, June 22 1844.-- about 9 P.M. Hyrum came out of the mansion and gave his hand to Reynolds Cahoon, at the same time saying, 'A company of men are seeking to kill my brother Joseph, and the Lord has warned him to flee to the Rocky Mountains to save his life. Good-by Brother Cahoon, we shall see you again.' In a few minutes afterward Joseph came from his family, his tears were flowing fast. He held a handkerchief to his face, and followed after Brother Hyrum without uttering a word."

So Joseph received a revelation on June the 22nd of 1844 telling him, "Now, *now* go to the Rocky Mountains."

When we have an opportunity to accomplish something with the approval of the Lord, the Lord is going to be the one who ultimately decides where the actual accomplishment will take place. When it takes place, it's going to be in the mountains, and you needn't guess which mountains. The mountains are going to be out here in the west, exactly where the first missionaries were sent to try and find it but were hedged up by the confluence of what was happening in the law, and in society, and in the management of the Indian tribes in 1831 when they tried to cross and go out west, and were told they can't. Well, if we can't go out there and find that New Jerusalem city-- if we can't go out there, then we'll settle here, and we'll take these local Indians, these relocated Indians, and we'll fetch ourselves a Zion right here in this spot.

And the Lord gave a series of revelations in which He said, "If you can do that, you do that. And that is acceptable to me, and that will be Zion. Go to, have at it." And then He says, "Here's why you didn't pull it off: your jarrings, your envies, your lusts, your contentions. That's why you didn't pull it off." And He has said repeatedly in one of those extraordinarily clever things that the Lord has done throughout history, "*Zion will not be moved out of its place*" (D&C 97:19; 101:17).

"Oh, I know, I know! I've got the answer. The answer is, What is Independence, Missouri? That's a Daily Double, and Alex is telling me I'm wrong. I've just lost everything I bet!"

“Oh, oh I know! It’s Nauvoo, and it’s Nauvoo because the Lord changed His mind and said He would accept Nauvoo as a substitute Zion and not move the saints out of *that* place if they would do what He said.” Wrong again, wrong again!

Zion will not be moved out of its place, which place you know not yet. But Joseph knew it was in the Rocky Mountains, and he intended to go there. And the Lord knew it was in the Rocky Mountains when He revealed that to Isaiah in his prophecy. And Father Jacob knew it when he was prophesying and blessing his son, Joseph.

Now, let me give the Lord the latitude that the Lord is entitled to have, because of a statement that Joseph Smith made. Joseph said, “Oh, you know nothing more than a baby in a cradle, because the whole of North and South America are Zion.” Okay? So if the Lord says, “Yeah, you can build it in Missouri, that’s copacetic. Go for it! Go for it my son!...Oh, big boo-boo my son.” “How about here?” “Okay, okay, go for it my son there...Oh, big mess, big mess! Plagues, locusts, starvation-- that’s not good, not good.”

Time and time again, the location of Zion is approved by the Lord in different spots precisely because the entirety of North and South America would be an acceptable place to found Zion. But within those general geographic parameters, it must be in the mountains. It must be among the natives who are originally here. It must be established under the guidance of someone who hails from both the tribe of Ephraim and is a descendent of Jesse. You can read that in the *Doctrine and Covenants*. And it will surely come.

There is absolutely no reason for the Lord to tell you another place to go and pollute, if you don't rise up to bring with you the worthiness necessary to turn, at last, a place into the New Jerusalem-- where the Lord can come and dwell among you, where you can be of one heart, where you can be of one mind, where there are no poor among you, and where you have all things in common, where you meet the requirements. And there’s no reason to assemble you together at any spot. You can do everything that needs to be done preliminarily, from wherever it is you dwell at present. And you can prepare your hearts, and you can prepare your minds, and you can begin to understand the difficulties. And instead of judging our failure that went on before, you can rather empathize with the failures that went on before and come to some appreciation for the fact that it’s not going to be any easier for you than it was for them. It’s not going to be any less filled with the temptation to be envious and filled with lust and have jarrings and contentions for you than it has been for those that went and attempted before.

MAN:

“It is not enough to receive my covenant, but you must also abide it. And all who abide it, whether on this land or any other land, will be mine and I will watch over them and protect them in the day of harvest, and gather them in as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. I will number you among the remnant of Jacob, no longer outcasts, and you will inherit the promises of Israel. You shall be my people and I will be your God and the sword will not devour you. And unto those who will receive will more be given until they know the mysteries of God in full...”

And the angels are given charge to watch over and protect my people.

My eyes are over the whole earth and all men everywhere are before me. Men conspire to overthrow and oppress and use violence to control others through fear. My Spirit restrains the destroyer to allow those who are in the world and willing to give heed to my words time to prepare, but I will not always suffer with the wickedness of man.

The Earth groans under the wickedness of mankind upon her face, and she longs for peace to come. She withholds the abundance of her bounty because of the offenses of men against me, against one another, and against her. But if righteousness returns and my people prove by their actions, words and thoughts to yield to my Spirit and hearken to my commandments, then will the Earth rejoice, for the feet of those who cry peace upon her mountains are beautiful indeed, and I, the Lord, will bring again Zion, and the earth will rejoice.

In the world tares are ripening. And so I ask you, What of the wheat? Let your pride, and your envy, and your fears depart from you. I will come to my tabernacle and dwell with my people in Zion, and none will overtake it.

Cry peace. Proclaim my words. Invite those who will repent to be baptized and forgiven, and they shall obtain my Spirit to guide them. The time is short and I come quickly, therefore open your mouths and warn others to flee the wrath which is to come as men in anger destroy one another. The wicked shall destroy the wicked, and I will hold the peacemakers in the palm of my hand and none can take them from me.

Be comforted, be of good cheer, rejoice, and look up, for I am with you who remember me, and all those who watch for me, always, even unto the end. Amen" (Answer and Covenant, p. 7, 9-10).

DENVER:

"And I, the Lord your God, will be with you and will never forsake you and I will lead you in the path which will bring peace to you in the troubling season now fast approaching.

I will raise you up and protect you, abide with you, and gather you in due time, and this shall be a land of promise to you as your inheritance from me.

The Earth will yield her increase, and you will flourish upon the mountains and upon the hills, and the wicked will not come against you because the fear of the Lord will be with you.

I will visit my house, which the remnant of my people shall build, and I will dwell therein, to be among you, and no one will need to say, Know ye the Lord, for you all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

I will teach you things that have been hidden from the foundation of the world and your understanding will reach unto Heaven.

And you shall be called the children of the Most High God, and I will preserve you against the harvest.

And the angels sent to harvest the world will gather the wicked into bundles to be burned, but will pass over you as my peculiar treasure” (Answer and Covenant, p. 11-12).

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver’s lecture entitled “Zion Will Come,” given near Moab, UT on April 10, 2016;
- The presentation of Denver’s paper entitled “Was There an Original,” given at the Sunstone Symposium on July 29, 2016;
- The Q&A session following his lecture entitled “The Doctrine of Christ,” given in Boise, ID on September 11, 2016;
- The Q&A session following his lecture entitled “Things to Keep Us Awake at Night,” given in St. George, UT on March 19, 2017;
- His remarks at “A Day of Faith and Connection” Youth Conference in Utah on June 10, 2017;
- His *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #6 entitled “Zion,” given in Grand Junction, CO on April 12, 2014; and
- The presentation of “Answer and Covenant,” given at the Covenant of Christ Conference in Boise, ID on September 3, 2017.

Podcast Episode 27: Generation

QUESTION: On September 22, 2016, you wrote that, “If they are penitent and willing to trust God, the last-days Zion will be achieved by a single generation.” What is a “generation,” how long is it, and are we that generation?

DENVER: We believe we are approaching a moment in which the Lord is about to return. Read that chapter-- Matthew 24. All of the signs that He speaks of will occur in one single generation. If you've not noticed, the signs have begun to appear. It means you're living within a generation in which a great deal is to occur. As it was in the days of Noah, so is it about to be. That means dreadful things are coming, on the one hand, and it means prophets are going to be among us again-- people with messages that come from the Lord.

There have probably been as many Bible commentaries written on the definition of “generation” as... One offered definition of generation is: “While the teaching/religion/movement remains in an unaltered state.” Almost invariably, however, the way a new revelation from heaven works is that God will reveal Himself in a generation, and then when the prophet/prophets of that time (the mortals living, the messengers) die, what survives cannot be kept intact. It simply cannot be kept intact. You need another Peter; you need another Paul; you need another Moses; you need another one with that standing, or it falls into immediate disrepair. So, while there are living oracles that are in communication with God, that's the best definition of a generation. But you don't add on to the work of a prophet. It goes downhill.

From the death of Moses until the coming of John the Baptist, the only interruptions you get were when these singular men-- Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel-- came upon the scene. And their work was confined to them in that spot. You don't improve upon what God gives. When God gives something, it is living, and it is breathing-- it is like a fire that has been lit, and it exists until the flame goes out. But when the visions of heaven are gone because the recipient is no longer on the stage-- it's what happened with the death of Joseph Smith.

I am certain we will see Zion because it's been promised, and it's been prophesied from the beginning of time. When Father Adam prophesied, being overcome by the Spirit in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and foretold what would happen to his posterity down unto the latest generations, Zion was pointed to, and therefore, from the days of Adam on, all of the holy prophets have looked forward to that as the essential moment in the history of the world. Because Christ will come and will redeem the world, it will be the end of the wicked. It will be the beginning of something far better.

That's been the hope; that's been the promise; that's been what they've looked forward to. I wonder how many of us share that same longing, that same hope, that same desire that originated in the beginning? Because if we don't subdue our desires, appetites, and passions enough to try and deal peaceably one with another, choosing deliberately to not

contend even when we know people are wrong-- when Christ was confronted, and He corrected the error, He corrected only that error. He didn't go on with a list of other weaknesses, failings, and challenges. He only addressed the one that was put to Him.

We have an opportunity. We have a bonafide, actual offer from God to allow us to be that generation in which the promises get fulfilled. But we have the freedom of choice that allows us to elect to be severed, to be contentious, to be agents of disruption, and to discourage and break the hearts of those who would willingly accept the challenge to repent and follow God.

Now it's also possible, in fact it's probable, that at some point what the Lord will do is gather out a remnant of the remnant-- gather out a few.

Generations now dead anxiously wait and hope for us to be faithful. They have part in this through you. If they have a righteous, living descendent they are blessed vicariously through that relationship. We are all part of one family, and your role in that family can bless the living and the dead.

What is going to happen is more affected by your repentance and your faith than anything else. And that's really where the hard work gets done-- in the hearts, in our own hearts, in our own lives, in how we treat one another.

When this whole process was set in motion by God on the first day of creation, He had in His heart, a plan that was going to unfold through every generation until the end. Three years previous to the death of Adam in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, Adam gathered his posterity together, essentially to tell them goodbye. And in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, Christ came and appeared to those that had gathered there, and Adam, despite the fact that he was bowed down with great age, rose up, animated by the Spirit that he was taking in from the presence of our Lord, and he prophesied whatsoever should befall his descendants to the last generation. So he was talking about, among others, you.

That same plan that was ordained in the heavens before the foundation of the world was revealed through Adam in prophecy in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman. And we're on schedule to keep the appointments. Whether we are going to be on one side of the divide or on the other side of the divide, we're keeping the appointment. And the times have been fixed, and the seasons unfold, and the signs that show up from time to time remind us that despite how hectic and disorganized and how ill-fitted the world may be for the fulfillment of all the prophecies, it's simply going to happen. Hopefully more will repent and return and be faithful, but it really won't matter because there is always enough with the Lord. He has a way of making whoever will come aboard be sufficient for His purposes.

Assuming there is some group, however small (as Gideon and his group were reduced from 32,000 to 10,000 to 300), whatever remained was sufficient for the triumph. Everyone is free to vote when we have reached the end of the line. And they're free to reject it. But if there is some small group who are willing to enter into that covenant, whatever that

number is, that'll be sufficient. But the Lord has plans for a temple that go beyond what you might associate typically with the temple from some of your past experiences.

There is the Spirit of Elias, there is the Spirit of Elijah, and there is the Spirit of Messiah. These three great spirits unfolded in the work of God in the generations of man in a steady descent. And they will be likewise inverted, like a chiasm, and return in an ascent. So that at the end, it will be as it was in the beginning. "That same Priesthood which was in the beginning, shall at the end of the earth be also," was the prophecy that Father Adam gave (see Moses 6:7).

God's hand is moving again; this is going somewhere. It will eventually culminate in the fulfillment of the prophecies. The trouble is whether we do it or whether it is left for another generation depends upon what we do. And I don't think religious enthusiasm or religious fanaticism produces it-- it's kindness to one another. It's taking seriously the things that God asked us to do, and then in a meaningful way, being self-sacrificing and trying to help and lift other people.

We need to let God take the lead. And then we need to patiently await each step along the way. This is the stuff of which the prophecies speak, and it is the stuff that will be fulfilled. But the rights and the ordinances necessary to accomplish that-- people in this generation don't even have a clue how that necessarily has to roll forth. But rest assured, it will. It will.

Baptism has always been required from the days of Adam until the present. Baptism is always the sign of acceptance of what it is that God is doing-- a penitence, that is turning and facing God, and then walking in a new path. From the days of Adam it will continue through the end of the millenium. And whenever there has been a believing people upon the earth, they have always been invited to partake of the ordinance of baptism as a sign of their faith.

This is the day in which, at long last, it is possible for what God intended to happen, before His return, to actually begin. The gospel is not supposed to be merely a record of how God dealt with other people at another time. Joseph Smith talked about how we can't read the words of an old book and then apply those words in an old book (that were meant for someone else at some other time) to us and then restore ourselves back to God's grace. That is just as true of the revelations given in the days of Joseph Smith as it is true of the revelations given in the New Testament. It becomes really apparent when you read them out of the scriptures because all our footnotes and all our chapter headings and all our cross-referencing-- it sort of gives you an impression that this stuff is talking about us, right here, right now. When you read them as they were written in *The Joseph Smith Papers*, it really becomes clear that when God is talking about how the church is living and alive and approved, it's because He's talking to Joseph Smith, and the church is listening to what Joseph Smith had to say. And rolling forth is the voice of God in that day. And Joseph Smith commissioned people to go out and to take it. And they took it, and they went out and they preached it, and when they preached it others were converted. And the people that were

converted actually had experiences and came to know God. But that's because God acted to set it in motion in the person of Joseph Smith.

Joseph had a covenant given to Him by God. Therefore, Joseph could testify to these words and they were true, and God owned them. And people who followed them received the wages of those who follow God. It worked. We can't mimic that and have the same effect. God has to say, "This is what I want to do."

And if no one else will say it to you, I'm saying it to you. Everything that has been said is, in fact, exactly what happened when God offered something through Joseph. He's offering something again, right now, in our day, to you-- to any that will hear, to any that will listen. The work is beginning again. I suppose it was necessary that what began in Joseph's time had to run down to the condition that it's in at present, that it had to become a leaky ruin of a farm that Joseph himself no longer even wanted before it was possible for the Lord to say at this moment we turn a new leaf. But my word, can't you see the signs of the times? Can't you look about and see that the whole world is waxing old like a garment? Can't you see that there is, right now, a balance of things that are kept at bay only to preserve the possibility that a remnant might be claimed? God promised He would do this.

These scriptures, these invitations, these prophecies, and this message is inviting you to do what was originally prophesied as this dispensation began, that we looked at at the beginning in Boise, Idaho. The game's afoot. The challenge is underway. The opportunity is here. There was a price that had to be paid. It involved several generations. You do not kill a man like Joseph by the conspiracy of his followers without forfeiting an opportunity. But that moment has come to an end and a new moment is upon us. And if you'll hear it, I can declare to you in the name of our Lord, that the day of salvation has once again arrived. Have faith. Be believing. He's real. Come to Him. Seek for Him. Have faith in Him.

The day of salvation appears tenuously, almost as gossamer as a spider web, and if you don't lay hold of it, it is lost. And generations can come and go and sing hymns to the pride of their ancestry and the greatness of their religion, and go to hell. Because when the Lord sets His hand, He sets it exactly the same way every time. And it requires faith to come aboard. And it requires faith to believe.

It took a long time for me to be able to see the pattern, but the pattern in which the Lord reveals and discusses new truth is the same in every generation. Verse 5:

"Call upon the Lord, that his kingdom may go forth upon the earth, that the inhabitants thereof may receive it, and be prepared for the days to come, in the which the Son of Man shall come down in heaven, clothed in the brightness of his glory, to meet the kingdom of God which is set up on the earth. Wherefore, may the kingdom of God go forth, that the kingdom of heaven may come, that thou, O God, mayest be glorified in heaven so on earth, that thine enemies may be subdued; for thine is the honor, power and glory, forever and ever. Amen" (D&C 65:5-6).

If you read that, and you know that the Lord is going to come to that, you realize that He cannot come unless it exists. If it doesn't exist, He cannot come to it. If He cannot come to it, then He delays the day of His coming. And generation after generation may come and go, never having accomplished what the Lord invites us to do, what the Lord invites us to be.

“And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant, which I made unto thy father Enoch; that, when men should keep all my commandments, Zion should again come on the earth, the city of Enoch which I have caught up unto myself. And this is mine everlasting covenant, that when thy posterity shall embrace the truth and look upward, then shall Zion look downward, and all the heavens shall shake with gladness and the earth shall tremble with joy. And the general assembly of the church of the first-born shall come down out of heaven, and possess the earth, and shall have place until the end come. And this is mine everlasting covenant, which I made with my father Enoch” (JST Genesis 9:21-23)

The covenant that God made again with Noah, the covenant that He made originally with Adam, the covenant which *some* generation will rise up to receive. Whether that's you or whether you go to the grave without realizing it or not, is entirely up to you.

Jehovah appeared in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman. And you have seventh from Adam being Enoch-- you have a line of continuity from Adam directly down all the way until you arrive at Shem. But when you hit Shem, it interrupts. There is a complete falling away. There are no righteous fathers for Abraham. His fathers had turned to idolatry. Abraham is the prototype of the saved man and the father of all who would be righteous thereafter, because Abraham represents coming to the truth in a generation of apostasy. Abraham represents coming back to the light despite the fact that his fathers taught him idolatry. Abraham represents the challenge that every man who would be saved, from that point forward, must find themselves within and then overcome: the idolatry of their fathers. Abraham is the prototype.

And so Abraham is acknowledged by that same Jehovah who visited with the fathers in Adam-ondi-Ahman and identified Himself again to Abraham who, after apostasy, becomes literally the first-- the first to return to the righteousness of the first fathers, the first to return to the religion that belonged in the beginning to mankind, the first to discover *“a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the planets, and of the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers” (Abraham 1:31).*

Abraham was the one who desired to be a follower of righteousness-- one who possessed great knowledge, to be a greater follower of righteousness and to possess greater knowledge still. It is this which made him a candidate the Lord could speak to. It's this that made him the prototype in his generation, of what it takes to turn away from idolatry, to turn away from the kind of corrupt and degrading religions that were then in play on the earth.

This is the Lord describing to Enoch what would happen by way of covenant, the Lord swearing, "As I live even so will..." and He tells him what's going to come to pass in the last days. This is among the promises that were made to one of the fathers, and this is one of the fathers. And these are the covenants whose time is now upon us. This is the day in which we need to be prepared, so that those who went before and ascended up the ladder can return and fall upon your neck and kiss you, and you fall upon their neck and kiss them-- a sacred embrace through the veil, evidencing fellowship between you here and them there, the Lord promising and covenanting these things are going to happen.

But notice, there has to be a tabernacle. He has to come and take up His abode. There has to be preparation made. These things require some effort to be made here, in order to prepare for His return. If there is no one here who is willing to engage in what's necessary to bring this to pass (because everyone looks around and expects someone else to do it), then you're neglecting the duty that's devolving upon you as one of those who was assigned to come down in this day, in order to honor the fathers and honor the Lord, by allowing the covenants that have been made to be fulfilled.

Take a look at Doctrine and Covenants 107, because in this we see that first Zion: *"Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called Seth [his son], Enos [his grandson], Cainan [the son of Enos], Mahalaleel [son of Cainan], Jared [son of Mahalaleel], Enoch [son of Jared], and Methuselah [son of Enoch], who were all high priests, with the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing."* This is the original, first patriarchal blessing being given by Adam, he having summoned them there.

And as he's giving his last blessing, three years previous to his death, the Lord appeared unto them. So the Lord comes to dwell with these seven high priests and Adam. *"The Lord appeared unto them, and they rose up and blessed Adam, and called him [Mich-a-el] Michael, the prince, the archangel. And the Lord administered comfort unto Adam."* Ask yourself what comfort is that the Lord administers? He:

"...said unto him: I have set thee to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of thee, and thou art a prince over them forever. And Adam stood up in the midst of the congregation; and, notwithstanding he was bowed down with age, being full of the Holy Ghost, predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation. These things were all written in the book of Enoch, and are to be testified of in due time" (D&C 107:53-57).

This is the original covenant. This is the first father. This is what was set in motion before the death of Adam, under the binding influence and ratification of the Holy Ghost (or the mind of God), in which Adam, under the influence of that Spirit, predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation. This is the original covenant. This is the original father. Words spoken as a consequence of the influence of the Holy Spirit become the words of God. They will not fall to the ground unfulfilled.

The everlasting covenant in our day is “new” only as a consequence of it having been restored to our attention recently. It is not a new thing. It is a very old thing going back to the days of Adam. It was known to him. You were known to him. What was going to happen in your day was predicted and promised as a consequence of him.

Prophecies, as I've said before, revolve around two (and primarily two) events only-- one being the first coming of the Lord, the other one being the coming of the Lord in judgment at the end of the world. Now there are plenty of prophecies that reckon to other events that are intermediate. However, the primary focus is the first and the second coming of the Lord-- the vindication of the promise that the Father made in the beginning that He would redeem us all from the grave, and the vindication of the promise that at some point the world would come to an end as to its wickedness and there would be peace again on the earth. Everything revolves around those two prophetic events.

But the restoration of the gospel in the last days is not reaching back to the meridian of time. The restoration of the gospel in the last days is reaching back, at a minimum, to the time of Enoch. Because what you have to have is not the center. You have to have walking back, in a mirror image to the beginning, so that the symmetry of the history of mankind matches at the end as it was in the beginning. It's unfolding according to a pattern. It's unfolding according to a plan. It is vindicating the promises and the prophecies that were made, beginning with Adam in the first days. And what is wanted in the last days are those who will at last say, “I am not satisfied with my Sunday school lessons and the disappointment that I see all around me. I'm not prepared to wait on another before I rise up to know God, myself.” If any of you lack wisdom, ask God. He gives to all men liberally. He does not upbraid-- that is, He doesn't send you away discouraged, telling you, “Don't do that; don't ask me that.”

We saw in that first talk in Boise that we were commanded to pursue after the mysteries of God. What is more mysterious than what went on in the beginning generations? Because we have so little left from which to reconstruct that. And yet, we have enough to know the pattern that the Lord intended the last days to unfold in accordance with, and that pattern was to return us, in the end, to what was here in the beginning-- to return us to a state of knowledge about things that He has always had in His heart as the goal, as the ambition, as the desire to fulfill.

Joseph's doctrines, teachings, revelations, and counsel were supposed to be kept and hearkened to by the church. In the 1835 *Doctrine and Covenants*, section 41 it says, “*Ye have received a commandment for a law unto my church through him who I have appointed unto you to receive commandments and revelations from my hand...*”-- making it clear that when we get something from Joseph, we, as a church, were directed by the Lord to respect what it was that came through him. In section 32, verse 2 it says: “*I have entrusted unto you, my servant Joseph, for a wise purpose in me; and it shall be made known unto future generations, but this generation shall have my word through you.*” Don't read the word “generation” in that context narrowly, because the word “generation” sometimes has varying meanings, and

the safe meaning in that context of that statement to Joseph includes all those who live after the day that Joseph came and Joseph bore testimony. Therefore, it would include you.

The purpose of the restoration of the gospel through the prophet Joseph Smith was to begin a process of walking backwards to that point when it was all unitary, as it was in the beginning. Because it's been fractured; it's been fragmented. And it's been spread apart through generations. And now we need to walk our way back to the beginning, back to the point in which it was unified as it was at the start.

Joseph Smith understood the correct doctrine, and he's trying to give you the character, the nature, the attributes of God, because until you get that correct, you're not going to have the power to exercise faith in Him, which is why you're going to encounter some amount of resistance between what it is that you need to believe in and what it is that everyone else in your generation may believe in. It doesn't matter. The responsibility is placed upon you to understand what is truth and what is not, and you have to choose. And you have to sort it out, and you have to come to the correct conclusion. Because it is only by exercising faith in the correct conclusion that you manage to align yourself with that narrow window through which the heavens are open and up which Jacob's ladder is found to be scaled.

This restoration merely got it's toe in the door in the day of Joseph Smith, and hardly even that. The prophecies and the promises and the time and the opportunity are upon us. The question is, is this generation going to be just as careless, just as indifferent as the one when last a real prophet's voice was heard among us?

When Joseph Smith could tell you, "I know He lives because I've seen Him," when Joseph Smith could say, "God commanded me that I should bare record of Him because I have seen Him"-- it has been too long, *too long*, between that moment and today. And it's time now that we stop running away from the conflict. It's time for us to be valiant once again.

Do not be fearful. Cowardice and fear are the opposite of faith. I don't care what a tattered ruin it is that you see around you today; Zion can come. There is nothing more delightful, there is nothing more delicious, there is nothing more exciting than the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talks 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 10, given during 2013 and 2014;
- A Q&A session entitled "A Visit with Denver Snuffer," held on May 13, 2015;
- A regional conference Q&A session held at Big Cottonwood Canyon, UT on September 20, 2015;
- Denver's conference talk entitled "Things to Keep Us Awake at Night," given in St. George, UT on March 19, 2017;

- His remarks at “A Day of Faith and Connection” Youth Conference in Utah on June 10, 2017;
- His Opening Remarks given at the Covenant of Christ Conference in Boise, ID on September 3, 2017;
- Denver’s *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #1, given in Cerritos, CA on September 21, 2017;
- Denver’s *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #2, given in Dallas, TX on October 19, 2017; and
- A fireside talk entitled “That We Might Become One,” given in Clinton, UT on January 14, 2018.

Podcast Episode 28: Adam-ondi-Ahman

QUESTION: On April 19, 2017, you gave a talk entitled “Things to Keep Us Awake At Night.” In the paper you wrote based on that talk, you state, “Adam, in the presence of Son Ahman, will return the government to our Lord. This event, Adam-ondi-Ahman, or Adam in the presence of Son Ahman, will happen in the new temple and will be done before the Lord returns to judge the world.” What is Adam-ondi-Ahman, why does it require a new temple, and who will be included in this great event?

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DENVER: You see: *“Three years previous to the death of Adam he called Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch and Methuselah who were all High Priests, with the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing. And the Lord appeared unto them. And they rose up and blessed Adam and called him Michael the Prince, the archangel. And the Lord administered comfort unto Adam, and said unto Him, I have set thee to be at the head, a multitude of nations shall come of thee, and thou art a prince forever over them. And Adam stood up in the midst of the congregation and, notwithstanding he was bowed down with age, being full of the Holy Ghost predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generations. These things were all written in the book of Enoch” (D&C 107:53-57).* See, he was one of the seven that were invited. He was one of the seven that participated.

Here you have an interesting setting in which on the earth, previous to the death of Adam, we have a gathering in which there are seven people who are correctly qualified to stand before the Lord. And the Lord comes and appears unto them. And these seven who were present with Adam are now lineal descendants of Adam, members of the same family. Therefore, I would suspect they had all things in common. And the Lord came, even if only for this ceremonial moment, and dwelt among them.

And one of the participants in that moment on that day, in that group, was Enoch. And Enoch is the one who records it. And it will be testified of at the proper time.

But here we have the definition of Zion. And it is diminutive, and it is temporary, and it is tightly confined to a narrow group. And it is not this thundering congregation of 3.7 million temple recommend holders—it’s a very small group. But it is a group to whom it is possible for the Lord to come and dwell among them. And among their number, then, is Enoch. So, we have Zion.

If you want the criteria, and we’ve got a description—part of what we have in the book of Moses, given to us by Joseph Smith... By the way, I was reading in *Doctrine and Covenants* 107:53-57, in the account of the appearance with Adam-ondi-Ahman. And in Moses 7:16 we find this: *“And from that time forth there were wars and bloodshed among them; but the Lord came and dwelt with his people, and they dwelt in righteousness”*—which is an interesting

contrast. Here you have wars and bloodshed, on the one hand, but then you have the Lord and the Lord dwelling among people who are living in righteousness.

“The fear of the Lord was upon all nations, so great was the glory of the Lord, which was upon his people” (verse 17). It was “the glory of the Lord upon His people”—it was not the glory of the Lord, it was the people that intimidated. The Lord doesn’t show himself to the wicked except unto destruction. But the Lord shows Himself unto those that are prepared, and then it is the glory of the Lord upon them that others find intimidating. And that was the case with the people of Zion.

These initial appearances of Zion in this world are connected, because the first one in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman occurs, and Enoch is present. And the second one occurs with Enoch who was present when the Lord had dwelt with people before. And the third one will occur when Melchizedek, who was acquainted with those on the other side of the flood...he’s an adult when they enter the ark. He knew of Enoch and the option. See, Melchizedek who was acquainted with that condition, in my view, who had to be offered the option...I mean going on the ark and staying down there when there’s a group that are going to be leaving and going elsewhere... Noah’s qualified to leave. All of them were qualified to leave, and they had to be willing to stay.

Now, when you are allowed the option, and when you are going to stay but you know that there are those who are taken up, it seems like a reasonable request for Melchizedek to make, that after he finishes his ministry here, that he also should be allowed to take a people with him. And in the course of events, Melchizedek established a city, a city of peace, city of righteousness. He was the king, and he was the priest, and he presided over his people in righteousness. And Abraham, who was converted to the truth, came to Melchizedek. They had a ceremonial get-together in which, among other things, there’s a sacral meal. And Melchizedek, who has been waiting for this moment, hands the football to Abraham and says, “At last me and my people are gone.” And so once again, Zion flees.

Jehovah, speaking directly to Abraham, tells him that from this moment, from the moment God spoke to Abraham before His departure, Abraham would now become the father of all the righteous. Now you ought to ask yourself, why would that be the case? Why is it that Abraham becomes the prototype of who will be saved and the father of whomever is saved from that point going forward?

When you go back to the fathers and you begin with Adam, although there were apostasies—and apostasies began immediately. It was generations before Eve bore Cain and thought she had a son that would at last be faithful. They were grandparents when Cain was born. And then Abel was born. And Cain slew Abel. And Seth came as a replacement to the grandparents, Adam and Eve. And from Seth reckons, then, the seed of the righteous: father to son to grandson to great-grandson.

When you look at the list of those that are gathered together into the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, in the first Zion, where the Lord came and dwelt among them, and He

rose up and He called Adam, “Michael”—“El” being the name of God—Jehovah appeared in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and you have seventh from Adam (being Enoch), you have a line of continuity from Adam directly down all the way until you arrive at Shem.

But when you hit Shem, it interrupts. There is a complete falling away. There are no righteous fathers for Abraham. His fathers had turned to idolatry. Abraham is the prototype of the saved man and the father of all who would be righteous thereafter, because Abraham represents coming to the truth in a generation of apostasy. Abraham represents coming back to the light, despite the fact that his fathers taught him idolatry. Abraham represents the challenge that every man (who would be saved from that point forward) must find themselves within and then overcome the idolatry of their fathers. Abraham is the prototype. And so Abraham is acknowledged by that same Jehovah who visited with the fathers in Adam-ondi-Ahman and identified himself again to Abraham who, after apostasy, becomes literally the first—the first to return to the righteousness of the first fathers, the first to return to the religion that belonged in the beginning to mankind, the first to discover a *“a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the planets, and of the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers”* (Abraham 1:31).

Abraham was the one who desired to be a follower of righteousness—one who possessed great knowledge—to be a greater follower of righteousness and to possess greater knowledge still. It is this which made him a candidate the Lord could speak to. It’s this that made him the prototype in his generation, of what it takes to turn away from idolatry.

Take a look at *Doctrine and Covenants* 107. Because in this we see that first Zion: *“Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called Seth [his son], Enos [his grandson], Cainan [the son of Enos], Mahalaleel [son of Cainan], Jared [son of Mahalaleel], Enoch [son of Jared]] and Methuselah [son of Enoch], who were all high priests, with the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing.”* This is the original, first patriarchal blessing being given by Adam, he having summoned them there.

And as he’s giving his last blessing, three years previous to his death, the Lord appeared unto them. So the Lord comes to dwell with these seven high priests and Adam. *“The Lord appeared unto them, and they rose up and blessed Adam, and called him [Mich-a-el] Michael, the prince, the archangel. And the Lord administered comfort unto Adam.”* Ask yourself what comfort is that the Lord administers?

He *“said unto him: I have set thee to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of thee, and thou art a prince over them forever. And Adam stood up in the midst of the congregation; and, notwithstanding he was bowed down with age, being full of the Holy Ghost, predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation. These things were all written in the book of Enoch, and are to be testified of in due time”* (D&C 107:53-57).

This is the original covenant. This is the first father. This is what was set in motion before the death of Adam, under the binding influence and ratification of the Holy Ghost (or the

mind of God), in which Adam, under the influence of that Spirit, predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation. This is the original covenant. This is the original father. Words spoken as a consequence of the influence of the Holy Spirit become the words of God. They will not fall to the ground unfulfilled.

The everlasting covenant in our day is “new” only as a consequence of it having been restored to our attention recently. It is not a new thing. It is a very old thing going back to the days of Adam. It was known to him. You were known to him. What was going to happen in your day was predicted and promised as a consequence of him.

In the first meeting at Adam-ondi-Ahman, Adam was not considered to be among those who were mortal because Adam had begun life in the garden, in the presence of God. Therefore, mortals who were born into the mortal realm, in that meeting, began with Seth. The seven who gathered at Adam-ondi-Ahman were mortal because they were born outside of God’s presence. And they were restored again into God’s presence at the meeting at Adam-ondi-Ahman. The fact is that that same thing that was in the beginning will be in the end of the world also. That’s the covenant; that’s the promise; that’s the destiny; and God will surely fulfill that.

I also think...we take a lot of comfort, and we spend a lot of money buying all of the stuff around Spring Hill, Missouri, the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, because that was the place where Adam was, and it’s the place where God will come to. Once again I want to suggest that the wicked, the knavish, the proud, the boastful, those who seek the honors of men, will never have possession of and be able to control or prevent the unfolding of God’s work. The words “Adam-ondi-Ahman” mean “Adam in the presence of the Father.” Therefore, any place that the Ancient of Days comes to, while Christ is there also, is by definition “Adam-ondi-Ahman.” Therefore, it doesn’t matter if a fallen and corrupt society owns a piece of real estate that they claim. God is not bound by the stratagems of man, nor are His purposes controlled by the vanities of men and yet, if they will repent, and if they will hear what the Lord has to say, He can still work with them. But if not, then He’ll work with you, assuming you came, and you’re willing to hear.

...death of Adam will be gathered together in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, where—and it outlines the names of those who participated. This is a series of high priests, one in each generation (because you can only have one in each generation), the total of seven generations from Adam being gathered together there in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman with the residue of the posterity who were righteous, and the Lord came and administered comfort to Adam. And Adam, being filled with the Holy Ghost, gets up, and he predicts all things that are going to happen to his posterity down to the latest generations of time. That’s in the same section of the *Doctrine of Covenants* that describes the first presidency, the quorum of the twelve, and so on. In fact, what Joseph was doing was preparing and using the church as an incubator. The incubator was supposed to produce a product. The end product of that would literally graduate from the church, and it would be a King and a Queen, a Priest and a Priestess—the idea being that those would then go off, and they would establish their own kingdom. They might use “churches” to prepare and incubate

their groups, but they would be fully equipped to go off and establish the kingdom of God on earth.

It never happened. They had one dry run. The one dry run occurred in the Council of Fifty in a meeting in which Joseph and Emma were made King and Queen, a Priest and a Priestess. It was not done in a way that systematized or regularized it, and therefore it got lost. And in the post-martyrdom era of the church, what has happened is we've adopted the phraseology of "King and Queen, Priest and Priestess," and we've incorporated it into a temple endowment. And we've said, "There it is." And it is owned by the church, and the church administers it. And when you're done with that you're supposed to be a good member of the church, and that's it. You never do graduate.

But Joseph had turned the church over to Hyrum. I mean, he was moving on to be and do something different. And Hyrum was the one who was taking over and running the church. Joseph got up and complained to the members that the members were not paying attention to Hyrum the way that they ought to be paying attention to Hyrum (because Hyrum had essentially taken over and was now running the thing, not him). But all of that has been lost. It never had a fulsome enough development while Joseph was still here for us to be able to reconstruct even what the objective was. We don't have the capacity to complete that process. And to the extent that there's any description of that, or any vocabulary that relates to that, everyone assumes that that has been adopted and is incorporated into the church and the ordinances of the church.

So, there's a lot of work left to be done if the restoration is going to be completed. We know that Joseph prophesied there would be another Adam-ondi-Ahman event. Except that one—instead of it being *prospective* with the history of the world yet to occur and with it being reflected by prophecy from Adam filled with the Holy Ghost—in the next one it will be *retrospective*, in which what has happened returns, and keys and accountability for what has happened are the subject matter of the future meeting in which the term "Adam-ondi-Ahman" means "Adam in the presence of Ahman" or "in the presence of God." It is a description of an event. It is an occurrence.

It's like a BYU-UCLA football game. The BYU-UCLA football game happened yesterday in the Colosseum in LA, but it happened a few years ago in the LaVell Edwards stadium in Provo, and it was still the BYU-UCLA football game. And the fact is that if there was a flood or some other problem, you could play that football game anywhere. You could even play that in a bowl game somewhere in Louisiana—it would still be the same event. "Adam-ondi-Ahman" is a description of an *event*, and it will happen at a location that is not owned by the Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints because, quite frankly, they don't belong in that meeting. They won't belong in that meeting. When it occurs, it will occur on different criteria and on a different basis.

How you get from where you are now to the point where it would be suitable and appropriate for an event like that to even be considered is a long, long effort, because we have a restoration to complete. We have prophecies to fulfill. We have things that need to be

done, and we have covenants that need to be renewed. And all of that begins again in embryo at the very basic level of faith, repentance, baptism, fellowships, collecting tithing, assisting one another, and acting like we're Christians, and acting like we care about one another.

Priestly authority comes down in a line by men, but it isn't empowered until the man connects with heaven. If you go to the scriptures and you look at what I've written, I point it out. It's in there, over and over again. The ordinations had two features, had two facets: The laying on of hands by someone that is in that tradition, and then secondly connecting to heaven, and God empowering them. But the second part of that—that is, connecting to heaven and having heaven animate that—is not considered necessary by those who don't understand priesthood but is considered vital by those who do, and when God is the one that completes that process.

As I point out, citing Joseph Smith's own history, his ordination to the priesthood did not happen until June of 1831, when the voice of God (as Genesis 14 that he translated in the Joseph Smith version)—that's when they got permission to do the ordination. Peter, James, and John are referred to by Joseph only—not in Section 27; that was added by a committee; that wasn't Joseph's work. All of that additional language was added by them. He refers to Peter, James, and John in his letter that's in [D&C] 128. And there he says, Peter, James, and John who came and declared "*themselves as possessing the keys of the...dispensation of the fullness of times*" (verse 20). Okay, I'm in possession of keys to my office. Do you now hold the keys to my office? Do you have the keys to my... do you have the keys to my office? I declared myself as being in possession of the keys to my office. Oh, cool. Great for Peter; great for James; great for John.

I will tell you what that means, and I will tell you it only means this: It does not confer upon Joseph or Oliver authority. But it does connect them in a line of patriarchs to the fathers. If you're doing a genealogy chart and you're asking, unto whom then would Joseph have been connected? He would not be connected to Joseph Smith, Sr.; Joseph Smith Sr., if he's going to be connected in, would be connected in as a son of Joseph. That connection was not something that, having been established, was even appreciated during Joseph Smith's lifetime—still isn't appreciated. There is so much more to the restoration that still has to be put on the ground, that the restoration has hardly begun. Joseph laid the groundwork, and in order to take the very next step, you have to return to the point of the beginning at which it ended. You have to gather back together everything that happened before in order to be able to take the next step in that line. It doesn't matter if you're over there if the destiny is up there. Develop all you want out there, but you're never going to find yourself back into that final gathering at Adam-ondi-Ahman in which Adam will be present, and Adam will be present in the presence of Ahman, or Son Ahman, and a meeting will take place.

But there's a lot left to be done. We tend to think as soon as we've got something that that means we've got everything. And when we've got something, what we've got is *something*. But *everything* is a lot further down the road with a lot more diligence and heed and effort and study. I'm constantly amazed at our arrogance. I said it, and I don't think it's in the

book, but it's in the recording. I said there is absolutely nothing special about us—*yet*. And the fact is that there can be. There can be, if we are diligent.

Here's the reality, okay? The reality is that in order for the entire earth not to be smitten and utterly wasted at the Lord's return, it will be necessary for there to be a Zion. In fact, it's almost a cause and effect. You have to have the re-establishment of what was in the beginning of the world in the end of the world also. That was a prophecy of Adam. He made it in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman. Enoch was the one that preserves it, so it appears in the Enoch portion of the book of Moses, where Enoch preserves Adam's prophecy, that that same priesthood which was in the beginning of the world shall at the end of the world be, also.

And I have to tell you, that's not—you know, "Yadda yadda yadda..., ummm..."—your, you know, senior chief apostolic high and holy pontificate of the ninth order—it's not that. It's not that at all. It is re-establishing something about which we know very, very little. And that has to occur only within an environment that has been insulated from the world and accepted by God. It has to be physically accepted by the Lord. That edifice has to be located in a place that is approved by the Lord. We don't know the place. We haven't built the edifice. We don't have the right to proceed, but all of this must occur before the invitation is extended. Because God is not going to come to a planet that He utterly wastes at His coming. An invitation has to precede the return of our Lord. And that invitation needs to be done in His way, at a place of His choosing, in a manner that He ordains, that occurs according to His will, established as a consequence of Him returning what was once here back to the earth again.

But as for wrapping up of the creation and the culmination of the ages, God's direct involvement in that and the impressive nature of how that will roll forward, will not be some people deciding to flee and go farm somewhere. It's going to be a little bit different kind of enterprise, culminating in a city of righteousness and a people of righteousness, and in that sense, righteousness includes a great deal of knowledge. *"The glory of God is intelligence, or in other words light and truth"* (D&C 93:36). Knowledge and redemption—all of that go together.

Men have to extend the invitation for God to return, so that men who extend that invitation are worthy of His return, and the Lord can safely come without utterly destroying all who are upon the earth. Therefore, you need Zion (among other reasons) in order for there to be a place and a people to whom the Lord can safely return without utterly destroying the earth at His coming. However small, however diminutive it may, there needs to be a Zion that extends the invitation for the Lord to return.

I don't care how cleverly you parse the scriptures, God, and God alone, is responsible for causing them to be written in the first place. And He has a meaning in mind behind them. And He has a work that He intends to do that they will vindicate when the work is done.

If you think that you can outthink the Lord, and you can arrive at the right place at the right time, then go ahead and buy some farmland in or around Independence, Missouri, and wait for the burning, because you're not going to be at the right place. If Independence, Missouri was where the Lord intended Zion to be, He wouldn't have told them in January of 1841 that He was going to make Nauvoo "the corner of Zion." It is portable until it is fixed by Him.

And Adam-ondi-Ahman is not simply a location that you can find on a map in Missouri. It is the description of an event. The event is Adam in the presence of Son Ahman—Christ. Wherever that happens, that is and will be Adam-ondi-Ahman. So buy all the land you want, build all the bleachers you expect to build. But the fact of the matter is that when Adam—the Ancient of Days—returns, there is going to be an orderly process in which a king, a mortal king—it necessarily begins there—surrenders the jurisdiction of the earth back to those who once presided over it; in turn, ultimately, back to the Ancient of Days. That's why he's going to be here. And he, in turn, will surrender it to the Father, the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, of the end of whose government, or the increase of whose government, there shall be no end.

Christ, when He returns, will have the lawful, the legal right, to possess this earth, to rule it, and to govern it. And He will come to govern it. But before that day, groundwork has to be laid. There's a process.

Christ lives. He is the One who redeemed all of us. He has a rightful claim as the Father of us all. In the resurrection we come forth out of the grave as His children, because He purchased with His blood our continued life. We symbolize that when we're baptized by going under the water and coming up again, to be born again a new creature in Christ, as a preliminary, ceremonial, necessary sign that we accept Him. He's real. I bear witness of Him. I've stood in His presence. I've spoken with Him. He speaks in plain humility. He has a very poor student in me. And I don't say that to be humble; I say that to be truthful. I wish I were better. But in His infinite wisdom, He chooses what He chooses. He does it as He chooses. He does it how He wants.

I am certain we will see Zion because it's been promised, and it's been prophesied from the beginning of time. When father Adam prophesied, being overcome by the Spirit in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and foretold what would happen to his posterity down to the latest generations, Zion was pointed to—and therefore, from the days of Adam on, all of the holy prophets have looked forward to that as the essential moment in the history of the world, because Christ will come and will redeem the world. It will be the end of the wicked, and it will be the beginning of something far better. That's been the hope; that's been the promise; that's been what they've looked forward to.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's talk entitled "The Mission of Elijah Reconsidered," given in Spanish Fork, UT on October 14, 2011;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #4 entitled "Covenants," given in Centerville, UT on October 6, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #5 entitled "Priesthood," given in Orem, UT on November 2, 2013;
- A regional conference Q&A session held in Big Cottonwood Canyon, UT on September 20, 2015;
- His talk entitled "Zion Will Come," given near Moab, UT on April 10, 2016; and
- A fireside talk entitled "That We Might Become One," given in Clinton, UT on January 14, 2018.

Podcast Episode 29: Patriarchal Blessings

QUESTION: Is my patriarchal blessing valid?

DENVER: Father's blessings scripturally had legitimacy because they were spoken through the gift of the Holy Ghost. Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called together his posterity in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and there he bestowed his final blessing on them, and notwithstanding he was bowed down with great age, he rose up, and he prophesied what should befall his descendants to the end of time. That was the first patriarchal blessing. It was given by the power of the spirit, and it was prophecy. It would be appropriate to read out of that event "priesthood" and to read into that event "Holy Ghost, power of the Spirit, word of prophecy"—because a patriarchal blessing delivered with no benefit of the Spirit is just more ink on paper, but a blessing delivered by the power of the Spirit as a prophecy, is the word of the Lord, the mind of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation, which cannot be broken.

When Jacob called his kids before him to bestow his final blessing, when father Lehi called his kids before him to bestow his final blessing, it was a reenactment of the event that the first father, Adam, had enacted in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman in which someone (bowed down with great age, knowing that they are going to soon depart this world, having no personal investment in the outcome, intending only to say what is for the blessing and benefit through the Spirit of what will befall their children after them, things that they will not be around to witness) confirm by the spoken voice what it is that God has put into their hearts. It's given generally by someone like Lehi, like Jacob in Genesis 49 & 50 in the KJV. They are calling upon all of the experience that they've had with the kids throughout their lifetime, and then they're projecting forward by the power of the Spirit.

And some of what, in giving blessings by the power of the Spirit, is prophesied to befall a child may be surprising to the one filled with the Spirit. But generally that lifetime of experience with the child helps prepare the mind, the heart, and the connection of the father to heaven, in order to speak by the power of the Spirit concerning the child and what will befall the child. All of which, every bit of that, can occur with or without priesthood, every bit of that—which is another reason why we tend to associate, and therefore to limit, the power of the Spirit to influence any person without regard to rank, position, or office.

Deborah was a prophetess. If she was filled with the Spirit and she uttered a prophecy, then that was God speaking through her. That doesn't mean that she now gets to go preside in the High Priests group. If she's smart she'll stay the hell away from that High Priests group.

Take a look at Doctrine and Covenants 107, because in this we see that first Zion: *"Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called Seth [his son], Enos [his grandson], Cainan [the son of Enos], Mahalaleel [son of Cainan], Jared [son of Mahalaleel], Enoch [son of Jared], and Methuselah [son of Enoch], who were all high priests, with the residue of his posterity*

who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing" (verse 53). This is the original, first patriarchal blessing being given by Adam, he having summoned them there.

And as he's giving his last blessing, three years previous to his death, the Lord appeared unto them. So the Lord comes to dwell with these seven high priests and Adam. *"The Lord appeared unto them, and they rose up and blessed Adam, and called him [Mich-a-el] Michael, the prince, the archangel. And the Lord administered comfort unto Adam..."* Ask yourself what comfort is it that the Lord ministers. He *"...said unto him: I have set thee to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of thee, and thou art a prince over them forever. And Adam stood up in the midst of the congregation; and, notwithstanding he was bowed down with age, being full of the Holy Ghost, predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation. These things were all written in the book of Enoch, and are to be testified of in due time" (D&C 107:54-57).*

This is the original covenant. This is the first father. This is what was set in motion before the death of Adam, under the binding influence and ratification of the Holy Ghost (or the mind of God), in which Adam, under the influence of that Spirit, "predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation." This is the original covenant. This is the original father. Words spoken as a consequence of the influence of the Holy Spirit become the words of God. They will not fall to the ground unfulfilled.

Back in those days, I thought all you people had these things. And then there was the patriarchal blessing that I got which said, this is a quote, that "you will again be in the presence of your Father in Heaven while in the second estate." That's in my patriarchal blessing. And I thought, well, of course; it belongs there. That's what we do, isn't it? I thought we were related to God in an intimate way because, well, the heavens were opened.

And therefore, it was not, to me, shocking when I encountered an angel. And I have encountered many of them. And all of them leave a vivid and permanent impression. I can tell you that it's been nearly 40 years since the first time I met with an angel. And I can still close my eyes and see the scene this minute.

This stuff happens. My experiences matter only because I can testify that it happens. The content is nothing but voyeurism for you. *You* need to have a connection with heaven. The scriptures are the authorized accounts given to us that testify to these things. The *Lectures on Faith* are trying to set it forth in a comprehensive way so that we can all get it. But the gospel is supposed to be a living, breathing, miraculous thing in your life. Whether I'm saved or not doesn't matter. What matters is whether you are saved or not. And the way in which you become saved is by coming to know "eternal certainty," the last words in verse 56. And "eternal certainty" is about your salvation, so that you're not dependent upon someone else for your knowledge of God, but so that you can say in your own right, "I know."

Look, um, we're enacting ancient events. We're part of a process that began a long time ago and is going on still. You read, what is it, Genesis 49—the patriarchal blessings of the various patriarchs—you look at the lives of those men in the flesh. We're just reenacting them on a grander scale and with more of us, to be sure. But the patterns are there. The records of the prophets are not just history. As the *Book of Mormon* demonstrates very ably, it's not history. It's highly edited, very limited, highly selected (at one point they estimate less than one percent of their history even gets alluded to) material that has been selected on account of prophetic foreknowledge of our circumstance. And so it constitutes not merely a history, but a prophetic pattern in which they try to get us to see the process that we ought to be reenacting in our lives, to do the things that they did that brought them to know the Lord.

Nephi couldn't have been more plain if he had said, "Here's my guidebook. Here's my rule book. Here's my pattern-recognition sequence. You go and do likewise." He's trying to get us to get our hands around, as Joseph Smith put it, the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ involves the path to and through the veil into the presence of God, becoming joint heir, becoming a son of God. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* page 375, he refers to "sons of God who exalt themselves to be God even before they were born, and all can cry Abba, Father."

Joseph wanted us to take the religion that he restored to the earth rather seriously and to search into and contemplate both the heavens and the darkest abyss. In an—I don't want to use the word "evangelical," I'll use the "evangelistic"—In a proselytizing church, in a church in which, at any given moment, the largest segment of the adult population are novices, introductory novices to a faith—you should never expect the church to forfeit the interests of the novices, who rightly need to be fed and nurtured, for the interests of those who are maybe a little more mature and have a little more robust comprehension of what the Savior was trying to teach us all. And it's probably rightly so that the Church makes no effort to really address that, and rightly so that you're left to your own. We have the scriptures. I mean, when the rich man said to Abraham in Christ's parable, "Well, send Lazarus back so he can warn my brothers," Abraham's response in Christ's parable was, "They have Moses, and they have the prophets, and if they won't believe them they won't believe Lazarus, even though one rised from the dead"—which is a very interesting foreshadowing of how people would treat the Lord.

Here's the problem: People do not believe Him even though He rose from the dead. Period. Today, us, you and I do not believe Him even though He rose from the dead. It was not intended to be a one-off event that occurred in the meridian of time. It was intended to be a gathering. I mean, the little seed grows up into the great mustard plant into which the birds—or, as Joseph put it, the angels—were intended to come and watch. It was intended to be a super structure for housing contact between the divine and the mortal. It was intended to be the moment of intersection between all that is in eternity and the life of the mortal. It was intended to be the journey into the Holy of Holies, into the presence of God.

In the ordinances, as they have been restored in the temple today, everyone who enters in is expected to come to the veil possessing certain knowledge, capable of identifying themselves as having been true and faithful, and be received in an embrace and then welcomed into the presence of God. It's a normal and expected part of the ordinances, as they have been restored. Those ordinances are supposed to be teaching us something. They are the Lord's way of shouting in a multimedia presentation, "Here is how I did what I did and what I would like you to do in the process of you becoming like me—a son of God, a daughter of God, a member of the household of faith, and part of the church and kingdom of the Firstborn." You have to become the Firstborn. You have to become one with Him. You have to become part of that, not in an organized group-think kind of way; in an individual way in which you connect up with Holiness, in which you become a vessel of Holiness. You are someone to whom sacred things have been entrusted, and you become, in turn, sacred as the bearer of them.

The Law of Moses prescribed the death penalty for a variety of offenses. One of the ways to avoid the execution of the penalty was to go to one of the safe harbor cities. Another way was to go and to come in contact with the altar, because if you came in contact with the altar it was considered most holy. Things that are most holy communicate holiness; you can't profane them. If you come in contact with them and you are unholy, you don't make it unholy, it makes you holy because it is most sacred. Part of the rites in the temple are intended to communicate to you things that are most holy. They are intended to make you holy. They are intended to make you a suitable recipient for an audience. They are intended to make you a suitable companion for a walk down a dusty road with the risen Lord who is trying to get you to notice exactly who it is that speaks to you. It's intended to have you understand that He lives, and that He's willing to associate with you. And that it's not, as Joseph Smith put it, relying on the words of an old book, the people who lived once long ago, that's going to save anyone. It's the dialogue that you engage in with Him now. It's the living, breathing, vital... He uses the figure of the living vine. And you have to connect to the living vine, and He's the vine, and you connect to it, and you get life through that. Words could not be more plain.

He's trying to get... I mean, what does it mean to be connected up with the vine and to derive sustenance from it? I mean, you have to be alive, which is not inert or an object that you move from there to there. If it's alive, it's going to grow. It's going to increase. It's going to improve. It's going to have connection with. It's going to have... Christ was extraordinary in His selection of the things that He wanted to use to communicate to us what He intended the gospel to be. And we read them and say, "That's cool. I'll pay my tithing. I'm connected. I got a card, I'm connected." Well, it's intended to be more than that, and the way that it becomes more than that is an individual journey in which you receive from Him and become a part of Him, and He does His best to try and use analogies and parables and stories to make it clear to us. And the history of the events that are recorded in scripture are intended to try and make it clear to us, but at the end of the day it's up to you to have the "aha moment" and realize He really is talking to and inviting *you*. *You*, individually, whoever you are, wherever you're at, whatever your confusion, whatever your doubts, whatever your uncertainties, He wants to talk to *you* about them.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's talk entitled "Christ's Discourse on the Road to Emmaus," given in Fairview, UT on April 14, 2007;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #2 entitled "Faith," given in Idaho Falls, ID on September 28, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #4 entitled "Covenants," given in Centerville, UT on October 6, 2013; and
- His fireside talk entitled "Cursed, Denied Priesthood," given in Sandy, UT on January 7, 2018.

Podcast Episode 30: How the Restoration Has Fallen!

QUESTION: Nearly 200 years after God appeared to Joseph in the Sacred Grove, we still don't have Zion. What happened to the Restoration? Why has it failed to produce Zion as prophesied? What can we do to help it get back on track?

DENVER: There was a time when the landscape of the restoration had the Brighamites in Utah and the Josephites in Missouri, both claiming that they were the authorized successor to Joseph Smith—Brighamites, because Brigham Young eventually claimed the right to succeed Joseph as leader; Josephites, because Joseph Smith III was the direct lineal descendant of the slain founder.

Both of the two largest Mormon divisions have experienced significant splintering. The institutions claiming to be an authentic version of what Joseph Smith founded have failed to produce the results Joseph foretold. This failure is due, in large measure, because Joseph's teachings have been abandoned or contradicted. There is still a great deal left undone. Joseph told us to expect great events among the gentiles, Native Americans, and remnant of Jewish people before Christ's victorious return. He did not live to see this happen. Upon his death, he left a great deal for others to complete.

Assuming the work Joseph began is to be finished, it will not happen by heaven laboring independent of us. We have work to do. The answer, according to the *Book of Mormon*, is that we must do the work while God, as Master of the Vineyard, labors alongside us. But fault lies with us. God has been willing to do His part of the labor from Joseph Smith's day until now. God directs the work, and in this way "labors alongside" us. We must resist the temptation to insert our own agenda for God's. If we fail to grasp that the direction must come from heaven rather than as part of an agenda created by uninspired corporate planners, imaginative (and even well-intended) individuals, then we risk working at odds with heaven. God's kingdom is a kingdom in every sense of the word, and the King is entitled to direct all of its affairs.

Today, we see all of the quarreling restoration mothers, daughters, and siblings accusing the others of apostasy and preaching falsely. If you are trying to find a "true" version of what Joseph Smith founded from the quarreling contenders of today, you face the same query Joseph posed at the beginning: "*Who of all these parties are right? Or are they all wrong together? And if any one of them be right, which is it? And how shall I know it?*" (*Teachings and Commandments 1:2:3*).

Sadly, it seems now as the Lord said to Isaiah: "*The daughters of Zion are haughty and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes*" (*Isaiah 1:11 OC; 2 Nephi 8:7 NC*). These daughters lust after women and property, power, authority, and make merchandise of the souls of men.

I was a one-time member of the largest branch but, as some of you know, was excommunicated over the demand I retract things I had written about their history. The resulting independence has allowed me to pursue a more unfettered search into Mormon origins, miscarriages, and missteps. Latter-day history has been so radically revised by revelations in the recent records released that anyone reading is left reeling. LDS history written before 1980 is antiquated. And we never had the more complete panoply of Brigham Young's conjectures, rants, and vulgarities until 2009.

The vast expansion of available and reliable historical materials, for those interested, has increased the schism rate for all the restorationist groups. There is a lot more kicking and pricking afoot, but it's increasingly more difficult to distinguish between kicks and pricks. The tapestry expands as more threads arrive.

But Mormonism's tapestry is not limited to the committed or devout. It now includes hundreds of thousands, perhaps more, disaffected former-Mormons who remain unable to fully depart. Mormonism exerts a religious gravitational pull almost impossible to fully escape. It remains with all of us, whether you are active in one of the two mother churches or one of their progeny. Mormon denominational splintering continues unabated.

The religion Joseph Smith ignited echoes with the wonder and appeal of God doing among us what He once did long ago with the people in the Bible. The restoration suggests that the long-awaited moment of Christ's return is at last approaching. Therefore, we either hope this to be true or need it to be exposed as a fraud. Either way, our fears or hopes are emphatic.

Accordingly, we all must decide what to make of Joseph Smith. All our fear, wonder, and hope rests on resolving what to make of the life of Joseph. This frames the dichotomy in the legacy of that man:

- With hope in his authenticity, we see him as God's messenger.
- With doubts about him, we see him as a charlatan.

These polar opposites are inherent in his life and were foretold at the beginning and reconfirmed toward the end of his life.

The angel who appeared to Joseph in September 1823 said: *"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 Nephi, that God had a work for me to do, and that my name should be had for good and evil among all nations, kindreds, and tongues, or that it should be both good and evil spoken of among all people"* (Teachings and Commandments 1:3:3).

My mother taught me to hold Joseph for evil. I've studied his life carefully, read what his critics and admirers have claimed for and about him. I've tried not to be hasty in reaching a conclusion. After four-and-a-half decades I have decided to hold Joseph for good. I'm all in. To me he is the real thing: a messenger sent from God to deliver a message that we reject at

our peril and accept for our blessing. He had a great soul that searched, stretched, believed, hoped, fought fiercely, defied pain and persecution, and bore the hallmarks we should expect from a prophet-messenger from God. He was a brilliant light—rough cut, homespun, and rustic. But he was ablaze with insight, keen and penetrating, able to capture with a phrase a glimpse of the infinite.

At the beginning, Joseph's restored religion included noble, thrilling, and aspirational words, worthy enough for them to belong to God. If you divorce these words from an opinion of Joseph and allow them to be independent ideas, they are worthy of meditation. Joseph Smith left religious writings and sermons that are the equal of the *New Testament*. They are the equivalent to the *Vedas*. They are as worthy as the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. They stand alongside the *Tao Te Ching*. But they trace their origin to Joseph Smith, and therein lies the rub.

I was raised among those who had Joseph's name for evil. Baptists regard Joseph as a deceiver, liar, and imposter. They find the English vocabulary has an insufficient supply of caustic adjectives to heap enough scorn on him. To paraphrase Billy Beane's description of his Oakland A's: "There are bad men; and there's devils. And there's 50 feet of crap. And then there's Joseph Smith."

When Mormon missionaries began pestering me in New Hampshire, I was amused at their sincerity and could not take seriously anything they offered. To me, they defended a false cult founded by a charlatan. I experienced an internal conflict between my mother's credo to be polite to others and her instruction that Joseph Smith was a fraud. Without resolving that conflict, I listened politely while pondering profanity.

Having nothing better to do one weekend, I went with the Mormons to a campout in Sharon, Vermont, the birthplace of Joseph Smith. There I obtained a copy of the *Doctrine and Covenants* from the visitor's center. Steve Klaproth, himself a convert, showed me Section 76. Reading it was the first time I took seriously anything that came from Joseph. The words gripped me. They inspired my mind to deep reflection. They had value. It shattered the paradigm and left me unable to trust a dismissive view for Joseph. He required evaluation. Joseph's words inspired my investigation of the restoration.

In Joseph Smith's History there is a passage that still appeals to my heart and mind. He wrote: "*During the space of time which intervened between the time I had the vision and the year eighteen hundred and twenty-three, (having been forbidden to join any of the religious sects of the day, and being of very tender years, and persecuted by those who ought to have been my friends and to have treated me kindly—and if they supposed me to be deluded, to have endeavored in a proper and affectionate manner to have reclaimed me)...*" (*Teachings and Commandments 1:2:10*). That is still going on. Joseph is still being posthumously persecuted.

Persecution is what happens when an idea cannot be opposed on its merit. Persecution is the product of fear typically experienced by those lacking knowledge. There are two great

competing forces in the whole of creation: love and fear. I think God's love for us is exemplified in Him speaking to Joseph Smith. And I am grateful for how that has enriched my life.

Here are some of the great thoughts God inspired and Joseph Smith conveyed to us:

"It is given unto many to know the mysteries of God. Nevertheless, they are laid under a strict command that they shall not impart, only according to the portion of his word which he doth grant unto the children of men, according to the heed and diligence which they give unto him. And therefore, he that will harden his heart, the same receiveth the lesser portion of the word. And he that will not harden his heart, to him is given the greater portion of the word until it is given unto him to know the mysteries of God until they know them in full. And they that will harden their hearts, to them is given the lesser portion of the word until they know nothing concerning his mysteries" (Alma 9:3 NC).

This is one of the great and succinct declarations about coming to know God. Finding Them is deeply personal. We come to God by giving "heed and diligence" to what God asks of us. I cannot do that for you, nor can you do that for me. It is the sojourn of every individual.

The path requires motion. We remain in motion all the time. There is no stasis, no holding a position. We advance (that is, experience restoration) or we recede (that is, experience apostasy). There is no avoiding movement.

The mysteries of God are hidden but simple truths. They set a man's bones on fire. To pay heed to God requires that we not harden our hearts. When we have hard hearts we know less. Even what we once knew can be lost. Eventually, we know nothing of God's mysteries, and we are left alone, without God in the world.

Another similar inspired thought:

"Woe be unto him that crieth, All is well. Yea, woe be unto him that hearkeneth unto the precepts of men and denieth the power of God and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Yea, woe be unto him that saith, We have received and we need no more. And in fine, woe unto all those who tremble and are angry because of the truth of God. For behold, he that is built upon the rock receiveth it with gladness, and he that is built upon a sandy foundation trembleth, lest he shall fall. Woe be unto him that shall say, We have received the word of God, and we need no more of the word of God for we have enough" (2 Nephi 12:5-6 NC).

All truth must come from God. The precepts of men are not only unreliable, but they are corrupted by their source. God's truths do not end. This thought, like the one before, reminds us that we must seek the constant nourishment of our minds and souls to be in God's path. When God is silent, then you are cut off from truth. Those God can save are those who will listen for His voice. No matter how unlikely the source from which God's voice comes, if it is God's word, it's to be prized. Even when it comes from the Joseph Smith your mother warned you about.

The hallmark reaction from those disinterested in what God is saying is their angry rejection and refusal to acknowledge more. When you are content, you perish. When you hunger and thirst, you live. Living organisms require constant additional nourishment. That's how you know they're alive.

There's another profound declaration along the same line:

“And because that I have spoken one word, ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another, for my work is not yet finished, neither shall it be until the end of man, neither from that time henceforth and forever. Wherefore, because that ye have a bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words, neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written” (2 Nephi 12:10 NC).

Last year I delivered a talk at the Sunstone Symposium titled “Other Sheep Indeed.” In it I invited others with sacred writings to come and bring them. That invitation was first offered by Joseph Smith in 1840. He anticipated a temple to be built in Nauvoo, to which records would be brought from all over the world: “bring every thing you can bring and build the house of God and we will have a tremendous City which shall reverberate afar... then comes all the ancient records dig them up... where the Saints g[ather] is Zion.” Not all of God's words are in the Bible. God has spoken to every nation (meaning every religious division of people). Truth is everywhere, among all people. If we love God and truth we will want to search for it. We will not be content to leave it unexplored and undiscovered. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after more righteousness” (see 3 Nephi 5:10 NC). Blessed are those who are “followers of righteousness, desiring to possess great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness and to possess greater knowledge” (see Abraham 1:1 TC). And blessed are those who do not suppose the scriptures contain all God's words and They (the Gods) have not provided more.

One of the world's greatest religious epistles was composed in Liberty Jail. It includes the following passage:

“[T]he things of God are of deep import, and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Your mind, O man, if you will lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost Heavens, and search into and contemplate the lowest considerations of the darkest abyss, and expand upon the broad considerations of Eternal expanse. You must commune with God. How much more dignified and noble are the thoughts of God than the vain imagination of the human heart? None but fools will trifle with the souls of men. How vain and trifling have been our spirits, our conferences, our councils, our meetings, our private as well as public conversations: too low, too mean, too vulgar, too condescending for the dignified characters of the called and chosen of God, according to the purposes of his will from before the foundation of the world...” (Teachings and Commandments 138:18-19).

These words enlarge the soul. Only a great religion challenges us to stretch as high as the utmost heavens, search into, and contemplate the darkest abyss—an expansive religion that urges us to become godlike in our interest, in our search for truth. We are clearly directed to turn our attention to the heavens and learn how they function, what they are, and who is to be found there. This is a vast religion. It is not confined to the earthly and certainly not under the control of any institution’s administrative regimentation or stifling controls. It cannot be what institutional Mormonism has become:

“O God, God!
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of [modern Mormonism]!
Fie on’t! ah fie! ‘tis an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. That it should come to this!”
(*Hamlet*, Act 1, Scene 2)

The restoration is far too great to have been reduced to the vain, trifling, low, mean, vulgar, and condescending versions presented in today’s Mormon institutions. If we’re going to hold a conference, it should aspire to stretch our minds upward—to make us reach beyond and never remain content.

This search into the highest heaven is the search to find holiness. Joseph Smith wanted us to ascend, like the ancients, into that realm of light and truth. How can any of us be content to listen to the institutional fare? It is incapable of sustaining spiritual life. Joseph’s ideas and teachings are as far above those teachings of today as the heavens are above the earth. The restoration once sought to find what God declared as “His way” to Isaiah: *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 20:2 OC)*. How the restoration has fallen! It is little wonder so many now hold Mormonism in contempt. It has become unnecessarily contemptible when it ought to be inspiring.

The restoration’s delight has turned to dismay; its ingenuity turned to ineptitude. Silk has become burlap. How have we allowed it to become so?

During confinement in Liberty Jail, Joseph reflected on the tragic and sudden disarray that priesthood leaders inflicted on the restoration. Whereas Joseph first envisioned an authoritative administration for the incipient faith, in Liberty Jail he stripped priesthood of all its right to exercise control and dominion. These inspired words not only undo Joseph’s initial investiture of priestly authority, it also rejects the long-established Roman Catholic decision to make priesthood non-forfeitable and independent of individual worthiness:

“Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen, and why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set...upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson—that the rights of the Priesthood are

inseparably connected with the Powers of Heaven, and that the Powers of Heaven cannot be controlled nor handled, only upon the principles of righteousness. That they may be conferred upon us, it is true, but when we undertake to cover our sins or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control, or dominion, or compulsion, upon the souls of the children of men, in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the Heavens withdraw themselves, the Spirit of the Lord is grieved, and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the Priesthood...of that man. Behold, ere he is aware, he is left...to kick against the pricks, to persecute the Saints, and to fight against God. We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion. Hence many are called, but few are chosen. No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the Priesthood; only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned, by kindness and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul..." (Teachings and Commandments 139:5-6).

Consider how these ideas affect religion. A calling to priesthood does not accomplish anything if the individual is not "chosen" by God. We can ordain men, but heaven must ratify and elect that man. No one is permitted to function on God's behalf without God's personal imprimatur of approval.

