

The Temple

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I stood in the back to try and listen to the opening prayer to get an idea what the acoustics was going to be like and I am satisfied that I need to talk slowly in order to be heard clearly in the back. If there is a problem with anyone hearing, yell out. Let me know. The object is not to be looked at, in fact it would be nice not to be looked at all, but to be heard. Preliminarily, for those of you who are going to be attending the Temple Conference tomorrow, I want to make a couple of comments about that conference. Margaret Barker was imposed upon by those who are personal friends of hers to consider coming out and attending the conference and she consented to do that. She is one of the most important voices when it comes to the topic of temple studies.

Unlike Latter Day Saints, in the Christian world at large, the subject of the temple is simply a matter of theoretical and historical discussion. Margaret Barker has elevated that discussion to a new level and she's done so, as something more than merely an honest scholar, because her views are not merely controversial. Her views are opposed by many of Christian academics. The reason why she is so compelling to Latter Day Saints, is because she reconstructs the first temple period, which is the period during which Lehi's family departed from Israel. They departed at the very end of the first temple period. She reconstructs the first temple period in a way that has a look and feel very much like what you find in The Book of Mormon and she did this without any knowledge about Joseph Smith, The Book of Mormon, or our faith. It takes integrity and it takes courage for her to put together what she has put together. Among Latter Day Saints, when **we** have scholars who speak about the temple, we can be vulnerable to pride and to self-satisfaction and to trying to collect recognition and acclaim for our scholarship. Pride is invidious. It creeps in everywhere, inadvertently; and sometimes the Latter Day Saint scholar suffers from the ill effects of pride. But Margaret Barker, to the contrary, required a great deal of meekness and honesty and humility to do what she has done. That's not to say that I am condemning anyone or judging anyone who is gonna speak tomorrow, in fact I've reviewed some of what is gonna be said tomorrow and there are some great things; well worth your time to go and hear.

We have a tendency, all of us, to take concepts or pictures or ideas and to put them in our heads and then to rely upon those pictures as we go forward learning new things. The object being to fit what we learned that is new into the framework of what we've already know or we're already familiar with. That can be handicapping. In the 28th chapter of Second Nephi, Nephi cautioned us about permitting, what he calls, the traditions of men to override, what he calls, the whisperings of the spirit. And he suggests that you run into mistakes, you run into errors, some of them terrible errors, when you permit those traditions, or those pictures that you already have inside your head, to be the framework from which you reconstruct new information that you learn. It's hard to do so, but when it comes to the gospel of Jesus Christ, you would be best advised to start with a blank slate

and to allow it to inform you as if you are hearing it for the first time because those words in scripture don't necessarily mean what the picture in your head suggests that they mean.

Let me pull an example. If you've got your scriptures, you're welcome to pull them out, and turn the pages and make all the noise you want finding the Joseph Smith History. You are **not** in a Sacrament meeting and therefore your scriptures are welcome to be used. In the Joseph Smith History the, it's the eighth verse. He says about halfway through that eighth verse *"in process of time, my mind became somewhat partial to the Methodist sect, and I felt some desire to be united with them."* Once again, this is high praise for Margaret Barker, a Methodist scholar. But laying that aside; during the time of this period, there was a, particularly in the revivalist part of Methodism, there was a group called The Shouting Methodists; and The Shouting Methodists had a tradition. That tradition was to go into the woods alone to pray, and when they prayed alone in the woods, they were looking for some experience that would bind them up and when they got bound up, they knew that they had an experience with God and The Holy Ghost and they came back converted. The miracle of The First Vision of Joseph Smith does not consist in the fact that he went in the woods alone to pray, nor does it consist in the fact that when he's in the woods alone and praying that he got bound up by some darkness which entirely overcame him. The miracle of Joseph Smith is that when that happened, he rejected it as the source of conversion. He did not allow his fears to control him. He did not allow the tradition to control him but calling upon God, he then pressed through to receive what lays on the other side of the fears and of the darkness and of the things that put you off the trail to God. And he tells us about the vision of the Father and the Son telling him that he was to join none of them. He goes on for some space of years, and during that space of years, he talks about how he frequently fell into many foolish errors displayed by the weaknesses of youth and the foibles of human nature and then he talks about he was guilty of levity and sometimes associating with jovial company. One of the pictures I think you have in your head about me, if you've read what I've written and you've read my blog, is that you may entirely misapprehend, number one, how difficult it is for me to get up here and do **this**. And number two, how incredibly irreverent I am by my native nature. I am **not** a stoic religious person. I undertake to do what the Lord asks, what I think pleases Him; at the cost of personal inconvenience. I don't like being up here and it's being recorded by my voice and not by a camera because I don't want people recognizing me. I don't wanna be a celebrity. I want my privacy. And when it comes to a native cheery temperament, I have, I suppose, a wicked sense of humor.

