

## Hear and Trust the Lord

Presentation at the "Hear and Trust the Lord in the Storm" Conference

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I have to do in two trips what I once could do in one because I broke my right arm, ironically, by slipping and falling on a handicap ramp. It was covered with ice, and I couldn't tell that in the dark. And when I landed, my feet went out from under. When I landed, it sounded like someone broke a carrot; it just snapped. And I thought, "Well, maybe I've just dislocated something. Maybe we can shove it back in place." But a more calm-headed nurse practitioner son-in-law of mine said, "Nah, we might want to get that x-rayed before we decide how we're gonna manipulate that thing." As for my part, there was a president of the LDS Church whose name was Spencer Kimball who said swearing was "an attempt of a weak mind to express itself forcefully," and I broke out all my old golfing language and distributed it liberally to the ramp and the parking lot and the...anyone within earshot.

I really appreciate the music that's gone on here. When Joe Alexander informed me that he'd made arrangements to bring those sisters aboard to provide music for this, I have to confess I looked them up on the Internet, and I listened a little. And they're actually better in person, I think—because there's something that distances you from the performer when all you have is the sound that they make. And we've got their presence; there's something about that.

I hope that some of you who are here today are Christians. If not, then I hope that those that listen to the talk that's given today are among those who are Christian.

A friend of mine (scholar, member of the faculty at Brigham Young University) attended a theological convention attended primarily by the ministers of Christian faiths. And he was invited to present a paper. He presented a paper, and one of those who was there at the time said to him (in kind of incredulous tone), "You talk as if you believe this stuff really happened!"—meaning the events of the New Testament. And he was surprised. And in the convention, the question was put to those in attendance: How many of them believed, literally, in the New Testament description of events? And somewhere between 10 and 20% raised their hands. And then it was turned on its side to make sure: How many of you think that these events did not literally occur? And over 80% of the audience raised their hand. And these are ministers! These are people who preach and serve. For them, the ministerial position is an occupation that they earn a living through. But faith and belief may belong to the congregants but does not necessarily belong to the minister.

One of the fellows who I've read and have some respect for is a scholar teaching a New Testament studies. He's a theologian, and he's an agnostic. He's written a book; one of his books, the first part of the title is: The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture, and then colon, and then there's a lengthy secondary title which I don't recall. It's something like: "How the Christological Debates of the Second and Third Century Resulted in Alteration of the New Testament Text" [The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament], in which he shows that the text ~~was~~ to the

New Testament was changed in order to support one side of the argument that was being made (over the nature of who Jesus Christ was) during the debates that went on in the second and third century after Christ had died.

What Christ left behind were apostles with messages that went out and that taught about their experience in having been with Jesus during His lifetime, witnessing His ministry, seeing Him crucified, and then being taught by Him in the resurrection and getting commissioned by Him to go unto all the world and to preach about this—which they did. But they didn't have social media, and they didn't have the Internet, and they didn't have phone lines. And as a consequence of that, how Thomas taught (in isolation on his mission) and how Matthew taught (in isolation in his mission) and how Peter taught gave rise to a variety of Christian forms that survived the deaths of the various apostles. But they were non-homogenous; they weren't the same thing. There was an extraordinary amount of variety in that first generation of Christianity, which is one of the reasons why a New Testament scholar can turn into an agnostic.

We want to impose upon Christ and upon the Father an obligation for the kind of perfect symmetry that we expect TRUTH to have. And yet, God has gone to the trouble of making every maple leaf on every maple tree unique. Every snowflake is individualized and unique. There isn't one person in this room whose fingerprints match the fingerprints of someone else. And your eyes are so differentiated from one another that I can get through the security screening at the airport by letting him scan one of my eyes. That's how unique you are.

God catches Ezekiel up into Heaven. And Ezekiel comes and gives a report, and he says, "Wheels within wheels; it was all in motion." The majesty of the creation that he beheld defied his ability to put it into words, and so he uses analogy. The testimonies that are given by those who have seen beyond the veil reflect their limited ability/limited vocabulary/limited capacity to take what is vast and beyond human understanding and try to put it into words. I don't talk much about what it is that goes on on the other side of the veil. But believe me, there is so much more to the truths that God has yet to make public, that every one of us ought to be humble about what little we are able to share and how limited our capacities are.

