

Context of the Answer to Prayer for Covenant

*The Answer to Prayer for Covenant as an Assignment from the Lord:
Love One Another as I Have Loved You*, Spring General Conference

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I want to thank the conference organizers for all the work that they have done. It was an unusual format this time, and it worked well, I thought. I wasn't quite sure what to expect when we got here, but I think the way that they have planned it and executed it has worked remarkably well. And I appreciate all of the sacrifices that got made in order to bring this conference to pass. And I'm grateful to accept the invitation to give a talk.

As Alan Vanleer said this morning (and by the way, I had no idea what any of the speakers were gonna say in advance), the Answer to the Prayer for the Covenant has a context, and it should be understood within that context. When the context is disregarded, the Answer can't be fully understood. So this talk today is about the context of the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant.

There's a passage that is in the Teachings and Commandments section 36, ~~verse 5~~ paragraph 5, in which there's an allusion made after an admonition to pray that says, *You shall ask whatever you will in the name of Jesus, and it shall be done. **But** know this, it shall be **given** you what you shall ask* (emphasis added).¹ Now that was in a specific context, to a specific person, at a specific time. And what preceded the statement to that individual was, "This will work as long as you're purified and cleansed from all sin."

Well, we don't do **that**. We don't purify **ourselves**; we don't cleanse **ourselves**—that is a gift that gets bestowed **upon** us. But if the Lord chooses to accomplish something and He wants to give someone "what you shall ask in a prayer," then the Lord is under the necessity then of purifying and cleansing the person from all sin in order to have this to work. It worked once in Scripture that we read about in Third Nephi chapter 9, paragraph 4, when the apostles were kneeling—well, the *disciples*; they weren't called apostles in the Book of Mormon—when the disciples were kneeling and praying while in Christ's presence: *And they did not multiply many words, for it was given unto them what they should pray*.

So they're giving a prayer, but the prayer is really a recitation of what it was that the Lord wanted to be included within the prayer. That ought not surprise anyone that the Lord is capable of accomplishing that because, as the Lord told us in the Sermon on the Mount, *your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him* (Matthew 3:28). So if He would like you to address Him and ~~to tell you something to~~ you to tell Him something in prayer, and He would like it to be an altogether appropriate petition to be given, then He'll give you what you shall ask.

"To place events into a context" challenges historians and puts us all in the position of having histories that disagree, that contradict, and offer differing viewpoints of exactly the same events. I've read, researched, studied, and contemplated the history of the

¹ All Scripture references in this talk cite to the Restoration Edition of the Scriptures.

Restoration. It's taken me over two million words to explain some of that history. The **revealed** Prayer for Covenant contains only 2,759 words. That's less than one and a half percent of the volume of words I've written in order to try to understand the events of the Restoration. In those few words, the Lord tells **us** the history of the Restoration clearly, succinctly, and truthfully. The Prayer is **His**.

Truth is a knowledge of things as they are and as they were and as they are to come. The Prayer for the Covenant **is our history**, as explained and set down by the Lord through revelation, and it is that prayer that gives context and definition to the answer. In fact, it's called the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant because the Prayer for Covenant preceded it and is essential as part of it. T&C section 156 is needed to understand T&C section 157. Part of this was read this morning, but I'm gonna read it and probably interrupt a time or two with some comments. This is T&C 156:

*Heavenly Father, [it's] I whom you named David, asking you in the name of Jesus Christ for your mercy and grace to be with those of us who seek to become your people. We hope to repent and return to your path, and no longer be condemned and rejected as a people because of those who went before. Take pity on us all and have mercy for us, as we **acknowledge** and **accept** the condemnation and rejection of the latter-day [saint] gentiles, and petition that we may overcome it. (§ 1, emphasis added)*

See, that's the first thing He wanted. He wants an acknowledgment—and not an acknowledgment that resists accepting it. He wants us to acknowledge the failure and to accept it as a given fact.

We are mindful that in [September]...

