

Book of Mormon as a Covenant

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I have this portable triple combination that I brought with me because the copy that I have of the new scriptures is so cumbersome, and we have to pack everything to catch the plane flights. So, although I really prefer the new scriptures, for portability sake, I brought these.

One of the things that I have, and I want to point out to you these features in the new scriptures in hopes that you will take note of the same kinds of things. One of the things that I have found is that when you get a new set of scriptures, everything is laid out differently than the way that it used to be laid out in the set that you are accustomed to reading and using. As a result, what used to be on the top left-hand side is now on the bottom right-hand side. Everything is reoriented. And the new scriptures do not have versification. They are divided into paragraphs in order to have complete thoughts gathered together. The paragraphs are numbered in order to cite them, but the purpose was to be divided into paragraphs so you got a complete thought. Therefore, when you're reading something you're used to seeing out of context— Some verses in the scriptures are a phrase. They're not even a sentence. They're just a phrase. But the phrase belongs inside a sentence, and the sentence belongs inside a paragraph, and when you pick up the new scriptures and you read them in this current layout, everything changes. You begin to see things....

I have read one way a passage in a January 1841 revelation—the entire time, over 40 some years—I read it the same way. I got the new scriptures with the new layout, and I read the same material, and all of the sudden, it has a different meaning. I'm not going to take the time to read it, but I want you to find it. It's the January 1841 revelation. When you have time, read it. And read the words about *they shall not be moved out of their place*, which I have always read to mean the people who are in Nauvoo. And if they are faithful, the people who are in Nauvoo shall not be moved out of their place. In the new scriptures, I read that, and I believe it is referring to Joseph and Hyrum Smith. That they would be preserved and not moved out of their place if the people were faithful. And if they were not, they were going to lose Joseph and Hyrum. Now it doesn't matter whether the words are referring to the people living in Nauvoo or to Joseph and Hyrum. The sign was that they would be moved out of their place, and both were. We lost Joseph; we lost Hyrum; and we lost Nauvoo. So, things like that happen when you've got the new scriptures.

Last night, as I was listening to Jeff and others who spoke, one of the things that struck me is that almost all revelation—going back to the days of Adam and coming right down to today—come as a consequence of understanding scripture. That was true even of Enoch. Because Enoch had a record that had been handed down from Adam. And in the case of Abraham, the records belonging to the Fathers fell into his hands, and he studied them to gain the understanding that he had. Micah quotes Isaiah. Isaiah quotes Zenos and Zenoch. Jacob quotes the allegory of Zenos. Nephi quotes Isaiah. All of them study scripture in order

to get an understanding, and revelation is largely based upon expanding your understanding of scripture. The Book of Mormon is really the keystone of the religion but also the the keystone to revelation itself. It was intended to open our eyes to things that we couldn't see before. The Book of Mormon is really a giant urim and thummim intended for our benefit.

I was also struck by something that I went and found this morning. This is a passage in which Nephi is describing the saints at the very end, at the end of time, just before the scene wraps up.

And it came to pass that I beheld the church of the Lamb of God, and it's numbers were few because of the wickedness and abominations of the whore who sat upon many waters. Nevertheless, I beheld that the church of the Lamb, who were the saints of God, were also upon all the face of the earth; and their dominions upon the face of the earth were small because of the wickedness of the great whore whom I saw. And it came to pass that I beheld that the great mother of abominations did gather together... multitudes upon the face of the earth, among all the nations of the gentiles, to fight against the Lamb of God. And it came to pass that I, Nephi, beheld [that] the power of the Lamb of God, that it descended upon the saints of the church of the Lamb and upon the covenant people of the Lord, who were scattered upon all the face of the earth. And they were armed with righteousness and with the power of God in great glory.

And it came to pass that I beheld that the wrath of God was poured out upon that great and abominable church, insomuch that there were wars and rumors of wars among all the nations and kindreds of the earth. And as there began to be wars and rumors of wars among all the nations which belonged to the mother of abominations, the angel spake unto me, saying, Behold, the wrath of God is upon the mother of harlots, and behold, thou seest all these things. (1 Nephi 3:28-29)

These words don't say that the coming conflict is against the covenant people of God or the church of the Lamb. Nor does it say that the wrath of God consists of God picking a fight with the wicked. In the case of the wrath of God, people are stirred to anger against each other. They decide. The wicked destroy the wicked because the wicked decide that they cannot put up with peaceful coexistence anymore. Their hearts are so angry with one another that they manage to inflict violence and death and destruction upon one another.

Like the judgment that Mormon describes in Mormon chapter 9 (of the old set), God is a bystander. The wrath of God is manifest by the rejection of God and the violence that people turn upon one another. And the power of God and the glory of God—meaning the peace of God and the ability to live with one another in harmony without this raging conflict—that power is manifest among the people of God, the church of God, and the covenant people that belong to God. So, if you can maintain peaceful coexistence with one another as you worship God in the coming days, the power and glory of God will descend and be with you, because you managed to extract yourself from the coming conflict, rage, hatred, polarization. And if you don't think those days are not commencing, then, well, you're not

watching the news. It's just an ongoing political battle escalating continually.