Well, he called upon and he had confidence because he had previously received an answer, and verse 29, he had confidence that he would have an answer and a divine manifestation as he had previously had one. Then, he gives the account, in some detail, of the appearance of the angel Moroni, how it occupied the night and he passes through the events of his life until we get to the time in which, during the translation of The Book of Mormon, beginning in verse 68, they come upon the ordinance of baptism. They went into the woods, they prayed in May of 1829, and John the Baptist appears and confers authority upon them, and immediately after conferring the authority upon Joseph Smith, the angel says to him *"He said [~~that~~] this Aaronic Priesthood had not the power of laying on hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, but that this should be conferred on us hereafter;"* and then we get to verse 73,

which is a description of what happened after being baptized:

73 Immediately on our coming [up] out of the water after we had been baptized, we experienced great and glorious blessings from our [~~Father our~~] Heavenly Father. No sooner had I baptized Oliver Cowdery, than the Holy Ghost fell upon him, [and] he stood up and prophesied many things which should shortly come to pass. And again, [~~as~~] [so] soon as I had been baptized by him, I also had the spirit of prophecy, when, standing up, I prophesied concerning the rise of this Church, and many other things connected with the Church, and this generation [of the children of men]. We were filled with the Holy Ghost, and rejoiced in the God of our salvation.

74 Our minds [~~now~~] being [now] enlightened, we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed unto us in a manner which we [~~could~~] never [could] attain to previously, nor ever before had thought of.

Now, here are the questions: He saw God the Father and he saw Jesus Christ in a vision. And if you'll read all of the accounts, you'll find out it was a vision that included a view into heaven for he saw the heavenly hosts because the Father does not appear without a host. The Son can appear alone, but the Father never does. If you see the Father, you are going to see a host.

And thereafter he is visited by the angel Moroni and he is tutored; not merely through the one night but in successive annual occurrences for four years; **and yet** the first time his testimony mentions the Holy Ghost is after baptism, and after baptism, using authority which the angel told him had not the right to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost. That would happen at some subsequent occasion. Why then, without the laying on of hands by one having authority, did Joseph Smith receive the Holy Ghost? Not merely as a visitation, mind you; read the words. It lingered, it persisted. Because after they were baptized, "*we began to have the scriptures laid open to our understandings, and the true meaning and intention of their more mysterious passages revealed [~~to~~] [unto] us.*"

That required scripture study over the ensuing weeks, months, years. There we encounter a word: Mysterious passages. You know that Peter in Second Peter chapter one, I don't know verse 16 maybe, you look it up. He says that the scriptures are not of any private interpretation. But holy men spake as they were moved upon by the Holy Ghost.

The scriptures were given by the power of the Holy Ghost, and now Joseph Smith is explaining that he could unravel their mysteries by the power of the Holy Ghost and things that did not make sense before, began to make sense. That was a hiccup. If you've read The Second Comforter, in the chapter about becoming as a little child, there is an excerpt taken from a book, Godel, Escher, Bach, a brilliant mathematical book about Bongaard problems. Bongaard problems are designed to test a certain kind of reasoning using symbols in order to test the person evaluating them. And invariably, Bongaard problems are solved by children and they confuse adults; because the children's minds have not become cluttered

by the kind of mathematical complexity that we have bouncing around in our heads. As a consequence of which, they look at it simply. And they see things simply and they can solve the Bongard problems in a way in which adults fail to grasp. The gospel is adapted to the simple mind. The statements that are contained in scripture are given in simplicity and in plainness. So, when we encounter Joseph Smith, speaking to us now about having the mysteries of the gospel laid open to his mind as a consequence of having the Holy Ghost, I am reminded of a statement that he made that you find in The Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith about the Holy Ghost on pages 149 and 150, which I am gonna read an excerpt from:

"There are two comforters spoken of, one is the Holy Ghost, the same is given on the Day of Pentecost and that all saints receive after faith, repentance, and baptism."