Priesthood is connected to heaven. Without a connection to heaven, there is no priesthood. The "powers of heaven" are, of course, the angels themselves. Priests must have angelic accompaniment to claim priesthood. And angels cannot be manipulated by the ambition, self-will, or worldly ambition of men.

The "called but unchosen" use office and position to cover their sins or to gratify their pride and vain ambition. They are like the Jews who persecuted Christ, while sitting in the chief seats. Likewise, there is no priesthood in the possession of any man who exercises control, dominion, or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men in the current sects of Mormonism. Christ's gentle example of kneeling to serve presents a neon-bright example of how priesthood is to be used. He came to serve, not to be served.

He taught, invited, bid others to repent, and clarified a better understanding of the scriptures for others. He did not demand support. He ministered light and truth for all who would listen. Any other kind of conduct antagonizes the heavens, which then withdraw themselves. The Spirit of the Lord is grieved, and when it's withdrawn, that's an end to the priesthood.

Imagine how different things are when you know that there is no power or authority in the priesthood itself but the power to influence others comes only by persuasion, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, love unfeigned, and by kindly presenting pure knowledge. Imagine that a teacher must greatly enlarge your soul to actually claim priesthood. How different would that be for you? You would be drawn to attend a meeting for what great light it could provide you. You would no longer endure those meetings,

conferences, and conversations that are low, mean, vulgar, and condescending—leave if they do, if you're not edified, and your soul is not enlightened. Religious classes and meetings that bore us are an obscenity. Discussions filled with a myriad of unenlightened personal opinion are the real pornography of today's Mormonism.

Joseph Smith revoked the right of priesthood to govern, and replaced it with the priesthood's obligation to teach and inspire. This ideal should be central. We should all repent and forsake the false models of a controlling hierarchy. All the accretions of power, wealth, compulsion, and dominion of the various Mormon sects should end this instant.

Another statement from Joseph makes it clear the restoration was intended to reintroduce the original religion of the Bible, not the diluted "Christianity" of his day. The original faith, in the first dispensations, had more understanding than what we find preserved in the Bible. Joseph was searching back into these beginnings. His heart was "turned to the fathers" of the first generations. He wanted a return of their original as part of the end. It was to be nothing less. Consider this declaration:

"[H]as the day of miracles ceased? Or have angels ceased to appear unto the children of men? Or has he withheld the power of the Holy Ghost from them? Or will he so long as time shall last, or the Earth shall stand, or there shall be one man upon the face thereof to be saved? Behold, I say unto you, Nay. For it is by faith that miracles are wrought. And it is by faith that angels appear and minister unto men. Wherefore, if these things have ceased, woe be unto the children of men, for it is because of unbelief, and all is vain. For no man can be saved, according to the words of Christ, save they shall have faith in his name. Wherefore, if these things have ceased, then has faith ceased also, and awful is the state of man, for they are as though there had been no redemption made" (Moroni 7:7 NC).

If the heavens are open to us, we have faith. If the heavens are brass, we are faithless. Without faith, it is as if Christ provided us no redemption. These words are as inspiring as they are sobering.

At the conclusion of the vision of the three-heavens, Joseph wrote the following. It clarifies that we are supposed to access heaven and see for ourselves the glory to be found there:

"But great and marvelous are the works of the Lord, and the mysteries of his Kingdom which he showed unto us, which surpasses all understanding, in glory, and in might, and in dominion, which he commanded us we should not write while we were yet in the Spirit, and are not lawful for men to utter, neither is man capable to make them known, for they are only to be seen and understood by the power of the Holy [Ghost], which God bestows on those who love him and purify themselves before him, to whom he grants the privilege of seeing and knowing for themselves that through the power and manifestation of the Spirit, while in the flesh, they may be able to bear his presence in the world of glory" (Teachings and Commandments 69:29).

This privilege of seeing and knowing for ourselves is available to us “while in the flesh.” The restoration aimed to reconnect us to heaven in a literal way. This is the same that transpired with Enoch and others in earlier dispensations.

The *Book of Mormon* is filled with ascension lessons and examples. There is one verse that captures Joseph Smith’s ascent theology. That verse compresses into a single sentence, it explains why the *Book of Mormon* contains the “fullness of the gospel,” and it’s perhaps Joseph’s most inspired declaration:

“Verily thus says the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsakes their sins, and comes unto me, and calls on my name, and obeys my Voice, and keeps all my commandments, shall see my face and know that I Am, and that I am the true light that lights every man who comes into the world” (Teachings and Commandments 93:1).

“Every soul” includes you and me. Every one of us has equal access to the Lord. The conditions are the same for all: forsake sins, come to Christ, call on His name, obey His voice, keep His commandments. This is far more challenging than obedience to a handful of “thou shalt nots” because so much is required to be *done*, so much required to be *known*. A great deal of study and prayer is required to stand in the presence of the Lord. Once done, we shall see His face and know that He is the true light that enlightens everyone. He’s the God of the whole world.

Immediately after His resurrection, Christ did not minister to gentiles. But after the *Book of Mormon* came forth, gentiles are also eligible for Christ’s ministry in very deed:

“And it shall come to pass that if the gentiles shall hearken unto the Lamb of God in that day that he shall manifest himself unto them in word and also in power, in very deed, unto the taking away of their stumbling blocks” (1 Nephi 3:25 NC).

His promise to us is predicated on “hearkening” to the Lamb. Gentiles failed to do so, and upon Joseph’s death, a great dearth set upon the restoration. Until there is gentile repenting and returning, it will continue to unwind. Since June 27, 1844 we have a restoration slow-moving car wreck. The pace of that decay is accelerating. We must rage against the fading of that light, *“And seek the face of the Lord always, that in patience you may possess your souls, and have Eternal life”* (Teachings and Commandments 101:6).

Evidence of Christ is everywhere. Joseph used cosmological terms in a passage describing the importance of light coming from Christ and His Father:

“[H]e is in the sun and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. ...[H]e is in the moon and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made, as also the light of the stars and the power thereof by which they were made, and the earth also...” (Teachings and Commandments 86:1).

If you are alive, you are connected to Christ. If you detect the light of the sun, you detect a testimony of Christ. If you behold the moon moving in her cycles overhead, you behold a testimony of Christ.

False traditions are as destructive for us as outright disobedience. The result is the same. The difference is that when we know we disobey, we feel guilt. But false traditions fool us into thinking we're obedient when we are merely misled.

The angel who visited Joseph in 1823 said his name would be had for good and evil among all people. A similar message was repeated 16 years later in March 1839 when the voice of the Lord spoke to Joseph in Liberty Jail. God said to Joseph:

"The ends of the earth shall inquire after your name, and fools shall have you in derision, and Hell shall rage against you, while the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under your hand. And your people shall never be turned against you by the testimony of traitors, and although their influence shall cast you into trouble, and into bars and walls, you shall be had in honor" (Teachings and Commandments 139:7).

Although these two are similar, there is a profound difference between the angel's statement in 1823 and the voice of God in 1839. The angel only said people would speak good and evil of Joseph. But God added a *description* of those who would speak evil and those who would speak good of Joseph.

That voice of God said fools shall have Joseph in derision. Because I accept this statement as God's, I am led to conclude all who have spoken derisively of Joseph have done so foolishly. We ought to stop our foolishness. We need to end the derision of Joseph.

God also condemned the "testimony of traitors" against Joseph. While alive, Joseph identified some of his contemporary traitors and named them: George Hinkle, John Corrill, Reed Peck, David Whitmer, W.W. Phelps, Sampson Avard, William McLellin, John Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris, Thomas Marsh, and Orson Hyde. These had been prominent leaders, trusted friends, and one-time believers in Mormonism. It was false testimony from those from within the flock that led to imprisonment of Joseph and other leaders.

The traitors of 1838 were joined by yet more traitors between 1842-44. In Missouri, Joseph was accused of treason and inciting violence. In 1842-44 Joseph's traitors accused him of adultery, polygamy, and lying. John C. Bennett was a sexual predator who claimed amidst his secret seductions that Joseph Smith authorized him to engage in his promiscuity.

When his misconduct came to light, Bennett admitted Joseph authorized no such wickedness. He swore under oath that he "never was taught any thing in the least contrary to the strictest principles of the Gospel, or of virtue, or of the laws of God, or man, under any circumstances, or upon any occasion either directly or indirectly, in word or deed, by Joseph Smith: and that he never knew the said Smith to countenance any improper conduct

whatever, either in public or private; and that he never did teach me in private that an illegal illicit intercourse with the females was, under any circumstances, justifiable; and that I never knew him so to teach others.”

William Law was also involved in secret adultery, and Joseph Smith refused to seal Law’s marriage. A conspiracy of traitors in 1844 included William Law, Charles Ivins, Francis Higbee, Chauncey Higbee, Reed [Robert] Foster and Charles Foster (who published the *Nauvoo Expositor*) accusing Joseph Smith of the very evil Joseph had been hunting down and eradicating through high council proceedings since the Bennett affair had become public two years earlier.

Joseph was unequivocal in his opposition to adultery and plural wife-taking. About the time Bennett’s misconduct was beginning to come to light, Joseph Smith organized the Female Relief Society to encourage moral and chaste conduct in Nauvoo. In addition to the steps he took privately to discipline those involved directly, he made many public declarations against plural wives and in favor of chastity and moral purity.

He also encouraged the Relief Society to adopt a declaration titled “A Voice of Innocence.” It was read publicly by W.W. Phelps on March 7, 1844, then edited by Emma Smith, adopted by the Relief Society, and published in the *Nauvoo Neighbor* on March 20, 1844.

Because of the testimony of traitors, Joseph Smith has been held in derision from 1842 to the present. He is accused of being a sexual predator, liar, and adulterer. Fools have repeated the accusations originally made by the confessed adulterer John C. Bennett, though Bennett testified under oath that Joseph was not responsible and never behaved in any improper way toward women.

In the derision of Joseph Smith today, we now have a chorus that includes the LDS Church, which claims him as their founder. It comes from Brian Hales, who claims to be an accurate biographer. It comes from anti-Mormons and Christian ministers and fundamentalists who have created a caricature they claim to be Joseph. There is little difference between these people and William Law, Charles Ivins, Francis Higbee, Chauncey Higbee, Robert Foster and Charles Foster (who published the *Nauvoo Expositor*). There is an immense chorus of fools holding Joseph in derision, even among those who claim to be devout followers of the faith he restored.

I think the voice Joseph heard in Liberty Jail was God’s. If I’m right, then God’s advice to the pure in heart, wise, noble, and virtuous is to seek counsel, authority, and blessing from Joseph. God’s advice leads me to adopt a view of Joseph that is consistent with nobility and virtue. I do not believe you can regard Joseph as a sexual predator, liar, and adulterer without holding him in derision. The chief and unavoidable result of thinking of Joseph in those terms has been a legacy of excusing institutional lying and promoting adulterous thoughts and inappropriately entertaining the concept of women as mere breeding stock for the use of men.

It is not possible to harbor lustful, deceitful, and adulterous thoughts in your heart and claim to be pure in heart. I do not believe you can conspire to commit bigamy and adultery and claim to be virtuous. I do not believe you can decide to trust the words of traitors and villains who contradict Joseph's account of his marital fidelity to Emma and to claim to seek counsel from Joseph. In short, those who claim to accept the restoration but believe Joseph was a sexual predator do not qualify as noble, wise, virtuous, or pure in thought.

It is important to realize the restoration was hijacked by polygamy and has never regained the momentum Joseph envisioned. That abomination has darkened men's hearts and broken women's hearts. It is used to justify looking upon women with lust in men's hearts, contrary to the Lord's command in the Sermon on the Mount.

I hold Joseph in some considerable esteem. On the lightning-rod issue of plural wives, I've decided the historical record does not convict Joseph of polygamy, lying, deception, sexual improprieties, or exploitation of women. If I thought of Joseph Smith as a man capable of such things I would join his traitors in deriding him. I prefer to think him virtuous and noble. I think it is only possible for any person whose heart is pure and who prizes virtue, wisdom, and nobility to respect Joseph Smith by regarding him as pure, wise, noble, and virtuous. To me, adultery, promiscuity, and deceit are none of those things.

I reject adultery by any name or description. It's morally wrong if you call it plural wives, polygamy, "celestial marriage," or any other misnomer. Adultery is prohibited in the Ten Commandments and remains an important prohibition for any moral society.

Mormonism should never have been saddled with Brigham Young's program of making adultery a sacrament. But Mormonism should not have been saddled with many institutional accretions. Between June 27, 1844 and today, there have been too many incorrect subtractions and far too many uninspired additions. Mormonism today requires both dramatic subtractions and necessary additions. No one seems willing to do that with the precision required to "*Strive to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*" (Timothy 1:6 NC).

Brigham Young was not the only one who betrayed Joseph and caused his memory to be held in derision. David Whitmer betrayed Joseph in 1838, testified against him, and helped cause his Missouri imprisonment. Many years later, Whitmer's testimony as a traitor and accuser was published in "An Address to All Believers in Christ." Though he had been excommunicated in 1838 and never lived in Nauvoo, he accepted and echoed the *Nauvoo Expositor's* claims about Joseph and polygamy.

Bastille posed the question in a song, "Pompeii": "Where do we begin? The rubble or our sins?" I think it begins with our sins. They first have to be set aside through Christ. But afterwards we have a Mormon landscape filled with rubble, out of joint, out of level, out of plumb, collapsed or collapsing. Mormonism's founding texts tell us this is as it should be for the present. We were never supposed to see Zion before the witnessed gentile failure and apostasy.

Christ declared to the Nephites a warning to the gentiles:

“And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you, At that day when the gentiles shall sin against my gospel and shall reject the fullness of my gospel and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings and of deceits and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy and murders and priestcrafts and whoredoms and of secret abominations, and if they shall do all those things and shall reject the fullness of my gospel, Behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fullness of my gospel from among them” (3 Nephi 7:5 NC).

This is not phrased as a possibility but as an inevitability. It was never a question of *if* the gentiles would reject the fullness. It has always been only a matter of *when* it would take place. The various institutions quarrel over whether it has happened. Some of them deny it can or will happen. The soothing mantra “we will never lead you astray” defies the message Christ was commanded by the Father to declare to us.

Joseph Smith has been held in derision for too long. Even those who claim to follow the commandments from God that came through him, deride his memory. This has gone on unchecked for far too long. The saints fell under condemnation in 1831 for taking lightly the *Book of Mormon* and former commandments given through Joseph Smith, then eight years later were warned it was foolish to hold Joseph in derision. Reclaiming the restoration requires repentance—first, recovering and accepting the text of the *Book of Mormon*, and restoring the former commandments to what God originally spoke. That’s been done by a small group of remnant believers. But second, we need to end the derision of Joseph and acknowledge that he was pure of heart, noble, and virtuous, and to act accordingly. It’s foolish to magnify his errors to justify our own. It’s wicked to attribute uncommitted sins to him to give ourselves a license to sin. Generations have been cursed for this error.

We have been led astray! All of us in every branch of Mormonism err. We stumble, and we have fallen down. We have discarded the expansive theology of Joseph Smith. The earliest dispensations had truth from heaven as their guide. Joseph began re-assembling what was lost but was slain before it was completed. We are the offspring of heaven and are capable of reuniting with heaven while mortal. We also have the opportunity, through eons of progression, to become as our Parents, the Gods.

Now is the time to awaken, arise, and shake off the dust. Some will awaken, arise, shake off the dust, and push forward to recover the restoration. God will set His hand a second time to accomplish His covenants. We are promised there will be a last-days’ Zion established on this, the American continent. We know that when it is here:

“[E]very man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety, and there shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under Heaven, and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another. And it shall be

said among the wicked, Let us not go up to battle against Zion, for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible, wherefore we cannot stand. And it shall come to pass that the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations, and shall come to Zion singing with songs of everlasting joy” (Teachings and Commandments 31:15).

The restoration has indeed squandered many opportunities by those who went before. Most of those who accept Joseph Smith as a founder of their religion are still squandering the opportunity to see the work continue. But God’s purposes do not fail, and we have the option to proceed now. Some generation, at some point, still has a glorious, promised completion to anticipate. As long as some, even a very few, are willing to walk in God’s path, they will see the completion of this glorious, final work. *“This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth, and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the Lord of hosts has purposed, and who shall disannul? And his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?” (2 Nephi 10:8 NC).*

Why not now? Why not us? All that’s required is to repent and return. The promise we have in exchange for our returning to the path is the stuff all the prophets and righteous from the days of Adam have eagerly anticipated.

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The foregoing excerpts are taken from the presentation of Denver’s paper entitled “The Restoration’s Shattered Promises and Great Hope” at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, UT on July 28, 2018.

Podcast Episode 31: Priestcraft

QUESTION: What is priestcraft? Does it exist today? And how can we avoid it?

DENVER: Turn to 2 Nephi, chapter 10, beginning at verse 11: *“And this land shall be a land of liberty unto the Gentiles, and there shall be no kings upon the land, who shall raise up unto the Gentiles. And I will fortify this land against all other nations. And he that fighteth against Zion shall perish, saith God. For he that raiseth up a king against me shall perish, for I, the Lord, the king of heaven, will be their king, and I will be a light unto them forever, that hear my words.”*

We, if we’re gonna have Zion, must reject even the idea of a king. I know that embedded in the doctrine of the restoration is the notion that we’re going to become “Kings and Queens, Priests and Priestesses.” I want to suggest to you when Christ said, *“My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36)*, and He girt himself with a towel, and He knelt down, and He washed the feet of those that He was ministering to, that implicit within that is the kind of conduct that the real King (and those who are His kings and priests) put on display. If He said, *“My kingdom is not of this world”*—here He came merely to be a servant—how much more should we, gratefully, look at the opportunity to kneel and to serve, rather than to say, *“I want the chief seats,”* rather than say, *“I want to be upheld and sustained and lauded and praised.* And if you can, would you mind throwing a big musical celebration my next birthday?”

Christ is our only King, and His kingdom is not of this world. He said: *“If I...have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example...The servant is not greater than his lord.”* That is John 13, verses 14 and 16.

The twin of kingship is priestcraft. In 2 Nephi 26:29 (by the way, the denunciation of kingship came from the same prophet who denounces priestcraft—he hit them both)—2 Nephi 26:29: *“He commandeth that there shall be no priestcrafts; for, behold, priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world, that they may get gain and praise of the world; but they seek not the welfare of Zion.”*

The twin of kingship is priestcraft, and the purpose of priestcraft is to *“set themselves up...that they may get gain.”* It’s not that they set themselves up *“for a light unto the world,”* but they *“set themselves up for a light into the world that they may get gain.”*

We have enough gentile leaders. We have a good enough church (or churches) already. When those churches err, they suffer the consequences of doing so. We do not need another church (or churches). We do not need a king. We do not need more priestcraft.

Institutional forms of Mormonism want to claim that God has finished His work for our day and has given His authority to a select group of professional clergy. Their jealousy and envy

keep them out of the kingdom, and those under their control are prevented from entering in.

The greatness of Mormonism has not been realized in any of its past, and those who have managed to profit from organizing institutions, based on its mere beginning, are threatened by the idea that there is yet much more to be added.

Mormonism has been a dismal underachiever. Its most wealthy sect is riddled with errors, controlled by an oligarchy of priestcraft jealous of their power, wealth, and influence. It has a criminal past, an unstable present, and an insecure future. That empire is diversifying its portfolio into land development, banking, and business enterprises to replace the now diminishing tithe cash stream upon which the empire was built.

The some 100+ corporations that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints now is comprised of is no accident. When the saints moved westward from Nauvoo, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hildago was signed on Feb 2, 1848, which conveyed to the United States the present day states of California, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, most of Arizona and Colorado, parts of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Wyoming, over which there was simply no law.

In a vacuum, which is where the Church found itself, the Church began to license timber. The Church began to give deeds. The Church began to assume authority over water. And this was a necessary civilizing step to be taken, otherwise people could not have the confidence to go forward and do anything. Therefore, the Church became the center of property; the Church became the center of government; and the Church became, by necessity, the entity through which all of the territory got organized. How thorough that organization became and was dependant upon the Church can be determined from where the Salt Lake base and meridian is located, in order to determine by metes and bounds, where all of the property of you people who live in Utah is reckoned from. It's the Salt Lake base and meridian, and if you go to Temple Square, you will find the marker there that was set by the coordinates determined by Orson Pratt, when he set it in 1855. But he did it based upon where Brigham Young set his cane down and said, "This is the place." That defined Temple Square. We have a legacy that created the legal environment that begins with the western migration.

Well, on July 10th of 2015, the Church announced that it was going to develop (on 133,000 acres in Florida) a new development that would include buildings to house 500,000 new residents. To give you an idea of how big that project will be—it would require you to take all of the populations of Salt Lake City, West Valley City, Provo, and West Jordan together, in order to come up with residential housing for 500,000 people. It's not housing alone, because these people need gas stations; these people need sewer systems. These people need everything that goes on in order to have that many communities.

Think of the engineering and development, think of the building and housing, think of all of the opportunities for commerce, employment, school, church—think of everything that would be required in order to establish, right now from scratch, enough development to fit

in Layton, St. George, Ogden, Sandy, Orem, and West Jordan, and you have some idea of the scope of what this development in Florida is going to entail.

The youngest member of the current Quorum of the Twelve is a year older than me. He will not live—he will not live to see this project through to completion. Do not think for one moment that the development of property by an owner is simply a discharge of responsibility to architects and engineers, because there are numerous decisions that have to be made all along the program in order to turn ground into a development. I know because, as a lawyer, I've done a great deal of that.

Take, for example, just the engineering issues that are involved in sewer systems. The state of Florida is overwhelmingly below 60 foot in elevation above sea level, and it is essentially flat. If you're going to develop a sewer system for a half a million people's residences, businesses, and everything else, you're going to have to make a lot of engineering decisions along the way. There is no architect, there is no engineer that's going to assume that responsibility. They're going to require the owner to assume the responsibility and to answer all the questions, which means you're going to be babysitting a development for the next 50-65 years in order to see it through to completion.

Now as an example of how decisions made early-on occupy the attention of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve, I want to read you (from some minutes in January of 1891) a meeting of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. It's held at the Guardo House, because the temple would not be completed until 1893. Between the time of it beginning and time of the temple being completed, the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve met at the Guardo House.

These are minutes taken by one of the members of the Twelve, Abraham Cannon:

"January 23, 1891, 11am. At this hour I went to a special quorum meeting at the Guardo house. Present, Wilford Woodruff, George Cannon, Joseph F. Smith, Lorenzo Snow, Franklin D. Richards, Franklin M. Liven, John Henry Smith, Heber J. Grant, and myself. The question of the sugar industry was discussed and each expressed his view of the matter. Pres. Woodruff was very anxious to see it established and felt it was a matter which should interest and engage the attention of all. Joseph F. Smith felt that a success should be made of this labor because of the evil results which would follow of failure of our endeavor."

And then they go on from there, ultimately deciding (and in light of the hour, I'll spare you those minutes)—ultimately deciding to go forward with it in part because one of the large gentiles in the valley predicted the Church would fail in it, and the Church didn't want him to be vindicated, so they decided they were going to get into the sugar industry.

Now if you go forward 40 years later, the decision to start the sugar industry comes back in minutes that I take from the diary of Heber J. Grant on December the 23rd of 1930:

“George said he thought it would be a mistake...”—(this is George Spencer)—“George said he thought it would be a mistake for Orville Adams or myself to go on the sugar board. It would create comment that it might yet be favorable to the banks. And Brother Ivans seemed to agree with him. I said that it is a church institution, and we must save it. Brother Ivins said he was opposed absolutely to the church attempting to save it, that it is not a church institution. I disagreed absolutely with him in my feelings. It is more of a church institution, almost, than the two banks. And should anything happen to it, it would affect the banks ten times more than anything else that could happen. Because the church originally called people practically on a mission to invest in it. I delivered a letter signed by the presidency of the church asking for investments. It is looked upon as a church institution. The church owns 72.5% of the preferred stock, and if we do not protect it, it will weaken the credit of the church all over the United States in my judgement.

We were jeopardizing not only a great institution but the credit of the church if anything happened to the sugar company, as it would injure the three banks in which the church is interested—Utah State National, Zions Saving Bank, and Utah Savings and Trust Company—ten times more than if they were to put up a lot of money and actually sustain a loss.”

So now in order to protect the credit of the Church and the banking institutions, the sugar enterprise that was undertaken needed to be bailed out and needed to be supported. But that’s not all. The issue of sugar and the sugar industry affected even General Conference talks. Okay?

This is on April the 5th of 1932:

“Brother Lorenzo Elggren called and made an appeal to me—as he is representing a big candy company—that in my conference talk....” This is the church president’s proposed conference talk. “...that in my conference talk I do not discriminate against the candy people. He told how many carloads of beet sugar they thought they bought for candy and that McDonalds and Sweets used a lot of cane sugar. That the company he represents is four or five times as big as both of them and has never bought anything but beet sugar, thus sustaining home industry. I told him I would forget to make a strong appeal for home manufacturing, although I said, ‘You know, brother Elggren, it would really be better for the people if you could not sell any candy here because it would furnish that much more employment.’”

So he dropped out of his General Conference address anything that related to the sugar industry and home industry.

Well, if you think that the meetings of the Quorum of the Twelve involve something that you believe Jesus would want to attend...

President Woodruff—this is on April the 3rd of 1899. These are minutes from the secretary of the First Presidency, L. John Nuttall:

“President Woodruff called up the misunderstanding between Brother Moses Thatcher and George Q. Cannon on the Bullion Beck and Champion Mining Company matters which he wished to have settled. I read all the correspondence between the parties and Pres. Woodruff since this affair was brought up by Brother Moses Thatcher on December 3 of 1888, after which the brethren spoke, Brother Cannon having submitted a very fair proposition for settlement. Brother Thatcher was very persist in his views. The matter was left over to give Brother Thatcher time to examine Brother Cannon’s position. Each of them expressed themselves as not having any feeling against each other so strong but what they can attend to the general business before the council.”

Well, as you go through the minutes of the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve, what you learn is that that corporate enterprise that the Church has found itself owning, owns the Church. You can’t have a multi-billion dollar business enterprise and neglect it. Those 105+ corporations demand attention, and they receive attention.

This is a Thursday meeting in the temple on December 28 of 1893:

“In the afternoon was at the temple until 5 o’clock. There were present at the meeting all of the presidency and Brothers Lorenzo Snow, Franklin D. Richards, Francis M. Lyman, Heber J. Grant, and myself. George Gibbs was clerk. The matter of purchasing the coal mine in Iron County and the constructing of the railroad to the pacific coast was next considered. Father made a statement of his labors in the East recently and said it was proposed by the manufacturers of the rails and so on that the church endorsed the bonds of the proposed road, in which case they will bring 30% more in their sale than if they were placed on the market unendorsed. The proposed coal mine purchase is a mine owned by Wooden Jensen near Cedar City, in which contains an inexhaustible quantity of coal. The price proposed is \$32,000 for a section of coal, but it is believed that a little reduction can be got on this figure. The whole matter was fully discussed, but it was becoming late. We adjourned until tomorrow. The next day, all were in attendance today who were here yesterday. It was decided that the presidency be authorized to take all necessary steps to carry the project through to successful completion, whether this means the using of church funds for this purpose or the endorsing of the bonds so as to place them on the market and obtain the highest price for them.”

The business of the Church is business. The ownership of the kingdom requires that the kingdom be maintained. And if your kingdom is of this world, then the worldly concerns related to your kingdom necessarily require your attention.

At the end of the day, one of the product lines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which is owned by the Corporation of the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter-day Saints—one of the product lines is the religion called Mormonism. That religion can underperform and not produce the revenue stream in tithing that you would like it to see. That's a good revenue stream, because from it all revenue is untaxed. The way to stimulate that revenue stream is to get out in general conference and to talk about the necessity for increase in the performance of the part of the product line. But if it underperforms consistently you can always diversify by investing in and improving, well for example, a mega-mall and a condo project, an office and retail space in Salt Lake City in City Creek or in Philadelphia, as they decided to do, or a massive project like the one that is currently done in Florida. But when you undertake those projects, it's going to require the continual babysitting by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve. It's going to occupy, as it has for nearly two centuries, the meetings that are held in the Thursday get-together of the Brethren.

You could get a group together, and you could unanimously vote out all of the leadership of the Church, and Thomas S. Monson could lock all of the chapel buildings and lock all of the temples and say, "Okay, go ahead. But I own it all." He would own everything. There would be nothing that Mormons would take ownership of themselves—but they couldn't even use the name "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" because it is a mark that is owned by the Corporation of the President. There is one owner, there is one member, and he owns everything. And it is always the senior most member of the Quorum of the Twelve, and he owns everything. And it's not subject—the words are up there, you put them on the board—it's not subject to a vote or approval by anyone. If he's mentally unable to serve, then it moves on to the next who is senior most. They never dispossess him because of the ability to keep going. There's only one Mormon.

In the early Church everything was done through conferences. At every conference that was held, someone was elected by common consent to preside at the conference. Usually, if Joseph Smith was there, they elected him, but they could have elected anyone. If a conference invited everyone, it was called a general conference. If, instead of inviting everyone, it was for a specific area, then it was some kind of local conference. They'd elect someone, then that someone would conduct the business. It would all be done by common consent, and anyone that had any business could bring it up, and anyone that had any complaints or suggestions could bring it up, and if anyone needed to be disciplined they could bring it up. And the purpose of the conference was to take care of the business, to make sure that the community was cohesive, and that issues were dealt with.

They even used conferences to get revelation. One of the brethren early-on wanted to know whether or not he should go on a mission, moving to Missouri. And so the conference was called to address the issue, and everyone discussed it, and then they took a vote by common consent, and they unanimously decided on whether to go or not go or send him on a mission.

When Brigham Young was in control, all equality was destroyed, and the Church became an oligarchy run by the Twelve. This continues from Young until today. Now, the senior apostle

automatically becomes the Church president—an unscriptural and unwise system for consolidating power. Equality among many has been replaced with the dictatorship of one.

Joseph cautioned the saints about violating God’s trust. As he put it: “His word will go forth, in these last days, in purity; for if Zion will not purify herself, so as to be approved in all things, in His sight, He will seek another people; for His work will go on until Israel is gathered, and they who will not hear His voice, must expect to feel His wrath.” That’s in *“Teachings [of the Prophet Joseph Smith]”*, page 18.

To the same effect, during the Mormon reformation, Heber C. Kimball said: “We receive this priesthood and power and authority—if we make a bad use of the priesthood do you not see that the day will come that God will reckon with us, and he will take it from us and give it to those who will make better use of it.” That’s in the *Journal of Discourses*, Volume 6, page 125.

George Albert Smith said essentially the same thing; Brigham Young said essentially the same thing.

We should expect God’s house to be ordered around only one principle: repentance. When the pride of a great organization replaces repentance, the heavens withdraw, and when they do, amen to that portion of God’s house.

The restoration through Joseph Smith will always remain, even if God chooses to order it differently before His return. It is His to do with as He determines best. He’s now sent me as a witness.

The passing of Eldred Smith was a moment in time that reflects the cumulative effect of a lot of decisions—including and beginning with the initial overthrow of the government of the Church by the Twelve at the passing of Joseph and Hyrum, culminating in the final overthrow of the priesthood itself by the death of the discarded Eldred Smith, and the discontinuation of the authority that was supposed to have been kept in honorable remembrance from generation to generation. God will bestow that authority again, and it will go forward. But it will go forward without these organizational pretenders that amass wealth and practice priestcraft.

The Savior is extraordinarily positive. And when He speaks negatively, it’s at those moments that I want to pay particular attention and give some careful consideration. One of the spots in which—in 3 Nephi in His visit with the Nephites at Bountiful—He spoke quite negatively, He attributed the content of His pessimistic prophecy to the Father and noted that the reason why He was stating it was because the Father had told Him to.

This is in 3 Nephi 16:10, *“And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you...”* is how He prefaces His direful assessment of the latter-day gentiles. *“At that day when the Gentiles shall sin against my gospel, and shall reject the fulness of my gospel, and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations, and above all the people of the whole*

earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings, and of deceits, and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy, and murders, and priestcrafts...” And then He goes on from there: *“...and shall reject, Behold, saith the Father...”* This is Christ attributing what the Father has told Him as the source for His message, *“...I will bring the fulness of my gospel from among them.”*

In that list we all can make a self-assessment about a variety of things. But the fact that He included within the list of the defects of the last-day gentiles the word “priestcrafts” ought to alarm every one of us. Because priestcraft, when it gets defined in the *Book of Mormon*, is something that I think all are tempted to engage in.

Peter was equally concerned, and in his First Epistle [5, verses 2-3] he wrote: *“Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over the Lord's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.”*

It is not appropriate that someone should collect money from the flock, nor “lord it over the flock.” Priestcraft is one of those toxic failures of the last-day gentiles that we have to guard against it appearing among us, as well. Nephi wrote:

“For the time speedily shall come that all churches which are built up to get gain, and all those who are built up to get power over the flesh, and those who are built up to become popular in the eyes of the world, and those who seek the lusts of the flesh and the things of the world, and to do all manner of iniquity; yea, in fine, all those who belong to the kingdom of the devil are they who need fear, and tremble, and quake; they are those who must be brought low in the dust; they are those who must be consumed as stubble; and this is according to the words of the prophet” (1 Nephi 22:23).

Nephi supplies us with the definition of priestcraft:

“He commandeth that there shall be no priestcraft, for behold priestcrafts are that men preach and set themselves up for a light unto the world that they may get gain and praise of the world, but they seek not the welfare of Zion” (2 Nephi 26:29).

There is something so toxic about the practice of priestcraft that I want to flip the normal approach to this topic and not focus upon how we see it being practiced by others, but to use it rather as a check on what *we* do and how *we* approach the gospel of Christ. It is so toxic that if you engage in the practice of priestcraft—of setting yourself up to be the light, seeking yourself to become popular, seeking yourself to get gain and praise—that it interferes fundamentally with your ability to even be of service to the Lord.

Tithes ought not be used to support a man. Tithes ought be used to help the poor, and the weak, and the infirm. There is “enough and to spare,” according to the revelation given to Joseph Smith (D&C 104:17), but only if the purpose for which the tithes are paid are satisfied first—not to enrich men. I would dare not participate in a ministry in which

service and sacrifice wasn't compelled. I wouldn't dare do that. There is a hardness associated with taking pay for what you do. There is an arrogance that sets you above the flock. It is better to pay than to receive tithes and offerings. It is better to give than to take.

We got an extensive warning—Moroni reflecting upon what the predicament of the gentiles would be in the last days, in Mormon chapter 8 (and this is Moroni who's talking), beginning at verse 32:

“Yea, it shall come in a day when there shall be churches built up that shall say: Come unto me, and for your money you shall be forgiven of your sins. O ye wicked and perverse and stiffnecked people, why have ye built up churches unto yourselves to get gain? Why have ye transfigured the holy word of God, that ye might bring damnation upon your souls? Behold, look ye unto the revelations of God; for behold, the time cometh at that day when all these things must be fulfilled. Behold, the Lord hath shown unto me great and marvelous things concerning that which must shortly come, at that day when these things shall come forth among you. Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not. But behold, Jesus Christ hath shown you unto me, and I know your doing. And I know that ye do walk in the pride of your hearts; and there are none save a few only who do not lift themselves up in the pride of their hearts, unto the wearing of very fine apparel, unto envying, and strifes, and malice, and persecutions, and all manner of iniquities; and your churches, yea, even every one, have become polluted because of the pride of your hearts. For behold, ye do love money, and your substance, and your fine apparel, and the adorning of your churches, more than ye love the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted” (verses 32-37).

He makes no exception for some latter-day church. He makes no exception for some latter-day organization. There may be those who are the “humble followers of Christ” that are mentioned with some frequency in the *Book of Mormon*, but they're never mentioned in a congregational setting. They're never mentioned in an institutional setting. Nor is the gathering that is to take place in the last days ever an institutional gathering. Christ Himself said it would be “one of a city, two of a family.” He did not say “one of an institution.” There is no such thing, and the *Book of Mormon* preaches against it. And we are just as vulnerable to that misapprehension as are any other group of people.

It is our relationship to, and our connection with, God that matters. And you form that not through me or through some other man and not through the groups to which you belong. The groups to which you belong are a place to render service. They're a place where you can sacrifice to help others. And I don't care if that group is Methodist, Presbyterian, Latter-day Saint, or one of the fellowships that have been organized. That is of little consequence. You can be a Christian soul wherever you are, serving whoever you happen to be in contact with.

I'm going to talk about Zion. And Zion is going to be gathered. But the gathering of that group will not necessarily come exclusively from any party, group, denomination, or lineage. Priestcraft damages the practitioner, I think more so than those on whom he

practices. I don't see how you can destroy equality and injure and grieve the Spirit by holding yourself up as a light and interfering with the work of the Lord in bringing about Zion and not suffer the greater loss.

The things of heaven were never intended to be given into the hands of men so that they might profit from them. We are expected to sacrifice for God. A religion that does not require sacrifice is a religion that will not produce faith. And if there is one thing that is going to be necessary for the establishment of Zion, it is going to necessarily be faith. You obtain it through sacrifice. You do not obtain it through adoration. You do not obtain it through the praise of men. You do not obtain it by sitting in chief seats. You don't obtain it by faring sumptuously and administering the wealth that is surrendered to you as if you were God. It belongs to God; it is His. You should go get a job to support yourself if you're going to administer the tithes, and leave the tithes alone.

I know there are verses that suggest that the laborer is worthy of his hire. I know that. I'm telling you it's toxic. I'm telling you that there are—in the history of mankind, I can think of maybe five men who have lived that would be worthy and beyond corruption in occupying that role, and one of those five was the Lord Himself. Don't look upon a passing verse as a basis upon which to revoke and to cast aside all of the other many verses and warnings and cautions and prophecies about the abuse of the last-days gentiles, which largely emanate from the corruption of our religion because of priestcraft.

Priestcraft is toxic, not just to the listeners but to the practitioners. If what you're saying, if what you're preaching, is greeted with wild enthusiasm, and it doesn't get you shunned, then you're probably not saying anything that God would agree with. God's purpose is to bring us to repentance. I mean, the Lord is exceptionally positive, but He is positive in stating affirmatively the standard that is acceptable to Him. *"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my name sake"* (Matthew 5:11). He expected us to be misunderstood, misapprehended, assessed very narrowly—just as He was, cast out—not to be handed money and to be given a chief seat, to be adored, and to be respected.

Our challenge among ourselves, however diminutive we may seem to be, priestcraft can invade our little fellowships every bit as much as it can invade multi-billion dollar institutions. There's no limit on where you can run amiss.

Rest assured that God intends to establish in the last-days a Zion in which we will see the return of exactly what was here at the beginning. There will be a return. I mean the reason why they're coming to the children of Ephraim in the everlasting mountains is because there will be a New Jerusalem. They will bring rich treasures when they come because they have records that they themselves are going to need to have translated. And they're going to be crowned because the family of God consists of people who are, in fact, kings and priests. All of that infrastructure has to be put in place by the Lord before His return. And therefore, He intends to accomplish this work. And when He accomplishes this work, you're not going to find at the top of it, a king like the gentiles expect. You're going to find something or

someone or some group who are meek and lowly, who are rather more like our Savior than the kings who ruled during our Savior's day. You won't find a Caesar, and you won't find a local potentate. You'll find a servant.

Men have to extend the invitation for God to return, so that men who extend that invitation are worthy of His return, and the Lord can safely come without utterly destroying all who are upon the earth. Therefore you need Zion, among other reasons, in order for there to be a place and a people to whom the Lord can safely return without utterly destroying the earth at His coming. However small, however diminutive it may be, there needs to be a Zion that extends the invitation for the Lord to return.

Now the good news is that Zion will be preserved. And the even better news is that all of those good people of the earth who live in ignorance but who would have accepted the truth if it were brought to them, they will be preserved, also. There will be a mission field into the millenium.

But the really really bad news is, in the laundry list of those whom the Lord intends to destroy at His coming, that is the description of those who are telestial and therefore cannot endure His presence when He shall come—all of the liars, all of the whoremongers, all of the people who have taken our Lord's name in vain *having not authority*, all of those who have preached for hire and practiced priestcraft. One of the reasons it needs to be eradicated before you get to Zion is so you're not ignited like a torch head to the amusement of everyone else that is in Zion. There has to be an end of all that nonsense.

We were never supposed to see Zion before the witnessed gentile failure and apostasy. Christ declared to the Nephites a warning to the gentiles:

“And thus commandeth the Father that I should say unto you, At that day when the gentiles shall sin against my gospel and shall reject the fullness of my gospel and shall be lifted up in the pride of their hearts above all nations and above all the people of the whole earth, and shall be filled with all manner of lyings and of deceits and of mischiefs, and all manner of hypocrisy and murders and priestcrafts and whoredoms and of secret abominations, and if they shall do all those things and shall reject the fullness of my gospel, Behold, saith the Father, I will bring the fullness of my gospel from among them” (3 Nephi 16:10).

This is not phrased as a possibility but as an inevitability. It was never a question of “if” the gentiles would reject the fullness. It has always been only a matter of “when” it would take place. The various institutions quarrel over whether it has happened. Some of them deny it can or will happen. The soothing mantra “we will never lead you astray” defies the message Christ was commanded by the Father to declare to us. Generations have been cursed for this error.

We have been led astray. All of us in every branch of Mormonism err. We stumble, and we have fallen down. We have discarded the expansive theology of Joseph Smith. The earliest

dispensations had truth from heaven as their guide. Joseph began re-assembling what was lost but was slain before it was completed. We are the offspring of heaven and are capable of reuniting with heaven while mortal. We also have the opportunity, through eons of progression, to become as our Parents, the Gods.

Now is the time to awaken, arise, and shake off the dust. Some will awaken, arise, shake off the dust, and push forward to recover the restoration. God will set His hand a second time to accomplish His covenants. We are promised there will be a last-days' Zion established on this, the American continent. We know that when it is here:

"...every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor must needs flee unto Zion for safety, and there shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under Heaven, and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another. And it shall be said among the wicked, Let us not go up to battle against Zion, for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible, wherefore we cannot stand. And it shall come to pass that the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations, and shall come to Zion singing with songs of everlasting joy" (D&C 45:68-71).

The restoration has indeed squandered many opportunities by those who went before. Most of those who accept Joseph Smith as a founder of their religion are still squandering the opportunity to see the work continue. But God's purposes do not fail, and we have the option to proceed now. Some generation, at some point, still has a glorious, promised completion to anticipate. As long as some, even a very few, are willing to walk in God's path, they will see the completion of this glorious, final work. *"This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth, and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the Lord of hosts has purposed, and who shall disannul? And his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" (2 Nephi 24:26-27).*

Why not now? Why not us? All that's required is to repent and return. The promise we have in exchange for our returning to the path is the stuff all the prophets and righteous from the days of Adam have eagerly anticipated.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #6 entitled "Zion," given in Grand Junction, CO on April 12, 2014;
- His talk entitled "Other Sheep Indeed," given at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, UT on July 29, 2017;
- His comments made during a panel discussion held at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, UT on August 1, 2015;
- A Q&A session entitled "A Visit with Denver Snuffer," held on May 13, 2015;
- His talk entitled "Zion Will Come," given near Moab, UT on April 10, 2016; and

- The presentation of Denver's paper entitled "The Restoration's Shattered Promises and Great Hope," given at the Sunstone Symposium on July 28, 2018.

Podcast Episode 32: Temples, Part 1

QUESTION: This is the first installment in a multi-part series about the Temple, where Denver addresses the meaning behind both ancient and modern temple worship, as well as some of the features and purposes of the temple to be built in New Jerusalem.

DENVER: The restoration was never intended to just restore an ancient Christian church. That is only a halfway point. It must go back further. In the words of the ancient prophet, God intends to do according to His will and to *"...preserve[d] the natural fruit that it is good even like as it was in the beginning"* (Jacob 5:75). This means the beginning, as in the days of Adam, with the return of the original religion and original authority—everything must be returned as it was in the beginning. Civilization began with the temple as the center of learning, law, and culture. The temple was the original university because it taught of man's place with God in the universe.

There's a reason why, when the temple message began to roll out, the message began with telling the story of the creation and Adam and Eve.

Ordinances that were ordained by God cannot be changed. If they're changed, they're broken; if they're broken, they're ineffective. Therefore, an altered ordinance can be informational, and if you take it sincerely and if you adhere to the covenants and if you obey, God can work with that because God can work with any soul. And you can ultimately realize every blessing and every promise of the temple, as God, by the Holy Spirit of Promise, works with you to confer upon you blessings that are intended for you. So there's no downside, but there's a considerable upside if you're true and faithful to the things that you obligate yourself to do.

The purpose of a temple is to allow the communication of great knowledge and greater knowledge, to restore what has been lost since the time of Adam, in order for people to rise up and receive the Holy Order.

The ordinances of the Old Testament, beginning with Exodus, were revealed through Moses, and so when you speak about "Moses and all the prophets" you should expect Christ would necessarily begin with the ordinances of the Law of Moses. When those ordinances are their most relevant, they're talking about the sacrifices that took place there, and they point to the great atoning sacrifice which He would perform.

In the tabernacle, and subsequently in the temple that was built by Solomon, the temple divided up into three areas. There was an outer court into which was welcomed all of Israel. You had to enter Israel whether you were a priest or not a priest—all of Israel entered into the outer court. There was a Holy Place into which, on a rotating basis, the priests alone were allowed to come. They would come for the morning service; they would come for the

evening service. And then there was the Holy of Holies, into which one priest, the presiding High Priest, would enter one time each year for one specific ordinance, on Yom Kippur (or the Holy of Holies). So you had—as a matter of separation—you had everyone, and then you had a smaller group, and then you had a single person. Or, if you were to draw it out in terms of how the divisions looked, you create in the structure of the temple itself the mountain of the Lord's house.

In the Holy Place there was a separation between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies by a veil. In front of the veil there was an altar on which incense would be burned. On the one side, there was a menorah (or a candlestick). On the other, there was the table of the shewbread, and this is the structure into which the priests would pass for their ordinances. In the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the Covenant, together with the Mercy Seat and the symbolic presence of God the Father and Christ. These represented ascending levels of holiness which were symbolically separated by who got to enter. The three degrees—the three levels of holiness—are represented there. It is inside the Holy Place—*that* is the place in which the New Testament begins, and the New Testament ends. It begins chronologically in that room, and it ends in its narrative in the Book of Revelation, where Christ appears in that same room in John's vision of Patmos.

I want to turn back to the beginning of the dispensation in which Christ will come, and turn to Luke chapter 1, beginning in verse 5: *"There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judæa, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia."*

This is what James Talmage wrote about this course:

"About fifteen months prior to the Savior's birth, Zacharias, a priest of the Aaronic order, was officiating in the functions of his office in the temple at Jerusalem. His wife, Elisabeth, was also of a priestly family, being numbered among the descendants of Aaron. The couple had never been blessed with children; and at the time of which we speak they were both well stricken in years and had sorrowfully given up hope of posterity. Zacharias belonged to the course of priests named after Abijah, later known in later time as the course of Abia. This was the eighth in the order of the twenty-four courses established by David the king, each course being appointed to serve in turn a week at the sanctuary...

"During his week of service each priest was required to maintain scrupulously a state of ceremonial cleanliness of person; he had to abstain from wine and from food, except that specifically prescribed; he had to bathe frequently; he lived within the temple precincts and thus was cut off from [his] family association; he was not allowed to come near the dead, nor to mourn in [any] formal manner if death [occurred to] rob him of even his nearest and dearest of kin. [They select daily] the priest who should enter the Holy Place, and there burn incense on the golden altar, ...by lot; and...we gather, from non-scriptural history, that because of the great number of priests [and] the honor of so officiating, seldom [this honor] fell twice [in] the same person."

That's from *Jesus the Christ* at page 71.

Not only was it seldom, later Jewish tradition has it that a person, a priest, who got to go in there and to do that in this room was considered rich, having been allowed to do this on one occasion. Zacharias is well stricken in years; the lot hasn't fallen on him. He spent his lifetime hoping for it, and now the lot falls onto him. And by the way, there are no coincidences. This was, at it turns out, exactly the right time.

"...his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth" (Luke 1:5). Both sides of this family are Aaronic, Levitical, so that there's no doubt about the right, the inherited right, that John will have to officiate in the ordinances that he will later officiate in.

"...they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years. And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord" (verses 6-9).

So his job was to come with coals from off of the outer altar, and bring it in to the inner altar, and put the coals on the altar, and then put on top of it incense. And then he had a job to do, and his job was to offer a prayer. The altar of incense, which had horns at its corner, would have burned with the smoke of the incense ascending upward in the Holy Place. When it hit the ceiling, it would then move outward, the rising of the incense column being a symbol of the prayers ascending to God from the Israelite nation. When it hit the ceiling and began to spread out, it represented as well the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden, with the trunk and with the upper limbs extending. This was a symbol of the original Garden of Eden setting, all of this occurring within the Holy Place.

"And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense" (verses 10-11).

See, this—the veil—was fastened hard on the left but ended on the right in front, and behind it, it was fastened hard on the right and ended on the left, so that a person could pass through. But if you passed through, and you came from inside the Holy Place (or the Holy of Holies) into the Holy Place, you would be standing, as it turns out, on the right side of the altar. Symbolically, that meant that this person who has now come to stand on the right side of the altar has just emerged from the symbolic presence of God.

We tend to think of things as being non-physical, but when these encounters occur it gets very concrete and very specific. And there we have the right side of the altar of incense, and that description fixes the angel in the right location for him, inside the temple, to have emerged from this symbolic presence.

So the dispensation of the Meridian of Time, when the Lord is going to come, begins right here, in this spot. That ought to tell us something, too, about the terrible significance of tying into everything that the Lord does, the temple. So here we are, standing on this side of the veil with the dispensation launched, with an angel who has emerged, not from just the figurative or symbolic, but from the literal presence of the Lord, and we're going to have to, as part of this dispensation, at some point pass through that veil and enter into the Holy of Holies.

When Moses passed through the veil, the presence of the Lord was shielded by a covering of a thick cloud. The cloud operated as a veil to the onlookers of Israel, but Moses was allowed to pass through or enter through the cloud into the very presence of God. We have an account of that in Exodus chapter 24, in verses 15-18.

"And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount. And the glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. And the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights."

See, just like in the mountain of the Lord's house you have the pinnacle— the spot at the top of the mountain at which when one stands there, they are no longer of the earth, but they have become a part of the sky. That's one of the reasons why the mountain of the Lord's house is the symbol that gets used in scripture to describe the phenomenon, because it is no longer connecting you to the earth. The only thing that touches is the soles of your feet; you have become part of the heavens. Moses ascends up, and the ascension that's being talked about here in the cloud, at the top of the mountain of the Lord's house, inside there is where we find the presence of the Lord.

Similarly, one of the things that had happened was in the dispensation of the Meridian of Time. Christ also passed through the cloud and entered into the presence of the Father. There were three disciples who were able to see Moses, Elias, but they were not permitted to see the Father, though they heard His voice. They heard the voice speaking from inside the cloud; only Christ passed into the Father's presence. That's recorded in Matthew 17:1-8. The relevant part:

"...after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid."

It's intimidating.

"And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only."

See, He was risen again from the dead. There is no reason now to withhold the information about the Lord having passed through the veil on the Mount of Transfiguration into the presence of God the Father.

In the rites of Moses there was one occasion when it was permitted to enter into the Holy of Holies. It took place only one time each year on a specific day. The day is set out in Leviticus 23 where it says: *"...on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement...And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement"* (verse 27-28).

This orientation as to time and number orients us on the tenth day to remind us of the "Ten Commandments" at Sinai. Ten is whole; it's complete. We use ten because of our fingers as the basis for our numbering system. And seven, on the seventh month, is a symbol of creation or completion or perfection. These two numbers combined in a symbolic testimony of the significance of the Day of Atonement, which is also testament of the perfection, the completion, the exactness of the timing of the actual atonement. It was no accident the Lord came and did what He did at the very moment that He did it, and it's no accident that the angel appeared at the very moment he did.

The Day of Atonement (or Yom Kippur) was originally associated with the deaths of Aaron's two sons. That's sort of an odd thing to think about. That's where it comes from; that's where it gets started. They had taken incense into the Holy of Holies and burned it there in an unauthorized manner, and that offense—in entering into the presence of God in an unauthorized way—resulted in Nadab and Abihu being killed. Fire came out and devoured them; they were killed. The Day of Atonement was the day in which there was a method provided for Aaron to enter into the Holy of Holies without being destroyed. The entirety of the ordinance reaches out, first to cleanse Aaron (or Aaron's successor) as the High Priest, and then to cleanse the temple, and then to cleanse all of Israel. It was a progression in three degrees, as if the atonement were intended to include redemption for the celestial, the terrestrial, and the telestial; as if the mercy of God was intended to extend to every living creature regardless of their obedience to Him. It was intended to be all-inclusive and all-encompassing.

In the context of the Day of Atonement, there was a prescribed use for incense. It symbolizes the cloud covering the presence of God, just as the cloud covering Sinai when Moses entered the presence of God, and the full account of the rite is set out in chapter 16 of Leviticus.

Well, I want to take a look at what that says, only for purposes of saying what necessarily the Lord had to suffer in order to enter into His glory. We don't look at these old books anymore. We tend to think that they were all done away with, and they were. We don't celebrate them anymore, but they were intended to give an orientation to who it was the Messiah was and what it was the Messiah was intended to do. It is a testimony. See, if God knows all things beforehand, and He does, then He knows how to set out in a ritual all of the details of what it is He's about to do—because it is fascinating to take a look at what the Lord suffered in the actual atonement in order to see what the rites were intended to reveal about Him. You don't understand the Lord until you understand what He set out in symbol to testify about Himself.

So if we go to Leviticus 16:1, *“And the Lord spake unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron...”* That incident occurred in Leviticus 10:1-3. *“...when they offered before the Lord, and died; And the Lord said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat.”*

So you don't get to control the timing of events. The Lord reserves to Himself the timing of events. If you think that there are moments when you are ready for something, you may not be. It's the Lord who decides and the Lord who fixes the time, and those things are determined according to the mercy and the wisdom of the Lord, just as it was when Zacharias was surprised in the Holy Place.

Verse 12 says: *“...he...”* that is, Aaron—when he goes in—and his descendants *“...shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil: And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not...”* (Leviticus 16:12-13).

So he's supposed to bring (from off of the altar of burnt sacrifice) coals with him, and he's supposed to bring a collection of incense with him, and he's to enter into—through the veil—into the Holy of Holies, and there he is supposed to set the coals and set the incense, in order for a cloud to be produced inside the Holy of Holies. So he's inside the veil of the temple, but he's also being drawn into a further cloud, or veil, inside the Holy Place, “that he die not.”

Well, unlike the room in which the altar of incense appears, the room in which this takes place is literally a cube. Every dimension is exactly the same inside this room. It is a perfect cube, and it's significantly smaller than the room from which he's traversed to get there. The incense behaves in a different way, and the cloud that's produced there does not become columnar, it fills the room because it's a much smaller space. And so while he's in there ministering, he is inside the cloud and in the symbolic presence of God, just as Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration had accomplished that, and the elements from Sinai are brought as well. You have Moses on the Mount Sinai, you have Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, and you have an ordinance. And the ordinance is symbolically recreating

these actual events—one that had occurred at the beginning of the dispensation, one that will occur in the Lord’s own life, and it is to be modeled every year on the Day of Atonement.

The Messiah’s life necessarily included an ascension through a cloud or veil into the presence of God. He was touching on one of the required elements of His ministry when this ordinance was established and when He said: “Ought not these things to have occurred?” One of the things that ought to have occurred was the incident on the Mount of Transfiguration. It satisfied one of the elements of the Law of Moses which would identify Him as the Anointed One, as the Lord, as the promised Messiah. In all things, Christ was required to fulfil what had been foretold of Him. When He asked: “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?” on the road to Emmaus, it’s the same sort of question that He and John the Baptist exchanged at His baptism. “Suffer it to be so because we need these things. There’s a pattern here. I must conform to the pattern. I am the one who will fulfil the pattern, therefore, I must do this, John. It’s necessary, it’s essential.” And if so for Him, then for us, also. When He said, “Come, follow me,” I don’t think He had in mind merely walking around Palestine—the Savior was talking about things that were transcendent.

The great Day of Atonement had elements included throughout the ritual which associate with the events of Christ’s life and of Christ’s sacrifice. Let’s look at how Luke described some of what happened in Luke 22:39-46:

“And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives...” This is after He has introduced the sacrament ordinance, after Judas has disassociated himself. The Savior now goes out to the Mount of Olives—Luke 22:39.

“And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone’s cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation” (verses 40-46).

Here, Luke identifies three elements of the Day of Atonement:

First, he orients us to the place involved. It’s the Mount of Olives. This mount, the Mount of Olives, was east of the temple.

Second, he identifies the sprinkling of blood upon the ground. Luke tells us Christ, at the eastern location, suffers until “drops” of His blood are sprinkled upon the ground.

Third, Luke tells us that Christ was left alone at the moment of these events. No man accompanies Him. Those who were “a stone’s throw” away have lapsed into sleep, so as the

blood is sprinkled on the ground, Christ is alone. Interestingly, the place that the priest would enter alone on the Day of Atonement is about a stone's throw away from those that would be in the outer court waiting as he performed the ordinance inside the Holy of Holies.

In our dispensation, the Lord confirms His suffering in Section 133 of the *Doctrine and Covenants*: *"I have trodden the wine-press alone, and have brought judgment upon all people; and none were with me"* (D&C 133:50). This had to be a solitary event.

So if we go to [Leviticus] 16, and look at the Day of Atonement, look in verse 14. The High Priest, when he comes in: *"And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward...."*

He comes into the east side of the Mercy Seat, and he sprinkles there the blood of the sacrifice that's been offered, just as Christ went eastward from the temple into the Garden of Gethsemane, where He sprinkles the blood upon the ground.

"... before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times. Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat: And he shall make an atonement for the holy place..." (verses 14-16).

Verse 17: *"And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place."*

Christ's suffering and the "sprinkling" of His blood on the Mount of Olives was necessary to fulfil the Law of Moses. He needed to suffer these things in order to fulfil the symbols that identify Him as the Messiah, in the rights that He had established as the way to identify who He would be. It would be more correct to say that the rites needed to include these elements because the events would include the elements, because He foresaw the elements of what He would suffer before He ordained the ordinance itself, and the two of them fit together.

Continuing with the events in Luke, we read that Christ was taken before Israel and an option was given to Israel to either let Him or let another man go free, as Luke describes it. This is in 23— Luke 23:16 (Pilate is speaking):

"I will therefore chastise him, and release him. (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast). And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas: (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.) Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. And he said unto them the third time..."

Interesting that it has to be repeated three times.

"...Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go. And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will" (verses 16-25).

Well! Knock me over with a feather if the Day of Atonement doesn't do this exact same thing. And one of the parts of the Day of Atonement that has generated, I would guess, more doctoral theses in the divinity schools of Christendom than probably any other speculative point, this account conforms to the Day of Atonement.

First, you offer one to be sacrificed and one to be released. Second, the choice is made before all the congregation of Israel. Third, after the choice is made, one is sacrificed for sin. And fourth, the one to be released is laden with sin when it is turned free. So, Leviticus 16:7-10 & 20-22:

"And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats, one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the Lord's lot fell, and offer him for a [sacrifice]. But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness...And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness...He shall let [go] the goat in the wilderness."

Confess over him all their sins, release him who "that for sedition and murder was cast into prison," and so the one laden with sin is let go.

The elements of the ritual in the book of Leviticus and the events in the life of Christ are not inadvertent. The Lord saw the events of the day when His own life was going to be laid down. The rituals of Moses were fashioned by the Lord in the revelation given to Moses to reflect the events that were actually going to occur.

The two goats are alike in the ritual. Just so, too, are the positions of Christ, the Son of God, and Barabbas, on the other hand. "Bar" meaning "the son of," "Abba" meaning "the father." Whether that was his given name or the name he assumed as a zealot, I don't know. But this name title co-identified "The Son of God" and "the son of God, Barabbas." So we have the actual Son of God, on the one hand, and a man whose name refers to him also as "the son of God" standing co-equally before the congregations of Israel. "And whom shall I free?" And the lot falls upon the Savior.

The two goats are treated differently in the ritual—one is killed; the other, laden with sins, is set free. Barabbas is set free. The similarities are striking. No doubt the risen Lord would have pointed these things out as they walked on the road to Emmaus, about how all these things ought to have occurred and were necessarily so.

The next element was the location. Luke describes the place of Christ's killing in Luke 23:33, *"And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left."*

The place where the crucifixion occurred would be to the north of the location of the temple mount. Inside the temple environment, inside the larger temple area, the place where the animals were killed on the grounds was the place of slaughter, and it was located to the north of the altar for burnt sacrifice, and outside of the temple itself but in the court of the temple—just as the scriptures make clear it was outside the city wall and at a location to the north of Jerusalem.

Leviticus 16:[11], *"Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, ...and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which is for himself..."*

This site would have been in the northern part of the outer court of the temple, the location of the actual crucifixion corresponding to the location of the rites performed within the temple. Crucifixion outside the temple walls (or outside the walls of Jerusalem) corresponding once again with killing the sacrifice outside the walls of the temple building. Then once this has occurred, once this slaughter has occurred, it's necessary to bring the blood.

In verse 15: *"Then shall he..."* Aaron or the successor High Priest *"...bring his blood within the veil, ...and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat..."*

So it has to come into the presence of (and the attention of), symbolically, God the Father. The Mercy Seat is inside the Holy of Holies. It's inside the veil of the temple. It's the most holy spot of the temple. When, therefore, the actual events of the Day of Atonement occur, it should be necessary for the offering to be brought into the holiest place and offered to the attention of the Father.

So in Luke 23:44, at the moment of Christ's death, after He shouts with a loud voice and gives up the ghost: *"And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst."*

Matthew 27:51 says: *"And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks [were] rent..."*

Christianity says that's because they did away with all that stuff, and it had now been superseded, fulfilled, and it was no more. The rites of Moses suggest it was necessary for

the offering to be accepted within the holy place. And as no one who was officiating would draw aside the veil to allow the presence of God the Father to acknowledge the sacrifice, God the Father Himself drew it apart with an earthquake, rending the veil of the temple to accept the sacrifice. As Christ completed His sacrifice, the Holy of Holies opened to acknowledge and accept the offering. It should not be a mystery to us why this happened. It completes the acts required under the rites to confirm that this was the Anointed One, to whom all the rites and ordinances pointed as our common hope for the One who would enter in and make atonement for us.

Well, the notion that Christ has a mission—has a destiny—for mankind; the idea that His glory necessarily encompasses us; the idea that the temple anciently divided things into three levels of holiness; and the idea that His plan is robust enough, that His glory is robust enough to provide for both the immortality, on the one hand, and eternal life, on the other hand, of mankind suggests a Lord who is collegial, who is friendly, who is social, who is as interested in you as you may be curious about Him—a person who, in describing His own glory, necessarily includes within it others—is the kind of being worthy of worship and worthy of admiration.

Well, the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ involves the path to and through the veil into the presence of God, becoming joint heir, becoming a son of God. *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, page 375, he refers to sons of God who exalt themselves to be a god even before they were born. And all can cry Abba, Father.

Joseph wanted us to take the religion that he restored to the earth rather seriously and to search into and contemplate both the heavens and the darkest abyss.

Here's the problem: People do not believe Him even though He rose from the dead. Period. Today, us—you and I—do not believe Him, even though He rose from the dead. It was not intended to be a one-off event that occurred in the meridian of time. It was intended to be a gathering. I mean, the little seed grows up into the great mustard plant into which the birds—or as Joseph put it, the angels—were intended to come and watch. It was intended to be a super structure for housing contact between the divine and the mortal. It was intended to be the moment of intersection between all that is in eternity and the life of the mortal. It was intended to be the journey into the Holy of Holies, into the presence of God.

In the ordinances as they have been restored in the temple today, everyone who enters in is expected to come to the veil possessing certain knowledge, capable of identifying themselves as having been true and faithful, and be received in an embrace and then welcomed into the presence of God. It's a normal and expected part of the ordinances as they have been restored. Those ordinances are supposed to be teaching us something. They are the Lord's way of shouting in a multimedia presentation, "Here is how I did what I did, and what I would like you to do in the process of you becoming like me—a son of God, a daughter of God, a member of the household of faith, and part of the church and kingdom of the Firstborn." You have to become the Firstborn. You have to become one with Him. You have to become part of that, not in an organized group-think kind of way, in an individual

way in which you connect up with Holiness, in which you become a vessel of Holiness. You are someone to whom sacred things have been entrusted, and you become, in turn, sacred as the bearer of them.

The Law of Moses prescribed the death penalty for a variety of offenses. One of the ways to avoid the execution of the penalty was to go to one of the safe harbor cities. Another way was to go and to come in contact with the altar, because if you came in contact with the altar, it was considered most holy. Things that are most holy communicate holiness—you can't profane them. If you come in contact with them, and you are unholy, you don't make it unholy—it makes you holy, because it is most sacred. Part of the rites in the temple are intended to communicate to you things that are most holy. They are intended to make you holy. They are intended to make you a suitable recipient for an audience. They are intended to make you a suitable companion for a walk down a dusty road with the risen Lord who is trying to get you to notice exactly who it is that speaks to you. It's intended to have you understand that He lives, and that He's willing to associate with you. And that it's not, as Joseph Smith put it, relying on the words of an old book, the people who lived once long ago—that's going to save anyone. It's the dialogue that you engage in with Him now. It's the living, breathing, vital— He uses the figure of the living vine, and you have to connect to the living vine, and He's the vine, and you connect to it, and you get life through that. Words could not be more plain.

He's trying to get— I mean, what does it mean to be connected up with the vine and to derive sustenance from it? I mean, you have to be alive, which is not inert or an object that you move from there to there. If it's alive it's going to grow, it's going to increase, it's going to improve. It's going to have connection with. It's going to have— Christ was extraordinary in His selection of the things that He wanted to use to communicate to us what He intended the gospel to be.

In a description of Christ when He appears standing among the seven candlesticks (a symbol of the menorah which is placed in the temple symbolically before the veil before you enter into the Holy of Holies) Christ, standing before the veil at the menorah in the vision that John has, speaks, and when He speaks, out of His mouth comes a sharp, two-sided sword. Why is the word that proceeds forth out of the mouth of Christ sharper than a two-edged sword? You could hurt yourself with a two-edged sword—you're going to split yourself open because it cuts both ways. And in handling the word of God, every one of us had better take care not to injure ourselves, lest we be found to fight against the work of God.

All of that stuff in the LDS temple that was designed to prepare you in all things for further light and knowledge by conversing with the Lord at the veil was not just a symbolic trip to dress up funny and go down and do a show. It was designed to convey a message in which you literally expect to converse with the Lord through the veil preliminary to entering into His presence. And the purpose of that was to open your mind to the possibility, as the *Book of Mormon* says, that you *can* enter into the presence of the Lord.

God does want to reveal Himself, and that is the constant theme of the *Book of Mormon*. And knowledge of God is the fullness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There is nothing greater than Christ, the originator and the finisher of our faith. Everyone always mutilates the account: They felt the nails in His hands and feet and side— hands and feet and side. That’s not the way the *Book of Mormon* account begins. It begins with an embrace. The first wound that is felt when they come to the Lord at Bountiful is an embrace. It is the wound on His side. The first place He brings you is to Himself, standing in His presence, beside Him, in an embrace, in plain humility, as if any of us were good enough to stand in His presence. That’s where it begins. Then His hands. And then as it fully dawns upon you the enormity of the gulf between you and Him, well, you end up kneeling at His feet. It’s the wounds on the feet you see last.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver’s “Opening Remarks,” given at the Covenant of Christ Conference in Boise, Idaho on September 3, 2017;
- His fireside talk entitled “The Holy Order,” given in Bountiful, Utah on October 29, 2017;
- His talk entitled “Christ’s Discourse on the Road to Emmaus,” given in Fairview, Utah on April 14, 2007; and
- His remarks given at the Joseph Smith Restoration Conference in Boise, Idaho on June 24, 2018.

Podcast Episode 33: Temples, Part 2

QUESTION: This is the second installment in a multi-part series about the temple, where Denver addresses the meaning behind both ancient and modern temple worship, as well as some of the features and purposes of the temple to be built in New Jerusalem.

DENVER: God pointed Joseph, and in turn us, towards something more ancient. God was attempting to return to the earth the original faith taught to Adam in the beginning. The religion of Adam was the objective of Mormonism. Joseph Smith was unable to fully restore that first religion of man. Joseph predicted the religion would include a future gathering in the "everlasting hills" (in all probability, the Rocky Mountains), where returning tribes would be "crowned" with glory in a New Jerusalem to be God's last Zion.

This, in my view, is the reason why Elijah must return. In the last days, that system that began at first with Zion going up to heaven is going to invert. It's going to open again, but this time instead of Zion leaving, Zion is going to stay, and it is going to be joined by those who went away. They will come again. And there is this marvelous description of how when they return they will fall on one another's necks, and they will kiss one another. Because Zion below and Zion above will be joined.

The purpose of the return of Elijah, which Joseph talked about being a yet future event in Nauvoo, has everything to do with the return and the Second Coming.

In January of 1844— now this is some eight years post Kirtland temple, Joseph is talking about Elijah and he said:

"The Bible says, 'I will send you Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come that he shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children & the hearts of the Children to their fathers lest I Come & smite the whole earth with a Curse,' Now the word turn here should be translated (bind or seal) But what is the object of this important mission or how is it to be fulfilled, The keys are to be delivered the spirit of Elijah is to Come, to be delivered, to come, the gospel to be established, the Saints of God gathered, Zion built up, & and the Saints to Come up as saviors on Mount Zion but how are they to become Saviors on mount Zion[?] by building temples erecting Baptismal fonts & going forth & receiving all the ordinances, Baptisms, Confirmations, washings, anointings, ordinations & sealing powers upon our heads in behalf of all our Progenitors who are dead & redeem them that they may Come forth in the first resurrection & be exalted to thrones..." and so on.

