

## Comments about Joseph Smith

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**DENVER:** Apparently, if you accept the doctrine of Christ—which is best defined in the Book of Mormon—that would suggest that you accept the Book of Mormon, which suggests that you believe in Joseph; and therefore, everyone has in common recognition of Joseph as someone through whom the Lord accomplished a great work.

I grew up with a Baptist mother and a father who believed in God but doubted the legitimacy of churches, generally, and the Baptist ministers, particularly. But my mom would make a fried chicken dinner every Sunday and invite the minister (whichever one it was at the time) over after the sermonizing was done, and we'd have fried chicken and the potatoes and gravy, which, by the way, endeared me to the whole "Baptist minister coming over" thing. But it was my father's skepticism about the legitimacy of that particular brand of Christianity that sort of alerted me to the possibility that churches may not be all they're cracked up to be.

We grew up next door to a Catholic family. And I rather liked the Catholic approach because you could raise hell all week and go in and confess; and, you know, a few confessions later, you're good to go again and raise hell for the next week. And that sounded kind of useful, if not particularly "authentically Christian." And I couldn't indulge in the excesses. (My mom thought statuary stuff was "making graven images.")

So, literally, I did not belong to any church until the Mormon missionaries hounded me when I was on active duty in the military. And they presented the Book of Mormon, and they presented their discussions, and I put up with them. I recall bringing cigars and a six-pack of beer to the Mormon family's house to listen to the felt-board presentations (back in those days). And they didn't want us smoking cigars or drinking beer during the missionary discussions. I assured them the beer, at least, would make things a bit more interesting. But they thought that was, you know, evil incarnate.

And I didn't particularly like the Book of Mormon. I didn't particularly like anything that they were saying. But there was something about the Joseph Smith account that struck me as incredibly authentic—because if God worked with and cared about people anciently and sent His Son, and His Son had died as a sacrifice to redeem all mankind, then it made little sense why, immediately after that sacrifice, God would then abandon all those who believed in His Son. And it just struck me that the reformers had not claimed God did anything directly with **them**. They claimed that the errors they detected were based upon an evaluation of the Scriptures that had been left behind by **those to whom God had spoken** and that they detected the errors. And therefore, Christianity was amiss. And Martin Luther discovered that there were verses in the book of Romans that could justify a plan of salvation that was not dependent upon a priestly magisterium to hold keys that God gave to Peter, but that you could, by faith, be saved. And so, Martin Luther's evaluation of the Scripture really opened the door not just for Lutheranism but, in turn, for every particular Protestant off-break of the Catholic mother.

But Joseph was saying something altogether different. Joseph was saying that the Scriptures justified taking a case of faith directly to God and asking Him and that God can answer you directly. It was revolutionary in terms of how you define Christianity because it's no longer dependent upon priestly authority and a magisterium recognizing that they held keys that had once been entrusted to Peter and passed down generationally, nor was it dependent upon someone feeling within themselves an inspired calling, and by faith, they had now overcome things. This was something very, very different. Joseph Smith was saying God talked, and God was talking; that Christianity was no longer an artifact of the past, dependent upon echoes that may or may not have been well-preserved through the corridors of history down to now, but it was, instead, God talking immediately and directly.

And as I read the Joseph Smith story (or history) as they handed it out in the pamphlet and as it appears in the Pearl of Great Price of the LDS Scriptures, there was one line in there that just [snaps fingers]... It struck me as so candidly honest that this would not be written by someone who was the vile deceiver that the Baptists accused Mormons of following, nor could it have been written by someone who was really pretentious and dishonest.

*(Being of very tender years, and persecuted by those who ought to have been my friends and to have treated me kindly — and if they supposed me to be deluded, to have endeavored in a proper and affectionate manner, to have reclaimed me), I was left to all kinds of temptations. (Joseph Smith History 2:10 RE)*

Well, why would the reaction to what Joseph had to say provoke anger, bitterness, and jealousy rather than, "Oh, you poor child. You're deluded, and we need to reclaim you. Let's show you that kindness and the tenderness that..." I mean, he was approximately 14 years old at the time. I don't know in Sanpete County if it's still true because of the damn internet, but a 14-year-old farm boy who is generally a tender creature, a naive creature. I've got 14-year-old grandkids that have been raised in rural circumstances, and they are very unacquainted with men and things, which is exactly how Joseph described his youth. So, why was he provoking this spirit of bitterness and this spirit of contention, and no one was endeavoring to reclaim him?

Well, it was the Joseph Smith story that actually kept me listening to the missionaries. And then they had something that was called a "Fathers and Sons Outing" and a Priesthood Restoration celebration. I was in the military. We were on the coast of New Hampshire, but they were holding this thing at the birthplace of Joseph Smith in Sharon, Vermont. So, we all trudged up to Sharon, Vermont in a caravan of cars, camped out overnight, and there were talks. And I went down to a visitor's center where very amiable old people manned the desk, and they had a copy of this blue book called Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price. And I wanted to buy one 'cuz I was interested in it, and they gave me one for free. So, I hustled out of there before they changed their mind and decided they wanted to charge me for it. And the fellow that had taken me up to the Fathers and Sons dog-eared Doctrine and Covenants section 76, which was the Vision of the Three Degrees of Glory.

Now, the Joseph Smith History had struck me with passages that seemed very authentic, but D&C section 76 struck me as something that was altogether from another world. It hailed from Heaven. It touched me. It reached me in a way in which, you know, Corinthians

had not.

And I got very serious about investigating things. But, alas, I mean... Mormon families that I had been exposed to in the investigation process lived a lifestyle that was **very different** from everything I was acquainted with. I got the conviction that I ought to have been baptized, but I despaired at what kind of a Mormon I would make because Mormons were so much better than I was. They didn't smoke. They didn't drink. They went to church on Sunday. They actually owned and wore white shirts and ties. They had suits and stuff. And they read Scriptures. And the Bible, to me, was a cure for insomnia. It wasn't... There was nothing in it that I could relate to (a lot of words). My mom had read the New Testament verses to us at breakfast, and some of them were catchy—*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son* (John 2:2 RE). Yeah, see, so some verses stick with you, and they're nice, but the Scriptures did not appeal.

I felt the obligation. I went ahead with baptism, but I despaired at what kind of Mormon I would make on the other side of the waters of baptism. But I went ahead, and I was baptized, and **everything changed**. The Scriptures came alive. Joseph talked about how the more mysterious passages of Scripture were opened up to their minds within a manner that they could never previously attain to. I was shocked at what happened with reading the Scriptures; I couldn't get enough of 'em. Who wanted to smoke and drink? This was something really interesting! God was now involved with the world again—which I had never supposed.

The summer before this, I had discovered J.R.R. Tolkien, and I'd read *The Hobbit*, and then I'd read the trilogy of *[The Lord of] the Rings*, and I'd done it all in, like, a month and a half because it was just gripping. That world came alive. Middle-earth was a real deal: Mount Mordor, Mount Doom, the caves, the caverns.

The Scriptures became more lively to me than had Tolkien's *Hobbit* and trilogy. It was a stunning transition. I couldn't get enough. I bought and I read... Back then, they had what was called "The Seventy's Mission Bookstore," which in New Hampshire consisted of the back porch of Sister Long's house. Sister Long had an enclosed porch that was windowed up and shut off against the elements, and her back porch was filled up with books.

I bought and I read every biography of every one of the early Restoration church fathers. I bought and I read B.H. Roberts' volume that summarized... His seven volumes that summarized church history. I bought and I read the documentary history that was the original effort in the *Joseph Smith Papers*. I read everything I could get my hands on because it was lively. It was something real and concrete and appealing.