This first comforter, and by the way, Joseph Smith is saying this at a time when the authority for the laying on of hands had been restored, but his list is: faith and repentance and baptism, and that produces the same effect as on the Day of Pentecost. If you listen to the words of the ordinance that's performed in the church, the words of the ordinance are an admonition to you to receive the Holy Ghost. It's telling you to do something. Well:

"This first comforter, or Holy Ghost, has no other effect than pure intelligence. [It's] It is more powerful and expanding the mind, enlightening the understanding, and storing the intellect with present knowledge."

Did you get that list of things? The effect of the Holy Ghost is pure intelligence. I can watch Lawrence of Arabia, and when they've successfully knocked the train off the track, and the group he is leading has charged and overcome the enemy, and Lawrence is walking on the tops of the trains with the flowing robes, I can get goose bumps. It is moving; it is stirring. That's not the Holy Ghost. I can have that same effect with Les Miserables. I can have that same effect with some of the scenes in Joseph's Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat. Moving and stirring things can delight your senses. That's not the Holy Ghost. Has no other effect than pure intelligence; expanding the mind, enlightening the understanding, storing the intellect with present knowledge. I'm not here to entertain you. I am trying to inform you of doctrine that will save you. I don't care if any of you are stirred, or like one of our MSNBC folks, had a tremor run up his leg at the president's speaking. I don't care about that. I care about your salvation. I care about your souls and I care about you understanding the things that will save you. Joseph Smith gave the list: pure intelligence, expanding the mind, enlightening the understanding, storing the intellect with present knowledge.

In the translation of the Book of Moses, which was Joseph correcting the Book of Genesis, he gives a list there of the Holy Ghost as well. Let me read you that list:

"...the Comforter; the peaceable things of immortal glory;" [this is Moses chapter six, verse 61]

"...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.”
(Moses 6:61)

This is the Holy Ghost. Joseph Smith returned from the first vision and didn't talk about the Holy Ghost because that incident, quite frankly, was not understood by Joseph Smith at the time it occurred. When he explained to his mother, he said: "Never mind, I'm well enough off. I've learned for myself that Presbyterianism isn't true." And I think that is a candid description of what Joseph got out of it that day at that time. He had been converted and he knew now not to join the Presbyterians. What Joseph Smith learned from the angel Moroni, also did not confer upon him the Holy Ghost. Faith, repentance, baptism, and then he notes the Holy Ghost. And what are the effects that he reports, immediately? Number one. Prophecy; one of the hallmark signs. Paul lists it in Corinthians. Mormon and Moroni list it in Moroni's book. The list of what the gifts are, you can find it in D&C section 46 if I am remembering that correctly.

11 For all have not every gift given unto them; for there are many gifts, and to every man is given a gift by the Spirit of God. 12 To some is given one, and to some is given another, that all may be profited thereby.

13 To some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he was crucified for the sins of the world.

14 To others it is given to believe on their words, that they also might have eternal life if they continue faithful.

15 And again, to some it is given by the Holy Ghost to know the differences of administration, as it will be pleasing unto the same Lord, according as the Lord will, suiting his mercies according to the conditions of the children of men.

16 And again, it is given by the Holy Ghost to some to know the diversities of operations, whether they be of God, that the manifestations of the Spirit may be given to every man to profit withal.