Christianity was diverse, divergent—and it came to a single focus in the recognition that Jesus Christ came as the Son of God and paid a terrible price in order to make grace possible. All Christians believe that they are going to be saved—somehow and in some way—as a consequence of what Jesus Christ did. If you were to ask a Catholic to give you a theological explanation of how that would happen, they would point to the tradition that the keys of the kingdom were given to Peter, and that those keys have been passed down, and that they have the ability to open or shut the gate of Heaven, and therefore, if you attend confession, the priest (vicariously—going all the way back to Peter) has the capacity to open that gate and to let you in. So it's important that you keep your fidelity to the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church separated from the Eastern Orthodox Church at about 1000 AD. And in the eastern half of the Christian world, they wouldn't tell you that you can go to the

Catholics and be saved. They have their own tradition; they have their own set of beliefs. And they preserve some things that the Catholics let go of. One of the things that the Eastern Orthodox Church kept on is the belief in the deification of man—that man may eventually become God. That's not believed in the Catholic side.

Now, all of you who are Protestant or Evangelical, your form of Christianity did not even exist AT ALL until about 500 years ago. If we transport you back in time to some time before Martin Luther's era you'd be killed as a heretic because preaching and believing what you preach and believe today was not only not considered Christian, it was considered heretical and dangerous. So, Christians ought to approach their Christian faith with a modicum of humility about what it is they think they have in their belief system that can secure for them salvation into eternity.

Here's a problem for all of you Christians: If you are an Evangelical, you proclaim loudly, *By grace you are saved, ...not of works, lest any man should boast* (Ephesians 1:5).<sup>1</sup> Now, there's a statement from Paul that includes both grace and works. So, you're saved by grace. Then Paul poses the question in the book of Romans, "What shall we say then? Shall we let sin abound" (see Romans 1) meaning, should you now be licentious? And his answer to that question is, "God forbid; you may be saved or rescued by grace, but by your works, you shall be judged" (ibid.). When you get to the book of Revelation and you read the criteria upon which the final judgment is gonna be executed, your judgment will be based upon your works. Well, there's a dilemma for you. So you're saved by grace. Okay. The Lord can erase all those mistakes. Now, what do you have to show for yourself? Why, I got a blank slate. The board's been erased. See, there's the grace; see that whiteboard over there? That's my saved Christian friends. Well, how the hell are we gonna judge you by your works if that's what you've got? (And I use the word "hell" advisedly because that's pretty much what we're left with.) We have NOTHING we can do for you. You merit NOTHING. Jesus' grace is intended to make it possible for you to free yourself from the slavery of sin. Now, what are you gonna do that you are freed from the slavery of sin? Christ tells you in the Sermon on the Mount what you ought to do:

- Don't be angry with your brother.
- Don't commit lust in your heart, because it will lead to adultery.
- Do good to those that spitefully use you.
- Be a peacemaker.
- Be among those who are going about (as Christ is described) doing good.

Then we have something upon which to judge you. Doesn't mean you're gonna live an error-free life, but the grace of God will help remove those errors. Just go on, and do something good.

Well, I hope all of you who have been here today have listened with the kind of precision that the talks have been given earlier today. Matt's talk, Whitney's talk, "Whitney's husband's" talk [laughter]. (We're not used to saying "Vern." We're used to saying, "Whitney's husband.") They were all delivered with precision about the subject. Now, some

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<sup>1</sup> All citations in this talk are to the Restoration Edition of Scripture.

of you are probably, in hindsight, thinking, "This sounds like there's a lot of luggage being toted around as a consequence of Mormon history." And that's true enough. There's a lot of stuff that got said today that is only necessary to be said in order to distinguish people who believe in the Lord's Restoration of Truth from those that claim institutionally to OWN the truth.

The LDS Church is the best known—the Mormon church, headquartered in Salt Lake—is the best-known group of those who claim that they become established by Joseph Smith. But there are literally over a hundred different formal organizations that claim that they were founded by Joseph Smith. And part of what's necessary in talking about the truth is to say "what we're not." And there's been a whole lot of "what we're not" that got said today. And that's good and well. But the fact is that something happened in the spring of 1820, in which a long prelude led to the heavens opening again.