~~The petition says~~ The prayer says, “in 1832.” I'm adding that month; it was in September of 1832.

...the gentile saints were condemned for vanity and unbelief because they treated lightly the things they had received, and they were warned by you that they would remain under condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon and the former commandments, not only to say, but to do...

To **say** requires that we have a correct statement. It requires us to have corrected Scriptures before we can **do** what God asks.

*You commanded the gentiles that they bring forth fruit meet for their Father's kingdom, and if they failed to do so, there remained a scourge and judgment to be poured out upon those who claimed to be the children of Zion. They **failed** to bring forth the required fruit, and were judged and scourged, and then violently driven out of Jackson County, Missouri. (§ 2, emphasis added)*

That happened within one year of the September 1832 events. They were told, “You have to do this.” They didn't do that. And within one year, in the fall of 1833, they agreed, because of the demands of the citizens who are going to expel them, that they agreed to leave, one-half by January of 1834 and one-half by April of 1834.

*You explained there were jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes, and lustful and covetous desires by them; therefore, by these things they polluted their inheritances. But they did not repent, and in their pride they threatened to wage a war of extermination **against** the Missouri citizens...*

I don't know how many of you know this, but the extermination decree by Lilburn Boggs (as the governor of Missouri) was **mirroring** what the Latter-day Saints had done previously by threatening to wage a war of extermination. Lilburn Boggs was reactive; he wasn't the aggressor—as the Lord makes clear in this statement.

*...in their pride they threatened to wage a war of extermination against the Missouri citizens, heedless of your warnings. But it was **you** who used the Missouri citizens as **your** hand of judgment to scourge the condemned saints in your **attempt** to persuade them to repent and no longer treat lightly your word. They still saw no Divine purpose behind their distress, and railed against their Missouri persecutors. Despite their suffering, they were not sufficiently humbled to repent. Instead, they breathed out threats and expressed hope[s] to gain vengeance against the same Missouri mobs to whom you had given power to afflict the gentile saints to inspire them to repent. Because of the hardness of their hearts, the gentile saints were again mobbed and slain, and in 1838 altogether driven out of the State of Missouri, with Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, and other leaders, cast into prison and condemned to die. But you were merciful, and did not suffer Joseph, Hyrum, or any of those imprisoned with them, to be killed. In your mercy, the surviving saints and the imprisoned leaders were [allowed] to obtain refuge in Illinois, whose people welcomed the saints, and a season of peace followed. (§ 3, emphasis added)*

This is the first hinge point in the prayer. Something now is going to change, and something else will follow because a **new** offer is extended by the Lord (in January of 1841) to the Saints after they'd been driven out because of their follies and because of their inability to repent earlier when they were warned.

*In 1841 you mercifully extended another opportunity to the gentile saints to repent and return, and you approved Joseph's offering and acknowledgements of the past failures of the saints when he petitioned you on their behalf. You found the prayers of Joseph and the gentiles were acceptable before you, and you granted to the saints **another chance** for you to recover them as your people. As you stated to the former gentiles, **There is not a place found on earth that you may come to and restore again that which was lost unto us, or which you had taken away, even the fullness of the Priesthood...***

It had been earlier offered on condition; the condition **was not met**. Therefore, it was taken away. They didn't "have it" and lose it. They had it **offered** to them, and they lost the offer. So now God is renewing again the **offer** at this point in the recitation of the history.

...You offered and intended for a house to be built unto your name in which you deigned to reveal to your people things which have been kept hidden from before the foundation of the world, things which pertain to the dispensation of the fullness of

times. You gave to them sufficient time to build a house unto your name, warning them to complete the work or their baptisms for the dead would be unacceptable.

In those days, you warned the people you will not perform the oath which you make, neither fulfill the promises which they expect at your hands, or in other words, you would remove your covenant if they failed to do what you commanded. And you foretold what you would do unto the people if they neglected to do the work assigned them. You warned, For instead of blessings, we, by our own works, would bring cursings, wrath, indignation, and judgments upon our own heads, by our follies, and by all our abominations, which we practice before you. You foretold that at the end of this appointment our baptisms for our dead shall not be acceptable unto you; and if the gentiles did not do the things you commanded, at the end of the appointment we would be rejected as a church, with our dead, said the Lord our God...