17 And again, verily I say unto you, to some is given, by the Spirit of God, the word of wisdom.

18 To another is given the word of knowledge, that all may be taught to be wise and to have knowledge.

19 And again, to some it is given to have faith to be healed;

20 And to others it is given to have faith to heal.

21 And again, to some is given the working of miracles;

22 And to others it is given to prophesy;

23 And to others the discerning of spirits.

24 And again, it is given to some to speak with tongues;

25 And to another is given the interpretation of tongues.

26 And all these gifts come from God, for the benefit of the children of God. (D&C 46:11-28)

The list of the gifts; prophecy is always included as one of the hallmark signs of what it is that the Holy Ghost does. And then secondly, allowing Joseph to understand the real intent of what is in the scriptures. How much of a blank slate was Joseph at the time that the Holy

Ghost allowed him the pure spirit of intelligence.

Well, I would suggest that if Joseph Smith can pass through the first vision and can pass through the incident of the visits of the angel Moroni and if he can even translate The Book of Mormon, which was then underway at the time this occurred, by the gift and power of God, but not attribute anything to the Holy Ghost until after he is baptized, that it is equally possible for you, good people, to go through everything you've gone through in your life, and yet not have experienced the thing that Joseph is talking about, which comes as a consequence of faith, repentance, and baptism.

Well the purpose of tonight, and I gotta clarify something. There is a reason why this is being held at Weber State University not at Utah State University and why this is somewhat disconnected from the Temple Conference going up there. That is the gathering of scholars at the secular university being presented during the daytime at the university itself. This is an evening event free to the public in which we are free to discuss religion and the things of God without worrying about the heavy handprint of the state. Utah State University is owned by the State of Utah and has to respect the requirement for certain distance between what we do here and what will happen there.

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. Even more so, those who have conspired to break their temple covenants and gone in and recorded the temple ceremonies, and then transcribed those ceremonies and put them on the internet, have made it possible for everyone who goes to the trouble of finding and reading the temple ceremony that's now available on the internet. If the temple ceremony is an end, then all of those people are the beneficiaries of it as well. But if the temple ceremony is instead a means, a means of trying to take you somewhere, then it doesn't matter who sees the ordinance, you can't steal the ends. You can't come in by some unauthorized way and attain the end, because that is a matter that exists between you and God. 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, there is an account given of the man Adam, and I have a question for you... **Who**, in the ceremony, is Adam? Is this a history lesson about the first man that lived on the Earth or is this, instead, a symbolic rendering of the lives of every man, or is it instead **your** life. Are you being told that in the beginning, you came here in an innocent, even a paradisiacal state. And in that state, everything was possible to the innocent mind. I mean, we impose, as adults, upon the credulity of our children by teaching them about the Easter bunny, and then to pull off the fraud, we have to go to the trouble every Easter of acting the role of the Easter bunny, always out of sight; and we impose upon them Santa Clause, and they believe in these things. That faith and that trust that those children have, comes as a consequence of where every one of you began; in a state of innocence, in a state of purity, in a state in which it is possible for that mind to comprehend and to accept the things of God. But there comes a point when you become accountable. There comes a point when you grow out of that and you are expelled from that state of innocence and then in order to return there, you have to make certain sacrifices and you have to be willing to obey, and you have to be willing to pursue the gospel. And at length, because there is a difference between the age of eight when you begin to become accountable and puberty; at length, the range of temptation that will confront you will require you then to engage and obey the law of chastity. And then as you grow into adulthood, when you realize that this world really has very little to offer, you learn that the way to happiness does not consist in popularity or wealth or acclaim, it lies exclusively in consecrating yourself to the things of God. And when you have developed through that course and you've come to the recognition that consecrating yourself is the only thing of value.

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 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 is an end, makes that notion preposterous because you're 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 then you were two hours earlier when you walked in, but the ceremony is saying you've 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. If you don't think the apostle Paul suffered from pride, than 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. Well, when it comes to the idea of being True and Faithful.... By the way, I don't care if you buy a quad, your scriptures aren't complete until you get the Lectures on Faith. They were voted in and sustained as scripture and then they were removed without a vote. In the Lectures on Faith, this is the Seventh lecture, this is the 16th verse, talking about the Savior:

"~~The~~ [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."