And then Joseph laments: "I would to God that this temple was now done that we might go into it & go to work & improve our time & make use of the seals while they are on the earth & the Saints have none to much time to save & redeem their dead, & gather together their living relatives that they may be saved also, before the earth will be smitten."

And then this is the place where Joseph says— he's talking about Elijah. He's talking about the seals being on the earth, and he's talking about preparing for Zion. And in this context, in January of 1844, this is where Joseph says:

"Their has been a great difficulty in getting anything into the heads of this generation it has been like splitting hemlock knots with a Corn doger for a wedge & a pumpkin for a beetle, Even the Saints are slow to understand I have tried for a number of years to get the minds of the Saints prepared to receive the things of God, but we frequently see some of them after suffering all they have for the work of God will fly to pieces like glass as soon as any thing Comes that is Contrary to their traditions, they Cannot stand the fire at all, How many will be able to abide a Celestial law & go through to receive their exhaltation I am unable to say but many are Called & few are Chosen."

Then in March of 1844 he picks up the subject again— the 10th of March, 1844. And this time, when he's talking about Elijah, he says: "The spirit & calling of Elijah is to have power to hold the keys of the revelations ordinances, oricles powers & endowments of the fulness of the Melchezedek Priesthood & of the Kingdom of God on the Earth & to receive, obtain and perform all the ordinances belonging to the Kingdom of God even unto the sealing of the hearts of the fathers unto the children & the hearts of the children unto the fathers even those who are in heaven."

The hearts of the fathers who are in heaven— that's the mission of Elijah. If you will receive it, this is the spirit of Elijah: That we redeem our dead and connect ourselves with our "fathers which are in heaven" — our dead through us, us to our "fathers in heaven." Who are our "fathers in heaven?" Who are our "father's in heaven" to whom we are to be connected? We want the power of Elijah to seal those who dwell on earth to those which dwell in heaven. Those who are in the spirit world, our dead, the ones that need redemption from us, are not redeemed. They cannot be in heaven because they need us to be redeemed. We need to be redeemed by our connecting to the "fathers who are in heaven." The dead have to be redeemed. The Fathers are in heaven. Joseph understood this doctrine.

It is my view that the notion that you go to the temple and do genealogical work to answer the coming of Elijah does not conform to the description we are reading here from Joseph Smith. Our ancestors, our kindred dead— they need to be redeemed. They all have an interest in you and your life. And the work that is being done needs to be done. But the gulf that needs to be bridged through the work of Elijah, in the words of Joseph Smith, is "to form a bond or a connection." And of course now, who was the last one who lived on the earth, not to hold the sealing power, but to ascend to heaven and to draw together heaven and earth by his ascent, representing the opening of that way through which Zion above and Zion below will be connected with one another? Who was the last guide, as a mortal man, to have walked this path? Because when the Lord comes He's coming with an entourage, and the path needs to be opened beforehand. And the path, once it's opened, allows men on the earth to be prepared for the coming again of those who are Zion above. Well, Elijah answers, because Elijah is the one who made that connection.

Again, the doctrine of sealing power of Elijah is as follows: "If you have power to seal on earth & in heaven then we should be Crafty, the first thing you do is you go & seal on earth your sons and daughters unto yourself, & yourself unto your fathers in eternal glory."

"Unto your fathers in eternal glory." That is not your kindred dead— they are relying upon you to be redeemed. The connection that needs to be formed is between you and the Fathers who dwell in glory.

And who are the "fathers who dwell in glory?" If we go back to the revelation in which Joseph Smith received the sealing power, and he received the sealing power some time before 1831, in that portion of the revelation known as D&C 132:49: *"I the Lord thy God will be with thee even unto the end of the world and through all eternity for verily I seal upon your exaltation. Prepare your throne for you in the kingdom of my Father, with Abraham your father."*

"...I say unto you, that whatsoever you seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, in my name by my word, saith the Lord, it shall be eternally bound in the heavens; and whosoever sins are remitted on earth shall be remitted eternally in the heavens..." (verse 46), and so on.

Just before that portion of the revelation, in verse 37, he talks about Abraham, he talks about Isaac, and he talks about Jacob. And then concerning those three, the Lord says to Joseph: *"...because they did none other things in that which they were commanded they have entered into their exaltation according to the promises and sit upon thrones and are not angels but are gods."*

This is Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These are the ones who are Gods.

Therefore, when I consider these things, I reach a different conclusion than the Elijah narrative that we generally talk about. And the conclusion that I reach is that when it comes to Elijah's role and Elijah's mission, the purpose was, in the last days on the cusp of the Lord's return, in order to open the channel through which the Zion that has been taken above can return, there will be a ministry, just as Joseph put it, still future in 1844 (March, April, May, June— three months before the death of the Prophet, yet future), the purpose of which is to make possible the reuniting of those that dwell above with those that dwell below— formed by a people who are capable of bearing the presence of the Lord, coming back into His presence, and not withering at the sight; coming back into His presence and being able to dwell at peace.

Which leads us then to the subject of the temple, which is the only thing I'm talking about tonight. Everything I have said so far bears only upon the temple. And that's the purpose of getting here—is to discuss about what the temple's purpose is, what it means, and what it's trying to convey to us.

Is the temple an end, or is the temple a means? If the temple is an end, then everyone who goes through the temple obtains everything that the temple has to offer by virtue of going in and participating in the ceremony. But if the temple ceremony is instead a means, a means of trying to take you somewhere—if it is a means, then what is it a means to? Because one possible meaning that you should come away with is that it is a means to inform you that there is a veil, and not a wall, to permit you to talk through and to touch through and to feel your way through to the symbolic presence of God. And then, that veil is not a wall but something that can be, with merely the brush of the hand of our Lord, drawn aside so that you may enter into His presence. And the way you get there is by being prepared in all things, having been true and faithful in all things, coming to learn something from Him; not coming to tell Him something, not coming to impose upon Him, but coming to learn from Him.

Our Savior was, and is, first and foremost, a teacher. By His knowledge, Isaiah and Nephi wrote, He shall justify many. By His Knowledge. He possesses things which we do not yet comprehend. He possesses things which He would like us to comprehend. How, then, are we to comprehend the things which only He can teach? By permitting Him to do so, by coming to Him.

In the ceremony, it only takes some two hours before you are called "true and faithful in all things." Well, if that's an end and not a means, then in two-and-a-half hours in sitting and occasionally standing and agreeing to some things, you have become "true and faithful in all things." I would suggest that the temple rite, as an end, makes that notion preposterous because you are the same person walking out of the temple as you were walking into it two hours earlier. You are no more faithful in the temptations that you face on the street, you are no more lovely in the way that you deal with your family, you are no more honest in your business dealings with your fellow man than you were two hours earlier when you walked in, but the ceremony is saying that you have been "true and faithful in all things."

I'd suggest that's a means, and it's an admonition. And it's an invitation, even begging you to recognize that the challenge you face in your life requires you, invariably, to lay aside those things that pull you away and that you always turn and face the Lord. That's what repentance means. It means to turn and face the Lord. And you know when you face Him the first time, you're just not going to be that good or that different than you were the moment before. But if you'll face Him, He'll work with you. It does not matter how badly damaged you are. That's irrelevant. He fixed the apostle Paul. He fixed Alma the younger and the sons of Mosiah, whose deliberate purpose was to overthrow the things of God. I don't care what you've done, the malignancies of those men are highlighted in scripture in order to assure you that you can all be reclaimed.

Turn and face Him, and then walk with Him. He does all the guiding and most of the heavy lifting. The fact of the matter remains that we all have the freedom to choose to leave behind whatever it is that becomes the door against which the Savior has to knock, hoping that you'll hear his voice. We have to become as a little child because it's only the little children who are willing to open themselves up and become vulnerable enough to believe,

and then hopeful enough to act on that belief so that they develop faith, and then persistent enough to ask again and again and again, "Are we there yet? Are we there yet?"

In the parable that Joseph was given in the *Doctrine and Covenants* about the unjust judge and the aggrieved woman, it was a constant petitioning. Little children not only don't know a lot of things, they know that they don't know, and they ask persistently, incessantly, because they desire to know what they don't know. They're like sponges, and we're like rocks. You can throw a rock into the water and pull it out again, and it's still a rock. But you throw a sponge in, and you pull it out, and it is greatly increased. Children are like the sponge—they're porous, and we are not.

Well, D&C 93:1—you probably all can recite that in your head, I hope. I'm not going to read it. Moses 6:57:

"Wherefore teach it unto your children, that all men, everywhere, must repent, or they can in nowise inherit the kingdom of God, for no unclean thing can dwell there, or dwell in his presence; for, in the language of Adam, Man of Holiness is his name, and the name of his Only Begotten is the Son of Man, even Jesus Christ, a righteous Judge, who shall come in the meridian of time."

So, in order to come into the presence of the Lord, we have to be clean. Well, in the ceremony of the temple, the way in which you become ceremonially clean is by borrowing things from the Lord through the ceremony. You are washed, though not quite as vigorously as you may have been in Nauvoo. You are anointed, though not perhaps as thoroughly as you might have been in Nauvoo. You know that strong drinks—next time you have a Word of Wisdom lesson and they're talking about strong drinks and the washing of the body, they used cinnamon-flavored or included mixed whiskey to wash you in the Kirtland and then again in Nauvoo. And, as it turns out, for washing the body, it's really a pretty good antiseptic. One of the things that Joseph talked about in the Nauvoo era was about how angels sometimes have a hard time visiting with men because they stink, and that we really ought to clean ourselves up because we'll offend the sensibilities of the angels. There's a notion for you. One of the doors to barring entry... anyway.

In the temple you borrow cleanliness through the ceremony itself, which washes you, which anoints you, which dresses you in new and clean clothes, and then progressively confers upon you symbols that suggest all of creation. Symbolically, the entirety of creation comes through and is redeemed as a consequence of your own redemption. Because if you are redeemed you are infinite and eternal and creation itself goes on. But here, no unclean thing can dwell there or dwell in His presence, which then leads to the reason for the temple.

The purpose of the temple is not merely to inspire you with the conviction that it is possible to rend the veil, to pass through the veil, to see and meet with our Lord who has promised us repeatedly that the stories in the *Book of Mormon* are stories designed to tell you over and over and over again about coming back into the presence of the Lord. Even wicked

Lamanite converts—many of them have what we, in our scholarly language would call a "throne theophany," and they did so upon conversion because their conversion was with real intent. Therefore, the *Book of Mormon* is a text about the Second Comforter.

But what is being talked about in this verse in Moses 6 is about dwelling in His presence. And when it comes—Again, this is Moses 6:57, it says when it comes to dwelling there, "...no unclean thing can dwell there" because He's the Man of Holiness. This presents the real message, or the real meaning, of what the temple is trying to convey to us in our day. And we're just about running out of time to accomplish that in our day. And if we don't, then, you know, He passes on and maybe starts this up with another people in another day, as He has so often done before.

To come to the veil and to meet with the Savior: He can clean you up. He, through His grace, can give you all that you lack. To dwell in the presence of God requires something more, something different. It requires that you grow from where you are now to the place where the Lord intends to lead you. He intends to have you *be* true and faithful in all things. Because in the ceremony in the temple, once you go through the veil, you don't come back; you stay there. And the purpose of going there in this day, in this setting, is to enable the return of Zion.

We don't need a profoundly new and far reaching economic system to make us have all things in common in order to bring again Zion. And we don't need possession of the real estate in Jackson County, Missouri to bring again Zion. We don't need any of the implements or locations or infrastructure to have Zion return. We need one thing, and that's *you*—you to be clean, you to be holy, to leave behind you not only the door, but the house in which you dwell, that you established that door to bar Him through. You need to come and live with Him. It is possible.

But the fact of the matter is, that it is the glory of the Fathers which Joseph was trying to explain in the last two talks he gave in Nauvoo.

The promise made by Elijah is about reconnecting us to the Fathers. Joseph called them the "fathers in heaven." These are not our kindred dead because our kindred dead are required to be redeemed by us. These are the Fathers in heaven. Among them would be Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and because of this dispensation being what it is, Peter, James, and John.

The purpose of the Holy Ghost is to allow you to see things in their true light with the underlying intent behind them and to allow you to do that without distortion and without confusion. The temple is a ceremony designed to teach you about the path back to God—the very same thing that the *Book of Mormon* teaches repeatedly. The path back to God is so that you can meet with and be instructed by our Savior. The purpose of our Savior is to prepare us in all things so that we can, at last, become Zion. Because if your heart is right and my heart is right, and if I'm looking to God and God only, and you're looking to God and God only, then the trivial things of having things in common are of so little import that they matter not.

If you're faithful to the Lord, you have no reason to pick a fight with anyone else. Our Lord was a peacemaker. We ought to be peacemakers as well.

Moroni 10:4-5, particularly 10:5, tells you that: *"By the power of the Holy Ghost you may know the truth of all things."* The truth of *all* things. There is nothing off-limits. There's nothing about which you're going to be upbraided and told, "Don't ask. Don't inquire. I won't tell."

Now you may ask for something that you are unprepared to hear an answer for because there is some preparation yet left. But if you ask, you set in motion, on the other side, permission to fix what's wrong with you.

Have you read the 10th Parable ["The Missing Virtue," *Ten Parables*, Denver C. Snuffer]? If you've read the 10th Parable you know there is a time lag in which a missing virtue gets supplied as a consequence of real world experience. The answer gets set in motion as a consequence of the laws of God upon which all blessings are predicated, which mandate, as we are seeing here in this verse, that you must ask! And by the way, the answer to the question that you ask from God will always be "yes." However, if you're not ready for the "yes," then you're going to go through a period of renovation and repair. How long you need to be renovated and repaired depends upon just how much of the toxic nonsense you've drunk in and how much of it you continue to drink in that opposes the ability of God to speak to you. So soon as you will lay down that nonsense and in faith be believing, so soon will God be able to plug the leaks, repair the hinge, fix the broken window. He really does have a house of order, or better put, a temple that is holy. The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple. But it must not be defiled; clean yourselves up.

If you want to know what your state and standing is because you are uncertain—we're reading in the Joseph Smith testimony. Look at the next verse: *"While I was thus in the act of calling upon God..." (JS-H 1:30)*. In the act of calling upon God! If you are in the right way with the right faith looking for the right answers, you don't even get to finish the sentence. God knows what you have need of even "before ye ask" (Matthew 6:8). That's from the Sermon on the Mount. Christ tells you that. That horrible aching, that longing, that hollowness, that emptiness within you is what Christ was designed to fill. That's His purpose in coming to His temple.

So while he was in the act of calling upon God, he discovered a light appearing in his room *"which continued to increase until the room was lighter than at noonday, when immediately a personage appeared at my bedside, standing in the air, for his feet did not touch the floor."* (As an interesting aside, I want to ask the question, Why? Why did Moroni stand in the air, his feet not touching the ground? It's an interesting topic we're not going to talk about here. It's off subject; it won't get us Zion anyway. But there's "stuff" here.) Oh, and look at this:

"He had on a loose robe of most exquisite whiteness. It was a whiteness beyond anything earthly I had ever seen; nor do I believe that any earthly thing could be made

to appear so exceedingly white and brilliant. 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" (verse 32).

Notice this—this is not ceremonial garb, as a consequence of which, I can tell you that it's okay to be buried without temple regalia because you're not going to be wearing that stuff in the resurrection anyway, if you inherit what the angels of God, including Moroni (who is certainly exalted), wear.

You read about the description of what Christ wears in the scriptures, as well. Ceremonial garb is just that: it is ceremonial garb. It is designed to teach you about the Creation, to endow you with certain knowledge about the process of being exalted. But it is not the attire that you'll see on the streets of heaven. I actually think—I think they look Egyptian. I think their attire looks Egyptian, but that's neither here nor there.

This is a guy who was wearing only a robe. It's not ceremonial. He doesn't have shoes on his feet; he doesn't have a bonnet on; he doesn't have a of a variety of things that we would associate with ceremonial dress. You can read a description of Christ's attire in 3 Nephi 11:8. And the description there is very much like the description that we have here, Christ and Moroni wearing the same kind of thing.

And then hey, just for the fun of it, let's go back to Exodus 28. I want to revert back to my Cecil B. Demille-esque stuff [spoken in vocal imitation]: *"And these are the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a broideded coat, a mitre, and a girdle: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. And they shall take gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen" (verses 4-5) ...and yellow and green and purple and orange and white and.... [Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat]. I'm sorry. You can read it; it's in here. Ooh, the "ouches of gold," and the "chains of pure gold at the ends; of wreathen work..." (verses 13-14)—I mean, He dresses you in funny attire, okay?*

God goes through in the ceremonial attire, and He dresses you up. And the purpose of the dress is ceremonial, to communicate to you, through symbolism, knowledge about certain things. But they are not an end; they are a symbol: six days of creation, six articles of clothing, each one of which can be associated with one of the days of creation. Therefore, as you enter through the veil it is as if the entirety of all creation is redeemed in your person. You represent salvation for the entirety of creation because in you, should you be able to be rescued, creation itself continues. These are symbols. They communicate to the mind ideas, ideas that are eternal. They're not ends in themselves.

Well, keep that in mind, because you're here to be trained. You're here to learn something. You're here to learn about the power of godliness. And by "here" I don't mean this room tonight, although I think that is certainly true. I'm talking about this lifetime in which you find yourself— this place, this terrible fallen world, this glorious opportunity in which

sacrifice is actually possible. You don't avoid it, and you don't necessarily seek it out. But when it comes upon you, you face it down bravely. And you stand where God places you. And you don't let any man move you from where it is that God would have you be. Because therein lies salvation. You're obeying a law ordained before the foundation of the world. You can't lay hold upon such blessings, unless you obey the law upon which it is predicated. There will always be, in absolute numbers, only a few who will find that straight and narrow path. There will be an overflowing abundance of those who will fight against it, because they serve their master. You don't have time to worry about them. You serve yours. And that Master needs to be Christ.

Go about halfway down in verse 19 of Section 132. There's a dash, and after the dash it says— and it's talking about conditions that you need to fulfill and covenants that you need to have. It says: *"Ye shall come forth in the first resurrection; and if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection..."* which is, by the way, one of the proofs that this is a revelation given by God to Joseph Smith, and it's one of the things that vouches for this being God, not man, writing this stuff. Because if it were Joseph, he'd be worried about coming forth in the first resurrection. But since God is giving a commandment here through Joseph that was intended to survive on into the end of the Millennium, God's anticipating, He foresees, that there will be generations that arise even after the Millennium and after the first resurrection has been sounded. And so God's saying, "Yeah, for those people, if it be after the first resurrection, in the next resurrection."

And it says: *"...shall inherit thrones, kingdoms, principalities, and powers, dominions, all heights and depths..."* Well these are not just words. These are descriptions of various levels of activity that take place in the afterlife. A "throne" is not the same thing as a "kingdom," nor a "kingdom" the same as a "principality," nor a "power" the same thing as a "dominion." These are describing different things, different levels, until finally you arrive up to the state of the Seraphim which dwell in fire. They are the flaming ones.

Doctrine and Covenants 109 has something to say about that. I'll look at that—section 109:79, *"And also this church, to put upon it thy name. And help us by the power of thy Spirit, that we may mingle our voices with those bright, shining seraphs around thy throne."* See, "around the throne" it is a place of everlasting, eternal burnings. Therefore, the Seraphs who gather there have to be "the flaming ones." They have mounted up to that point.

You know, there was a verse I alluded to in Boise. Isaiah 6—this is an incident I alluded to, I even (I think) gave the scripture, but I didn't talk about it using the scripture in front of me. Isaiah chapter 6, beginning at verse 1: *"IN the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple."* The Lord sitting upon the throne would be this condition of glory.

"Above it stood the seraphims..." The seraphim are the ones who are flaming, the ones who dwell in this everlasting burning. *"Each one had six wings..."* This is metaphor because these folks have climbed through six stages of the ladder, Jacob's ladder, to arrive where they were. And they cry out: *"...Holy, holy, holy,"* and the posts of the door moved, and Isaiah says

in verse 5: *"Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar..."* Now we usually read that as "he took the tongs, and with the tongs he touched the lips." But it doesn't say that. He took the tongs to get it off the altar and brought it in his hand. Because being one of the flaming ones, he is able to bear this kind of glory. *"And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged"* —improvising an ordinance using the prayer altar, the altar with the ascending smoke which is a symbol of the prayers that ascend to heaven; that worthy speech uttered by you in faith that ascends to heaven, that the altar symbolized—the flame, the coals, the incense put upon it to build a column of smoke that reaches then the roof, and it spreads out rather like the Tree of Life that it symbolizes—all of this stuff taking place in the temple of Solomon, and the ordinance being improvised by one of the flaming ones that dwells in these conditions of burning and of glory.

Take a look at *Doctrine and Covenants* 128. And you ought to be looking into all this stuff because if you look into all this stuff you don't have time to waste on that crap that besets you. And this is a lot more interesting than the junk that you fill your skulls with. Go *here*, do *this* stuff.

The fact of the matter is that you can make a vow to God, but you can't make a covenant with God. God can make a covenant which you can fulfill by your performance. God can offer you something, but it's up to you to accept it, and you accept it by what you do. It's not enough to say, "Yea Lord, I'll go out, and I'll do as I'm bidden." You have to *do* it. Because it's only in the doing that the covenant is kept. It's only in the doing that the covenant is able to be empowered sufficient to give you the blessing upon which a law has been established for the blessing to be predicated. You can't get there without God offering and you accepting.

So now we should realize, I hope, that that city which Melchizedek, the King of Peace, was able to teach righteousness sufficiently so that it was taken up from the earth, reserved to the last days at the end of the world. The next time we have such an event on the earth, the next time there is this kind of a gathering and this kind of a population anywhere, it will not be for the purpose of going up. It will be for the purpose of permitting those who have gone up to come back down. It will be for the purpose of having those who can endure the presence of those who will come. Because those who come will burn up all those who are unworthy, and therefore, some few need to be gathered so that the earth is not utterly wasted at His coming.

"As it was in the days of Noah, so it shall be also at the coming of the Son of Man" (JS-Matthew 1:41). How many people were required in order to have the Ark be an acceptable place in which God could preserve all of humanity? It was a portable Ark of the Covenant, in which a family was preserved. And so if it's going to be as it was in the days of Noah, there is this net that has been cast out to gather together all manner of "fish" (Matthew 13:47-50). But as the Lord tells the parable, the angels are going to come, and they're going to pick through

all manner of "fish," and they're going to keep the good and the rest are going to be scheduled for burning.

And so the question is, how diligent ought the search be into the things of God? How carefully ought we to consider the things that have been restored to us through the Prophet Joseph Smith? The fact is that this stuff is assigned to our dispensation. All of you have this information in front of you. All of this material has been restored through someone that we claim we honor and regard as a prophet.

Well, they who come will burn up those who are unprepared. And therefore, what should we be doing in order to make sure that we are included among those who are prepared?

I want to look more into Enoch, so let's go back to the book of Moses. Moses chapter 7, beginning at verse 60: *"And the Lord said unto Enoch: As I live...."* This is covenant language. This is God swearing by His own life. This is God promising that if He lives, so shall this word live. If He's alive, He shall vindicate what He's about to say.

"As I live, even so will I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance, to fulfil the oath which I have made unto you concerning the children of Noah; And the day shall come that the earth shall rest, but before that day the heavens shall be darkened, and a veil of darkness shall cover the earth; and the heavens shall shake, and also the earth; and great tribulations shall be among the children of men, but my people will I preserve; And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth, to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men; and righteousness and truth will I cause to sweep the earth as with a flood, to gather out mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, unto a place which I shall prepare, an Holy City, that my people may gird up their loins, and be looking forth for the time of my coming; for there shall be my tabernacle, and it shall be called Zion, a New Jerusalem. And the Lord said unto Enoch: Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there...."

These are they who, when they come, will burn up those unprepared for the coming, so that it leaves neither root nor branch.

"...we will receive them into our bosom, and they shall see us; and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other; And there shall be mine abode, and it shall be Zion, which shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made; and for the space of a thousand years the earth shall rest. And it came to pass that Enoch saw the day of the coming of the Son of Man, in the last days, to dwell on the earth in righteousness for the space of a thousand years; But before that day he saw great tribulations among the wicked; and he also saw the sea, that it was troubled, and men's hearts failing them, looking forth with fear for the judgments of the Almighty God, which should come upon the wicked" (Moses 7:60-66).

This is the Lord describing to Enoch what would happen by way of covenant, the Lord swearing "As I live, even so will..." and He tells him what's going to come to pass in the last days.

This is among the promises that were made to one of the Fathers. And this *is* one of the Fathers, and these *are* the covenants whose time is now upon us. This is the day in which we need to be prepared, so that those who went before and ascended up the ladder can return and fall upon your neck and kiss you, and you fall upon their neck and kiss them—a sacred embrace through the veil, evidencing fellowship between you here and them there, the Lord promising and covenanting these things are going to happen.

But notice, there has to be a tabernacle. He has to come and take up His abode. There has to be preparation made. These things require some effort to be made here in order to prepare for His return. If there is no one here who is willing to engage in what's necessary to bring this to pass (because everyone looks around and expects someone else to do it), then you're neglecting the duty that's devolving upon you as one of those who was assigned to come down in this day, in order to honor the Fathers and honor the Lord by allowing the covenants that have been made to be fulfilled.

Rest assured that God intends to establish, in the last days, a Zion in which we will see the return of exactly what was here at the beginning. There will be a return. I mean, the reason why they're coming to the children of Ephraim in the everlasting mountains is because there will be a New Jerusalem. They will bring rich treasures when they come because they have records that they, themselves, are going to need to have translated. And they're going to be crowned because the family of God consists of people who are, in fact, kings and priests.

All of that infrastructure has to be put in place by the Lord before His return. And therefore, He intends to accomplish this work. And when He accomplishes this work, you're not going to find, at the top of it, a king like the gentiles expect. You're going to find something or someone or some group who are meek and lowly, who are rather more like our Savior than the kings who ruled during our Savior's day.

Well there's a parable—it's just one verse; it's a very short parable. It moves along, but it's a response that Christ gave to the question that was put to Him by His disciples, asking Him, "Tell us what the signs of your return is going to be." And He goes through a list of things, but He ends with a little parable at the end. And our translation makes it seem kind of morbid, so I'm going to substitute "body" for "carcass," because it sounds like what you're dealing with in the current King James version is morbid, not a living body. But He says one of the signs that is going to be at His return is "where the body is, that's where the eagles with gather" (JST-Matthew 1:27; Luke 17:37). The body is the New Jerusalem. The eagles are going to be angelic ministrants who are going to come.

There has to be an opening that occurs in order to prepare the way. The opening at this end is going to be handled by someone who has remained behind, and the opening at the far

end is going to be the one to whom the assignment was given to open the way for His return— Elijah, the one who was promised.

Now, I want to be really clear. I don't expect either of those individuals to have any public ministry again. They have a role in Zion, and those who dwell in Zion are going to have some contact with them. The three Nephites are a great example. They, like John, were given a similar ministry to remain around and to minister until the end of the earth. And they did minister. Two of the people to whom they ministered were Mormon and Moroni. They, like ministering angels, ministered to Mormon, who in turn ministered to the public. They ministered to Moroni (he kept his hope up in the waning days of that dispensation), but they did not minister publicly.

John will have a role, but the work of Zion is the work of flesh and blood. Men have to extend the invitation for God to return so that men who extend that invitation are worthy of His return, and the Lord can safely come without utterly destroying all who are upon the earth. Therefore, you need Zion, among other reasons, in order for there to be a place and a people to whom the Lord can safely return without utterly destroying the earth at His coming. However small, however diminutive it may be, there needs to be a Zion that extends the invitation for the Lord to return.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- The presentation of Denver's paper entitled "Was There an Original," given at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, UT on July 29, 2016;
- His talk entitled "The Mission of Elijah Reconsidered," given in Spanish Fork, UT on October 14, 2011;
- A fireside talk on "The Temple," given in Ogden, UT on October 28, 2012;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #1 entitled "Be of Good Cheer," given in Boise, ID on September 10, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #3 entitled "Repentance," given in Logan, UT on September 29, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #4 entitled "Covenants," given in Centerville, UT on October 6, 2013; and
- His talk entitled "Zion Will Come," given near Moab, UT on April 10, 2016.

Podcast Episode 34: Dances With Wolves

QUESTION: Today Denver responds to some of the questions you have submitted for consideration and provides some timely context and recommendations for how we can become one.

DENVER: Right now, if you're sincere, interested, and struggling, probably the most important thing in all of the questions are the focus or the questions about hearing God, and about responding to God, and getting it right from God.

Almost all of us have some kind of gift that exists completely independent of everything else and just resides in you. Oliver Cowdery had a gift in which, essentially, he used a divining rod in order to get answers (yes and no answers). And that's, to me, a weird gift because divining rods—they just seem odd to me. I mean, witching sticks, using something that seems rather more folk magic than authentic Godly gift. And something like that seems strange enough and so off-script that it seems like it could be easily employed to deceive or mislead. So, despite the fact that almost everyone has some kind of independent gift, every single one of us every one of us have exactly the same set of scriptures available that constitute a guide and a measuring stick, a ruler, a set of scales in which the language of scripture helps clarify, instruct, and define.

The problem most people have with using the scriptures in order to find answers from God is that they haven't spent enough time in the scriptures in order to pick out the major themes, the larger context, to begin to see the connections that exist between a statement one place and a statement another place. Very often the scriptures appear to be contradictory because they will talk about a topic in one way, at one point, urging one conclusion, and then a practically identical issue is talked about in another place. And the recommendation, instruction, or result appears to be a contradiction. And so one person plants their feet on the first statement, and with their hands on their hips they defiantly say, "This is the ground God has carved out, and there can be no other," while badgering you with the language of scripture. And the other person stands on different ground and shakes their fist back saying, "No, no, no, no! This is the standard God has planted!" And no one seems to realize that the same God that said the one thing, said another. As a consequence, God, who is unchangeable, didn't contradict himself. The problem is that you're not getting the point.

It's like saying today is Friday, and it is nearly 9:30 in the morning. That statement will be true at this moment and exactly one week from this moment. And in between there will be a Saturday, a Sunday, a Monday. Everything is in motion; everything is in the process of moving.

When God identified to Abraham a spot in the heavens and said that the throne of God was nigh unto that spot, that statement was true at that moment. And if you asked him to identify the spot today, He would choose a different location in the heavens, and He would

say it's nigh unto that. But it is nigh unto that in the same sense that if you stand here and you point your finger—we're in Sandy, Utah—and we point the finger south and say, "The BYU football stadium, into which the wicked are cast and where they are continually burning, is that direction." It's true (well, I mean, the stadium is there. Whether the wicked are cast there and continually burning, that's a matter for the Christian theologians to sort out). But that's a true statement, but that doesn't mean that it's at the tip of my finger, or I'm touching it. It's pointing to a generalized direction, and the generalized direction would change if we hopped in the car, and we drove south to the city of Nephi. Then we'd have to turn around and completely contradict ourselves.

Now, not all truths are that malleable because of time or because of distance. Time and distance illustrate the problem. Because some person coming into some setting with some set of background qualifications or information are told one thing, and another person is told something different. One person is commanded and given the poles and the charge to heft and to carry the Ark of the Covenant. And another person, who sees the oxen stumble and reaches out his hand in order to stabilize it, is slain because they have violated the command and the jurisdiction that was entrusted to another. And so in the case of an object, the instruction to one and the instruction to another appear to be completely contradictory to one another; but they're not. They are based upon establishing a kind of order that God intends to have unfold in a precise way.

The more you study the scriptures, the more you begin to realize that there aren't two people—one with their hands on their hip insisting they stand on the truth and the correct ground, and another person standing firmly and shaking a fist, and both are entirely correct. Instead, what you begin to see is that these two people have a part of the picture and, as a consequence of having only part of the picture, they need to reason together until they come to a correct conclusion.

There are people who have, when they learn of an issue, have gone to God in prayer and gotten an answer. And I'm going to assume that people are trustworthy enough and sincere enough that when they say they've prayed, and they've got an answer from God, that they actually have. And then someone else repeats exactly the same thing on the same issue, trying to come to a resolution, and they hear from God, and they know what the answer from God is for them. So, one person has an answer, and it's different than the answer given to another person. That happens. And we should not deny the possibility that God actually spoke to both of them and that both of them have an authentic truth. Hold that thought for just a moment.

I want to tell you about a continuing legal education class that I attended involving hiring practices in law firms. The fellow who taught the class (has actually written several books), but the fellow who taught the class said the words "homicide," "suicide," "fratricide," "infanticide," and "decide" all come from the same word. Every one of them means "cutting off." When you have to decide something, you cut off something else. So a decision is a fearsome thing.

In society, in history, typically decisions were made by kings, royalty, and the priesthood, and the common man simply did what the common man was told to do by the people in a position to decide. The common man never had to face the fearsome prospect of actually making a decision. Then comes the Industrial Revolution. Then comes democracy. And now we find ourselves in a position in which every member of society is forced continually to make decisions for themselves, and most people just aren't very good at it.

So now, everyone is a decision maker, and we all want to make sure we're not making a bad decision, and so social media has a way of making you feel comfortable because you're inside the herd of lemmings. And at least when you go off the cliff with them you're going to be keeping company, and maybe you'll have a soft enough landing you'll survive, if enough of the bodies below you break your fall.

So in the hiring practices, this fellow, as a consultant, went to advise some large law firms in the East. They were giving tests to prospective legal minds—law school graduates—to decide who [they] would hire. And what he noticed was that the way in which they made the decision to hire was based upon how well the students did on a test. The highest scores were hired, and if you were not among the highest scores, you were not considered for hiring.

He went through and he looked at the test results in detail. What he found was that the people with the highest scores were always getting the same things wrong; they were always overlooking something. And some of the people who got lower scores were picking up on issues that the really bright guys weren't tuning in to.

In a legal environment, if you're trying to make the very best decision, you need to have every single viewpoint represented. Meaning that someone that you're not hiring because their score isn't high enough may be the only person who perceptively, intuitively, intellectually, picked up on a problem everyone else was blind to. And so, in the decision to hire or not hire, his recommendation to the firm was: "You are going to consistently miss and fail on this issue unless you hire that person or that person because they're the ones that guarantee that when the problem arises, they're going to see it."

And so the hiring practices were changed, tentatively and experimentally, in order to see what kind of a disaster this choice would render, and it turned out that in the discussion, it improved the overall effect of the law firm.

What if the answer that God gives to one person, based upon their knowledge, their experience, their background, their life, their education, the people they know, the things they've been through, is a true and correct answer that it's important for them to grasp? And what if, because of a completely separate life and experience and education, another person has tuned into an important issue, and God has told him, "Yes, this is important, too" in order for both people to come together in a discussion and have a full and fair and complete understanding, before they reach a conclusion? An answer from God does not necessarily mean it is the conclusion and that all the thinking has been done, and God did it,

and so you can shuffle off the responsibility to decide on to God's shoulders. And you can stand back—both of you—and put your hands on your hips and say, "It's God's fault. I mean, He screwed this whole thing up. He made this mess. God's the author of confusion."

What if God isn't ever the author of confusion? What if God is the author of enlightened discourse and the author of information exchange, discussion, and search for agreement? What if God is the author of exactly the same scriptures that appear to contradict one another in different settings, at different times, in order to illustrate the necessity for your reasoning through and lively engagement in coming to the correct conclusion? And what if at one point in your life you ought to go left, and at another point you ought to go right, and yet a still third point in your life you blend together, and you go straight? What if it's all there in order to illustrate the necessity of you, as a free and engaged agent in your own right, should take with you this bundle of information and to reason with someone that sees it, but sees it differently, in order for the two of you to finally see beyond the narrow horizon that you live with, and engage in the fact that God's ways are higher, and He sees the entirety of the circuit of the earth? Not just the little horizon in which we reside, confined as it is by mountains on the west and mountains on the east and a mountain on the south, and you go far enough, one on the north, too—what if God is taking in the whole, and He would very much like (now that He's given different answers to different people) each one of those people to engage in a discussion?

I was talking about this subject with friends last Saturday. And while it's the Hollywood version, and the efforts to portray something in the view of the Hollywood writers, they still do make an effort to try and reflect something that is not outrageously contradictory. But in the discussions that take place inside the teepee among the tribal members, and trying to figure out what to do with the soldier that's moved into the neighborhood, everyone was invited to come—the male braves were invited to come, and they sat in a circle inside the teepee. And the chief presided. And the medicine man was there. And everyone spoke, and there were sharp disagreements. "Let's go kill this guy. Let's go kill him, steal his stuff. The only thing about him is that he's got a smart horse, and that's not good enough. Let's go kill him. I mean, he dances with wolves. He's strange. He's just not anything other than a threat." And others were saying, "No, let's investigate. He's done nothing to harm us." Everyone spoke. The medicine man tried to give wisdom and guidance, and after all that had their fair shake, then the chief made the decision on what they would do.

See, I would like to see women, and not just braves, included in the circle. I would like to see the chief, that was called upon to make the decision, be random and not one person—a title and a role that is temporary, transitory, and could be imposed on anyone at any time. And I would like to see the medicine man, who's going to give the spiritual guidance, be random, transitory, and could be anyone at any time, but still sitting in a circle while they reason it through.

I would like to see, for example, everyone randomly draw out of a hidden box or bowl, either stones or buttons or whatever. And if they're buttons, for example, whoever draws the black button is the "chief." Whoever that falls on, man or woman—it doesn't

matter—they're going to be the "chief." And whoever draws out the blue button, they're going to be the "medicine man," and they're going to give the prayerful and religious viewpoint, confining themselves entirely to just that. And that everyone else who draws a white button is simply a member of the council that gets to speak. And if someone would like to observe but not to speak, they needn't draw a button. But, if you ever draw the black button or the blue button, you can never draw and be chief again until everyone else has been chief. And you can never be the medicine man, the holy man, until everyone else has had that opportunity, also. And that we do something like that, which is transitory and temporary— everyone acknowledging that if you've gotten a prayerful answer, it is important for you to come and to voice that prayerful answer, in order for the decision that ultimately gets made by the random person assigned to have some enlightenment, based upon the word of God to you, otherwise it may not be considered.

But that within community, no one gets to control. Within community, authority is equally distributed. Within community, you may be imposed upon to do the cutting, to do the deciding, whether you want that role or not. Male or female, it doesn't matter—you may have that responsibility imposed upon you. And when it comes to you, face it bravely. Take the advice of the medicine man, and if you are the medicine man for that council, prayerfully come, prayerfully participate. And realize it's not your responsibility to advise based upon partisanship but to advise based upon the wisdom of God. I mean, I might say the medicine man has to always be a female, but I think this ought to be experimented with before you say, let's settle down that way.

Because I think the culture of Native America, and the remnant that is on this land, has some real benefits as a model or as an example. But I also think that settling into a lifelong position, like being the chief for life, is a responsibility that is more aristocratic than it is unifying, and that by passing responsibility out among various people, that everyone gets to feel the awful weight, the terrible responsibility, the disappointment, the frustration, and the learning that comes from having to make a decision after everyone is given their input. Because some people simply refuse to lay down, for the heart of the community, their own heart. They refuse to be soft-hearted, open-hearted. They insist upon, by the hardness of their heart, that they get to establish rule. The antecedent to that is the accuser of the brethren.

The *Book of Mormon* says it's not often that the voice of the people are going to choose error. Well, the voice of the people, in the context of making a decision, if a decision can be made in no other way, should be heard in this kind of a cooperative, enlightened outpouring of viewpoints, however diverse they may be, however difficult to reconcile they may be. I think it's one model that can be experimented with, and it may be experimented with to good effect.

We are at the incipient stage of trying, as a people, to become of one heart and one mind. And we don't get there by having forceful, intransigent, single minds insisting that when they see a truth it is all the truth, it is the only truth, and it can never be compromised, modified, or altered in any particular because it is their truth. Whereas God has many

truths, and He tells you to take no thought for the morrow, on the one hand, and then He tells you if you don't provide for your own, including the members of your own family, you've denied the faith, and you're worse than an infidel. Well, which is it, Lord? Reconcile them. Reason it through together. See what your responsibilities are. See how you come to the full circuit, the full circle.

You look up in the heavens, and at one moment there's a crescent moon, and it happens to be waxing or getting larger day by day. You look up at another moment and it's a crescent, but it appears to be waning and growing less day by day. And then again you look up at other times and it's altogether gone, and at other times it's bright, and it's full. Because things are in motion, and things change. Circumstances change; people change.

If you give the exact same answer to the same question asked by the same child when they're two years old as you do when they're 40 years old, you're an idiot. You're an unworthy parent. There are developmental stages in everything, including in our knowledge of God. And we're supposed to be one.

So sit in a circle, and reason together, and shift responsibility. And sometimes you're chief, and sometimes you're grateful that you aren't.

The foregoing comments by Denver Snuffer were recorded on September 7, 2018 in Sandy, Utah.

Podcast Episode 35: Temples, Part 3

QUESTION: This is the third installment in a multi-part series about the temple, where Denver addresses the meaning behind both ancient and modern temple worship, as well as some of the features and purposes of the temple to be built in New Jerusalem.

DENVER: The priesthood which began with Adam was priesthood which was after the Order of the Son of God. And that *Priesthood after the Order of the Son of God* descended from Adam down to the time of Enoch. And then it got renamed the *Priesthood after the Order of Enoch*. And then later it got renamed the *Priesthood after the Order of Melchizedek*, or the *Priesthood of Melchizedek*. When Adam promises that the priesthood that was in the beginning is going to return at the end of the world also, he is talking about a return at the end of the world of that priesthood which was held by the original patriarchs, a time when, for generations, it was unitary. There was only one, and that the designation—the correct designation of that priesthood—is the *Holy Priesthood* or the *Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God*. It's a long name, but it was that priesthood that was held by the patriarchs. As a consequence of it being that priesthood held by the original patriarchs, which was in the beginning of the world and is to return at the end of the world also, I prefer to regard the highest order under the name designation of *Patriarchal Priesthood*. And so when I use the term, I'm referring to that priesthood originally held by Adam, that priesthood held by Enoch, that priesthood which is more correctly called the *Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God*. Therefore, if you are going to say *Patriarchal Priesthood* as a scholar and parse the words differently, you need to understand that I'm using them in this way, and I disagree with you, and I have my reasons for doing so. And I think that Joseph had reasons for doing so also, because of what I just read you.

"Go to and finish the temple, and God will fill it with power, and you will then receive more knowledge concerning this priesthood" (*TPJS*, p. 322). I am suggesting to you that something which, by its nature, required the completion of the temple and required the presence of God which relates to the revelation given in January of 1841 that I read a few minutes ago. "*For there is not a place found on the earth that He may come to and restore again that which was lost unto you, or which he hath taken away, even the fullness of the priesthood*" (*D&C 124:28*).

It requires Him, God, to come to that place, and for Him, God, to restore to you that which has been taken away: the fullness. Go to—you finish the temple. God will fill it with power. You will then receive more knowledge concerning this priesthood. Even in the words of Joseph, taken together with *Doctrine and Covenants 124:28* that I just read to you, it suggests that the highest form, the one which brings you into contact with God in his holy temple—that one—that priesthood is correctly designated Patriarchal. And it's not priesthood which one obtains by going and being sealed in the temple. It's the one that one obtains by going in and meeting with God in His temple.

"Behold, I give unto you power, that whatsoever ye shall seal on the earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven; and thus shall ye have power among this people" (Helaman 5:7). This is rather Melchizedek because you can seal up unto eternal life. This is the positive side. This is the thing which those who are given this authority seek earnestly to do. Thus, if you shall say unto this temple, "It shall be rent in twain," it shall be done, because the temple is subordinate to the word of God. The temple is not the place that controls the word of God; the temple is the place which most of all ought to be subject to the word of God. It's not the place to innovate in ordinances. It's the place to obey, to follow, to give strict heed unto, and to not vary.

D&C 84 has a description of events at the time of Moses. Beginning at verse 19 of section 84: *And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.*" And by the way, I should add as a parenthetical thought, "the ordinances thereof" is far more expansive than simply a set of rights or rituals. Because when the higher priesthood is present on the earth, everything that that higher priesthood does is done as an ordinance. Because once it has been ordained by God to take place and God's hand is behind what takes place, those events under the direction of that priesthood is all an ordinance, and therefore, within them you find power of godliness.

"And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh; For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live. Now this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God; But they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence; therefore, the Lord in his wrath, for his anger was kindled against them, swore that they should not enter into his rest while in the wilderness, which rest is the fulness of his glory" (verses 21-24).

I'll remind you we've talked about this before. *"The glory of God is intelligence or in other words light and truth" (D&C 93:36).* Therefore, the "rest" is to be filled with His glory, or in other words, filled with light and truth or to comprehend things that you do not at present comprehend without the benefit of the glory of God.

"Therefore, he took Moses out of their midst and the Holy Priesthood also..." (D&C 84:25). And thus at that point ended the expectation anciently that there might be Zion.

This incident is being described in modern revelation and section 84, but the incident itself occurred back in the book of Exodus. This is Exodus chapter 20, beginning at verse 18: *"And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was" (Exodus 20:18-21).*

They did not want to encounter Him—not because the presence of God is so terrible that it drives men from Him, because Moses approached Him, but because the evidence of His presence makes us internally evaluate who and what we are. And although we can lie to ourselves about how good we really are, when the measuring stick against which you compare yourself is God, all of us come short. Even when the Lord himself testifies to you that your sins are forgiven you still recognize that you fall short. To the extent that you have confidence in the presence of the Lord, it is wholly derivative from him. He has to strengthen you because if He does not, all of us would retire in shame.

Doctrine and Covenants 124 has a revelation given in January of 1841 to the saints (at that point in Nauvoo), offering something to the saints in that day that is relevant to the history that unfolded thereafter. Beginning at verse 28, the Lord says through Joseph: *"For there is not a place on earth that he..."* ("He" here being the Lord, God) *"...that He may come to and restore again that which was lost unto you, or which He has taken away, even the fullness of the priesthood."* Skipping to verse 31:

"But I command you, all ye my saints, to build a house unto me..." See, this commandment was unto everyone who at that point claimed to be a saint. All of them—every one of them was put under the equal burden *"to build a house unto me and I grant unto you [all of you] a sufficient time to build a house unto me; and during this time your baptisms shall be acceptable unto me. But behold, at the end of this appointment your baptisms for your dead shall not be acceptable unto me; and if you do not these things at the end of the appointment ye shall be rejected as a church, with your dead, saith the Lord your God"* (D&C 124:31-32).

It's interesting that in verse 31 it says "your baptisms," and in verse 32 it says "your baptisms for your dead." Which suggests that after verse 31, if we fail in verse 32, that our baptisms will continue to be acceptable but our vicarious work would not, and the church would then be rejected.

If you skip to 34, talking about this proposed temple to be constructed: *"For therein are the keys of the holy priesthood ordained, that you may receive honor and glory."* "Honor" being the promise from God into the afterlife respecting what you can expect to receive from God as an oath and as a covenant. "Glory" being intelligence or knowledge and understanding, light and truth, things that were not comprehended but which God hoped to have the saints at that point comprehend.

Well, He gives to us in this same revelation a measuring stick by which we can determine if we satisfy the requirements that the Lord has set forth. And the measuring stick is this, beginning in verse 43: *"And ye shall build it on the place where you have contemplated building it, for that is the spot which I have chosen for you to build it."* So they contemplated it, the Lord approved it, and this would become a spot where the Nauvoo temple was to be constructed.

"If you labor with all your might, I will consecrate that spot that it shall be made holy. And if my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place" (verses 44-45). "They" being the people. "They" being those that He had chosen to lead them. "They" being, in this instance, the Prophet Joseph Smith and the one who would be appointed to receive priesthood and be appointed to hold the sealing power in this revelation—Hyrum Smith, the one who was designated to be the successor to Joseph Smith in the event of Joseph's death, and the one whom the Lord would take first—Hyrum. Joseph died knowing that his successor had first fallen. "If..." then they shall not be moved out of their place.

"But if they will not hearken to my voice, nor unto the voice of these men whom I have appointed, they shall not be blest, because they pollute mine holy grounds, and mine holy ordinances, and charters, and my holy words which I give unto them. And it shall come to pass that if you build a house unto my name, and do not do the things that I say, I will not perform the oath which I make unto you, neither fulfil the promises which ye expect at my hands, saith the Lord. For instead of blessings, ye, by your own works, bring cursings, wrath, indignation, and judgments upon your own heads, by your follies, and by all your abominations, which you practice before me, saith the Lord" (D&C 124:46-48).

So, if you get out the history, and you look at the events that occurred between 1841 and the death of Joseph on June 27th of 1844, and you ask yourself whether or not the saints went to and built the house that had been commanded, and did it with the kind of dispatch in the time frame that was allowed, that allowed the house of the Lord to be constructed, and if you look at the history to find where it was that the Lord came into that house—because it was Him that was required in order to restore what had been lost, because it was him that was required to be there in order to return the glory to the house of the Lord, because it was Him that would bestow upon the Saints the fullness of the priesthood, because it was the Lord Himself that required a place at which He could meet with his people—and then once Joseph and Hyrum were dead, if you look at the history of what occurred in Nauvoo and ask yourself: Were they blessed? Were they protected? Or did they experience in the ordeals that drove them out of Nauvoo and into the wilderness, and the suffering that ensued there—if instead you see cursings, wrath, indignations, and judgments upon the head of the saints, then you can reach a considered conclusion about whether or not we, in our day, mirror what happened at the time of Moses. And we, in our day, just as in the day of Moses, elected to say, "You, Joseph, Hyrum—you go talk to the Lord for us." Because when we consider the glory of the house of the Lord, it is no more desirable to us to go and ascend there as it was for those ancient Israelites to climb up the mountain where there was thunderings and lightnings and earthquakes underway.

I have one, and only one, desire: To try to persuade you to believe in the restoration through Joseph Smith. It is not, and has never been, completed. It is a work yet before us. It is a work largely neglected since the time Joseph and Hyrum breathed their last breath.

The prophecies that were delivered to Joseph Smith—both by Christ in the first vision, and by Moroni on the night of the first visit—which we began this [40 Years in Mormonism Series] with in Boise, Idaho, are a rallying cry for us to rise up and lay hold upon things. It's a rallying cry, a prophecy that does not fulfill itself. It gets fulfilled by what you do. Whether or not you fulfill those prophecies is dependent upon whether you will, like the ancient Israelites, elect not to go up. Or, whether you, like Moses, like Joseph, like Hyrum, choose instead to forsake your sins and to move forward even in the face of your own weakness and unworthiness.

There isn't one of us in this room that should not kneel before the presence of a just and holy being. There isn't one of us who, if instructed to stand before Him, would not keenly feel the inadequacy of doing so. Not one of us. But there are some here who have been in His presence, myself included. There are a number who, like me, have a witness of our resurrected Lord. It can and it does happen, and hopefully as we get through this material today, you'll have confidence in your own ability to rise up.

Let's assume that we are like ancient Israel. Let's assume that we too were left outside of God's presence when He offered to come and dwell generally among the saints back in Nauvoo. Let's assume that this was not what God wanted for us. Let's assume that these things have, just like they did anciently, kindled God's anger like we read in D&C 84:24. Let's assume that we have now, as a body, generally been left with something lesser, which is like what was described in D&C 84:26, that is only that the lesser priesthood which includes within it the ministering of angels.

Well, assuming all of that, what shall we do? You're the regulator that determines whether, on the one hand, you get more, or whether, on the other, you get less. Soften your heart now. Today is the day of salvation. This is the moment you came down here to face. The test is on. The challenge is in front of you. You better have ears to hear. God will judge you, but more importantly, you will judge yourself.

"And after God had appointed that these things should come unto man, behold, then he saw that it was expedient that man should know concerning the things whereof he had appointed unto them" (Alma 12:28). He wants us to know. "The glory of God is intelligence, or in other words, light and truth," which is knowledge of things. He wants us to know these things.

"Therefore [because this is God's desire] he sent angels to converse with them, who [this is the angels] caused men to behold of his [God's] glory" (verse 29). So the office of the angels is to educate and to prepare and then to cause man, who receive and entertain the angels, to then behold the glory of God—the glory of God being intelligence, or in other words, light and truth.

Ultimately, the greatest truth is God Himself. And if you entertain angels, and if the angels instruct you, and if you have been in their presence, you acquire from them the strength, the fortification, the knowledge, or in other words, the ordination by which you're able to go on and pass by them (because they surely are sentinels), and enter into the glory of the

Lord. And so, if you'll give heed to the process, it really should not matter that you are left in a dispensation in which the only authority gives you the ministering of angels. Because the ministering of angels is sufficient to bring you into the glory of God, if you will receive them, if you will give heed to them. That's the office of their ministry. That's what they're responsible to do.

"And they began from that time forth to call on His name; therefore God conversed with men" (Alma 12:30).

And what did Joseph say about all of the prophets of the Old Testament? He said they all held Melchizedek Priesthood, and they were all ordained by God Himself, because they functioned inside a society that was defective, limited, excluded from the presence of God. But not those who received and entertained angels. They were brought up to where they need to be, and God Himself ordained them. Should you not have hope? Should you not rise up above the level of those who are content to have less? Should you not be willing to mount up on that fiery mountain, despite the thunderings and lightnings, despite the earthquakes, despite the fact that you do not believe yourself to be worthy? You're still capable.

In the beginning of section 132, look at verse 7, *"...the conditions of this law are these: All covenants, contracts, bonds, obligations, oaths, vows, performances, connections, associations, or expectations, that are not made and entered into and sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, of him who is anointed, both as well for time and for all eternity, and that too most holy, by revelation and commandment through the medium of mine anointed, whom I have appointed on the earth to hold this power (and I have appointed unto my servant Joseph to hold this power in the last days, and there is never but one on the earth at a time on whom this power and the keys of this priesthood are conferred), are of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead; for all contracts that are not made unto this end have an end when men are dead."*

So, everything that you hope to receive into the next life, even your expectations, all of that has to be obtained from God by covenant. I mentioned an answer to a question in Ephraim that the role of the woman was significant, even in the life of Christ. I mentioned that she anointed Him preliminary to His death and burial. One of the things that gave Him the expectation of coming forth out of the grave was the anointing that promised Him.

Why do you think in the temple the rights include preserving some of the functions of the body? It's not to make you healthy here and now. It's so that you can lay claim upon this as an expectation in the eternities. Because if you do not have the expectation conferred upon you by the Holy Spirit of Promise, you'll have to get that in some other cycle. Because the only thing you will be able to take with you into eternity you obtain in this manner. Everything has to be obtained by a covenant.

Look at verse 13: *"And everything that is in the world, whether it be ordained of men, by thrones, or principalities..."* It doesn't matter if it's ordained by men, and it doesn't even

matter if someone sitting in eternity on a throne, who has authority in the presence of God, ordains it. It does not matter. *"Or principalities..."* That is talking about angels. That is talking about people from the other side. Even if they are in a position of authority in the presence of God, it doesn't matter.

"Everything that is in the world, whether it be ordained of men, by thrones, or principalities, or powers, or things of name, whatsoever they may be, that are not by me or by my word, saith the Lord, shall be thrown down, and shall not remain after men are dead, neither in nor after the resurrection, saith the Lord your God."

The "keeper of the gate" is the Holy One of Israel, indeed. These words should mean something to you if you've listened to or read the text that we reviewed in Orem on priesthood. You should understand what God is saying here. You should understand that when it comes to some things that you hope to have continue into eternity, it is not enough to have even one of the noble and great, even one of those who we regard as an archangel, it doesn't matter. God, and God alone, holds the keys of death and hell. Christ paid that price. Christ has to be the one because He is the only one qualified to do this. He has to be the one. This is a non-delegable responsibility by He who, by virtue of bringing you back and promising you, becomes your Father in Heaven.

"For whatsoever things remain are by me and whatsoever things are not by me shall be shaken and destroyed" (D&C 132:14). That's Christ's word. That's what He says is going to happen.

"Therefore if a man marry him a wife in the world and he marry her not by me nor by my word, and he covenant with her so long as he is in the world and she with him, their covenant and marriage are not of force when they are dead, and when they are out of the world; therefore they are not bound by any law when they are out of the world" (verse 15).

Although God is talking about the eternity of the marriage covenant, He extends this into everything. Everything, even your associations—all of them are obtained by a covenant from Him. Because His word, and His word alone, will endure.

By the time Adam and Eve knew enough to declare repentance unto their children, their children were suffering from the ravages of the Fall. As soon as they began to declare repentance unto their children and teach them some things about covenant making, one of their sons took that and turned it into a combination by which inordinate wickedness could be brought to pass. And you wonder why God withholds some things from the view of the public? It's because some things, if abused, can bring to pass such wretched wickedness in the lives of men, that you're better off not talking about them. You're better off not disclosing them. Adam and Eve declared and cried repentance together. They labored side-by-side. They received the garment at the same moment. They were instructed on sacrifice at the same time. They were taught and received the Holy Ghost at the same moment. They experienced the baptism of fire, and Adam prophesied at the same moment

that Eve, overcome by the Spirit and the spirit of Wisdom, was able to interpret and define what was going on, and how all of this was suitable and appropriate. They two were one.

This is the gospel of Christ. This is the power of God unto redemption, and this is the stuff that Joseph Smith was attempting to lay out when he was taken. There's a lot left to be done. There's more left to be done than has been started. There's more that has not been revealed than what Joseph was able to get on the ground here. As we've gone forward, we've taken less and less. And now, with the engines of correlation, we're managing to trim yet further. The gospel of Christ is not about "have a nice day." The gospel of Christ is not about being a keyhole. The gospel of Christ is about awakening and arising; it's about you becoming redeemed. Thank God that before Joseph died he was able to lay out something in the Red Brick Store, through ritual and through ceremony, that described walking back into the presence of God, conversing with him through the veil, and then entering into His presence. Thank God that in addition to the scriptures, Joseph left us a ritual testimony. But do you know why ancient Israel had their temple? It was to have ceremonies to point them to the coming of Christ in the flesh. The Latter-day Saints have been given a ritual ceremony to point them to receiving Christ in the flesh. There needs yet to be another temple built, but it will be in Zion. And those who go there will meet with their Lord because that will be His house, indeed. You can build that only if you qualify to do so.

The other thing that's required is a record of the names. Not email addresses, not vital statistics, not phone numbers, not any contact information—only names. Therefore, after you've complied and someone is being baptized, choose a recorder—someone that has to record who the names are. Faithfully record the names every time there is a baptism. There will be various recorders in various locations. The various recorders need to submit them to a single central record keeper on an annual basis. Have the recorders identify themselves, and I can give them some further direction, but there should be annually compiled a single volume which will be deposited in a temple when it is built. Because there will be a temple ultimately built.

We do not need numerous temples; but we will need one to which Christ can come. We do not need to perform endless work for the dead until after there has been a covenant made for us. We must be first connected. Only then can we do something to liberate them.

The coming of the Lord in the future will not bring an immediate resurrection. Just as the resurrection of Christ did not empty the world of spirits of even the righteous dead. Those who will be prepared at His coming will remain comparatively few, still. Hence the great need to turn the hearts of the children to the father's and the father's to the children, and this, too, by covenant and sealing through the Holy Spirit of Promise. It was abundantly clear, according to Joseph, that the only way in which this kind of a welding link could be accomplished, required a temple to be built. And not the temple that was built in Kirtland that was accepted by the Lord but something different.

There are at least three stages in the process of restoring knowledge. The first stage is to receive it, but that's just receiving it. Receiving it is not the same thing as the second stage,

which is to comprehend it. It is possible that a man receive something without understanding what it was that he had received. Time and careful and solemn and ponderous thoughts are required to untangle what has been received in order to comprehend what it is that you have been given. But it is altogether something of a different order of magnitude, completely separate from that, to teach it. You can receive it, you can comprehend it, but you may not be able to teach it. When it finally does get taught, undoubtedly it will be taught in the manner that Joseph Smith was beginning to work on in Nauvoo that he never finished, at the time that he was taken. That is, by ceremony, by covenant. And this, too, by something given by God, and it to be established in a house that is acceptable to him.

If you want to know what Joseph Smith was doing in his efforts apart from the church, in a whole new effort, you have to understand the birthright. You have to understand the sealing power. You have to understand he was trying to organize again on the earth the kingdom of God. He was trying to bring back the actual family, but he was taken from us at the incipient stage. Because all that he was sent here to do was to lay the groundwork, to lay the beginning, to come as an Elias, to come and to call to the world and to give to them, if they will pay attention to it, a basis upon which they can study and learn and potentially qualify for the Lord to resume the restoration and bring it to a completion. All of the work that gets done for the dead, where you seal yourself to your ancestors (like they are going to get you anywhere), is the inverse of the model that Joseph was establishing. Joseph had people sealed to him because he had formed a link to heaven. Sealing your kindred dead to be your superior puts you in the spirit world living among the dead, unredeemed, unresurrected, unreturned to the flesh, where you, like your righteous dead, can preach to the people that are in prison. But it'll never get you up Jacob's Ladder back to the presence of God. It won't even get you out of the grave. If you're going to be part of the family of God, there has to be a link, and the link has to form in an unbroken chain.

Remember that in Nauvoo the Lord offered to reconnect the saints, but clearly defined the condition for that to happen. It was necessarily an acceptable temple where He could come and restore the connection. The reconnection is ordinance-based and will require an acceptable temple before it goes beyond the single representative. First, ideas need to be advanced and accepted. Then second, we need to act on the ideas primarily by repenting and opening ourselves to the influence of God. Third, we have to be humble and patient and willing to practice the religion before we can have any hope of God deciding to gather us. Practical experience is absolutely necessary. Theories and pretensions are not going to get us anywhere. Everyone can theorize the virtues that are necessary to gather people together and live in harmony. Everyone can envision themselves as one of the residents of the City of Peace. But the practical experiences required to iron out our selfishness and competitiveness, so we can actually live in peace, is another order of magnitude harder.

See, individual salvation and promises of eternal life are just that—they are individual. A restoration of the family of Israel requires more, including cooperation and inter-relationships that will be formed by God Himself. Promises made to individuals give the individual hope.

If you take the vision of the redemption of the dead that we find in D&C 138, he saw a vision where *"...there were gathered together in one place an innumerable company of the spirits of the just, who had been faithful in the testimony of Jesus while they lived in mortality; And who had offered sacrifice in the similitude of the great sacrifice of the Son of God, and had suffered tribulation in their Redeemer's name. All these had departed the mortal life, firm in the hope of a glorious resurrection, through the grace of God the Father and his Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ" (D&C 138:12-14).*

All of them—these were the righteous, they were in Paradise, and all of them were worthy; they had hope, and not only did the Savior give them hope before death, He visited with them in the spirit world during the time between His death and His resurrection. But that did not get them reconnected to the Fathers in Heaven, nor did it even get them resurrected, because it goes on to say in the same vision: *"...from among the righteous, he organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness, even to all the spirits of men; and thus was the gospel preached to the dead" (D&C 138:30).*

So the righteous who departed this life firm in the hope of a glorious resurrection, who had offered sacrifice in the similitude, many of whom had seen Him in the flesh, who witnessed Him and were ministered to by Him and given authority by Him in the spirit world, remained in the world of the dead to preach to the dead.

Only the organization through a temple and associated rites results in finishing the family of God and the house of order, allowing the results achieved by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, which are described in D&C 132:37. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—they *"...did none other things than that which they were commanded; and because they did none other things than that which they were commanded, they have entered into their exaltation, according to the promises, and sit upon thrones, and are not angels but are gods."*

In D&C 138:41, Abraham (the father of the faithful), Isaac, and Jacob were also there. In verses 41-42 of 138, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were there. But in the revelation given in 1843, they're sitting on thrones. They're not in the spirit world proselytizing; they're sitting on thrones. The difference between these two categories are the differences between individual salvation, which can come, and reorganizing the family of God, which must occur by an ordinance in a temple to be acceptable to God. This was why the command was given to build the temple in Nauvoo and why God offered to restore to them the fullness that they did not achieve.

We need to let God take the lead, and then we need to patiently await each step along the way. This is the stuff of which the prophecies speak, and it is the stuff that will be fulfilled. But the rights and the ordinances necessary to accomplish that— people in this generation don't even have a clue how that necessarily has to roll forth. But rest assured, it will. It will.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #5 entitled "Priesthood," given in Orem, UT on November 2, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #8 entitled "A Broken Heart," given in Las Vegas, NV on July 25, 2014;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #9 entitled "Marriage and Family," given in St. George, UT on July 26, 2014;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #10 entitled "Preserving the Restoration," given in Mesa, AZ on September 9, 2014;
- A fireside talk on "Plural Marriage," given in Sandy, UT on March 22, 2015; and
- A Q&A session entitled "A Visit with Denver Snuffer," held on May 13, 2015.

Podcast Episode 36: Temples, Part 4

QUESTION: This is the fourth installment in a multi-part series about the temple, where Denver addresses the meaning behind both ancient and modern temple worship, as well as some of the features and purposes of the temple to be built in New Jerusalem.

DENVER: Mormonism is true, but it is possible for people to believe in Mormonism and have a whole bundle of ideas in their head that I don't share with them. But the difference between the views that I have of Mormonism and the views that that person has of Mormonism can largely be accounted for based upon how much study, effort, review, thoughtfulness has gone into where they are and where I am. The effort to uncover the story of the Restoration is still left undone. It's still incomplete. But let me tell you, the search is worth it. No matter how shallow the pool is that you've drunk out of in trying to figure out what the history of Mormonism is, let me assure you that if you uncover a question, there is an answer to your question. There is something out there that will give you the truth of the matter. There is a great work left to be done. We may yet see the Restoration take on a power and a glory that it hardly attained to at the beginning.

I would encourage every one of you to take seriously the restoration of the gospel. I would encourage every one of you to realize that Joseph Smith was exactly what he said he was, and probably a whole lot more than he was ever willing to disclose.

When the endowment was rolling out in the red brick store, Joseph Smith didn't have three angels named Peter, James, and John. He had two angels, and he didn't put a name to those two angels. But he had two (because there's two witnesses required). Changing it to three and identifying them as Peter, James, and John was an innovation that Brigham Young adopted to the temple ceremonies in order to reinforce the primacy of the Quorum of the Twelve as the leadership of the church. But it wasn't there to begin with.

In the endowment—the temple ceremonies—Joseph Smith constructed in a ceremony, in a ritual form, the idea of beginning a walk back in which you encountered sentinels along the way, and you demonstrated by the life you have lived that you are in possession of certain standards of conduct, so that eventually you could arrive at the point where you were able to converse with the Lord through the veil. And then having proven yourself true and faithful in all things, you are permitted to enter into the presence of the Lord.

Now that ceremony has been tinkered with. There's been a lot that happened during Brigham Young's time. There's been a lot that happened since it got written down in 1876. The first revisions got done during the Smoot hearings in Washington, DC, in order to conform the ceremony to the testimony that was given by the church president at the time, and the first changes are in the handwriting of Joseph F. Smith. The ceremony has been altered, but the theme of the ceremony has remained the same.

What Joseph Smith did was he lived that journey. He accomplished that walk. He made that pathway back to conversing with the Lord through the veil and then entering into the Lord's presence. He encountered those that were opposed to the walk; he encountered those that were encouraging of the walk. And if you want to know where the idea for the temple ceremony in the form that Joseph established it came from, all you have to do is read his letter when he was in exile:

"...what do we hear? Glad tidings from Cumorah! Moroni, an angel from heaven, declaring the fulfilment of the prophets—the book to be revealed. A voice of the Lord in the wilderness of Fayette, Seneca county, declaring the three witnesses to bear record of the book! The voice of Michael on the banks of the Susquehanna, detecting the devil when he appeared as an angel of light! The voice of Peter, James, and John in the wilderness between Harmony, Susquehanna county, and Colesville, Broome county, on the Susquehanna river, declaring themselves as possessing the keys of the kingdom, and of the dispensation of the fulness of times! And again, the voice of God in the chamber of old Father Whitmer, in Fayette, Seneca county, and at sundry times, and in divers places through all the travels and tribulations of this Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints! And the voice of Michael, the archangel; the voice of Gabriel, and of Raphael, and of divers angels, from Michael or Adam down to the present time, all declaring their dispensation, their rights, their keys, their honors, their majesty and glory, and the power of their priesthood; giving line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little; giving us consolation by holding forth that which is to come, confirming our hope! (D&C 128:19-21).

That was what Joseph Smith lived. That was what he described the Restoration as having included. That was what he attempted to turn into a ritual to be housed in a temple, so that everyone in the ceremony could experience the same kind of angelic ministrants coming and talking to you and giving to you the obligation to live a higher life, and then a higher life still, and then yet another higher standard of conduct, until at last you're purified sufficiently to come and embrace the Lord through the veil, and upon embracing Him through the veil receive from Him not a name, but a seven-fold blessing that stretches from time into eternity. Any of you who have been through the temple will realize that what goes on there is something that is very otherworldly, very foreign, very strange, very unusual. We don't typically see that level of ritual in the Mormon religion that's really relatively informal. But in the temple it gets quite formal. It's because that was the process by which Joseph Smith learned about what went on throughout history.

"And I give unto you, who are the first laborers in this last kingdom, a commandment that you assemble yourselves together, and organize yourselves, and prepare yourselves, and sanctify yourselves; yea, purify your hearts, and cleanse your hands and your feet before me" (D&C 88:74).

Okay, what is the purpose of cleansing the hands? So that you do not handle anything that is unclean. How do you handle anything that is unclean? You go out, and you meddle in stuff that isn't your prerogative to do—all of the unclean things in this world, all of the stuff that

bogs you down. How do you get contamination primarily into the body? Your hands lead you on a keyboard, they lead you when you're paying, they are a manifestation of the cares that you have. You want clean hands? Change the things about which you care.

When we had animal sacrifice, particularly when we had, like, industrial animal sacrifice in the courtyard of the temple at Solomon and the second temple and the temple there, you could not go into the courtyard where the animals were being sacrificed, even if you were only going to sacrifice a turtle dove. You could not go in there. (And the turtle dove, they just wrung the neck, and it was a relatively blood-free thing.) You couldn't go in there and not get blood on your feet, because the sacrifices that were going on were just dumping blood. They collect it in bowls, and they sprinkle it on the altar. But you sever the carotid artery in any animal, and you've got spray, and the courtyard's a mess. And if you walk out into the courtyard, even for a modest sacrifice, and you walk back, you have blood on your feet.