So now He has set it up so that we understand what comes next. Because what He's going to describe next will be the **response to the offer** that was extended the second time to give to them the fullness.

...But the secret works of darkness multiplied, and the gentile follies did not end, and they practiced secret abominations in violation of your commandments and in defiance of your warnings.

The wickedness of the gentile saints dismayed the people of Illinois who had welcomed them, and provoked the anger of their indignant neighbors, who then implemented your judgments against the rebellious saints...

Nauvoo was a place where there was fraud, forgery, theft, counterfeiting, adultery, violence, and dishonesty. If you study the history, you'll reach that conclusion.

...The former gentile saints were driven into the wilderness, and relocated into a desolate land, where they suffered hunger, cold, and sickness. In that isolation the gentile leaders were emboldened to openly practice abominations and wrongly teach the people to call them sacraments, as they reigned with blood and horror over the people. Secret murders, open defiance, and the slaughter of over 200 men, women, and children fixed the anger and opposition of the entire United States, who were moved by your will to curtail the barbarism of the gentile saints. (§ 4-6, emphasis added)

That slaughter of over 200 men, women, and children was the Mountain Meadows incident that took place.

*Even today the gentile saints justify lying to others as part of their religion, believing you will vindicate them in their dishonesty. They seek deep to hide their counsel from others, and now deny your judgments against their ancestors, claiming you have never rejected them. They have, **as you foretold**, spoken both good and evil of your prophet Joseph. They ascribe many of their wicked practices to Joseph, who correctly told their ancestors that they never knew him — for indeed, the gentile saints have grown distant from you because of their willful rebellion, pride, foolishness, and blindness...*

Now we reach the second hinge point.

*...**We** acknowledge that **we** must distinguish ourselves from them, admit the errors of the past, and in the depths of humility, seek to be reclaimed as yours. (§ 7, emphasis added)*

Then what follows is an explanation to us of how **we** fit into the Restoration.

But I want to take just a moment to read you some words that we've been going through, extracted from the prayer. As of 1832's warning through 1838 (when they were altogether driven out of Missouri), these are the things which the Lord found offensive by the Saints:

- vanity,
- unbelief,
- treating lightly
- repenting: and not saying and doing,
- failing to bring forth fruit,
- jarrings,
- contentions,
- envyings,
- strifes,
- lustful desires,
- covetousness,
- pride,
- threats,
- wanting vengeance, and
- hard hearts.

This is a **bad** list of stuff that justified judgments. However, **after** the second offer, this is the list of the words that get used to describe what the Saints did **after** they were given an opportunity to repent and return:

- secret works of darkness,
- follies,
- secret abominations,
- violating the commandments,
- wickedness,
- emboldened,
- openly practiced abominations,
- wrongly taught,
- secret murders,
- reigned with blood and horror,
- slaughter over 200 men, women, and children,
- barbarism,
- justifying lying,
- denying the judgments of God,
- speaking evil of Joseph,

- willful rebellion,
- foolishness, and
- blindness.

The first list in response to the first offering is pretty bad. The second list in response to the renewed offer is **so much worse**. If it was a downhill ski slope, they augered in somewhere beneath the turf itself after the Lord in His mercy extended the offer.

So, now we get to an explanation of how **we** fit in.

The neglect and rebellion of the saints during Joseph's day and thereafter included how they have treated the scriptures, carelessly inserting numerous errors and transcription problems into the Book of Mormon and other commandments and revelations. The original Book of Mormon translation manuscript was placed in the cornerstone of the Nauvoo House where water and mold destroyed over 70% of the text. This was a similitude to the restoration provided by you through Joseph. Just as the original manuscript was allowed to decay, with only approximately 28% surviving, so likewise the Restoration has also decayed.