Jesus Christ **is** the prototype of all saved beings. **So what** was our Savior if he's the prototype? He was a blasphemer. He was a sinner. He worked on the Sabbath and he encouraged his disciples to do so. He associated with the tax collectors and with the publicans and sinners and the harlots, and he let harlots tooooooouch hiiiiim. This is the prototype of the saved man. This is the One who was rejected by His people. This is the One who was called unclean. This is the One who was rejected, persecuted, and ultimately killed by those who held religious rank and authority in His day. This is the prototype of the saved man. This is the example of Joseph Smith. This is Isaiah and Jeremiah. **Was** Christ true and faithful in all things? If so, to what, to whom was He true and faithful? Was it the law? I mean, he never spoke ill against the law. The Sermon on the mount is simply taking the law and showing what it really meant. He took it to another level. If he took it to the level in which he took it, Caiaphas would not have been sitting there in the robes of the priesthood, which by that time, had been elevated to the status of wealth itself. If you had merely the attire that Caiaphas had on during the trial of Christ, just his attire, you would have been a wealthy man.

Well, The Lectures on Faith, this is lecture six, yeah, it's the sixth lecture:

"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's 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. And then we get to this verse eight:

"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."

What did the Prototype of the saved man offer in sacrifice? I mean, we jump to the end of the story and we point to Gethsemane and we point to the cross and we say, there it is, His life. But He was the living sacrifice for many more years than the week that was spent coming in, confronting them in the temple, celebrating and implementing the sacrament, going into Gethsemane and suffering, being tried and crucified, being laid in a grave, and three days and three nights later arising from the grave. He spent some 30 plus years prior to that as the prototype of the saved man.

In the ceremony, you come asking for further light and knowledge from the Lord, and when you enter into the Lord's presence in the ceremony, it hints at something which the scriptures themselves make plain. In John chapter 14 the Savior said, *I will not leave you* [this is John chapter 14, verse eighteen] *I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you.* And in verse 23 He says, *"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."* Well, that promise in the 23rd verse suggests something beyond the Lord simply coming and visiting with someone. The notion that the Father and the Son will take up their abode... I mean, we have that hymn, and that hymn creates a picture; Abide with me 'Tis Eventide, so abiding means you come and you spend the evening and there we've taken care of the abode. But the suggestion here is that there is a greater kind of familiarity that attaches to the relationship that is more enduring.

In Revelation chapter three, verses 20 and 21 there is a promise that John records, well, that 20 is where he stands at the door and knocks *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock..."* See, in this description, it's almost a flip. It's not you knocking to get in, it's the Lord knocking to come to you. It's the Lord who is the eager One. The One who would like to have this relationship take up. He is the One knocking. He is the One trying to get into your life. And so, in this account *"I stand at the door"* [the Lord's speaking] *"and knock. If any man hear my voice..."* [see, His sheep hear his voice. Do, do you hear His voice?] *"If any man hear my voice and open the door..."* because you're the one that shut it. You're the one that's saying, "yah, no thanks, I'll pass. I mean, I've got a skeptical mind now. I've been to college and received training to practice law. I'm an engineer and I understand formulas and equations. I'm a mathematician and I know some things add up and some things don't, and I also know that I've been leading a reasonably decent life and I've never had Jesus in **my** car."

Our minds are skeptical. We have to open the door, because almost invariably the door that we configure to keep Him out from our construct is something that has come about as a consequence of what happened in your life. From the time you left that state of innocence as a child in the Garden until today. Every painful experience you've been through, every humiliation you've suffered, everything that has gone on in your life that has led where you now construct a door... Some of oak, some of iron. Whatever it is that's happened to you, you use **that** to keep Him out. "Well, if He really cared, He would..."

You know, the notion that He doesn't care is the greatest lie of all. If you knew what he suffered, you would **never** say, "If He cared..." But if you'll open the door, He says "I will

come into him and will sup with him, and he with me.”

You know, the reason why in that parable in Ten Parables that I drew upon the tree and the fruit and the neighbors who were fighting with one another, sharing the food as one of the traditions in that community of sharing in one another’s lives, is drawn from this very example the Savior used; because to share a meal with Him is to become one with Him. I might be able to find it in a hurry, I’ll check, yeah, this is Exodus chapter 24, verse nine. This is a group going up onto the mount where they meet with the Lord.