I probably had been a member of the church (baptized in '73, started law school at the J. Reuben Clark Law School at BYU at '77)... In the four years between baptism and the time I started law school, I think I had exhausted the available library of materials about LDS founding and history and teachings.

There is only one doctrine of Christ, and you're right to lay hold on that. But there is precepts and principles and commandments and teachings and mysteries that go **well beyond** the doctrine of Christ. The doctrine of Christ is how you get your feet on the road in

order to progress. But having my feet on that road, I wanted to know as much as I could know.

Well, after I had exhausted the available library and thought myself a well-informed Latter-day Saint, along came the Leonard Arrington Church Historian's Office and D. Michael Quinn. And things start rolling out of the Church History Library that D. Michael Quinn was repackaging. And he sounded to me like someone that had an axe to grind, and he was being **incredibly unfair**. He had an agenda, and his agenda was to do something to mess with retelling church history in a way that corrupted it and challenged faith—and it was wrong of him.

So, he excited me to look into the whole history of the LDS Church and the Restoration at another level. But he did something very different from what other historians had done. Largely what they had done was base their histories upon secondary sources. I mean that the Documentary History and the B.H. Roberts materials and then a handful of other source material, secondary, were what they used, and D. Michael Quinn was now taking stuff directly out of the Church History Library and quoting materials that weren't particularly available. So, I made it a quest to try and find the same original source material that Quinn had relied upon in order to show the errors, the unfairness, the bias that he'd allowed to creep in.

He got dismissed from BYU, he got discharged from the LDS Church Historian's Office, and he finished publishing a number of things and then donated his papers to Yale University (because he did not trust the University of Utah or Brigham Young University to let the papers be made public). So, he donated a large volume of material to Yale University. And then Signature Books (which has an axe to grind themselves) started publishing typewritten transcripts of the original journals that much of which Quinn had had access to in the LDS Historian's Office—now they were rolling out in limited numbers. And they were expensive, and they're rare books, and I don't know why anyone would buy them unless they were on a quest to try and get to the bottom of something. But I spent a small fortune acquiring a library of original source material. And I started reading the same stuff that Quinn had read and relied upon when he did his history-making.

I don't believe that D. Michael Quinn had an axe to grind. In many respects, he pulled punches that he didn't need to pull. His history of the church—it comes from a vantage point that I would differ with, but I see the justification for the conclusions that he reached and for the stuff that he published. And the biggest disagreement that I would have with him is that I don't think the narrative about the origin of plural marriage coming through Joseph Smith is defensible. The best you can say is that there's not enough proof to decide that issue one way or the other. But you certainly can't say that you know for certain that it originated with Joseph Smith.

What Joseph was doing appears to be as Richard Bushman said: It appeared to be related to some kind of familial abundance in the afterlife. It didn't have anything to do with taking plural wives and bearing children in this life. Brigham Young changed that kind of afterlife familial interconnectivity into a practice of taking more wives and having children.

There is not a single child that was born to Joseph Smith that didn't come through Emma Smith. She's the mother of all his children. The stories about Fanny Alger are grossly distorted. If you go back and you look at the contemporaneous material, there really isn't anything. Even Oliver Cowdery withdrew the allegations that he made when he was in front of the Far West High Council, called up for disparaging Joseph and insinuating that he had had some kind of inappropriate liaison with her. She had nine children from a husband; Joseph fathered eight children through Emma. Both of them were in their prime fertility when the alleged liaison took place, and yet, there's no children as issue from that relationship.

The most scandalous account of that is given by William McLellin, and he wasn't there! He says he heard something from Emma which was told to him over two decades after "whatever happened" happened, and then he reports it in the 1870s. And he's one of the two primary sources, the other being Levi Hancock, son of Mosiah Hancock; and Mosiah didn't leave a record. And the only thing about the McLellin account is the punctuation and the spelling: "**TRANSACTION**" all in caps, "in the barn," exclamation point, exclamation point. And he's writing this to one of the sons of Joseph Smith. Well, what was the transaction? Apparently, Joseph practiced sealing of people together in a relationship for the next life. "Sealing" became a code word for marriage. But sealing **did not mean** marriage, at least not at the beginning: sealing included adoption; sealing included a number of other things—not marriage and certainly not marital relationships.

Well, I went to dinner with D. Michael Quinn, and he was a great conversation starter. He said, "You know, I think your position on Joseph Smith and polygamy is bovine feces," (but he didn't use that; he used a more colorful expression). And that's because he relies upon all of the historical material that got ginned up in the 1860s, 70s, 80s, and 90s. So, I posed this question back to him. I said, "If you take the historical record, and you limit your inquiry to what existed on June 27, 1844 and **before** then, and you rely upon **nothing but the material that existed while Joseph Smith was alive**, can you **prove** that Joseph Smith practiced plural marriage?"

And he thought about it for a few minutes. I could tell the wheels were turning. And I said, "Yeah, Far West won't do it, will it?"

And he thought for another minute. He said, "Okay. Okay. I understand where you're coming from."

So, the problem with that subject is that it gets all changed after the 1852 talk given in General Conference by Orson Pratt when he was told by Brigham to go to the podium and announce the plural marriage thing, and then everything changes. And the Church Historian's Office began to alter historical documents. You can see proof of that in the *Joseph Smith Papers*.

And so, I wound up being an apologist for the church and a Gospel Doctrine teacher for about nearly three decades teaching the four standard works as you go through. I taught Gospel Doctrine in a Pleasant Grove ward, in multiple Alpine wards, and in multiple Sandy, Utah wards for decades. And I—even though we went through the four standard works

serially—I never taught the same lesson twice. I wasn't interested in plowing and boring myself with the same material. I tried to push it further. Got to the point that at the end... Going through the Book of Mormon, they give you eight chapters to cover in a 45-minute, and I would cover a verse or a phrase within a verse; and you know, the rest of the material you just... You've got to read that on your own. We're not gonna get there.

I've come to the conclusion that the Book of Mormon was a far more materially dense book with far greater volumes of information included within it than any of the other volumes of Scripture that we have. I've also come to the conclusion that Joseph Smith, throughout his ministry, understated everything, that he **never** overstated a proposition, that he **never** gave us anything beyond the veil that he was not required to give, that Joseph Smith was everything that he claimed to be and a whole lot more.

There was a trendline that occurred in the Restoration, where Joseph—even after the publication of the Book of Mormon and after the initial success that the book began to have—was still susceptible of being influenced by bigger personalities than him. I don't know that any of you have spent enough time with it, but I think in the marriage, Emma was the more dominant personality. I think Joseph deferred to her. I think she was trusted; she was better educated; and he looked to her for assistance, counsel, guidance, and that she was a stronger personality than was Joseph.

Joseph continually read into other people the same sentiments that were in his own heart. Therefore, he was continually being duped by pretenders and con-men. That followed him right into Nauvoo with John C. Bennett—because he assumed John Bennett was just as good and decent and noble as he (Joseph) was, and John Bennett was not. He was a horrible character.

Well, one of the people that showed up early on was Sidney Rigdon, who was an accomplished orator and a persuasive minister who had a fountain of biblical understanding and preaching competency that wowed Joseph Smith. And part of the trajectory of the Restoration early on was influenced by the counsel and the guidance that Joseph, who was younger, took from Sidney Rigdon, who was older and more acquainted with men and things. And one of the things that Sidney Rigdon really wanted to see was a New Testament church revived.