What is the blood representing? The sins of this world. How do you cleanse your feet? If you want your hands clean, and you want your feet clean, then walk in the paths of righteousness. *"He leadeth me beside the still waters."* Your feet are walking where there's peace, where they are going to stay clean. And if need be, you can take a step or two into the still waters to make sure that the feet are clean.

But you can go sacrifice goats and lambs and anything that you want to sacrifice all day long and be no cleaner from the sins of this world for that act, just like you can have the Savior kneel and wash your feet and receive no benefit if you're Judas (although I think you'd have left the room by this time).

They would invoke a ceremony inside the Kirtland Temple to actually wash feet, but it's a *symbol* of the cleansing and the abandonment of sin. Do you want to have clean feet? We can wash all your feet, but it is not going to take any greater effect upon you than what you already received in the LDS temple. If you want your feet clean, walk in the paths of righteousness, and stay in there.

Proxy baptism of the living for the dead was added in 1840. Originally proxies of either sex could be baptized for both men and women. That later changed, and vicarious proxy work could only be done on behalf of the same sex only.

The purpose of baptism grew from remitting sins and joining the church, to include rebaptism as a means for rededication and purification, and rebaptism for the healing of the sick. Emma Smith was rebaptized in October 1842 for her health. In April of 1842, another additional clarification limited baptism and rebaptism for rededication for the living to be performed in living waters like a lake, stream, or river. Baptism for the dead or for the healing of the sick were only to be performed in a temple font.

In 1836, sacred rites were introduced in the Kirtland Temple. In 1843, different rites were contemplated, even partially celebrated. The new and improved temple rites were to be

completed and housed in a new temple, then under construction. A partial "endowment" was added to the already existing washings and anointings. The expanded rites also contemplated sealing marriages and adoption—or man-to-man sealings—all of which remained ill-defined at the time of Joseph's death.

Joseph's original instruction about sealing dealt with connecting the living faithful to the "fathers" in heaven—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The connection was to be accomplished through adoption sealings, not genealogy. Joseph was connected to the Fathers through his priesthood. He and his brother Hyrum were to become "fathers" of all who would live after them. Just read Abraham 1:2. Families were originally organized under Joseph as the Father of the righteous in this dispensation. Accordingly, men were sealed to Joseph Smith as their Father, and they as his sons. This was referred to as 'adoption' because the family organization was not biological, but priestly, according to the law of God. As soon as Joseph died, the doctrine began to erode, ultimately replaced by the substitute practice of sealing genealogical lines together. In between the original adoptive sealing to Joseph and the current practice of tracking genealogical or biological lines, there was an intermediate step when families were tracked back as far as research permitted, then the line was sealed to Joseph Smith. That practice is now forgotten, and certainly no longer practiced, by any denomination within Mormonism. When Joseph died, any understanding of the practice of "adoption" was quickly lost.

In developing man's role in the cosmos, things began rather Protestant-like. Joseph eventually taught plainly that men could become gods. Further, he asserted that God was once a man that had progressed to godhood. The idea crept into Mormonism late in Joseph's life and never had an opportunity to be fully developed. So Mormons do not know a lot about it.

Joseph Smith's "Magnum Opus," the King Follett Discourse, seems more like an introduction to something new than an established, fully developed theology, though the idea that man could progress to be like God had been disclosed earlier. The idea that God was once a man and also learned His salvation was clearly something new that was first revealed in this talk. Joseph's April 1844 sermon finally closed an idea opened nine years earlier in the 1835 *Lectures on Faith*:

"We ask then where is the prototype, or where is the saved being? We conclude as to the answer of this question...that it is Christ: all will agree in this, that he is the prototype or standard of salvation; or, in other words, that he is a saved being" (LoF 7:9). He goes on to explain that any saved being must be precisely what Christ is or else not be saved.

The 1835 *Lectures* was just a prelude left un-clarified and unexplained. The implications of this teaching escaped believers. Mormons were surprised to learn Christ did what His Father did when He offered Himself as a sacrifice for sin. Like God the Father, Christ laid down His life and took it up again or, in other words, attained to the resurrection of the dead. These ideas were consistent with earlier revelations, translations, and writings, but

King Follett signaled a whole new level of harmonizing ideas and adding upon the restoration.

Because Joseph was killed less than three months later, the talk was left as the introduction of something much grander to follow. But like the Nauvoo Temple and the temple rites, this fresh teaching was left undeveloped—a reminder of how great a loss one encounters when God takes an authentic prophet out of a community.

So briefly then, a temple is the Lord's house. It's not actually a temple unless He comes to, visits, and accepts it, and then it is His house, until it has been profaned. Therefore, when it is the Lord's, the timing of when it is to be built, where it is to be built, how it is to be built, and exactly what it is that He wants to be built are entirely within His control.

We don't have the right to select the spot. I mean, if you read carefully the word of the Lord in D&C 124, He does say to the people in Nauvoo, "The site that you have chosen for the building of the temple is acceptable" (verse 43). But remember that the Lord has everything in front of Him, and therefore it's acceptable. In other words, "Yeah that site will do, just like any other site you want to choose will do, given where I know you're headed! Given the end result of this massively stupid experiment that you've got under way at present, build the temple there, build it anywhere. It's acceptable to me, go for it."

"Now I want you to know something," the Lord goes on to say, "If you will do it, and if you'll follow me, and if you'll do, if you'll meet the conditions, I will come there, and I will not only make it my house, I will protect you. You will not be moved out of your place. I will be the one who establishes you in this spot, and I will protect and defend you, and this will become the corner of Zion" (D&C 124:44-45). And He meant it when He made the promise. But again, He knew what was about to happen. He knew the hearts of the people that were involved. And it doesn't matter how eager or earnest Joseph or Hyrum were; it doesn't matter. You don't have a temple without a people, and we did not have the required people at the time.

Now our first obligation in donating and paying tithes is to take care of the poor. But there are fellowships I know that have accumulated money beyond their needs, and there are a group of women that are organizing and making the means available for gathering excess for the construction of the temple. And I assume that eventually the means will be provided from among ourselves for the accomplishment of that work. I do believe that when the command is given, that the command to build the temple is not going to give us decades to respond. I think that when the command is given, we're expected to act with some dispatch to accomplish what has been requested of Him. And so, I am personally grateful that there is no command out there at present to do so, because I don't know how we would accomplish it. We're not supposed to do it in haste, but we're supposed to prepare every needful thing. And preparing every needful thing— we might be in a time when it's far more convenient to accomplish it now than it will be later, under more pressing circumstances.

There's an effort to collect funds for a temple project that transcends every group. Other than that one "transcending each group" project, there is no other general fund or aggregation of funds between fellowships. Each fellowship is independent in their own funds. There is no general fund collected even at these conferences. But conference sponsors may ask for donations to help defray the cost of the conference. That's up to them.

The relief from the donations for "the poor among you" refers to the poor among the individual fellowship. If there's no poor among you, then excess donations should go to the temple, but they can be shared as your fellowship determines by common consent, and that's up to you, using your common consent.

When a temple exists there will be a box in the main courtyard where people can make donations. Donations to the temple will go for two purposes: First is maintenance and repair of the temple. But second, *that* fund, when *that* happens in *that* time and those circumstances, is a general fund for the poor. And that fund can be called upon by any fellowship needing assistance with their poor. Anyone who is part of any fellowship is entitled to request for assistance from that excess temple fund.

There are entirely local and independent fellowshipping groups that are comprised primarily of family and friends. And that's the way that this has and will operate, with only two exceptions. First, conferences can be called that are area-wide, region-wide, or general. Everyone's invited to come to those. Those things operate in addition to local fellowships.

And then secondly, the temple by its nature is general and is the one place that involves all believers, wherever they are located throughout the world. When the temple is functioning, there will be general conferences regularly conducted there. It should be expected also, when the temple is fully organized and operating, that there will be festivals or feasts that will be observed, whereas in the present state of things, such things are not yet expected observances. I don't think the Lord cares whether you want to practice or not; that would be up to you. But the Lord has plans for a temple that go beyond what you might associate typically with a temple from some of your past experiences.

Funds that are donated to build the temple are going to be fully transparent. At present, the GoFundMe site is public, and the funds donated there are open and public. But in time, every cent that is donated will be fully accounted for. The Lord requires a record of donations and expenses. They are supposed to be gathered and, ultimately, maintained at the temple and be open for inspection and, I expect, will be disclosed at some point online when the full accounting can be made.

Now I want to refer to a verse—and refer to this verse in the context of the temple. Apply these words solely and exclusively for a moment to the temple. "*Do not expect to eat the bread or wear the garment of the laborer in Zion*" (D&C 42:42). If you oppose the work, if you stay your hand, if you refuse and others do the labor, don't expect to eat the bread or wear the garment.

Now, there is the Spirit of Elias, there is the Spirit of Elijah, and there is the Spirit of Messiah. These three great spirits unfolded in the work of God in the generations of man in a steady descent. And they will be likewise inverted like a chiasm and return in an ascent, so that at the end it will be as it was in the beginning. That "*...same Priesthood, which was in the beginning, shall be in the end of the [earth] also*" (Moses 6:7), was the prophecy that Father Adam gave, Enoch quoting Adam, and Moses quoting Enoch, the prophecy being contained in the book of Moses or soon, in the book of Genesis.

The first spirit was the Spirit of Messiah. Adam dwelt in the presence of God. Adam represents that original fullness. Adam was the first man. Adam received instructions and spoke to God face to face. He dwelt in a temple (from which he was cast out, but he dwelt in a temple). And therefore, Adam represents the Spirit of Messiah.

The Spirit of Elijah is represented by Enoch who, when the earth was threatened with violence, and men were to be destroyed because of the wickedness upon the face of the earth, was able to gather a people into a city of peace, and to have the Lord come to their city of peace and remove them from the coming violence and destruction. He is a type of the Spirit of Elijah because Elijah would likewise later ascend in the fiery chariot into heaven. He is a type of the Spirit of Elijah, because it is the Spirit of Elijah and that ascent into heaven that must prefigure the return of the Spirit of Messiah in the last days in order to gather a people to a place that God will acknowledge, will visit, and will shield from the coming violence that will involve the destruction of the world. And so Enoch becomes the great type of the Spirit of Elijah, although the name "Elijah" is associated with a man who lived later still but who duplicated, among a hardened people in a fallen world, the same achievement as Enoch had accomplished, albeit Enoch did so with a city, and Elijah did it as a solitary ascending figure. Yet it will be Elijah and his spirit which, in the last days, will likewise prepare a city for salvation and preservation.

And then there is the Spirit of Elias, which is represented by Noah, in which everything that had gone on before was lost. Things begin anew, and Noah begins a ministry of attempting to preserve what was before by preaching repentance. And so Noah, as the messenger or the Elias, bears testimony of what once was.

Well, in the end before the Lord's return, these same three spirits need to have been brought into the world in order for the completion of the plan that Adam prophesied about and that was in the heart of the Lord from before the foundation of the world. The Spirit of Elias declaring the gospel has to come again into the world—and it did in the person of Joseph Smith; and in the message that he brought; and in the scriptures that he restored; and in the message and the practices that he was able to bring about, however short-lived that success may have been. Elias, and the Spirit of Elias, came through Joseph Smith into the world.

We have yet to take the Spirit of Elias seriously enough to move on to receive something further. But, we are now facing a crossroads in which it may be possible to restore again and continue the work and move forward. Moving forward successfully, however, will

require the Spirit of Elijah. This time the Spirit of Elijah is not to prepare a people so that they might ascend into heaven but, instead, to prepare a people so that those who come will not utterly destroy them. There must be a people prepared to endure the burning that is to come. Just as Enoch's people were prepared, shielded, and brought worthy to ascend so as not to be destroyed by the flood, the Spirit of Elijah must prepare people in order for them to endure the day that is coming that shall burn the wicked as stubble. That will be people living in a place of peace, and they will be the only people who are not at war one with another. They will be people who accept a body of teachings and allow them to govern their daily walk, both with each other and with God, so that they receive "commandments, not a few" and "revelations in their day," because that is what the people of Zion must necessarily be willing to do.

We are promised that one will come who will be part of Jesse and part of Ephraim, who will set in order, whose identity will be established by the work accomplished and not by the foolishness of prideful claims made by someone who's done nothing. If the work is done, once it's completed you might be able to guess. But any fool can run around claiming themselves to be whatever their peculiar schizophrenia allows them to claim.

The third spirit that is to return is that spirit which was in the beginning. It is the Spirit of Messiah, this time the Messiah Himself. This time He will come to His house; He will dwell there. Everything must be prepared in order for Messiah to return. And so in the end, as it was in the beginning, Adam being a type who represents dwelling in the presence of God, or the Spirit of Messiah, in the end it will be Messiah Himself who returns to dwell among a people who are prepared. This is a chiasm. It is returning to the beginning as the work of the last days walks backward in time to the point where it all began.

Elias goes before to prepare for a greater work that is coming after, just as the Aaronic ordinances go before. Joseph Smith said the Spirit of Elias was revealed to him, but "the Spirit of Elijah holds something more. It holds the revelations, ordinances, endowments, and sealings necessary to accomplish turning the hearts of the fathers to the children by securing an unbroken thread between the living and the fathers in heaven. This can only be done in a temple prepared for that purpose." I'm reading Joseph. Without sealing of living children to the Fathers in heaven who dwell in glory and who sit upon thrones, the return of the Lord with Enoch and the other thousands who will accompany him would result in none escaping the judgments to come.

One of the interesting things about the gathering into Zion is that, apparently, although there may be yet more revelations and commandments that roll out, apparently it will be in Zion where the "rich treasures" of the records of other scattered tribes are to be brought in order for that information or body of material to be reclaimed. If the revelations and the prophecies are correct, the records of the Jews and the records of the Nephites, they get gathered, and they are the first. But eventually there will be many others that get gathered in.

The description that's given of bringing their rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim in the everlasting mountains is a description of bringing them into the place that will be built by a covenant people who have the legal right to the land.

And first of all, I believe we could choose, as a people, a place to build a temple, and we would get exactly the same response that we see in the Doctrine and Covenants that was given to Joseph when the Nauvoo Temple began: "The sight that you have selected is acceptable to me." And we'd probably reach exactly the same conclusion. I will not, therefore, choose a site. If God doesn't choose a site, it will remain unchosen. If God chooses the site, it's His, and then He has the responsibility to defend it.

If you read about the site selected in Nauvoo—in the Nauvoo site the Lord said, "Yeah that's acceptable to me, and if... and if... and if... *then....*" But if God chooses the sight, it's His. There's no "if" —well, there might be one "if," and that one "if" is: "Now if you want to live and not be slain by me on the land that I've chosen, then you better be careful." But it's His land; it's His to defend; it's His choice; it's His house; it's His Zion; it will be His New Jerusalem. And therefore, no man is going to say (and if they do say, I'm going to have nothing to do with them), "Is this acceptable to you, Lord?" It's got to be His. And if it is His, it carries the weight of God having chosen it.

He's known where it is for millenia now. And He's had prophets describe it. It's in the everlasting mountains; it's not on the plains of Missouri. And the people that are going to go there are going to say, "Let us go up to the mountain where the Lord has an ensign erected." And that will be His house. And He will come, and He will accept it, or we won't have Zion.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's fireside talk on "Mormon History," given in Bountiful, UT on November 22, 2015;
- Denver's comments during an assembly on "Missionary Work" in Eden, UT on July 2, 2016;
- The presentation of Denver's paper entitled "Was There an Original?" given at the Sunstone Symposium on July 29, 2016;
- His conference talk entitled "The Doctrine of Christ," given in Boise, ID on September 11, 2016; and
- Denver's conference talk entitled "Things to Keep Us Awake at Night" and subsequent Q&A session, given in St. George, UT on March 19, 2017.

Podcast Episode 37: Temples, Part 5

QUESTION: This is the fifth installment in a multi-part series about the temple, where Denver addresses the meaning behind both ancient and modern temple worship, as well as some of the features and purposes of the temple to be built in New Jerusalem.

DENVER: Jacob gave a blessing to Joseph that we find in the book of Genesis 49:26: *"The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren."*

As a consequence of that, the latter-day Zion must be brought through Joseph. He's the one upon whom the blessing devolved, and interestingly enough, he passed that on to Ephraim, not to Manasseh. Also interestingly enough, though Manasseh was the lineage through which Lehi's family descended, the prophecy I read you about the blessings being conferred in the last days are to come through the hand of Ephraim. There's something afoot. And it is going to come through Joseph at "the utmost bound of the everlasting hills."

I don't know how many of you have spent much in time in Missouri, but the hills there aren't everlasting. They are almost so diminutive as to be undetectable, and if you happen to be in a cornfield or around some trees, they're altogether gone. Because that terrain was never the terrain prophesied as being the location when the blessing was given by Father Jacob to Father Joseph.

Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 2:2-3: *"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it."* In this context, in this prophecy, "all nations" is not Russia and China and Ethiopia and Uzbekistan and Turk-crap-istan and I'm-a-nut-istan. "All nations," in this context, means all the 12 tribes of Israel. The "nations" are the 12 tribes of Israel. Period; that's it. That's who's going to flow unto it.

"The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths."

The paths of God lie in the heavens. Therefore, if you are going to learn to walk in his paths, you are going to have to learn to walk in the heavens.

"For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." The ensign that is prophesied to be established in the context, in the meaning, of that day had reference to a zodiacal, a constellation, a depiction of the heavens themselves. So when an ensign is

going to be reared, and it's going to tell you about how to walk in the paths of God, this is talking about something very, very different than what most of us today would envision.

Zion is going to be a connection between heaven and earth, and at that place you will learn of the God of Jacob's ways, and you will walk in His paths, because heaven and earth will be connected, and the stairway connecting the two will be open, and the heavens and the earth will be reunited again. And this is going to happen in the top of the mountains.

In March of 1831, there was a revelation given that we can read in D&C 49:24-25: *"But before the great day of the Lord shall come, Jacob shall flourish in the wilderness, and the Lamanites shall blossom as the rose. Zion shall flourish upon the hills and rejoice upon the mountains, and shall be assembled together unto the place which I have appointed."* The "mountains"—these were the prophecies at the beginning, as the Restoration was starting to roll forth.

Joseph was told that when they located in Kirtland that it would be temporary. And the location in Kirtland was temporary. When they went out and they found the "center place" (and that was found not by Joseph Smith; that was found by the four missionaries—five, because another guy joined them as a result of proselytizing in Kirtland, and so they had five when they got there), they said, "We can go so far and no further, and at this spot, we are in the center." And so that spot, given all the legal entanglements and prohibitions, that spot became as close as you could get, and as it turns out, not much was able to be done.

Later (and this is during 1841)—this is in Nauvoo, and a temple is being required of the saints in Nauvoo. There's this interesting statement within the revelation about constructing the temple in Nauvoo:

"And ye shall build it on the place where you have contemplated building it, for that is the spot which I have chosen for you to build it. If ye labor with all your might, I will consecrate that spot that it shall be made holy. And if my people will hearken unto my voice, and unto the voice of my servants whom I have appointed to lead my people, behold, verily I say unto you, they shall not be moved out of their place" (D&C 124:43-45).

So what this opportunity in the Nauvoo temple represents is: We'd lost Kirtland. We'd been forcibly expelled from Missouri. We had attached the idea of a center temple where God would come to dwell with this people, and a place that would be a refuge that would be preserved by the power of God, to that location. But we got kicked out of there, and we went back across the Mississippi to Nauvoo. And the Lord said, "You going to build the temple in Nauvoo? I'll command you to do that. You build it; I'll give you sufficient time within which to do it. And if you go to and you do it, I'm going to consecrate *that* spot. And I will make *that* spot holy to you. And I will make it so that you cannot be moved out of *that* spot by your enemies. And I will come there, and I will restore to you what has been lost: the fullness. I will give that to you, and I will do it in Nauvoo." And it didn't happen. And the flow of events took over.

I want to read you from Joseph Smith's history, at the very end of his life on Saturday, June 22 (five days before he would be slain)—June 22 of 1844. You can read this in the *Documentary History of the Church*, at volume 6, page 547:

"Saturday, June 22 1844— about 9 P.M. Hyrum came out of the mansion and gave his hand to Reynolds Cahoon, at the same time saying, 'A company of men are seeking to kill my brother Joseph, and the Lord has warned him to flee to the Rocky Mountains to save his life. Good-by Brother Cahoon, we shall see you again.' In a few minutes afterward Joseph came from his family, his tears were flowing fast. He held a handkerchief to his face, and followed after Brother Hyrum without uttering a word."

So Joseph received a revelation on June the 22nd of 1844 telling him, "Now, *now* go to the Rocky Mountains."

When we have an opportunity to accomplish something with the approval of the Lord, the Lord is going to be the one who ultimately decides where the actual accomplishment will take place. When it takes place, it's going to be in the mountains, and you needn't guess which mountains. The mountains are going to be out here in the west, exactly where the first missionaries were sent to try and find it but were hedged up by the confluence of what was happening in the law and in society and in the management of the Indian tribes in 1831 when they tried to cross and go out west and were told they can't. Well, if we can't go out there and find that New Jerusalem city—if we can't go out there, then we'll settle here, and we'll take these local Indians, these relocated Indians, and we'll fetch ourselves a Zion right here in this spot.

And the Lord gave a series of revelations in which He said, "If you can do that, you do that. And that is acceptable to me, and that will be Zion. Go to, have at it." And then He says, "Here's why you didn't pull it off: your jarrings, your envies, your lusts, your contentions. That's why you didn't pull it off." And He has said repeatedly in one of those extraordinarily clever things that the Lord has done throughout history: "*Zion will not be moved out of its place*" (*D&C 97:19; 101:17*).

"Zion will not be moved out of its place," which place you know not yet. But Joseph knew it was in the Rocky Mountains, and he intended to go there. And the Lord knew it was in the Rocky Mountains when He revealed that to Isaiah in his prophecy. And Father Jacob knew it when he was prophesying and blessing his son Joseph.

Now let me give the Lord the latitude that the Lord is entitled to have, because of the statement that Joseph Smith made. Joseph said, "Oh, you know nothing more that a baby in a cradle, because the whole of North and South America are Zion." Okay? So if the Lord says, "Yeah, you can build it in Missouri, that's copacetic." Time and time again the location of Zion is approved by the Lord in different spots, precisely because the entirety of North and South America would be an acceptable place to found Zion. But within those general

geographic parameters, it must be in the mountains. It must be among the natives who were originally here. It must be established under the guidance of someone who hails from both the tribe of Ephraim and is a descendent of Jesse (you can read that in the Doctrine and Covenants). And it will surely come.

There is absolutely no reason for the Lord to tell you another place to go and pollute if you don't rise up to bring with you the worthiness necessary to turn, at last, a place into the New Jerusalem, where the Lord can come and dwell among you, where you can be of one heart, where you can be of one mind, where there are no poor among you, and where you have all things in common, where you meet the requirements. And there's no reason to assemble you together at any spot. You can do everything that needs to be done preliminarily from wherever it is you dwell at present. And you can prepare your hearts; and you can prepare your minds; and you can begin to understand the difficulties. And instead of judging our failure that went on before, you can rather empathize with the failures that went on before and come to some appreciation for the fact that it's not going to be any easier for you than it was for them. It's not going to be any less filled with the temptation to be envious and filled with lust and have jarrings and contentions for you than it has been for those that went and attempted before.

The only purpose behind the last-days work, both what was happening at the time of Joseph and what the Lord is offering to us today, is to accomplish that fulsome restoration of the family of God. I mean, Joseph talked about temples, and they were built incrementally, and they never reached the finish line, even on the second one before he was killed, but he laid a fabulous foundation and pointed in a direction that the Restoration necessarily must go to and complete. Because if we don't have the tabernacle of God where He comes to dwell with His people, which He does when He has a family on earth, then the prophecies are not going to be fulfilled. Then the promises that were made to Enoch will not be realized. Then the statements of what will happen in the last days through Moses will not be vindicated. Then Adam's prophecy concerning his descendants to the end of time will not be realized. All of these things point, so we know it is going to happen. The question is not, "Is it going to happen?" The question is, "Will we rise up, or will we not?" Because what He's offering is, in fact, a legitimate opportunity for that to indeed happen.

We seem to get so easily distracted that we have a hard time staying on task. It's one of the gentile afflictions. We're very ambitious people, and we're very egocentric. And a lot of what is going to be required will require sacrifice and selflessness.

If you cannot reconstruct the family through an adoption ordinance process, the work cannot be accomplished. There just isn't time. We're in the process of walking back to how it was in the beginning. A lot of people think that by getting a New Testament church put on the ground that Joseph Smith accomplished the fulsome Restoration. It was never intended to stop there; it's supposed to go all the way back to the beginning. It's a giant chiasm, and it's a giant mirror. And today we do not live 900 years. And so the way in which it will be rebuilt at the end is going to be by ordinance in the house of the Lord, in a place that He has accepted. The only kinds of places that are legitimately the house of God are houses that

God has come to dwell in, in order for those who seek His face to find Him. That happened at Kirtland. It never happened at Nauvoo or Salt Lake.

The fact is that a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of smoke by day is an allusion, an attempt to refer to things we are familiar with, to describe things that we are not familiar with. A conduit that reaches up into heaven, as the temporary appearance of the Lord to Joseph in the First Vision, is intended to be a permanent connection at some place. It will be one of the reasons why people say, "Let's not go up against the people of Zion because Zion is too terrible." The presence of God is dreadful to the wicked; it's frightening to them. They get near it, and it convicts them of their unworthiness. They dare not go up.

But the pure and the humble and the noble are drawn to it. They will want to be there. And so that conduit, that fiery pillar, that stairway to heaven, Jacob's ladder, the chariot of fire—all of those things are an attempt to describe that heavenly connection, that heavenly presence.

Now, to the unworthy and the ungodly looking at it, they may or may not be able to see anything about it, but they will sense extraordinary dread. It will frighten them. To the worthy, there will be something enlightened about the very presence of the place. It will not seem to them to just be another place. It will seem as though the God of heaven has some base established there. That's when you know that an ensign has been established in the tops of the mountains to which nations will flow saying, "Come, let us go up and learn from the God of Jacob." Because that ensign is actually something godly, holy, edifying, instructive, revelatory, filled with light, and redemptive. And the God who dwells there is going to be the Lord.

So we don't have time. And if you think about it, Enoch taught for 365 years—365 years before his people were prepared enough to go up. And we have to be prepared enough for them to come down and not destroy us by the brightness of their presence.

"The Father can, and does, acknowledge others as His. But, unlike the Son who has repeatedly visited this earth, walked upon it, been handled by people, eaten here, the Father does not come into contact with this earth in its fallen state. The only time the Father had contact with this earth was before the Fall, in the Paradisiacal setting of Eden, which was a Temple at the time. Whenever there has been contact with the Father thereafter, He has been at a distance from this earth.

"There is a formality with the Father that does not exist with the Son. For example, the Son has eaten with mortal man while He was immortal, both before His ministry in the flesh and after. As our Redeemer, He is directly responsible for us and has contact with us to perform His redemptive service. The Father, on the other hand, is different in status, responsibility, glory, and dominion. The Son can appear to mortal man without showing His glory or requiring any alteration of the mortal who beholds Him. To behold the Father, to endure His presence, one must be transfigured. Mortal man cannot behold the Father's

works while mortal, for if you comprehend them you cannot afterward remain mortal in the flesh."

That's taken from pages 383-387 of *Removing the Condemnation* (©2011, Denver Snuffer), and there are a lot of footnotes to that.

Like this description of the Son, the same description should apply to His Mother. The Father is the source of glory and likened to the sun. The Mother reflects and shares this glory and is likened to the moon. She reflects God's glory, endures within it, and is empowered by it. She can participate with Him in all that is done wielding that glory. "Knowledge" is the initiator or force, and "wisdom" is the regulator, guide, apportioner, and weaver of that power. If not tempered and guided by wisdom, knowledge can be destructive. Wisdom makes the prudent adaptation required for order. The Father and Mother are one. But the Mother bridges the gulf between the throne of the Father and fallen man. She made it possible for the Son of God to enter this fallen world for the salvation of everything in it.

A great deal of reflection and study is needed to understand all this implies. This is an introduction of some basic information about the Mother of God or "the Mother of the Son of God after the manner of the flesh." More will be given in a temple—where mankind's understanding of things kept hidden from the world will be greatly increased—when God directs one be built to His name.

There was a time when Christians recognized that the stars of heaven bore witness of the significance of Mary, Christ's earthly Mother. Few Christians now look at the constellations as signs set in the firmament of God as His testimony. The light that was meant to shine on the earth was to illuminate both the eyes and mind of man. Man in the first generations understood this, and "*a knowledge of the beginning of the creation, and also of the planets, and of the stars, as they were made known unto the fathers*" was written by Abraham, who received that same understanding (Abraham 1:31).

At the time of Christ's birth there were those who understood the testimony written in the lights of the firmament. They reported they "saw his star in the east and have come to worship him." These wise men watched and waited for the heavenly alignment to testify of the birth of a promised king. The Matthew text makes such casual mention of this that we give it little notice. Today, Christians and Mormons alike have little understanding of the lights in the firmament and so, give little heed to the signs set by God in the heavens above. Our ignorance doesn't mean these signs are meaningless. It only means we are poorly informed of God's full message.

Clearly, both the Father and Mary despise the proud whose overestimation of themselves is informed by the imagination of their hearts and not God's regard. Both the Father and Mary want those who are mighty to be dispossessed from their high seats of power. The Parents of Christ prefer them of low degree whose humility and selflessness make them suitable to be exalted. The hungry are fed and the rich are sent away empty—which may not be fully

realized until after this world. But the Parents of Christ will be the final judges of all people and will judge mankind based exactly upon the criteria that They have revealed.

There are Heavenly Parents, to be sure. There are two separate beings—a Father and a Mother. She exists, and Her role is acknowledged in scripture. We are supposed to find Her. And in the last-days temple (should it be finally built by a humble and obedient people), Her open presence will be there.

In the temple ceremonies, women veil their faces. Among other things, this symbolizes the hidden Heavenly Mother. Her presence is veiled because She is sacred and not to be regarded as accessible apart from Heavenly Father. That which is most holy is veiled from the vulgar and profane. Women should be regarded as daughters of the Divine Mother. Like Her, they carry the power to produce new life. Mothers are the physical veil between pre-earth spirits and physical bodied inhabited in mortality. They clothe children in the veil of flesh. This power is honored in the temple veiling of women. This power to give life has been regarded in almost all societies as something sacred and holy. In our coarse and vulgar society we have rejected, as a matter of law, the idea that women engage in a sacred and holy labor when bearing children.

The creation of woman was designed to fulfill the work and the covenants of the Father in this world and will be critical in eternity. Families come through the union of the man and woman. Women bear the souls of mankind and bring all of us into this world through childbirth. That power was inherited from the Heavenly Mother. But there are other rights belonging to women that will only be apparent in the afterlife. They have been endowed with an everlasting authority required for any man to occupy a throne in the Father's kingdom.

A fuller explanation of woman's role will require worthy people willing to be taught and to build an acceptable house for the Elohim to return. And I don't know why some things get said at one point in history that are not said at other points; I just know that as we move along the path towards what is inevitable at this point—that is the coming of the Lord and the establishment of a place of peace, a city of Zion, and a New Jerusalem—that more information needs to be in the possession of those that will find themselves there.

Last year I delivered a talk at the Sunstone Symposium titled "Other Sheep Indeed." In it I invited others with sacred writings to come and bring them. That invitation was first offered by Joseph Smith in 1840. He anticipated a temple to be built in Nauvoo to which records would be brought from all over the world: "...bring every thing you can bring and build the house of God and we will have a tremendous City which shall reverberate afar... then comes all the ancient records dig them up... where the Saints g[ather] is Zion."

Not all of God's words are in the Bible. God has spoken to every nation (meaning every religious division of people). Truth is everywhere, among all people. If we love God and truth we will want to search for it. We will not be content to leave it unexplored and undiscovered. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after more righteousness. Blessed

are those who are followers of righteousness, desiring to possess great knowledge and to be a greater follower of righteousness and to possess greater knowledge. And blessed are those who do not suppose the scriptures contain all God's words and They (the Gods) have not provided more.

One of the world's greatest religious epistles was composed in Liberty Jail. It includes the following passage:

"[T]he things of God are of deep import, and time, and experience, and careful and ponderous and solemn thoughts can only find them out. Your mind, O man, if you will lead a soul unto salvation, must stretch as high as the utmost Heavens, and search into and contemplate the lowest considerations of the darkest abyss, and expand upon the broad considerations of Eternal expanse. You must commune with God. How much more dignified and noble are the thoughts of God than the vain imagination of the human heart? None but fools will trifle with the souls of men. How vain and trifling have been our spirits, our conferences, our councils, our meetings, our private as well as public conversations: too low, too mean, too vulgar, too condescending for the dignified characters of the called and chosen of God, according to the purposes of his will from before the foundation of the world" (T&C 138:18-19).

These words enlarge the soul. Only a great religion challenges us to stretch as high as the utmost heavens, search into, and contemplate the darkest abyss—an expansive religion that urges us to become godlike in our interest, in our search for truth. We are clearly directed to turn our attention to the heavens and learn how they function, what they are, and who is to be found there.

There was a step that was able to be taken (as a consequence of work to recover the scriptures) that occurred in a conference up in Boise where the scriptures got approved—and as part of that, a covenant allowing gentiles to accept the status of covenanting, to accept the *Book of Mormon* (which had never been done from the time of Joseph Smith until the Boise conference) as a covenant between the believers and God. The terms of the covenant are contained in the new set (the new volume) of scriptures. It's the third volume. Repent, be baptized, enter into the covenant that accepts the *Book of Mormon* as the word of God and the direction given to us. And the covenant requires some work to be done among the remnant of the Jews and some work to be done among the Native Americans.

That is something that is being attended to, but not everything that is going on is necessarily something that ought to be broadcast publicly for everyone and everywhere. But we all have our obligations, and we all have our responsibilities. And some people have very specific responsibilities that they've accepted and that they're discharging to take care of things involved in the covenant.

There's always an obligation, when God has a people, to build a temple. When God first established the original religion at the time that He created Adam and Eve, He put them in

what is a temple setting. It was a garden in which God, angels, and man mingled together. They were cast out of the garden. But when He's had people on the earth, He has commanded that they construct sacred space. The purpose of the sacred space has always been to reunite heaven and earth. It's not to endlessly repeat a ceremony that you can memorize if you go often enough. It's purpose is to reunite heaven and earth and to accomplish what was originally the status of mankind in the Garden of Eden, being reunified with heaven itself.

We don't have a commandment to do that, but we have been told we are going to be commanded to do that. And so an effort has been made to begin to gather funds necessary. There's a statement that nothing is to be done in haste; haste brings pestilence. Pestilence is not just bugs and vermin; pestilence is also confusion and disorder and chaos. And so that process is underway and at some point will culminate in an identified place and a command to build a specific, conforming structure.

In July of 1840 Joseph Smith gave a talk in which he was encouraging the people that believed in the revelations that had come through him to build a temple. A temple needed to be built. And he made a comment that if the temple could get built and he could see it finished from its top to its completion—if he could see that work completed, then he would gladly go in peace and let his life end, if he could just accomplish that work. This was in July of 1840.

In January of 1841 came the revelation commanding that the temple be built. Together with a statement at the beginning of the January 1841 revelation saying, "Joseph, your petition and your offering is acceptable to me, and I will allow them to build a temple, and it can be built on that spot, and you'll have sufficient time to do that. But at the end of the sufficient time, then instead of blessings there will be an outpouring of cursings upon the people." And in three-and-a-half years, the temple had not been completed to the second floor, and the time went out, sufficient time expired, the lives of Joseph and Hyrum were forfeit, and instead of blessings there were cursings.

Well, why did Joseph in July 1840, without a commandment from God that he knew was going to come, why did Joseph encourage the saints at that point to begin building a temple to God? Why did the commandment have to be given in January of 1841 for the temple to be built? And why were the lives of Joseph and Hyrum forfeited three-and-a-half years later when the work was still incomplete?

There were accusations about the temple committee stealing money from the temple fund. There were complaints from the mission up in Wisconsin floating wood down the Mississippi to Nauvoo for construction of the temple, that the wood was being diverted to construct houses for the leading members in Nauvoo. And houses did get built. In fact, the Nauvoo restoration has been a testament, a testimony, to how the community diverted the effort that God commanded be spent on constructing the temple into constructing the community. And so their lives were taken.

Joseph did have a covenant, and Hyrum did have a covenant. But the manner in which that covenant was to be disseminated, Joseph understood, required that the house of God be built because some things do not get put outside of God's house.

We were told in a get-together in Boise, Idaho that God's people are always required to build a temple. It will serve exactly the same purpose that was intended at the beginning of the Restoration to have been accomplished while Joseph and Hyrum were alive. To this point, we do not yet have a commandment to do so, but we know it is coming. And we know its purpose is exactly the same. Joseph could have accomplished a great deal more. Hyrum and Joseph together could have completed the process of the Restoration. It's still a great undone work.

At about the same time that Joseph gave that talk, there were two letters—one written on July 25th, the second one written on July 27th—both of them from John C. Bennett, who was the quartermaster of the militia in the state of Illinois. The first one saying he was coming to Nauvoo and that he wanted to be there with Joseph's people; the second one said he not only wanted to come but he wanted to join, to become part of Joseph's people. And both letters end with John C. Bennett, who had become the mayor of Nauvoo, saying, "Reply to this letter immediately!" "Reply to this letter immediately," because John Bennett was a hasty man and an ambitious man and a corrupt man.

And when it comes to the construction of Zion, God has said in revelation it cannot be done in haste because haste brings pestilence. And what is pestilential is not just bugs and rodents; it's confusion. We have a season of peace, and we have a season of prosperity, and we have an opportunity in which we might be able to accomplish something with nothing more than the same thing that Joseph Smith was talking about in July of 1840. But when a command is given and sufficient time is accorded and the clock begins to run, then the tendency is to move quickly, like John Bennett. Everything's in a hurry.

When you have a season of peace upon you and an opportunity to reflect upon what went wrong with the Restoration at the beginning, and we have again the opportunity established by the word of the Lord that was read to and accepted by, for the first time in the Restoration, a covenant to accept the obligations that were devolving upon us in the Restoration, and we have an opportunity to prepare and to do something—we delay, we hesitate, and we squander the opportunity, ultimately at our peril.

I don't care how much you think you know about what God is up to, I guarantee you that unless God has shown it to you plainly, as He had done to Joseph at the beginning, you're not going to figure out what God is up to. There's a reason for that. If you could figure out what God is going to do and where and when and how, then the adversary could prevent that work from being accomplished. It is precisely because God keeps His secrets and entrusts them carefully and guardedly, that the work of God cannot be frustrated; and the covenants will be fulfilled; and the prophecies will be vindicated; and what was offered through Joseph will, in fact, be accomplished.

And we have an opportunity, if we will avail ourselves of it, at a time of peace and prosperity, to do something to prepare in order to have that day come upon us with adequate preparation having been made in advance.

Because the institution could be corrupted, and because the institution began to inflate its role— you see, at the beginning, the institution was the creature of the authority of the prophet. It did not own and control the prophet, but it was subordinate to that man who could declare what the mind of God was to them. Over time, the institution arrogated (that is, in its arrogance assumed) that it could control even the right to declare the mind of God. And so the institution puts people in a role to sit in the temple of God as if they were God, to declare to the people what things ought or needed to be done, and has amassed at this point billions of dollars in wealth (with no Zion), hundreds of billions of dollars in property (with no ability to reconnect anyone through covenants to the Fathers, to anyone other than the dead who reside in hell looking for redemption from the grave). That was *not* the plan at the beginning. That was *not* the objective of the Restoration.

Billions of dollars have been accumulated in the pursuit of the damnation of the souls of men— "damnation" meaning hedging up the way so that they cannot progress. Billions of dollars! And where is the Restoration precisely? How much closer are we now to having the covenants fulfilled, the rights vindicated, the opportunity to enter into sacred space where heaven and earth and the afterlife commune together in the process of redeeming the earth itself? There will be two of these locations on the earth before the Lord returns—one will be called Zion, and one will be at Jerusalem. And in the covenant, things were set in motion that will vindicate those promises. Not all of what is happening to do that [create Zion] can be known publicly. It's not necessary that it be known. But there are things taking place, no matter how diminutive it may seem. God will vindicate His words.

We're not going to arrive where we need to arrive if we perceive ourselves as unequal, if we think of ourselves as greater and lesser, if we don't think of ourselves as simply common servants, inadequate as we may be, to a Lord who loved and sacrificed Himself for our redemption. *He* is worthy.

We can do our best, and we can make a lot of mistakes along the way. Joseph did his best, and it just didn't work out. But what would have happened if the people—in July of 1840, when no commandment had yet been given—rose up and with alacrity decided that they were going to labor for the accomplishment of the task that Joseph was telling them was coming? What would have happened had the money raised and donated for the temple not been diverted by the temple committee to their own purposes? What would have happened if the lumber sent down from the Wisconsin mission been used for the construction of the temple rather than being diverted for the homes of the leading citizens? What would have happened if, instead of God requiring yanking on the reins to pull the bit in the mouth of the horse of the Restoration— what would have happened if all that was needed was for the reins to be lightly put on the neck of the horse of the Restoration, to guide it where it needed to go? Horses are so sensitive that when a fly lands on their skin they can twitch to remove it. The people of the Restoration are nowhere near as sensitive to what God would

have them do, then or now, as is a horse.

Given the opportunity to accomplish what the work of the Restoration is intended to result in, I would hope that we would cease from our jealousies and our ambition, our contention, our desire for one-ups-man-ship, our desire to prove our individual greatness—and to realize that none of us are ever going to be very good servants. But we're supposed to be serving the perfect Master, and if we'll serve Him faithfully, instead of our own agenda, He can lead us home.

He will lead some few home. But I hope it's not with the same sort of miserable, inadequate, self-serving distractions that had to be overcome at the beginning. I hope we can take it a bit more seriously and be a bit more sensitive when the Lord is encouraging us in a way, rather than requiring that He command and demand us to go in a way. Commandments are often the things that produce condemnation. Encouragement and invitation is almost always the thing that produces blessing. I hope there will one day be a blessed people.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #6 entitled "Zion," given in Grand Junction, CO on April 12, 2014;
- A fireside talk entitled "Cursed, Denied Priesthood," given in Sandy, UT on January 7, 2018;
- Denver's conference talk entitled "Our Divine Parents," given in Gilbert, AZ on March 25, 2018;
- The presentation of Denver's paper entitled "The Restoration's Shattered Promises and Great Hope," given at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, UT on July 28, 2018; and
- Denver's remarks given at the "Remembering the Covenants" Conference in Centerville, UT on August 4, 2018.

Podcast Episode 38: Temples, Part 6

QUESTION: This is the final installment in a multi-part series about the temple, where Denver addresses the meaning behind both ancient and modern temple worship, as well as some of the features and purposes of the temple to be built in New Jerusalem.

DENVER: When the tabernacle was first built (the portable tabernacle), all of the details on how to put that together was given to Moses. And the temple got constructed from natively available materials while they're wandering in the wilderness.

One of the amusing things to me is the use of badger skins in the tabernacle, in putting it together. There are really two animals that you run into up in Idaho that you stay away from: mountain lions are predatory and dangerous to men, if you give them the opportunity (and you can't even keep them away with campfires—they'll come poking around a campfire), and badgers. Badgers are so mean an animal that even grizzly bears leave them alone. No one likes, in nature, to confront a badger.

And so when badger skins are being used in the tabernacle of Moses, I think, well that's useful in one way—you're disposing of a population of these vicious animals that may be occupying the same territory; but you're going to have a hell of a fight on your hands if you're going to harvest badger skins to use in your program.

I mean, they had animals. They could weave wool; they had skill sets. But largely, the componentry that was used in the erection of the tabernacle were locally available materials, and locally available craftsmen could fashion them.

That's really in contrast to what happens when the temple is to be built at the time of Solomon, because the temple required skills on a whole other level of magnitude, including cutting, fashioning, and placing stone work. The *Book of Mormon* refers to the temple built by the Nephites as inferior to the temple that had been built at Jerusalem, because it did not have so many precious stones. The word “precious stones”—some people have taken that to mean emeralds and rubies and diamonds. And I don't think that's what it's referring to at all. I think it's talking about the difficulty of the stone masonry work and fashioning large, interconnecting, fit-together stones in order to make the structure, itself, sound—engineeringly sound, aesthetically sound, and so on.

When Solomon went to erect the temple, he looked at the available materials and the available skills, and concluded that they didn't have the capacity to fashion the structure that God wanted to be built as His house. But he knew that there was an adjoining kingdom presided over by the King of Tyre, Hiram, who did have—because he'd had public works accomplished, he did have the required skill set in order to construct what needed to be constructed.

So the temple of Solomon was constructed with the wealth donated by the nation of Israel to the adjoining kingdom of Tyre, who sent the laborers to accomplish the work. And the outcome of that was acceptable to God, because at the dedication of the temple by Solomon, the cloud of the Lord appeared, the presence of God was felt. The term that gets used by scholars is the "Shekhinah." It occupied the temple, so much so that people were vacating the building because of the glory of the Lord that was there. And so you can't gainsay or question the validity, the propriety, of using skilled laborers from outside the nation of Israel, the people of Israel, to construct the house of the Lord.

We're a fairly small people with a fairly daunting task. And the manner in which the task is to be achieved is going to have parameters prescribed by God. Details are going to have to be met, and the workmanship is going to have to conform to the pattern that's given by God. But that doesn't mean that we have, in our possession, the capacity to do the work. But there are artisans—there are artisans all over who can fashion what needs to be fashioned, cast what needs to be cast, carve what needs to be carved, and erect what needs to be built in order to conform to the pattern. And all of that is available, if we have the means to hire the artisans, if we have the ability to employ the necessary skill sets.

One of the amusing ideas (if you think about it for five minutes) about the prophecy of who's going to build the temple—right now in America, the construction trades are largely manned by people who are descended from native tribes, that are viewed by most Americans simply as another Mexican, but who have native blood, who are filling the construction trades everywhere in this country.

I just had to have some 25-year-old stucco on my house re-done, and the crew that did it had an Anglo-European foreman. He wrote the contracts, and he took the money, but his labor force—I don't think there was a single one of them that wasn't at least partly descended from Native American blood. But they had the competency, they had the skill sets, they had the availability, they had the work ethic, and they were willing to come and to do the stucco repair that needed to be done, and to replace what needed to be replaced, and to tear out what had rotted in the place where water got through, and to finish it all up, fix it all up, and restore, and put a brand new face on a 25-year-old home.

Well, if the descendants of the remnant of this land are going to participate in the construction of the temple, and you hire any workforce right now to do it, and you gather the money from among our people to hire craftsmen to come and to do the work of the building, you will not be able to do to it without employing the people who were foretold to do the labor. It's just the way the construction trades work in America right now.

So whether you think that that prophecy requires some devoted, religious, believing holder of faith with us to accomplish the work, or whether you look at the analogy to the temple that was built at the time of Solomon, employing neighboring tradesmen to come and do the work, either way you're going to wind up with the blood of the Native Americans

laboring on the erection of the temple, because that's where the craftsmen are; that's where the tradesmen come from.

So if I were to say, what can we do to get ready, I think the best kind of preparation would be to gather the necessary wealth in order to employ the skills to get the work accomplished and not for us to begin fashioning articles that are going to have to be transported and delivered and set up. It's true that there are a number of articles that are fixtures or fashionings of things that will have to go into the building when it's erected, but some of those are something that you would want to have fashioned for immediate use, rather than have it fashioned and then wait perhaps a period of years, where it could be damaged, where it could be put on display for curiosity seekers, where you have to take care of it, and you have to curate it, you have to do things with something that might be better fashioned for immediate use, placed in its appropriate station within the building, and then left as part of that temple structure.

So if I were saying what we ought to do, I don't think we ought to be right now creating artifacts that will go into the building. I think we ought to be gathering the means with which to accomplish the work when the time comes.

And we don't have a command as yet, therefore we don't know when the work is going to have to be launched. It may be that we're going to get far enough along that we can have even plans, architectural designs for the structure, before we ever have a command. Because given what I know about the construction trades, the day you decide to erect a structure, your first year is probably going to be occupied with architects. It's not going to be work on the ground.

In the Nauvoo Temple—I've seen some of the designs by the architect that went into the structure, but it was sort of a design build. In beginning the work, not all of the plans even existed in order to be able to complete the work. For one thing, the upper attic space did not have a design at all at the time that Joseph Smith died. So although there was a structure and there was an attic area, and the attic area would be co-opted in order to present a ceremony/endowment, Joseph had ordered canvas that was intended to be used outside at the bowery, in order to have a canvas tent protect the people from the weather, so that conferences held outside would be a little more tolerable. Several of Joseph's talks ended because of wind and rain and the hostility of the environment to holding meetings. He'd ordered a lot of canvas that was intended to go onto the bowery which, after his death, with no plan for the attic space, they took the canvas, they cut it up, and they divided the upper area of the Nauvoo Temple into spaces for the presentation of a ceremony with canvas separations. They took, for example, an area that was intended to be the Garden of Eden or to symbolize the Garden of Eden—they moved some plants in there. So, it was a canvas separation on the upper attic level, with one compartment of that canvas division with plants that they brought up and put inside to symbolize the Garden of Eden area. And so on, throughout the upper area.

When they abandoned Nauvoo, they took that same canvas that was intended for the bowery, and they used it to cover covered wagons for the migration to the West. And so, part of attic space canvas divisions for the ceremonial presentation saw later use as covered wagon material for the western migration.

But Joseph, on a design build—the labor force was full of expatriate English craftsmen who converted to the church and came over, and they were capable of accomplishing the trades. Poor Englishmen—and in fact, they needed employment, and church donations were used to pay the laborers for the time that they spent laboring on the temple. Some of the labor was tithed, but some of the craftsmen were there employed full-time, doing the work. Well, they never had a plan to finish the building out. So when they got up to the upper levels after the death of Joseph Smith, they improvised. And inside their improvisation they staged a form of ceremony, the best they could recollect of what Joseph had done in the Red Brick Store, upstairs.

And we won't be able to do a design build because before you ever turn dirt to begin excavating for foundation, you normally have to have everything planned out in order to make sure everything will fit together as you get to the final bit. And architects don't do design-build of something like a temple. You can do it on a warehouse. You may be able to do it with some kinds of structures, but a temple building—you really need to have everything completed in the design right down to the finished details, in order to make sure that everything will fit together.

I designed a house (well, this building we're sitting in right now—I designed this building). But when I designed the house, and when I designed this building, I had to go hire a competent tradesman, draftsman, or architect to get a working set of drawings. The house I built—it was 2500 square-feet on one floor, with a 2500 square-foot basement. So, it was a 5000 square-foot building. But it was a rambler, and the purpose of the design was to make the building look small. And everything in the building worked except one detail. When we got to this one detail, the fellow I had hired to build the building said, "This plan's never been built before, has it?" And I said, "No, this is the first time it's ever been built, and I designed it."

Well, going from the family room on the main floor down to a family room in the basement was a curved staircase. And the curved staircase ran next to a breakfast nook, which was next to the kitchen. The kitchen cabinetry came down right over the top of the staircase, as you wound through the curvature. And when you got to the stair that was the point of the kitchen cabinet wall, your head hit the wall because there was no space there. But it was a big drawer; it was for pots and pans. I mean, it was a big, capacious drawer. So the drawer had to be lost, and the space had to be cut at an angle of descent, in order to allow enough headspace so you weren't bumping your head as you walked down the stairs to get to the lower level. Which, then, would have wrecked the appearance in the kitchen, because you're losing this big drawer. So for aesthetic reasons, that large, capacious drawer for the pots and pans front remained glued to the wall with nothing behind it. You couldn't move it; you couldn't open it, because there was no drawer behind it. It was just a faux drawer-front to

look consistent with the rest of the kitchen. But that's the kind of detail you learn after you have built it once, and you figure out that, well, you just should move the stairway into the upstairs family room another two or three steps, and then you probably need to make a couple of small wall adjustments. But, you can keep your drawer, if you'll make those accommodations.

I drew this floor plan, and didn't realize it when it came to the upstairs, but the window that was designed for the upstairs in this building was actually a skylight, which I never picked up on. Well, when it became apparent that the window outside was a skylight instead of a view to the east, we changed that and extended the floor upstairs to the back of the building, which meant we eliminated a vaulted ceiling in a conference room in the back of this. But we have a dormer, and we have an eastward-viewing window upstairs now. And we have more floor space up there as a result of that. But those are the kinds of things that you actually have to build it in order to cope with a first design on a project.

We're going to have to get all the details into an architectural design and a working set of drawings, and then we probably ought to 3D model the thing so we see that the window is a skylight and not a dormer, so that we see that you're going to bump your head when you walk down the stairs. Because there are programs right now that you can feed an architect's drawing in, and then you can 3D model it. And you can take an average height person, you can walk them through the structure, and you can see what will work and what won't work and how it'll all fit together. You can 3D print it; you could do that, too.

Right now, the best protection for everything that needs to be done is silence. The plans of God can be disturbed by enemies who are ill motivated, if they are given the opportunity. The best way to prevent the enemies from having the capacity to do something to interfere is ignorance, silence.

We're protected a lot by skepticism, by doubt, by indifference. That is a wonderful shield to allow the work to go forward. Indifference doesn't pose a threat. Outright motivated hostility from someone who wants to interfere with the work of God can be troublesome, but there's no reason to inspire them or to give them the capacity to achieve anything or do any mischief if they don't know anything. And so leaving people in ignorance is a great protection; however, it would be, in my view, better to have someone who in their heart knows that what this amounts to is a house for God and whose devotion to God is reflected in the effort that they make. That would be far better. But they need to share the understanding that everything that can reasonably be kept out of public notice, needs to be kept out of public notice, for as long as it is possible to keep it from being publicly noticed. And only what merely must be told, should be told, when it is inevitable that it must be so. Our tendency to get excited and to talk about things before their time creates an enormous peril for a lot of things that would have been better served, and more easily accomplished, if we'd simply held our peace.

There's a vast, vast difference between what some of the people who composed scripture knew and what they put into the scriptures to make available for us to read. I don't know

how many times—maybe I should search this so I know the number. But I don't know how many times (but it's fairly frequent) the *Book of Mormon* starts out and tells you, “Here's the story... Oh, I'm not supposed to disclose this; I can't tell you this.” It starts with the first writer in the *Book of Mormon*, Nephi. It goes all the way through the end of the thing. It concludes with the last writer in the *Book of Mormon*, Moroni, saying the same thing. “Oh, I was about to write more, but I was commanded not to do that.” That ought to give you a hint. I mean, one of the things that God requires of His people, in order to accomplish what needs to be accomplished in a fallen world, is the capacity to respect the boundaries that He establishes, as opposed to boundaries we would like to see out there.

One thing I have learned is that you must keep confidence with the Lord and keep to yourself things that He does not want out for public view.

In the account in the New Testament, written by Luke, of the conception and birth of Christ, the record talks about enough information to let you understand that the birth of Christ was miraculous and involved the will of God the Father. But whenever the details achieve that, then you're left with a narrative that says, “And Mary pondered these things in her heart.” What Mary could have borne testimony to (and may have to Luke) and what Luke could have written (taking what was pondered in the heart of the Mother of God and putting it on display for readers for two millennia of the account that Luke left) was so ill-advised that Luke didn't record it. He drew a line and said, “I'll tell you what you need to know in order for you to understand that the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise,” and then explained that it was the work of God the Father, and it was a sacred passage through the veil of Mary's flesh into mortality that brought about the existence of Christ. And that's all (see NC Luke 1:2-3; LE Luke 1:31-36).

And you needn't go where some fairly crass and crude purported apostles of Jesus Christ and their pretensions have gone, saying [in vocal imitation of Bruce R. McConkie], “Oh yeah, there were 23 chromosomes from one and similar chromosome contribution from another, and God the Father was the father of Jesus Christ in every way as I, or any other man, is the father of any son, born to a wife of theirs.” Yeah, thanks Bruce, but we probably shouldn't have been told that, even if it were true. And there's a big question about whether or not that was true.

The birth was virgin. The birth was virgin, okay? It was essential that that be the case. Mary was a holy vessel. She was a holy vessel before she conceived the child, and she was a holy vessel after. So, how Luke dealt with that, and what Mary pondered in her heart, and how the Holy Ghost overshadowed her, are things that Luke assures us was the work of God. And he draws a line. And I think that line ought to be respected rather than to be violated.

Every true temple of God is designed to be a holy place, in which holiness is preserved and protected from the profane world, in which sacred things can be conducted that are intended to draw people closer to God. In many respects, all of us come to a project like that with a certain amount of profane desire and ignorance. But the house of God is designed to remove our ignorance and to teach us about a different culture. It hails from a different

culture. And in some ways—one of the other questions that was asked, “What we do that offends God? Or what do we think offends God, that doesn't?”—when you come to the temple as someone who has prepared themselves for that sacred moment, the real things that God honors the most are humility, and our openness, and our willingness to receive what He has to offer, as opposed to coming to reinforce our prejudices, to reinforce our conviction, or to gratify our pride by going to the house of God with the notion, “We're better than other people; and when we get to the house of God, it proves we're better than other people. And now that we're here receiving from God sacred information and blessings and promises, when we leave we are most assuredly better than other people.” Those are the very kinds of things that provoke the justified anger, the justified ire, the justified jealousy, envy, and resentment of people who are looked down upon by those who came and approached God—God who loves all people; God who wants to save all people.

And if you are saved, then you ought to go out and labor to save another soul, to share the joy. God's saved, and what does He want to do? *“This is my work and my glory, to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (OC Genesis 1:7; LE Moses 1:39)*. He wants to share the joy. He doesn't sit back on a throne saying: “Worship me. Idolize me. Look at me. Check it out—I glow in the dark! I'm bigger than you; I'm better than you. In fact, I can do stuff you can't do. Look at it. Worship me; fall down. Because *I am holy*. Check it out—without even trying, I can make my voice sound like the rushing of waters. I don't even need a reverberation setting on the amplifier. I don't need an amplifier. I can talk to the whole crowd of 2500 people gathered at Bountiful at one time, and they can hear my voice. Except, I had to repeat myself three times, because they wouldn't open their hearts to receive it.” Between the first speaking and the second speaking and the third speaking, they were stirred in their hearts to humility because of the possibility that heaven itself was speaking to them.

We're supposed to come to the temple, like that audience after the voice spoke twice, and before it spoke the third time, having prepared ourselves, opened up to actually listen to what He has to say. We're not supposed to come there filled with our prejudice and our arrogance and our presumptions, to hear reinforcement of what we already believe about ourselves. We ought to be not only humbled but brought down to the dust of the earth by the things that we hear God deigning to reveal to us in the house of God. And then we ought to leave there realizing that the preciousness of the souls of others is every bit as great as the preciousness of your own. In fact, more so, because if you fail to elevate those that might have been elevated by your unique ministering to them—your kindness, your charity, your ability to reach out to them and understand them—and they are left without salvation, just like the revelation says, “If you should bring save it be one soul to me, how great will be your joy in the kingdom of heaven” (T&C-JSH 15:34; LE D&C 18:15), likewise, if you could have reached someone, and you didn't, how great will be your sorrow with the realization that you could, and you should, have done more to benefit and bring about salvation to the souls of others.

And so the correct approach in preparing ourselves for the temple is to realize that God conveys sacred things to people who will respect them, treasure them in their hearts, have

that influence the way in which they view themselves and others but to go about charitably, reaching others humbly, and petitioning them to open their hearts, crying repentance to them in the hopes that they, too, will come to God. And with the realization that everyone has different gifts, and some of the most gifted people there are, are not yet believing. Their gifts may prevent them from having the humility, the contrition, to be able to come. You need to reach out for them, too. They need to be reminded that the gifts do not make you greater. They impose upon you perhaps even a greater burden, but they don't raise you up to be something high and holy and better. You have to come to God's house on God's terms, and when you're there you need to be careful that you don't offend Him by the heart you bring in to His house.

Talking to Saul, Samuel told him that: *"...to obey is better than sacrifice"* (OC 1 Samuel 7:9; LE 1 Samuel 16:22). Isaiah tells us that God's had enough sacrifice in the temple to exhaust Him. What He wants is a broken heart and a contrite spirit—a broken heart, not because of the things that God is forced to make us suffer, because our hearts can be broken that way, too, but a broken heart by the recognition that so many of the souls of men, including our own, are threatened to be lost. And our heart breaks at the idea that our Lord came and gave a sacrifice, the enormity of which defies anyone's ability to describe it, including His. When He's talking about the price He paid, He calls it "exquisite." He calls it "sore." He tells us, "You can't imagine it." Our hearts ought to be broken for the fact that Christ went through something, on our behalf, that should break us in humility. And a contrite spirit means we don't come thinking of ourselves bigger, better. We come thinking of ourselves as an ignorant vessel, searching for possession of something greater, and hoping we might comprehend it a little bit, but open to whatever it is the Lord will convey to us. Because He's going to convey to us information from a whole different level of comprehension, and our grasp needs to be contrite enough to let him, through the whisperings of the Spirit, through the things that will flood your mind, give you understanding and give you meaning.

I think it's one thing to prepare financially to have the structure, it's another thing for God to fill it with His glory so that His name can be uplifted there in grateful remembrance of the work that He has undertaken, as He explains Himself to us. And it's still another thing altogether to have people who are contrite and broken-hearted and grateful and come to willingly receive what God can dispense to us in His house. Those are very different things. And we think if the first two are accomplished, then the third one necessarily follows. But I think we can go to God's house and damn ourselves by the hardness of our heart and the pride of our spirit. And I think the Answer to the Covenant sort of warns us about that and about how we can come, and we can do everything that we think will satisfy Him, but if we are not of the right mind, of the right spirit, of the right heart, we can still offend Him—even if we're doing what He asked us to do. We have to do it in the right spirit. And that's the biggest challenge of all.

If the temple exists, its existence will be known, because it's too late then to stop it. If it exists, it'll be known. And I don't think there will be such a thing as a temple recommend. I don't think there will be such a thing as one man passing on the worthiness of another man. I don't think you're going to have to satisfy a committee. I'm sorry I laugh at that. The

preposterousness of that strikes me as such a parade of fools and such a display of pretentiousness, that it's really—at its core, it's ungodly.

I think that the way in which people will gain access to the house of God is from God or angels. God's going to call people; God's going to approve people; and God's going to invite them to His house. How that gets implemented may involve revelation to people but revelation that says, "This person is to be brought into the house of the Lord" doesn't allow an independent evaluation. If God says, "Bring them into the house of the Lord," that's it. There's no more discussion to take place. Whatever your opinion is of that individual, whatever your independent evaluation would be, whether you'd raise your hand and say, "Yes, yes on that one," it doesn't matter. If God says they're to be taken care of, they're to be taken care of. Period.

I also think there'll be a baptismal font, because it's one of the necessary accoutrements that will be at the temple. And I think anyone who wants to be baptized—no matter where or if or how many times you've been baptized, I think everyone who's a faithful follower of God would want to be baptized for themselves in the temple baptistry, once in their lifetime. I think everyone would want that. You know, I've been baptized and re-baptized. But for me, if there's a font in a temple, I would want to be baptized again. And that baptism doesn't have to be recorded, because if you've been re-baptized and your name has been submitted and it's in the Recorder's book (the Recorder's book has to go into the temple; it'll be kept there)—but for myself and for my own heart and desire, I would want to have been baptized in the font of the temple, when there is a temple. And I don't think anyone can be forbidden from that. That's an act of repentance, renewal. Everyone's entitled to that. Heavens, what's his name? Russell Nelson could come and ask, and I don't think anyone could forbid him. Of course, he's not going to. Pope Francis could be baptized if he wanted to.

Feasts, and the returning of the feasts, belong in the house of God as part of that renewal. I know people are trying to practice feasts right now, including Passover, and I see no harm at all in doing that as kind of a preparation. In fact, it might be good to develop a few skills by some kind of rudimentary practice beforehand. But the temple is the place where, hopefully, those skills will be put to use, and you won't make a mess of the first attempt to celebrate it in the temple, at God's house. But we are going to be told—here's my understanding at present, subject always to God kicking me in the head and saying, "You know, you're wrong, and you're foolish, and here's the real circumstance..."—my understanding is that the feasts that were incorporated into the Law of Moses were a preservation, in a Mosaic law format, of feasts that pre-existed the Law of Moses. The Fall Harvest, the Barley Festival—these things preceded, they antedated, the Law of Moses. They were handed down as part of the original religion, or at least some of them were. Meaning that they go back to the era of the first Fathers. Anything that reckons from the first Fathers—those to whom our hearts are to turn—that religious practice is to return and to be celebrated in the house of the Lord at the end.

The only one that existed from the days of Adam to Noah to Abraham that got added, that will be observed, is the Passover. Because the Passover was added as an additional testimony, given in the days of Moses, to point forward specifically to the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb (whose blood would save Israel), with a command that it got preserved. So even though it got added and wasn't part of that original, the addition at the time of the Passover itself was an event symbolizing liberation from the world, coming out from under the bondage of Egypt (which is what its last-days people are supposed to ultimately achieve), coming out from under the influence of the head of gold and the Medes, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, and the modern-day kingdoms—being liberated from all of that. And at the same time, being liberated as a consequence of the blood of the Lamb. So the addition of the Paschal Lamb, and that feast, is going to stand at the renewal.

The rest of the feasts of Moses, only insofar as they were part of what was from Adam to Noah, and only in the form that was celebrated during that time period, will be preserved and observed, and observed in the format that the first Fathers observed it—which may differ, perhaps markedly, but perhaps not you know, altogether, from the way that the Law of Moses had their festivals. And most of the festivals were cyclical, tied to the ebb and flow of nature (seed time and harvest time), and to the cycles of the signs in the heavens, in order to integrate into one religion things that are above and things that are on and things that are beneath the earth, in one grand reminder that the architect of everything was God, and that He set the stars in the heavens above, and He set cycles, and He set repetitious motions, and He has alignments that bear testimony of specific events at specific times. And all of these are part of these observances, and we've lost track of them. They're not part of our holy religion because our religion is so incomplete and so inadequate. But, yeah, there will be festivals.

MAN: You've said that the temple was/is the original university.

DENVER: Yeah, it was. And it is going to be again.

MAN: And so, will it be a commuter university, or will it be more of a people-go-there-and-live kind of a city? In other words, will people go and caravan to the temple, learn what they need to learn, and then go back home? Or are they going to come there and reside?

DENVER: There's going to have to be some—there's going to have to be someone, I mean, some have to reside there. Yeah, there has to be a presence there. But...

MAN: I mean, you have a city, New Jerusalem, the center of which is the temple, and hopefully that gets upgraded at some point to Zion....

DENVER: Yes, right. Right. It's a progression.

MAN: But, so we start with the foundation, the temple, and out from that would build New Jerusalem, over time, and eventually, one heart and one mind....

DENVER: You get Zion, yeah.

MAN: And so could you maybe...

MAN 2: And incorporate the City of Enoch.

DENVER: Eventually, yeah, all of that. The Restoration is a process of restoring, and some of that is an abrupt moment in time. When you finish the building and dedicate it, that's an abrupt moment in time. And you know the date, and you know the hour, and you know when that happened. But some of it is gradual and incremental and begins at one point in the process that develops and takes a while. And so you can't really put your finger on the calendar and say, "and this got done on this day," because it got done over these days and, yeah, there's that.

But the pattern that Joseph was talking about in Nauvoo was actually a correct pattern. It's embedded into the January 1841 revelation, where at the time that you are being given a command to build one thing, you're also being given a command to build another thing. You have the temple that is required to be built, in order to house the sacred events that God intends to take place there, and at the same time you're also told to build the Nauvoo House, which is a commuter house for people to come, in order to be taught. But they're clearly transitory; it's a temporary abode. It's designed to house people temporarily while they go through some kind of education, training, indoctrination, initiation, endowment, blessing, empowerment, and instruction, so that they then can leave their temporary abode and return, so that the knowledge of God can spread throughout the earth. And when these transitory folks succeed in bringing people along far enough, then those people can come up. "Let us go up to the house of the Lord, to the God of Israel, and let us learn of his ways" (see OC Isaiah 1:6; Micah 1:9; and LE Isaiah 2:3; Micah 4:2). The prophecy is not: "Let us go up to the house of Lord, and get an apartment, and stay there forever." It's coming to learn and then going to teach. The knowledge of God has to spread around the earth, like the water fills the oceans.

The prototype temple that is going to be built (in what will become Zion) is something that I would hope—I would hope that the people would not present this in such an offensive, obnoxious, and arrogant way that it would be looked at as condescending. I would hope that it would be looked at as sincere, invitational, and honest, and a humble beseeching to come and consider. But I would hope that the people in the old Jerusalem who are inspired to the cause of a temple in their land would be willing to come and be taught—if not for purposes of being utterly persuaded, at least for purposes of trying to see a little more clearly that the God of Israel is, in fact, the God of the whole earth. And that He can make of any people, His own. And that perhaps the children of the widow can outnumber the children of the bride, if they will come and meet the terms that God prescribes for meeting Him. And if their hearts can be touched, and if they can see a little something in what is going on in one gathering around one temple, it might inspire and inform something they do, for their gathering, with their temple.

Because all of this is going to be the work of God. I have no doubt that the people who are anticipating and looking for the return of the temple in the old Jerusalem are doing so because of the whisperings of God to them. Because the will of God is moving them inexorably towards that. Because it has to happen.

There's also the prophecy that however much they may become informed by what they are willing to receive here, that even after their temple is built, there will be people among them who say, "What are these wounds in your hands and in your feet?" And He'll identify Himself as He who was wounded in the house of His friends, as He who was lifted up, as the God of Israel, who was Jesus Christ (see OC Zechariah 1:36; T&C 31:11 and LE Zechariah 13:6; D&C 45:51).