If it hadn't been for Martin Luther and his rebellion against Catholicism, there could not have been Protestant churches. But the initial Protestant churches were just as beset with problems as was the Catholic mother from which their births came. Martin Luther participated in killing those who rejected Lutheranism and who defended papalism. John Knox was called the apostle of murder because of the violence and the killing that he engaged in. Enforcing religion at the edge of a sword was considered to be necessary as part of the early Protestant Christian movement, just as the Catholic religion had been plagued by the violence that it inflicted on people. It took the Protestant Reformation and it took hundreds of years of working through that before both the Protestants and the Catholics became more benign and more tolerant of one another—and THAT required the founding of a new nation that conceived of religious liberty as a venue in which religious pluralism was allowed to flourish, so that God could, in fact, call and start something new, under the Son, that resembles what went on before.

The reason why theologians become agnostic and faithless is because they study the minutiae of what the texts say without ever permitting the experiment of what the texts TEACH to become how they live their lives. We hear the idea that you have faith in something. But the idea of faith did not really get defined until Joseph Smith sought, through the heavens, to ordain on Earth a form of priestly authority that hadn't been here since Old Testament times and with Christ and His apostles. And he got a revelation that allowed him to confer that authority upon a limited group of people. He was rejoicing and celebrating the accomplishment—and to a man, every one of those who had been ordained failed to accomplish anything, apostatized, rebelled, wrote a series of letters denouncing Joseph. And everything that he had hoped that this achievement would reflect turned into nothing but a mess. I wrote about this in *A Man Without Doubt*.

What Joseph Smith did in response to that was to set about trying to fix the problem. Out of that came what's called the Lectures on Faith. One of the Lectures on Faith was quoted earlier today in one of the talks. Well, Lectures on Faith defines faith as a principle of action. You can believe all you want to believe, but you do not have faith unless you act.

We don't pay, hire, or support ministers. If you don't sacrifice to minister to others, you cannot acquire faith. When Joe invited me to come and speak at this conference, and I

agreed to do it, I understood we had to buy our own plane tickets for my wife and I to travel here, we had to rent our own car, we had to pay for our own hotel room. I didn't expect and I would be insulted if they offered to compensate me for anything that gets done—because faith is a principle of action that requires that you engage in sacrifice.

When I got the opportunity to come here, I sat about writing a talk (despite the fact that we're told to "take no thought beforehand"). And so, I had a great talk prepared to give, but I broke my arm, and I can't hold the Scriptures with one hand, and I can't turn the pages with one hand, and I can't prepare a talk to read with one hand. And so, I was rather forced into the corner of just coming and talking spontaneously. And so, all the great thoughts that I had are sitting at home on a computer that are still unfinished. Sometimes we're required to take things out of our own hands and to trust in what the Lord wants.

We don't believe in an organization, because organizations can be compromised simply by capturing the control center. You are witnessing a concerted effort being made everywhere you look—churches, the military, the government, businesses, Disney... Everywhere you look, there is a concerted effort to acquire control over the control center of the organizations in order, then, to corrupt the entirety of the organization by gaining control of the center/of the top. If you never consolidate power into a single place but every person must stand on their own—and every person has their own volume of Scriptures, and everyone has the ability to get access to the heavens through prayer—then it doesn't matter who you corrupt, you cannot corrupt the whole. And when she [Kathy Alexander] said (just before the last song and me getting up here) that she takes no one's word for anything but she has to pray for and have her own assurance of the truth, what that means is no person's corruption, no matter who they may be, stands in the way of her ability to discern and be faithful to the truth. There's a resilience to a lack of hierarchy, a lack of position, a lack of control. There's a vulnerability to any organization that, right now, is being exploited relentlessly no matter where you turn. The Disney organization is going to be getting into the adult-film business, probably using a different label—but they are clearly moving away from the "family-friendly" fare that Walt Disney founded it to become.

If you are a Christian, you should study what happened in the last ~~222~~ [202] years since the heavens opened in 1820 and God spoke to Joseph Smith. If you are a Mormon and you want to try to understand what happened to Christianity, you should look at your own last ~~222~~ [202] years and the marvelous transformation that your own religion has undergone to try and understand what happened in the early days of Christianity.