And of course, one of the things we learn from the Scriptures is that if you ask, and you ask often enough, no's can turn into yes's. And the lack of permission to give 116 pages into the custody of Martin Harris can turn into **permission** to give the 116 pages to Martin Harris, with certain restrictions—which would not be honored; and therefore, they got forfeited. But God had planned ahead for that failing. And Joseph is told right out in one revelation, "Joseph, you cannot see what's in the hearts of other men. You're no good at that." And it plagued him throughout his life.

Well, with Sidney's influence, the church organization tumbles out, and we get a presidency, and we get a Quorum of Twelve, and we get a Quorum of Seventy, and we get stakes that are modeled after the larger magisterium, and we get priesthood authority, and we get hierarchy. And that continues right into the 1838 crisis in which the hierarchy in Zion...

See, there was a presidency in Kirtland, and there was a presidency in Zion. And the presidency in Zion was David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery. And **they** were the **successors** to Joseph Smith—if he was not gonna be around, David Whitmer was gonna run the church. And the group in Far West in Missouri (the presidency in Zion) turn on Joseph—members of the Quorum of the Twelve (David Whitmer, Oliver Cowdery), these people (John Whitmer), they wind up excommunicated from the church. They wind up, several of them, signing affidavits that help get Joseph held in prison for treason and rebellion.

And so, the magisterium of priestly authority that God established to roll things out has now turned on the founder of the Restoration. And Joseph Smith is in prison as a consequence of that, and he's left for nearly half a year. He writes a letter at a moment when he really didn't know when or if he would ever get out of prison. And things change dramatically. This is what he wrote from a dungeon in Missouri:

*Behold, there are many called, but few are chosen...why are they not chosen? Because their hearts are set so much upon the things of this world, and aspire to the honors of men, that they do not learn this one lesson — that the rights of the Priesthood are inseparably connected with the Powers of Heaven and...the Powers of Heaven cannot be controlled nor handled, only upon principles of righteousness. That they may be conferred upon us, it is true, but when we undertake to cover our sins or to gratify our pride, our vain ambition, or to exercise control, or dominion, or compulsion upon the souls of the children of men in any degree of unrighteousness, behold, the Heavens withdraw themselves, the spirit of the Lord is grieved, and when it is withdrawn, Amen to the priesthood or the authority of that man. (T&C 139:5)*

Joseph's in the process of deconstructing the entire priestly magisterium (sitting in a dungeon in Missouri) because it's proven to be potentially treacherous. He goes on to say:

*No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood; only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned, by kindness and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul; without hypocrisy and without guile. (Ibid. v.6)*

See, imagine what the group out of which you have become disaffected would look like if no claim by anyone to any authority at any time was given any credence by anyone, but it was, instead, necessary that you had to be persuaded by the pure knowledge of the speaker before you said, "Amen," to any proposition. Control and compulsion and dominion could not be exercised if the burden was placed upon the preacher, the priest, the minister, the president, the bishop to persuade you first that what they were asking of you or preaching to you was predicated upon truth and light and knowledge.

Well, everything has rather turned into a murky mess from the history to the current claims of leadership. My suggestion to any of you would be that you view claims that people make today of holding authority—whether it's within a priestly establishment or hierarchy or some chest-thumper claiming to be "mighty and strong"—that you evaluate that based upon the way in which Joseph Smith pulled the rug out from under every one that would have the audacity to make such a claim and to say, "Not so."

If you've got something of light and truth, share it. Show me by your pure knowledge something that is of value. Edify me. Give me truth. But if you've got nothing but your claim to authority, then I can detect you right now as someone aspiring to have control and compulsion and dominion. And I'm a refugee from that nonsense, and I will not go back.

So, there it is.

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

I'm going north. Thank you.

I don't know—how long have I talked?

**AUDIENCE:** Like, forty minutes.

**DENVER:** Okay. We've had people who've had to go already, and I envy them that. So...yeah. Do you want to hear from her [Stephanie Snuffer]?

**STEPHANIE:** No, no, no, no.

**AUDIENCE:** Yes.

**AUDIENCE:** Heck yes we do!

**AUDIENCE:** What about a couple of questions?

**AUDIENCE:** Yeah, questions.

**DENVER:** She'll answer anything you want... [laughter]. Questions can always be asked, but answers are another thing.

Yeah?

**QUESTION 1:** So, what do you think it's gonna look like when Christ comes back or, like, when all the problems are fixed, and we become unified and build Zion, say? What is it gonna look like for, like, authority? Does that make sense? Like, how are we gonna be organized, is it Patriarchal Order or... What is it? What's the ideal system that you think Joseph wanted to set up that kind of got kaboshed, you know?

**DENVER:** I don't think that... In the book *Gospel Doctrine*, Joseph F. Smith said one thing I really agree with (and that one **is** quotable, and that one **is** worthwhile). He said, "The government of God is a family."

And I think that having our hearts turned to the Fathers is a way of expressing in a short—you know—phrase the idea that we began with a family that consisted of Adam and Eve; and both of them, in the garden, were exercising the priestly functions—both Adam and Eve. He was the high priest; she was the high priestess. And they were the ones to whom the government belonged.

When Cain slew Abel, he did that to dispossess the heir (the one that would succeed the father). He murdered Abel; he did not murder Adam—because Cain did not want the position held by Adam to be subject to threat or death or overthrow. He wanted it. He envied it. He wanted to occupy that position, and he aspired to that role.

God had other plans, and Seth was born, and the right of government passed to him. But the original structure of the family was patriarchal and matriarchal and familial. And I believe that when we are organized again in the Millennium into something that makes sense, that the sensibility will reckon from a family and that all who survive into that will be put into a family relationship—and everyone will be aunts and uncles, cousins and nephews, fathers and grandfathers, grandmothers. It will not be organized, in my view, outside of the family line because there's really no reason to create redundancy. The eternities are a place in which there are families. It'll just be getting us back into a familial connection that we'll take with us on into eternity.

**QUESTION 2:** Do you believe that Joseph Smith will return as the Davidic Servant?

**DENVER:** Well, he denounced that idea as a doctrine of the devil, so I doubt it.

**AUDIENCE:** Where did he denounce that as the doctrine of the devil?

**DENVER:** When Matthias came and claimed... Well, when the guy who claimed to be Matthias reincarnated (or returned to Earth) came to him, Joseph rejected the idea as a doctrine of devils and said he had cast the devil out in bodily form after he told Matthias, you know, "Get out of here. You're deceived, and you're teaching a doctrine of devils."

Look, I forget which section of the Doctrine and Covenants it is—I was just reading it in the new Scriptures, but...

Christ goes to the top of the Mount of Transfiguration. On the Mount of Transfiguration, we get in this revelation in the Doctrine and Covenants a greater explanation of what took place there. What Peter, James, and John were **shown** was what was gonna transpire on the world down to the latest generation. Coming out of that incident—so now, Peter, James, and John know what's gonna happen down to the latest generation—coming out of that, Peter and James say, "Don't leave us in the spirit world. Let us come speedily into your kingdom," which means: "Resurrect us, and get us out of the spirit world so we're not **there**." John says, "Let me tarry here on this side; I don't want to go there."

If it's possible to recycle through the spirit world and what they were looking at was, "I'm gonna die; I'm gonna come back. I'm gonna die; I'm gonna come back. I'm gonna die, and I'm gonna come back," it wouldn't have said, "They looked upon the **long absence** of their spirit from their body as a prison" (see T&C 31:4). They would have said, "Well, we're in and we're out of prison. So, cool enough, we'll just hang here, and we'll do our thing." And John would not have needed to say, "Let me tarry in the flesh," if it's possible to go and return.