*Using that remnant of the original translation, we have confirmed there were numerous transcription errors made when Oliver Cowdery copied it for the printer. We know that E. B. Grandin's Print Shop also made errors, and the punctuation was supplied by John Gilbert, which changed the meaning of the text. We know there has been over a century of debate caused by the errors in understanding the text, solely due to the way in which the text has been punctuated. [We've] labored to make corrections and to recover a truer meaning, but are required to use our best conjecture to sort out the many textual dilemmas we now face. [We've] inquired of you and prayerfully sought guidance on even small issues out of respect for your words. Joseph Smith revised the printed copy in 1837, and again in 1840, to try to eliminate errors and make the text more correct. Most importantly, we know that you have, by revelation, recently supplied corrections to some of the writings in the Book of Mormon **quoting you**, for which we are grateful...*

...which I would point out is language that gets identified in the Preface to the Book of Mormon, and the corrections that were made weren't translation errors, apparently. They were quotes of the Lord, in which the Lord said, "I want to make what I said a bit more clear." And so there were a handful of revisions made—**by the Lord, to the text**—which quotes Him.

...We have labored over the text of the Book of Mormon to try to remove as many of the mistakes in the text as we can discover, but know that our efforts fall short of perfecting the text.

The other revelations given through Joseph Smith have also not been maintained and transmitted to us in their purity. Many originals have been lost, and some of what we have from Joseph are copies of copies, and many were later recorded by others using their recollections of your revelations to him. [We've] used brackets and re-punctuated the texts as [we've] worked with them, all in an attempt to show respect for your holy

texts. We ask that you accept this work and the punctuation and allow us to remove the brackets.

*[We've] also determined to update some words that were in use and understood by earlier people, but whose meaning has been lost or so changed as to render the language foreign to modern usage. We ask for your approval to update the wording so as to clarify the language for modern readers. Mindful of how mistakes can be made, [we've] attempted to gather only those revelations which are authentic, attested to have come directly from Joseph in a reliable transmission, and which likewise involve general principles applicable to **us** rather than a personal revelation to an individual. We are mindful of the criticism of David Whitmer...*

And I want to pause there. David Whitmer, when he was an old man, published a small booklet called *An Address to All Believers in Christ*. He made the charge against the church, and the church members, and Joseph, in particular, for having led the church into error by accepting Joseph's revelations as Scripture. And there are those who, having read *An Address to All Believers in Christ* by David Whitmer, have accepted the general idea that Joseph Smith's mission should have been confined to the Book of Mormon—or the other charge that David Whitmer made: that Joseph was a fallen prophet. And there are those who argue over that still today. The Lord is clarifying in this prayer that Whitmer was wrong.

...We are mindful of the criticism of David Whitmer, who thought the recording and use of Joseph's revelations was never wise and, therefore, we ask to be corrected in anything we have gathered and ask to be instructed by you to discard what ought to be discarded, and inspired to keep only those things which should be kept...

That begins **our offer** to the Lord, which is what He wants to be made. We ask to be corrected in anything we've gathered, ask to be instructed by you to discard what ought to be discarded, and inspired to keep only those things which should be kept.

...We were not responsible for neglecting your warnings, for treating lightly the Book of Mormon and former commandments, nor for failing to do as you asked, but have inherited that legacy and acknowledge that we also suffer under your condemnation as our inheritance. (§ 8-11, emphasis added)

And then, this issue comes up, which is section 132 of the Doctrine and Covenants (the revelation on plural marriage) that comes up in this prayer.