Well, the Book of Mormon— This is the Book of Mormon Covenant Conference. The Book of Mormon tells you what it's for.

Oh, one last thought about the church of the Lamb of God. At the time— at the time that these words were being written by Nephi, and he had seen the vision, and he's talking about what he saw. At the time that he's writing that prophecy, the earliest stages of the Nephite civilization had just begun. Nephi is still living. He has a wife. He has some children. He has brothers. The total group that are involved is not much larger than the group that we have right here today [about 25 people]. He's looking down through history prophetically and he's saying the saints—the covenant people of God, the people that the Lamb of God's church—that group is "few." Now if it was 16 million people scattered globally, in the reality of Nephi's context, he would not describe them as few. He is not making a comparative analysis. He's simply describing what he saw. He said they're all around the world, but there's only very few of them. If you go to the fellowship locator and you look at what you see among those that have identified themselves with the last days' covenant, they're all over the world, but there is really very few of them.

We tend to think about numbers in the Book of Mormon as if their numbers were akin to what we're accustomed to seeing in our day. One of the distortions that comes in is the rank, the identification. If we're talking about someone who is a general, we would say, He's a general, and we would expect a star to be on his shoulder. If they're talking about someone that is a general, they would call him a captain of 10,000. It does not mean that he has 10,000. A captain of a hundred does not mean that he has a hundred. It means a rank. A captain of 50 does not mean that he has 50. It means that he has a rank. When the pioneer companies were organized, and they divided into captains of 100's and captains of 50's and captains of 10's, those were simply identifying a role, a rank, a position. It didn't mean that you had a hundred people in your company. It didn't mean that you had 50 people that you were directing. It didn't mean that you had 10 people over whom you had charge. It was simply a way of dividing them. So, when you get to the end of the Nephite wars, with "this and his 10,000" and "that and his 10,000" and "someone else and their 10,000" and they're all slain, it doesn't mean that you are reading about hundreds of thousands or millions who are dying. It means that someone in a position of rank and authority and all of those under his command were slain. What those numbers amounted to, we don't know. But the designation that Nephi gives to what would be going on in the last days before the coming of Christ, when the wicked are destroyed by the wrath of God,—meaning that the spirit withdraws, and as it withdraws, their level of cruelty and violence increases—is few, probably describing gatherings like we have here.

The Book of Mormon begins with a title page that was on the very last plate of the plates that Joseph Smith translated, and it appears as the first page of the Book of Mormon.

An account written by the hand of Mormon upon plates taken from the plates of Nephi. Wherefore, it is an abridgement of the [records] of the people of Nephi, and also of the

Lamanites; written to the Lamanites [who] are a remnant of the house of Israel and also to Jew and gentile .

The Book of Mormon was written for three groups. Three targeted audiences are identified right at the outset: the Lamanites, the Jews, and the gentiles. That's who the Book of Mormon was sent to. In the Teachings and Commandments, section 158, there is a covenant offered to the gentiles, to the remnant of the Lamanites, and to the remnant of the Jews. These are the words of that covenant.

Do you have faith in these things and receive the scriptures approved by the Lord as a standard to govern in your daily walk in life, to accept the obligations established by the Book of Mormon as a covenant, and to use the scriptures to correct yourselves and to guide your words, thoughts and deeds? (vs 3)

It also goes on to say: *But if you do not honor me, nor seek to recover my people Israel... then you have no promise (vs 19).*

The people that the Book of Mormon established as the target audience are the Lamanites, the Jews, and the gentiles. We have an obligation to try and reach out to the Lamanites, the Jews, and the gentiles.

The title page goes on to say:

...written by way of commandment, and also by the spirit of prophecy and of revelation. Written, and sealed [up], and hid up unto the LORD, that they might not be destroyed; to come forth by the gift and power of God unto the interpretation thereof; sealed...by the hand of Moroni...hid up unto the LORD, to come forth in due time by..way of [the] gentile; the interpretation thereof by the gift [and power] of God.

Did you get that? Almost in rapid succession, twice we're told *to come forth by the gift and power of God unto the interpretation thereof* and *the interpretation thereof by the gift [and power] of God* . Joseph Smith did not translate the Book of Mormon. God translated the Book of Mormon and told Joseph Smith what He wanted that interpretation to say. I have read as many source documents as are currently available to review in print. There are some source materials I haven't looked at because they are in private collections, and you have to travel to see those. But we have this fanciful narrative about how the Book of Mormon was translated.