And so whether their temple reflects the temple in Zion or reflects something different to preserve and respect their understanding of the will of the God of Israel for them—ultimately doesn't matter. I just think if they would be willing to come and look, listen, and hear, if their hearts were open and their minds were open, I think they would see and hear things that would be edifying and useful to them.

I don't ever expect everyone in the world to humble themselves enough to receive what God offers before His return. But I do expect that the wicked who would fight against Him will be destroyed at His coming. And those who remain, at least hopefully, will be curious about His visit to the New Jerusalem and His visit to the old Jerusalem and have some amount of desire to perhaps one day say, "Come let us go up to the house of the God of Israel and learn of His ways, that we might walk in them, too."

The foregoing comments by Denver Snuffer were recorded on September 8, 2018 in Sandy, Utah.

Podcast Episode 39: Babylon

QUESTION: Who or what is the stone cut out of the mountain that will grind Babylon to dust? Has that happened yet? If not, how will it happen, or is it already underway?

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DENVER: I think for an understanding of Christianity you really have to go back to the condition of Israel at the time of the birth of the Savior, because Christ was introduced into an environment in which the whole of Judaism had been transformed by events that took place between about 600 BC and the time that the Lord was born. Judaism divided, at the time of Solomon's death, into a Northern and a Southern Kingdom. And the Northern Kingdom was taken away captive into Assyria, and they ultimately never returned. They're the lost ten tribes of Israel. And while there is some reference of them departing out of Assyria as an organized group being led by prophets, they did not return to the area of Palestine. They turned instead and went North, into the North countries, and we lost record of them. There are prophecies about their return, but history and their accounting for themselves is absent from the record.

It was some time after that, that the Southern Kingdom (which identified itself as either the Southern Kingdom or the Kingdom of Judah—or still later, they identified themselves as the Jews, but some of the anachronistic statements in the Bible identify them earlier as Jews than when they were self-identifying as that)—that group got also taken captive, dispossessed, and moved into the foreign power of Babylon. It was while they were in Babylon that Judaism underwent a fairly significant revisioning. When you think about it, up until the time of the Babylonian captivity, they either had—from the time of Moses until that moment—a tabernacle, in which they could practice their formalized religion, or they had the temple that had been built by Solomon. In Babylon, they were dispossessed of their homeland, their sacred sites, their temple, their functioning religion. And so the first dispossession from their land—or their first diaspora—their first separation from their holy land in Babylon was a prelude and a practice to try and figure out how to make Judaism portable. And so, in the Babylonian experience, you have a kind of portability to their faith that allowed it to survive dispossession of land, dispossession of sacred sites, dispossession of temple, and a non-functioning Aaronic and Levitical priesthood. Literally, it was non-functioning. When they return again, they had to resort to genealogical study and Urim and Thummim in order to declare who could be a priest, because the priestly functions had lapsed into decay, disuse, and forgetfulness.

And during that time, because of the Babylonian society, the religion took on a kind of Babylonian intellectualism that led, in turn, to rabbinical Judaism in a way that Judaism had not existed before that moment. When they return, you get into the time of Ezra and Nehemiah and the reconstruction of the temple. There is reason to believe, and I won't go into it at this moment, but there is reason to believe, when they reconstructed the temple upon the return from Babylon, that what they built was not a reflection of what had been there previously—that 70 years of captivity in Babylon was long enough so that people

with the kind of continuity of knowledge, familiarity, understanding were gone, and so you get a reconstruction.

At the time that they were taken captive into Babylon, there was a lot of tension inside Judaism, as reformers were trying to make the faith fit a model that was becoming popular among other competing religions and peoples. And those people have been given the nickname (by scholars) of the Deuteronomists. But the tension between the competing viewpoints had not been resolved at the time of the Babylonian captivity. So they leave with a fight going on, then they have to reconstruct the religion in order to make it portable and fit into a new culture. Then they return, and it appears that the people who reconstruct the temple and who re-established Judaism included people who had been persuaded by the Deuteronomists in the pre-exile. And so the reconstruction of the religion that takes place—including the books that were purportedly discovered when the ruins of the temple were being rummaged through in order to reconstruct the temple site by Ezra, that were used to rebuild the Old Testament that had been lost—[was] rather more influenced by the Deuteronomists as the prevailing party in the argument than Judaism had been at the time of the Babylonian captivity. So it's a whole bunch of historical events that together create a different look, feel, and flavor to Judaism, even after its return.

So in the prophecy that you have of Daniel interpreting the dream and explaining the interpretation, you have the head of gold, you have the shoulders of silver, you have the arms, and so on through the body, down to the feet of miry clay and iron—our day. Daniel declares that that head of gold is Babylon. It's the kingdom in which the Jews were, at the moment of that prophecy, being held captive. So why the head of gold will persist all the way down to the time when there's clay and iron in the feet—and will need also to be ground into dust by the stone cut out of the mountain without hands—should perplex people. Because Babylon fell, and Babylon's been gone and off the pages of history—beginning sometime shortly after the Jews return and rebuild their temple in their holy land. So when the Jews return, they return knowing that there is this head of gold that not only followed them but will follow all religion; it will follow all society; it will follow all culture on into the last days. Well, there's a series of kingdoms that come through between the time of the return to the holy land and the time in which Christ is born— because the Medes and Persians and the Greeks and then the Romans are all part of that vision of Daniel, and all of them come through and sway Israel, hold influence, bring culture, bring attitudes, viewpoints, understanding. They bring government. They bring a variety of invasive thinking that cumulatively have an effect on the landscape at the time of the birth of the Lord. We have—what is it, in Luke, when it's dating the birth of the Savior—we have a statement, so we know when Christ was born: *“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria” (Luke 2:1-2)*. Cyrenius being a Roman puppet appointed by Rome; Caesar Augustus being Octavius, who retook the name (or took the name) of Caesar after he was the unquestioned head of the Roman empire, having defeated Mark Antony. So you've got the dating in the record of the Savior and the birth of the Savior based upon what's going on in Rome. This is the legs of iron.

So there is a stone to be cut out of the mountains that is going to grind to dust all of the components of the cultural, governmental, economic influences that were foreseen by the king and interpreted by Daniel going all the way back to Babylon. And Christ arrives in the middle of those pernicious, corrupting, social influences in the remnant of Israel, in Palestine, with a reconstructed temple (this one built using the family of Herod's money and influence), under the Roman Empire's economic, social, governmental, and cultural influence, in order to come into the world and to discharge His mission and ministry.

So when you put the entry of Christ into the full sweep of both history and prophecy, you should not expect the Savior to establish the Kingdom of God on earth that is intended (at some future point) to destroy all of those influences. He's going to leave all of those things intact. The Savior is going to come. He's going to minister. He's going to accomplish His mission. He's going to die. He's going to be resurrected. And the great image is going to continue happily on its way, developing down through the channels of history, with all of those influences unimpeded, unimpaired, uninterrupted by the coming and going of the Savior.

Now, arguably, it was because of the presence of the Savior that some of those later anatomical developments occur (with the legs, the feet, the clay, the iron), as the influence of Christ's ministry took over, and ultimately, the desire to separate church and state came about; the desire to have religious freedom came about; the desire to create a benign environment in which it's possible for people to worship according to the dictates of their own heart came about, because Christianity itself became rather a malignant force in the wake of the Savior coming and going. But that gets ahead of where we are in the story. We're going to look at the time of the coming of Christ, because Christians tend to read Christianity as if it sprung into existence with Christ's birth, and it came fully formed, fully functioning, and fully capable of accomplishing the very thing that the culmination of the ages was intended to achieve. Christ didn't do that. It wasn't time yet for that to happen. In the Lord's Prayer, He prays about a future kingdom: "*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven*" (Matthew 6:10) is a petition prayer, begging the Father that the time will eventually come when that event will take place. The stone cut out of the mountain without hands—it did not happen in Christ's time, and he knew it didn't happen. It didn't happen, and He prayed for that eventuality. And He said, "this is one of the things when you pray, if I'm going to teach you how to pray, this is one of the things you ought to be praying for, you ought to be asking that at some point this future kingdom will come about, so that God's will can be done on earth like it is being done in Heaven." Because on earth, we're down here in this cultural, social, legal, religious environment that is heavily influenced beginning with the head of gold and going through all of the cultures that had succeeded one another in dominating the world.

So Christ enters onto the scene inside a milieu that is corrupt. It is disconnected significantly from pre-Babylonian religion of Israel. It holds very little content that reckons pre-Moses. It has hardly any connection to Abraham—and the beliefs of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob—and it includes only two of the twelve tribes as the nation. And for that, it includes only that remnant that returned from the Babylonian exile back to Palestine to reoccupy the

land after they had been dispossessed. So He's talking to a tiny remnant of what was once a great people that consists of, primarily, the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (in the Southern Kingdom) who were willing to come back from Babylon. The ten tribes were scattered; much of those tribes were left behind. And in this Southern Kingdom, you probably have onesies and twosies of the other tribes, represented through marriage, that had stayed within the Southern Kingdom; but primarily, the blood of Israel is gone, and the religion that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and that family had has been radically altered, revised, poorly preserved. Abraham himself was trying to restore an even earlier version of the religion that goes back to the first fathers.

So when Christ comes to minister and to serve and to sacrifice in Israel, He's dealing inside a very corrupt environment. He sets up Peter, James, and John (as three who were significantly isolated and elevated from the other members of the twelve) for such things as the Mount of Transfiguration, when they were taken up on the mount, and they saw Moses; they heard the Father; they experienced the events on the top of the Mount of Transfiguration. And then there were the twelve (that were called to be a group) that were ordained and sent out as messengers. And then there were seventy who were called as missionaries, also to go out. If you go back historically, and you say, "What is the type that Christ is organizing as the way in which he's going to plant a seed for the religion that He's trying to get people to recognize? What is the model that Christ employed?" You would say, Peter, James, and John are an echo, an homage, a remembrance of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and the quorum of the twelve that he organized and He sent out as messengers are a remembrance—an honor—to the twelve sons of Jacob, the twelve tribes of Israel. And the seventy, when you go to Exodus 1:5, you find that there were seventy souls who went into Egypt at the time that the rest of the family joined Joseph and the brothers, and their descendants came to live in Israel.

So what Christ is doing is He's reestablishing a kind of restoration of the family of Israel in a model that is pointing back to an earlier time, before Babylon—an earlier time when there was a different religion on the earth; an earlier time, at the time between Abraham and the twelve sons of Jacob or Israel, when Judaism had not been influenced by Babylon, the Medes and Persians, the Greeks, the Romans. (And I say the Greeks—much of the New Testament was actually written in Greek. If you don't think that the influence of Alexander the Great in going through and conquering—first, in Persia; and then second, he came through Syria; and then next, he went down to Egypt. And they made Alexander a Pharaoh in Egypt—If you don't think that the influence of these predecessor cultures wasn't persistent in the land at the time of Christ, then you're oblivious to the fact that the New Testament was written in Greek, because Greek was a predominant language.)

So when Christ begins his planting, He's actually a restorer of an earlier religion. Instead of this being something altogether revolutionary and new, Christ was a restorer. He was an antiquarian. He was bringing back something which once had been. He was trying to get people to understand. See, the religion that Moses was trying to restore was originally significantly greater than the one that he wound up restoring because the people were unwilling to accept the earlier version; so those things were broken, destroyed, discarded,

and a new innovation was established through Moses, the great law-giver, who gave a law of lesser performances, observances, rites in order to point forward to something else that would be coming, so that maybe when that something else, when it came, could explain to them what the law was intended to have them observe. The paschal lamb (that occurs where the blood on the lintel on the doorpost saves you from the destroying angel) is a type of Christ because Christ's blood will save you from destruction. The rites involving the shedding of blood in the courtyard of either the tabernacle, or later the temple, was designed to be a propitiation, a form of paying the debt for sin. The wages of sin are death. Therefore, it's necessary that death be demonstrated through the sacrifice of animals, in order to have your mind pointed forward to some great sacrifice whose effect will be saving you from sin. In the courtyard of either the tabernacle or in the temple, when you sacrifice animals, and you spill their blood by cutting the neck and letting the blood flow out, blood gets all over the ground; it gets tracked, it gets splashed, it gets upon you. And prophets use this analogy of blood and sins—and blood on your garments and shaking the blood off of your garments—as an analogy that's based upon the effect of performing the law of Moses, which itself is intended to point you to Christ. And Christ demonstrated, by His teachings and actions, that He fully understood that was what was happening, and that was who He was and what His role was. When Christ knelt to wash the feet of the disciples—one of the things that washing feet in that culture accomplished was cleansing the blood off the feet that was tracked everywhere when you got near the courtyards of the temple, in order to show that they were unaccountable for sin. He was removing from them the guilt that the blood was intended to exhibit.

All of the sacrifices were intended to show that there was some great and final and last sacrifice that was intended to be offered. And Christ was that. The law of Moses pointed to a fellow. Jesus was that fellow. He came along to fulfill that. Now the people at the time predominantly rejected the idea that He was that great sacrifice. In fact, at the moment that the Savior was being tortured on the cross and in His last moments, He was being mocked, ridiculed, and invited to come down off the cross and save Himself, so that they would believe. But had Christ succumbed to the temptation to come down off the cross so they would believe, the effect of their belief would have been rendered null. It would have been void, because it was necessary for the shedding of that blood. He had to die, in order for Him to complete the journey, the circuit, the atonement, the propitiation for sin, the actual sacrifice to which everything else pointed, and therefore, Christ had to die. He had to remain on the cross, and He had to die. And the temptation to come down and do something demonstratively miraculous so that we could believe was an invitation to destroy the very object in which you were saying you wanted to have belief. He had to die, and He did.

But unlike all those who had entered the grave from the time of Adam until that moment, Jesus Christ did not have sin and error that kept Him in the grave. Death could have no hold on him, because the wages of sin is death, and Christ had not committed the kinds of things that can hold you in the grave. Anyone who can get through this experience without succumbing to the sins of this world is equally entitled to come forth out of the grave, because death can have no hold upon you. And so the Savior came back out of the grave.

Once the Savior had forfeited life in order to suffer death, while in a state that did not require Him to die, so that His death became unjust—what was taken from Him was eternal; it was everlasting. If He should never have died (because He led a life that did not justify death), then His death was, by definition, an infinite and an eternal loss, and so His death compensated fully the law of justice that requires death. He died, literally, for all mankind. His death represents an eternal and an infinite sacrifice, which was the very point that the law of Moses was intended to point to, because the people were unwilling to receive a restoration of the earlier religion. So Christ came and sacrificed, fulfilled the law of Moses.

People didn't necessarily accept or believe that the mission of the Savior was designed and did achieve the things that He was sent to achieve. And so God, using those legs of iron, achieved the end of the law of Moses externally by the siege of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, so that, as Christ said, Not one stone shall be left upon the other. And the observances of the law of Moses ended in about 70 AD, when they destroyed the temple at Jerusalem, and the organized practice of the law of Moses (inside a sanctuary/temple set up for that purpose) ended a second time—and this time ended from that moment until today. It's gone. It has not been returned.

When Christ's missionaries, His messengers, went out to proselytize and bring people aboard the religion, for the most part people believed and taught Christianity as if it were the culmination of all things Jewish—the achievement, the crowning jewel achievement of everything that was intended to be achieved in religion—that Christianity was IT. And yet, Jesus pointed forward to some future, still greater event, in which everything that had been around at the beginning would be fully restored; a time when there would be a refreshing or a restitution; a time when that kingdom He prayed would come—so that God's will could be done on earth like it's done in Heaven—a time when THAT would come to pass.

Christ spent some time prophesying about what the signs would be that would be immediately preceding His return. And while He talks about some more immediate prophecies about the destruction of Jerusalem and about the coming loss of the temple, the greater part of what He explained in that chapter of Matthew is about one single generation that would live at the time when He would return in glory. The prophets have pointed forward to that future event repeatedly. Prophets that existed in the Northern Kingdom spoke about it. Prophets, whose records we actually have preserved in the Southern Kingdom, also have spoken about it. And the prophecy that Daniel interpreted in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar points to it, in which something will happen, likened to a stone being cut out of a mountain, which will roll down and grow and fill the earth and grind into pieces this false religious, economic, cultural construct that still prevails on the earth today. And so Christ made an initial effort at restoring something that was far more ancient and that has yet to be fully achieved.

So Christians and Christianity fail to contextualize either Christ or His teachings when they look at Christianity as if it were an end in itself. It was a step in a process. And the ministry

of the Savior was essential to the salvation of all mankind. But God's work has not yet been fully revealed. And God's religion has never been fully restored.

The foregoing comments by Denver Snuffer were recorded on September 7, 2018, in Sandy UT.

Podcast Episode 40: Interpreting Scripture

QUESTION: Sometimes it seems like there is a conflict between the Old Testament and the New Testament. They seem to come from very different people with very different ideas about God. How do we reconcile the differences?

DENVER: When we have the history of the Jews and the loss of the Northern Kingdom and the ten tribes (the lost ten tribes of Israel) and then the captivity of the Southern Kingdom (or the Babylonian captivity of the Jews), there's an intermediate event that occurs between the moment that you lose the Northern Kingdom and the moment that the Southern Kingdom gets taken captive. And that was an event in which another planting of Israel took place by the out-migration by a small group that were in the Southern Kingdom but had been warned by God to flee before the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon. That record or account is contained in the Book of Mormon.

The Book of Mormon details the history of people who leave the land around Jerusalem. They take with them some records in order to preserve their religion. They migrate across the Arabian Peninsula, settle into a place where they're commanded to build a ship. They build a ship, and then they begin to migrate. The route that they take appears, from the record, to go down the Eastern edge of the continent of Africa, around the cape at the bottom of Africa, where there was a terrific storm (coincidentally, a terrific storm at the very moment when things are getting out of hand inside the family, and there's a rebellion of sorts going on). They return to peaceful navigating after that. They appear to come up the western edge of Africa and then across the English Channel, Iceland, Greenland, the Northern Canadian shore and down somewhere into the Americas, where they settle. And this planting then practices their religion in a new land, in which they are never exposed to the head of gold. They are never exposed to the influence of the Medes and Persians or the Greeks or the Romans. They preserve their civilization for a period of about a thousand years. And over the course of that thousand years, they not only practice the earlier, more ancient form of the religion that they had, they also qualify to have their own prophets come teach, preach. They have their own instructions, revelations, and connections with God. And ultimately, they get visited by Christ who comes to minister to them as one of the scattered branches of the house of Israel.

Now, if we are looking for something that will come about, eventually, to fulfill a prophecy about a stone cut out of the mountain without hands (that will succeed in defeating the head of gold with Babylon and all the other cultural influences that came about thereafter), one of the chief candidates that every Christian should be curious about investigating is the possibility that preserved in the Book of Mormon is a record that is independent of, and uninfluenced by, the head of gold, the shoulders, the belly of brass, the legs of iron; uninfluenced by any of that, because it sprang into existence separate from those influences, was never taken captive, overrun, or imposed upon culturally, religiously, economically, governmentally by any of them. They simply had no influence.

One of the big criticisms of the Book of Mormon by people who have taken the time to look at it is that there is too much Christology in the Book of Mormon for it to be an authentic 600 BC reflection of what the Jews believed. Well, that's an interesting thing, because what you are accepting when you make a statement like that is an idea that the correct barometer, the correct measuring stick, are the traditions that got handed down from those who were influenced by the head of gold, the Babylonians, the Medes, the Greeks, the Romans. You're saying that that's your correct measuring stick, instead of saying, Let's flip that, and let's apply the measuring stick that has been handed to us from the source that purports to be free of those influences, and let's see if the Book of Mormon can't give us a more accurate gauge from which to measure all these things.

There was a Christian radio preacher who styled himself "The Bible Answer Man," Dr. Walter Martin. I mean, I listen to a lot of radio preachers, even when I disagree with them, because they entertain me. And one of those I'm entertained by today is Joel Osteen. And there's a Catholic program on the Catholic channel on SiriusXM that gives some interesting stuff. Dr. Walter Martin, The Bible Answer Man, used to use this slogan in almost every other broadcast: "It is the first principle of Biblical Hermeneutics that you interpret the old in light of the new." Meaning, when you encounter (in the New Testament) an interpretation of a prophecy that came in the Old Testament you don't go to the Old Testament to decide whether or not that prophecy fits the events in the New Testament. You reverse that, and you say, What does the New Testament tell us that the Old Testament means? And the Old Testament means whatever it is that the New Testament says it means. You arrive at your Biblical interpretation, always, by using the new to tell you what the old meant—which is another way of saying that prophecy is so obscure that it requires it to be fulfilled in order for you to understand what it was all about. When it is fulfilled, then the evidence of what was in the mind of God and the prophet, when it first got composed, is apparent, but it is not apparent until the events happen. Which is why all of the people trying to date and foretell all of the events are always surprised because they missed something. They're always advising Herod—when the wise men show up and say, Now where's the king that was born?—and they're shocked there was a king that got born, and they have to search around and rummage before they say, O Bethlehem, thou art not least among the princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come a ruler, and (lo and behold), well, he must be in Bethlehem. If you find him, hey you bring him to us so we can worship him. Wink, wink. Nod, nod. Because they had the prophecies in front of them, but they didn't know what God was doing. And they wouldn't know it; they couldn't know it. Just like today. God's doing things, and but no one knows it because it requires its fulfillment before people can comprehend what happened.

Well, if we accept Dr. Walter Martin's Biblical injunction that you interpret the old in light of the new, then if you're a faithful Christian, and you accept that premise, what that requires that you do is that you interpret both—because the Book of Mormon did not come translated into English until 1830, so it is the latest in time. Even though [it is] a composition that began 600 years before Christ and a composition that continued to record until 400 years after Christ, it did not come forth for our access until 1830. Now clearly, the

last 400 years were post-Christ, but the entirety of the text reckons in its public availability, post-Christ, by 18 centuries. So if we accept the edict to interpret the old in light of the new, then if you want to know what the New Testament was about, and in turn the Old Testament—if you want to understand the ancient religion—then the first principle of interpretation is: you must go to the Book of Mormon to find out what that was all about.

One of the clearest examples, right in the Book of Mormon, that helps you see why Dr. Walter Martin's edict is useful is when Christ appears as a resurrected being—showing the wounds in his hands and in his side and in his feet—to the people who are gathered as a faithful body on the American continent. And He tells them, *"Ye are they of whom I said: Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; [I must go to them] and they [must] hear my voice; and there should be one fold, and one shepherd"* (3 Nephi 15:21). He explains that the disciples at Jerusalem didn't ask Him about that, and they didn't understand Him when He said that. And that they wrongly supposed that what that meant was that Christ would only come to speak to other sheep through the ministry of the people in Palestine, as they spread the message outward. Instead, what He meant was He, Christ, would go as a resurrected being to scattered remnants of the House of Israel; and that He would let them hear His voice, see Him; and He would minister to them. And that included within the body of those that Christ intended to minister to—when He made that statement preserved for us in the New Testament—was the intent to go and visit with the people who were writing the Book of Mormon. And then He extends that, and He says, I have still other sheep, in addition to you, and I'm going to go visit with them also. And so, from the record of the Book of Mormon, in just one example, if you want to understand the obscure statement that Christ made—preserved in the New Testament—that He has other sheep to whom He's going to go minister, in order to understand that prophecy, you go to the last in time—the later—to interpret the earlier. And the Book of Mormon supplies you that interpretation and explains, yes, Christ meant, as a resurrected personage, that He would go, and He would appear.

The record of Christ's appearance in his post-resurrected state in Palestine includes appearing first to two women. Then He spent the better part of the day walking on the road to Emmaus with two disciples —Cleopas and an unidentified other who wrote the record, Luke. Then He appeared to the twelve. Still later, He would appear to the apostle Paul. And then, when He ascended, there were above 500 gathered together at the time that He ascended from the mount. And so there were multiple sightings, multiple witnesses, and multiple audiences to whom He ministered as a post-resurrected being. Then in the Book of Mormon, He does exactly the same thing. He appears as a resurrected personage, and he ministers.

The Book of Mormon helps contextualize Isaiah, Psalms, Christ's Sermon on the Mount. It helps contextualize the prophecies about that time that is coming, in which the head of gold is going to be ground to dust. It foretells the coming, ultimately, of the Kingdom of God on earth. There are a lot of prophecies that are requiring fulfillment right now that must precede the return of the Lord in His glory. In addition to everything else that you learn from the Book of Mormon, there are prophecies about a kingdom, an incipient planting, a

return of a religious body, small though it may be, that will build what's called a New Jerusalem, an antecedent to the establishment of Zion—and that the Old Testament prophecies about Zion and Jerusalem, at the time of the Lord's return, [are] not talking about one location. [They are] talking about two separate locations because when the Lord returns, the sun will never set on His kingdom. One of them will be on one side of the world, and the other will be on the other side of the world. And He will establish in Jerusalem—that is, at old Jerusalem—a kingdom. And He will establish in the New Jerusalem—that is in Zion—a second part of His kingdom. And out of Zion and out of Jerusalem will go the law and the teachings that will constitute the effort and the government and the society and the culture that's going to finally free itself from the toxic influences and the corrupt traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation, being influenced all the way back to Babylon. That's why the prophecies of John talk about the fall of Babylon the great. Because the head of gold is still with us. The Babylonian influence remains with us still in our banking, in our profit motives, in our culture, in our education, in our false ideas about what's important and what's not, in our desire for power and wealth and influence. All of those things remain with us still today. And they corrupt everything. They corrupt business; they corrupt governments; they corrupt churches; they corrupt society. Everyone is vying with one another to gain influence, power, and in turn, wealth and the acclamation of this world. And it all goes back to Babylon. Which is why John prophesies the fall; not of every one of these components of the great image that Nebuchadnezzar saw, but he goes right to the head. Because as soon as you destroy the head, everything else is going to unravel. And he prophesies about the destruction of Babylon, the head of gold that holds sway over all else. So if you want to tune in to the work that God began in 1830 to preliminarily prepare for a coming harvest, you have to consider (if you're a sincere Christian) the possibility that the Book of Mormon is an actual planting of something God wanted planted in order to permit that work of God to be fulfilled in the last days. The Book of Mormon came forth as a record of a fallen people in order to testify of the great work of Christ.

I mentioned that one of the criticism of the Book of Mormon is the prevalent Christology as a criticism because people don't believe that Christ was so openly known, openly talked about, openly expected in the pre-Babylonian captivity of the people in the Bible. But in the Book of Mormon, we learn that there were some prophets who had left a testimony and a record before we get to Isaiah, who clearly influenced Isaiah, and who spoke openly about the coming of Christ. One of those prophets was named Zenos. In the Book of Mormon—I forget the total number of words; I went through, and I copied, and I pasted every quote of the prophet Zenos in the Book of Mormon into a single Word document one time; and I'm going from memory, and my memory could be off, but it was in excess of 3,000 words; and I think it was 3,200 words that are from the record of Zenos quoted in the Book of Mormon.—From the vernacular within the Book of Mormon, the references there about “the prophet” appear to identify Zenos. When we talk about “the prophet” of the Old Testament, we think about Isaiah; they thought of Zenos. Zenos and Isaiah talk about the same topic. Zenos went before, and Isaiah came after. Zenos was apparently a Northern Kingdom prophet, and Isaiah was a Southern Kingdom prophet. Isaiah's record about Christ is poetic and, like most poetry, tends to be obscure, beautifully-crafted language with difficult

allegories to understand. Zenos, on the other hand, was pretty blunt and pretty straightforward. You could not miss the point of Zenos. Whereas it's very possible to take the Isaiah text and you can construe it, because of its vague allegories, to mean just about anything, Zenos could not be reformed to eliminate Christology. It was blatantly present in the Zenos text. Therefore, Zenos got dropped from the Old Testament. Isaiah, on the other hand, could be used to obscure the Christology because, although he points forward to—in magnificent ways—the coming of the Savior and His sacrifice, the suffering servant passages could be interpreted to not mean an individual Savior, Jesus Christ, but rather the people of God, or Israel, who went through so much persecution because they preserved a religion that testified of the true God. And therefore, the language of Isaiah was susceptible of interpretation to construe it away from pointing to Jesus Christ. Zenos could not be so handled or interpreted. He clearly spoke about this coming Savior. As a result, in the reconstitution of the scriptures, the references contained in Zenos were too plentiful to allow it to get into the canon of scriptures, and it got obliterated from the scriptures that were re-gathered at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. But the record of Zenos *was* included within what that planting of people in the Book of Mormon took with them. They didn't lose the prophecies of Zenos, and so it informed them about Christ in very specific ways. The presence of Christology in the Book of Mormon [is] the inevitable result of possessing scriptures that speak candidly, openly, and frankly about the coming of this Messiah. And so, when you pick up the Book of Mormon and read it, you literally are reading a text that has not been corrupted by these other influences. And the abundant presence of a Christological theology in the Book of Mormon is not evidence that the Book of Mormon is false, but it is evidence that the traditions that surrounded the religion of the Jews, as it came to be understood when Christ came to earth, *that* was what was corrupted. *That* was what was incomplete. *That* was what failed to preserve the original religion (that began all the way back with the first fathers, when they learned of a promised Messiah, who would save us from the fall of Adam and death entering the world, by reversing that as the second Adam—as the apostle Paul described Him—the second Adam who would plant a restored family, brought back to life through the power of the resurrection, so that, as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive).

We also learn through the Book of Mormon that the first fathers were not so ignorant as we think them, but that they had, from the beginning, knowledge of a coming Savior and a promise of redemption from the Fall; that they had, from the beginning, the practice of baptism; that they had, from the beginning, animal sacrifice to point to (as a type and a shadow) the sacrifice that Jesus Christ would make to redeem them from death. that Christology was not merely present at 600 BC, at the time of this planting the Book of Mormon refers to, but that Christology was present in the religion from Adam to Enoch and from Enoch to Abraham and from Abraham to Moses, and then (because of the slave culture of Egypt and the corruption that they experienced there) Moses had to bring them along with the lesser law of carnal performances and ordinances in order to point their mind forward to the coming of a Savior, who would offer an infinite and final and eternal sacrifice for the redemption of mankind.

So if you want to begin to get your hands around what it is that God has yet to do in order to set the stage so that His kingdom may come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven, and you're a Christian, the place you ought to begin your search (to find what God is really up to now) is the Book of Mormon. And you ought to interpret the old in light of the new, and accept the Book of Mormon as a guide in order to bring you along. The Book of Mormon poses a question that I'll paraphrase: "Wherefore murmur ye because ye receive more of the word of God?" I mean, it ought to be self-evident to anyone who claims themselves to be a Christian and to love the Lord that if a record comes about that purports to be a record testifying of Christ—written by people who believed in, obeyed, and followed Him—that that record bears not just serious consideration, but prayerful acceptance if it is true.

Now I was raised by a Baptist mother and a Christian (but non-denominational) father. My father was a Mason, and Masonic lodges require that you be a believer in God, and my father believed in God. He just didn't necessarily extend that belief all the way to the exuberance of the Baptist faith. But my mother was ever hopeful of turning the whole clan into Baptists. We had our Baptist preacher over for Sunday dinner with some regularity, and I always liked the fried chicken. (For some reason Baptist ministers and fried chicken dinner, it just goes together like hand in glove. And if you're a Baptist and you're listening to this, you know this is authentic because you've been there and done that.) So when missionaries came and said, "Hey, here's the Book of Mormon. Um, it's about Jesus, and it's going to help you," my response to that news was less than enthusiastic. I mean, I had had all of the indoctrination that comes from Dr. Walter Martin and all the other anti-Mormon critics. I'd read his book, *The Kingdom of the Cults*. I'd heard all the flaws and problems with this idea. The Book of Mormon grew on me very slowly. I had actually determined [there were] other reasons to affiliate with Mormonism [other] than the Book of Mormon and did so for years before I ultimately discovered the Book of Mormon to be something terribly significant. It took years of reading, of study, and of actually teaching the Book of Mormon before it began to penetrate into my understanding and my heart. Once the Book of Mormon began to be taken seriously by me, I discovered things in there that were beyond the capacity of a forger and a fraud to assemble, as the critics of Joseph Smith and Mormonism have claimed. Now I am not a member of the Mormon church today (although they've recently asserted that their name isn't the Mormon church; it's the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints). I was one time a member. I have been excommunicated because I prize historical truth above institutional loyalty. And the institution, as it turns out, is disloyal to believing-followers of the restoration, if they're not sufficiently institutionally-loyal. I don't hold any institution, at present, up as the ideal model—an example of the work of Jesus Christ. I think Jesus Christ's work has to be done independent of institutional control at this point because every institution that's out there, just by reason of being institutional, becomes the subject of laws and taxes and rules and Babylon. Just because the institution *exists*, it's part of the great conglomerate that includes the head of gold, Babylon, the Medes and Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, on down to the present. I believe that Christ's work must stand independent of every other influence under heaven and owe its allegiance, owe its loyalty, and owe its faith to Christ—and Christ alone—which

makes me really ill-fitted in an institution that prizes, above everything else, loyalty to the clan.

Well, the more I began to take in the truths of the content in the Book of Mormon, the greater the gap grew between the lip-service paid to the restoration by the Mormon church (the LDS church) and the practice of the institution itself. In fact, the Book of Mormon, used as a guide or measuring stick, condemns all of the institutions of Christianity. In fact, it condemns everyone, except the few who are the humble followers of Christ and points out: despite that few being *“humble followers of Christ, nevertheless, they are led, that in many instances they do err because [they’re] taught by the precepts of men”* (2 Nephi 28:14). If you want precepts that come from God, the best place to look, at this point, is the Book of Mormon text. The closer you look, the more you’ll see. The more you see, the more you’ll find that, right now, the religion of Jesus Christ is hardly practiced anywhere on this earth. If it’s going to be practiced at all, it needs to be done by you, by someone who is eagerly searching for and trying to find words that come from Jesus Christ: as your guide; as something to lead you back to Him; as the message intended for the last days; and as the means by which you can interpret the earlier New Testament, the earlier Old Testament—to find out exactly what they mean because the key to unlocking all of what God has been, is presently, and will, ultimately, be involved with (to fulfill all the prophecies) is contained, primarily, in the text of the Book of Mormon. And so, if you want to escape (before the ultimate destruction of that great image with the head of gold) beforehand, to be prepared for the coming of the Lord—if you’re a sincere Christian, you don’t need to go and join another denominational institution, but you better take seriously the Book of Mormon; and study it; and take its interpretations, its meanings, its guidance seriously, because it is the standard that has been planted in the last days as the ensign of truth to which all Christians, if they believe in Christ, need to rally in order to be part of His great latter-day work. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

The foregoing comments by Denver Snuffer were recorded on September 7, 2018, in Sandy UT.

Podcast Episode 41: The Journey

QUESTION: We understand from scripture that “Wise men still seek Christ today.” At the time of the birth of Christ, the people in Palestine knew almost nothing of the birth of the Savior. Even Herod’s priests were wholly unaware, yet certain wise men “from the East” made an arduous 2-year journey to come into the presence of the Savior. What would cause them to take a journey of thousands of miles, and how did they even know about Christ, his birth, the signs in the heavens, and how to correctly interpret them?

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DENVER: In examining the mission of Christ and what was accomplished during His lifetime and what was left unaccomplished during His lifetime—but intended by the Lord to be accomplished at some point before His second coming—even the record of the Lord’s accomplishment is incomplete and suggests that there is a great deal more that might have been learned or might have been recorded at the time of His ministry but is simply omitted from the record of the New Testament.

After His resurrection and His appearance to the women at the garden Tomb, He appeared and spent the better part of the day walking on the road with two disciples from Jerusalem to Emmaus—about a seven mile walk. He sidled up beside them, and He walked beside them, and they talked throughout the day; it was evening when they arrived at their destination. And they asked Him to come in and to sup with them, to eat with them, because they had enjoyed the fellow’s company. And He went in and blessed the food. Actually, He took bread and blessed it and brake it and gave it to them. And then their eyes were opened, and they realized it was Him. But their reaction to Him, after they recognized who He was, was a reflection on how they ought to have perhaps recognized Him earlier in the day: not because of seeing Him as He is and recognizing His person, but instead because of the message. Reflecting on what He had said, they asked one another, “Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way and while He opened to us the scriptures?” And then they rose up from there and scurried back to Jerusalem to announce the news that He had appeared.

So, we know that the Lord spent the better part of the day walking with two disciples on the road to Emmaus and that the subject that He discussed with them was the scriptures, in such a way that the scriptures were opened to them, and the effect of that was to have their hearts burn within them from the conviction that what they were being taught was truth. Not one word about what the Lord said or taught when the disciples’ hearts were touched and what they were brought to understand by having the scriptures opened to them.

And so when something is missing from a record, a page or a hole in the record, that is called a *lacuna*. So one of the more obvious lacunas in the narrative is the failure to tell us anything about what Christ did to open the scriptures, in order to have these disciples,

these believers, these people who He deliberately chose as witnesses of His resurrection (and that, too, as *priority* witnesses).

It's an interesting study to take a look at who the Lord appeared to and in what order, because there appears to be a pattern in the appearances of the Lord and the priorities of the people to whom He appeared, in order to have witnesses of His resurrection. But these are two of the earliest, and so they have a high priority. And I believe that one of the two witnesses was, in fact, Luke (who leaves his own name out). He identifies the companion who was with him, Cleopas, but he doesn't identify himself. And I think that it was Luke who wrote the books of Luke and Acts, in which he explains the history, the life, the death, the resurrection of Christ, the message, the importance of the message, the vindication of the promise of Him being a Messiah because of His resurrection, and then the immediate effect of the post-resurrection ministry of the apostles. All of those things are written about, and they're written in some detail by Luke. And yet, that talk (that was so convincing that the hearts of both him and his companion, Cleopas, burned within them) is left as a glaring lacuna in the narrative by a fairly exhaustive biographer. Luke picks up upon some details of Christ's life that only appear in the Gospel of Luke. This incident on the road to Emmaus is one of those, but some of the more intimate details about the birth of Christ are preserved by Luke. There are things that Luke was fully capable of preserving and conveying, and he clearly—if his heart was burning within him, that kind of a message is going to have some durability, some persistence—[was] capable of writing it, and it's gone from the record.

In the Book of Mormon, there's an early visionary encounter before they migrate very far from Jerusalem, in which Nephi is shown the whole sweep of history, and he begins to record the account of what it was he saw. And he's interrupted and told, You can't write a record of what I'm going to show you hereafter because this record is going to be entrusted to another person who is going to write it; his name is John. And the account—that John would record—the Book of Mormon doesn't recite, but we all can identify it as the Book of Revelation. And so Nephi is told, Don't write about this visionary material; someone else is going to do that. So Nephi is told he cannot write that. A fuller account is going to be given by John. But Nephi is also told that this same kind of material has been shown to others. Nephi, later, in the second book that he composes—by that time 40 years has passed from the time of the visionary encounter near Jerusalem. He's now on another continent, a new world, a promised land given to them. And he's had 40 years of reflection on what he saw and what he heard. And from that 40 years of reflection he realizes that he can bear testimony of what he saw (without infringing upon the right of John to write the fuller account) simply by quoting Isaiah, who wrote about much of the same material—and so Nephi adopts as his text, in large measure, the text that came from Isaiah, as it appeared on the brass plates (slightly different than the version that we have in our Bibles that descend from the Masoretic Text). But he preserves, as his testimony, words that were composed by Isaiah in the form that he had them as his testimony. Then as his entire account is winding down—at the end of the second book that Nephi composed—he begins at about (in the standard LDS-published version, it's chapter 27), he begins to change from quoting the Isaiah text to paraphrasing the Isaiah text, in order to adapt it to a very specific, prophetic foretelling of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon in the last days, in order to make the

Isaiah text fit exactly what would be happening with the Book of Mormon coming forth. Then he gives his interpretive key from that point, explaining exactly why it was that he put those Isaiah materials in: in order to have people understand that it is his testimony of what he knows and what he was shown; and to convert the language of Isaiah into the prophecy of Nephi to convey Nephi's message.

Well, we don't have any explanation from Luke as to why there is a lacuna in the record and the omission of Christ's post-resurrection exposition: opening up the scriptures, explaining what it was in the scriptures that bore testimony of Him. We just have Luke leaving it out. But in the Book of Mormon, the record that we have of Christ's appearance to the Nephite descendants includes Christ opening up the scriptures in order to show how they bear testimony of Him—not merely of Him coming as the sacrificial lamb but also of Him coming in the last days. Christ's missing material from the book of Luke is back-filled by the Book of Mormon's account of Christ's appearance and Christ's ministry and teachings to the Nephite people.

So if anyone is a devoted follower of Christ and attentive to the scriptural record, as the way in which they come to understand and know who Christ is and to gain a conviction of His status as the Redeemer of mankind—anyone who is sincere about searching into and trying to find how and why and what the Savior was, is, and what He did is going to be eager to back-fill the lacuna that appears in the Gospel of Luke and find out what it was that the Lord was saying. And they'll be eager and willing to look at the Book of Mormon with that in mind.

I can tell you that the Book of Mormon has received, perhaps, the greatest amount of neglect of any volume of scripture, since its coming forth in 1830. The one who translated the record, Joseph Smith, made almost no use of it in his public ministry. He was dealing with people who were largely converts from other denominations, including—initially—predominantly, people who had been followers of Alexander Campbell. They were among the most devoted people to the Bible. New converts who came in believed the Bible and accepted the Book of Mormon but regarded the Book of Mormon, largely, as a sign that God was up to something. When Joseph Smith taught, even as the one who translated the Book of Mormon, he largely focused upon the Bible and an exposition of the content of the Bible, because prospective converts and new converts to the idea relied upon and had a priority for the Bible, above any other volume of scripture. So adapting to the audience, Joseph Smith's teachings largely focused upon the content of the Bible. You can see, leaking through in the talks (the transcripts of the talks that are preserved of Joseph Smith), that there was tension that ran all the way up to the highest level of the church. Sidney Rigdon was a counselor to Joseph Smith, and in a talk that has been called the King Follett discourse—it was a funeral sermon about the recently deceased man named King (first name) Follett (last name). We used to give names like "King" to people. King Follett was a fellow who had been killed in an accident in a well. He was recently deceased, at the time that Joseph gave the King Follett discourse—in the discourse, he talks about a variety of things, stretching on into the eternities and the post-death course that mankind will take. In the middle of that, Joseph makes an aside. Sidney Rigdon was not in

the audience at the time. He wasn't in the city of Nauvoo. He was elsewhere. But he [Joseph] makes an aside, specifically calling Rigdon by name, and saying, to the absent Sidney Rigdon, "I suppose that the inquiry has to be supported by the Bible." And then he goes on to use the Bible, in order to demonstrate the teaching that he is going to advance to the audience is Biblical. It is based in the content of the Bible itself. So Joseph Smith is saying, "Rigdon, I'll prove the truth of what I'm about to teach from the Bible. I suppose I have to support it by the Bible." That tells you that one of the problems Joseph was confronted with is that people—including those very closest to him, at the top of his organized church at the time—didn't want to hear anything that wasn't supported by the Bible, didn't want to hear him talking about the Book of Mormon, didn't want to accept something based upon the new revelations. At a still later time, a fellow who was one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon (who got excommunicated and disassociated himself with Joseph in 1838), he wrote in the late 1870s or early 80s a pamphlet that was called *An Address to All Believers in Christ*. And in that, David Whitmer (one of the three witnesses of the Book of Mormon) complained that the revelations of Joseph Smith were given too much priority. I assume that the attitude that David Whitmer reflected, 30 years after the death of Joseph Smith, was an attitude that he held even while Joseph was alive, one of the reasons why he became disaffected and that he didn't want to see the revelations of Joseph Smith expounded upon. He didn't want to hear material that was more recent—although David Whitmer did hold the Book of Mormon in some considerable regard, and he remained true to his witness as one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon.

Well, after the death of Joseph Smith, among the people who are nicknamed the *Mormons*—the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints being the largest one of those, the one that most Christians would be familiar with; the church that sends out the missionaries two by two in their white shirts and ties to knock on people's doors; the one that sponsors the Tabernacle Choir; the one that sponsors Brigham Young University; the largest single denomination—the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints did not give any serious consideration to the Book of Mormon until the 1950s; and only then, in the 1950s, because the church president (at the time, it was a man named David O. McKay) asked a professor at Brigham Young University (whose name was Hugh Nibley) to write a priesthood manual that could be used by the institutional church to teach a course in priesthood for a year. When that interview took place, in the accounts that Hugh Nibley tells of it, he wanted to focus upon the Book of Mormon, and David O. McKay's reaction was surprise—because no one took that book seriously. And Hugh Nibley was saying, no, he believed in it. The seriousness with which the Book of Mormon was taken after the 1950s is largely the result of a now-deceased Brigham Young University professor, Hugh Nibley, and his conviction that the Book of Mormon was an authentic book.

I say that to a Christian audience, because the Book of Mormon has largely been so neglected by the people who are nicknamed *Mormons* that if Christians were to take that book up and to examine it through the eyes of a devoted Christian believer, I believe that Christians are going to find treasures within the Book of Mormon—an understanding, as a result of their Christian background, from the Book of Mormon—that the Mormons themselves have never been able to harvest, have never noticed, and do not have the eyes

with which to even see its presence. The Book of Mormon remains a Christian treasure that has yet to reveal its greatest results, having only been taken seriously... In 1950 there were leaders in the church who had never read the Book of Mormon, Mormon church leaders who did not read the Book of Mormon, much less understand it. It was quite some time after that before the Book of Mormon became something in which there was some regular study among Latter-day Saints.

Because the Book of Mormon was published before there was an LDS church, and because the Book of Mormon stands as an independent witness, there is no reason why accepting the Book of Mormon requires you to be institutionally loyal to anyone. You can be a Baptist and believe in the Book of Mormon—and there is at least one minister out there who is doing that right now. There is no reason why Catholics and Presbyterians and other mainstream Christian denominations can't pick up the Book of Mormon and make use of it, without pledging allegiance to any institution that claims ownership over the Book of Mormon. In fact, the most accurate edition of the Book of Mormon, currently in print, is one that was prepared independent of any institution and is available for purchase on Amazon. It is part of two books combined in a single volume called the New Covenants. The first half of the book is the New Testament, and the second half of the book is the Book of Mormon. They were intended to go together, as a witness by people who on one side of the world and on the other side of the world, [who] both witnessed the ministry of a resurrected Lord; who [were shown] the prints of the nails in His side and in His hands and in His feet; and had people bear testimony that it was Him who was sacrificed, that rose again from the grave, and who is the Savior prophesied of by Isaiah (He uses Malachi in the Book of Mormon; He uses other texts to demonstrate and to teach His identity as the Son of God and Redeemer of mankind). And I believe, if the Presbyterians and the Baptist, and the Catholics were to pick up the Book of Mormon and treat it seriously, it would yield truths to them which they could then preach—independent of the LDS church or the people who are nicknamed *Mormons*—and they would find themselves growing closer to Christ, as a consequence of having this material available to their study.

It's been too long that the Book of Mormon has been neglected. It's been too shoddily handled by the people to whom it was originally given. The copyright has expired. The book is now available to the public. The institution that got it originally has made precious little use of it. And if you find yourself not only disbelieving the LDS church, but—because of your institution's native hostility towards the LDS church—you will find in the Book of Mormon a great deal of ammunition to use to condemn, to criticize, to censure the LDS institution, because the Book of Mormon spares very little ink in criticizing, condemning, and judging harshly the people to whom the Book of Mormon would be delivered, including the LDS church. The use to which the Book of Mormon can be put by Christians is so relevant to the Christian belief system that if Christians will soften their heart and consider it and allow for the record that is latest in time to be used to help understand the records that are earlier in time—because God's latest word clarifies and governs the interpretation of His earlier word—Christians are going to reap a fabulous reward in doing so. And unlike the texts that we have in the New Testament (many of which are copies of copies of copies, that we know have been altered in the process of transmission)—Bart Erhman, a one-time

believer (now agnostic), parsed through the texts of the New Testament; compared it to quotes in the anti-Nicaean, the pre-Nicaean fathers, and to internal evidence in the New Testament itself; and reached the conclusion that the New Testament text deserves a great deal of skepticism because the method and manner of its transmission has been demonstratively shown to be inaccurate and the record to be muddled. In one place, the less-altered text of Hebrews preserves the words that are drawn right out of the second chapter of Proverbs: This is my son; today I have begotten you (Proverbs 2:7), a statement that was made prophetically about Christ. The book of Hebrews preserves it in that form. The gospels, however, were altered, and the statement that was made at the time of the baptism of Christ (when John the Baptist was baptizing the Lord) was changed to be, "*This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased*" (Matthew 3:17), because of a controversy that erupted over the nature of Christ during the Christological debates of the third and fourth century, and it's one of the illustrations that Bart Erhman points to in his book, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*. That title tells you something about the transmission of the New Testament: the Orthodox corruption of scripture. Bart Erhman isn't the only scholar, but his books are fairly easily available, if you're interested in the topic, through Amazon.

Another scholar who has done essentially the same thing in picking apart the Old Testament and the integrity of the transmission of the Old Testament text is a Methodist scholar in England named Margaret Barker, whose works demonstrate that there was an earlier, an older religion that got defeated at about the time that the Jews were taken captive into Babylon; and on the return from the exile, a new religion that had been altered emerged. Christians generally view information like that as threatening the very core of their religion because, if their Bible is flawed and not inerrant—if their Bible has been poorly transmitted and is inaccurate—then the basis upon which they seek salvation is itself threatened.

The Book of Mormon, on the other hand, bears witness of the very same Lord, in essentially the very same kinds of terms, identifying Him as having accomplished the work of the redemption by the sacrificing of His sinless life, in order to defeat death and to restore mankind back to life. But unlike the transmission of the Bible record, the Book of Mormon record was preserved for generations by a singular transmission through a line of record holders. At the end of that line, a prophet named Mormon (hence the name for the book) did a summary explanation excerpting from all of the prior records a final and inspired, God-commanded, and prophetically-infused record summary of the preceding nearly-millennium of history, giving us the truths that God wanted preserved. He turned that record over to his son. His son finished it up and then buried it up. And when it came forth out of the ground, it was translated by the person who accomplished the translation through the means he called the *gift and power of God*. And the original language in which the Book of Mormon was first published in the last days was English. The original of the first transcription has been preserved in part. It was put into a cornerstone, and water damaged it, and so we only have about 28% of that original. But the original was hand copied before it was taken to the printer for the first printing. And all of that printer's manuscript still exists. And then the one who was responsible for the translation of the

Book of Mormon had the opportunity to review it for another edition in 1837 and to review it and again publish it in 1840. We do not have the transmission issues with the Book of Mormon that are existing with the current Bible. Christians hear this criticism about the Book of Mormon—that there's been 9,000 changes made to the text. Those 9,000 changes have been located and largely dealt with, every single one, in that New Covenants edition of the Book of Mormon that is currently in print and available through Amazon. Most of those purported changes are punctuation changes. Many of them come from the fact that when it was first printed, it was printed like a book, but it later became versified and divided into chapters, and footnotes were added; and in the tally of changes, many of the changes also are superficial changes to versification and chapter divisions and other such things. There were some errors made. There were some lines that were dropped out between the original manuscript and the printers manuscript that have been located and have put back in. But even with every one of the identified changes to the Book of Mormon, the fact is that it is demonstrably, on a whole other order of magnitude, more faithfully preserved and more reliably a text attesting to Jesus Christ than anything that we have transmitted in the bible.

In short, if you are a Christian who feels some insecurities as a consequence of the criticism leveled at the Bible because of its clear transmission issues, it's very demonstrably true problems of conveying the text from the original authors down to what we get printed, and the vagaries of how you convert some Greek lettering into other languages... (At the time the New Testament was written, the form of Greek that was used didn't have lower case; it only had uppercase. It didn't have punctuation. And in almost every text, there's no separation from the end of one word and the beginning of another. Dividing it up into words, upper and lower-casing the alphabet that was used, all of that was accomplished by monks hundreds of years after the original text had been handed down.) Well, the Book of Mormon has far greater integrity. So if you're insecure about the reliability of the content of the Bible, none of those insecurities should attach to the text of the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon is not only a testimony of Jesus Christ, but it is perhaps the most reliable testimony of Jesus Christ that exists in available print right now, today, in the English language.

So if you're a Christian, and you're sincere about your faith, I think you neglect the Book of Mormon at your peril. If God has sent to you a message, a testimony about His Only Begotten Son, in order to bring you closer to Him, to prepare you for the day of His coming to judge the world, and you decide that you're simply going to dismiss that message that came from God, then what kind of a Christian are you really? Have you no faith? Do you think that God cares less about the generation of people who will be on the earth at the time of His returning to judge the world, cares less about them, than He did about the people to whom He came and ministered when He came here to sacrifice His life to redeem mankind?

Now, it's true, at His first coming, precious few took seriously the message and accepted Him. But God bears testimony, whether you will listen to it or not. Wise men, who were some distance from the place of the Lord's birth, watched for and understood the signs testifying of Christ in the heavens above. Based upon the appearance of the sign and the

journey and their arrival, it took them two years (according to the New Testament record) to get from where they were to where the Lord was. And Christ is called a young lad when they bring gold and frankincense and myrrh in order to worship the newborn King. And when they depart, they depart without advising Herod where they'd found the newborn king because they'd been warned in a dream—which means God had been talking to them, also—and they returned, perhaps, on a two-year journey somewhere else. The people who were on this continent, the American continent, watched for signs in the heavens, knew about His birth, knew about His death, and were anxiously testifying of Him before He came to visit with them.

The testimony of Christ to the world, by God, at His first coming was not local. Admittedly, the record begins with Zacharias bringing incense to burn before the veil of the temple, to recite the prayer asking God for the redemption of Israel to take place, when an angel appeared. And the record begins with the angel announcing that, "Your prayer about the redemption of Israel is going to be answered, and your wife's going to have a son who is going to go before the face of the Redeemer of Israel," which seemed improbable to Zacharias because of the age of his wife. Nevertheless, it was vindicated. That's not the beginning of the testimony concerning Christ by God throughout the world. And at least some company, two-year's journey away, heard the message and appeared to worship Him. How many others were there throughout the world? Has a Christian ever contemplated the fact that God's testimony to mankind was not tightly confined to a small group of people in Palestine, but it went out so far and so wide that one group responding to it took two-year's journey to get there? The Book of Mormon testifies that there were yet others, on the entire other side of the world, separated as they were by oceans, to whom Christ went to minister.

The purpose of the Book of Mormon, among other things, is to remind us—living at the time when Christ's return is imminent—that His message is global. If you think you can just brush off a message that was intended to help prepare Christians for His return, well, you're like those whose hearts were hard and refused to hear even when Christ walked among them. We ought to be rather like those who would undertake an arduous two-year journey just to come into the presence of the Redeemer of mankind.

If you refuse to take the Book of Mormon seriously, as a Christian, you are no more Christian than the Jews who crucified the Lord, giving lip-service to a false and inadequate religion, rejecting the message of a Messiah who intends to save your soul, because you prefer your false, inadequate, partial tradition to the truth of a living Redeemer. The Jews didn't reject Jesus because they had no religion. The Jews rejected Jesus because the religion they had did not adequately encompass the truth concerning Him, and so they felt comfortable rejecting Him—just like Christians who feel themselves adequately informed from a false and incomplete set of beliefs about the work of Jesus Christ to be willing to accept the record that was intended to come forth to prepare the world for His return. You're no different if you reject the Book of Mormon. And I testify of that in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

The foregoing comments by Denver Snuffer were recorded on September 8, 2018, in Sandy UT.

Podcast Episode 42: Cycles of Creation

QUESTION: We often hear about Eternal Progression, but we know precious little about it. You have mentioned that this occurs in “cycles of creation”. What are “cycles of creation,” and how do we progress through them?

DENVER: I told you before in Idaho Falls that, in my view, the Lectures on Faith are scripture. They were adopted as such, and I'm going to read from the Seventh Lecture on Faith, paragraph 9, about Christ:

...where shall we find a saved being? For if we [may] find a saved being, we may ascertain without much difficulty what all others must be in order to be saved....We think that it will not be a matter of dispute that two beings who are unlike each other cannot both be saved, for whatever constitutes the salvation of one will constitute the salvation of every creature which will be saved. And if we find one saved being in all existence, we may see what all others must be or else not be saved. We ask, then, Where is the prototype? Or where is the saved being? We conclude as to the answer [to] this question there will be no dispute among those who believe the bible that it is Christ: all will agree with this, that he is the prototype or standard of salvation, or in other words, ...he is a saved being. And if we should continue our interrogation, and ask how is it that he is saved, the answer would be, because he is a just and holy being. And if he were anything different than what he is he would not be saved, for his salvation depends on his being precisely what he is and nothing else. For if it were possible for Him to change in the least degree, so sure he would fail of salvation and lose all his dominion, power, authority and glory, which constitutes salvation. For salvation consists in the glory, authority, majesty, power and dominion which Jehovah possesses, and in nothing else, and no being can possess it but himself [and] one like him.

We read this, and then we immediately gloss over it, as if what salvation consists of is Him and fairy dust, which He can distribute to make us like Him. This teaching that appears, this was what Joseph Smith worked on editing for the months prior to the publication of the Doctrine and Covenants in 1835. He doesn't say in his diaries that he spent any time on the revelations. That was trusted to a committee. And the committee was responsible for getting those ready for publication. And they did a bunch of freelancing and embellishing and expanding, and some of the stuff they added to the revelations was remarkably more expansive than what Joseph received revealed to him. That's not where Joseph spent his time. He spent his time on the Lectures on Faith, and this is early in his ministry. This is when he wanted to make sure that the doctrine was correct. And this is the doctrine that came rolling out in that first publication. And yet, despite that, we tend to read this and not take it seriously. If you are going to be saved, you must be exactly, you must be precisely what Christ is and nothing else. O.K.? You! At that moment, that is when you are saved. As a consequence of that, to speak of Christ is necessarily to speak of salvation. To understand Christ is to understand salvation. Despite how plainly this has been put, we still stop short

of comprehending the doctrine. Joseph Smith's mind returned to this topic again all the way down to the end of his ministry. In April of 1844—the last general conference of the church that Joseph Smith would be alive for—on April 7th of 1844, Joseph gave a talk. I'm going to first read to you the version that appears in the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, but then, to make sure that you realize how important the point was, I'm going to go back to the talk as recorded by those who were present that day. Because one matter in this is picked up by everyone of those who was present and recording what was said in their diaries. Joseph says:

I wish it was in a suitable place to tell it, and that I had the trump of an archangel, so that I could tell the story in such a manner that persecution would cease for ever. What did Jesus say? (Mark it, Elder Rigdon!) The Scriptures inform us that Jesus said, As the Father hath power in Himself, even so hath the Son power—to do what? Why, what the Father did. The answer is obvious—in a manner to lay down His body and take it up again. Jesus, what are you going to do? To lay down my life as my Father did, and take it up again. Do you believe it? If you do not believe it, [then] you do not believe the Bible. The Scriptures say it, and I defy all the learning and wisdom and all the combined powers of earth and hell together to refute it.

Here then is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God; and you [YOU] have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace, from exaltation to exaltation, until you attain to the resurrection of the dead (Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pgs 346-347).

Exaltation to exaltation, grace to grace, until you attain to the resurrection of the dead. Christ said, *“I am the resurrection and the life”* (John 11:25). You must be precisely what He is and nothing else. You hear those who say, The church has all the keys! But we do not yet have the keys of the resurrection. That's because even when you are resurrected, you will not have the keys of resurrection until you, like Christ, have gone from exaltation to exaltation. Until you, likewise, attain to the power to resurrect all that depends upon you.

“The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever [the Father] doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise” (John 5:19). And the Father went before. And the Son follows after. And if you think that you can at some point, like Him, attain to the status of godhood, then you're going to have to do precisely what it is that the gods do. Therefore, to understand Christ is to understand the challenging destiny about which Joseph Smith is speaking in this last conference talk given in 1844. Until you attain to the resurrection of the dead and are able to dwell in everlasting burnings and to sit in glory, as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power—even what we envision as the highest heaven is a condescension for those who sit in enthroned, able to dwell in everlasting burnings. Else, why in section 132 would you be given a white stone that reveals things pertaining to a higher order of kingdoms, when you are in the celestial kingdom? It's because where you are now, at this moment in this meeting, hearing my voice in this room today, is about halfway to where you need to grow. And it's been almost infinite in getting

you here today. In order to arrive at the point that you might be able to be as Christ and where Christ arises to in everlasting burnings is about halfway to where things ultimately can go. You say it's necessary, in this condition, to have a physical body in order to come down here and perform, and you say that rightly. But there are other places beyond.

He bore record, saying [this is verse 7 of 93]: I saw his glory, that he was in the beginning before the world was. Therefore, in the beginning the Word was, for he was the Word, even the messenger of salvation—The light and the Redeemer of the world; the Spirit of truth, who came into the world, because the world was made by him, and in him was the life of men and the light of men. The worlds were made by him; men were made by him; all things were made by him, and through him, and of him. And I, John, bear record that I beheld his glory, as the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, even the Spirit of truth, which came and dwelt in the flesh, and dwelt among us. And I, John, saw that he received not of the fullness at first, but received grace for grace; And he received not the fullness at first, but continued from grace to grace, until he received a fulness. And thus he was called the Son of God, because he received not the fulness at first (D&C 93:7-14).

John, bearing record of what he saw concerning our Lord before He entered into this world—this is what He did before He came into the flesh to live among us. This is who He was before the world was. He went from grace to grace until He was called the Son of God. Christ went from grace to grace, before this world and before He entered into the flesh here, through a long enough period of development that He had sufficient grace to be called the Son of God. And this is the prototype of the saved man. This is what you must be or else not be saved. This is the *first principles of the gospel* about which we are going to spend some time today so that you might understand who it is you worship and how it is you are called upon to worship Him. Because as long as you're down here in this veil, clothed in this flesh, with the capacity to make sacrifices and the ability to exercise faith in Him, you will be amazed at the grace you can acquire if you will only do so while in this dark place. You're here to accomplish a great deal.

Our Lord—and we're talking about Him in the beginning, before the world was—received not the fulness at first, but received grace for grace. And we think *grace for grace* consists of: I'm going to now obey a principle, and as a result of obeying that principle, I will receive the benefit of the grace that flows from doing so. And that is true enough. That is a true enough principle, but it is also truer and more accurate to say, in connection with the long preparation that preceded the call of Christ to be the Son of God, that *grace to grace* is also something that involves the upward scale of a ladder, as Joseph alludes to it. He was *called* the Son of God because He received not of the fulness at first. He was *called* to be the Son of God because that wasn't His status before. Therefore, He had to be *called* to be the Son of God. And that was true because He received not of the fulness at first.

And I, John, bear record, and lo, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove, and sat upon him, and there came a voice out of heaven, saying: This is my beloved Son. And I, John, bear record that he received

a fulness of the glory of the Father; And he received all power, both in heaven and on earth, and the glory of the Father was with him, for he dwelt in him. And it shall come to pass, [that] if you are faithful you shall receive the fulness of the record of John. I give unto you these sayings that you may understand and know how to worship, and know what you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fulness. For if ye keep my commandments you shall receive of his fulness, and be glorified in me as I am in the Father; therefore, I say unto you, you shall receive grace for grace (D&C 93:15-20).

Long before the Lord assumed the role and responsibility of descending here and being the Redeemer of this world, He qualified by grace—doing things that proved, while He was behind a veil (as you presently find yourselves situated), that demonstrated graciousness and faith by obedience to the commandments of God, even though it would be a great while yet before He (and now you) would rise up to that level—still, He lived his life with such grace that He qualified to receive more and to develop and move up.

And I want to move to Alma 13. Because in Alma 13 we run up against some of the other suggestions in the scriptures about what it takes to move from grace to grace. Beginning in chapter 13 of Alma, verse one:

I would that ye should remember that the Lord God ordained priests, after his Holy Order, which was after the order of his Son, to teach these things unto the people. And those priests were ordained after the order of his Son, in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption. And this is the manner after which they were ordained—being called and prepared from the foundation of the world... (vs. 1-3).

Did you get that? We're talking about priests. His Son, His Son His Son. So you can understand who His Son is, there are going to be some people who qualified—before the foundation of the world—that will be qualified to come and teach about some things. And they're going to be called before the foundation of the world, like His Son was called before the foundation of the world, to be pointing to His Son who will come into the world, And this qualification occurs before the world is. But it is done so you can understand and have faith in His Son.

Being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God (vs. 3).

Why does God have foreknowledge about these things? Why does God know that, given the trust, they will be true to it? Why does God know that these are the kinds of people to whom trust can be given, and it will not be broken? Why does God have such foreknowledge? It's not based upon conjecture. It's based upon proof. It's not based upon merely hope. It's based upon the knowledge of God. Because He's not asking lead to do what He knows only iron can accomplish. Therefore, he chooses a suitable instrument

based upon His foreknowledge, prepared from the foundation of the world. And what is God's foreknowledge known?

...on account of their exceeding faith and good works, in the first place. That is, before the foundation of this world; [in the first place, long ago, on some other rung of this ladder—long ago, a great while in the past. In the first place, they were] left to choose good or evil; therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceedingly great faith, are called with a holy calling, yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such (vs. 3).

You have to redeem them, in order to have them reclaimed, so that they can come back and perform what they need to do. There has been a preparatory redemption. They have chosen what's right. And the game's afoot, and you're in it. And you're here, and this is now. And you have the opportunity, on account of your own being left to choose between good and evil, having the opportunity to choose good. And at this moment, you have the opportunity to exercise "exceedingly faith." And you have the opportunity, at this moment, to be identified and proven by God, so that his foreknowledge of you hereafter includes within it a record of your exceeding faith and good works.

And thus they have been called to this holy calling on account of their faith, while others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and [the] blindness of their minds, while, if it had not been for this they might have had as great [a] privilege as their brethren (vs. 4).

Resist it, if you want; reject it, if you want. But you can read right here what the consequences are. Others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and the blindness of their minds. If it had not been for this, they might have had as great a privilege as their brethren.

Or in fine, in the first place they were on the same standing with their brethren [that is, before they ever got here, in the first place, long ago, far away, they were on the same standing with their brethren; exactly the same place]....this holy calling being prepared from the foundation of the world for such as would not harden their hearts, being in and through the atonement of the Only Begotten Son, who was prepared—And thus being called by this holy calling, and ordained unto the high priesthood of the holy order of God, to teach his commandments unto the children of men, that they also might enter into his rest—This high priesthood being after the order of his Son, which order was from the foundation of the world; or in other words, being without beginning of days or end of years, being prepared from eternity to all eternity, according to his foreknowledge of all things [it has been underway a long time; this has been underway a long time]—Now they were ordained after this manner—being called with a holy calling, and ordained with a holy ordinance, and taking upon them the high priesthood of the holy order, which calling, and ordinance, and high priesthood, is without beginning or end (vs. 5-8).

You say a man must be ordained by someone here, while in the flesh, and I say that may be true enough. But if he was not ordained before this, at some point in eternity—that is “without beginning”—then you might as well ordain a sack of flour. Because if it does not reckon from some place in eternity, it is inadequate to compensate or deal with eternal things. You say you want to create an expectation into the next life, and I say if it did not exist and the authority by which to declare it was not handed down from before in eternity, then it will not last after.

Joseph held up a ring and said, There is no beginning, and there is no end; it is one eternal round. I'm telling you, you're only on part of the cycle here. But you *are* on part of this endless cycle—here; now! Today matters a great deal. Therefore, what you do here matters, infinitely, eternally, everlastingly. It matters! You have your doubts; weigh them in the balance. The gospel is delicious. Get rid of that stale, wretched stuff that you consume, and go on to find the life and the light and the vigor contained in the words that we have in scripture. This stuff is delicious. If you will partake of it and prepare yourself, you can improve this estate in a way that will reflect credit in the next estate. Don't forfeit the opportunity.

Thus they become high priests forever... (vs. 9).

They become high priests forever. They had it before the foundation of the world. They come here; they have authority here; and that authority began there, and it will continue into the next life. Therefore, they can bless, and you are blessed indeed.

Thus they become high priests forever, after the order of the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father, who is without beginning of days or end of years, who is full of grace, equity, and truth. And thus it is. Amen. Now, as I said concerning the holy order, or this high priesthood, there were many who were ordained and became high priests of God; and it was on account of their exceeding faith and repentance, and their righteousness before God, they choosing to repent and work righteousness rather than to perish; Therefore they were called after this holy order, and were sanctified, and their garments were washed white through the blood of the Lamb (vs. 9-11).

You say you want to be baptized and to be cleansed from all sin? I say, have at it! But in addition, this “prototype of the saved man” requires you do something, in addition. You may only achieve a limited amount of grace in this life, but that limited amount of grace you must hold fast to. You cannot receive more if you will not receive what is offered now. And if you will receive what is offered now, you will be added upon. The Lord Omnipotent who reigns, who was and is from all eternity, shall come down from heaven among the children of men and shall dwell in a tabernacle of clay. Father is a tabernacle of spirit and glory. The Son descended to be among us, in a tabernacle of clay.

To the extent that you can receive our Lord—though He was here, like you are—the only way you could tell the difference was, he declared things that were filled with light. How is the Lord able to accomplish all that He did? Abraham 3:19, the Lord tells you. He says, “*I am*

the Lord thy God, I am more intelligent than they all." Why is the Lord able to say that He is more intelligent than they all? Because our Lord went from grace to grace to the point in which he *understood* all things, because he had *been through* all things. He had *descended below* all things. And he had *risen above* all things. Therefore, he *comprehends* all things. He is more intelligent than us all because he is more experienced than us all. He has arrived at a state in which he is worthy, holy, sanctified—having been left to choose between good and evil, he has chosen good.

He declared who he was when He introduced himself to the Nephites, and he said he suffered the will of the Father in all things from the beginning. From what beginning? For you, why can't that be a beginning that starts now? For you, why can you not, from this beginning at this moment in this place, go forward, saying that you will follow the will of the Father in all things, from this beginning. Why will you refuse to rise up and to receive grace for grace? This is how you worship, who you worship. Because He was the word of God, the embodiment of what the Father's will was. The Father declares what is true, and the Son does it. And thus the Son became the word of God—because he did what the Father bid him do. Would you be a son or daughter of God? Do what he bids you do. This is how the Son worshipped. This is what you must do if you will worship him also. "I am the Lord thy God, I am more intelligent than they all."