Christianity was such a divergent group that when Constantine decided to make Christianity the state religion of Rome, he thought he was getting a religious organization that he could subordinate to the interests of the Roman state, and it would be unifying and gratifying. What he found out was that Christians believe things so differently from one another that Christians were killing Christians over debates about Christianity and how it ought to be practiced. And so, in hindsight, it is now called (it's a rather flattering sort of BS term, but nevertheless) it is called the "First GREAT Ecumenical Council," the Council of Nicea, out of which comes the Nicene Creed, which was the attempt to standardize (under the direction of the Emperor) a definition for what the Christian faith minimally consisted of so that we could get our story straight! And they held votes, and they were literally

sequestered by the Emperor until they came up with a definition—and even then, they still had a couple of holdouts who got exiled out of the Roman Empire. But voila, from the ~~great ecumenical~~ First Great Ecumenical Council, now we have a definition of Christianity that we can use.

And so, Christianity assumed a stable form. But that was at 324 AD, and the battle had been going on since the death of the apostles, and Scriptures were being revised. And Christian scholars who look into these things deeply enough wind up saying, "I don't know how much of any of this stuff is reliable." So if you go to the Mormon history and you check out what happened in the Mormon history, you will find out that there are extraordinary numbers of parallels that go on. Joseph Smith was not the character he was represented to be by Brigham Young and the cabal of interests that followed Brigham Young to the west.

The telling of Mormon history, just like the telling of Christian history, can be analogized to this: You set off from Europe in a wooden sailboat. And the winds are pushing you in one direction, and the current is pulling you in another direction, and you're headed to India because you want to get cinnamon and pepper and spices to bring back and become a wealthy person. And en route, you manage, at some point, promiscuously sailing first one way and then another, with the winds blowing you in every which direction, but you're trying to hold your course west at San Salvador. And you say, "We made it to India." And no one's speaking Punjabi (it's a real problem). So, the story over time turns into something a little different and a little more heroic. And it's the contention that the possibility exists that there's another trade route on a globe, and "I'm inspired by God, and we're headed in the right direction, and God's leading us all about," and we get the story—the heroic story—of Columbus and his persistence, and the sailors getting ready to rebel the night before, and him saying, "Just one more day," and sure enough, they find the land—and we've turned it into something heroic.

Mormonism has taken mess after mess. mistake after mistake, wicked purveyor after wicked purveyor, and they've dressed it up into something that is a great story of triumph. Brigham Young could not conceive that God wouldn't vindicate him 'cuz he had the keys and the kingdom was with him. So when he sent all the cattle up to Cache county (and the winter in Cache county is ever so much worse than it would have been if he'd kept them down in the Salt Lake valley), and the entire herd of cattle dies from the winter, Brigham Young doesn't blame his own stupidity; he blames the Mormons for not being sufficiently faithful to the leadership. And so, he launches the Mormon Reformation.

There's something... Well, it doesn't exist anymore. But there's something called the Home Teaching program—where members visited one another to encourage them in faith every month. The predecessor to that was the Home Missionary program. The missionary program came to members' houses and asked you a series of questions. The series of questions were designed to determine whether or not you should be "blood atoned," because Brigham Young believed in a principle which was that "some of your sins are so bad that Jesus won't suffer for them; your own blood has to be shed for that particular sin." So, if you committed a blood atonement sin and the home missionaries visiting discerned that, then you needed to shed your blood in order to atone for your own shortcoming so you could be saved. (And by the way, the person who got killed in this manner would later

thank you because you made it possible for them to enter into the kingdom.) This is the kind of nonsense that went on when the Mormons were isolated from the larger American community.

Johnson's Army came out and dispossessed Brigham Young of the governorship. The railroad came through and made it possible for transportation. The year after Johnson's Army arrived in Salt Lake to dispossess Brigham Young of the governorship, over 3,200 families fled out of Utah going east to get away from Brigham Young because they were afraid of him. We have good numbers on those that went east. We do not have numbers for those that went west. By that time, the forty-niners had been out there, Sutter's Mill and the gold had been found, and there was plenty of land—valuable, useful land—in California to go to. And so it's thought that multiples of the number that when east fled to the west, out of Utah, to escape from Brigham Young's reign of terror.