9 Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel:

10 And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness.

11 And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.

So on the mount, in Exodus chapter 24, you have the Lord supping with them. And in the account in Genesis of the visit with Abraham, there’s a sacral meal. In the D&C, I am not gonna look it up, you look it up, where the Lord talks about when He returns. Ah, I think I know where that is. Hold on. This is a, I’ll use it anyway, this is not without its controversy. You probably don’t know the full history of this but... this is section 27, verse five of the D&C:

Behold, this is wisdom in me; wherefore, marvel not, for the hour cometh that I will drink of the fruit of the vine with you on the earth, and with Moroni, whom I have sent unto you to reveal the Book of Mormon, containing the fulness [of my everlasting gospel, to whom I have committed the keys of the record of the stick of Ephraim;]

And so on and He gives a list of all of those that He’s going to have this meal with and verse five, He’s going to sit down and He’s going to drink of the fruit of the vine and He’s going to have fellowship with. And here we have in Revelation chapter three, verse 20, the notion that He wants to come in and He wants to sup with you. Well, you think about how long it takes and what goes on at a meal? I mean if you’re not, you know, confining that meal to the ceremony that we have in the sacrament, but you say this is actually sitting down to sup with someone, that is a setting in which it is convivial. In which there’s an exchange of friendship and discussion and ideas and you have prophets in The Book of Mormon talking about how approachable the Lord is and about how He visits and speaks in plain humility as one man speaks to another.

We have this absolutely schizophrenic set of pictures in our head about the Lord. On the one hand, He is this limp-wristed, happy-go-lucky, permissive chap who sashays about blessing everyone with fairy dust. And on the other hand, we have this stern, unapproachable, distance galactic ruler who just can’t be troubled by any of us and He says, This is His work and His glory, to save you. Not merely to save and preserve you, but to bring about your eternal life and your exaltation. **That’s what He is about. Get rid of the**

junk in your heads and let the scriptures speak to you. As Joseph said, Look, everything in them can be a mystery if what you have done is barred the information from getting through to you by the door that you have erected from the traditions that you have been handed. Many of you were handed traditions from very good and very well meaning and very honorable Latter Day Saint parents who ought to be commended and praised for the effort that they made with you.

However, I don't care if your parents were nigh unto God or the devil himself, 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 D&C 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 section 93, verse one, you probably all can recite that in your head, I hope, I'm not gonna read it. I am, I am looking in Mormon and I am trying to find a verse in Moses. Moses six, verse 57:

D&C 93:1 "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"

"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 anoint and wash you rather in the Kirtland and then again in Nauvoo. And, and, as it turns out, I mean for the washing of the

body it's really a pretty good antiseptic. One of the things that Joseph talked about in 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. Here's a notion for you. One of the doors to barring entry is...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 chapter six, is about dwelling in His presence. And when it comes, in verse, again, this is Moses six, verse 57, it says when it comes to dwelling there, no one unclean thing can dwell there because He is 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's 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. These are not cunningly devised fables, as the apostle Paul put

it. This is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Look at the definition that the Lord gives of salvation in Ether chapter three. This is a definition that the Lord gives.

Ether 3:13 "...behold, the Lord showed himself unto him, and said: Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I show myself unto you."

This is the meaning of salvation. This is the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is contained in The Book of Mormon, which has the fullness of Jesus Christ in it. The Lord showed Himself unto him and said, *"Because thou knowest these things ye are redeemed from the fall; therefore ye are brought back into my presence; therefore I show myself unto you."*

Look at, look at D&C section 76, in which a description is given of those who inherit the celestial kingdom or those who have celestial glory. And, and, I'm not gonna go through all of it and parse it, it's really interesting, it's worth doing; but included among the definition of those who are celestial, are descriptions of the present tense; Now, Here. I mean there's past tense in here and there's future tense in here, but this is the present tense. And I believe that this was wittingly done because this is a transcript from heaven. Joseph Smith would recite the words of the vision. Sidney Rigdon, when it was read back, would say, "that is correct." Therefore, the tenses of this language were given by heaven and not by the person dictating. So, in verse 54, D&C section 76:

*54 They are they who are the church of the Firstborn.
55 They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things—
56 They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fullness, and of his glory;
57 And are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son.
58 Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God—
59 Wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's. (D&C 76:54-59)*

Now if that sounds a lot like the language that is contained in the oath in the covenant of the priesthood, it's because it mirrors the language that you find in the oath in the covenant of the priesthood; where once again, it talks about the priesthood being connected to God Himself; the Powers of Heaven, if you will.