One of the things that went on in Kirtland was a "shouting Methodist" tradition. People would go into the woods, and they would shout praises to God in hopes that they obtained some kind of spiritual manifestation. The typical manifestation that they were able to create in this tradition was to be seized upon, bound up, and unable to move, which was considered a sign of God's grace and redemption because they were seized upon by some unseen power that had such marvelous power as to bind them up so they could not move. One of the other things that the "shouting Methodists" tradition in Kirtland, Ohio

encountered was the idea that as you're out and shouting praises, often times standing on the stump of a tree that's been cut down, there would be a scroll or parchment that would flutter down from heaven, and when it arrived, on the parchment, there would be words written, and you would read the words, and after you had read the words, the parchment would disappear; it would disintegrate. These were the kinds of manifestations that were the "shouting Methodist" tradition which, when Mormonism came to Kirtland, some of the Kirtland Mormon converts had similar experiences.

Well, one of the stories which gets told about the translation of the Book of Mormon is that Joseph Smith would look in a hat, a parchment would appear, he would read the words off the parchment, and then the parchment would disintegrate as soon as the translation was written down, and then a new parchment would appear.

At a conference in Kirtland, Hyrum Smith introduced his brother, Joseph. And as Joseph was getting up to talk, Hyrum said, "And Joseph is going to tell us about how the translation of the Book of Mormon took place." Joseph got up in front of the people, and he said, "It's not appropriate; it was translated by the gift and power of God." And then he went on. He refused to describe the process. If you want to know how the Book of Mormon was translated, the Book of Mormon tells you how: by the gift and power of God.

When pressed, after Joseph is dead and gone, and you want to sound like you know something, and you think back about the experiences of the "shouting Methodist" tradition in the early days in Kirtland, well, why not say scrolls would appear, and then when he read them, they'd disintegrate. There is so much that has crept into the reconstruction of events that are accepted by the LDS church, that are accepted by historians, that are accepted by the scholars. There's only two people—I was gonna say one person—that knows how it was done—and that was Joseph—but there are two; the second one is God. How did God interpret the Book of Mormon? And, by the way, if you took only the etchings that are on the plates of the Book of Mormon, and you rendered a word for word translation of that set of inscriptions, would it read exactly like the Book of Mormon that we have? Or did God—in His mercy, understanding the weaknesses of our day—give us an interpretation that helps us to understand things in our language, maybe a little more clearly than if we had simply a word for word translation from the plates? These are things that Joseph may know, or he may not. But certainly God would know. When people pretend to know everything there is to know about the translation of the Book of Mormon, and then to mock the process, they're really inviting... they're putting their own foolishness on display, and they're inviting the ire of God. The fact is that the witness to how this process unfolded confined what he had to say to, "it was translated by the gift and power of God." And the source of these other fanciful tales—Oliver Cowdery, Martin Harris (two of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon)—they were commanded to bear testimony, and their testimony was to consist of "the interpretation thereof was by the gift and power of God." So when they go beyond that, to give details that they probably have no way of knowing a thing about, they're actually violating the restriction that God put upon it "for a wise purpose."

Joseph Smith was not the translator. It plainly states that God was the translator. It does not

mean that what was composed by Nephi, Jacob, Enos, Omni, and others on the small plates, and by Mormon and Moroni on the rest—and their abridgement—is necessarily exactly what was composed by them, because God used the interpretation of the text that He provided to state what He intended by His gift and power to be the message that we receive today. It is literally Gods statement to us about the content He wants us to understand, adapted to our needs. It goes on to say, in this title page,

An abridgement taken from the book of Ether also, which is a record of the people of Jared, [who] were scattered at the time the LORD confounded the language... which is to shew unto the remnant of the house of Israel [what] great things the LORD hath done for their fathers...that they may know the covenants of the LORD, that they are not cast [out] for ever. And also to the convincing of the Jew and gentile that Jesus is the CHRIST, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations...now if there [are faults], [they are] the mistake[s] of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment seat of CHRIST.

What are the covenants of the Lord that are supposed to be made known unto the remnant of the house of Israel that comes through the Book of Mormon? Well, the Book of Mormon tells you what they are: *It shall also be of worth unto the gentiles, ...not only unto the gentiles but [also] unto all the house of Israel, unto the making known of the covenants of the Father of Heaven unto Abraham, saying, In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed (1 Nephi 7:3).* So the purpose of the Book of Mormon is to alert the gentiles and the Jews of the covenants that were made, specifically the covenants that were made with Abraham.

One of the great things about the new set of scriptures is that the Teachings and Commandments are laid out chronologically. There's this tradition that the last great revelation that Joseph Smith received was in January of 1841, in which the Lord outlined the commandment to build the temple, and the signs that were to be given if the temple were completed in sufficient time, and how the church would be accepted with their kindred dead—or rejected with their kindred dead, depending on how they pursued this. That's supposedly his last great revelation. In the Teachings and Commandments, however, what you see in the layout of Joseph's revelations chronologically is that in 1842, the first installment of the Book of Abraham was published. And it appears in the Teachings and Commandments in its chronological layout, and then a few months later, the next installment of the Book of Abraham appears. And so the last largest revelation given to Joseph, although there were others that are included in this same time frame, is the text of the Book of Abraham.