*We also have been left with a copy of a copy of a revelation recorded July 12, 1843 that is not in the handwriting of a scribe of Joseph's, and which we believe to have been altered from its original form before it was publicly disclosed. That revelation has been the source of a great deal of mischief, sorrow, ungodly conduct, violence, and adulterous lusts among those who accept the published version of that revelation among the various Mormon factions. We first attempted to edit it to make it more consistent with your other commandments and revelations, but have ultimately concluded to remove it altogether because **we cannot fix it**. We ask that if there are any commandments, principles, or precepts involving the marriage covenant you*

would be willing to reveal to us to become part of our record, we would receive it with gratitude and rejoicing. We desire as a people to repent and remove the condemnation, and to overcome your rejection, and to be true and faithful to your commandments. All those involved have labored to avoid and eliminate the interpolations and uninspired emendations of others, however well they may have meant. If it is not from you or of you, we do not want to acknowledge it as scripture, and therefore we have labored to present this **to you** in the hope we have shown respect for your word and not the works of men. We acknowledge that you have inspired and guided this work by your spirit.

We acknowledge we are imperfect and, despite your inspiration and assistance, we know there are faults and weaknesses with us, and therefore we ask for your mercy to cover our weakness. We have attempted to be unified in this work, but have sometimes disputed with one another, and therefore ask to be forgiven for our own contentions as we were laboring beside one another. I confess my own failure in securing a replacement for the former section 20. You required a unified statement of principles for us to adopt, and I asked others to provide such a document. I have understood that you required that to be developed by others and not myself, and therefore I have refrained from any involvement. Despite three attempts by representatives of twenty-three fellowships, there remain disputes, and no agreed statement of principles has been composed and accepted by the people as you directed. Forgive those who have worked unsuccessfully. I ask that you look at the earnest desires of those involved and forgive this failure. I would ask that we **not** be required to provide a statement of principles, but the people be left to govern themselves according to their varying circumstances, needs, and desires. We are mindful of the duties expected by you for any people who would claim to be yours, and ask that our weaknesses be forgiven and our own follies and errors be corrected and not condemned. We as a people present the result[s] of our labor to you as our best attempt to preserve and recover the scriptures provided to us in the restoration through Joseph Smith at the beginning of the dispensation of the fullness of times.

As you began to roll forth a restoration through Joseph and others, we ask you to now continue that work and to allow your revelations, work, covenant, and blessings to roll forth with us, and things kept hidden be uncovered, and a fullness be given to us as a people. It is written that those who will not harden their hearts will receive a greater portion of your word, until they know the mysteries of God **in full**. It is also written that those who will harden their hearts will receive a lesser portion of your word, until they know nothing concerning the mysteries of God...

You can see that dynamic playing out on the losing end of light and truth within **all** of the churches, from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints down to the apostate groups scattered everywhere. It gets diluted; the ignorance increases; the darkness grows. There's hardly a difference between evangelical television shows and general conference from the LDS Church anymore, except that there's probably more biblical truth, by far, among the evangelical group than you find in general conference—with the possible exception of Joel Osteen, who's rallying on the “gospel of success” is such rubbish that... Welcomed rubbish!

He lives in a \$10 million home supported by his fan club (who want to know that if they follow that, they “too will be blessed” [imitating Joel Osteen]. “You can be blessed, too!”).

...We seek to leave behind a hard heart, and to be open to receiving a greater portion of your word, and to know of your mysteries, and obtain your grace for us as a people, that we may become yours.

*Though only a remnant of the original Book of Mormon manuscript has survived, and though only a remnant of the original faith you established through Joseph [Smith] has likewise survived, **we ask**...*

And at this point, the Lord takes over and defines what **we should be asking**. He gives it to us. This is our request: We ask...

...to be reconnected as a people to you by covenant, to make us yours, connected to a living vine, restored as a people, and numbered with Israel. We seek as a people to honor you and to keep your commandments so that a living body of your disciples may again exist on the earth. We desire that we may rise up through your grace and mercy so that you will perform your oath and vindicate your promises to the fathers concerning a faithful latter-day body of gentiles to be numbered with the remnant of Jacob, that your kingdom may come and your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

O Lord, remove our blindness, forgive our sins and weaknesses, give to us a new heart that we may become children of the Most High God. We acknowledge our unworthiness. We are descended from rebellious and wayward ancestors and know that without your mercy we will remain in an awful state, unprepared for the return of our Lord in glory. The scriptures foretell of a latter-day recovery of your people, and of natural fruit returning to your vineyard. We seek to be part of that so [that] you may value us as yours and preserve us against the coming season of harvest.