Well, if the temple is 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 and we all know

that to dwell in the presence of the Lord, if you are not prepared to do so, you would be more miserable to dwell with the holy and just God under a consciousness of your filthiness before Him than you would to dwell with the damned souls in hell; that's Mormon chapter nine, verse four. Really, you ought to read two through four, well, five too. See, five talks about your nakedness before God.

You know, the Lord suffered the things that He suffered so that He could redeem us by leading us back but there isn't any magic fairy dust to that process. It is by the things that He knows that He fixes us. There is no defect in any of you that the Lord did not experience and heal from. He knows the way back to the Father because He found His way back to the Father by the things that He suffered in the agony of Gethsemane. He learned what it was to be sinned. There is nothing you have, however malignant or deeply hidden, that He hasn't experienced and then healed from and found His way back to peace and justification and holiness before His Father. The way in which He works the atonement is to teach you if you will receive it, what you need in order to overcome what your flaws are.

On the 13th of February 2003, after a long search for the Lord, which I had almost forgotten about because I was so busy with other things in my life, the Lord made Himself known to me. And I thought I had received everything the Lord had to offer. By the time we got to the Christmas season of 2008, but just before Christmas of 2008, I had some serious medical issues compounded by the fact that I've had a hernia fixed some, I don't know, 18 years before and I had a problem that had grown into an infection of that site and it required surgery, which they were going to do laparoscopically, which meant nothing to me then and probably means little to you now, but that involves puncturing and sending in robotic arms to fix things but it didn't work out that way, and after they'd had a lot of fun exploring with robotic arms, they pulled all that out and they simply opened me up from the navel to the pelvic bone.

I, when they gone done, boy, I probably shouldn't say this..... Okay, I was on the high council at the time. This goes back to what I was telling you at the beginning about a wicked, even despicable, sense of humor. They removed, they removed, like eight inches. It's a circulatory loop, they have to take the entire loop and then pull it together. They removed the loop, they took approximately eight inches of the colon out, and when I got back, I was on the high council, I sent an email to the other members of the high council in the stake presidency saying "I'd been through surgery, they removed eight inches of my colon, I'm recovering, but on the bright side, I'm less of an asshole than I've ever been before."

Okay, so now you know little more about... In, in, any event, when they do surgery that radical, and when they remove and flush; because there was infection, they had to tease apart a lot of internal stuff. The repair doesn't get stitched up, they just put staples in you and I had staples, which required time to heal and it required me to take off and replace bandages and change the dressing two or three times a day. During that time period, I was still speaking in sacrament meetings and I was going into the office on occasion and I would wear a suit coat, but I had pajama bottoms on so I was sort of a curious looking fellow. But you couldn't put on, you really couldn't put on belt. Well, I bled and I bled, I kept track of it,

but it was months later when I went back and looked at it. I bled for 40 days, and after the 40 days, I learned yet more from the Lord. And I can tell you that 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 context 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.

Let me end because we've taken long enough, first of all by thanking the DeGraw family singers who gave the prelude music. They are a family that are dear to me. Donna, thank you, that was wonderful and it allowed me to stand in back and see how the microphone worked and Jim who will give the closing prayer let me thank him as well. He teaches me in a high priest group over the active resistance of the high priest group. I get a lot of rest in that group. It helps when you're recuperating from things to tend to your group meetings regularly.

Listen, 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. I have nothing but appreciation for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. They publish the scriptures; oh yeah, they bought Bookcraft too; they publish the scriptures that make me wise to salvation. They build the temples in which we can go and learn about the mysteries of God. They delivered to me through the voice of some Utah boys; I mean they were about the same age as I was, but they were so young and naïve in my universe, that I considered them boys; a testimony about the restoration of the gospel through the prophet Joseph Smith 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 am 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.