So, I think Joseph was right when he said **doctrine of devils**, and that when he threw... What was the name of the guy? I mean it was... He called him Matthias. But he was a roundabout preacher that made a thing off that.

Yeah?

**QUESTION 3:** So, for me, if I was to sum up if someone asked me what the point of your remarks was, it sounds like you have a concern that someone in our group is claiming to be a “mighty and strong one.” So, I’m just asking you really directly: Do you have... Have you heard (from whatever source) that there’s someone in our group that claims to be a mighty and strong one? That’s one part of my question.

The second part: Under what conditions do you believe a mighty and strong one would be called to set in order the Latter-day Saint Church? Do you subscribe to that? And how would you recognize that person? And do you think they need to have their house set in order?

**DENVER:** [Chuckles]

**STEPHANIE:** Okay, wait, wait. I want to answer something first. Can I answer something first?

**DENVER:** Sure.

**AUDIENCE:** She speaks.

**STEPHANIE:** Oh, I do speak. You know, I guess that's an interesting... ‘cuz I've been sitting here listening, and I didn't take that from it at all. And I think a lot of it might have more to do with...

Oh, never mind. You go ahead and answer.

**QUESTION 3 (continued):** I'm not trying to be contentious!

**STEPHANIE:** No, no, no...no.

**QUESTION 3 (continued):** You said if someone comes to mind you... thumping their chest and thinking they could be the mighty and strong one... I haven't heard of anybody doing that, and I'm just curious...

**AUDIENCE:** Are you talking about the LDS Church in that scenario, or... there’s any church...?

**DENVER:** Ok, let me clarify, let me clarify... I know **nothing** about your group other than having gone to lunch with a fellow named Curtis that Jeremy Hoop...

**AUDIENCE:** Mark Curtis.

**DENVER:** ...Mark Curtis, who Jeremy Hoop, a friend of mine... If you saw the movie *Charlie*, he was...

**AUDIENCE:** Or *Testaments*.

**DENVER:** He was the romantic interest of “Charlie” in that movie. Jeremy Hoop took...

**STEPHANIE:** That’s how I know him.

**DENVER:** ...he and I to lunch. And mostly, he talked about how he didn't believe in eternal marriage, that he thought that his study of Scripture led him to the conclusion that there was no eternality to marriage, which...

**AUDIENCE:** Really? That's weird.

**DENVER:** ...was what stuck out in that lunch.

I'm not saying anything about this group in particular. I just know that around every corner, in every fragmented group... You've got your Allreds, and you've got your... What's the name of the guy that got arrested in the red...

**AUDIENCE:** Daybell.

**DENVER:** No, no, not Chad Daybell—although I'm pretty sure he would have claimed he was mighty and strong. No, the guy that's down in prison that...

**AUDIENCE:** Jeffs.

**DENVER:** Warren Jeffs, yeah! The Cadillac Escalade with the \$50,000 in cash in the back end of the... I mean, being mighty and strong really pays well, apparently!

But no, I don't know anything about anyone making any claims among your group. But if there is or are, if there's 50 of 'em here, then that wouldn't surprise me because they're everywhere. I think there's one down in South America who has fabricated a phony set of brass plates, and he claims he's... I think he claims he's Joseph Smith reincarnated.

**STEPHANIE:** Okay, and just so that, you know, where I was headed with that was that **that** tends to be a strong reaction for him because people think that of **him**.

**DENVER:** Yeah.

**STEPHANIE:** There, I mean... You know, you don't have to go too far into the depths of the internet to read, you know...

**AUDIENCE:** People think **he** is the Davidic Servant?

**STEPHANIE:** Well, or people think **he thinks**, or people think he... or whatever. I mean, just whatever iteration of...

**DENVER:** I think...

**STEPHANIE:** ...that thought process is.

**DENVER:** I think that...

**COMMENT:** Is it the followers of you think that you are, too?

**STEPHANIE:** I don't...

**DENVER:** I think—and I would proclaim it from the rooftops—I am “the one foolish and weak.” I don’t make **any** claims to have anything that requires you to respect me. If I can’t persuade you to a truth, if I can’t share light, then you ought to dismiss what I have to say altogether. I believe we probably need someone to help fix a whole lot of things, but they’re not gonna do it by proclaiming themselves to be something great and high and mighty.

**If you are something, then go get the work done!** I assume that if they achieve something, that **that** will identify them, but hollow claims and bragging and asserting entitlement to any kind of respect or position, to me is nonsense. The greatest who ever walked on this earth was asked about His authority. And what was Christ’s response?

**AUDIENCE:** To do my Father’s work.

**DENVER:** No, He said, “I’ll tell you what my authority is if you’ll tell me what John’s authority was.” And then they argued among themselves: “Well, if we say that He came from God, then He’s gonna ask us why we didn’t believe him. And if we say He’s not from God, the crowd’s gonna get mad because the crowd thinks John’s from God... So, we can’t tell you.” And Jesus says, “Well then, neither can I tell you what my authority is.”

I mean, when Christ died, the “He called Himself the Son of God” thing that was up there was so controversial that there was an argument about whether or not it ought to be taken down. His followers scattered. It wasn’t until He reappeared and said, “Look and see”—then they went from cowering in the shadows to walking boldly into the temple. I mean, look—what did Christ do as the example who **was** the Son of God? **He went about doing good.** Go about doing good. Whoever... If there is such a person that ever arrives on the scene—and Lord knows, every single group of people everywhere could use someone that goes around doing good.

But I don’t know how you set in order a trillion-dollar organization.

**QUESTION 4:** Speaking of doing good, the next 6 months to 12 months, what is your group hoping to accomplish?

**DENVER:** There’s a conference in Kentucky in the spring that I’ll be speaking at. There’s a conference being organized in September of next year that I’ve been asked and I will speak at.

There’s an ongoing project (it is a Herculean project) to translate the Book of Mormon into Old Testament Hebrew. Modern Hebrew is not what the Book of Mormon needs to be rendered into; it’s got to be put into Old Testament Hebrew. There is a panel...

We do not possess the competency to be able to accomplish that. There’s a panel of scholars that are working behind the scenes that are some of the best “Old Testament Hebrew” scholars in the world. (I mean, we’re talking Europe; we’re talking people around the globe.) But we have to pay them to do that, and right now the cost is running about \$15,000 a month to pay for the translation effort. The work is... About a third [is] in a great form, and probably 40% [is] done. We’ve got another (we’re guessing) year and a half at the current rate before we get it done.

But there's an obligation that's imposed upon us through the Book of Mormon to take the message of the Restoration to two remnant groups: One group are native covenant people in the Americas; the other are the remnant of the Jews. You're not going to attract any attention among the Jews unless the Book of Mormon is presented in an authentic form that requires an extraordinary effort to make it suitable for the audience. That work is being done. Outreach to the Native Americans is also being done. People have been asked to accomplish the work of...

**AUDIENCE:** Are you translating that into a language more suitable for them, as well? Is that what you mean?

**DENVER:** Umm, okay. The Book of Mormon translation text in the version that we have at present is actually a formal kind of English that... It would be more correct to analogize the translation to 1600s English than it would be to analogize it to 1830 English. Some of the words and the phrases that are contained in the Book of Mormon are antiquated in 1830. So, if you go buy an 1830 Merriam-Webster dictionary and you use that, you're really not gonna tree what the translation is talking about. There's an effort being made to take the entire Book of Mormon and its correct translation setting and to move it up to English of today.