He believed (when Johnson's Army was coming to Utah) that the Indians would rise up and defend his claim to be governor and that (he called the Indians "the battle-ax of the Lord"), he believed that that would secure for him his continued governance, and he could declare his independence from the nation, and he could found this theological institution that he would reign over as king. It didn't happen—and the talks that Brigham Young gave (that are now available—they weren't for a long time, but they got published about 2005), the talks that Brigham Young gave during that time period of emotional crisis lead me to believe that the man literally lost his mind. There's an example that's drawn out of Mormon history from the LDS perspective to discredit Joseph Smith's counselor, Sidney Rigdon, who claimed that he should be the custodian over the church after Joseph was dead. He gave a talk that is pointed to as evidence that he was a nutcase. Brigham Young (after Johnson's Army arrived) sounds very much like Sidney Rigdon in his campaign to be the church president after Joseph's death. They're BOTH nutty.

Mormon history is fraught with embarrassing, outrageous, violent, unfortunate events. If your faith requires that you have a church that doesn't bear any of the marks or failures, then it becomes intolerable for you to hear anyone reciting the events that occurred in your church. Mormons' faith is largely predicated upon the notion that the Mormon church has survived intact. Christians' faith is predicated upon the notion that Christianity has survived sufficiently intact so that you can secure for yourself salvation in the kingdom of God in the afterlife if you follow the form of Christianity you believe to have saving power today.

I have good news for everyone, and I have bad news for everyone. But first, the bad news: None of your churches are gonna save you. None of your current Christian forms are gonna save you. None of your Mormon forms are going to save you. If you intend to secure for yourself hope in Christ, then it is requisite, it is mandatory, it is absolutely essential that you hear the voice of God when it speaks to you in YOUR generation. It is necessary that someone be sent with a message from Him—just like Joseph Smith was sent with a message from God to tell you about how you can extract yourself from sin and error. And Joseph secured (for those who were willing) the possibility of their own salvation by obedience to the ordinances of the gospel which **he could authoritatively declare**. Paul says, "How can you believe if you don't have someone who is sent, and how can you be sent

if not being sent by God?" Joseph met the criteria: He was sent. He did bring a message. It did have the power of salvation. It IS possible to secure salvation once Joseph's voice gets raised. And that voice and those ordinances remained authoritative until they get broken.

Study Christian history and you'll begin to realize that the Christian message got broken, certainly by 324 AD. Study the Mormon church. I mean, she [Kathy Alexander] joked that I got baptized in 1973, and it's true enough. But I gotta tell you, the church that I got baptized into in 1973 has **nothing in common** with the church that exists calling itself... Well, it doesn't even acknowledge itself as "the Mormons"; they were kind of proud of that back then. Now, it's "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," because "the devil is happy every time you use the word 'Mormon.'" Ohmmmm...

I'm not sure how that worked. Which is another thing, I don't have a clock, so... [looking at the time]. Okay, I can keep going.

So we have to have—it's an essential ingredient of Christianity; it's an essential ingredient of salvation—we have to have God talk to us in our generation. The words of an old book—which is how Joseph Smith described the Bible—the words of an old book and the salvation that took place in their day does not do anything for us! We can come along and pick up the old book and imitate what it's saying there, but unless that religion lives in you, their religion belonged to them. Their feats, their acts, their sacrifices secured for them salvation in **their** day. What does God want of you now in your day? I mean, pick up the book, read it, and imitate it, but the LDS Church is largely left in the same position as the Christians were after ~~222~~ [202] years: They pick up an old book, and they imitate it. Where's God's voice to them today?