The Book of Mormon points to a recovery of knowledge and understanding about the covenants God made with Abraham. The Book of Abraham had to be revealed. It had to come forward. In order for us to understand the covenants that God made with Abraham, we had to get the Book of Abraham, which did not roll out until the 1842-and-beyond time period. Joseph's work culminated in attempting to get on the ground ordinances that would have reflected more fully the covenants made with Abraham, but the Book of Abraham is part of vindicating the promises that were made in the Book of Mormon. So, as you read the

Teachings and Commandments, and you see it unfolding chronologically, you see where the Lectures on Faith fit in. You see where the book of Abraham fit in. You see how Joseph's ministry was taking on a trajectory that literally fits the pattern of what the Book of Mormon was promising would come forth and be vindicated.

In the Book of Abraham: *I have purposed to take thee away out of Haran... to make of thee a minister to bear my name* [this is God's great gift to Abraham; He is going to make of him a minister to bear his name] *in a strange land which I will give unto thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession* (Abraham 3:1).

Ok. This is cumbersome language, but I want you to ask yourself, if the great gift that God gives to Abraham is to make of him a minister to bear His name, and then He mentions he is going to bear His name in a strange land, followed with, *which I will give unto thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession*.

Is the gift that He is giving to his descendants "the land" or "the ministry?" *I will give unto thy seed after thee for an everlasting possession, when they hearken to my voice*. Does that sound like land, or does that sound like the ministry relating to hearkening to God's voice. As He goes on to explain what his descendants are going to inherit:

Thou shalt be a blessing unto thy seed after thee, that in their hands they shall bear this ministry and priesthood unto all nations. And I will bless them through thy name, for as many as receive this gospel shall be called after thy name and shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as unto their Father. And 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. (ibid)

The seed of Abraham are the people that hearken to the same God that Abraham hearkened to. If you hearken to that same God, you're the seed of Abraham. And the ministry that you're supposed to bear is the testimony that that God lives! And that that God is THE God over the whole earth; that His work began with Adam and won't wrap up until the second coming of Christ in judgment on the world to save and redeem those that look for Him.

We have to have the record of Abraham in order to understand the covenant that God made with Abraham in order to vindicate the promise that's made in the Book of Mormon. One of the sharp edges of criticism of Mormonism is directed specifically at the Book of Abraham. There are a lot of intellectual arguments that are being made out there, a lot of challenges for why the Book of Abraham ought to be thrown out, and how the Joseph Smith papyrus that got recovered is really, simply, Egyptian *Book of Breathings* material that has very little to do with a record written by the hand of Abraham on papyrus, and so on. Well, if the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, the Book of Abraham was translated no differently, except by the gift and power of God. And it includes information that's vital for us to understand in order for us to know what the covenants were that were made with Abraham—in order for us to inherit the same gospel that was given to Abraham,

so that we can lay hold upon the same blessings that were given to Abraham, so that the covenants that were made with the Fathers can be understood, activated, realized, and we can obtain the blessings of those here in the last days.

All this stuff fits together, and Joseph's work had to necessarily include recovery of the covenants made with Abraham. Now, you may regard yourself as a gentile, but the covenant that was made with Abraham makes you a descendant of Abraham if you hearken to that same God and receive that same gospel. And Nephi explains who the gentiles are in relation to the family of Father Abraham also. This is Nephi:

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, and harden not their hearts against the Lamb...they shall be numbered among the seed of thy father. Yea, they shall be numbered among the house of Israel; and they shall be a blessed people upon the promised land for ever. They shall be no more brought down into captivity. (1 Nephi 3:25)

Nephi is telling you, "If you are willing to receive what God has offered, then you're numbered among the house of Israel." Jacob, the brother of Nephi, wrote about the gentiles. He said:

He that fighteth against Zion shall perish, saith God, for he that raiseth up a king against me shall perish. For I the Lord [God], the King of Heaven, will be their king...I will be a light unto them for ever... Wherefore, for this cause, that my covenants may be fulfilled which I have made unto the children of men, that I will do unto them while they are in the flesh, I must needs destroy the secret works of darkness, and of murders, and of abominations. Wherefore, he that fighteth against Zion, both Jew and gentile, both bond and free, both male and female shall perish... the gentiles shall be blessed and numbered among the house of Israel. Wherefore, I will consecrate this land unto [them and] thy seed. (2 Nephi 7:2-4)

So Jacob, likewise, says gentiles who are willing to receive this as their covenant are numbered among the house of Israel, no longer numbered among gentiles. They change identities, just like the promise that was made to Abraham. You receive it, you're his seed.