Joseph made no effort to present to the Lamanites a version of the Book of Mormon any different than to the English-speaking audience of his day. We expect that when the modern-English version is finished, that **that** version will hold more appeal to the Native American audience because it is actually in simpler modern English that we use in our vernacular today. But those efforts are underway and are being accomplished.

We have conferences scheduled. We just finished with the Scripture Project (that took far more work than we thought it would take to get out into print). And who knows, we...

**QUESTION 5:** Do you feel like there's any way that we can all work together? Or do you think we're just gonna do our own thing and meet up in the Millennium or something like that?

**DENVER:** Don't... Don't know. I mean, I came down here. I mean, Bryce was the one who had this brainchild; he set this up. He knows you, apparently, through his father. I mean, some of you may know his father. I went to hear Bob talk in the park on Saturday, and on Monday, he was... I got news that he'd died. I mean, we went to the park, and my daughter (who was up from college in Southern Utah) was there in the park with us at the time your father talked, and it came as quite a surprise.

**QUESTION 6:** Can I ask one more? So, you issued, as I understand it, a new covenant. I'm curious, what was the genesis for that? And what is it?

**STEPHANIE:** So, you get to end on this. This is your swan song, so...

**DENVER:** But there's a lady over here. I thought...

**STEPHANIE:** Oh... oh. Go ahead.

**AUDIENCE:** I've got a question for you.

**AUDIENCE:** I did.

**AUDIENCE:** Do you want me to ask my question first?

**DENVER:** No, you can ask yours last. [Laughter]

**AUDIENCE:** Mine's not as interesting as his is.

**QUESTION 7:** And my last question is: Can you bear witness of Christ and share your testimony of Him?

**STEPHANIE:** OK, go ahead. Start with one at a time, honey. It's okay. One at a time.

**DENVER:** As the *Joseph Smith Papers* rolled out and as the source material started to become more abundantly available, it became apparent to a number of people that the Scriptures (in the form that it's published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) were not what Joseph had started with. There were three different groups that had it occur to them that work needed to be done to try and find a more correct version of the Book of Mormon and a more correct version of the revelations through Joseph Smith, and they began working on this stuff. As long as they were at it, the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible was something that also ought to be looked at. And so, different groups began working on recovering the Scriptures.

Two of the three groups combined into one; that left two surviving groups. Both of them finished their effort at the Scriptures within two weeks of one another. And both of them (when they finished their work) brought it to me and said, "Here, we want you to take a look at this. These are better Scriptures." And I took what both of them had done, and I said, "Okay, you guys have been getting down really granular about these Scriptures, and now I've got, you know, 2,000 pages of material to read. I got a better idea. Why don't we just get the two surviving groups together, and let's all meet, and let's all talk."

So, I set up a meeting at my law office, and I brought together the two groups—some of whom participated by Zoom but many of whom were there in person—and they sat down and they talked, and they'd all run into some challenges that they had resolved differently. And so, my suggestion was instead of leaving that with different resolutions, why don't we compare notes and figure it all out? So, the effort that had reached a conclusion by the two groups started over as a single group looking at how everyone had resolved things. And the give-and-take was largely figuring out which was the better historical source to rely upon in order to figure out what the accurate statement of the record was, and some people had found better source material than other people had found. And that went back and forth.

And so, we also stumbled upon a guy who had redone the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible in the 1960s and had put it into print—and that guy was still alive. And he was... He had sold everything he planned to sell, and he turned over... He just turned over (in a word processing format) all of the work that he'd done. And so, now we had a (we thought) a better thing.

So, we're getting to the point that we're gonna suggest to a conference of people that we adopt new Scriptures, and at the point that discussion begins (we're putting it out in paperback for everyone to read and everyone to comment on and everyone to pick apart and find any additions) there's a guy sitting in the audience who has made it his **life's work** to study the Joseph Smith Translation. And he—taking that JST—went back and found where the publication (in the form that it rolled out through the RLDS Church/Community of Christ/Herald Press) had changes made by the committee that published it that Joseph never did. And in the Nauvoo era, Joseph Smith gave talks in which he said, "I'm gonna quote from this passage in Galatians—I could give you a plainer translation, which would be this..." He had gone to the trouble of finding 14 other changes Joseph had made to the biblical text by talks he gave in Nauvoo, and those were being added in. And so, the work we thought was done on the Bible had to go through the same crunching again. And so, it really took **years** after the project had been finished. And after the project had been finished, it started over again, and it took years to get the whole thing done.

Well, after it had gotten that far along, the people involved in the committee asked me if I would present the scriptural project to the Lord for His acceptance. And they all were united in agreeing that if I asked, that whatever answer was forthcoming, that they would consider accepting. So, I prepared myself, as people ought to do to offer a significant prayer to the Lord. And the dedication of the Kirtland Temple was done by a written prayer, and this, I thought, was a serious enough question that the prayer ought to be written. So, I sat down to compose a prayer.

Now, I have written 250,000 words about LDS history in a single volume, and I've presented multiple papers at the Sunstone Conferences about incidents in church history, including a discussion about the original formation of the church. I sat down to write a prayer of my own writing, and what occurred was an **inspired** prayer that summarizes the entire history of the Restoration (from the beginning to this moment) in far, far fewer words than anything I've ever composed and gave a more accurate statement of what has and is happening. And it includes the necessity of repentance and forgiveness from the Lord for the condemnation that was originally imposed in 1831 because we were treating lightly the words of God. And instead of treating it lightly, this entire effort was an act of repentance; it was an act of contrition; it was acknowledging that we've inherited corruption and that we are trying—unlike those that got condemned by the Lord in 1831—we're trying to say to the Lord: We want to shake off that condemnation.

And so, the inspired prayer for the Lord to accept the Scriptures was met with a lengthy revelation that was presented in September of 2017 in Boise. And it proposed that He'll renew His covenant with this penitent group and that He'll work with this penitent group to go forward.

Now, you really need... It's a bigger subject than we can talk about right now, but throughout... Every little red tag you see here in these Scriptures...

Identities in the Book of Mormon shift; they go back and forth. You have Lamanites, and you have Nephites. And at some point, the Lamanites repent, and they are numbered among the Nephites, and at other points the Nephites are thrown out. And the identity of people being

numbered among one or the other changes repeatedly in the text of the Book of Mormon. Your identity with “the remnant” is not determined based upon biology or genealogy. The remnant of the people of Nephi will include people that are called Gentiles (at the outset) who become **numbered among** the people of God when they repent and return to Him. And the part of the red tags includes language within the covenant the Lord offered in 2017 in September to a group of Gentiles assembled in Boise that says: “I will number you among the remnant of the house of Israel.”

**QUESTION 6 (continued):** So, that was the covenant that you issued?

**DENVER:** Yes. Yes. And the language of the prayer, the language of the answer, and the language of the covenant itself are all contained in the... They were added by the committee into the new Scriptures and sustained by a group of people. And they are separate sections of what’s called the Teachings and Commandments. (It’s the T&C, not the D&C.)

**QUESTION 6 (continued):** So, do you see that as part of your issuance of a new set of Scriptures? Or what is the basis of, you know, extending that covenant that the, you know, this group of Gentiles might be adopted into the house of Israel?

**DENVER:** The process by which that gets accomplished is contained within the “Answer to the Prayer” and in the “Covenant” itself. And it can be renewed by anyone at any time in any circumstance just by following what the “Answer to the Prayer” and the “Covenant” itself states. I mean, people this last week have become covenant people—because it’s an ongoing thing.