Well, something got alluded to in passing, and I don't know how many picked up on it. But in 2017, again at a time when there were alignments in the heavens (because the heavens often testify to what the Lord is doing on Earth, just as the heavens testified when Christ was born—and there was an alignment in the heavens, and wise men came to the east in order to find who it was that had been born "the King of the Jews")... Well, in 2017, God spoke again and offered to this generation/those living today/you people who are within the sound of my voice (whether you're here in this hall today or you listen to the recording) offered to you—today—the possibility of salvation through a new covenant.<sup>2</sup> And part of what He's telling you in that new covenant is that He has some things that He expects to accomplish before He returns in glory to judge the world. You think Christ is coming again, and that is true enough; He's coming to judge the world. But before that time, He expects to establish a covenant people so that the religion that was once here at the time of Adam is here again. Paul wrote about how the gospel had been fore declared unto Abraham, and Paul's exactly right: Abraham knew the gospel. But so did Adam. So did Enoch. So did Noah. And so now can we too, not as part of the words of an old book, but as part of a living community of people that believe, have accepted a covenant today, and have sacrificed in order to bring forth the works of salvation today.

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<sup>2</sup> See T&C 156, 157, and 158. See also [www.receive.thecovenant.com](http://www.receive.thecovenant.com).

We believe in paying tithes. But we don't use them to buy buildings, and we don't use them to pay clergy. We use them to help the poor among us. The tithes that are gathered among the people who believe this message are used in fellowship meetings to help their neighbors or anyone within their community who are in need. Money doesn't go to invest. Money doesn't go to compensate people whose sacrifice in serving the Lord is required as part of their faith. Money goes to help those who stand in need: food, clothing, shelter, transportation, medical care, dental care. These are the things that the tithes are supposed to be used for. These are the things that we DO use tithes for. A conference gets organized, as this one has, and it requires the people who are going to organize it to rent the facilities, to gather the funds necessary in order to take care of everything that goes on during the course of the conference. And since housing isn't always free, if they can arrange to get someone to provide housing and make that available for people to purchase, they do that. But everything about our faith is intended to be sustained at every moment by acts of faith so that unless our faith remains vibrant, ongoing, active, and producing sacrifice, it will disappear from the earth. Because the last thing we want to do is to leave behind another hollow shell to become corrupted and to be used by evil and designing men to achieve their ends instead of God's ends.

It was mentioned that there are periods of restoration and periods of apostasy; those two things are intertwined. As soon as restoration ends, apostasy begins; you cannot sustain it. It MUST have a life of its own. Blow out the candle, and then enjoy its light—because that's how it works: You've got to keep the flame alive. There are people who have written me emails and letters saying I've got to institutionalize this or it's going to die out. Well, may it die out if the candle ever gets extinguished. IF it is to continue, it must continue solely on the basis of the sustaining light that comes from Heaven and not because we've created an institution that can be co-opted and turned into something like the rest of the world.

I have spent—I was gonna say "hours," but it would be much more accurate to say "many days" conversing with...well, it's not just the Lord; it's the Heavenly Council—about the management of a dispensation of the gospel. Past dispensations have failed. A dispensation of the gospel is very vulnerable, delicate thing. It's as delicate as gossamer or a cobweb, and it can be torn by inadvertence and neglect. It has to be attended to with care. The resilience of the dispensation of Moses consisted in a bunch of rites and practices and observances that could make people slavishly repetitious in what they did, and so it could go on generation after generation very durably.

The Christian dispensation went into, rather, freefall but stabilized at about 324 AD and assumed a form with enough resilience that Catholicism today has more than a billion adherents, and as long as Catholicism is around to remind us of Jesus and the apostles and the keys of the kingdom, then at least we know THAT much about Christianity.

Joseph Smith organized a church with a series of co-equal groups: a First Presidency (3), a Quorum of Twelve Apostles (12), a Quorum of Seventy (70), and then Stake High Councils (that were 12 members in as many stakes as existed geographically throughout Mormonism). Every one of those was equal to one another until Brigham Young got his hands on the reign of authority. And then Brigham Young used a verse that says, "Where the Twelve can't go, they can call upon the Seventy to go fulfill an assignment." And he said, "No

longer are they equal in authority. I get to boss the Seventy; I'm the head of the Twelve," and they became subordinate, and ultimately, he got tired of power-sharing with the other members of the Twelve, and within three years, he wants to be the First Presidency again. And today, in the LDS form of governance, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints consists literally—absolutely literally—of one person. The president of the corporation of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints owns every building, every university, every business venture, all of the acreage that consists of over 2% of the landmass of the state of Florida, all of the Hawaiian farms, all of the radio and television networks, all the motion picture production stuff, all the newspapers—ONE Mormon, and he owns it all. And that one Mormon is a "corporation sole." And when he dies, then the senior-most member of the Quorum of the Twelve becomes the member of the corporation sole, and then HE owns it all. That's what Mormonism has turned into today. It is a vast financial empire, so much so that the religion that Mormons claim to believe in is really one of the smaller "side projects" of the Corporation of the President. There is a lot of money in religion. It's one of the two oldest professions in the world. And it's slightly more profitable than the other but not at all dissimilar.