Christ picked up the same thing in 3rd Nephi: *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 (3 Nephi 9:11)*.

The purpose of the Book of Mormon is to reveal that God made a covenant with Abraham in the beginning, and at the end, God intends to vindicate the covenant that God made with Abraham by changing gentiles into the house of Israel, by covenant. When the restoration began, the people from the first publication in 1830 until September of 2015 [2017] in

Boise, Idaho, no one accepted the Book of Mormon as a covenant. It had not been done. The Lectures on Faith got accepted. The Doctrine & Covenants got accepted. The church leaders got accepted. A First Presidency, a high council—all kinds of things got accepted—but not the Book of Mormon as a covenant until September...was it...what year was that? 2017. (It was an odd year, but not 2015.)

September of 2017—it was the very first time in history that the Book of Mormon was received as a covenant. And in the words that I read you just a moment ago, Nephi mentions covenant people. You have to receive it as a covenant. God only works to bring people into His good graces by covenants. They have to be made. Without covenants, you cannot participate in what the Lord sets out.

Well, the Book of Mormon was intended as a record for our day to restore our knowledge to make it possible for us to enter back into a covenant relationship with God, in order for the promises that were made to the Fathers to be vindicated. Abraham looked forward to having seed that would be countless. He had one son. But God told him, “Don’t worry about that.” The time will come when everyone who receives this gospel—that is, the gospel that Abraham had in his possession; the gospel that is unfolding in front of your eyes today—that will continue to unfold until all of its covenants, rites, obligations, privileges, understandings will all roll out. The restoration will be completed. But the promise was made to Abraham that whenever that is on the earth, those who receive it will acknowledge him, Abraham, as their covenant father—the father of the righteous.

I want to comment about an issue that came up last night, both in remarks that got made by Jeff and comments that others made in the audience. During the early Kirtland era when there were a lot of false spirits that wound up creating a lot of mischief, the people were really wanting to have these miraculous signs to be given. Faith does not come from signs. It’s actually impossible to for that, to have a sign, and that as a consequence of the sign, you now have faith. It doesn’t work that way. That’s one of the reasons why Christ, when He did something miraculous like healing someone who was a leper or healing someone who was lame, He would admonish them, “Don’t tell anyone about this.” Because if the person who underwent this miraculous event went out and talked it up, then the people who heard that would be damaged in their ability to have faith. Because they now had a sign. And if what you do is run after signs, then you go from sign to sign, and you never develop the required faith.

By studying the scriptures and plumbing the depths of the message that we have in the scripture record that’s in front of us, you can arrive at a point in your understanding in which it really doesn’t matter if an angel appears to you or not. The angel’s purpose is never going to be to produce faith in you. If the angel is going to produce faith in you because of their appearance, then the angel ought not appear. Because they’ll turn you into a sign seeker. On the other hand, if you have developed faith by the careful study of what we’ve been given in the scriptures, and the presence or absence of an angel will have no effect on your faith—you will believe; you will have confidence; your understanding reaches the same depth with or without the angels presence—then there is no reason for the angel to

withhold. There is no reason for him not to appear.

When the brother of Jared went to the Lord with an interior lighting problem, and the Lord said, "What do you want as a solution?" The brother of Jared did not need to see the finger of the Lord in order for him to have faith that the Lord was going to solve the problem. He went out, he molten the stones, he took them back, he presented them to the Lord. He asked the Lord to take care of it. Is there any greater faith in saying, "Oh, as the Lord touched the stones I saw his finger," or, "Here are the stones that will light in the dark that the Lord has now taken care of." Because of the knowledge of this man he could not be kept from beholding within the veil. Well, what was the knowledge that he had? It was the fact that his faith had grown to the point where he was taking what is behind the veil and unseen, and he's pulling into this world—a physical manifestation of God in this world—by the stones that he had molten and by the request that he had put to the Lord. And so the Lord makes that manifestation here. His knowledge parted the veil because he had done the labor to make something in this world that connected God to it, in order to bless the people. All of this was an act of service and sacrifice and faith for the blessing and the benefit of others. It was selfless. But it was selflessness in a way that drew into the physical world what lies beyond the veil.

And so he sees God's finger, and it startles him. It startles him, and the Lord puts a question to him. It's a question that is reflected earlier in Nephi's writing. Nephi says, God loveth all who will have him to be their God.

And the brother of Jared is asked, Did you see more than this. [Brother of Jared] No. [God] Will you believe me if I show myself to you? [Brother of Jared] Yea, I know you're a God of truth and cannot lie; I'll believe all your words.