"The glory of God is intelligence, or, in other words, light and truth" (D&C 93:36). The light shines in darkness, and the darkness comprehends it not. Because in the darkness, there are things that are forgotten. But in the light, there are things that are exposed and seen. Light and truth. Because you see things as they really are. Because you judge things as they really are—not after the manner of men but according to the light that God shines upon it. So that you can see, and you can feel that the heart that is speaking to you is pure; that the words that are being spoken are given by the grace of God; that it doesn't matter how flawed a vessel the Lord chooses, He can cleanse any of you, every wit; that He has such power as that. So He can take what is broken and mend it, and He can take what is unclean, even scarlet in color, and make it white as snow—by His word, which is the word of the Father, because the two of them are one. And so comes this sobering verse; two verses, in D&C 130:18 & 19:

Whatever principle of intelligence [Remember, the glory of God is intelligence, or in other words, light and truth. So now you—whatever principle of intelligence] we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection. And if a person gains more knowledge and intelligence in this life through his diligence and obedience than another, he will have so much the advantage in the world to come.

How will you gain intelligence? How will you gain knowledge? It says right here you gain knowledge and you gain intelligence by your diligence and obedience. The words that are spoken are intended to cause action. When that answer came to me in the barracks, if I had done nothing, my life would have continued as it began, and there would have been no difference the next day. And today, I would be in a far different place than I am at this moment.

Hearing without heed and diligence, obedience to the things that God asked you—I mean, what good does it do you to know more about the scriptures than another person if it does not affect your behavior? What good does your knowledge give you if your knowledge is not employed to bring you and others near you closer to the Lord? Knowledge can be used as a point of vanity. It can be used to make you seem bigger, better, brighter. It can be a point of pride. It is power. And wielded in the wrong hands, it abuses, it subjugates, it humiliates. The Lord is not like that. He lifts, He raises, He elevates, He endows you. He blesses your lives. If you will receive it and act upon it, if you will soften your heart, if you will allow his spirit to enter in, if you will receive the light that comes from Him, you will receive grace. And you will be more like Him. And you will be more gracious and patient with others. And you will view them in their fallen state, and you will hope for them better. And to the extent that you're able to do so, you will offer them better.

Knowledge saves a man; and in the world of spirits no man can be exalted but by knowledge. So it is with the principles of the gospel. You must begin with the first and go on until you learn all the principles of exaltation. A man is saved no faster than he gets knowledge, for if he does not get knowledge, he will be brought into captivity by some evil power in the other world, as evil spirits will have more knowledge, and consequently more power.

A man is saved no quicker than he gains knowledge, but knowledge requires you to act because it doesn't become part of you until you have lived it. Therefore, unless you are willing to live it, you can't receive it.

Our religion is centered in Christ; therefore, our religion is centered in intelligence. It is not enough to know what Christ knows. We must also be loving or charitable, as He is. He not only created this world, He also suffered to save it. Christ's suffering was redemptive. It lifted the creation, as a result of what He was able to do. And if you think about it in physical terms, if you're going to use a fulcrum to lift an object, it is necessary to put the fulcrum underneath the whole thing. You cannot lift unless you put the fulcrum beneath. Christ is, in effect, the fulcrum which lifted the entirety of creation. So, in lifting the entirety of the creation, it is necessary for you to appreciate the extent to which Christ is bonded to all of this. And therefore, to all of you.

Go to Doctrine and Covenants 88. This is a marvelous transcript. This is a description that you need to keep in mind when you are trying to understand who our Lord is. Beginning in verse six:

He that ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the light of truth; Which truth shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. As also he is in the moon, and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made; As also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made; And the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand. And the light which

shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings; Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things. Now, verily I say unto you, that through the redemption which is made for you is brought to pass the resurrection from the dead. And the spirit and the body are the soul of man. And the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul. And the redemption of the soul is through him that quickeneth all things, in whose bosom it is decreed that the poor and the meek of the earth shall inherit it (vs. 6-17).

Between verse 6 and verse 13, rather like bookends, the connection of Christ to all things appears seven times. It appears at the beginning, and it appears again at the end. Christ is in all things. Everything that you are acquainted with in this creation is sustained by the light of Christ. He occupies, He brings the light into. He is more intelligent than it all. And He keeps its organization together by the light that emanates from Him. This is why it is possible for redemption to come through Him. Because when He descended below it all, including death, He has the power, then, to bring it all with Him back into life. He is the fulcrum. He is the one which must permeate all things, in order for Him to be able to lay hold upon all things. And in order to, therefore, to bring you back from the grave. Which means, at this very moment you are in contact with Him through His spirit. He is giving you the life which you are presently living.

He is not a distant God. He is an immediate and an intimate God. You say He knows your thoughts, and that is true enough! Because He is giving you the ability and the freedom to entertain the thoughts. Therefore, He knows how to judge you, because everything that you have done, you have done using the power and the light He lends to you. You have the illusion of privacy. You have the actuality of agency. But that agency is being employed by you, using an instrumentality that belongs to Him.

And the scriptures make it abundantly apparent that is, in fact, the case. Mosiah 2:21, *"I say unto you that if ye should serve him who has created you from the beginning, and is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, that ye may live and move and do according to your own will, and even supporting you from one moment to another—I say, if ye should serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants."* Because the energy that is being used at present to power this life that you're living is borrowed from Him. It is His light; it is His truth; it is His intelligence. He is sustaining you from moment to moment. Verse 25:

And now I ask, can ye say aught of yourselves? I answer you, Nay. Ye cannot say that ye are even as much as the dust of the earth; yet ye were created of the dust of the earth; but behold, it belongeth to him who created you."

So, this mortal frame—that you are walking about in, temporarily—belongs to Him, and ultimately, He is going to take it back and reduce it back to dust and reform it into

something else and do something else with it. And someday, He will resurrect you. But when He does that, that's Him, also. Because it will be a long time before you attain to the resurrection of the dead. You are going to borrow this from Him for yet some time.

He knows what He is doing. He has descended below it all in order to acquire the capacity to lift it all. And the things He intends to lift back include all of you. He intends to save everything. And by saving everything, allow it to continue on in its course. Those who will receive less will continue on in a lesser course. Those who will receive more will continue on in a greater course. But all will continue on, freely using what God freely gives to both the righteous and the wicked. He makes the sun to shine on the righteous and the wicked. He makes the rain to fall on both the righteous and the wicked. And he does so while merely asking you to repent and turn to Him. He does not demand obedience. He offers you, if you will obey, grace for grace that you, too, might receive more of Him in you and that you might be better animated by a higher source than the one that animates you at the moment. No matter where you are situated, He continuously offers you more.

Everything that you hope to receive into the next life, even your expectations—all of that has to be obtained from God by covenant. I mentioned in answer to a question in Ephraim that the role of the woman was significant, even in the life of Christ. I mentioned that She anointed Him preliminary to His death and burial. One of the things that gave Him the expectation of coming forth out of the grave was the anointing that promised Him... —Why do you think, in the temple, the rites include preserving some of the functions of the body? It's not to make you healthy, here and now. It's so you can lay claim on this as an expectation in the eternities. Because if you do not have the expectation conferred upon you by the Holy Spirit of Promise, you'll have to get that in some other cycle. Because the only thing you will be able to take with you into eternity, you obtain in this manner. Everything has to be obtained by a covenant.

When it comes to the subject of marriage (as if all I have said and all that is in scripture isn't clear enough), Revelation 19 has a description of the culmination of all the Lord's great work in this cycle of creation. This is talking about when it all wraps up. In the prophecy, God cannot think of anything better to put into the mouth of John, his Beloved, who wrote this prophecy, than the analogy of a marriage used here. Revelation 19, beginning at verse 6:

And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude [male and female], and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

Not only does he liken the final triumph of the Lord's atonement to a wedding feast, but it is, in fact, a wedding feast. For all those who come through the tribulation, male and female, in the image of God, He will put on for them a wedding banquet, because they are like Him. They will see as they are seen, because they are like Him.

Humility is absolutely required to progress. The more we think we understand, the less willing we can become to receive more. Joseph said, "It is the constitutional disposition of mankind to set up stakes and bounds to the works and ways of the Almighty" (*TPJS*, pg. 320). He also said, "I never heard of a man being damned for believing too much; but they are damned for unbelief" (*TPJS*, pg. 374). James 4:6 says, "*God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.*" Damnation is limiting progress or stopping progress. Setting up boundaries to what the Lord can do is voluntary damnation. No matter how much you believe you know, if you will be humble, you will learn a great deal more. We must continue progression, or if we don't, we accept damnation and that, too, voluntarily.

Interesting comparisons can be made between the Hindu belief in "karma" and the Mormon teaching of "pre-existence." Karma includes the belief that what was done (or not done)—both in this and previous states of existence—will determine a person's condition now and in the future existence. Whatever blessings or burdens you encounter are of your own creation by your deeds. Your suffering is merited and deserved. But by doing well, acting justly, and showing kindness you can deserve to inherit a better existence in the next state.

Mormonism includes the declaration that what we experience now and in the future is based on our heed and diligence to the Gods' pathway. While the Hindu karma has a robust body of teaching, Mormonism's explanation of pre-earth events is spartan:

- The spirits of all mankind lived as separate personalities before birth.
- This world was planned before it was created, and people were assigned roles to fulfill in this creation.
- Some souls were more noble and great than others.
- Prophets were chosen to have a role to "rule" or to teach in this lifetime.
- Christ was chosen to be the Savior of mankind in the expected event they fell from grace and required saving.
- Lucifer rebelled and others followed him.
- All souls were free to make choices before coming to this stage of creation.

We can infer from these few, settled Mormon ideas that all our choices made before this creation mattered and affect us here and now. Likewise, all choices we make now will follow us into the hereafter and affect things there.

What's the definition of a creation? How often in a creation does one appear? If you look carefully at the scriptures—the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, talking with Christ, are given a fulsome vision of everything that is now going to unfold on into the future. And these are the disciples—this is Peter, James, and John standing there on the

Mount—they look at this, they look upon the long absence of their spirit from their bodies, and they regard it as a form of prison, and so they figure out an escape route. It's in the scriptures. John says, Don't send me there; let me stay in this arena and do battle here. Peter and James (it's actually Jacob) say, Let us come speedily into your kingdom, (meaning: don't leave us there; resurrect us). They will miss the resurrection because the first resurrection was when Christ came out of the grave, and they were going to die after that. Therefore, they were left there. They said, No, don't leave us there, and so they secured an early resurrection; they're not in the spirit world. If a long time in the spirit world is not part of the agenda, then they had no reason to take that up as an issue and have that discussion with the Lord and make the choices they did. Therefore, if multiple mortalities is like: On Wednesday I die, and on Monday I'll be resurrected or reborn as someone else, then there is no long absence of the spirit from the body; there is a continual return. But then you get into the definition of creation and how many creations have there been for this world and topics about which even Joseph kept his mouth shut.

Early Christians were very diverse. There was no one in charge and no attempt to standardize Christianity. These earliest believers were divided into the following kinds of Christians:

- Pauline Christians: These believers were grounded in a tradition founded by the apostle Paul. They claimed to follow the Old Testament and Paul's instructions. They were located in the areas Paul served as a missionary. Paul appointed teachers who were charged with guarding the doctrine from being changed.
- Mathayan Christians: Followers of Matthew, centered in Antioch, who attempted to form a compromise between Jewish and non-Jewish—or Gentile—Christians. It was in Antioch that the conflicts in Jewish Christianity were worked out. You read of Mathayan Christianity in the book of Acts, where respect and loyalty to the Jewish temple at Jerusalem is acknowledged but Gentile converts were welcomed.
- Johannine Christians: These are followers of John. These believers tried to keep an original focus on the individual's relationship with Christ alive. They emphasized the in-dwelling of Christ's spirit in each Christian. They taught and believed in the pre-earth existence of man's spirits. Before the creation, Christ was the great high priest of heaven who would redeem the creation by His sacrifice. The strength of their teaching was focusing on the individual's relationship with Christ and no organization could replace that individual relationship.

The idea of the love of Christ was preserved in Johannine Christianity. Spirit, knowledge, and ritual were designed to preserve knowledge of Christ. Although lost to western Christianity, John taught that man would become divinitized, or ascend in stages of progression, to become just like God. His teachings have been lost, but two passages in the New Testament writings of John preserve that teaching still:

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope...purifieth himself, even as he is pure (1 John 3:1-3).

In Revelation 3, beginning in verse 20, it is Christ who is speaking:

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (Revelation 3:20-22).

Almost all knowledge of the earliest forms of Christian practices have been erased by the destruction of records. John’s teaching of a pre-earth existence for the spirit of Christ and for all mankind did not suddenly disappear. It lingered for centuries.

Origen, an early Christian, claimed the original teachings of Christ included that Christ came into this world in possession of knowledge He held from before the creation of this world. Jesus had been so faithful to the Logos, or “word of the Father,” that He was entitled to that as His name. He exemplified the word of the Father. Do you want to know what the Father said? Look to Christ, because everything Christ did was an example of that word of the Father. Other spirits who were less faithful, and some of who fell away altogether, are involved also with this world.

Joseph Smith also testified that we all existed as spirits living before the creation of this world, and I believe this is a teaching. Each human soul is at a different point of progression and therefore, has different abilities to perceive the truth here. Every person in the world has a distinct spiritual past that began long before the creation of this world. Salvation consists of doing what is necessary in this world to advance individual spirit progression. The greatest way to progress is to follow Christ.

Joseph Smith, like the apostle John, believed and taught that all of us existed as spirits before the creation of the world. We are spirit-beings having an earthly experience. There’s a veil of forgetfulness, because as physical beings, our thoughts are processed through a physical biomechanical connection limiting our pre-earth memory. This limit is an important part of God’s plan. If we had a perfect memory of our pre-earth existence, we would not be required to develop faith in Christ. But our spirits know God, and in our quiet moments we all sense our immortality. We are here to be tested, and the test is now underway.

I don’t believe that anyone comes back here to live a second mortal experience in this creation. I do think that when the scriptures use the phrase *worlds without end*, the work of God is infinite in scope and reach and that God’s redemptive work is, in each individual

case, adapted to the development of the individual until they grow and are fashioned and are developed to the appropriate godly stature that we become like our Lord. Christ went, and He preached to the spirits in prison, meaning that when He died and He went into the place where the dead are, He continued His ministry. Peter writes about that. The continuation of a ministry among the dead suggests that when you die, there's still work to be done—at least preaching to be done. If you read real carefully some of the content about the things that occurred before the world and the things that will occur at the end of the thousand years of peace when Lucifer (Satan) is released—at the end of the thousand years of peace, the very, very beginning of what went on before the world was created and the very, very end when, after a thousand years of peace, Satan is loosed from the pit again, look an awful lot alike. But that's a subject beyond the challenges and the problems of this mortal life and what we today confront and are faced. There's a lot of stuff in the far distance that aren't relevant for the challenges we face now. In fact, we were just looking at that phrase *worlds without end*, which is how it's rendered. The original language, if you take it literally, meant: As you look out at the horizon, it's something past your ability to see. It's beyond the end of the world as you see it, meaning that what comes after we finish our sojourn here will be trouble for another day, because sufficient is the evil of this day for the purposes God has in mind for us and our challenges here.

I would like to suggest that the Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God includes the fact that those who inherit the Holy Order are sons of God. Therefore, in a way, calling it the Holy Order after the Order of the Son of God is a way of identifying the recipient as someone who has become one of God's sons. I think it's appropriate to regard the primary identifier—that is, the subject of who the Son of God is—to be Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone. Because quite frankly, He's the only one who attained to the resurrection, and it is through the power of the resurrection that we're going to come forth. We do not have the power in ourselves to rise from the dead. The wages of sin are death; we've earned those wages; we all will die. The Savior did not earn those wages. He died, and therefore, His death was unjust, and the law of justice got broken when He died. Therefore, whenever justice makes a claim on any of us, He can point to the fact that justice extracted from Him eternal life and that is an infinite price for Him to have paid. Therefore, He has compensated for all of mankind's shortcomings [and] failures.

Christ is the means by which we lay hold upon the promises, but it is His intention to make of us all sons of God. Therefore, the Holy Order after the Son of God is when the name is announced, self-identifying the person holding such a Holy Order as one of God's sons, even though they may be mortal, even though they may be in the flesh. The Holy Order is for that very purpose and is after the Order of the Son of God. "All other priesthoods are only parts, ramifications, powers and blessings belonging to the same, and are held, controlled, and directed by it. It is the channel through which the Almighty commenced revealing His glory at the beginning of the creation of this earth, and through which He has continued to reveal Himself to the children of men to the present time, and through which He will make known His purposes to the end of time" (History of the Church, 4:207).

Therefore, among other things, the purpose of the Holy Order is to put in place a mechanism by which God can reveal from heaven what is necessary for the salvation of man on earth, in every generation, in order to fix what is broken; in order to restore what has been lost; in order to repair, heal, forgive, and reconnect those who are willing to give heed to the message sent from heaven, so that they can rise up to become sons of God.

If Christ attained to the resurrection through His progression from one small capacity to a great one, going from grace to grace and from exaltation to exaltation, did His Mother do anything less? Was Her coming into this world any less of a condescension? Reflect on the Mother of God, and consider this passage of Lecture Seventh, which describes Christ.

And if we should continue our interrogation, and ask how it is that he is saved, the answer would be, because he is a just and holy being. And if he were anything different from what he is he would not be saved, for his salvation depends on his being precisely what he is and nothing else. For if it were possible for Him to change in the least degree, so sure would he fail of salvation and lose all his dominion, power, authority and glory, which constitutes salvation. For salvation consists in the glory, authority, majesty, power and dominion which Jehovah possesses, and in nothing else, and no being can possess it but himself or one like him (Lectures on Faith 7:9).

It requires as much to save a woman as a man. No person, male or female, can dwell where God dwells without possessing the same attributes as all those who have gone before. The pattern is unchangeable. We cannot claim to be like Them without possessing the same holiness these holy beings possess.

Returning to the words of the Divine Mother in Proverbs 8:

“I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures” (vs. 20-21).

These treasures are not earthly, but “durable” and incapable of depreciation. What the Mother offers cannot be harmed by moth or rust, nor lost to thieves. They are in heaven. But obtaining them requires us to walk as She guides “*in the way or righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment.*” The great, white throne is not occupied by the Father alone. Nor will that great judgment be made without the Mother’s involvement, for She lives in “*the paths of judgment*” and wisely counsels Her children to obtain durable “*riches and honor*”.

The Mother explains how She was present from the beginning as part of the God we call the Father or, in Hebrew, the Elohim:

The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: While as yet he

had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his Earth; and my delights were with the sons of men (Proverbs 8:22-31).

Before this creation, the Mother in Heaven was with the Father. She was beside Him when His work began. She was there when the plan was laid, the boundaries established, and the compass applied to establish order for the creation. All the Father knows, the Mother knows. All the Father established and ordered, the Mother established and ordered. They are One. She is the Father's "*delight*," and the potential of Her sons to be like Her Husband brings Her delight.

To be like their Father, Her sons must become one with Her daughters, for it is not good for man to be alone. The Father and Mother are One, and Her sons and daughters must likewise become one. Only when the man and woman were together was the creation "good." When men rebel, disobey, act cruelly, or mistreat Her daughters, we are anything but a "*delight*" to the Heavenly Mother. When we offend Her, we also offend Her Husband.

Before any of us will plan, measure, set a compass, and apportion the foundations of another earth, we must grow together and become like Them. Their work is glorious. They possess love—the power that creates and organizes. Love is the power behind all that They do. We cannot be like them without a loving relationship that mirrors Theirs.

Their character, perfections, and attributes are mercy, righteousness, love, compassion, and truthfulness. They are without partiality, no respecter of persons, regarding all alike. They make the sun to shine and the rain to fall on both the righteous and the wicked. They regard wickedness as an abomination. They prize truth, meekness, and peacemakers. They abhor the froward, prideful, evil, and arrogant. They are full of grace and truth and are more intelligent than us all. They are the Creators and will be the final judges of this cycle of existence, and no one will be permitted to progress further without Their permission. There is nothing vile or perverse about Them. They are repelled by contention and seek for us all to associate with one another equally, as brothers and sisters. They are perfect, in the sense of having completed the journey to the end of the path and entered into Eternal Lives and Exaltation. They now seek to guide Their children along that same path.

First and foremost, for fallen man in this creation, salvation is dependent upon Jesus Christ. Like Christ, we are expected to grow from grace to grace. Those words are in a revelation that begins with this promise: "*Verily, thus saith the Lord: It shall come to pass that every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, and calleth on my name, and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am*" (D&C 93:1). This is how we are to grow from grace to grace. This is how we can receive of His fullness.

There is no mention of redirecting our obedience to another. Nor is there any name provided to us to call upon other than Christ's. Nor is there any voice we are to hearken unto other than Christ's. We are in a fallen state and need to be saved. Like Mary acknowledged to Elizabeth when they met, we need to be rescued by a Savior. That Savior is Jesus Christ. She pointed us to Him, and if we will heed Her wise counsel, we will rely on the merits of Christ, who is mighty to save.

Women should be regarded as daughters of the Divine Mother. Like Her, they carry the power to produce new life. Mothers are the physical veil between pre-earth spirits and physical bodies inhabited in mortality. They clothe children in the veil of flesh. This power to give life has been regarded in almost all societies as something sacred and holy. In our coarse and vulgar society we have rejected, as a matter of law, the idea that women engage in a sacred and holy labor when bearing children.

The Great Weaver organizes intelligence into life itself through motherhood. It is in the womb that disorganized intelligence is organized into spirits resembling the Heavenly Parents in eternity. Mothers in this creation do likewise. That power, endowed by the Divine pattern, is present in this creation to testify of She who wove our spirits before this world. She is ever providing wisdom to guide the energy of Her Divine counterpart so balance and order are maintained. For the present, it is enough to know She is there and that She urges us to be faithful and obedient to Her Son, our Redeemer and Savior. We need to be rescued from our fallen state. Jesus Christ is our rescuer.

Jesus Christ was among the *souls* who were *noble and great* before this cycle of creation. The word *soul*, as used in the 1842 publication of the book of Abraham, had been defined in a revelation received in 1832: "*Now, verily I say unto you, that through the redemption which is made for you is brought to pass the resurrection from the dead. And the spirit and the body [is] the soul of man. And the resurrection from the dead is the redemption of the soul. And the redemption of the soul is through him who quickeneth all things, in whose bosom it is decreed that the poor and the meek of the Earth shall inherit it*" (D&C 88:15). Christ is identified in the scripture as a *soul* before this world was created. Therefore, before this world was created, Christ had both a *spirit and a body*—having gone through the necessary progression required for all who ascend to be *like unto God*.

The earliest dispensations had truth from heaven as their guide. Joseph began re-assembling what was lost but was slain before it was completed. We are the offspring of heaven and are capable of reuniting with heaven while mortal. We also have the opportunity, through eons of progression, to become as our Parents, the Gods. Now is the time to awaken, arise, and shake off the dust. This world is a place of trial and testing. Before creation, it was planned that when we came here, we would be *proven* by what we experience. That happens now. Prove yourself by listening to God, hearing His voice, and obeying. Sometimes we are like Alma and want to do greater things to help God's work, but the greatest work of all is to respond to God's voice and prove you are willing to listen and obey Him.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #7 entitled "Christ, Prototype of the Saved Man," given in Ephraim, UT on June 28, 2014;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #9 entitled "Marriage and Family," given in St. George, UT on July 26th, 2014;
- Denver's conference talk entitled "Things to Keep Us Awake at Night," given in St. George, UT on March 19th, 2017;
- Denver's talk entitled "Other Sheep Indeed," given at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, UT on July 29th, 2017;
- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #2, given in Dallas, TX on October 19th, 2017;
- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #3, given in Atlanta, Georgia on November 16, 2017;
- Denver's fireside talk entitled "The Holy Order," given in Bountiful, UT on October 29, 2017;
- Denver's conference talk entitled "Our Divine Parents," given in Gilbert, AZ on March 25th, 2018;
- The presentation of Denver's paper entitled "The Restoration's Shattered Promises and Great Hope," given at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, UT on July 28, 2018; and
- Denver's remarks given at the "Remembering the Covenants" Conference in Centerville, UT on August 4, 2018.

Podcast Episode 43: Gathering Truth

QUESTION: How does the gospel of Jesus Christ encompass and include all truth?

DENVER: Christ made a comment about those that would be able to enter into the Kingdom of God, and he said that, “Except you become as a little child, you shall not be able to enter into that Kingdom.” And that thought about what it means to be “as a little child” is one worth considering. It’s one worth puzzling over.

Hold that thought for a moment, because I want to talk about a related subject, and that’s perfection. Every one of us, if I say the word *perfection*, every one of us have something that comes to mind. In the course of your life, my guess is that every one of you have had moments that you could point to and say, That moment was absolutely perfect. There’s nothing about it that I would have changed.

When you ride a motorcycle, roads have a design that is, for safety reasons, capable of handling traffic at speeds that are called the design speed, which means that a vehicle can operate up to that design speed, on that road, safely. But the speed limit is never the design speed. Because they build in this margin of safety, so they tell you to drive 5 or 10 or 15 miles below the design speed of the road so that there’s a margin of safety built into it. If you’re riding a motorcycle on a road, particularly a rural, winding road, like Idaho 5 that goes from the Montana border to the Washington border, and you go the posted speed limit, the motorcycle does not cooperate with you. It doesn’t like that speed. It’s hard to handle. But if you speed up, the motorcycle and the road and you are in syncopation with one another, and you’re riding at the design speed; everything is easier. In fact, it is almost thoughtless as you go. The rhythm of the road, the design of the road, the pace the motorcycle is at, everything about that.

On Idaho 5, there are places where the banking—they call it *super elevation*—of the road is 25 or 30 miles an hour above the posted speed limit. We were returning from the Black Hills of South Dakota, coming through northern Idaho on Idaho 5, going the design speed. It was a moment of absolute perfection, when the joy of the experience—the feel of the humidity, the pace of the road, everything about that moment was perfect—until it was interrupted by an Idaho state patrolman, who fortunately was pointed in the opposite direction as we went by at the design speed of the road. Well, he had a lot of recovery to do to reorient himself, and to start from zero to get to where we were. And we happened into, fortunately, a little village and went a block off the road, found a gas station, hopped off, and there was a fellow there who owned... he owned a Moto Guzzi, which in northern Idaho is a pretty rare motorcycle to be driving. (It’s a V-twin, but unlike a Harley Davidson, which is an inline V-twin with a front and a back, this one has V’s that go out either side. It’s still a V. It’s not like a BMW; that’s a Boxster, horizontally opposed.) So we acted like we’d been there all week. And the police came through, making their noise, and they went on their happily way. And he said, “They looking for you?” We said, “That’s possible, but....”

There are moments where, because you can't be planning next week or regretting last month, you can't be doing anything other than that moment. If you're on the bike and your mind is elsewhere—and you're going the design speed and your mind is elsewhere—you can kill yourself, or you can badly injure yourself. You can do extraordinarily stupid, haphazard, dangerous things if you're not absolutely in the moment. Perfection is one of those things which occurs absolutely in the moment. Think back over your lifetime at those moments when you would not change a thing. You were so content, there was nothing else that you would want or change about that moment.

There's a character, a samurai, that an American struggled to try and understand in the movie *The Last Samurai*. And although they grew to have this friendship with one another, Katsumoto was always looking for the perfect cherry blossom. He would study the cherry tree as it blossomed in the Spring at his—outside his own temple, always looking for the perfect cherry blossom and never finding—there was always a problem with it. Well, as he lay dying on the battlefield, at the end of his life, one of his last breaths, he's looking up and seeing in the distance the cherry trees blooming, and he observes, "Perfect, they are all perfect." And it didn't matter what flaws they had. The fact is, they were all perfect.

I can remember sometime... the scene presents itself vividly in my mind. I can't tell you how old I was or what grade I was in, but during recess, playing marbles with friends—recess was maybe 15 minutes—but it was timeless. Out, playing marbles with a friend, in the dirt with your marble, all eternity could come and go in that moment of such profound contentment.

I have dogs. And dogs are always content, and we're told that dogs do not have any sense of time. They may live only 10 to 12 years, but as far they're concerned, they've lived for all eternity, because there's a timelessness to the experience of being a dog. They're not in a hurry to get somewhere—unless, of course, you've got the leash, and you're going to take them out; in which event, they'll anticipate that moment. But there's a timelessness to the idea of perfection.

I can recall an afternoon: I had come out of my house, and I was sitting on the front porch. And I was all alone. The temperature that day must have been exactly the same temperature as the temperature of my skin, so that I could not tell where outside of me and inside of me began and ended by feeling the breeze. The temperature was exactly the same temperature as I felt. And it was so calm an afternoon, so calm a moment sitting there, that I was taken in by the moment itself. A bird flew by, and I could feel—I could feel the movement of the bird's wings through the vibration of the air because it was just that calm. I thought, as I sat there, this is Heaven. This, this moment, this experience—this is Heaven. Because it, at that moment, was perfect, something that I would not change.

I was out walking, and I came upon this songbird that was just singing the happiest little tune you could ever imagine. I don't know what kind of bird it was, but it was sparrow-sized and small and very happy and singing its tune and doing all that God endowed it to do. And

I came upon it abruptly, and—because of where it had situated itself and because of where I came upon it from—it was trapped. And it was singing loudly. And when I got there, it was so loud and so startling that I stopped and looked at it, and it immediately stopped singing. And it knew, it was like the bird realized, if I wanted to, I could catch it; if I wanted to, I could kill it; if I wanted to, I could exercise whatever control I wanted over the bird. And it looked frightened, less than an arm's length away. Foolish to let a human get that close to you, in that vulnerable a spot. And the stopping of the singing was so abrupt. It's like the last notes still hung in the air as this frightened little creature looked at me. And I thought, "Hey, I'm harmless," but it doesn't know that. So I thought, "What's the best way to communicate to this trapped little animal that I'm harmless?" I turned, and I walked away, and I tried to whistle a little like what the bird had been whistling like. Miserable imitation. I mean, it was probably screeching to that poor thing, but I whistled as I'm walking away. And within a few steps, if there's anyway to describe it, I would say that the bird's tune resumed on a happier note than it had been before. That was a moment that was perfect.

I'm sure every one of you have had moments in your life that you can point to and recall and say, that moment, that incident, that was perfect. If we can conceive of perfection, or if we can experience it even for just a moment, that means perfection exists. It's real. It's attainable. It can be had, even in this place. And even with you and even with me, perfection is possible.

In this creation, there are two opposing forces that cause everything there is to be and to exist. Those two opposing forces are not good and evil, although we tend to call them "good" and call them "evil". The two opposing forces are, in fact, love and fear. Everything that is generative or creative comes about as a consequence of love. If you think about all the problems that people have with one another and what would solve them, the one thing that could solve every problem is love—if we loved one another enough. And all of those vices—all of the suffering, the anger, the pride, the envy, the impatience, the greed—have their root in fear: "I fear I will not have enough, and therefore, I envy. I fear for my own inability, and therefore, I resent your ability." Everything that produces negativity comes about as a consequence of fear.

The apostle Paul, in a letter to the Ephesians, wrote "*that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, ...in Him*" (Ephesians 1:10). The entire history of Christianity is plagued with disunity. Christianity was born inside the crucible of disunity. When Christ sent twelve messengers out as missionaries to deliver the message, calling them apostles (which simply means someone with a message), he sent these twelve out, and they brought twelve different versions of what they learned from Jesus. And there was no attempt at having a unified message.

The earliest studies of the Christian faith focus not upon Christianity in aggregate but the various forms that Christianity took, as a consequence of which one of the apostles happened to be teaching their particular view. And then the apostle Paul comes along and teaches yet another view. And so you have such strong disunity among Christians in the

first generations, that by the time you get to the third century, Christians are killing Christians over Christianity because they harbor that much resentment at the different views that were held. I don't know if the word *fortunately* or if the word *unfortunately* should be applied, but fortuitously, as it turns out, when Constantine wanted to unite his Roman empire, one of the features of the unification of that empire (that he recognized he needed to incorporate) was religious unity. And so he chose Christianity to become the new state religion of a unified Roman empire that he was trying to hold on to and manage as a single intercontinental empire; only to learn, after he had made Christianity the official state religion, that that would not do the empire any good because Christians within his empire were killing other Christians within his empire over Christianity. And so he convened, under house arrest, a group of bishops at Nicaea, which in hindsight (in order to portray it as something really good and inspired), the house arrest of all the bishops to force them into a unified statement is now called the first, great, ecumenical council of Nicaea—which is a fancy way of putting a positive spin on a very ugly moment, in which the emperor didn't give a crap what they agreed on; he just wanted an agreement. "If I'm going to make this infernal Christianity the Roman state religion, by damn, it better be a religion in which I can have peace!" It's practical, it's pragmatic. But it certainly doesn't guarantee you a form of Christianity that bears anything other than the hallmarks of compromise in order to solve the violence.

And so we get the state religion of Rome, which evolves over time from being the Roman empire and Catholic (meaning *universal*) church to the *Holy* Roman Empire, which is Catholicism. And you had a period of relative Christian unity—unity marked by the absence of killing one another, not necessarily the absence of a Christian spirit. Because Christianity itself became a political power broker, in which there were really only a couple of professions that had the status that would allow you to enjoy a good life, and one of them was being in the clergy. And so the clergy became politically—and it became economically—a source of power. And the Holy Roman Empire, in the form of the Catholic church, exercised all of the abuses and excesses that you would expect from any kind of dictatorial government that has power over people.

People that have power tend not to be respectful of those that lack power. And if you can treat people as your servants, your slaves, your serfs, then you treat them accordingly. And so Christianity developed into a monolithic and very abusive control, centered in the Roman clergy, headquartered in Rome. For a whole variety of reasons—including ambitious, local kings who wanted to declare their own independence from the Roman hegemony and who wanted their own ability to waylay the money that was being aggregated through the church and getting exported (they wanted to keep that money locally and get their own hands on it)—A moment came in 1517, when it was possible for Martin Luther, pricked as he was in his conscience because he believed what Paul had written; he believed what Matthew, Mark, and Luke had recorded. He believed in the faith. And he saw that what was acting itself out on the stage of life bore no resemblance to the lofty perfection that is spoken of in the teachings of the New Testament. He simply had had enough, but his life was spared because politically there was a political leader who saw some advantage in providing protection to Martin Luther. And so Martin Luther was spared

from what had happened to others who had rebelled against Rome. He wasn't burned at the stake. He was, instead, allowed to post his disagreement and ultimately found a new brand of Christianity, in which he believed it would be more authentically Christian and less inauthentically autocratic and authoritarian. But just like what happened in the New Testament, with the twelve apostles, immediately upon the emergence of Lutheranism, we get, in the same generation—these people met and spoke with one another—John Knox, John Calvin, Zwingli, Martin Luther.

Not only did the fracturing of Roman hegemony cause Protestantism, but Protestantism immediately began to say, "We disagree with you about... (choose your topic)," and you have multiple Protestant denominations immediately springing into existence. And what had been coercive unity (through Roman dictatorship) and artificial unification of Christianity for a millenium and a half, immediately upon the first fissure showing up, you have fracture after fracture and disunity after disunity, because Christianity simply disagreed about so many things. And it was inconceivable—inconceivable to them that Christianity did not require you to divide up into mutually exclusive camps, in which your brand of Christianity ought to be (at least claimed to be) superior to their brand of Christianity. And if heaven is only for those who have the truest form of Christianity, then those people really need to go to hell because they aren't quite Christian enough in the truest way, in the most meaningful way, in the most correct way.

So let's go back and read that verse again: *"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, ...in Him."* All things. I don't know how many of you sitting here today—hearing those who have spoken about Buddhism or speaking about the Native American tradition or speaking about Messianic Judaism—I don't know how many of you sitting here today have thought, "That speaker has said something true, and I believe that." Whether you think that may be part of Christianity or the teachings of Christ or not, when you hear truth—the dispensation of the fulness of times, which has to occur before the return of the Lord, has to gather together in one all things. If that thing to be gathered has been fractured and lost to Christianity but preserved in Hinduism; if that thing to be gathered is a truth lost to Christianity, broken away, and preserved in Buddhism; if that thing to be gathered into one appears anywhere, then in the dispensation of the fulness of times, it all must be brought back and gathered into one.

If you take a piece of art—sculpture—and you fracture the sculpture into bits, and then you gather the bits, and you reassemble them, you will not have the unity and the perfection of the original until every piece has been found, every piece has been gathered, and every piece has been put into its proper perspective—only when they've all been gathered and only when they've all been put in their proper place, because the sculpture ought not look like Picasso and the cubists; it ought to look like what it was when originally formed. When that happens, so that you can now see the beauty that's there, then you've completed the gathering. But the prediction is that it will gathered together in one *in Christ*, so it doesn't matter if you're a Hindu, and you think Christ is outside—he is other than—our tradition. Your tradition must be gathered home also into Christ because it fits there. And if you're

Buddhist, and you say, “Ours is not a religion but a philosophy, a way of thinking, a way of disciplining the mind,” that way of thinking, that way of disciplining the mind must be gathered together in Christ for it to find its home. For the purpose is the salvation and eternal life of every being, of every person. Until we gather all the parts, it is not possible to gather in one all things that belong with Christ. The search must be global, the search and the invitation must cross cultures, traditions, religions.

You see, the philosophy that motivated Constantine in coercing Christian unity was the desire to see Christians not fight with one another. If you say fighting with one another is the evil end to be avoided, there are really only two ways to approach conquering that evil end to be avoided. One of them is to do what Constantine and the Popes have attempted and what some other centrally-controlled religious organizations likewise attempt today—and that is by coercion and exclusion and punishment to discipline the adherents so that they fall in line. That is a compressive, coercive, and dictatorial way of trying to achieve the Christian unity that we seek after.

Another more benign way of attempting exactly the same thing is to say, “You are free in all your thinking, in all your beliefs.” We require very little of you. We believe in the doctrine of Christ, which was read to us here today. It’s very short: belief in Christ, belief in His Father, acceptance of the Holy Ghost, being baptized in faith, and then allowing that Holy Spirit (that Holy Ghost) to animate you in your search for truth. And if we begin with diversity, then we begin with appreciation for that diversity, because coming together in the unity that Paul speaks of, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, is not because someone beat you into submission. It’s because someone had something to say that resonated as truth to you in such a compelling way that you found yourself persuaded, you found yourself enticed to accept it, you found yourself prizing it, and you welcomed it, and you embraced it. And if someone has not yet embraced it, you explain to them why it’s delicious to you. And if they reject it for a season, that’s okay, too.

Joseph Smith had a revelation that was actually dictated from beyond the veil and then recorded by a scribe, read back, and then once the transcript was read back and it was correct, Joseph and Sidney Rigdon (who shared in the vision with him) said, “Yes, that’s correct,” and then it would move on. This is part of that revelation. It’s talking about people who, at the end of this experience in this world, find themselves disappointed by what they did not accomplish while they were here. They did not accomplish what they wanted because they *“received not the gospel, neither the testimony of Jesus, neither the prophets, neither the everlasting covenant[s]”* (D&C 76:101).

When he [Gary Gibson] spoke of the Book of Mormon earlier today, the whole text of the Book of Mormon comes down to experience after experience being retold by people who, during their lifetime, they had this opening up of the heavens to them, and they came into contact with Jesus Christ, having the heavens open to them and recognizing who He is and what His role was. It’s an experience that they tell over and over again, throughout the entirety of the Book of Mormon, because the people that wrote the accounts in the Book of Mormon had had that experience.

The testimony of Jesus is not something that comes from you. “I have this, and let me tell it to you.” The testimony of Jesus is something that He gives to you as His confirmation to you that you have part in His kingdom. To receive the testimony of Jesus is to receive, from Him, the promise that He will give you eternal life. The Book of Mormon is filled with accounts of people that had had that experience. And that’s, at one point, an expected and normal part of the Christian experience. It became very rare, unexpected, and in fact, is denounced by many denominations as something that doesn’t happen, can’t happen, ought not happen—and if you think you’ve come into contact with a divine being, then you’ve been misled because, well, “Jesus is busy, and He can’t be troubled with your lot. He’s getting ready for the second coming. He’s got a lot of wicked to burn. He’s got stuff to do. And so don’t think that you’re going to have an encounter with Jesus.” However, my view is that Christian salvation is based upon the testimony of Jesus to you of your salvation.

I also think that it doesn’t matter when you live or what the circumstances were, if you are true and faithful to Him, you will have that experience. In the case of Stephen, in the book of Acts, he was in the process of being stoned to death, and it was in the last moments of his life that the heavens opened up to him. He saw Christ. He forgave the people who were in the act of killing him because he was filled with a devotion that comes from having Christ Jesus confirm and testify to Stephen of his salvation. And he parted this life, rejoicing.

Joseph Smith had an older brother, whose name was Alvin, who died when Joseph was still a young man. In the last moments of his older brother Alvin’s life, Alvin said that there were angels in the room and that the angels were talking to him and that he was conversing with them. Many years later, Joseph Smith had a vision of the celestial kingdom, and in the celestial kingdom he saw his brother Alvin, and he wondered, “Why is it that Alvin got to be in the glorious afterlife when he died before the gospel had been fully restored?” And he was told: anyone—*anyone*—who would have accepted the truth, the gospel, the testimony of Jesus, the prophets and the everlasting covenants—anyone who would have done that, even if they die when it’s unavailable—they will be saved.

St. Francis believed in and practiced the Sermon on the Mount. St. Francis lived at a time when Catholic hegemony made Catholicism *IT*: the only religion, the only brand of Christianity. He went to the pope, and he said he wanted to found an order (the Franciscan order), and they would take a vow of poverty, and they would practice the Sermon on the Mount. And the pope told him, “Well, that’s ridiculous; no one can do that. And if you can find people who will do this, come back, and ask me again. But this can’t be.” St. Francis was known—if you saw him in winter—cold, without a coat, and you gave him a coat, he’d accept the coat. And he’d wear it until he met the next person that needed it more than he, and then he would give it away. So he was always needing coats and always giving away what little he had. St. Francis found twelve men who would practice that order. And the pope gave him the Franciscan Order. In the last days of St. Francis’ life, at a time when the only brand of Christianity was corrupt, St. Francis said that angels were coming and ministering to him. I believe it to be an authentic part of every Christian’s life.

I believe there's a revelation that talks about how there are those people who will not taste death because it shall be sweet unto them. Why do they not taste death? Because death means *bitterness*. And if, in the authentic Christian's life, the final moments that they spend here are caught up with the testimony of Jesus, confirming that they have part with Him in his Kingdom—like Stephen, in the very act of being stoned to death—they part this life rejoicing, because whatever they're going through, it doesn't matter; it's joyful to be reunited with that person who represents perfection itself.

The highest aspirations, the highest ideals of Buddhism are present in the gospel of Christ. The highest ideals of Hinduism are present in the gospel of Christ. The problem is—that in that disunity, in the fracturing—some of the bits of the sculpture that left Christian awareness and departed into the East (but were retained by the Hindus, are understood by them, are practiced and accepted by them), but they're outside of the typical Christian awareness—you will not understand the sayings of Jesus the same if you could put on Hindu eyes for a moment and read what is in the sayings and the teachings of Jesus Christ and of His followers. You'll not understand the teachings of Christ as well until you've put on Buddhist eyes and you've relooked at the gospel of Christ through that prism. Because part of the picture will be missing. Christianity may be disciplined and had its story down, but it lacks the depth, the richness, the kindness, the texture—it lacks the meditative power that you find in Buddhism and Hinduism. As you heard from the people practicing those philosophies, religions, viewpoints today, the fact is that they're fractured, too. Part of reunifying everything in Christ is going to reunify the Hindu world, as well; reunify the Buddhist world, as well.

The title that my talk was given is: *What is God up to Today?* He's up to the work and the challenge of reuniting all things in one, in Christ; not by exclusion and subtraction and coercion, but by openness and by addition and by tolerance.

Thank you.

The foregoing comments by Denver Snuffer were recorded on November 3, 2018, in Boise ID.

Podcast Episode 44: Breaking the Chains

QUESTION: How do we break the chains of tradition that bind us and keep us from hearing the voice of God?

DENVER: I have come to realize that everyone's religion is eccentric. And it doesn't matter how plausible an explanation they can make for it if you give them enough time. The first blush expression of whatever the religion is, it's always eccentric.

I was talking to a law partner of mine who is— He's extraordinarily orthodox, mainstream Latter-day Saint. He's been in a bishopric; I think he's in a high council right now. And I'm currently an excommunicated, former member of the LDS church who is a religious fugitive and vagabond at the moment. And he was— They're very careful not to talk religion with me at my law firm because who knows, the contamination of heresy may spread, and so everyone kind of avoids the subject. And I said, "Everyone's religion is eccentric." And he said, "No, no, not like this other guy...." And I said, "Wait a minute. You believe God is so pissed at the world that He wants to beat the world for their sins, and so to placate Himself, He sent a son here, and He killed the son or had the son killed, and that satisfied this angry God. And you believe this, and you think that that's truth." And he said, "Well, there's more to it." And I said, "Of course there's more to it! But if I want to put it in terms that make it appear to be out of proportion, it's possible to do so, and you can do that with any religion. Doesn't matter what it is."

So, I actually blame you people—probably these two on-campus ministerial folks. I blame you people for me becoming a Latter-day Saint. Now follow the logic on this.

I was raised by a Baptist mother. My father was Christian and a mason; he had hoped that I would join the Masonic lodge. And he put up with the Baptist minister coming for Sunday dinner, which was always fried chicken and mashed potatoes. (I don't know what it is about Baptist ministers that provoke the fried chicken. They do, and it's actually pretty good, so I was always glad to see the minister come if not for any other reason than the meal.)

Growing up, I never had the conviction that the Baptists really had the answer. So by the time I entered the military, I was vaguely Christian and unbaptized. And because *you* people didn't send out any missionaries, and Salt Lake *did* send out missionaries, I was confronted with the Joseph Smith story and all that by the LDS version of the Restoration. I didn't even know there was another version that was out there at the time. And they challenged me to read the Book of Mormon as part of the missionary discussions. And I read— They had earmarked, gave me a free copy, and I read those pages. And they wanted to know, after I'd read them, what my impression was. And I can still tell you exactly the words of my answer. I said, "It's gotta be scripture. It's every bit as boring as the Bible." And I meant it. It did not connect for me. In fact, there was so much about the Restoration that my mother had told me, and I had that point of view that Bryce spoke about already embedded in me that made

it impossible for me to really see this other paradigm that they were trying to advance and get me to buy into.

The angel who appeared to Joseph Smith preliminary to the Book of Mormon plates being shown to him said, Your name shall be had for both good and evil, or that people everywhere are going to speak of you in terms of both good and evil.

I grew up with a Baptist mother who only spoke evil of Joseph Smith. So to me, Joseph was not to be trusted. He was a scoundrel. He was a predator. He was the epitome of what goes wrong when someone seizes upon the idea of a religion to advance their own personal lies, agenda, wealth, power, and influence.

It really came as quite a surprise to me when we were at the birthplace of Joseph Smith in Sharon, Vermont, on a campout— They had a stake president; they had a fireside. The stake president got up, and he told the story of David and Goliath, which is Biblical (my mom had drilled that into me), except that he took this story as if it were actually true, as if all these people and all these events had really happened. And it struck me that there was a kind of naive, innocent literalism to what this guy was doing with the religion, and it was Biblical. And to me it was disarming; it was a little unsettling. How can a Mormon devotee of this imposter, tell a Biblical story in a way that evidences not only acceptance, but persuaded me that there might be more to it? He had actually computed the height of Goliath. Today, we have NBA players that are nearly that height. I mean, to me Goliath was like some Hollywood-animated character. No, he was of an attainable height. And the size of the spear that he threw—he calculated that. He gave that number, and I thought, “Actually, the guy who is nearly nine feet tall could throw a spear that has...” Everything about it seems plausible. Everything about the story he told convinced me that maybe, maybe there’s something there. A kernel. Maybe there’s a little spark of something good, even in this horrible, flawed religion developed by an imposter.

Well, they had a visitor center. And the visitor center had literature. The fellow I was with— They had what was called the Doctrine and Covenants. That’s about that much of this book. The fellow I was with at the visitor’s center told me there was something in that book I ought to read. I assumed that if you’re going to take a book, and you’re going to start dog-eared it that you’re going to have to pay for it. And he had dog-eared the page, and I thought, “Gah, you haven’t even paid for this thing, and you’re wrecking these people’s book.” And this elderly lady behind the counter told me that the book was mine. And I said, “Uh... I didn’t bring any money, and I’m not...” And she said, “No, no, we give these away.” And I thought, “Wow, foolish people. Here they are, they’re giving their stuff away. And here, it’s now my book, and you’ve dog-eared it? What the...what are you messing with my book for?”

The section that he had dog-eared is one that is common to both the RLDS and the Community of Christ, and that is the vision of the redemption of the dead that is Section 76 in the LDS version. It has a different number in the Community of Christ. But it is a vision of the redemption of the dead, in which during the translation or the editorial revisions that

Joseph Smith made to the New Testament, in the Gospel of John, he comes across a statement concerning the afterlife which made him wonder about the segregation of people in the afterlife and the two categories of heaven and hell...and there had to be something more to that. And the vision of the redemption of the dead unfolds. I read that, and my reaction— The only way I can describe it is I was thunderstruck. How could a man who is an imposter and a deceiver compose a transcript of such sublime meaning of beauty as this? It was at that moment, for the first time, that I thought there may be more to Joseph Smith than what my Baptist mother has told me.

It's a fearsome thing to let loose of the anchor that holds you in the harbor that you were raised with as a child. But it was at that moment, whether I was willing to cut that anchor or not, that the chain was broken. Because if my mom could be wrong about the potential virtue of Joseph Smith, she could be wrong about a number of other things. Therefore, the search into the restoration of the gospel actually began as a consequence of that moment.

Now, the missionaries were persistent, basically because there's no one in New England that was interested in Mormonism at the time. I had joined the military. I grew up in Idaho, and I had been assigned to New Hampshire. In New Hampshire, it was the New England States mission, and I don't know how many missionaries they had out in that mission (a couple hundred, I guess), and *one* of them had actually managed to get *one* person who was willing to put up with their pamphleteering and film-stripping. And so I'm pretty sure that in their zone and regional meetings they talked about their investigator. Reluctant though I was, I was the guy that showed some interest.

As the stories unfolded, and you hear about the pillar of fire that descends and, within it, personages who speak to Joseph and call him by name, and the story progresses. And a few years later he's praying, and a conduit opens up and a light and a person of light appears and tells him about a book that is buried in a mountain that's engraved on gold plates, and you hear about the founding stories of the Restoration. The impression, naive as I was, the impression I got was that you people, you people have religion like the New Testament. Angels come talk to *you* people. God appears to *you* people. It's like Paul on the road to Emmaus, except now it's happening today. This is the old religion, the one that Moses went up on the Mount— The bush is burning, the voice, the finger of God writing on tablets of stone—it's happening again! Oh my word! Baptists have an old book, but you people have angels!

I'm thinking that I occupy a position of vast inferiority to you because the heavens are open to you, and they're not to me. And I would like to have that experience. I would like to be part of you people. I want to rise up to your glorious level because, from where I am, all I got are words in an old book, written by other people in another language, in another time, from another culture that I'm trying to make applicable to me by interpretation. But you people have the heavens, themselves, available to you.

So I want to obtain a testimony so that I can believe like you people believe. And I recall the night in which I sincerely undertook to try and be like you great people. I prayed, kneeling

beside a government-issued bed with an army blanket on it. I had a roommate, but he wasn't there. He was out partying somewhere, and I was alone in the barracks. And I knelt down; I prayed— I wanted to be like you guys. And with all the fervency and sincerity of a young soul wanting desperately to be something akin to what you had attained, I poured out my heart. And when I was done praying, I got up, I sat on the bed, and I waited. And there wasn't a conduit to heaven, and there wasn't a glowing man in the dark. It was just me, alone in the room, sitting there. I don't know what I expected, but there wasn't any of that.

And as I thought about it, I thought, "You know, this story these Mormons are telling can't be true because there aren't any more angels appearing." As I thought about that for a moment. I knew what was in the New Testament because we read that every morning at breakfast with my mom growing up, and there was nothing in there that said, "I'm revoking the authorization of angels to appear." There literally was nothing in there. Then I thought, "Okay, but Joseph's put out new scripture, and the Bible says, Whoever adds to this book shall be cursed; whoever takes away from it God will take away his part in the kingdom." That's in the book of Revelation. But then it entered my mind, "Wait, the book of Revelation was actually written earlier than many of the other New Testament books that are in there, so if it literally means you can't add scripture, we have to throw out most of the New Testament. So that's not a legitimate criticism." I went through issue after issue after issue, thinking of a problem why it can't be true, and as I thought of the problem, an answer always came that said, "No, because of..."

After this meditative process that went on for about just under a couple of hours, my final thought was, "Okay, yeah, all of that may be good and well and not a reason to reject, but how do I know there's even a God?" [Clapping once] That quickly, the words came into my mind, "Who do you think you've been talking to for the last two hours?" At that moment I thought, "This was not the way in which I expected to encounter God. But if I have now encountered God, and if He has spoken to me, and if this means that I can get into His good graces, then I have to act in response to what He just told me, or I might be cut off, and I would like more of this, not less of this."

So I told the missionaries I got an answer to prayer. And I thought, "I'm going to be the world's worst Mormon, but okay, I'll be a Mormon. I'll try. But I just don't have what it takes to be that great a person" (because I think you people are all great). And I went ahead, and I got baptized, and to my surprise, that connection with God did not go away or diminish, it grew. And it grew brighter and brighter.

Understand, I assumed God and angels and the heavens themselves were wide open to all of you. I assumed it was a common experience for people to have angelic ministrants. I had every expectation that sooner or later you're just going to find yourself in the presence of angels, because that's what the Restoration is all about. So I had no doubt that that would happen.

I had an experience in which I did encounter an angel. He had very little to say, but he certainly would have answered a question if I had put one. The words that he said to me were, "On the first day of the third month in nine years, your ministry will begin, and so you must prepare." And then he waited.

Now, some things that ought to be obvious if that's a statement that's made is, "Okay, how does one prepare? What is this ministry? What are you talking about? How am I to do what you just suggested I ought do?" But I wasn't doing that. I was looking at him; I was looking at the clothing; I was looking at the scene. I was trying to take in— And there were things that were visible that were odd to me. Art, for example. And I thought, "Why would you have artwork in the afterlife or in the eternities or...?" I was like a tourist. If I'd had spray paint, I might have sprayed, "Denver was here." I may have behaved really poorly, but I did not ask a question.

So he leaves. I'm left thinking about that scene, and I can conjure it back up into my mind. I can see that moment right now, and it's been decades.

Well, I didn't, at that time, know that you ought to keep a journal. I didn't, at that time, know that you ought to keep a record and know dates. But I kept it in my mind, and I did what I thought was a calculation. And I calculated out when the first day of the third month of the ninth year had arrived, and on that date I'm expecting, "Hey, hey! Something big!" And the date comes, and the date goes, and nothing happens—just another day in school. It's just nothing at all. So I thought, "Okay, 'and so you must prepare' is how heaven gets out of this. I didn't prepare, so it's my fault. I blew it. Not worthy, not prepared. Shoot! I wish I had known what I should have done." Because obviously, I had not done it.

The next year, on the first day of the third month, on my door comes an LDS bishop and Sunday School president to call me to be the new gospel doctrine teacher for the ward. It was actually a few days after they had extended to me the request that I teach gospel doctrine that I went back and realized it was the first day of the third month. And then I went back and recalculated everything, and because I had not kept a record, I had assumed that the nine year calculation began from the year in which I was baptized, which was 1973. But it had been sometime apparently months later in '74, so I was off by a year in my calculation.

Well, in the LDS church, the gospel doctrine teacher is given a one-year curriculum to teach, in which you spend one year on the Old Testament, you spend one year on the New Testament, you spend one year on the Book of Mormon, and you spend one year on the Doctrine and Covenants and Church History. And then when you finish with that, you start all over again, and you spend one year on each one of these, and you go through, and you teach them for a year. And then when that year ends, you start all over again.

When I got called to be the gospel doctrine teacher, I had not yet gained any appreciation for the Book of Mormon. In all honesty, I didn't know what to make of the Book of Mormon. Joseph Smith, the vision of the redemption of the dead, some of the things that Joseph

taught, some of his revelations resonated with me. Old testament, not a problem; the New Testament, loved it. The Book of Mormon, to me, was a— It was hard for me to have that book resonate with me. I taught it. They give you a manual. I followed the manual, and we got through the year. And the calling to be the gospel doctrine teacher didn't end. So we cycle through, and I taught the Book of Mormon for a second year.

In year one I used the the manual. In year two, I said to myself, "I'm going to bore *me*, even if I'm not boring the people. I'm going to bore *me* if I do that again." So I began to push into the Book of Mormon a little more carefully, using more resource material, studying it a bit more closely, and using outside material that had been provided by— This was the LDS church; this was by scholars. I began to have a little more appreciation for the Book of Mormon. There might be a little more to this.

Well, as circumstances would have it, I moved from the city I was living in to a new city in Utah, and I would have been released if I had stayed where I was living. But when I moved to the new place, the new bishop asked me, "What is your calling in the ward you're leaving?" And I said I was a gospel doctrine teacher. He said, "Oh good, good. We are releasing ours. We haven't yet called anyone, so we're going to call you." So I changed cities, but I kept the calling, and I continued on being "this guy" teaching these scriptures. It was easy to push this material into greater depth. That was easy. This was a little more difficult.

By the time I got through teaching the Book of Mormon a second full year, I began to realize there was a good deal more to this book than I had anticipated. And so the next time I went through, I assumed that this text was actually what it purported to be, and I began to have respect for it trying to get *it* to tell *me* what *it* contains.

The third year I spent on the Book of Mormon, I began to have experiences and a growth in faith that resembled those very earliest days encountering the missionaries. You see, I had joined Mormonism in New Hampshire, but I had gone to college in Utah. And in Utah, Mormonism is jaded. In Utah, Mormonism consists of one guy who holds all the keys, who's the president of everything, that one rises to their feet when he enters the room, and you don't sit until he sits, and when he's through talking and he's ready to leave, you rise, and you stay where you are until he leaves the room, because holy, holy, holy, *he is the man*. That's Mormonism in Utah. No one expects an angel, except *that* guy might get one. No one expects an open vision, except *that* guy might get one. No one expects God to have a darn thing to do with you or me because He's too busy with *that* guy. He's the one who, if someone were to walk on water today, would be *that* guy. We are mere minions supporting the pyramid, atop which is *that* guy and God. And God won't talk to us, but He will talk to *him*. So in Utah I realized angels don't come talk to people, and they don't expect angels to come talk to them. And no one expects spiritual connection to the other side except for an office, and that office owns the right to that. But we don't.

The problem with that realization is that it was contrary to my actual experience. I knew that I wasn't just a minion at the time; I was a newly potential baptized person when God spoke to me, and I was a newbie, ignorant, fresh-out-of-the-water newbie when an angel

had spoken and visited with me. So I knew the paradigm that prevailed in Utah could not be true. But it was only the third time through teaching the Book of Mormon for a year that that light, that ignition began to return, and the other side began to become more accessible, more understandable, more lively, more communicative.

When I taught the Book of Mormon for the fourth year, I was able (in a 50 minute class) to cover one or two verses. We were assigned like eight chapters, and I said, "Okay, eight chapters—you can read the material. I want to delve into the meaning of this verse." And for 50 minutes I talked about one verse or sometimes two verses. Because the Book of Mormon has that much to say.

There's a bunch of scholarly efforts to talk about the content of the Book of Mormon, but the Book of Mormon itself explains how the translation process was done. This is in 2 Nephi 27. Nephi has used the Isaiah material to testify about Nephi's experience. He does not have a Jewish intent, an Isaiah intent, in using Isaiah's words. Nephi has been prohibited from writing about the vision that he has had, but the angel tells him "others have seen this." And so Nephi, intending to express his own testimony of what God has shown him, uses Isaiah's words to tell you Nephi's visionary experience. When he gets to chapter 27 of 2 Nephi, he begins to transition. He ceases to be directly quoting Isaiah, and he begins to paraphrase Isaiah in a transitional chapter 27 before he then gives you an explanation for why he said all of the Isaiah materials that went on before. And chapter 27 begins to be the transition from Isaiah quotes, Isaiah paraphrase, Isaiah meaning in the words of Nephi, in the experience of Nephi.

So in 27 we get to the Isaiah material where he talks about the words of a book that's going to be delivered to someone who's learned, who says he can't read a sealed book, and then he's going to go from there when the learned won't do it. And God tells you how the Book of Mormon was translated: *"I am able to do mine own work; wherefore thou shalt read the words which I shall give unto thee... I will show unto the children of men that I am able to do mine own work"* (2 Nephi 11:20 RE). The translation of the Book of Mormon was not done **by** Joseph Smith; it was done **through** Joseph Smith. The translator of the text of the Book of Mormon was God. God told Joseph what was in the text of the Book of Mormon. You want to know who translated it? God.

Then we have the testimony of the Three Witnesses. This is what the Three Witnesses say: *"And we also know that they have been translated by the gift and power of God, for His voice hath declared it unto us; wherefore we know of a surety that the work is true."* God translated the Book of Mormon. After God gave Joseph the words that God wanted to be included in the Book of Mormon, then the angel showed the plates to the Three Witnesses, and God vouched for the translation process that He had done, by the gift and power of God.

Joseph Smith once said that a man can get closer to God by heeding the Book of Mormon than any other book, and that it was the most correct book that there is, and that if you will abide it's precepts, you will come closer to understanding God.

I started out with the Book of Mormon as a pedestrian looking in the book and saying, “Yeah, it’s something. And it’s part of the religion.” If I had not been called to be a gospel doctrine teacher and left in that position— I moved again into a third location. I taught gospel doctrine in Pleasant Grove, UT; Alpine, UT; and Sandy, UT in two different places there. I was this guy going through this material. It took between 10 and 20 hours of study and preparation each week for a 50 minute class, as I went deeper and deeper into the text of all these materials, but deepest of all into the Book of Mormon.

The foregoing message from Denver is taken from the first half of his lecture entitled “Remembering the New Covenant,” given on November 10, 2018 at Graceland University in Lamoni, Iowa.

Podcast Episode 45: Denying the Power

QUESTION: In 1820, God told Joseph Smith not to join any church because they all “have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof.” How do churches today still deny the power of godliness, and how is God working to help us grasp the depth of our awful situation?

DENVER: I think that you can be a Mormon Community of Christ member, a Mormon Latter-Day Saint, a Mormon in some of these rare splinter cults— I’m an independent, freelance, converted-to-my-soul believer in the Book of Mormon and the value of the Book of Mormon, without any denominational affiliation. I believe to my core that the Book of Mormon is the keystone to *a* religion, but I’m not sure it is the keystone to the religion that they practice in Salt Lake City anymore. I’m not sure it’s the keystone to the religion that’s practiced in some of these splinter groups. I don’t know enough about the Community of Christ to be able to evaluate that, but in June of this year I went to a conference in Boise, Idaho. I spoke there, and I heard from a group. These were— There was a member of a presidency and a seventy who had previously been members of the Community of Christ, and they had split primarily over the issue of the standing of the Book of Mormon; they had formed something that they called the Remnant Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. And their chief objection, according to these authorities from that group, was that the Book of Mormon was not being held in the kind of esteem with which that they would like to hold the Book of Mormon. Therefore, they considered their version of what they were doing to be more genuine, better, and what have you.

I’m to the point where I believe truth is truth. I believe the Book of Mormon has value. And I’m tired of the peephole mentality where “I want to see the Restoration, Joseph, and the Book of Mormon through this lens, and anything that falls outside of that lens in corrupt, is to be opposed.” I don’t understand why we’re fighting. I don’t understand why we’re competitive! If you can teach me something about the Old Testament that I do not know, I want to hear it. If you can teach me something about the New Testament that I don’t know, I would love to learn about it. If you’ve got some insight into the Book of Mormon that can expand my understanding and appreciation of it, I would love for you to give that to me.

And I have to tell you, the Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints is a mess. I mean, to put it mildly, it’s a mess. It does not reflect the voice of God to Joseph Smith in the way in which the voice of God came to Joseph Smith. When the revelations of Joseph were sent for publication in what would have been called the Book of Commandments, printed in Independence, Missouri, Oliver Cowdery and William Phelps felt that they had the editorial right (Oliver believed this because of some things that had been said to him in revelation) the editorial right to make changes and alter the text. And they felt comfortable doing that.

The Book of Commandments got— The press got wrecked by a mob, and so, although a handful of the manuscript printed sheets got salvaged and they got put together, the Book of Commandments got superseded by the 1835 publication in Kirtland of the Doctrine and Covenants. During the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants publication, Joseph Smith undertook to take the *Lectures on Faith* (that had been delivered at the School of the Prophets in Kirtland) to turn that into a standardized text that could be used elsewhere for instruction and understanding of doctrine. And so in Joseph Smith's journals, he enters comments about the labor he was doing to get the *Lectures on Faith* prepared for publication. Everything else that went into the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants had been turned over to a committee. And the committee took what the Book of Commandments had done, and then the committee (now including Sidney Rigdon, among other), took and expanded and expanded— Section 27 of the Doctrine of Covenants in the LDS version is a vast expansion of something that was originally very small, like I think four verses. And it's now like 35 verses.

Joseph Smith, when the Doctrine and Covenants was presented to the conference in 1835 for a sustaining vote as a statement of the religion, personally vouched for *Lectures on Faith*, and signed his name attesting to it being true and accurate, and he would answer for anything that is contained within that text. And the rest of the book was sustained by people as a standard of the faith and accepted, but Joseph made no such vouching for the balance of it. And the balance of it contained expansions, changes, deletions, improvements, as folks thought that they were making.

Today if I were a gospel doctrine teacher in an LDS church, I would teach people how to parse this book in order to get back to where it ought to be. I would be unfit for the ministry, because I'd be subversive.

The truth is oftentimes very subversive, because people really like to take textual material that's considered authoritative and to wrap themselves in the cloak of that authority, in order to justify the agenda that they would like to advance. Sometimes the reasons people do that are noble. Sometimes the reasons they do that are laudable.

When Martin Luther was confronted by a corrupt Catholic church, the problem that Martin Luther had to solve was how you could have salvation while you depart from the authoritative hierarchical structure. How do you get salvation and authoritative baptism without priestly authority, because the tradition that had been handed down for a millenium and a half—and this was 1517 when Martin Luther finally reaches the point that he splits—how do you survive that split if authority to seal on earth and in heaven, if authority to baptize remains with the Catholic church, and they excommunicate you. How does salvation itself survive? The way that Martin Luther solved the riddle that allowed him to make the split—noble as that split may have been, laudable and as good as it may be that he took the step—was to take one of the letters of Paul in the book of Romans and to take the phrase of “salvation by grace” and to wrap himself in the authority of the words (that appear in the book of Romans) to vindicate the split to say salvation can be attained independent of the hierarchy, independent of the priesthood, independent of the ability

claimed by the Pope and his priests to seal on earth, to forgive sins, to do what they do to minister in the gospel. And we have a chance, by the grace of God, to lay hold upon salvation and to make our way back to redemption independent of that structure. Martin Luther, bless his heart, created the rationalization that allowed John Knox and John Calvin and Zwingli and the other protestant reformers, in one generation, to split into numerous different protestant congregations. Just that quick—one generation. Those men met with each other.

So then we get all the way down to the Restoration through Joseph Smith, when Joseph is troubling over which church, which branch ought he join. I mean, everyone knew in Colonial America that Catholics were wrong because the protestant reformation had succeeded in getting a toe hold in the Americas as an escape from the religious oppression of Europe. They were burning people at the stake; they were killing people over religious issues at the time that the colonies were founded.

One of the things that the Constitution wanted to do was to divorce federal power from religious power. And when the Bill of Rights was adopted, the very first one was to guarantee religious independence so that people could think. So Joseph could rest assured that you don't even need to trouble yourself over Catholicism, but as to everything else that was out there, "Which of all the churches ought I to join?" And the answer that he got was that, "Don't join any of them. They teach for commandments the doctrines of men; they have a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof."

What do you think it means that religions *deny the power of godliness*? If you're open to it, it puts you right back where I was, sitting on a bed in a barracks, talking to God and getting answers, because God is willing to be a lively participant in a living religion in which you and He, together, are part of the living gospel of Christ.

The religion that Joseph Smith restored was intended to have a powerful form of godliness. Something that God only changes you and changes the landscape inside of you, but ultimately is intended to change this world; ultimately is intended to bring again something like the Garden of Eden.

In the letter Joseph Smith wrote to the publisher of *The Democrat*, the portion of which is now the "Articles of Faith"— John Wentworth had sent a letter to Joseph; Joseph responded; he described the faith— Joseph said that we believe that there was going to come a time when there would be a Zion that would be built upon this, the American Continent, and that the earth was going to be renewed and returned again to its paradisiacal glory.

I mean, think for a minute about what happened at the Fall. At the moment in which the Fall occurs, the harmony that once existed between this creation, man, and God was fractured. And man is sent out to labor by the sweat of their brow. Well, that fracturing in the Joseph Smith translation version of the book of Genesis— It's in the Joseph Smith translation that's used by the Community of Christ; it's in the Pearl of Great Price as the book of Moses in the LDS scriptures— In that account there comes a moment when Enoch is caught up in the

Heaven, and Enoch has this visionary experience, and he sees what's going on on the earth, and he's lamenting, and he wants to know when the earth is going to have the Lord come and visit it and redeem it. And the earth itself, in this vision, mourns over the wickedness that is upon her face. She wants that to be cleansed.

That vision of Enoch suggests that this earth is sentient; this earth has a spirit; this earth is alive. If this earth mourns over the wickedness that is upon her face, she's literally talking about something as intimate to her as your face is to you. If you can sense it, when there's something—a fly, a mosquito, something that happens, a leaf brushes up against your face, the wind blows—if you can sense that on your face, and the earth is mourning the wickedness of men that's upon her, how must the earth be responding to the way in which men behave?