**QUESTION 6 (continued):** Yeah. It talks about, you know, that in 1 Nephi 14.

**DENVER:** Yes. Yeah, it’s a great chapter.

**QUESTION 6 (continued):** Yeah. I mean, the (you know) the process (you know) outlined by Nephi is that (you know) the Gentiles of the end times, we have to repent and return...

**DENVER:** Yes.

**QUESTION 6 (continued):** ...that the Lord would remove our stumbling block. And really the (you know) what I would call the new and everlasting covenants that Christ declares in 3 Nephi 9, (you know) comprised of two oaths—an oath that man makes to God, an oath that God makes back to man...

**DENVER:** Right.

**QUESTION 6 (continued):** ...is that you will offer up unto me a sacrifice of a broken heart and contrite spirit. And whoso does that (you know) become my ~~daughters~~ sons and daughters—the formal adoption process which is the baptism of fire/baptism of the Holy Ghost. And so that’s really (you know)... What Nephi outlines is the way the Gentiles repent and return. It’s to enter into that covenant (you know), offering up sacrifice of a broken heart and contrite spirit.

**DENVER:** And if that's the universe of your belief and how you read the Book of Mormon, then I would say, be happy with that and go no further.

**QUESTION 6 (continued):** So, how do you expand on that?

**DENVER:** I would say, "Wherefore murmur ye, because ye receive more of my word? Ye need not suppose because I have spoken one word that I cannot speak another" (see 2 Nephi 12:9-10 RE). And to the Gentiles **directly** in 1831, the Lord said, "You are condemned because you treat lightly my word" (see T&C 82:20).

**QUESTION 6 (continued):** Or in 1832.

**DENVER:** And later He said, "I am going to reject you with your dead if you don't give heed to the things that I'm telling you to do." That was the January...

**QUESTION 6 (continued):** Yeah, "I'm giving you one last chance to repent and return."

**DENVER:** Yes, that was the January 1841 revelation...

**QUESTION 6 (continued):** D&C 124.

**DENVER:** ...in which...

**QUESTION 6 (continued):** 124

**DENVER:** ...in which He gives you the description. "This is how you know if you've met my terms: You will not be moved out of your place. **But** if you don't give heed, then this is how you know that you're rejected: You're gonna be hounded out of this place by your enemies, and this center stake that I have accepted will not be where you're allowed to live in peace."

**QUESTION 6 (continued):** Sure. "If you repent and return, I will fight your battles..."

**DENVER:** Right.

**QUESTION 6 (continued):** "...You will not be driven out of Nauvoo." However, we were smitten and driven.

**DENVER:** Yeah.

**QUESTION 6 (continued):** Therefore...

**DENVER:** And I don't think that when you get to the precipice of having the Prophet Joseph Smith (who **was** the reason why we were a true and living church, because we have the oracles of God through Joseph)... When we did what we did, and we corrupted what we corrupted, and we treated lightly what we treated lightly—and we've dealt with incomplete, inaccurate, corrupted Scriptures for generations—I don't think you simply pick up...

The Book of Mormon itself has required numerous fixes. There was the printer's manuscript (which was copied by Oliver Cowdery from the translation manuscript), and the printer's manuscript we still have 100% of. The translation manuscript got put in the

cornerstone of the Nauvoo House. It rotted because moisture got in. There's only about 28% of that manuscript that's left. From what we've got of the original translation, Oliver Cowdery made one-and-a-half copy errors per page in transcribing the printer's manuscript from Joseph's translation.

**AUDIENCE (PETER):** [after bumping something]: Oh, I did it again. I'm so sorry...

**AUDIENCE:** [Sarcastically] Peter, you're not allowed to sit there anymore... [Laughter]

**DENVER:** Then E.B. Grandin took the printer's manuscript and made even more errors. Joseph Smith was in the process of revising the Book of Mormon (after it had been in print) and correcting it for re-publication. And from what we can tell, Joseph Smith was changing the errors that had crept in by Oliver and E.B. Grandin back to the original translation—everywhere that we have any ability to determine that.

**QUESTION 6 (continued):** Right, so we've got the 1840 and 1842 edition.

**DENVER:** Yes. The Book of Mormon as published by the LDS Church is neither one of those; it hails from the British publication. And the British publication has its own additional swarm of errors contained in it. And that's what's been handed down.

I don't have the time to walk through everything that needs to be walked through, but I can tell you that I've dealt with all these subjects at one time or another in what I've written, in what I've taught, or what I've said. And not to be perfunctory, but I don't...

I'm not here to tell anyone to be discontented. If you're happy, if you believe that you have obtained from the Lord a hope in Christ, I don't want to upset you or set you at odds with me or anyone else. I say: Go your way in peace, and be happy; go your way rejoicing. All I'm trying to do is to get things right as we approach the decreasing circumference of the funnel leading up to the return of the Lord, in which **a great deal has to be done**. And as far as I can tell, I can't see anyone on the horizon that's doing the things that need to be done.

The LDS Church **sold** the right to proselytize in Israel to get the BYU Jerusalem Center. They have a treaty with the nation of Israel—they **will not proselytize** in the nation of Israel. They want to keep their BYU Center. They actually had a fellow who translated the Book of Mormon into Hebrew that donated it to the church, which then showed up... The church put it into print and then took it out of print and then took all the copies and destroyed 'em. And oddly enough, they donated the Hebrew manuscript to the Genealogical Society, and we were able to get that copy from microfiche at the Genealogical Society. But it's a crappy version; it's modern Hebrew, and it's not... You're not gonna take that version to a rabbi in Jerusalem and present it as an authentic Old Testament text. They'll laugh at it; they'll say, "This is clearly a ginned up..."

**QUESTION 8:** Can you give me the Reader's Digest simplified version of what the covenant that was given in Boise 2017...

**STEPHANIE:** No, hold on; over here first.

**QUESTION 7&8:** I still want to hear your testimony of Christ. But I'm wondering about the simplified Reader's Digest version of what that was, 'cuz Justin told us that...

**AUDIENCE:** It's on the website: scriptures.info.

**QUESTION 8:** Okay, I just wanted to hear it.

**STEPHANIE:** Okay, over here.

**QUESTION 9:** Okay, super quick. So, I'm really new to all this, and I was intrigued. So, I bought the new Scriptures, and I was reading in T&C section 3 where the Lord says, "Oliver Cowdery, you have a gift of the sprout." And I thought, "Man, that's totally new; I've never seen that before." So, I had to cross reference it with the D&C (which is what I've grown up with, and I have known my whole life) where it's talking about the gift of the Aaronic Priesthood—which is **radically** different. Maybe... At least in my estimation, the word was so radically different that it just blew my mind. So, my question is, "How is it that the Scriptures that we have are so radically different?" And you may have already just answered it with the last thing, but since I'm so new to this and I just stumbled upon this, this is one thing that just was really kind of freaking me out this last week. Why are the Scriptures that I have so completely different than this, which I am to believe may be more accurate?

**DENVER:** The revelations that were given to Joseph Smith (and you're talking about that subject)... Manuscripts were taken by Oliver Cowdery to be printed at Independence on a printing press that the church bought there. He was going to print it in 1833 in Independence in what became known as the Book of Commandments. When Oliver Cowdery was setting it in Independence, he believed he had a certain "discretion" to write them up in an improved form for publication in 1833. And so, the typeset version of the Book of Commandments in 1833 is a starting point from which the next volume rolled out. The 1833 Book of Commandments was not a true and faithful, accurate reproduction of what Joseph had given. It was edited through the printing press in 1833. That's the press that got destroyed in Missouri. They smuggled out printed copies in the skirts of some of the women. The copies that got smuggled out then got bound together, and a few copies of the 1833 Book of Commandments survive because of the smuggling process that went on.