Why do you think the Lord posed the question, If I show myself to you, will you believe in me? Why do you think that Mormon writes about how he's spoken face-to-face in plain humility, as one man speaks to another? We want the thundering and the lightning and the ground-shaking on Sinai, and when the Lord appeared to the brother of Jared, before appearing, He asked him, Now when you see me, are you going to believe me? He loveth all who will have him to be their God... Well, I knew not that God was a man... You seem so much bigger and better when you were the burly thunderer from behind the curtain announcing that you are the great and powerful Oz. But now that the curtain's drawn aside and you're like— Man was created in your image, and it literally means that. It takes some of the varnish off it all.

God's greatness does not consist in striking awe in the eye of the beholder because of glory. It consists in the humility, the virtue, the goodness, the purity of the being. We worship God, not because He is powerful. We worship God because He represents everything that is pure and holy and good—everything that is desirable above all else. The purity of that fruit that was delicious that father Lehi talked about and Nephi wrote about, it is so because of its goodness. Because it is exactly what the highest and the best and the most noble should be. That's who God is.

People that are brought into God's presence are convicted of their own inadequacies because you see here, at last— now is a complete being, is a pure, just, and holy being. And in comparison, we all lack. We all lack. When Isaiah was caught up to the presence of the Lord, he is shouting, Woe is me; I'm undone; I am a man of unclean lips; I dwell among people of unclean lips. He recognizes the enormity of the gulf, the gap between him and God. And so God purges it. It's because of the faith and the confidence that he has in God that Isaiah afterwards says, Here am I, Lord, send me. It's not because Isaiah is suddenly a greater being than he was before. It's because Isaiah had faith that this Being can indeed make one as flawed as we are cleansed, holy, pure, confidence in him. If I were to make one recommendation about the process, I would say forget about asking for signs, study the depths of the scriptures, and you'll find yourself in company with angels who will come help you to understand what is in these scriptures—and in particular, above all, the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon is a giant urim and thummim; used in the correct way, you'll find yourself in company of angels—who are helping to tutor you—in a conversation, as you look into an understanding of what's written in the scriptures. And then there's no reason for them to withhold their presence from you. Adam, having conversed with the Lord through the veil, desires now to enter into His presence: There's no reason after you have conversed through the veil for that presence to be denied you. But it follows an order. It follows a pattern.

We have now arrived at that moment when there are going to be competing meetings going on. I did say that we'd do questions if people had any. So is there something someone wanted to have me talk about?

Q&A Session

QUESTION: I wondered if you would expound upon the studying of the scriptures.... A christian pastor I am acquainted with, in the process of studying, he ended up losing his faith, instead of developing faith. There seems to be that risk, like with Jeremy Reynolds and the CES Letter... Sometimes people lose their faith instead of developing it....

DENVER: The question is, Do you run any risks by studying that you can just as easily study your way out of belief as you can study your way into belief.

The way that I think that works is... Everyone wants to understand, because of how proximate—how close—Joseph Smith is, everyone wants to understand how Joseph Smith did it. So, if we think we can figure out how Joseph Smith did it, then presumably that will equip us to understand or put it into context. But most people who are studying to figure out how Joseph Smith did it are only interested in debunking it. I want to know how he pulled this off because I'm a little skeptical that what he pulled off is actually genuine, and maybe if I can understand how Joseph Smith pulled that off, then I can understand how Jesus pulled it off. Then I can understand how Moses pulled it off. Then I can put it all to

rest because I needn't worry about it. Or, I want to understand how Joseph Smith pulled it off so I can pull it off, and when I get that and I figure it out, and I try it, and it doesn't work for me, then I can say Joseph made it up because it didn't work for me. I mean, there are a lot of pitfalls along the course of study.

The first and primary question you have to ask is... Take a look around this world and, and ask yourself if—in this world—it makes sense to you that there is no Creator. Does it make sense to you that everything that's going on here simply is a haphazard accident? That there is no creation; there's no creator; there's no divine plan; there's nothing here that operates on any other basis than random chance? If you reach the conclusion that everything that's going on here could possibly be by random chance, then read *Darwin's Black Box*. There's a little over 200 different things that have to line up perfectly in order for your blood to clot. If any one of those 200 things don't happen simultaneously—it's a little over 200—if any one of those don't happen simultaneously, you will die. For some of those, if you get a cut and they're not present, you'll bleed out. You'll simply die because you will exsanguinate. For others of those, if you get a cut, your entire blood system will turn solid, and you will die because clotting knows no end. *Darwin's Black Box* makes the argument that it is evolutionarily impossible for trial and error to solve the problem of blood clotting because everyone of the steps that are required, if nature simply experiments with it, kills the organism. And that ends that. You don't know that you are going to succeed until you've lined them all up, and you've made them all work. It is an interesting book, *Darwin's Black Box*. In essence, it's saying that the evolutionists require more faith really than do people that believe in God because the theory upon which they base their notion requires far too many things to occur by trial and error than is conceivably possible.