Does any man or woman have any business to look at another person on the basis on how they believe in these things and to judge and dismiss them? Do we have any right to treat one another as if we are in hostile camps? If we believe that something happened with Joseph Smith, and if we believe that the Book of Mormon is a gift given us for God, and if a person can get closer to God by abiding its precepts than any other book, then we outta celebrate whenever anyone says something laudable, [praiseworthy], noble, or enlightening concerning the restoration and the Book of Mormon.

I am shocked at how bad a job we've all done with the history of the Restoration and the history of Joseph Smith. Right now the LDS church is in the process of publishing the Joseph Smith Papers. When they come out I read them cover to cover like you're reading a novel. My set of these books, I don't know how many— They're in the teens now— but my set of these books has cross references, interlineations, I point out where the historian's office is making a mistake because it's contradicted by something that's in an earlier volume. They're not keeping their version of the story straight, but they are publishing source materials. Source materials, if you focus on them, will give you a much better view of what was going on.

The fact that Bryce tells a story that's preserved within the Community of Christ tradition-history of Joseph Smith III about Emma's insistence— If you read the source material, you realize that as between the two of them, Emma Smith was the stronger personality. Emma Smith was the one who provided for Joseph a backbone, a stability. Emma was better educated than Joseph. Joseph not only loved her; he prized her. He deferred to her. He sought counsel from her. The relationship between Joseph and Emma Smith is *not at all* what is portrayed in Salt Lake City. They *do not* understand the relation between Joseph and his wife, Emma. And the stories that are told there, and retold there, based upon third and fourth-hand accounts, some of which are summoned 40 years after the fact in order to support the institution that is in a death grip with the United States over the issue of plural wifery—and I'm expected to trust a 40-year late reminiscence about Joseph's behavior in Nauvoo, Illinois at a time when litigation is trying to confiscate all of the property belonging to the institution of the LDS church, and the LDS church needs this

supporting material in order to justify the changes, the aberrations that they have adopted to Mormonism?

There are a couple of really well-known, well-respected Latter-day Saint historical writers that I've crossed paths with. I won't drop names—that just seems unseemly to me. But both of these—one's called the "Dean of LDS Historians" as a nickname—one of these fellows and I were talking about the subject of plural marriage and Joseph and all that. I posed the question to both of these fellows, "If you take Joseph from the time of his birth to the date of his death, and you say we're going to draw a line right here (it's going to be on June 27th of 1844) and you're going to look at everything that existed in written form that had been preserved through that moment in time, and you just stop the record right there at that moment, can you unequivocally state there is evidence that Joseph Smith had another wife other than Emma Smith?"

Now, understand, these people are well enough acquainted with the body of the original source material— Most people are not well enough acquainted with that. Even the revelation that purportedly occurred in Section 132, which is the big revelation that justifies it, is not in the handwriting of a clerk that wrote for Joseph Smith as a scribe. It's in the handwriting of a fellow who worked at the store who was never a scribe, who claims that he copied from the journal of Joseph's scribe at the time. It's a copy of a document that got destroyed, so we can't put that document before this date. And it didn't even come to light until some time 1852, okay? It could have been created in 1850, 51, 52. Could've been created after June 27th. If you stop the clock right there, and you say, "What does the history of Joseph Smith reveal about that topic?" Both of these fellows said, "Okay, I see where you're coming from. Okay, yeah, I get it. I just don't believe it." Tradition and peepholes are really difficult for people to part with.

When you have been muzzled into a paradigm that says, It is this way; it can be no other way— We are just as apt as the protestant folly because the Lord wasn't commenting to Joseph about the Catholics. He was talking about the protestants. We are just as apt as they were after Joseph had explored the various alternatives, to have God say concerning us now today, *we* teach for doctrines the commandments of men; *we* have a form of godliness; but *we* deny the power thereof; and that *our* hearts are far from Him.

If your heart is close to God, it also tends to be open to your fellow man. I wish that we felt no insecurities about our own beliefs and were willing to say, "I'm prepared to revise what I believe if you can give me reason to do so." I welcome, want; I hunger, and I thirst after knowledge of things that are true.

I wrote a book called *Passing the Heavenly Gift*, in which I analyzed the history of the Restoration from the vantage point of using what the Book of Mormon says the Latter-day gentiles are going to do. I didn't approach it as if I were a historian. I approached it as if I were trying to understand what the prophets in the Book of Mormon said the gentiles were going to do with the restoration of the gospel, and I posed the question, "What would that history look like?" On the assumption the Book of Mormon is telling us what the gentiles

were going to do with it, I wrote a history that said “This event means this part of the prophecy of the Book of Mormon was filled. This event means what Christ said concerning the Latter-day gentiles was vindicated. This event is immediately following God telling you what the evidence, what the sign would be, and so this should be understood historically as fulfillment of God’s sign.”

And by the time I finished writing that history and got it out into print, what has been going on in Salt Lake did not appear to be all that praiseworthy from Heaven’s perspective. It appeared to be a shabby decay and a ruin. It appeared to be the very spot in which God said, “After they’ve done this, I’m then going to breathe new life into it again. I am going to bring again Zion.” The problem with the book is, if you believe that all members of your organization ought to be minions holding up a pyramid, atop which sits one guy at the pinnacle who has the authority, like the Pope, to bind on earth and in heaven, and everyone ought to be submissive and supportive, then that kind of history-telling becomes threatening.

I was given the ultimatum that I either had to take that book out of print, or I would be excommunicated. For a whole host of reasons, including the fact that I have a publisher, I have a contract with the publisher, I went to the publisher and said, “I’m being given an ultimatum, it needs to be taken off.” He said, “Well if the church is opposed to it, it’s a good book to keep in print. So no, we’re going to keep this book in print.” So then I was told that since the publisher was interested in keeping it in print, they would be willing to purchase the copyright to the book. And so I went back to the publisher, and I said, “What would it take to buy the copyright from you for this book?” And the fellow’s reaction was, “You are shitting me!” (I mean, I’m quoting him, so don’t fault me for his language.) He said, “If they’re that interested in buying and getting it out, this book *has* to stay in print! This is Martin Luther, this is Galileo, this is historic! We have to keep this— No. No amount of money!” I said, “Well, okay. I don’t want to be in the middle of a lawsuit, but....”

As I thought about the reaction, it struck me that it really doesn’t matter if the book ever has wide appreciation. The book has depth of meaning. It’s not important that you influence millions of people casually. But it is a wonderful thing if you can influence a single soul deeply.

Christ’s ministry was relatively modest in it’s accomplishment in terms of the people He influenced directly. By the time what Christ had founded had widespread political, economic, and even military influence, it had become so corrupted that Christianity itself was more political than it was religious. Today we have over 100 different denominations that claim Joseph Smith as the founder. But the fact is that precious few people have allowed the message of the Book of Mormon, that was intended to redeem not only latter-day gentiles but to redeem a remnant of the natives that were on this continent, and to ultimately redeem some of the Jews that remain as a remnant and to bring them together in a cause that will make the earth herself rejoice because wickedness has ceased from off her face.

If anyone can grasp the depth of what the Lord complained about—a form of godliness but deny the power thereof— If there’s one piece of lifeline that God has extended to us in our day to get us out of that decrepit condition, it’s the Book of Mormon. We share that across all of the fractured parts of the Restoration, wherever it is. I know that the Book of Mormon contains valuable, indispensable prizes that have been given to us by God. I know that because I’ve lived it, and therefore, I look at the Book of Mormon as more miracle than mere text.

I know that Joseph Smith was singularly called by God, not merely as just another protestant leader, but as a founder of something that was intended to retain vitality and godliness in a power that can change absolutely the destinies of where we’re headed in eternity and the heart that we have within us. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

The foregoing message from Denver is taken from the second half of his lecture entitled “Remembering the New Covenant,” given on November 10, 2018 at Graceland University in Lamoni, Iowa.

Podcast Episode 46: Charity, Part 1

QUESTION: Why is charity the greatest of all?

DENVER: Charity is sometimes viewed as this emotional or deeply-felt connection that seems unattainable vis-a-vis the stranger but something that is capable to be done for your wife or your husband or your children or your parents—someone that you are intimately connected with. But it doesn't appear from the example of Christ that his willingness to die on behalf of others meant that he had to feel emotionally connected with them in order to do so. When he forgave the Romans that were nailing him to the cross, that wasn't the kind of act that demonstrates the sort of emotional connection to the people that you would say made him love them in the way that we would traditionally define love. Instead it would be the sort of commitment, the determination to want to do good despite the opposition or hinderance of anyone else. The very people he went into the temple and provoked with his *Woe unto scribes and Pharisees* discourse, deliberately controlling the timing of their outrage so that he would be sacrificed at the appropriate time during the Passover, were people on whose behalf he also died. **He was committed to giving his life to others** as an act of charity, as an act of service, and as an act of kindness in a way that demonstrates what charity really is. It's a fixed determination to do something on the behalf of others. Whether they appreciate it, whether they love you in return or not, you're simply going to do what needs to be done.

The mistreatment that Nephi receives at the hands of his older brothers did not change whether or not he had charity towards his older brothers, even though he knew that for the safety of his own wife, children, offspring, and compadres, he needed to separate from his brothers—for the safety of others. That doesn't mean that Nephi ever had anything other than charity for them.

Charity is a determination to live a certain way and to not allow yourself to be overcome by the jealousies, envies, all the negative things that are so easy to excuse our kindness to others. In a very real sense, we try to see others in the same way that the Father sees them, even if they don't see us reciprocally the same way. Even if they despise and abuse us. Even if they speak all manner of evil against us falsely. If we are committed to living the kind of life that has charity, the pure love of Christ in it, that's a determination, that's a vigor, that's a resolution, that's a firm-fixed determination to abide a certain standard, where you are committed to the wellbeing of your fellow man even if your fellow man is not committed at all to you. You do it for the sake of righteousness. You don't do it for the sake of recognition. Recognition rarely comes, except maybe posthumously, to the truly charitable. It's an approach and a value that you assign to the lives of others that allows you to do good to them even if they refuse to do good back to you. It's the only way that we can ever eradicate the kind of jealousies, envies, and strife that produce war, conflict, and injured feelings.

The world is plagued by the absence of charity and the best evidence of that is the presence of conflict, the presence of fighting, the presence of hurt feelings. If I have charity towards someone who despises and abuses me, then their attitude towards me is irrelevant. Even if they want to spend time berating me, I don't waste any time either considering or being motivated by that. I'm motivated by something else.

Blessed are the peacemakers. Well, why are they peacemakers? Because they are willing to charitably proceed in a world riddled with conflict. There's no room for envy in the charitable approach. It's not puffed up, it's not seeking its own. It's really trying to please God and to serve him. And not to serve himself. It is the greatest, because if we had charity, we could live in peace with one another. Even if we have any number of unresolved issues that exist between one another, we can still live in peace with one another. Even if we absolutely disagree on a number of issues we think are fundamental, we could still live in peace with one another—if we had charity.

Joseph Smith once remarked that the problem with councils and conferences is that we wouldn't agree to hold our disagreements long enough in order to reach a proper resolution. We have to be willing to allow for differences as we search for the solution. Sometimes the solution requires years of differing opinions, differing viewpoints, differing ways of approaching things. That's not evil. It's only evil when we allow that to crowd our hearts in such a way that we begin to envy and be jealous and be resentful and be hateful and to have our pride injured. If we are charitable, then we look upon even what we think are the shortcomings of someone else in a way that is tolerant and kindly. We think Zion is going to be the great peaceful community, and it surely will be. But that doesn't mean that the residents aren't going to have differing opinions.

Art, literature, great thought, very often— music, all the creative impulses very often are stimulated by a conflict that the person who is doing the creating is grappling with. Zion may not be a place in which there is the absence for the potential of conflict, but it will be a place where the potential for conflict is resisted because of the charitable impulse to abide peaceably with one another while we work on the things that separate us, that make us different. Our differences aren't evil. Our differences are something to be considered, thought about, to be explored, to be understood. Because charity is the peaceful means of dealing with these diverse ways of understanding lives, of understanding why we're here, what we're trying to do, of understanding how we can be kindly towards one another. Sometimes, the kindest thing is a rebuke. Sometimes the kindest thing, in turn, is to carefully consider the rebuke, to not open your mouth in return, to think deeply about what was said and why it was said, and to allow the possibility that the person who expressed the rebuke did so out of love, out of kindness, out of their concern for you. Sometimes that rebuke is based on a wealth of misinformation and misunderstanding. So, instead of returning with another rebuke, telling the rebuker how stupid they are because they don't understand things, think about why they have their understanding and what can be done to overcome the gap between you and someone else. Zion is going to be, above all other things, a place that necessarily demands that people be charitable towards one another and kindly disposed to dealing with the misunderstandings, the differences of opinion, the different

educational background, the different life experience backgrounds, that make for different opinions and different viewpoints. All of them are valuable, assuming you will charitably allow people to be where they are, and to help you understand them in their context, while they are kind enough to try and understand you in your context.

Verse 15, *And it came to pass there was no contention in the land because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people. (4 Nephi 1:15 LE)*. This is now the third time that they mention *no contention*. They mention it back in verse 2, no disputation, no contentions among them. They mention it again in verse 13. And they mention it again in verse 15, and they talk about the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people. Etching is hard work. There is absolutely no reason for redundancy. Therefore, you have to conclude, that while they thought they had gotten rid of contention, they found another level of harmony among them. And when they thought they had achieved a perfection of that harmony, they found yet another level of harmony among themselves. Three degrees! Well, that's interesting. Because of the love of God, which did dwell in the hearts of the people. The love of God. Faith, hope, charity, these three— Well, such irony. Here we have charity now where we have finally arrived at the point where there is such a fulsome elimination of the problem that you have to use the word, but you don't have to mean the same thing with it.

So, look what we got rid of in verse 16. There were no envyings. Well go back to that, "*Turn all ye gentiles...*" and repent of the crap that you are doing. And it says, in that long list of stuff, it associates "*and your priestcrafts and your envyings.*" Now I'm uncomfortable. Because if envyings get associated with priestcrafts, I don't like that at all. And yet, what a wonderful system we have. We have upward mobility in the church. We have your elders and an elders quorum president. And you have your wards, and you have your bishops. And you have your stake presidents that rule and reign over the bishops. And you have your area presidents who rule and reign over your stake presidents. And you have your general authorities, and you have your first presiding authorities in the Quorum of the Twelve and the First Presidency, and then you have your First Presidency, and then you have your president. And all along, scattered in there, there's lots and lots of opportunity. Lots of opportunity for envyings. Because we're suffering from the defect that the Savior noted among his own disciples about wanting those chief seats. A Savior who knelt and washed the feet, the most menial act that you can engage in in that society is dealing with the problem of disciples, an inner circle who want recognition, they want those seats. And he says, "Look, look, don't do that, don't even think about that. Go sit in the back of the room. Get called up." And I think about Nephi in the crowd at the temple Bountiful, and how the Lord had to call him up. Nephi wasn't up there saying, "The great and wonderful, His Holiness has appeared. I am here to introduce Him." Because all that is is a diversion of attention to the one. Like in the movie, *The Knight's Tale*, Chaucer. Nephi did not make of himself Chaucer. He sat in the back, blended in with the crowd and required the Lord to call him up. Christ addressed this problem directly. I can't imagine dealing with the affliction; Neil Maxwell talked about it. He said, "Yeah, it's out there, but you just don't inhale." The way that my wife has characterized it, and I think it is the perfect characterization, is the curse of celebrity-dom. We turn them into celebrities. We want to turn them into Britney

Spears. Because that's the ultimate end of celebrity-dom. It is hollow; it is stale; it is flat; and it is unprofitable. There is nothing to it. Why do you think Britney Spears is the mess that she is? Because fame and fortune is nothing. And I suspect those who enjoy the envy of position, who ultimately wind up in a position in which they are now there, they manage to weasel around those to where they thought it would be great, arrive at the point, look around and say, "Well, this is just like where I was! Nothing's changed." Because the change has to be a change internal to the person and not to mere geography or topography. Going from the third floor to the tenth floor doesn't change you. You're still that same hollow, miserable envious chap.

So, there's "*no envyings*," and there's no "*strifes*," and as a result of that, there are no political conventions. That's all a tumult is. It's just a lot of noise in a concentrated collection of folk in which we have a revival. We have a Republican Party break out, just all of the sudden. "*No tumults*." And despite all the rapid increase in the population and the familial life that is going on there, there is no whoredoms. Well, tumults, politics, and whoredoms go hand in hand. Well, if your going to have whoredoms, of course we are going to have it's corollary, lyings, because those go together. And there are "*no murders or any manner of lasciviousness*." Take that list and ask yourself, upon which of these things is our culture, is our society, is our economy based? This is the stuff we eat. This is our daily fare. This is who we are. This is the definition of us. This is us! "*Oh, ye gentiles!*" So we are here, and we're talking about Zion, and we are wondering why it's not here in full bloom at this point. This garbage is in our DNA. We have a hard time even thinking in terms that would allow us to relate to these people. The plot lines of all of our great western stories involve this stuff.

"*Nor murders or any manner of lasciviousness*." The story of the latter end of the Jaredites is full of whoredoms, lyings, murders and all manner of lasciviousness. The ultimate end of the Nephites is a repetition of that. And we don't learn from the patterns that we're shown that says, "Here's the road to hell, and here's the road to Zion." And we march down the road to hell, and we talk about Zion.

So then it says, "*and surely there could not be a happier people among all the people who had been created by the hand of God*." To us, in our cultural setting, that seems really incongruent, because everything that drives us, everything that our economy is based upon, everything that our entertainment portrays in front of our minds is based upon these kinds of conflicts and tumults and envyings and whoredoms and *Desperate Housewives*... It's all tied into this stuff. But these people who have been separated from our common fare, there could not be a happier people than among all the children of God. Because there comes a point when you have separated yourself from the crap that your capacity to incorporate more and more truth and light allows you to say, "Well, this is more interesting than that was anyway." There is something more engaging about truth and light. And there's something more fascinating about the things of eternity than there is about any of this stuff. We are all weak. We are all vulnerable. We are all carbon-based mud piles at the moment. And this carbon-based pile of mud around which my spirit has been wrapped into, it gets tired. It has appetites. It has weaknesses. But the reason they threw fasting in there was to subordinate that body, to teach it that the spirit is something that ought to be in control.

There comes a point at which, if you have allowed the spirit to have its way, you'll find that the things that are fascinating to this pile of mud that you walk around in are far less interesting than the things of the spirit. And whatever principle of intelligence you attain to in this life is going to rise with you. And if it does, then you are going to have so much the advantage in the world to come. Why is that? Because in the world to come, the crap that is here has no utility. It has no value. It's here to test you; it's here to try you; and it's here to give you an opportunity to overcome it. But it's not here for you to revel in. It's for you to dig yourself out from.

So there's *"no robbers, nor murderers, neither were there Lamanites nor any manner of -ites. But they were all in one, the children of Christ and heirs of the Kingdom of God."* I would suggest that the peace of Zion has much less to do with whether or not the outward hostilities of those who will be burned at His coming are fighting with one another and those inside the city are not taking up arms. But, it is rather the peace that comes as a consequence of having shed your sins and being able to endure the presence of the Lord. Because these are those people who have let virtue garnish their thoughts unceasingly because *"[their] bowels [have been] full of charity towards all men and to the household of faith."* Imagine that. Can you imagine that it is necessary that you have charity for those who are within your own household of faith. Can you imagine that I need to tolerate and even love those inside my own community of belief who think me an emissary of the devil? Who think me an apostate? Toward them, I must show charity? And *"let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly."* Because you see, if you are not so constituted within your own heart, where there can't be any lies—if within your heart you are not at peace in charity toward those who would, in the name of your own religion, spitefully use you, then your confidence cannot wax strong in the presence of God. And all of this is connected to the doctrine of the priesthood. *"Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distill upon thy soul as the dews of heaven"* (D&C 121:45). It will just condense there. Because when you do that, you reach dew point. See, if Neil Maxwell were here, he would write that down, and he would use it, too. I might send that to Cory, and say, "Hey, put it in his book, and give him credit."

"The Holy Ghost [shall] be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth" (verse 46). I want a scepter! Because can't you use those things to bash people in the head and say, "Big me, little you?" Scepters have nothing to do with ruling and reigning. Scepters have to do with serving and kneeling. He who thought Himself the least kneeled and washed the dirt from the feet of those who, in every respect, He excelled. And He wanted to give them the chief seats. He didn't envy those He raised. He didn't envy those who presided over Him. He declared the truth, and He declared it boldly, because He knew what the truth was. To the extent that He could do so diplomatically, He did. But when the moment came and it was necessary to lay it out, it was He who chose the moment of the sacrifice. It was He who went up to Jerusalem to be crucified. And it was He who drove the fury that resulted in the sacrifice at the appropriate moment, because the

fullness of time had come for the offering on that Passover. And He knew that. I talk about that in *Come, Let Us Adore Him*. Because when the time had come, the time had come.

The peace that is in Zion is the peace that Joseph is describing in the letter from Liberty jail from which I have been reading in D&C Section 121. It's in the account from Enoch as well. The statement that is made concerning the priesthood, Moses 6:7, "*This same priesthood that was in the beginning shall be in the end of the world also.*" That statement, when you put it together with the statements, "*As it was in the the times of Noah, so also shall it be with the coming of the Son of Man.*" Every time you encounter the existence of Zion, the Zion that we read about, the first one had seven high priests within it. There was a residue associated with them who were righteous, but among them, you have the seven high priests. I have to assume that they each had families. And I have to assume that the families that were raised by these high priests in righteousness, I have to assume that that included multiple generations. And so, that collection of people were essentially seven families.

The Zion that was established by Enoch thereafter, we don't have any geographic description or numeric description apart from the statement that we get in the book of Jude, which is really quoting from an earlier text of Enoch about the return of Enoch with his ten thousands, with his ten thousands of angels. And so, if that is a representation—and those kinds of things are not particularly reliable, because ten thousands— Given the way in which the numeric compilations occurred in those days, the error, if there is one, is an overstatement, not an understatement. In other words, there would not be millions described as ten thousands, but there could be hundreds described as ten thousands. And then the area occupied apparently by Melchizedek and his city in an agrarian setting could have been located on something as small as 20 city blocks. The significance of Zion is not it's numerosity. The significance of Zion is it's spiritual endowment. It is the power of heaven and not the voting block. It's not that you have big numbers here that intimidate the ungodly. It's that even a handful are sufficient. Remember from the account of John that when they came to arrest the Savior and He declared, "I am He," the guards stumbled backwards and fell down. The imposing figure of the righteous Lord was enough to intimidate those who came with swords and with shields, protected and armed, and Him clothed only with the garments He had upon Him. At that moment, in that garden, in that presence confined to the person of one individual, there was Zion. I do not think the picture that we have in our head of the role, the mission, the ministry, and the purpose of the return of Elijah is necessarily the one that is accurate. Nor do I think that the role, the mission, the ministry, and the effort of Elijah is something from our past. Just as Joseph predicted the future return in January and in March of 1844, I think the role and mission of Elijah is intimately connected with the immediate return and opening up the capacity for the salvation of a group of people who will be greeted at the return of those that last went through that opening when they come and fall upon one another's necks, and they kiss one another. No rivalry, no disparity, no hierarchy. All things in common is rather difficult when you got big and little people; when you got important and wealthy, and you got obscure and poor; when you have those who are mighty and wonderful and those who are nothing.

Don't be cowards. Stand, and be valiant, no matter what it is. In the day of judgement, you will find yourself wanting, and in this life, you will find that you lack the power of godliness unless you obey the law upon which all blessings are predicated. You make sacrifices. You obey him. And to obey him is to find yourself oddly incongruent with everything about you. Not about *you*. *About* you, meaning the external world in which you find yourself moving about within.

There is another verse in D&C Section 121. This would be one written in the year following the Joseph Smith testimony. This one is written— Joseph was sentenced to die on November 1st of 1838. The general who was supposed to carry the execution, rebelled, wouldn't do that. Joseph ultimately wound up being kept in prison in Liberty jail. While he is in Liberty jail, he writes a letter. We have taken out three excerpts from the letter, and we have canonized them, and section 121 is one of those three sections. I want you to look at verse 45. Verse 45, ask yourself whether this has something to do also with the power of godliness.

“Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men and to the household of faith. And let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly. Then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God. And the doctrine of the priesthood shall distill upon thy soul as the dew from heaven. The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion and thy scepter, an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth. And thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion and without compulsory means. It shall flow unto thee forever and ever.”

Oh, that I had the ability to declare it. This is in the middle of one of the three great principles by which God governs and shapes the universe itself. It is not through compulsory means. The only way in which God works is by inviting and enticing. You break yourself against the laws that are ordained. You condemn yourself by the things you bring upon yourself. God just is. And he is, to give you opportunity. And he opens opportunity to allow you to enter in if you are willing to enter in. But whether you are willing to enter in or not is predicated upon your own conduct, your own desires. And the best way to determine what your desires are are based upon what it is you do.

One of the greatest sins that the Lord says we are capable of, in a revelation that was given about the law of consecration—another notion that rears its ugly head only one time these days, and that is as you are making covenants in a temple. Take a look at D&C 70. This is about our failure to live the law of consecration, which brings us all under condemnation. Beginning at verse 14 of Section 70, *“Nevertheless, in your temporal things you shall be equal, and this not grudgingly, otherwise the abundance of the manifestations of the spirit shall be withheld. Now, this commandment I give unto my servants for their benefit while they remain, for a manifestation of my blessings upon their heads, and for a reward for their diligence and for their security; For food and for raiment; for an inheritance; for houses and for lands, in whatsoever circumstances I, the Lord, shall place them, and whithersoever I, the Lord, shall send them.”* Here we have, separate and apart from the description of Zion—they are one heart, there are no poor among them, they are one people—a commandment that

says, "In your temporal things, you are going to need to be equal. Otherwise the abundance of the manifestation of the spirit is going to be withheld."

In a section about Zion— This is D&C 59 beginning at verse 18, the Lord has this to say: *"Yea, all things which come of the earth, in the season thereof, are made for the benefit and use [by] man, both [made] to please the eye and to gladden the heart; yea, for food and for raiment, for taste and for smell, to strengthen the body and to enliven the soul. And it pleaseth God that he has given all things unto man, for unto this end were they made to be used, with judgement, not to excess, neither by extortion."* Or in other words, excess meaning wealth. Extortion meaning to compel the poor. "I am willing to give unto you some charitable thing if you will..." The poor are not to be extorted. Take the money that the Lord intended for the poor, and you administer it for the poor among you. If you try this experiment, and if there are those among who receives rather than gives, because they have not, then let me remind those who receive of another statement made in the revelations of this dispensation in D&C 42:42, *"Thou shall not be idle for he that is idle shall not eat the bread nor wear the garments of the laborer."* If you are the beneficiary, not only should you be grateful, but do what you can, in turn. There is absolutely no reason to gather in order to fail again. We do not need another Jerusalem; we do not need another Rome; we do not need another Antioch; we do not need another Kirtland; we don't need another Jackson County. We don't need another Nauvoo, and we certainly don't need another Salt Lake. We need Zion!

The foregoing comments by Denver Snuffer were recorded in Sandy, Utah on November 24th, 2018, with additional excerpts taken from:

- Denver's talk given at the "Zion Symposium" in Provo, Utah on February 23rd, 2008;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #1 entitled "Be of Good Cheer," given in Boise, ID on September 10th, 2013; and
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #6 entitled "Zion," given in Grand Junction, CO on April 12th, 2014.

Podcast Episode 47: Charity, Part 2

QUESTION: Why is charity the greatest of all?

DENVER: *I give unto you these sayings that you may understand and know how to worship, and to know what you worship, that you may come unto the Father in my name, and in due time receive of his fullness, for if ye keep my commandments you shall receive of his fullness, and be glorified in me as I am [of] the Father. Therefore, I say unto you, [that] You shall receive grace for grace (T&C 93:7).* That's what you do to worship. That is how you are to worship. We grow in grace as we exhibit the grace that has been given unto us. And we do so in order for us to obtain likewise the fulness. Now, here is a sober moment that I need to remind you about which need not continue. Go to Ether chapter 12. This is Moroni, as he's completing the translation of the record that his father said would be included within his father's book, the Book of Mormon, but his father did not translate. And so Moroni translated it and included it within the the Book of Mormon. And as he is wrapping up his translation, he includes a dialogue. It's a very sobering dialogue in Ether chapter 12, beginning at verse 36 (LE):

And it came to pass that I prayed... [this is Moroni, the translator; this is in Ether; this is Moroni's interlude] I prayed unto the Lord that he would give unto the Gentiles grace, that they might have charity. And it came unto pass that the Lord said unto me: If they have not charity it mattereth not unto thee, thou hast been faithful; wherefore, thy garments shall be made clean. And because thou hast seen thy weakness thou shalt be made strong, even unto the sitting down in the place which I have prepared in the mansions of my Father. And now I, Moroni, bid farewell unto the Gentiles (vs 36-37 LE).

Did you see what just happened. Moroni begged the Lord to give unto the gentiles grace. And the Lord says, It doesn't matter to you. He did not give to Moroni what he asked for. He did not promise the gentiles would receive grace. The Lord could not do that. Because it would abrogate both the law grace for grace and our agency, because we are free to choose. Therefore, the gentiles inherited the restoration with no promise from Christ to Moroni that those who would receive this record would be given the grace of God. That is dependent upon you.

Now I, Moroni, bid farewell unto the Gentiles, yea, and also unto my brethren whom I love, until we shall meet before the judgement-seat of Christ, where all men shall know that my garments are not spotted with your blood. ...Then shall ye know that I have seen Jesus, and that he [has] talked with me face to face, and that he [has] told me in plain humility, even as a man telleth another in my own language, concerning these things (Ether 12:38-39 LE). This is that Lord who, when you get past the thunderings and the lightnings , you'll speak with. He talks in plain humility. It is not His position to cause fear in your heart but to bring to you comfort. His purpose is not to leave you comfortless but to come and to comfort you. It's you that presents the barrier. It's you that presents the fear. And that rightly so. Because

we ought to fear. And what we should fear is our own weakness and our own sins. Because our greatest sin is our ignorance.

And only a few have I written, because of my weakness in writing. And now, I would commend you... (Ether 12:40-41 LE). This is Moroni, commending you, the gentiles, who are going to receive this book... *I would commend you to seek this Jesus of whom the prophets and apostles have written, that the grace of God the Father, and also...Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, which beareth record of them, may be and abide in you forever.* He asked for grace to be given. God cannot give it. Then he turns, and he says, You gentiles, please seek for His grace. It cannot otherwise be given. The Book of Mormon's assessment of us is sober indeed, and the arrogance with which we read that book blinds us to the predicament in which we find ourselves. The plea: seek for grace. It is through grace that we obtain charity, and it is through charity that we are able to bless others. Because the fact of the matter is that you can't bless anyone nor hold that priesthood that is primarily designed to administer blessings and not cursings, unless you have charity for others; unless you are willing to do things you would rather not do; unless you are willing to subordinate your will to the will of the Father. Because it is the purpose of the Father to bless all of his offspring. Therefore, it is only through grace you acquire what you need to be of use to God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. If you think that your burdens that you carry are great, remember the burdens that were carried by the Son. He faced burdens that were inordinately greater than yours.

All of us should be tested to our limits. All of us should be proven by the experiences that we endure. The only way to test some things is to destroy them. The only way to test you through mortality is to cause mortality itself with the eventual coming of death. That's the way it works.

Look at verse 4 of Ether chapter 3 (LE): *And I know, O Lord, that thou hast all power, and can do whatsoever thou wilt for the benefit of man; therefore touch these stones, O Lord, with thy finger, and prepare them that they may shine forth in darkness; and they shall shine forth unto us in the vessels which we have prepared, that we may have light while we cross the sea. Behold, O Lord, thou canst do this. We know that thou are able to show forth great power, which looks small unto the understanding of men.*

He is not asking for this in order to have a light show. He is asking for this out of pity and concern, charity and intercession for others who will be left in the dark. **He is trying to do something to bless and benefit others** in a very practical way. **He hopes to make the lives of others better.** He not doing this for himself. He is doing it on behalf of his people. Therein also lies something very important about the attitude of this man that tells you why it is that God had respect for this man. Think about what it means to have the power of God. Think about what it means for God to be able to do all things, including sustaining you from moment to moment by lending you breath. And then, for God to say, You are free to choose to do with what he is lending to you, whatever it is that you choose to do. Think of the patience of our God. Think of the meekness of our God. And think about the test that you are presently taking to prove who and what you are. And whether or not, in the circumstances of this test, you are proving that you can be trusted to have the meekness, to have the patience, to endure in humility what will be done, to endure the abuses that God

allows to take place in order to permit his children to gain experience, so that in the long run they can ultimately know the difference between good and evil. And on their own, choose to love the good and to stay away from the evil. Think about that and think about this record and think about the test that is currently underway. And think about what it is that you in your life should be choosing and doing, desiring and holding to your breast.

Zion will require a worthy people. There was a Second General Epistle from Peter (2 Peter 1), where he talks about what he would like to see Christ's followers seek. I am going to begin at verse 5 (LE): *And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

This was a great admonition and a great path to follow. I think Peter thought this through. He knew this was a progression that follows in almost this exact order, in almost every well-lived life. However, those Saints of that day did not have Zion, despite this admonition. Therefore, if we are going to see it we have to do something more, we have to be more holy than they were. We have to be more disciplined than were they. You see, the word "discipline" and the word "disciple" come from the same word. We need to have greater virtue than they did.

The Lord does everything according to His higher way of teaching. By beginning with a vision of His return, He set out the foundation for understanding His course, which is one eternal round. Since His first appearance, He has sent diverse angels, from Adam (or Michael) to Hyrum and Joseph Smith, giving line upon line to confirm my hope in Christ. The most important thing for us is to repent, be baptized, and let virtue and righteousness guide our thoughts, deeds, and words. We ought to deal fairly with one another and to be kind. You may remember abuses from priesthood leaders in your last church. Do not bring that with you. Leave behind all the sins and errors found in other organizations, and show Christ-like patience and charity to one another. We follow Christ to become more like Him. He requires faith, repentance, and baptism and bestows the Holy Ghost to bring all things back to our remembrance. When we hear Christ's message to repent and be baptized, it is our duty to respond and then warn others, so they can escape the coming judgement. The whole world struggles under a burden of sin that we are powerless to remove without Christ. He suffered and overcame the sins of the world so we can avoid the consequences of sin, on condition of repentance and baptism.

MAN QUOTING THE LORD IN ANSWER AND COVENANT: "It is not enough to receive my covenant, but you must also abide it. And all who abide it, whether on this land or any other land, will be mine, and I will watch over them and protect them in the day of harvest and gather them in as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. I will number you among the remnant of Jacob, no longer outcasts, and you will inherit the promises of Israel. You shall be my people, and I will be your God, and the sword will not devour you. And unto those who will receive will more be given, until they know the mysteries of God in full.

“But remember that without the fruit of repentance and a broken heart and a contrite spirit, you cannot keep my covenant; for I, your Lord, am meek and lowly of heart. Be like me. You have all been wounded, your hearts pierced through with sorrows because of how the world has treated you. But you have also scarred one another by your unkind treatment of each other, and you do not notice your misconduct toward others because you think yourself justified in this. You bear the scars on your countenances, from the soles of your feet to the head, and every heart is faint. Your visages have been so marred that your hardness, mistrust, suspicions, resentments, fear, jealousies, and anger toward your fellow man bear outward witness of your inner self; you cannot hide it. When I appear to you, instead of confidence, you feel shame. You fear and withdraw from me because you bear the blood and sins of your treatment of brothers and sisters. Come to Me, and I will make sins as scarlet become white as snow, and I will make you stand boldly before me, confident of my love.

“I descended below it all and know the sorrows of you all and have borne the grief of it all, and I say to you, Forgive one another. Be tender with one another, pursue judgment, bless the oppressed, care for the orphan, and uplift the widow in her need, for I have redeemed you from being orphaned and taken you that you are no longer a widowed people. Rejoice in me, and rejoice with your brethren and sisters who are mine also. Be one.

“You pray each time you partake of the sacrament to always have my Spirit to be with you. And what is my Spirit? It is to love one another as I have loved you. Do my works, and you will know my doctrine; for you will uncover hidden mysteries by obedience to these things that can be uncovered in no other way. This is the way I will restore knowledge to my people. If you return good for evil, you will cleanse yourself and know the joy of your Master. You call me Lord and do well to regard me so, but to know your Lord is to love one another. Flee from the cares and longings that belong to Babylon, obtain a new heart, for you have all been wounded. In me you will find peace and through me will come Zion, a place of peace and safety.

“There are only two ways: the way I lead, which goes upward in light and truth unto Eternal lives, and if you turn from it, you follow the way of darkness and the deaths. Those who want to come where I am must be able to abide the conditions established for my Father’s Kingdom. I have given to you the means to understand the conditions you must abide. I came and lived in the world to be the light of the world. I have sent others who have testified of me and taught you. I have sent my light into the world. Let not your hearts remain divided from one another and divided from me.

“Be of one heart, and regard one another with charity. Measure your words before giving voice to them, and consider the hearts of others. Although a man may err in understanding concerning many things, yet he can view his brother with charity, and come unto me, and through me he can with patience overcome the world. I can bring him to understanding and knowledge. Therefore, if you regard one another with charity, then your brother’s error in understanding will not divide you. I lead to all truth. I will lead all who come to me to the

truth of all things. The fullness is to receive the truth of all things, and this, too, from me, in power, by my word and in very deed. For I will come unto you if you will come unto me.

“Study to learn how to respect your brothers and sisters and to come together by precept, reason, and persuasion, rather than sharply disputing and wrongly condemning each other, causing anger. Take care how you invoke my name. Mankind has been controlled by the adversary through anger and jealousy which has led to bloodshed and the misery of many souls. Even strong disagreements should not provoke anger nor to invoke my name in vain, as if I had part in your every dispute.”

DENVER:

But to his astonishment, another wave overcame Him. This one was much greater than the first. The Lord, who had been kneeling, fell forward onto His hands at the impact of the pain that was part of a greater, second wave.

This second wave was so much greater than the first that it seemed to entirely overcome the Lord. The Lord was now stricken with physical injuries, as well as spiritual affliction. As He suffered anew, His flesh was torn, which He healed using the power of the charity within Him. The Lord had such life within Him, such power and virtue within Him, that although He suffered in His flesh, these injuries healed, and His flesh restored. His suffering was both body and spirit, and there was anguish of thought, feeling, and soul.

The Lord overcame this second wave of suffering and again found peace of mind and strength of body; and His heart filled with love, despite what He had suffered. Indeed, it was charity or love that allowed Him to overcome. He was at peace with His Father and with all mankind, but it required another, still greater act of will and charity than the first for Him to do so.

Again, the Lord thought His suffering was over. He stayed on His hands and knees for a moment to collect Himself when another wave of torment burst upon Him. This wave struck Him with such force, He fell forward upon His face. He was afflicted by this greater wave. He was then healed, only to then be afflicted again as the waves of torment overflowed. Wave after wave poured out upon Him, with only moments between them. The Lord's suffering progressed from a lesser to a greater portion of affliction; for as one would be overcome by Him, the next, greater affliction would then be poured out. Each wave of suffering was only preparation for the next, greater wave. The pains of mortality, disease, injury, and infirmity, together with the sufferings of sin, transgressions, guilt of mind, and unease of soul, the horrors of recognition of the evils men had inflicted upon others were all poured out upon Him, with confusion and perplexity multiplied upon Him.

He longed for it to be over and thought it would end long before it finally ended. With each wave, He thought it would be the last, but then another came upon Him

and then yet another. The Lord pleaded again with the Father that "this cup may pass" from Him. But the Lord was determined to suffer the Father's will and not His own. Therefore, a final wave came upon Him with such violence as to cut Him at every pore. It seemed, for a moment, that He was torn apart and that blood came out of every pore. The Lord writhed in pain upon the ground as this great final torment was poured upon Him.

All virtue was taken from Him. All the great life force in Him was stricken and afflicted. All the light turned to darkness. He was humbled, drained, and left with nothing. It is not possible for a man to bear such pains and live, but with nothing more than will, hope in His Father, and charity toward all men, He emerged from the final wave of torment, knowing He had suffered all this for His Father and His brethren. By His hope and great charity, trusting in the Father, the Lord returned from this dark abyss and found grace again, His heart being filled with love toward the Father and all men.

I believe that there is tension, if not outright hostility, between charity as a priority, on one hand, and knowledge as priority, on the other hand, and that as between the two it is more important to acquire the capacity for charity or love of your fellow man than it is to gain understanding. It's like what Paul said, "If I have all gifts and know all mysteries but have not charity, I'm nothing." Charity, or the love of your fellow man, is the greater challenge and the more relevant one, and when you've acquired that you can add to it knowledge. Knowledge has the ability to render the possessor arrogant and haughty, whereas charity renders the possessor humble. If you want the greatest challenge in life, try loving your fellow man unconditionally in viewing them as God would view them and then behaving according to that view. Out of that you will learn a great deal more about Christ than you can simply by studying. Walking in His path is a greater revelation of who He is than anything else that's provided.

Joseph Smith once remarked that, "If you could gaze into heaven for five minutes you would know more about it than if you read every book that has ever been written on the subject." Likewise, if you live charitably for five minutes in the presence of what you would normally condemn—what you would normally find repugnant—if you can deal with that charitably, you will understand Christ better than if you spend a lifetime reading books written about Him.

Jacob (called James in the King James Bible) mentioned "wisdom" in his letter. In contemplating Her, Jacob suggested we should be "easy to be entreated:" *"Who is a wise man, and endowed with knowledge among you? Let him show out of good conduct his works with meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descends not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish; for where envying and strife are, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace"* (Epistle of Jacob 1:14).

Wisdom from above can endow us with the kindly demeanor of brothers and sisters who seek what is good for one another. How often are the words of our mouths froward and “perverse?” The Divine Mother refuses to speak wickedness and abominations, and Her influence brings others to depart from such failures. Continuing: “They are all plain to him that understandeth and right to them that find knowledge. Receive my instruction and not silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.”

Proclaiming “wisdom is better than rubies,” she asks us to receive Her instruction rather than seek silver and gold. Nothing else is to be compared with Her wisdom. She instructs in virtues that would make any person better. But Her instruction will also make living in peace with others possible. Nothing in this world is more desirable than acquiring wisdom: understanding and putting knowledge to wise use. Zion will require the wisdom to use pure knowledge in meekness, humility, and charity. Zion will require Her influence.

Continuing: “I, wisdom, dwell with prudence and find out knowledge of witty inventions. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil, pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way and the froward mouth do I hate.” Wisdom and prudence go together as companions. “Prudence” means good judgment or common sense. It is the quality of assessing things correctly and making a sound decision in light of the circumstances and persons involved. Prudent judgment is not hasty or unfair. Arrogance is destroyed and pride overtaken by “fear of the Lord”—meaning that we do not want to disappoint our Lord by our low, vulgar, and mean conduct. She mentions a second time Her opposition to the froward. This time She declares She hates the froward mouth. We repel Her by being argumentative and contrary with one another.

Continuing: “Counsel is mine and sound wisdom, I am understanding, I have strength.” The Mother must possess great strength because She hates the forward—the contentious. She does not welcome that spirit in Herself or any of Her offspring. But yet, she loves us.

Christ taught this idea to the Nephites, which seems to be clearly taken from the Mother’s wisdom: *“And there shall be no disputations among you, as there hath hitherto been, neither shall there be disputations among you concerning the points of my doctrine, as there hath hitherto been. For verily, verily I say unto you, he that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the Devil, who is the father of contention; and he stirreth up the hearts of men to contend with anger, one with another. Behold, this is not my doctrine, to stir up the hearts of men with anger, one against another, but this is my doctrine, that such things should be done away”* (3 Nephi 5:8).

It requires strength to refrain from contention and disputes with froward and arrogant people. When we feel strongly that we are right or are firmly convinced someone else is wrong, it is difficult to bridle our tongue and meekly persuade without contention. But the Heavenly Mother possesses the strength required to look with compassion on our failings.

She deals with Her offspring using good judgment and common sense. She is opposed to arrogance, and when we are arrogant we offend Her.

How many religious arguments, even religious wars have been caused because mankind is too weak to patiently reason together? The history of this world is a bold testimony of what weak and deceived men do when they reject wisdom.

Mankind cannot have Zion without wisdom to guide us. Zion must be a community. Developing wisdom requires us to patiently interact with one another. This counsel from the Heavenly Mother is a gift to help us understand what we lack.

The greatness of a soul is defined by how easily they are entreated to follow the truth. The greatest of those who have ever lived have been submissive and gentle souls. In a day when Satan accuses and rages in the hearts of men, it requires extraordinary will and steely determination to remain easily entreated by truth.

I have pondered, How much more ought to have been accomplished during Joseph Smith's lifetime? Joseph was only able to accomplish a fraction of what needs to be restored. Joseph faced continuing troubles because of the ambition of the believers. Too many of the saints aspired to lead. They wanted control over others. It hindered the work. Joseph was not able to finish the restoration. Our hearts must turn to the fathers in heaven, and we cannot ignore that duty because of any other vain ambition here and now. We should be less astonished by the earlier failure and far more astonished at how little we have learned from their failure.

In a letter written in July 1840 Joseph explained: "In order to conduct the affairs of the kingdom in righteousness it is all important, that the most perfect harmony kind feeling, good understanding and confidence should exist in the hearts of all the brethren. and that true Charity—love one towards one another, should characterize all their proceedings. If there are any uncharitable feelings, any lack of confidence, then pride and arrogancy and envy will soon be manifested and confusion must inevitably prevail...."

In that same letter Joseph said he wished the people would progress, but did not see that possible until a different spirit led them: "It would be gratifying to my mind to see the saints in Kirtland flourish, but think the time has not yet come and I assure you it never will until a different order of things be established and a different spirit be manifested. It is in consequence of aspiring men that Kirtland has been forsaken. After nearly a half-year of imprisonment, Joseph described the importance of a calm mind in order to hear the still small voice of God. His mind was afire with all the distractions of being in prison, and his family and friends expelled from Missouri at gunpoint. Friends had been killed. Church members had betrayed him. God spoke to Joseph when he freed his mind of these concerns and quietly pondered, opening himself up to inspiration."

Learn from these words Joseph wrote while in Liberty Jail about how to set aside all that distracts us to hear God's voice: "We received some letters last evening: one from Emma,

one from Don C[arlos] Smith, and one from bishop Partridge, all breathing a kind and consoling spirit. We were much gratified with their contents. We had been a long time without information, and when we read those letters, they were to our souls as the gentle air is refreshing. But our joy was mingled with grief because of the suffering of the poor and much injured saints, and we need not say to you that the floodgates of our hearts were hoisted, and our eyes were a fountain of tears. But those who have not been enclosed in the walls of a prison without cause or provocation can have but a little idea how sweet the voice of a friend is. One token of friendship from any source whatever awakens and calls into action every sympathetic feeling. It brings up in an instant everything that is passed. It seizes the present with a vivacity of lightning. It grasps after the future with the fierceness of a tiger. It retrogrades from one thing to another, until finally all enmity, malice, and hatred, and past differences, misunderstandings, and mismanagements, lie slain victims at the feet of hope. And when the heart is sufficiently contrite, then the Voice of inspiration steals along and whispers, My son, peace be unto your soul, your adversity and your afflictions shall be but a small moment, and then, if you endure it well, God shall exalt you on high.”

This world is a place of trial and testing. Before creation it was planned that when we came here we would be “proven” by what we experience. That happens now. Prove yourself by listening to God, hearing His voice, and obeying. Sometimes we are like Alma and want to do greater things to help God’s work, but the greatest work of all is to respond to God’s voice, and prove you are willing to listen and obey Him.

It was a year ago that a renewed covenant was given to all willing to accept it by God. New covenant people sprang into existence when a few accepted that gift. Until that moment, there were only lost and scattered remnants who, although the object of God’s earlier covenants, lived in ignorance of God’s renewed labor in His vineyard. Now, in addition to other remnants, there is a new covenant remnant aware of God’s renewed labor—a remnant who has been asked to labor alongside the Master of the Vineyard, as He sends His final invitation to come to His wedding feast. Christ spoke of this very thing when He taught the Nephites. He foretold that the barren gentiles would eventually produce more children for His Kingdom than the remnants on this land and at Jerusalem. Christ said:

“And then shall that which is written come to pass: Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child, for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes, for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left, and thy seed shall inherit the gentiles and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. Fear not for thou shalt not be ashamed, neither be thou confounded for thou shalt not be put to shame, for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy maker, thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: the God of the whole earth shall he be called” (3 Nephi 10:2).

We can see a new and different meaning in Christ's Book of Mormon prophecy to the Nephites. Before, Christ's words seemed to foretell that the lost and scattered remnants would build the Lord's House and the New Jerusalem; now it appears that there are covenant-receiving gentiles who are included—gentiles who repent and hearken to Christ's words and do not harden their hearts will be brought into covenant as His people. Christ mentions three distinct bodies: first, those who have accepted the covenant and are numbered among the remnant of Jacob, to whom Christ gave this land for their inheritance; second, the lost descendants of the remnant of Jacob on this land who will repent and return; third, as many from the House of Israel who will repent and return. These three will build a city that shall be called the New Jerusalem. All three of those will come to know God in gathering and laboring to build the New Jerusalem. Then they will go out to assist all of God's people in their lost and forgotten state, to be awakened to the work of God and gathered as if one body of believers. Then all who have any of the blood of Abraham, who are scattered upon all the face of the land, will come to be taught in the New Jerusalem. There the Power of Heaven will come down to be among them, the angels and Enoch with his ten thousands will come down, the Ancient of Days (or Adam, our first father), and Christ, also, will be in the midst of His people.

The spirit of God is withdrawing from the world. Men are increasingly angry without good cause. The hearts of men are waxing cold. The scriptures describe events now underway and call it the *end of the times of the gentiles*. This process of the spirit withdrawing will end, on this continent, as it did with two prior civilizations, in fratricidal and genocidal warfare. For the rest of the world, it will be as in the days of Noah, in which, as the light of Christ or spirit of truth is eclipsed, men's cold hearts will result in a constant scene of violence and bloodshed. The wicked will destroy the wicked. The covenant established a year ago, if it is kept, will prevent the loss of light and warmth of heart as the spirit now steadily recedes from the world. Be charitable and patient and labor to reach others. Even if they should judge you harshly because of their traditions, you should nevertheless be kind to them. They are going to grow to fear you, but that's only part of how darkness responds to light. Give them no reason to fear you. The time will come for us to gather, but between now and then, be leaven. Preserve the world. Be salt. Preserve the world, even if it hates you. The soul of every person is equally precious to God as is yours. If your kindness and example should awaken another soul, you will rejoice with the angels over them.

The foregoing excerpts were taken from:

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #8 entitled "A Broken Heart," given in Las Vegas, NV on July 25, 2014;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #10 entitled "Preserving the Restoration," given in Mesa, AZ on September 9, 2014;
- His conference talk entitled "The Doctrine of Christ," given in Boise, ID on September 11, 2016;

- The presentation of “Answer and Covenant,” given at the *Covenant of Christ Conference* in Boise, ID on September 3, 2017;
- Denver’s *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #3, given in Atlanta, Georgia on November 16, 2017;
- Denver’s conference talk entitled “Our Divine Parents,” given in Gilbert, AZ on March 25t, 2018; and
- Denver’s remarks entitled “Keep the Covenant: Do the Work,” given at the *Remembering the Covenants Conference* in Layton, UT on August 4, 2018.

Podcast Episode 48: Prophecy

QUESTION: What is the purpose of prophecy, and how do you know when it will be, or has been, fulfilled?

DENVER: All of prophecy is essentially focused on two events. You can always find an acceptance to this because there are all kinds of intermediate events that get covered. But essentially the burden of prophecy focuses upon two and only two events. The first one is the looking forward to the coming of the Lord in the flesh in His mortal ministry. And the second one is looking forward to the coming of the Lord in glory to judge the world. Those are the two primary events that are the burden of prophecy, the burden of scripture, and you're living on the cusp of the fulfillment of the second of those two events. And therefore, you would be well served to learn as much as you can about those two events.

Take a look at Doctrine and Covenants Section 107, because in this we see that first Zion: *"Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called Seth [his son], Enos [his grandson], Cainan [the son of Enos], Mahalaleel [son of Cainan], Jared [son of Mahalaleel], Enoch [son of Jared], and Methuselah [son of Enoch], who were all high priests, with the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing."* This is the original, first patriarchal blessing being given by Adam, he having summoned them there.

And as he's giving his last blessing, three years previous to his death, the Lord appeared unto them. So the Lord comes to dwell with these seven high priests and Adam. *"The Lord appeared unto them, and they rose up and blessed Adam, and called him [Mich-a-el] Michael, the prince, the archangel. And the Lord administered comfort unto Adam."* Ask yourself what comfort is that the Lord administers? He:

"...said unto him: I have set thee to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of thee, and thou art a prince over them forever. And Adam stood up in the midst of the congregation; and, notwithstanding he was bowed down with age, being full of the Holy Ghost, predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation. These things were all written in the book of Enoch, and are to be testified of in due time" (D&C 107:53-57; T&C 154:19-20).

This is the original covenant. This is the first father. This is what was set in motion before the death of Adam, under the binding influence and ratification of the Holy Ghost (or the mind of God), in which Adam, under the influence of that Spirit, predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation. This is the original covenant. This is the original Father. Words spoken as a consequence of the influence of the Holy Spirit become the words of God. They will not fall to the ground unfulfilled.

The everlasting covenant in our day is "new" only as a consequence of it having been restored to our attention recently. It is not a new thing. It is a very old thing, going back to the days of Adam. It was known to him. You were known to him. What was going to happen in your day was predicted and promised as a consequence of him.

Prophecies, as I've said before, revolve around two (and primarily two) events only—one being the first coming of the Lord, the other one being the coming of the Lord in judgment at the end of the world. Now there are plenty of prophecies that reckon to other events that are intermediate. However, the primary focus is the first and the second coming of the Lord—the vindication of the promise that the Father made in the beginning that He would redeem us all from the grave, and the vindication of the promise that at some point the world would come to an end as to its wickedness, and there would be peace again on the earth. Everything revolves around those two prophetic events.

One of the problems with understanding the will of God is that religion was always intended to be proven and provable personally. I cannot prove it to you; you cannot prove it to me. But God can prove it to both of us.

When it comes to the proof of the things of God, it is necessarily anecdotal. Anecdotal proof means that someone went out, and they had an experience, and they come back, and they tell you, as an anecdote, that that is what happened to them. You cannot know whether, when they tell you what happened to them, they're telling you the truth or not. What you can do is say, "Joseph Smith seems to persuade me. Joseph Smith seems to have arrived at a point in which the things that have come to us appear to be beyond the capacity of a man to accomplish. Joseph Smith seems to say things which, because of their volume, because of their consistency, because of their apparent purity appear to me to be something which hails from God." But you must trust him. The only way in which you can know for yourself is if you go out and you encounter something for yourself, in which you come back from that experience and say, "God spoke also to me. Therefore, as a consequence of God speaking to me, I now know something which, independent of Joseph Smith and independent of these scriptures, God has covenanted with me, and I know now to be true."

Your knowledge of God is necessarily anecdotal. Your knowledge of God is necessarily yours and yours alone—your property belonging to you, your covenant in the final analysis, in which God promises by His own voice to you, in words that He cannot break because He is a God of truth, and He is the same God today as yesterday and will be the same tomorrow. He does not change. When you fall into His orbit, you are now revolving around the center in which all truth is to be found, all the answers to the dilemmas that you have are to be given. But they're to be given to you individually by Him and not by another.

Even if a man has power to declare things that have been kept hidden from the beginning of the world until now, it's of no use if it's mere voyeurism, if it's just entertainment. It's not supposed to be entertaining. It may appropriately be inspiring, but if it is inspiring, it's only so if it results in you taking action. Because the action that's required is for you to go out

and to acquire for yourself your own anecdote, your own experience—if you will, your own testimony or, more correctly, your own knowledge of the things of God.

One of the reasons why we look at the scriptures is because these are evidence of how often the Lord has, and how frequent He does, covenant with those who seek after Him.

When the Restoration began through Joseph Smith, there was already in place a restorationist movement. It was all over frontier Ohio, moving into upstate New York. That restorationist movement already knew that what was wanted was a New Testament church. What was needed was a New Testament church that was modeled, governed, patterned, and authorized in the same way in which Jesus had authorized a New Testament church in the meridian of time.

But what was Jesus up to in the meridian of time in establishing that church? He was about to launch the Gospel into the gentile world, in which you would not find those who could organize themselves as the House of Israel. Therefore, in order to accomplish that, as a substitute for the twelve princes of Israel (the twelve sons of Jacob), He called twelve apostles to model that family. And they called 70 others because the family of Israel included 70 others in Exodus 1:5. You'll find that when they went into Egypt, the family of Israel consisted of 70. And so He remodeled the ancient family of Israel in the New Testament church.

But the restoration of the Gospel in the last days is not reaching back to the meridian of time. The restoration of the Gospel in the last days is reaching back, at a minimum, to the time of Enoch. Because what you have to have is not the center. You have to have walking back in a mirror image to the beginning, so that the symmetry of the history of mankind matches at the end as it was in the beginning. It's unfolding according to a pattern. It's unfolding according to a plan. It is vindicating the promises and the prophecies that were made, beginning with Adam in the first days.

And what is wanted in the last days are those who will at last say, "I am not satisfied with my Sunday School lessons and the disappointment that I see all around me. I'm not prepared to wait on another before I rise up to know God myself."

If any of you lack wisdom, ask God. He gives to all men liberally. He does not upbraid. That is, He doesn't send you away discouraged, telling you, "Don't do that; don't ask me that."

We saw in that first talk in Boise that we were commanded to pursue after the mysteries of God. What is more mysterious than what went on in the beginning generations? Because we have so little left from which to reconstruct that, and yet we have enough to know the pattern that the Lord intended the last days to unfold in accordance with. And that pattern was to return us, in the end, to what was here in the beginning, to return us to a state of knowledge about things that He has always had in His heart, as the goal, as the ambition, as the desire to fulfill.

Go to Moses chapter 5 [6]. This is a prophecy given by Adam, which constituted one of the covenants which I referred to in the talk given at Centerville. Moses—oh excuse me, it's chapter 6:7: *"Now this same Priesthood, which was in the beginning, shall be in the end of the world also. Now this prophecy Adam spake, as he was moved upon by the Holy Ghost..."* (OC Gen 3:14). Therefore, it was the power of the priesthood animated by the Holy Ghost, which established as a matter of right, and therefore of covenant, the promise that this thing—this authority, this power, and this relationship which once existed in the beginning of the world—is to exist again at the end of the world. And that that, too, arises as a consequence of the covenant given in the beginning.

Well, if you go to D&C Section 68, first verses 3-4: *"And this is the ensample unto them, that they shall speak as they are moved upon by the Holy Ghost. And whatsoever they shall speak when moved upon by the Holy Ghost shall be scripture, shall be the will of the Lord, shall be the mind of the Lord, shall be the word of the Lord, shall be the voice of the Lord, and the power of God unto salvation"* (T&C 55:1). Then go over to 12: *"And of as many as the Father shall bear record, to you shall be given power to seal them up unto eternal life. Amen"* (T&C 55:2).

So this is talking in the context of someone having authority to seal when moved upon by the Holy Ghost. And that is authority which anyone of you—and the prophetess Anna in the temple at Jerusalem when Christ came into the temple, a women can use—when moved upon by the power of the Holy Ghost. And it is the word of God, and it is the power to seal, if it originates from God. That doesn't mean it's the same thing as a dispensation head. It doesn't mean it's the same thing as an ordinance. And it doesn't mean that it's the same thing as the control of the elements given in those rare cases. But what it does mean is that the word of God will always be respected both in time and in eternity, if it is given by God, if it is the power of the Holy Spirit.

There are those who have heard that their calling and election is made sure. And they've heard that as a witness from God. Don't doubt the word of God given to you. However, don't think for one moment that's the end of the matter. Remember that in the cases that we looked at before, that one of the purposes of ascending up into the presence of the Father is to be endowed with knowledge, with light and truth and with intelligence, to possess a God-like mind and a God-like understanding. Therefore, no matter what you receive, you ought to always search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of God. Indeed we are commanded to do so, as I reminded you in Boise and won't repeat again here.

I have one, and only one, desire—to try to persuade you to believe in the Restoration through Joseph Smith. It is not and has never been completed. It is a work yet before us. It is a work largely neglected since the time Joseph and Hyrum breathed their last breath. The prophecies that were delivered to Joseph Smith—both by Christ in the first vision and by Moroni on the night of the first visit (which we began this with in Boise, Idaho)—are a rallying cry for us to rise up and lay hold upon things. It's a rallying cry, a prophecy, that does not fulfill itself. It gets fulfilled by what *you* do. Whether or not you fulfill those prophecies is dependant upon whether you will, like those ancient Israelites, elect not to go

up. Or whether you, like Moses, like Joseph, like Hyrum, choose instead to forsake your sins and to move forward, even in the face of your own weakness and unworthiness.

There isn't one of us in this room that should not kneel before the presence of a just and holy being. There isn't one of us who, if instructed to stand before Him, would not keenly feel the inadequacy of doing so. Not one of us. But there are some here who have been in His presence, myself included.

Adam and Eve had sons and daughters; their children likewise were married, and they had sons and daughters. They were visited, and they were instructed by the angel. We looked at that. They were baptized, then they received the Holy Ghost. And look what is contained in the Holy Ghost in verse 66 that we read a few moments ago of chapter 6: *"Thou art baptized with fire, and with the Holy Ghost. This is the record of the Father, and the Son, from henceforth and forever..."* (Mos 6:66; OC Gen 4:10). It's also referred to and defined more in verse 61: *"...it is given to abide in you; the record of heaven; the Comforter; the peaceable things of immortal glory; the truth of all things; that which quickeneth all things, which maketh alive all things; that which knoweth all things, and hath all power according to wisdom, mercy, truth, justice, and judgment"* (Mos 6:61; OC Gen 4:9). So, that is what is within them.

Look what happens once they are so endowed, and they're equipped. This is Moses 5:10-11. I am so glad that these verses were restored to us, because contained in this is a much, much greater lesson if you have the eyes to see it. *"And in that day Adam blessed God and was filled, and began to prophesy concerning all the families of the earth, saying: Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God."* That's Adam prophesying what is going to befall the future generations. That's what Adam is doing.

Now let's look at what Eve does:

"And Eve, his wife, heard all these things..." the prophecy comes through Adam, Eve hears them, *"Eve...[hears] all these things and was glad, saying: Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient"* (Gen 3:4 RE).

There is a profound difference between the response of the power of the Spirit unfolding upon these two with respect to its effect upon Adam, on the one hand, and its effect upon Eve, on the other. These are remarkably different reactions. To the man it is that he prophesies; that is, he declares the truth. The truth being a knowledge of things as they are and as they were and as they are to come. That definition is given to us in the Doctrine and Covenants. This is the role of the man, and this is the role that he fulfills.

But to Eve, on the other hand, she obtains wisdom. The role of the man is knowledge; the role of the woman is wisdom. And you see that on display right here in these verses. It is the

role of the woman to have the understanding to take the prophecy that has been delivered now by Adam, to process it, and to say, "Here is what it means." This is the role of the woman. This is the gift of the woman. This is eternally the role of the woman. This is why there is a male and why there is a female. Because in many respects, the gift of wisdom alludes the male. And in many respects, the gift of knowledge alludes the female. And together, the two of them— And I'm not talking about knowledge in the sense that a woman can't have a PhD. Two of the brightest people I know are daughters of mine. It's not that that I'm talking about. I'm talking about knowledge in the "godly" sense, knowledge in the "gift of God" sense. And I'm talking about wisdom in the "gift of God" sense and in the scriptural sense. This is an example.

Now together, look at verse 12: *"And Adam and Eve blessed the name of God..."* And how did they do that? They did that by a ritual. They did that by offering sacrifice. They did that by observing what they understood. But they did it together. *"...And **they**..."* it is **they**, *"...**they** made all things known unto **their** sons and daughters."* This isn't Adam preaching repentance. This isn't Eve preaching repentance. This is "they." This is the two of them. They are equally yoked. This is the two of them joined together to make the declaration—"they," together. The two of them, however, beginning in verse 12, begin to *"make all things known unto their sons and daughters"* **after** they had been adequately prepared to understand and to make the declaration (Moses 5:12; OC Genesis 3:4). They were first prepared before they began to preach.

Prophecy is not given so that you know the details beforehand. Prophecy is only given so that, after the event takes place, you can look at the scriptures and understand what the Lord meant to accomplish. Its purpose is not to allow you beforehand to know the events with enough specificity so that God's will cannot be accomplished. If you knew what He was up to, you could prevent it. But because you don't, when the prophecies are fulfilled, then you know that the Lord has acted.

God can use *any* means He chooses to accomplish His promises. Everything that God is doing is not disclosed at the time He's doing it. We all know and accept John the Baptist, because history tells us we ought to accept John the Baptist. But it was not until a revelation was given through the prophet Joseph Smith that we understood the greatness of the effort behind the scenes that were involved in bringing to pass the mission entrusted to John the Baptist. We knew none of what I'm going to read to you at the time that John acted, but we know it now. D&C section 84, beginning at verse 27:

"Which gospel is the gospel of repentance and of baptism, and the remission of sins, and the law of carnal commandments, which the Lord in his wrath caused to continue with the house of Aaron among the children of Israel until John, whom God raised up, being filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb. For he was baptized while he was yet in his childhood, and was ordained by the angel of God at the time he was eight days old unto this power, to overthrow the kingdom of the Jews, and to make straight the way of the Lord before the face of his people, to prepare them for the coming of the Lord, in whose hand is given all power" (T&C 82:14).

It was because of this that Joseph observed (concerning John), John "wrested the keys, the kingdom, the power, the glory from the Jews, by the holy anointing and decree of heaven" (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 276).

Did the Jews notice? In like manner, God's house is a house of order. He does it according to patterns. It is not God's purpose to abandon the Restoration. It is His purpose to preserve the Restoration, which at this moment is in terrible jeopardy. The Restoration itself must be rescued.

Here's the reality, okay? The reality is that in order for the entire earth not to be smitten and utterly wasted at the Lord's return, it will be necessary for there to be a Zion. In fact, it's almost a cause and effect. You have to have the re-establishment of what was in the beginning of the world in the end of the world also. That was a prophecy of Adam. He made it in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman. Enoch was the one that preserves it, so it appears in the Enoch portion of the book of Moses, where Enoch preserves Adam's prophecy that that same priesthood which was in the beginning of the world shall at the end of the world be also (Mos 6:7; OC Gen 3:14).

I have to tell you that's not...you know, "Yada, yada, yada, aummm"... you're, you know, Senior Chief Apostolic High and Holy Pontificate of the 9th Order— it's not that. It's not that at all. It is re-establishing something about which we know very, very little. And that has to occur only within an environment that has been insulated from the world and accepted by God. It has to be physically accepted by the Lord. That edifice has to be located in a place that is approved by the Lord. We don't know the place; we haven't built the edifice; we don't have the right to proceed, but all of this must occur before the invitation is extended. Because God is not going to come to a planet that He utterly wastes at His coming. An invitation has to precede the return of our Lord. And that invitation needs to be done in His way, at a place of His choosing, in a manner that He ordains, that occurs according to His will, established as a consequence of Him returning what was once here back to the earth again.

Zion will be God's work, and in the end, it will be His and His alone. He will own it; He will bring it; He will be the author of it; and He is the one who says that He will take credit for it. When it happens, however, it will conform to a pattern.

This is a verse that gets attributed to Enoch, who is in turn quoting a prophecy that was given by Adam. And so this is the original prophecy given at the beginning of the world through Father Adam, who established in the beginning the covenant that God, Himself, intends to vindicate: "*Now this same Priesthood, which was in the beginning, shall be in the end of the world also*" (Mos 6:7; OC Gen 3:14).

Well, that authority gets explained a little more fully when Abraham sought for the blessing that began in the beginning. He describes what it was that he wanted: "*...I sought for the blessings of the fathers, and the right whereunto I should be ordained to administer the same;*

having been myself a follower of righteousness, desiring also to be one who possessed great knowledge, and to be a greater follower of righteousness, and to possess a greater knowledge, and to be a father of many nations, a prince of peace, and desiring to receive instructions, and to keep the commandments of God, I became a rightful heir, a High Priest, holding the right belonging to the fathers. It was conferred upon me from the fathers; it came down from the fathers, from the beginning of time, yea, even from the beginning, or before the foundation of the earth, down to the present time, even the right of the firstborn, or the first man, who is Adam, or first father, through the fathers unto me" (Abr 1:2-3; T&C Abr 1:1).

There's some very bright, well-studied Latter-day Saints who think they know what the gospel and priesthood of Abraham was. I'm here today to declare to you the truth, whether you accept it or not, whether you understand it or not, whether you think you can parse the scriptures otherwise or not; I'm telling you what the truth is today. Abraham sought for the right that came down through the Fathers, from Adam, which was the right of the firstborn, which is that priesthood which must be restored in order to bring about the purposes of God in the last days. Abraham 2:11—the Lord says that through him:

"I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee; and in thee (that is, in thy Priesthood) and in thy seed (that is, thy Priesthood), for I give unto thee a promise that this right shall continue in thee, and in thy seed after thee (that is to say, the literal seed, or the seed of the body) shall all the families of the earth be blessed, even with the blessings of the Gospel" (Abr 3:1 RE).

Abraham's fatherhood reckons from priesthood. Although the right will continue through the literal seed, it reckons through priesthood. He sought for the right to be one of the Fathers. We're talking about a time in the last days, prophesied and repeated by Jacob as his testimony in the Book of Mormon, when the natural fruit is going to reappear upon the earth. Natural fruit is always genealogical. It is always familial. There's going to come a time in the last days when the family of God will return again to the earth. That same priesthood includes a function that is not well understood. Abraham knew what this was when he said he desired to be a *"father of many nations."* He's identifying one of the attributes and one of the roles that necessarily must return.