That's the problem with religion. And so, when people hopeful of salvation and anxious about their eternal state come to the ministers of the various denominations and they hear the good news in Jesus, they're hearing something that grossly misstates the obligations that devolve upon you. An adulterer cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven. A penitent adulterer can enter into the kingdom of Heaven so long as they confess and forsake their sins. You don't get there by continuing to entertain the vile lusts which the Apostle Paul said need to come to an end once that grace has been bestowed upon you. Look at Paul's example:

He's holding the coat of those that are throwing the stones that kill Steven. And Paul was probably responsible for having gotten Stephen into that predicament in the first place. He went about persecuting the Christians. He was a strict Pharisee. I mean, under his religious definition of righteousness at the time that he was practicing these things, he (the Apostle Paul) was a righteous Pharisee, vindicated by all that he knew, believing himself in good standing before God. And yet, when he awakened to his awful circumstance, he realized that he was a vile sinner. So what did the Apostle Paul do once that he recognized the ENORMITY of what it was that he had done that was wrong? He spent the rest of his days pursuing the exact opposite. He went on mission after mission proclaiming the righteousness to be found in living a life according to Jesus' sermons, Jesus' principles, the gospel of Christ.

Mormons have no hope in Christ because they belong to a church that gave them "authoritative ordinances." Without faith in Christ and a change to your heart and a willingness to obey the teachings that come from Christ (the latest of which is the covenant that instructs us what we are to do), then it doesn't matter what organization you do or don't belong to. Salvation is to be found by following the words of a living God—and that God is not only living, He is speaking. And what He has to say is remarkably profound. We've brushed up only against a small part of it in the talks that have been given today. But

a lot of what has been said presumes that you know something in the background of Mormonism and the Restoration in Joseph Smith.

I'm here to tell you that the tattered history of early Christianity and the tattered history of Mormonism over the last ~~222~~ [202] years are directly analogous. You will understand your Christian faith better by understanding what has happened to Mormonism than you will by listening to preachers in the pulpit. And you Mormons will better come to reconcile an understanding of what's happened to your Restoration when you candidly look at how Christianity conducted itself over the first two and a quarter centuries.

It is HARD to hold onto the truth. It is HARD to have the Lord walk with you. But that's only because this world wears on you and asks that you compromise a little here and that you give up a little there and that you indulge a little here. And everywhere you turn in our society today—entertainment, the news, the political voices—they're all urging you to sin. And the bad news is we become victimized by that. We become inoculated to it. I mean, you only wade through and sit in raw sewage so long before you lose the scent, and you don't realize the mess that you're living in. This world intends to drag you down. And at the same time in that same covenant, the Lord says, *The tares are ripening. ...What of the wheat?* (T&C 157:64). We have to become wheat, something worthy of being laid up in-store by the Lord for preservation into eternity.

Now, I need to let you know one other thing before I finish, and that is: We made our reservations to come out here at the time Joe invited us (months ago), and we bought our tickets—and just a few days ago, in going through and confirming and locking everything down, we found out that we didn't have the rental car after all; they knew we'd expressed interest; we had to take care of that again. We found out that Southwest—on their own—decided they were changing our return flight, as a consequence of which we are gonna have to leave to get back to Louisville early enough that I'm not gonna be here and talk tomorrow. And so, I told Joe, "Don't you announce that. I'll just tell 'em as part of my talk," and then you can throw your shoes at me instead of at him. I've got to be out of here. And so, in the Q&A, it's the last you'll hear of me in this conference.

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*This presentation is continued in the "Hear and Trust the Lord Q&A."*