Well, if there is a creation, then there is a Creator. If there is a Creator, then the question is... I assume all of you have had a father or a grandfather—someone that you respected—a mother or a grandmother, an aunt or an uncle that over the course of a lifetime developed skills and talents and humor and character—someone that you admire. And then they pass on. How profligate a venture is it to create someone that you—a creation that you view as noble, as worthy, as admirable, as interesting, as fascinating; some person that you love. Take that, and just obliterate it. God, who can make such a creation, surely doesn't waste a creation. He's not burning the library at Alexandria every day by those who pass on. God had to have a purpose behind it all. I don't know how many of you have had a friend or a loved one or a family member who passed on who, subsequent to their death, appeared to you, had a conversation with you, in a dream, in a thought. I can recall going to my father's funeral, and his casket with his body was in the front of the little chapel we were in, but his presence was not there. That may have been the hull he occupied while he was living and breathing, but I had no sense at all that my father was there. I did have a sense that he was present, but he wasn't in the coffin. He was elsewhere in the room. I couldn't see him, but I could have pointed to him, and said, He's here. In fact, I made a few remarks at my father's funeral, and I largely directed them at him.

Nature testifies over and over again; it doesn't matter when the sun goes down, there's going to be another dawn. It doesn't matter when all the leaves fall off the deciduous trees

in the fall, there's going to come a spring. There's going to be a renewal of life. There are all kinds of animals in nature that go through this really loathsome, disgusting, wretched existence, and then they transform. And where they were a pest before, now they are bright, and they're colorful, and they fly, and they pollinate. Butterflies help produce the very kinds of things that their larvae stage destroyed. These are signs. These are testimonies. Just like the transformation of the caterpillar into the butterfly—the pest into the thing of beauty; the thing that ate the vegetables that you were trying to grow into the thing that helps pollinate the things that you want to grow—that's the plan for all of us. So, when you study the scriptures, the objective should not be, "Can I trust the text? Can I evaluate the text? Can I use a form of criticism against the text in order to weigh, dismiss, belittle, judge?" Take all that you know about nature, take all that you know about this world and the majesty of it all. Take all that you know that informs you that there is hope, there is joy, there is love. Why do you love your children? Why do your children love you? These kinds of things exist. They're real. They're tangible, and they're important. And they are part of what God did when He created this world. Keep *that* in mind when you're studying and search the scriptures to try and help inform you how you can better appreciate, how you can better enjoy, how you can better love, how you can better have hope. What do they have to say that can bring you closer to God? Not, can I find a way to dismiss something that Joseph said or did? As soon as Joseph was gone off the scene, people that envied the position that he occupied took over custody of everything, including the documents, and what we got as a consequence of that is a legacy that allowed a trillion dollar empire to be constructed. Religion should require our sacrifice. It should not be here to benefit us. We should have to give, not get. And in the giving of ourselves, what we get is in the interior; it's in the heart. It's the things of enduring beauty and value. If your study takes you away from an appreciation of the love, the charity, the things that matter most, reorient your study.

QUESTION: Expound on the phrase, "the pavilion of thy hiding place?"

DENVER: At that time Joseph was in Liberty jail and he was longing for that earlier companionship that he had been involved with. Joseph made a remark one time about how the apostle Paul had seen the third heaven and that he, Joseph, had seen the seven heavens. There's a construct to the order of everything. And there are veils within veils within veils. I once analogized priesthood to fellowship, and there is more than one kind of fellowship beyond the veil. And there are councils, and there are places in the heavens where some are invited, and others will get there eventually. The pavilion of God is another way of saying, You have located yourself in a place high and lifted up—is one way that it gets described, in which God appears to be inaccessible at that moment. God appears to be outside of the range. Joseph was writing that in Liberty jail because he felt like God had abandoned him.

In fact, one of the problems with the LDS version of the Doctrine and Covenants is that the language that appears right before God's answer to Joseph is gone. It's not in your D&C, but it's in the Teachings and Commandments. Joseph got a letter from friends. It was very consoling. He was complaining to God because now he'd heard from his loved ones, but it made him reflect upon all the misery that had gone on in their being driven out of the state

of Missouri while he's locked up in a dungeon and unable to do or say anything to help them. And his mind—he describes how his mind is aflame with anxiety. His mind is jumping from point to point with—the *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* says, “with the avidity of lightning.” The real word that he used was with the *vivacity* of lightning, but his mind is simply jumping from place to place to place because of the circumstances. Then just before the answer comes...

Oh God where art thou, and where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place. How long shall thy hand be stayed. (D&C 121:1)

That is part of the letter. Between verse 6 and verse 7, as it appears in the Doctrine and Covenants, is this long explanation that Joseph gives about how his mind is stirred up. He's jumping from subject to subject. His anxiety... He's worked up into a frenzy. And then he says, At last all the anxieties lie slain, and he reaches a state of peace and reconciliation, and when he is finally calm and his mind has settled down, the voice of inspiration comes along and whispers,

My son, peace be unto thy soul. Thy adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment. (vs 7)

The voice of God came to Joseph in Liberty jail when his mind came to peace.