God's ways are higher than man's ways. He said this to Isaiah: *"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa 55:9; OC Isa 20:2).* Jacob, a prophet who stood in the presence of God, expounded on the meaning of God's mysteries to an audience that include, now, us. Jacob 4:8: *"How unsearchable are the depths of the mysteries of him; and it is impossible that man should find out all his ways. And no man knoweth of his ways save it be revealed unto him; wherefore, brethren, despise not the revelations of God" (NC Jacob 3:3).*

In other words, I don't care if you have a PhD in theological studies and you are the most adept scriptorian of our age—the meaning belongs to God. It does not belong to me; it does not belong to you. It is not found out by our clever or witty parsing of what it is. In large measure, the prophecies have, as their purpose, to hide from men what God intends to do

until God has done it. And then having accomplished what He intended to do, the scriptures confirm that He knew the end from the beginning. But if you could know the end from the beginning, you could interfere with the plan of God by going where the prophecies say, when the prophecies say, and interfering with the hand of God in fulfilling it. Even worse still, if your inclination were to priestcraft, if you knew what the prophecies meant beforehand, you could profit from them. And the things of Heaven were never intended to be given into the hands of men so that they might profit from them.

Let me cover one more matter and that is this idea of prophecy and interpreting prophecy. Because I know that there are elaborate efforts made to parse the scriptures and come up with the meaning, the interpretation, even the timing of certain things that the Lord has now begun or that He intends to accomplish in short order.

In Isaiah chapter 48, the description is given of how prophecy works: *"I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I shewed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass" (Isa 48:3; OC Isa 17:1)*. "Suddenly" can be rendered "surprisingly." "Suddenly" can be in an unexpected way. "Suddenly" can be "You got caught off guard. I declared what I was going to do, I did it, and you got caught off guard."

"Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass; I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I shewed it thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them. Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare it? I have shewed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them" (Isa 48:4-6; Isa 17:1 RE).

"You didn't know them. I declared them, I accomplished them, and I told you about them beforehand, and it happened suddenly. And you didn't expect it to happen." Why is that? Because the way in which the Lord intends to accomplish what He's going to accomplish is not going to be in the way that will permit you to say, "I, and my idol, have been hard at work to accomplish this great thing." No man gets to take credit for that. It's got to be surprising and unexpected in order for the Lord, once it happens, to say, "This was what I had in my heart and I have done it."

If we knew how the Lord and when the Lord was going to accomplish how and what He was going to accomplish, we would stand a chance of preventing it. Or we might make commerce out of it by profiting from it. Therefore, the way in which He will accomplish it will be according to His will, at His timing, for His purposes, without the control of man, and with man always saying, "That was sudden. That was surprising. That was unanticipated." And so He can send that Galilean, accent-speaking, carpenter's son into the world and have the world take no note of Him. Or a farm boy from upstate New York to declare the Lord has opened the heavens, and have everyone react to that in demused humor or with insults and scorn, ultimately fearing him enough to kill him and those that would follow him.

When this whole process was set in motion by God on the first day of creation, He had in His heart a plan that was going to unfold through every generation until the end. Three years previous to the death of Adam in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, Adam gathered his posterity together essentially to tell them goodbye. And in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman, Christ came and appeared to those that had gathered there. And Adam, despite the fact that he was bowed down with great age, rose up animated by the Spirit that he was taking in from the presence of our Lord, and he prophesied whatsoever should befall his descendants to the last generation. So he was talking about, among others, you. That same plan that was ordained in the heavens before the foundation of the world was revealed through Adam in prophecy in the valley of Adam-ondi-Ahman. And we're on schedule to keep the appointments. Whether we're going to be on one side of the divide or on the other side of the divide, we're keeping the appointment. And the times have been fixed, and the seasons unfold, and the signs that show up from time to time remind us that despite how hectic and disorganized and how ill-fitted the world may be for the fulfillment of all the prophecies, it's simply going to happen. Hopefully more will repent and return and be faithful, but it really won't matter because there is always enough with the Lord. He has a way of making whoever will come aboard be sufficient for His purposes.

Within every group of chosen people, there's always those who are resilient and faithful enough to pass the test, to hold the edge, to survive when the difficulties come and when the Lord puts us through the furnace of affliction. Our burdens are designed to get us to be able to qualify. Our burdens are designed to make us a little more realistic about our own limitations.

I want to talk about a couple of things. I want to remind you that becoming a chosen people, or being chosen by God as His, is no guarantee that we aren't going to be remembered by history for our own foolishness and example of how to inspire God's ire and fall short. I'm a little more optimistic at this point in history because of the hour, because of the signs in the heavens above, because of the things that we see on the earth. And so someone's going to do this. Someone's going to achieve it—the prophecies are not going to fall to the ground unfulfilled. So perhaps coming out of this group will be that example that is pointed to, not as folly and failure, but as vindication of the Lord's promises.

Zion is something that has only been accomplished in the known history of the world by two communities. It's prophesied that there will be a third. What is to be created is something so foreign to this world, that there is nothing in the world to use to judge how we are doing. Even the scriptures do not give a blueprint to follow. If they contained the necessary information, Zion would've been established long ago.

God alone will establish Zion; His instructions are vital and necessary for us. Once He instructs us, the scriptures can then be used to confirm that His directions to us now is consistent with what He prophesied, covenanted, and promised would happen. But the path to Zion is to be found only by following God's immediate commands to us. That is how He will bring it. He will lead us there. There is no magic; there is no sprinkling fairy dust that will take you to where God is. It does not and cannot happen that way. He will lead us, teach

us, command us, guide us, but we have to be the ones who become what He commands. We have to be the ones who do what He bids us do.

The greatest instruction that I know out of, given by God at any time, to any generation, is a rule of community found in the Sermon on the Mount and in the Sermon at Bountiful. Now we have the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant, that not only resonates with the message of those two sermons but applies it directly to us in our peculiar circumstances, to fix our peculiar defects and urge us to be more like Him.

The Lord revealed His plan for our day approximately 3000 years ago. We now begin fulfilling that ancient prophecy. Our current struggles were foreseen and foretold. The Lord of the whole earth considered destroying all the wicked. But His servant plead for Him to grant more time (Jacob 5:49-50 LE). The Lord of the whole earth hearkened to His servant and decreed that He would spare it and would labor within His vineyard a final time in our day (v. 51). The Lord determined long ago He would use a covenant to graft back people who had become wild and bitter and connect them to the original roots of the tree of life, or in other words, restore a people in our day to His covenant.

The covenant offered today is from God and is the first step required to restore the family of God, or tree of life, on the earth. It will change the lost, wild, and bitter fruit and begin to recover them and turn their hearts to the Fathers. This will connect those who are living today with the natural roots—or those Fathers who still hold rights under the original covenant (v. 52-54). Work for this grafting began years ago, and it took a great leap forward approximately two years ago with the effort to recover, as near as possible, the text of the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith revelations. The initial graft happens today.

I have written up a description of a future event that's going to take place, that I was inspired to write up. But like what happens very often with things that are given to people by God, God tells you what to say and limits what you say about some things for purposes that He may understand a whole lot better than do we. You can read John's book of Revelation or Isaiah or Daniel or Ezekiel, and the debates about the content and the meaning of those more obscure passages are endless. And at the end of all the debate, what you wind up with is more confusion than understanding.

The way in which prophecies are handed to mankind by God is in a way that allows us, when the event takes place, to say, as Isaiah explained, "God knows the end from the beginning." Nothing's going to happen that surprises God. But the description that's given is not intended to tell us beforehand where to put our money in the stock market and when to sell and when to get out of stocks and bonds and when to get into real estate or when to buy gold—because it's all going to crap. And the purpose is to, once an event occurs, it is to ratify God's foreknowledge. It is to confirm to us that God knew what was going to happen. Sometimes the way that God tells us that is by giving a specific date for an event. But if He gives you a specific date for an event, the description of the event will be such that you won't understand what the event is going to be until the date arrives. Alternatively, He can give you a reasonable description of the event but no date, and so sometimes you wait

generations, millennia, for prophecies to be— I mean, Isaiah was 725 B.C., and much of what Isaiah wrote about is happening now.

So what I wrote was what I was told to write and confined to what was intended to be conveyed. And despite what some people may think, I try to be exact, obedient, and to take no step to the left, no step to the right, no step forward unless I receive instruction from God. The only reason I'm here giving this talk is because this was something God wanted to have take place. So yes, I could tell you a lot more, but what I've written is what I was told to write, and therefore when it happens you'll say, "Oh yeah, God knew about that beforehand and gave a pretty good description, now that I see what it involved."

I believe Christ has spent the last 500 years inspiring mankind to restore a more correct form of Christianity. He declared He would return again in glory to judge the world, but before His return, many prophecies remain to be fulfilled. Almost the entire burden of prophecy focuses on two events: the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ. And a great deal about the second coming of Christ will require that there be things that occur prior to His return in glory that will involve the Restoration and the presence of those who speak in His name with authority, testimonies to be born. The world cannot be judged without an adequate prior warning being given. Even if the world is ignoring the message, it doesn't matter. God assumes the obligation to making clear His plans. He assumes the obligation of having the warning voice sound, and whether the world gives any heed or not, it doesn't matter. They've been warned, and they will be judged.

One of the prophecies came through Peter. He declared:

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:19-21; Acts 2:3 RE).

The time of refreshing or restoring, promised to come from the presence of the Lord has, in fact, begun. Jesus Christ has been sent again to prepare for His return.

In that first talk that I gave in Los Angeles, someone listening to that was concerned because I referred— Jesus Christ's most extensive prophecy is in the 24th chapter of Matthew, where His disciples are asking Him about the future, and among other things, they want to know about the signs of the times when He's going to come. And Christ answers them, and it's, well, you can read the 24th chapter. There's a lot of really tragic, ugly things that will go on before His coming. But it has a happy ending—He's coming, and when He comes, He's going to fix everything that's wrong with the world, primarily by destroying the wicked by the brightness of His glory. But if you're not wicked, that's still good news.

You don't live your life in contemplation of the fearful return of the Lord. You live your life in a grateful celebration for everything God has done and given to us.

As I was flying here, we had— I think we were taking off just as the first rays of the sun were creeping up in the east, and there was this brilliant scarlet ribbon on the horizon, and my wife pointed it out to me (I was sitting in an aisle; only thing I get to see is the cart they bring you treats with). As I looked across at the sunrise, it was spectacular. Where I live in Utah, we have this Wasatch Front. These are jagged granite cliffs that go upward. The top of one of the ski resorts is 11,000 feet. And we live at about 4,000 feet. When the sun sets, as you are in the valley, you see the sun go down in the west, but in the east, on the mountains, you see the sunlight creep up and creep up and creep up the mountain until finally, just the very top peaks remain with light. What happens is that the light, as it goes up the mountain in its nightly retreat, because of the refraction of the atmosphere, it tends to shift to the blue and to the purple. And every night those mountains— and it's particularly spectacular when there's snow up there because the hues of the sunlight refraction become very colorful up there.

Now I happen to like impressionist art, and my favorite impressionist is Monet. We have a couple of Monet (I mean, they're forgeries—they were given to me as a fee; we didn't pay for them). But they're actual Monet paintings with— right down to the brush strokes being reproduced, and they're beautiful.

Every night as the sun sets, God does something on the mountains that is never the same, always beautiful, and greater in beauty and splendor than anything Monet ever put on canvas.

We ought to love life, and we ought to love one another, and we ought to pursue our education. And we shouldn't bunker down with guns and ammo, fearfully waiting for a direful end to things. Of all people, Christians should have the most hope, the most optimism, the most vitality, and the greatest amount of joy in life. We ought to celebrate every day.

The only purpose behind the last-days work, both what was happening at the time of Joseph and what the Lord is offering to us today, is to accomplish that fulsome restoration to the family of God. I mean, Joseph talked about temples, and they were built incrementally, and they never reached the finish line, even on the second one, before he was killed. But he laid a fabulous foundation and pointed in a direction that the Restoration necessarily must go to and complete. Because if we don't have the tabernacle of God where He comes to dwell with His people, which He does when He has a family on earth, then the prophecies are not going to be fulfilled. Then the promises that were made to Enoch will not be realized. Then the statements of what will happen in the last days through Moses will not be vindicated. Then Adam's prophecy concerning his descendants to the end of time will not be realized. All of these things point, so we know it is going to happen. The question is not, "Is it going to happen?" The question is, "Will we rise up or will we not?" Because what He's offering is, in fact, a legitimate opportunity for that to indeed happen.

We seem to get so easily distracted that we have a hard time staying on task. It's one of the gentile afflictions. We're very ambitious people, and we're very egocentric. And a lot of what is going to be required will require sacrifice and selflessness.

And when it comes to the construction of Zion, God has said in revelation it cannot be done in haste, because haste brings pestilence. And what is pestilential is not just bugs and rodents; it's confusion. We have a season of peace, and we have a season of prosperity, and we have an opportunity in which we might be able to accomplish something with nothing more than the same thing that Joseph Smith was talking about in July of 1840. But when a command is given and sufficient time is afforded and the clock begins to run, then the tendency is to move quickly, like John Bennett—everything is in a hurry. When you have a season of peace upon you and an opportunity to reflect upon what went wrong with the Restoration at the beginning, and we have again the opportunity established by the word of the Lord that was read to and accepted by, for the first time in the Restoration, a covenant to accept the obligations that were devolving upon us in the Restoration, and we have an opportunity to prepare and to do something, we delay, we hesitate, and we squander the opportunity, ultimately at our peril.

I don't care how much you think you know about what God is up to, I guarantee you that unless God has shown it to you plainly, as He has done to Joseph at the beginning, you're not going to figure out what God is up to. There's a reason for that. If you could figure out what God is going to do and where and when and how, then the adversary could prevent that work from being accomplished. It is precisely because God keeps His secrets and entrusts them carefully and guardedly, that the work of God cannot be frustrated, and the covenants will be fulfilled, and the prophecies will be vindicated, and what was offered through Joseph will, in fact, be accomplished. And we have an opportunity, if we will avail ourselves of it, at a time of peace and prosperity, to do something to prepare in order to have that day come upon us with adequate preparation having been made in advance.

Dr. Walter Martin, the "Bible Answer" man, used to use this slogan in almost every other broadcast: "It is the first principle of Biblical hermeneutics that you interpret the old in light of the new." Meaning, when you encounter in the New Testament an interpretation of a prophecy that came in the Old Testament, you don't go to the Old Testament to decide whether or not that prophecy fit the events in the New Testament. You reverse that, and you say, "What does the New Testament tell us that the Old Testament means?" And the Old Testament means whatever it is that the New Testament says it means. You arrive at your Biblical interpretation always by using the *new* to tell you what the *old* meant. Which is another way of saying that prophecy is so obscure that it requires it to be fulfilled, in order for you to understand what it was all about. When it is fulfilled, then the evidence of what was in the mind of God and the prophet, when it first got composed, is apparent. But it is not apparent until the events happen, which is why all of the people trying to date and foretell all of the events are always surprised, because they missed something. They're always advising Herod when the wise men show up and say, "Now where's the king that was born?" And they're shocked there was a king that got born, and they have to search

around and rummage before they say, "*O Bethlehem, thou art not least among the princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come a ruler,*" and lo and behold, "well, he must be in Bethlehem. If you find him, hey, you bring him to us so we can worship him." Wink, wink, nod, nod. Because they had the prophecies in front of them, but they didn't know what God was doing. They wouldn't know it; they couldn't know it. Just like today—God's doing things, but no one knows it because it requires its fulfillment before people can comprehend what happened.

The foregoing excerpts were taken from:

- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #2 entitled "Faith," given in Idaho Falls, ID on September 28, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #4 entitled "Covenants," given in Centerville, UT on October 6, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #5 entitled "Priesthood," given in Orem, UT on November 2, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #8 entitled "A Broken Heart," given in Las Vegas, NV on July 25, 2014;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #9 entitled "Marriage and Family," given in St. George, UT on July 26, 2014;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #10 entitled "Preserving the Restoration," given in Mesa, AZ on September 9, 2014;
- A regional conference Q&A session held at Big Cottonwood Canyon, UT on September 20, 2015;
- His talk entitled "Zion Will Come," given near Moab, UT on April 10, 2016;
- His conference talk entitled "The Doctrine of Christ," given in Boise, ID on September 11, 2016;
- His remarks at "A Day of Faith and Connection" youth conference in UT on June 10, 2017;
- His comments at the "Unity in Christ" conference in Utah County, UT on July 30, 2017;
- His Opening Remarks given at the Covenant of Christ Conference in Boise, Idaho on September 3, 2017;
- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #2, given in Dallas, TX on October 19, 2017;
- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #3, given in Atlanta, Georgia on November 16, 2017;
- A fireside talk entitled "Cursed, Denied Priesthood," given in Sandy, UT on January 7, 2018;
- Denver's remarks entitled "Keep the Covenant: Do the Work," given at the *Remembering the Covenants Conference* in Layton, UT on August 4, 2018; and
- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #5, given in Sandy, Utah on September 7, 2018.

Podcast Episode 49: Ordinances

QUESTION: What are ordinances, and why do we need them?

DENVER: Here's the problem: People do not believe Him, even though He rose from the dead. Period. Today, us—you and I—do not believe Him, even though He rose from the dead. It was not intended to be a one-off event that occurred in the meridian of time. It was intended to be a gathering. I mean, the little seed grows up into the great mustard plant into which the birds—or as Joseph put it, the angels—were intended to come and watch. It was intended to be a super structure for housing contact between the divine and the mortal. It was intended to be the moment of intersection between all that is in eternity and the life of the mortal. It was intended to be the journey into the Holy of Holies, into the presence of God.

In the ordinances as they have been restored in the temple today, everyone who enters in is expected to come to the veil possessing certain knowledge, capable of identifying themselves as having been true and faithful, and be received in an embrace and then welcomed into the presence of God. It's a normal and expected part of the ordinances as they have been restored. Those ordinances are supposed to be teaching us something. They are the Lord's way of shouting in a multimedia presentation, "Here is how I did what I did and what I would like you to do in the process of you becoming like me—a son of God, a daughter of God, a member of the household of faith, and part of the church and kingdom of the Firstborn." You have to become the firstborn. You have to become one with Him. You have to become part of that, not in an organized group-think kind of way, in an individual way in which you connect up with holiness, in which you become a vessel of holiness. You are someone to whom sacred things have been entrusted, and you become, in turn, sacred as the bearer of them.

Part of the rites in the temple are intended to communicate to you things that are most holy. They are intended to make you holy. They are intended to make you a suitable recipient for an audience. They are intended to make you a suitable companion for a walk down a dusty road with the risen Lord who is trying to get you to notice exactly who it is that speaks to you. It's intended to have you understand that He lives and that He's willing to associate with you. And that it's not, as Joseph Smith put it, relying on the words of an old book—the people who lived once long ago—that's going to save anyone. It's the dialogue that you engage in with Him now. It's the living, breathing, vital— He uses the figure of the living vine, and you have to connect to the living vine, and He's the vine, and you connect to it, and you get life through that. Words could not be more plain.

He's trying to get— I mean, what does it mean to be connected up with the vine and to derive sustenance from it? I mean, you have to be alive, which is not inert or an object that you move from there to there. If it's alive, it's going to grow, it's going to increase, it's going to improve. It's going to have connection with, it's going to have— Christ was extraordinary

in His selection of the things that He wanted to use to communicate to us what He intended the gospel to be.

And we read them and say, "That's cool. I'll pay my tithing. I'm connected. I got a card; I'm connected." Well, it's intended to be more than that, and the way that it becomes more than that is an individual journey in which you receive from Him and become a part of Him, and He does His best to try and use analogies and parables and stories to make it clear to us. And the history of the events that are recorded in scripture are intended to try and make it clear to us, but at the end of the day, it's up to you to have the "a-ha moment" and realize He really is talking to and inviting you—YOU, individually, whoever you are, wherever you're at, whatever your confusion, whatever your doubts, whatever your uncertainties—He wants to talk to *you* about them. Verse 33:

"But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me...."

This is not "They shall all know *about* me." This is "They shall know me." And it will no longer be necessary for anyone to say, "Know the Lord" because you shall know Him. It's not knowledge concerning Him; it's *Him*. And those that know Him shall be *"from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more"* (Jer 31:33-34; OC Jer 12:9).

That's who He is; that's what He does. He doesn't want to remember your sin. He would rather prefer it if you don't remember your sin. Because if you don't remember your sin and you go on in a positive way, having laid down the burden that He so willingly will accept from you and remove from you that burden of guilt, then you can go on and become healthy again. You needn't be troubled about all of those things that have bogged you down. He wants to remove that. He wants to carry them.

"I will remember their sin no more. Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The Lord of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me forever" (Jer 31:35-36; Jer 12:9-10 RE).

If you look up in the morning sky, right now you can see Orion on the Eastern horizon. And that's been true twice a year since the beginning. It's been true that all of the ordinances ordained by God in the heavens above have remained true from the day that He set them there until today. They are so well-established, they are so regular, they are so permanent, and they are so far beyond the ability of man to touch, alter, or destroy, that the only way to have an apostasy from those ordinances, from our perspective, is for you to forget what

knowledge there is that are written in the heavens. But the Lord wrote it there, it remains there, and it's still yet part of what is to be restored.

Well, the definition of salvation (or life eternal) given in John 17:3: *"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent"* (NC John 9:18). This is the knowledge of the Lord that he's talking about here. This is the day that Jeremiah prophesies. No one needs to say: *"Know the Lord, for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest"* (Jer 31:34; OC Jer 12:9). This is what the gospel was intended to restore, offer, promise, suggest to each one of us.

The ordinances that are referred to here, in the heavens— if you go to Genesis 1:14 (and for those that aren't familiar with their scriptures, Genesis is, like, page 1): *"And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so"* (OC Gen 2:6). And so He sets this up, and He sets this up in order to communicate things.

If you go back to the book of Abraham chapter 4—and this is the other end of the four standard works—go to Abraham chapter 4, beginning at verse 14:

"And the Gods organized the lights in the expanse of the heaven, and caused them to divide the day from the night; and organized them to be for signs and for seasons, and for days and for years; And organized them to be for lights in the expanse of the heaven to give light upon the earth; and it was so. And the Gods organized the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; with the lesser light they set the stars also; And the Gods set them in the expanse of the heavens, to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to cause to divide the light from the darkness. And the Gods watched those things which they had ordered until they obeyed. And it came to pass that it was from evening until morning that it was night; and it came to pass that it was from morning until evening that it was day; and it was the fourth time" (Abr 4:14-19; Abr 7:5 RE).

This is not a bunch of gratuitous language. This is describing something that took place with absolutely deliberate intent. Everything that is written in scripture and all of the ordinances that were ordained upon the earth, in the heavens, were reckoned from the position of the earth. It's not that the ancients were ignorant of what's going on in the heavens. It's that they viewed the heavens as being a testimony given to us on the earth. It is a geocentric—that is, from the surface of the earth—that that testimony is written.

From the surface of the earth, the sun occupies a space— Even though the sun is over 100 times larger than the earth, the space that the sun occupies in the firmament of the earth is exactly the same as the space in the firmament that is occupied by the moon, although the moon is 1/6 the size of the earth. From the surface of the earth they are identical in size. So much so, that when you put them on the ecliptic as they are located, one can block out the other entirely in an eclipse. Because all of these things were ordained by God to testify in

the heavens about Him and about His work. And those things are bearing testimony, and they are telling you something.

Go to Doctrine and Covenants section 121, beginning at verse 26. These are the neglected verses, because we don't pay attention to this stuff anymore:

"God shall give unto you knowledge by his Holy Spirit, yea, by the unspeakable gift of the Holy Ghost, that has not been revealed since the world was until now [not the Holy Spirit—the Holy Spirit has been revealed—it's the knowledge that is coming that has not yet been revealed] which our forefathers have awaited with anxious expectation to be revealed in the last times, which their minds were pointed to by the angels, as held in reserve for the fulness of their glory; A time to come in the which nothing shall be withheld, whether there be one God or many gods, they shall be manifest. All thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, shall be revealed and set forth upon all who have endured valiantly for the gospel of Jesus Christ. And also, 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 the days of their 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—According to that which was ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before this world was, that should be reserved unto the finishing and the end thereof, when every man shall enter into his eternal presence and into his immortal rest" (T&C 138:21).

There is an agenda. That agenda is to be completed. It's to be completed before the coming of the Lord. And it includes a restoration of things that we have hardly yet thought about.

Well, Jeremiah knew what he was talking about when he referred to the ordinances we've long since forgotten. The only way you apostatize from that stuff is through forgetfulness, because the testimony remains, and it's in front of your eyes nightly and daily.

Because it is the purpose of the Son to bear record of the Father. It is the purpose of the Son to bring others to the Father so that there might be many sons of God. *"And he that receiveth my Father receiveth my Father's kingdom..." (T&C 82:17)*. Because you can't go where the Father is without entering into and receiving an inheritance.

You know, one of the things that we tend to think is that if you get something (this is based upon statements made in [D&C] 132)— but if you get something here and you get it by a covenant, that you are automatically entitled to take it into the next world. But what if the covenant that you are to receive in order to obtain that inheritance in the next world doesn't reckon merely from something handled by ordinance but that the ordinance is pointing you to something higher and more holy? What if the thing that secures for you the inheritance in the next life is not the ordinance but what the ordinance testifies to, that is, embracing the Lord through the veil; and then, having conversed with Him, entering into

His presence; and then, having entered into His presence, being ministered to and taught? What if it means all that?

In order to know something about covenants, Joseph Smith needed to give us some material about that. And I want to refer you to section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants, beginning at verse 8 where the Lord tells Joseph: *"Behold, mine house is a house of order, saith the Lord God, and not a house of confusion. Will I accept of an offering, saith the Lord, that is not made in my name? Or will I receive at your hands that which I have not appointed? And will I appoint unto you, saith the Lord, except it be by law, even as I and my Father ordained unto you, before the world was?" (D&C 132:8-11)*. You see, everything proceeds according to law. And the government of God is not necessarily limited to an organizational structure, but it hails back to things that were committed by God in promises made to the Fathers which have to be fulfilled. And it doesn't matter if we try to capture that; God's purposes are ordained according to a law that was ordained before the world was.

"I am the Lord thy God; and I give unto you this commandment—that no man shall come unto the Father but by me or by my word, which is my law, saith the Lord" (verse 12). In other words, if you are going to come, whoever you are, unto the Father, the only way you are going to get there will be through the Son.

"And everything that is in the world, whether it be ordained of men, by thrones, or principalities, or powers, or things of name, whatsoever they may be, that are not by me or by my word, saith the Lord, shall be thrown down, and shall not remain after men are dead, neither in nor after the resurrection, saith the Lord your God. For whatsoever things remain are by me; and whatsoever things are not by me shall be shaken and destroyed" (verse 13-14). This is another way in which we can know that *"the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel, and He employeth no servant there" (2 Nephi 6:11)*. Because when it comes to this kind of material involving this kind of salvation for any of the children of men, God is hands-on. And our Redeemer is the one who not only keeps the gate, protects the way, but greets those along the way whom He is going to introduce to the Father. And it has to be *"by me or by my word...saith the Lord."* If it is not, then it shall be thrown down, and it shall not remain.

Only God can, or does, ordain covenants. We do not make covenants. Covenants come as a consequence of God's will and only as a consequence of God's will. We can accept them, or we can reject them, but we cannot create them. He does. Our participation is limited to acceptance of, or rejection of, what He offers. The way in which we accept the covenants is set out in Doctrine and Covenants section 130: *"There is a law, irrevocably decreed in heaven before the foundations of this world, upon which all blessings are predicated—And when we obtain any blessing from God, it is by obedience to that law upon which it is predicated" (verses 20-21)*.

Therefore, what is important for you to understand and to know is whatever it is that law consists of. Because the way in which you accept the covenant that has been offered to you

is by learning the principle or the law upon which the blessing you seek is predicated. And then, having learned what law that is upon which it is predicated, obeying it.

We learn all of this through the revelations given to us through Joseph Smith.

"Whenever men can find out the will of God and find an administrator legally authorized from God, there is the kingdom of God; but where these are not, the kingdom of God is not. All the ordinances, systems, and administrations on the earth are of no use to the children of men, unless they are ordained and authorized of God; for nothing will save a man but a legal administrator; for none others will be acknowledged either by God or angels" (Joseph Smith, January 22, 1843).

Dispensation heads are given the power, the sealing power, the authority, the ability to use the power to seal up, by embodying the covenant that is given to them by God, into an ordinance. And that ordinance remains in effect after the death of Moses, after the death of Lehi, after the death of Joseph Smith—so long as it remains embodied within the ordinance. This kind of ordinance, or this kind of sealing authority, then requires and gives rise to the second kind.

And the second kind is a sealing power that is embodied within authoritative ordinances. All dispensations of the gospel follow the covenant-giver's ordinances. For so long as the ordinances that were handed to you through the dispensation head are kept intact, the covenant is kept intact. And the second form of sealing power is a sealing power which is not dependent upon the persistent presence of a dispensation head. It is only dependent upon keeping faithfully the ordinance that has been established and handed down by God through covenant.

The second form of sealing authority, however, has conditions upon it because God is not bound by anything that differs one iota from His word. And that doesn't matter who it is. God is bound by His word, not by man's. Therefore, when you handle such ordinances you need to keep in mind the admonition that was given in the prophecy of Isaiah: *"The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left"* (Isaiah 7:1). It's talking about a future time at His coming. But it's lamenting a condition that you have to decide about it's currency.

So when you have possession of that second form of sealing authority, you have to recognize that the covenant handed down from the dispensation head can be broken. It was broken rather abruptly in the case of the covenant given to Lehi, when at the death of Lehi, his family fragmented into two groups—one of whom desired to preserve the covenant, and one of whom rejected it and walked away from it. Therefore, it was not to the ones that had rejected the covenant that the Lord would subsequently come to appear. But they, by and large, would have been destroyed. So handling the second form of the covenant after the dispensation head has established it, is a matter of fidelity to the word of God and

faithfulness to the word of God and faithfulness in preserving and practicing the ordinance that has been established.

The temple is not the place that controls the word of God; the temple is the place which, most of all, ought be subject *to* the word of God. It's not a place to innovate in ordinances; it's a place to obey, to follow, to give strict heed unto, and to not vary.

Because in the ordinances, the power of God is manifest—not because of some white-shirt-wearing, dark-suit-clad institutional chap with a certificate and common consent is doing something, but because you come in faith to God, believing, and you wrestle a blessing from God through the means that He has allowed it to be bestowed, by your faith. And you have God take note of your diligence and your faith.

In large measure, your faith matters far more than you think it does. I know a great deal more than I knew at the time I went to the Jordan River Temple to perform vicarious work for deceased ancestors—an incident that I recorded in one of the little vignettes in *The Second Comforter*. I went to the temple in faith, believing, and I met 11 of my ancestors who were redeemed because of my faith. And they could use any condition in which they can find the rights, any tattered ruin left they could use, so long as there was faith upon the earth to act in their behalf.

Joseph Smith said, on page 308 of the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, "If a man gets fullness of the priesthood of God, he has to get it the same way that Jesus Christ obtained it, and that was by keeping all the commandments, and by obeying all the ordinances of the house of the Lord." I want to redefine that "house," not in terms of physical structure, but in terms of familial relationship, in which God alone establishes His house, and that, too, by acknowledging who His sons and daughters are. That house can never be overtaken, touched, trampled, broken, forsaken, compromised, or adulterated, because man is powerless. And so when the house of God is to be set in order in the last days, don't think of that as a movement that you are waiting for someone else to accomplish. How do you not know that the "one mighty and strong" to be sent to set in order the house of God is not Jesus Christ Himself, waiting to minister to all those who will come to Him? Because receiving our Lord is, in itself, an ordinance.

If you go to Doctrine and Covenants section 84, beginning at 19, it says: "*And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest.*" And I would note, as a parenthetical, that you have to have priesthood in order to have the ordinances. "*And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh*" (T&C 82:12). And Zion is a fleshly endeavour. It is to involve living, breathing people. Therefore, as you read these verses, you ought to recognize that the power of godliness being manifest to men in the flesh, through the ordinances as a component, is talking about the rudiments that's required for Zion.

"For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live. Now this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God; But they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence; therefore, the Lord in his wrath, for his anger was kindled against them, swore that they should not enter into his rest while in the wilderness, which rest is the fulness of his glory" (Ibid).

"The glory of God is intelligence..." (T&C 93:11). The "rest [of the Lord] is the fulness of His glory," or in other words "light and truth." Or in other words, it requires a people that are competent in the things of God, who have an understanding which will reach into heaven.

"Therefore, he took Moses out of their midst, and the Holy Priesthood also" (T&C 82:12). Thus ended Zion. Because Moses went up the mount, and Moses talked with God, and he spoke with Him face-to-face. He wanted to bring the people with him up there so that they, like he, would speak with God and be in His presence, face-to-face. That's what Moses sought after, at which point Moses' status as a leader ended. Because no one would need to say to another, "Know ye the Lord," for they all would therefore know Him—a prophecy about Zion in the last days (Jeremiah 12:9). That is an accomplishment that requires people and not individuals.

Doctrine and Covenants section 133, beginning at verse 25, is a description of the results if there is a people who get prepared. This will be the result (133, beginning at 25):

"And the Lord, even the Savior, shall stand in the midst of his people, and shall reign over all flesh. And they who are in the north countries shall come in remembrance before the Lord; and their prophets shall hear his voice, and shall no longer stay themselves; and they shall smite the rocks, and the ice shall flow down at their presence. And an highway shall be cast up in the midst of the great deep. Their enemies shall become a prey unto them, And in the barren deserts there shall come forth pools of living water; and the parched ground shall no longer be a thirsty land. And they shall bring forth their rich treasures unto the children of Ephraim, my servants. And the boundaries of the everlasting hills shall tremble at their presence. And there shall they fall down and be crowned with glory, [in this context, it's an ordinance] even in Zion, by the hands of the servants of the Lord, even the children of Ephraim. And they shall be filled with songs of everlasting joy. Behold, this is the blessing of the everlasting God upon the tribes of Israel, and the richer blessing upon the head of Ephraim and his fellows" (T&C 58:3).

Doctrine and Covenants section 84 has a description of events at the time of Moses. Beginning at verse 19 of Section 84: *"And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest."* And by the way, I should add as a parenthetical thought, "the ordinances thereof" is far more expansive than simply a set of rights or rituals. Because when the higher priesthood is present on the earth, everything that that higher priesthood does is done as an ordinance. Because once it has

been ordained by God to take place and God's hand is behind what takes place, those events, under the direction of that priesthood, is all an ordinance, and therefore, within them you find the power of godliness.

"And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh. For without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live. Now this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God; But they hardened their hearts and could not endure his presence; therefore, the Lord in his wrath, for his anger was kindled against them, swore that they should not enter into his rest while in the wilderness, which rest is the fulness of his glory" (T&C 82:12).

I'll remind you we've talked about this before. *"The glory of God is intelligence, or in other words light and truth" (T&C 93:11).* Therefore, the "rest" is to be filled with His glory or, in other words, filled with light and truth—or to comprehend things that you do not, at present, comprehend without the benefit of the glory of God.

"Therefore, he took Moses out of their midst, and the Holy Priesthood also" (T&C 82:12). And thus, at that point, ended the expectation anciently that there might be Zion.

Go to the book of John, chapter 14 [KJV]—two verses. Chapter 14:18 the Lord says: *"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 9:8).* This is Christ talking to the apostles about what He intends to do on the other side of His death, burial, and resurrection. He's saying, "I'm not going to leave you comfortless—I will come to you."

And then verse 23 [KJV]: *"Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 9:8).* Christ is saying that's the intention! And so that we can have the definition given through Joseph, go to Doctrine and Covenants section 130, discussing this verse. D&C 130:3, *"John 14:23 [KJV]—The appearing of the Father and the Son, in that verse, is a personal appearance; and the idea that the Father and the Son dwell in a man's heart is an old sectarian notion, and is false."* The promise was designed to have this actually happen.

This is why D&C 93:1 says what it says. This is what the fulness of the gospel consists of. Those folks who go through ceremonies think that ceremonies have some powerful mojo, some compelling voodoo. But the purpose of the ceremony is to teach you a precept. The precept is what you ought to find within your heart. Rites and ordinances are intended to testify to a greater truth. It was anciently among the Jews. It is an Aaronic priesthood function to turn around and look at the ordinance as if it were an end in itself. It is not an end in itself. It is intended to be a symbol reminding you of some great truth concerning our God—capstone of the ceremonies that were restored through Joseph involving a dialogue between you and the Lord in which you're brought back into His presence, and then following that, you're taken away, and you're sealed for eternity. Those are lofty concepts. They are powerfully portrayed in the ordinances and the rites. They are intended to convey

to you the reality that all of this is possible because God does, in fact, intend to preserve you and all of those associations that you prize, so long as they're worthy.

After the creation itself, marriage was the first ordinance. I want to take an opportunity to look at the way in which this unfolds, because it's a very interesting— Adam and Eve were sent down here first. Adam and Eve were introduced into the world, and they were presented these challenges initially. They were the first ones to face this stuff, and the way in which their story is told is not chronological. You have to go through Moses' record, and you have to go through Enoch's record within the book of Moses in order to put together the chronology of these things. But when you do that, a story unfolds and a scene unfolds upon us. It's really rather fascinating. So I want to take a few moments and do that.

Marriage was the first ordinance. It was introduced before the Fall. It was introduced before man was instructed on sacrifice.

Hearts of people get hard the older they get. Although, there is at least one exception, because I ran into a guy at my office who was like 85-years-old, and he's still as young and as nimble and as open and as flexible as a child. That's why we have to become childlike, because we have to be willing to consider these things.

Well, in that Alma chapter 13 [LE] material, beginning at 14 it says:

"Yea, humble yourselves even as the people in the days of Melchizedek, who was also a high priest after this same order which I have spoken, who also took upon him the high priesthood forever. And it was this same Melchizedek to whom Abraham paid tithes; yea, even our father Abraham paid tithes of one-tenth part of all he possessed. Now these ordinances were given after this manner, that thereby the people might look forward on the Son of God, it being a type of his order, or it being his order, and this that they might look forward to him for a remission of their sins, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord" (Alma 10:1).

And what is "these ordinances" that are being talked about? That's what we looked at in the Orem talk in chapter 13, and we're not going to repeat it here. That's the material that includes everything that God does, He does by an ordinance. Everything that He does and every blessing He confers, He confers by a covenant. One of the good news about the absence of a binding covenant is that you can't damn yourself by taking upon yourself an obligation that you will never honor.

One of the good things about the Restoration is that there are covenantal examples that are given that give you an idea of the kind of behavior that God would want. I wish everyone would go to the temple. I wish everyone would go to the temple and take on them covenants, learn what they are, and then try to live them. But if you fail, unlike the stuff that comes into play with this Melchizedek character, there is no severe penalty, because it's for your good and for your practice and for your instruction. And if you honor that, there is no reason why God and the angels cannot ratify whatever it is you do, if you qualify for it.

Go to the temple, get your ordinances, and then work to have the Holy Spirit of Promise because the keeper of that gate is the Holy One of Israel, and there is no employee there. It is the Holy One of Israel, and *you* qualify to receive that directly with heaven. There's no other gatekeeper opening and closing doors. There is the Holy One of Israel; He employeth no servant there.

Any who desire to be baptized should be baptized. If you have this authority and you practice this and anyone comes to you, baptize them. Refuse no one. Freely you get from God; therefore, freely give to others. Do not charge to perform an ordinance. The ordinance is between them and God. And they need to have it performed between them and someone God has asked to do it. You become the people God asks to do it.

Before baptism, teach them the Doctrine of Christ.

If you take money from someone in order to advance your religious purpose, the mere act of doing that creates an inequality. It creates an arrogance. It removes the burden of sacrifice. It removes the humiliation of having to lose sleep and to fret and to worry about things and to face an uphill battle in everything that you do in order to please God. But you can't please God by taking advantage of your fellow man.

There have been changes to the ordinance. Isaiah 24:5 [KJV] warned that: *"The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant"* (Isaiah 7:1 RE).

Those changes include the most single, radical change to the temple endowment in 1990. In 2005, they eliminated washings and anointings. Before the January 2005 changes, washing and anointings were literal. The change made them only symbolic thereafter. That has significance, and I leave it to people to query why it has significance.

I mean, there was a reason why Christ was anointed, preliminary to his death, by the woman that blessed and anointed him. And it was to preserve Him into the resurrection. Now we don't do that.

Remember that in Nauvoo the Lord offered to reconnect the saints, but clearly defined the condition for that to happen was necessarily an acceptable temple where He could come and restore the connection. The reconnection is ordinance-based and will require an acceptable temple before it goes beyond the single representative.

You see, individual salvation and promises of eternal life are just that—they are individual. A restoration of the family of Israel requires more, including cooperation and inter-relationships that will be formed by God himself. Promises made to individuals give the individual hope.

If you take the vision of the redemption of the dead that we find in D&C 138—he saw a vision where: *"...there were gathered together in one place an innumerable company of the spirits of the just who had been faithful in the testimony of Jesus while they lived in mortality, and who had offered sacrifice in the similitude of the great sacrifice of the Son of God, and had suffered tribulation in the Redeemer's name. All these had departed the mortal life firm in the hope of a glorious resurrection through the grace of God the Father and His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ" (D&C 138:12-14).* All of them. These were the righteous. They were in paradise, and all of them were worthy; they had hope, and not only did the Savior give them hope before death, He visited with them in the spirit world during the time between His death and His resurrection. But that did not get them reconnected to the Fathers in heaven. Nor did it even get them resurrected, because it goes on to say in the same vision: *"...from among the righteous, he organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority, and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness, even to all the spirits of men; and thus was the gospel preached to the dead" (verse 30).* So the righteous who departed this life firm in the hope of a glorious resurrection, who had offered sacrifice in the similitude—many of whom had seen Him in the flesh, who witnessed Him and were ministered to by Him and given authority by Him in the spirit world—remained in the world of the dead to preach to the dead.

Only the organization through a temple and associated rites results in finishing the family of God in the house of order, allowing the results achieved by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, which are described in D&C 132:37: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—they *"...did none other things than that which they were commanded; and because they did none other things than that which they were commanded, they have entered into their exaltation, according to the promises, and sit upon thrones, and are not angels but are gods."*

In D&C 138:41, Abraham (the father of the faithful), Isaac, and Jacob were also there. In verses 41 and 42 of D&C 138, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were there, but in the revelation given in 1843 they're sitting on thrones. They're not in the spirit world proselytizing; they are sitting on thrones. The difference between these two categories are the differences between individual salvation—which can come—and reorganizing the family of God—which must occur by an ordinance in a temple to be acceptable to God.

This was why the command was given to build the temple in Nauvoo and why God offered to restore to them the fullness that they did not achieve. We need to let God take the lead, and then we need to patiently await each step along the way. This is the stuff of which the prophecies speak. And it is the stuff that will be fulfilled. But the rites and the ordinances necessary to accomplish that— People in this generation don't even have a clue how that necessarily has to roll forth. But rest assured, it will. It will.

In public, Joseph declared, "Ordinances instituted in the heavens before the foundation of the world, in the priesthood, for the salvation of men, are not to be altered or changed. All must be saved on the same principles." The first question this raises is whether Joseph contradicted himself by changing things. The only way to reconcile the many changes he instituted is to take note that he made *only* additive expansions, finishing and recovering

the ordinances instituted in the heavens. He was transmitting what came from above to believers, and it came incrementally. Joseph's changes never took away from the ordinances but frequently expanded on what was here before.

Joseph never did anything with the "ordinances instituted in the heavens" like the LDS Church has done. The elimination of the Christian minister from the endowment in 1990, along with the abandonment of the penalties from the ceremony at the same time, were purely deductive. Joseph never did anything like that. Likewise, LDS washings and anointings were changed in 2011 to eliminate actual washing and actual anointing, replacing them with simply symbolic references. That was yet another deductive deviation from the "ordinances instituted in the heavens." It violated Joseph's principal that they "are not to be altered or changed." The original Mormonism may have added, but it respected what was previously revealed. All later forms of corporate Mormonism have been deductive.

The RLDS Church made even greater deductions. They abandoned baptisms for the dead, washings, anointings, eternal marriage, and the temple rites altogether. Subtraction from the ordinances is one clear way to confirm the original form of Mormonism no longer exists. If there is to be an original, it will require adding back what has been lost.

At the end of the whole thing—when you get all the way to the end, you can take Mormonism and go all the way back to James 1:5 [KJV] and say, "All Joseph is doing is saying that James 1:5 is true, and it works. And therefore you ought to attempt it." Take all of the ordinances, take all of the promises—take everything that has been delivered and realize that all of that is simply God cheerleading you to reconnect with Him and have an authentic experience. And when that happens, then the religion is alive. Then it matters. But it's living in you—it's not living in some chapel; it's not living in some temple. It's living in you. That's the objective of the original.

I was lying at home in my bed when the Lord spoke to me, calling me by name. When it ended, I was commanded to write an account. As I wrote, the words were given to me, and I recorded the following:

On the 13th of February 2003 I saw the Lord coming in His glory. At first a sign appeared in the heavens; a light emanating from a single point and turning first this way and that. All the world saw it. And men debated over its meaning. At length the light turned upon us, and within it was the Lord, showing His glory, with concourses of angels and the hosts of heaven following in His wake.

And when we saw that it was the Lord, we rejoiced and were filled with joy. I turned to my wife and said, "Look, it is Christ!" And she said, "Yes, it is!" And we were filled with joy and peace of mind, for the long-awaited day of the Lord had come.

But others were filled with dread. They feared and lamented and wanted the mountains to cover them and hide them from His presence, for He was clothed in

red and came in judgment. And Christian ministers knew they had taught falsely and that their faith could not save—and they begged for relief from the Saints.

This caused me to marvel at how this could be. It was given unto me to understand that without the ordinances of salvation through the authorized ministers of the gospel, it was not possible for men to shed their sins. And they could not look upon a just and Holy Being without being racked with torment and guilt for their sins. And they pled with the Saints to minister to them, but we could not, for we were constrained by the Spirit and were forbidden to do so. For this was the day of judgment which the Lord had in His heart, and He was now come to preach His own sermon, clothed in red, and to deliver those who waited on Him and to convict and condemn those who had not.

I write this with my own hand, and bear solemn testimony that it is true, Amen.

In the tenth talk given in Phoenix two years ago, you were warned about false spirits as happened in Kirtland, which you were warned would come among us. That warning has proven true. False spirits have misled some into foolish errors. I am astonished at vain, foolish, and prideful ideas that are anti-Christ, degrading, and dark but have been welcomed by some. Remember, Pharaoh's magicians also enchanted their rods to become snakes and conjured frogs to mimic the sign given by God through Moses and Aaron. Pharaoh's heart was hardened by these imitations. Do not let yours become so likewise.

For two years I have watched, attended some of your meetings, gathered reports, and tried to let you stand and display your strength and understanding. Even God left Adam and Eve in the Garden and allowed Lucifer, the common enemy, to tempt and try them, promising to return again to visit them. They transgressed His commandment, and He provided the means to cover their shame, repent, and return. He also promised to later send messengers. But God did not "babysit" Adam and Eve, informing them that it was given unto them to choose, even when He forbids something. God is the same now as in the beginning. We are all required to display our strength, obedience, and prove our understanding.

People have come among you preaching falsehoods and inviting others to follow false spirits— adulterers and adulteresses who justify sins and mock the commandment, "*Thou shalt not commit adultery*" (*Exodus 20:14 [KJV]*). False claimants are pretending to seal others up to eternal life, changing the ordinances, and introducing foolish and vain ideas borrowed from pagans and heathen who do not know Christ nor His righteousness. I do not oppose them directly by debate or counter-argument. I declare the truth and leave it for everyone to decide between clearly opposing teachings. If people cannot discern, then they will need to learn from sad experience to choose between good and evil, perhaps only coming to understand after their destruction in this world.

The third spirit that is to return is that spirit which was in the beginning. It is the spirit of Messiah—this time the Messiah, Himself. This time He will come to His house. He will dwell there. Everything must be prepared in order for Messiah to return. And so in the end, as it

was in the beginning, Adam being a type who represents dwelling in the presence of God, or the Spirit of Messiah—in the end it will be Messiah, Himself, who returns to dwell among a people who are prepared. This is a chiasm. It is returning to the beginning as the work of the last days walks backward in time to the point where it all began.

Elias goes before to prepare for a greater work that is coming after, just as the Aaronic ordinances go before. Joseph Smith said the Spirit of Elias was revealed to him, but "the Spirit of Elijah holds something more. It holds the revelations, ordinances, endowments, and sealings necessary to accomplish turning the hearts of the Fathers to the children by securing an unbroken thread between the living and the Fathers in heaven. This can only be done in a temple prepared for that purpose." I'm reading Joseph. Without sealing of living children to the Fathers in heaven (who dwell in glory and who sit upon thrones), the return of the Lord with Enoch and the other thousands who will accompany him would result in none escaping the judgments to come.

We are all equal. We all accept the Book of Mormon as a covenant for us to be numbered among the Lord's covenant people. This land, in particular, is a land of promise to those who serve the God of this land who is Jesus Christ. The time is coming when those who are not the Lord's people will be swept off the land.

I have been given authority from God to deliver this covenant, this day. Every formality required from the days of Adam until now for establishing a covenant has been kept and met. Once the covenant is established, those sustained by seven women—or a man inside his own family—who receive it also have authority to administer the ordinance to others who want to be numbered among God's people. To administer to others, repeat the ordinance, read aloud the Lord's Answer and the words of the Covenant. Ask them to stand and say "yes," and they will become one of the Lord's covenant people. Do not change the words of the covenant, for to change an ordinance is to break it.

All our ancestors have failed to follow the Lord's path. Generations now dead anxiously wait and hope for us to be faithful. They have part in this through you. If they have a righteous living descendent, they are blessed vicariously through that relationship. We are all part of one family, and your role in that family can bless the living and the dead.

Today marks a moment when the stirrings that have been underway for years result in God's offering to establish His people on earth, by a covenant He ordains. The few ready to receive the Lord's offer today are scattered to the nethermost parts of His vineyard (Jacob 5:52 [LE]). Despite this, a live broadcast on the internet allows them to be grafted in at the same moment this is happening in Boise, Idaho. Correspondingly, those who utterly refuse to accept the offered covenant are plucked from the Restoration's tree of life because they are bitter fruit, unable to meet the Lord's requirements. The Lord is taking this step to preserve part of humanity, not to destroy it (v. 53). A few descendants of the covenant Fathers have the natural gift of faith; that gift belongs to the natural branches (v. 54). When grafted, we are connected to the natural roots or covenant Fathers as heirs of the promises made to them. Even after the covenant, there will still be those who are bitter and wild, who

will be unable to produce natural fruit despite the covenant. These will remain for a time, despite their bitterness (v. 56-57). Today only the most bitter who refuse to be grafted in will be trimmed away.

If you cannot reconstruct the family through an adoption ordinance process, the work cannot be accomplished. There just isn't time. We're in the process of walking back to how it was in the beginning. A lot of people think that by getting a New Testament church put on the ground that Joseph Smith accomplished the fulsome Restoration. It was never intended to stop there; it's supposed to go all the way back to the beginning. It's a giant chiasm, and it's a giant mirror. And today we do not live 900 years, and so the way in which it will be rebuilt at the end is going to be by ordinance in the house of the Lord in a place that He has accepted. The only kinds of places that are legitimately the house of God are houses that God has come to, to dwell in, in order for those who seek His face to find Him.

In an October 1840 proclamation to the saints, Joseph and the High Council in Nauvoo hoped to see happen in 1840 what did not happen then, has not happened, and may only happen if people honor the covenant offered last year. The proclamation said:

The work of the Lord in these last days, is one of vast magnitude and almost beyond the comprehension of mortals; its glories are past description and its grandeur unsurpassable. It has been the theme which has animated the bosom of prophets and righteous men from the creation of this world down through every succeeding generation to the present time; and it is truly the dispensation of the fullness of times, which all things which are in Christ Jesus, whether in heaven or on the earth, shall be gathered together in him, and when all things shall be restored, as spoken of by all the holy prophets since the world began: for in it will take place the glorious fulfillment of the promises made to the fathers. (*JSP Documents* Vol. 7, p. 412; also *Times and Seasons*, Oct. 1840, p. 178)

Joseph understood that the project was reclamation and restoration of what once was and had been lost. We're not trying to create something new; we're trying to reclaim that which is the oldest of all, the original religion.

That grandeur was not achieved in Joseph's day. The Restoration has never reached the magnitude God intends. All the institutions of Mormonism are drifting away, aimlessly. They're more interested in preserving power for themselves than in preserving the Restoration. Taking the scriptures as your guide, you'll be better prepared than any other generation to arise and fulfill the promises and the prophecies. Joseph Smith did not complete the Restoration, but he laid a foundation that should not be ignored. The Community of Christ and Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are both being led down to destruction and are bound in the chains of hell because of their studied ignorance.

"Apostasy" means a deliberate rebellion against God. They are in apostasy because they are deliberately changing the ordinances, have broken the covenant, and are rejecting Joseph

Smith's teachings and revelations. They have been deliberately walking away from the Restoration and choosing to align themselves with a doomed world.

But I do think that the ceremony is useful even though I don't think that the transmission of it has been altogether correct. I think it is merciful by God that the way in which it came down was altered, because we can enter into the covenants of the temple and take them very seriously, but if we wind up violating them we have not violated an authentically empowered ordinance, so we're really not offending God by violating something.

Ordinances that were ordained by God cannot be changed. If they're changed, they're broken; if they're broken, they're ineffective. Therefore, an altered ordinance can be informational, and if you take it sincerely and if you adhere to the covenants and if you obey, God can work with that because God can work with any soul. And you can ultimately realize every blessing and every promise of the temple. You're just going to get it as a one-off from heaven, as God, by the Holy Spirit of Promise, works with you to confer upon you blessings that are intended for you. So there's no downside, but there's a considerable upside if you're true and faithful to the things that you obligate yourself to do.

And the temple tells you that: "Brothers and sisters, if you're true and faithful the time will come when you will be called up and anointed kings and queens, priests and priestesses, whereas now you're only anointed to become such. The realization of these blessings depends upon your faithfulness." I mean, they dial it right back in the introduction to the ceremony itself, almost as if they're making an admission against interest.

The purpose of a temple is to allow the communication of great knowledge and greater knowledge, to restore what has been lost since the time of Adam, in order for people to rise up and receive the Holy Order. Because you don't get saved in ignorance, and there are so many gaps in what was going on.

The Lord, whose own heart was broken, ultimately requires a great deal to happen to create a broken heart and a contrite spirit willing to endure—however uncomfortable it may make you feel—all that God requires of you to do in order to be a son of God. And that's not accomplished in an instant, suddenly; it's accomplished carefully and over trial after trial, test after test, temptation after temptation. But ultimately, it will be required before the return of the Lord. It will be mandatory, before the return of the Lord, for the original Holy Order to exist in all of its components. It has to. And there has to be established on the earth all of the rites that originally belonged in the days of Adam, because that has to be surrendered back. And it has to go back through those that had possessed it in order for God to have the right to come and claim this world as His own and to exercise dominion over it. Because if the dominion over the world belongs to someone other than Him, His word cannot be broken, and He cannot come and interfere with the right of dominion that exists on the Earth. It has to exist. It has to be fully restored, and it has to be in the possession of those who will not covet it—those who will not, like Cain, attempt to influence the conditions of salvation for the souls of men, those who look upon it merely as a burden to be held, under the authority of God, belonging to Him, to be returned to Him so

that He can come and fix this broken world and bring wickedness to an end.

The foregoing excerpts were taken from:

- Denver's talk entitled "Christ's Discourse on the Road to Emmaus," given in Fairview, UT on April 14, 2007;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #2 entitled "Faith," given in Idaho Falls, ID on September 28, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #3 entitled "Repentance," given in Logan, UT on September 29, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #4 entitled "Covenants," given in Centerville, UT on October 6, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #5 entitled "Priesthood," given in Orem, UT on November 2, 2013;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #6 entitled "Zion," given in Grand Junction, CO on April 12, 2014;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #8 entitled "A Broken Heart," given in Las Vegas, NV on July 25, 2014;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #9 entitled "Marriage and Family," given in St. George, UT on July 26, 2014;
- Denver's *40 Years in Mormonism Series*, Talk #10 entitled "Preserving the Restoration," given in Mesa, AZ on September 9, 2014;
- A Q&A session entitled "A Visit with Denver Snuffer" held on May 13, 2015;
- The presentation of Denver's paper entitled "Was There an Original," given at the Sunstone Symposium in Salt Lake City, UT on July 29, 2016;
- His conference talk entitled "The Doctrine of Christ," given in Boise, ID on September 11, 2016;
- Denver's conference talk entitled "Things to Keep Us Awake at Night," given in St. George, UT on March 19, 2017;
- His Opening Remarks given at the Covenant of Christ Conference in Boise, ID on September 3, 2017;
- A fireside talk entitled "Cursed, Denied Priesthood," given in Sandy, UT on January 7, 2018;
- Denver's remarks entitled "Keep the Covenant: Do the Work," given at the Remembering the Covenants Conference in Layton, UT on August 4, 2018; and
- A fireside talk entitled "The Holy Order," given in Bountiful, UT on October 29, 2017.

Podcast Episode 50: Celebrating Christ

QUESTION: As we celebrate Christ during this season, what should we know about Him today?

DENVER: I'm going to approach this subject through an indirect route, and we'll arrive where we want to arrive before the end of this. But I'm going to start out, apparently, in a different direction.

In the Book of Mormon we have big stretches of the Book of Mormon in which the writer of the text that we've got is relying upon, or directly quoting from, earlier scripture, in what they call the "brass plates" that had been recovered from Laban. In the case of Nephi, and in Nephi's books, also his brother Jacob, the primary source they quoted from the brass plates were the Isaiah texts. Both of them preached from them, and both of them used them. But they were taken from the brass plates as the message that they wanted to convey.

When his brother, Jacob, wrote his own book, he used long passages from the prophet Zenos, whose record we don't know anything about. We know about Isaiah, but we don't know about Zenos. And so Jacob's allegory that is contained in the book of Jacob is another example of following that same pattern of using the scriptures that they had on the brass plates, in order to deliver a message that they said was theirs. Nephi used Isaiah's material as his testimony. Jacob announced that he was going to prophecy, then he quotes extensively from Zenos, and then he says, "This is my prophecy. Those words I just read to you from Zenos— they're true." So he's a second prophetic witness testifying to the authenticity of the earlier prophet, taken from the brass plates, and it's his message.

Keep that in mind, because there's this long passage— It appears to be that Alma is just recording his own preaching, and he launches into an extensive description about Melchizedek and the priesthood which was after the Order of the Son of God. In that passage, in The New Covenants version of the scriptures, at the end of chapter 9 and the beginning of chapter 10 of the book of Alma (in the traditional version it's the 13th chapter of the book of Alma, in traditional versification and chapter division)— But the content of this sermon by Alma says:

And I would that ye should remember that the Lord God ordained priests after his Holy Order, which was after the Order of his Son, to teach these things unto the people...And this is the manner after which they were ordained: 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 exceeding great faith, are called with a holy calling — yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such. And thus they were called....

And he goes on to describe how they qualified in the first place; that is, they qualified before this world, and he goes on to elaborate:

...this High Priesthood being after the Order of his Son, which Order was from the foundation of the world, or in other words, being without beginning of days or end of years, being prepared from eternity to all eternity according to his foreknowledge of all things. Now they were ordained after this manner, being called with a holy calling, and ordained with a holy ordinance, and taking upon them the High Priesthood of the Holy Order...

And he goes on to say this is modeled *...after the Order of the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father who is without beginning of days or end of years, who is full of grace, equity, and truth. And thus it is (Alma 9:10).*

Now the sermon continues, and Alma adds:

Now as I said concerning the Holy Order of this High Priesthood, there were many who were ordained and became high priests of God. And it was on account of their exceeding faith and repentance, and their righteousness before God, they choosing to repent and work righteousness rather than to perish. Therefore, they were called after this Holy Order and were sanctified, and their garments were washed white through the blood of the Lamb.

Then he goes on to talk about what that means to be washed, and he says:

I would that ye should humble yourselves before God and bring forth fruit meet for repentance, that ye may also enter into that rest. Yea, humble yourselves even as the people in the days of Melchizedek, who was also a high priest after this same Order which I have spoken, who also took upon him the High Priesthood for ever. And it was this same Melchizedek to whom Abraham paid tithes — yea, even our father Abraham paid tithes of one-tenth part of all he possessed. Now these ordinances were given after this manner, that thereby the people might look forward on the Son of God, it being a type of his Order, or it being his Order...

And he goes on to talk about Melchizedek, and the people of Melchizedek, they had:

...waxed strong in iniquity and abominations — yea, they had all gone astray; they were full of all manner of wickedness. But Melchizedek, having exercised mighty faith and received the office of the High Priesthood according to the Holy Order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they did repent. And Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days...and he did reign under his father. Now there were many before him, and also there were many afterwards, but none were greater.

Then Alma closes this discourse where he has been talking about the Holy Order and he's been talking about Melchizedek as this example, this great example of someone who functioned in this Holy Order. He closes it with these words: *Now I need not rehearse the matter; what I have said may suffice. Behold, the scriptures are before you; if ye will wrest them, it shall be to your own destruction* (Alma 10:1-2).

So, given the pattern that the prophets of the Book of Mormon have followed and Alma's statement that the scriptures are in front of you, he doesn't need to rehearse this stuff—you, apparently, can read about it. This appears also—this entire passage that deals with the Holy Order after the Son of God and the function within that Holy Order of Melchizedek in preaching repentance to a people who had all gone astray, who are wicked and had abominations—all of that appears to be like the Isaiah text and like the Zenos text, also taken from the brass plates—the scriptures that the Nephites had before them that we do not have at this point. And Alma is telling them, "Look at what happened that our scriptures testify to about the priesthood and this man, Melchizedek." So I think that the closing of that part of Alma's instruction, *Behold, the scriptures are before you, and I need not rehearse the matter*, suggests that these passages also were taken from the brass plates.

Now, I mention that because in the testimony of Nephi, Nephi explains how he and his people knew of Christ and knew of Christ's ministry nearly six centuries before He was here as a mortal. In The New Covenants, the text begins in 1 Nephi chapter 5. And he records:

And the God of our fathers who were led out of Egypt, out of bondage, and also were preserved in the wilderness by him — yea, the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and the God of Jacob — yieldeth himself, according to the words of the angel, as a man into the hands of wicked men, to be lifted up... (1 Nephi 5:36).

So this first statement about the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob yielding Himself into the hands of wicked men to be lifted up, that is according to the words of an angel. So the first part of this is a new revelation that they had. But he goes on to say: *...to be lifted up according to the words of Zenoch....* So when Zenoch's testimony about him being lifted up appears in the brass plates, they knew, from reading that, about that prophecy. An angel, apparently, reconfirmed that, but they had that in the brass plates.

Going on, Nephi writes: *...and to be crucified according to the words of Neum....* So they had both a prophet named Zenoch and a prophet named Neum on their brass plates, testifying about Christ being lifted up and crucified. *And to be buried in the sepulchre, according to the words of Zenos....* So now he's quoting from yet a third prophet. We have no record of any of these three prophets, but they did in their brass plates.

So Zenos now: *...to be buried in a sepulchre according to the words of Zenos, which he spake concerning the three days of darkness which should be a sign given of his death unto those who should inhabit the isles of the sea — more especially given unto those who are of the house of Israel.* So quoting from Zenos, he says Zenos prophesied that Christ would be

buried in a sepulchre and that there would be a sign given to people on the isles of the sea of that three days in the sepulchre, which would include three days of darkness.

He goes on to say: *...more especially given unto those who are of the house of Israel. For thus spake the prophet.* "The prophet" in this instance is Zenos. Apparently, if you had access to the brass plates and you read the content of the prophecy of Zenos, you would take away from your reading of that "the prophet," being Zenos—not Moses, not Isaiah. When Jews speak of "the prophet," they generally have Moses in their mind. When Christians speak of "the prophet," they generally have Isaiah in their mind. When the Nephites called "the prophet," the person to whom they apparently referred was this Zenos.

And he quotes him:

The Lord God surely shall visit all the house of Israel at that day, some with his voice because of their righteousness, unto their great joy and salvation, and others with the thunderings and the lightnings of his power — by tempest, by fire, and by smoke, and vapor of darkness, and by the opening of the earth, and by mountains which shall be carried up. And all these things must surely come, saith the prophet Zenos.

So Zenos had given an extended description of what the events would reflect at the death of [Christ]:

And the rocks of the earth must rend. And because of the groanings of the earth, many of the kings of the isles of the sea shall be wrought upon by the spirit of God to exclaim, The God of nature suffers. And as for they who are at Jerusalem, saith the prophet, they shall be scourged by all people because they crucified the God of Israel and turn their hearts aside, rejecting signs, and wonders, and power, and glory of the God of Israel. And because they turn their hearts aside, saith the prophet, and have despised the Holy One of Israel, they shall wander in the flesh, and perish, and become a hiss and a byword, and be hated among all nations. Nevertheless, when that day cometh, saith the prophet, that they no more turn aside their hearts against the Holy One of Israel, then will he remember the covenants which he made to their fathers. Yea, then will he remember the isles of the sea, yea, and all the people who are of the house of Israel will I gather in, saith the Lord, according to the words of the prophet Zenos, from the four quarters of the earth. Yea, and all the earth shall see the salvation of the Lord, saith the prophet; every nation, kindred, tongue, and people shall be blessed (1 Nephi 5:37).

Well, that prophecy of Zenos focuses not just upon the first coming of the Lord, His sacrifice, His burial, and the God of nature mourning over the death, and three days of darkness for those who are on the isles of the sea who are of the House of Israel—it also speaks about what is now underway with the gathering of the House of Israel, according to the words of the prophet Zenos, from the four corners of the earth.

Nearly six centuries before Christ was born as a mortal, the people who had the brass plates in their possession knew details about the coming ministry of Christ, even though

they were scattered and on the isles of the sea, even though they were located on the other side of the world from where Jerusalem was and the ministry of Christ would take place. They knew details about the life of Christ because of the words of the prophets contained in the brass plates. And Nephi explained how focused his people were on the coming of the Lord, nearly six centuries beforehand. He said: *We talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins* (2 Nephi 11:8).

Christ became the central theme, the central subject, the central focus of the religion six centuries before He came, because they took seriously the message contained in scriptures that we no longer have. We don't have the record of Zenos. We don't have the record of other prophets that the Nephites looked to and studied to learn about the ministry of Christ and His message. But they apparently had as good of information to look forward to the coming of Christ and His sacrifice as we have.

These people focused on Christ before He was here on the earth. They did not have the four gospel accounts of His life, but they had something perhaps equal to the four gospel accounts of Christ's life to give them knowledge about the details of the Lord and what He would come here to accomplish. For them, Christ was a promised Redeemer whose redemption had not yet been accomplished. For us, He is a remembered Redeemer whose redemptive work has been accomplished, and we know some of the details of that from the testimony of those who were witnesses. How much greater a reason do we have to focus our attention and our rejoicing and our preaching and our writing on Christ—who has now *done* His great work—than they who only knew the promise of His coming?

Christ lives, and knowledge of Him has been around since the days of Adam.

We're entering a season of which we're going to celebrate or commemorate the birth of the Savior. And we all know, even the Christians know, that the birth of Christ did not happen on the winter solstice. That's simply an addition as the Roman empire accepted Christianity as the state religion. They didn't know when He was born, and they already had a mid-winter celebration about the triumph of Sol Invictus, in which finally the day would gain victory over the night, and the night would begin to recede, and the daylight would begin to grow. And that winter moment was marked by the Roman celebration. When the pagans became Christian, the pagan celebrations likewise became Christianized, and Christmas became what it became because of incorporating the Roman holiday into Christianity.

So we all observe and we all take note of December 25 as a commemoration of the birth of Christ, even though it didn't happen on that day. And during this season of remembering, we take for granted a great deal about the story of Christ coming, His birth, the lowliness of His entry into the world. But when He came, even though men in high places and the world, generally, took little to no note of it, the heavens rejoiced and angels sang praises to the birth, and a handful—a small handful—of shepherds who were keeping watch over the flocks (undoubtedly priests whose flocks were to be used in the temple sacrifices at the

time) came to see the Sacrificial Lamb that the angels celebrated and sang about. And in a two-year journey, others who kept the prophecies and understood the signs that were given of the birth of the Lord, likewise, in a two year journey, arrived to bring gifts to celebrate the birth of this Messiah, of this Lord. We take for granted so much of what the ancients prized, the ancients celebrated.

Christ came to be a Sacrificial Lamb, and He performed and accomplished what He set out to do without ever turning aside to the left or to the right but staying steady on that course through the end. Christ came. He was sacrificed, but He lives. And He will come again.

The ancient prophets focused on two events in all prophecy as the primary burden of all prophecy. The coming of the Lord into the world to make the sacrifice as a Redeemer—that's the first event. And the second is His return in glory to judge the world. All the prophecies that dealt with the Lord's first coming described a single generation in which all the events would take place. Likewise, the prophecies about His return focus upon events that will primarily occur in a single generation that will see the fulfillment of the prophecies and the Lord's return in glory to judge the world. Just like the first coming of the Lord was so insignificant that even today people debate about the authenticity of the record of Him coming, because it was so unheralded in the halls of Alexandria and Rome and elsewhere in the world— The gospel writers were there, front and center, and witnessed it, but it was a very local event. Just like that, the prophecies about His second coming and the events that will take place during that second, concentrated prophetic foretelling is not going to be something that is unlike the first. It'll be easy for the world to not notice. It'll be easy, if you're not looking for the signs, for it to be upon you like a thief in the night—unwelcome, unheralded, unexpected. But if you take the prophecies to heart, Christ has given us great reason to recognize when that generation arrives and when His coming is near, even at the doorsteps.

So in this season of commemorating and celebrating the birth of Christ, we ought to be grateful not only for His first coming but for the promises of His second advent.

The foregoing was recorded by Denver Snuffer in Sandy, Utah on December 15, 2018.