That 1833 version then became the basis that a committee used in 1835 to publish what would become known as the Doctrine and Covenants. Joseph Smith, leading up to the 1835 conference, spent time working on a series of lectures that had been delivered in the School of the Prophets, which became known as Lectures on Faith. Joseph edited Lectures on Faith, and they are the **doctrine** of the Doctrine and Covenants. They were put in the front of the book. They are in larger type than was the rest of the book. The revelations that were given to Joseph were in... I'm not sure the font size, but I'm gonna estimate it's like a nine pitch, and the Lectures on Faith are in like a twelve pitch. So, they're in the front of the book, they're in larger print, and Joseph Smith (at the conference) vouched for the accuracy of the **doctrine**. He turned the **revelations** over to a committee. The committee consisted of a group of people who also felt that they had the right to do some editing. So when the Doctrine and Covenants rolled out, the revelations to Joseph had undergone further

modification. And in the minutes of the conference, what Joseph vouched for was Lectures on Faith; he didn't vouch for the **publication** that was made there.

So, section 27 of the Doctrine and Covenants, when it was originally given, consisted of about (I forget what it was)—about three or four verses; it may have been five verses. Doctrine and Covenants section 27 **now** goes on for pages. And it's in the expansion, beyond revelation given to Joseph, that we have the first mention of "Peter, James, and John, by whom I ordained new apostles," which is part of the claim to the priestly succession that went on thereafter. In fact, when the first quorum of the twelve was called, they were ordained by the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon. And, as an interesting side note, we don't know who ordained who, but if you start with their names in order of seniority, every third one that got ordained would be [by] Martin Harris. And the math works out that Brigham Young was likely ordained to the apostleship by Martin Harris, which is sort of an interesting thing.

You can read the Covenant in section 127 of the Teachings and Commandments; it's online. Oh, no, it's section 158 of the Teachings and Commandments" at [scriptures.info/Teachings and Commandments](http://scriptures.info/Teachings%20and%20Commandments). Just click on 1-5-8, and you can read it there.

[Answer to QUESTION 7] You can also read an expanded version of a testimony (within the Teachings and Commandments) where I talk about the suffering of the Lord in Gethsemane and what happened on the morning of the Resurrection. I wrote accounts of those things (at the time that it happened) in my journal. I do not think later reminiscences are as accurate, authentic, or valuable than the thing you record at the moment. And so, I've never released reminiscences; I've stuck to exactly what was written in the journal at the moment in which these things occurred. And that's what showed up that the Scripture Committee wanted added to the Scriptures and what people voted to have added in there, but you can read my extended testimony there.

Here and now, at this (you know) late hour, with the exhaustion that is clearly setting in in the faces of some of you (some of whom would have liked me to shut up long ago, including the missus)...

I know that the Lord lives because I've seen Him, and He's ministered to me. The full extent of what the Lord has asked of me, I don't think would ever appropriately be put into the public record. I can tell you that I don't view myself as anything special. I don't believe that a fantastic testimony makes the person to whom it's been entrusted bigger or greater or wiser than anyone else. I don't think I've lived as good a life as many of you have lived, because I did not become a practicing Mormon until I was 19 years old, and I grew up in southern Idaho where there was a lot of boredom.

I sought the Lord sincerely, earnestly, using everything that I believed would be appealing to the notice of Heaven, including the formalities of prayer that you learn about in an LDS "true order of prayer" ceremony. I did every step that I thought would bring it about, and then nothing happened.

So, I went about doing what other Latter-day Saints who are faithful did: I magnified my calling; I was 100% home teacher for 15 years; I was a diligent Gospel Doctrine teacher; I

was a student of the Scriptures. But I thought that I had gotten all I was going to get from the Lord. And then, on His timing, at His chosen moment, for reasons that are entirely His, He decided that He would make Himself known to me—not because I’m “someone,” but because no one else was willing to do what needed to be done. I don’t think I’m anything other than someone who’s willing to do **His** agenda, not my own. I don’t have an agenda. I don’t want to be responsible for things. I am not pushing the Lord. If He wants something of me, He asks—I’ll do it; I’ll do it to the best of my ability. And I can tell you, much of what I’ve been asked to do I find more difficult than anything I ever imagined.

At one point, the Lord told me, “If we go on, there is a war underway in this world, and you are going to be a combatant in the war in this world”—not taking up arms and shooting people. I’m talking about ongoing conflict between truth and error, lies, deception, arrogance, foolishness—the tools of the devil. When he wrapped the earth with a great chain at the time of Enoch, and he looked up at Heaven and he laughed, the chain was **lies**. The Lord is **fighting against incessant, continual lies**. The foolishness that exists down here...

And I responded to the Lord that “I’m ready to go,” and He literally... The Lord would not take my answer. He insisted that I think about it. And I thought about it for a couple of weeks, and I thought, “What’s so bad about fighting against the forces of evil? What’s so bad about fighting against the nonsense that goes on in this world?”

Yeah, I can tell you that **sincere, good, believing, religious people are aligned with the lies!** People think they’re doing God’s errand when they’re fighting against what God is doing right this minute. And people that you would want to love and embrace, you **cannot** because they **will not hear** His voice speaking at this moment. They murmur because they do not want more of His word.

And so, in my two weeks of reflection, I determined, “Yeah, I’m ready to go forward.” And then the Lord took me at the word, and we went forward. But I can tell you, if I knew then what I know now, I might not have answered in two weeks. I think I would have still given the same answer, but this—**this is not fun**. And this is not particularly even rewarding. And I don’t think anyone in this room can understand what I’m saying except her [Stephanie].

But I am on the Lord’s errand—as ill-suited as I am and as comparatively unworthy as I am to some of you. I try to be a diligent servant, and so far, that appears to be enough. But there is **so much left to do**; we’ve hardly begun. And the stuff left is the hardest of all, and we’ve still gotta get it done.

I know He lives. He’s ministered to me. And I would guarantee you with every fiber of my life that I’m **not overstating anything**. I try to mirror the model of Joseph. Joseph said, “You don’t know me; you never knew me. If I hadn’t lived it, I wouldn’t have believed it.” I get that. It’s a terrible thing to be in the presence of a living God—but it’s an even more terrible thing to think yourself somehow involved in work that can affect the souls of men, and the truth of the matter is that “only fools trifle with the souls of men” (see T&C 138:18). Joseph put it well. And I hope not to trifle with any of your souls. I wish I could make a more

persuasive presentation to convince you that God's **really doing something right now**. But I'm as weak as I am and as flawed as I am and...

And I said we'd get out of here after that one, but there's a hand over there. So, I'm gonna stand up and act like I'm walking out and... What's your question?

**QUESTION 10:** Real quick question. So, by the way, thanks for coming. So, in the beginning of the "Prayer for Covenant," you mentioned having received the name David from Heavenly Father. I was just curious if you'd be able to tell us, like, how that happened and maybe what you understand that to mean?

**DENVER:** I thought it was really a disappointment. It was an ugly moment for me. I mean, I know what... I did not have in mind what people have in mind—**at all! At all!** The Voice that spoke to me said those words about the name—and God gives new names to people all the time; it happens in Scripture; He does it. **To me** what that new name meant was I'm supposed to rejoice at being named after an **adulterer** who **murdered** the husband of the woman that he committed adultery with in order to cover the sin of adultery that he impregnated...