He grasps after the future with the fierceness of a tiger, 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.

Finally, hope and peace, and then comes the answer. We have a lot of reasons to be anxious in every one of our lives. There is so much that troubles us, but the voice of inspiration steals along and whispers, when we finally are calm enough: Be still, and know that I am God gets read as, Be Still!! And know that I am God!! When what it's really saying is, If you would like to know that I am God, quiet it all down. Because whatever pavilion I may occupy, I also occupy part of you. You live and breathe and move because God is sustaining you from moment to moment by lending you breath. He's in you, and He's with everyone of us.

QUESTION: So you spoke of the need to plumb the depths of the scriptures, particularly the Book of Mormon, and how it becomes a urim and thummim to us. The Book of Mormon itself informs us that this is the lesser things. It is intentionally withholding much. And it specifically states the purpose is to try our faith. The faith having been so tried, those who plumb the depths can expect more to come forth at some point—in terms of scripture; in terms of record. I guess the question there is—and not to minimize what we have been given because it is clearly enough for our present state and more—does that sort of thing, are those sorts of records that are promised a millennial sort of thing, after the Lord

returns? Or, is it a sort of thing that, if we finally take seriously enough what's been given now, can we expect more to come forth before the Lord comes?

DENVER: I believe that how we respond to what we are given will drive that entirely, and whether we get it before the millenium or after is dependant upon us. But I also think— Look, the people who prepared the summaries on the plates—the abridgement—and the Lord who provided the translation of that, both know what's being withheld. They abridged what they abridged with what was being withheld in front of their eyes. So they can't tell you the abridged story without the content of what's being withheld present in their mind. If you go through the text carefully, you'll begin to see that there are patterns that start fitting together. I don't think that when the rest of what has been withheld is suddenly brought out into the light— If you've carefully looked at what is in the scriptures already, you're not going to say, "Wow! That is shockingly different!" You're going say, "I always suspected that. And that fits in with this, and this fits in with that, and the picture begins to emerge a bit more clearly. Yeah, I've always sort of suspected that to be the case." When we read the scriptures, keep in mind that the people writing them have in their mind the rest of the picture, and it leaks through, a great deal leaks through because you can't— If you know the rest of the story, and you're telling the tale, but you're leaving out some of the big punch lines, but they are present in your mind, the punch lines are going to leak through. There is a lot that comes through in the Book of Mormon. The character and the nature of God is probably better understood by what we have in the Book of Mormon, and it is perfectly consistent with the testimony of the gospel writers who knew Christ in mortality. And if you take what we got in a fairly battered New Testament record and the Book of Mormon together and what happened in the life of Joseph Smith, and you weave them all together, you begin to understand that God is a very patient, loving, kindly being. And that the mysteries of God largely consist in developing the attributes of godliness in us. The things that matter the most are the things that make us more like Him—better people, more kindly. You want to know more of the mysteries of God, serve your fellow man, and be of more value to them. In the process of blessing the lives of others, you find out that you know more of the character of God as a consequence of that.

Let me end by bearing testimony that God really is up to a work right now. And the work that is underway can culminate in Zion. Covenants were made. Promises were given. God has an obligation to the covenant fathers that He will vindicate. God's words will be fulfilled, all of them. None of them are going to fall to the ground unfulfilled. The question is not, Will God bring about the culmination of all His purposes? The question is, Are we willing to cooperate with Him to bring those purposes to pass in our day? The offer that God makes—this appears in scripture nearly as often as the promise in Malachi—God says, How oft would I have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and ye would not. Could God have brought about His purposes and vindicated His promises in the days of Moses? Could He have done what He had promised to do when Christ was here on the earth? Could He have done it in the days of Peter? Could He have done it in the days of Joseph Smith? The question is never whether God *will* vindicate His promises. The question is, Will there ever come a people who will respond to the Lord's willingness to gather them as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and be gathered, and be content with being

gathered and being at peace with one another. We have that opportunity, but so many generations before us have had the same opportunity, and they would not. The question isn't whether God *is* going to do it or whether God is *willing* to do it now. The question is, Are we willing to cooperate with Him in that process to do our part? We get really petty with one another, and we shouldn't be. We ought to value one another so highly that we will do anything we can to support one another and to assist in bringing about the purposes of God. At the end of the day, obedience to God is simply blessing one another by the way we conduct ourselves. I like the Lamanite king's prayer, "I will give away all my sins to know you." We tend not to be willing to give away our sins. We want to harbour them and cultivate them and celebrate them. We ought to be more— We ought to love God more and our sins less. God *can* fulfill His promises in our day, before we leave this stage of the action. It can happen. Whether it happens or not is up to us and how interested we are in doing as He bids us. Of that I bear testimony, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

[Transcription v1.3]