I thought of Uriah. I thought of Bathsheba. I thought of Joab receiving the orders. (It's not in the Bible, but it's in Josephus: Joab, the nephew of David, getting the order from David that was supposed to help murder this man in secret. And Joab, to his credit, read the order to Uriah and his commanders. And when they withdrew so that Uriah would be killed, **many** of the valiant men stayed behind and died with him because he was their comrade in arms.) This is David who betrayed these people! This is the name that... and the context. I spent two days troubled about that. In fact, I bitterly complained about the name. **I did not want that name.**

**QUESTION 10 (continued):** So, when did it happen?

**DENVER:** It's in the Scriptures. It's in the Teachings and Commandments.

**QUESTION 10 (continued):** Okay.

**DENVER:** But after my bitterest return-prayer (that took a bit of emotional composition in order to go back before the Lord), the response that I got from the Lord was, "I thought it no great insult to be called the Son of David," which, I mean, it just... It cut me like, "Here I am, ungrateful for something that the Lord viewed as a positive." I've been cut to the heart many times. I'm not the... I've made a lot of mistakes. I'm sure that all of the correction that I have required has been well deserved, and many of it has been poignant and heart-piercing.

Yeah, you had a...

**QUESTION 11:** So back to... You lost me a little bit when you were talking about Joseph Smith and MMP [Multiple Mortal Probations]. Some of us don't jump to that. So, when I came... I'm relatively new. About seven years ago, we found ourselves praying about the pollution in the church and asking Heavenly Father who the Apostles were, and we were told they've made an oath of death. We prayed about who Nelson was, and we were told, "I

will send one mighty and strong, holding a scepter of power." And we were then told that, "You'll know him by his fruits," and that, "Beware of wolves in sheep's clothing."

I asked the Lord when we moved to Manti recently: "I am lost; I have to speak in Sacrament," saying, "I'm all alone, Father. They have killed the holy prophets; they have killed Joseph Smith; they have polluted our temple..." (that I was excited to move to this temple), "and they have... And I'm all alone." And then I asked Heavenly Father for comfort and opened up to (I think it's in) Romans, and it said [that] Paul said the same thing (that I opened to), which was, "They have killed the holy prophets; they have swept down the altars." And I'm all alone, and I thought, "Please guide me to some people that know what I know," and then I came into this group.

And so, I asked Heavenly Father about the one mighty and strong recently, and I was just told that he would be involved with new records and translations and Cumorah. (I was about to a passage that said something about the Cumorah and the other records to be coming forth.) And so, I wonder if you can make remarks. And I just...

I jumped to the conclusion that that could be Joseph Smith resurrected. I never went to the idea of MMP, so that frightens me. The whole idea of MMP is something that I, exactly, I asked that and opened up about Matthias as well. And I've been researching, and I see it from your point of view. So, how can you reconcile Joseph Smith or one "like to him"? Because I haven't gotten the full answer to who he is, just that I know he will be involved in this before he puts the rec[ord], you know, gives the inheritances and puts the church in order and so forth, whatever. He might not even know who he is!

So, could you maybe comment on the idea that it could be Joseph Smith, or if it could be...

**DENVER:** I don't think it's possible for Joseph Smith to come and do work that... The work of salvation is the work of mortals. The burden of salvation is the burden of mortals. **It does not happen** that resurrected beings, translated beings, or "second-life" beings come back and do the work that would change the conditions for mortality.

When the three Nephites exceeded their natural life, they were no longer seen publicly. But they **ministered to** Mormon and Moroni who, in turn, then ministered to the public. John ministers to people as a ministering angel, as is described in the Doctrine and Covenants.

Angels minister—as explained in Alma and as explained by Moroni in the Ether chapter seven (I think it is)—angels minister to people "of a firm mind in every form of godliness" (in Moroni's description), and (in Alma's description) angels minister to the "chosen vessels." Then the chosen vessels are the people that are of a firm mind [who] spread the message down. So, if you're talking about a translated being who functions as an angel or if you're talking about a resurrected angel ministering, they minister to people that are then sent on an errand—but the errand involves a mortal going out to preach.

And other mortals have to hear the word from people to whom the angels have ministered, in order for **them** to rise up and to receive what they need to receive in order for themselves also to qualify to be ministered to by angels. And then the process proceeds from there, who preach and teach to the chosen vessels so that they're prepared to receive

the Son. And then the Son has a ministry with people in which He prepares and presents them to the Father. And it is an orderly process that's described in both Alma and in Moroni.

But the idea that we're gonna get Joseph Smith, you know, walking around... Is he gonna show the bullet holes in his... Is Hyrum gonna show his bullet holes, as Christ did when He said, "See my wounds..."

**AUDIENCE:** Wow.

**DENVER:** "...and know that it's I." I mean, what are we expecting when, in fact, Joseph denounced the...

**QUESTION 11 (continued):** Yeah, I agree.

**DENVER:** ...Joseph denounced the idea of reincarnation. But there is an early-Mormon teaching about multiple mortal probations that is slightly different, and **that teaching** you can actually **find** in the Doctrine and Covenants where it talks about the "deaths" (plural), and it talks about "worlds without end." And in Joseph's King Follett Discourse, he talks about going from "exaltation to exaltation, until you **attain to** the resurrection of the dead."

Well, we're all going to be resurrected, but we don't "attain to the resurrection of the dead," because Jesus brings us out of the grave. You have to be **precisely** what the Lord is and nothing different than that to be a saved man. To be "precisely what the Lord is" means **you** have to attain to the resurrection of the dead. Until then, you will go from exaltation to exaltation until you arrive at the point that you are prepared, worlds without end, for the resurrection.

**QUESTION 11 (continued):** That has to mean something...

**DENVER:** Yeah. And if you want a more fulsome description of the difference between that process for **the man** and **the woman**, then you should read the talk (now a paper) called "Our Divine Parents," in which the role of the Mother in this process is described. But again, that talk kind of picks up where King Follett leaves off.

**AUDIENCE:** Who is the author of that talk?

**DENVER:** It's my talk.

**QUESTION 12:** Denver, could I just get your thoughts on an experience I had this year?

**DENVER:** Yeah.

**QUESTION 12 (continued):** And this is something that happened January the 9th of this year. But the Lord came to me and said, you know, "Michael, stop referring to the Book of Mormon as the Book of Mormon, but refer to it as the Book of Christ."

**DENVER:** Hmm.

**QUESTION 12 (continued):** And I said... I mean, my... The reason that I'm here is because of the testimony of Nephi in the Book of Mormon. And so, people I've shared it with, some

have outright rejected it; some have accepted it; some say, “It makes sense. Michael, you run with it; that’s your revelation.” What are your thoughts?

**DENVER:** I think **you** should call the Book of Mormon “the Book of Christ.” And I don’t think you should vary from that, because I think by doing that you’re gonna provoke a lot of people into conversations that I think **you** ought to participate in. Because that message to you, I think, is a conversation starter and a really good one, and I think you ought to stick with that.

**QUESTION 12 (continued):** Yeah, I mean, I have. Because to me, it just makes sense. What other book can bring a Christian closer to Christ than the Book of Christ?

**DENVER:** Yeah. Right. And it’s an **astonishing** book. I mean, I taught it every four years for years, and it got to the point that I became in awe of the Book of Mormon. Nephi...

Well, we’ve got to leave. It’s... It is almost surreal.

Thank you!

[Transcription v1.1]