We have added only things to the scriptures as we have understood to also have come from you and would be pleasing to you. We ask that you accept these books as yours so that people of faith may then...

I want to pause right there and tell you that up until **this** moment, it was unclear and unresolved whether or not the Scriptures would be, in effect, a “supplementary commentary,” that we would all continue to buy Scriptures from Deseret Book and paying to get **them**—and use the Scripture Project as kind of a supplementary commentary that we could use alongside it. At this point, however, the Lord makes clear: Get rid of everything, and keep what He's going to approve.

*...so that [the] people of faith may then rely upon **this** work as your word **to this generation**, as a standard for governing ourselves, as a law, and as a covenant, to establish a rule for our faith, and as the expression of our religion, so [that] we may have correct faith and be enabled to worship you in truth. If this body of writings are not acceptable, we ask that you guide us further so [that] we may correct, remove, or add whatever you would require for the writings to become acceptable for a covenant*

and law, a rule of faith, [and] as a correct expression of the religion that honors you, so [that] we may be in possession of correct faith and be enabled to worship you in truth.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, in faith, believing that with you all things are possible. Amen. (§ 12-18, emphasis added)

That was the prayer that the Lord wanted offered—and which **was** offered—to Him on behalf of the people, which produced the Answer to the Prayer for Covenant and then the Covenant itself.

In Third Nephi chapter 5, paragraph 2, after there'd been a whole lot of destruction, and the people were gathered around, showing one another all of the terrible events that had transpired to change the typography in the area of Bountiful where the temple had been built, *they heard a voice as if it came out of Heaven...they understood not the voice which they heard.*

So something from Heaven spoke, and they didn't hear. Later on: *[And] again they heard the voice and they understood it not a **second time**. And then the third time they did hear the voice and did open their ears to hear it....they did understand the voice which they heard.*

Well, God's voice spoke in September of 1832, and they understood it not. God's voice spoke again in January of 1841, and they understood it not. And God's voice spoke again in July of 2017 (which was presented in September of 2017). Will **we** hear? Will **we** open **our** ears? Will **we** understand? Because on the other side of the third invitation, when the people open their ears to hear, they receive things which are not lawful for man to utter because of the Lord's visit.

Now, there's a chapter in Matthew that was considered so singularly important to Latter-day Saints that they put it in as one of the books in the Pearl of Great Price. Because we had adopted the Joseph Smith Translation (which is where this text came from) as part of our book of Matthew (just as we adopted Joseph Smith's Translation of the book of Genesis, instead of the book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price—we just have it in our Genesis texts), there's a chapter that has been singled out—but even the Latter-day Saint scripture committee [who] tossed away the Lectures on Faith thought this was important, so maybe it really is.

(Hi, Bev.)

Jesus leaves the temple after He'd said a bunch of stuff that was somewhat hard for locals to understand—and even the disciples who'd been tagging around with Him for lo those three years previous had a hard time understanding—and they said,

[Well, tell us] concerning the [building] of the temple, as you have said, They shall be thrown down and left unto you desolate. ...Jesus said...Do you not see...these things? ...do you not understand...?

And then He sat on the Mount of Olives, and He gave an explanation, and it shows up in the book of Matthew. Specifically, they pose the question,

What is the sign of your coming? And of the end of the world, or the destruction of the wicked, which is the end of the world? (Matthew 11:2)

Now, His answer begins with things that these people locally—that were then talking to Him—would experience. But after He tells them about the stuff they will encounter, then He jumps forward to a much later generation that will be around when the Lord returns. It's that latter stuff that's kind of relevant. But the former stuff is interesting, too, because He draws some analogy between the two. But this is gonna happen during the lifetime of **those** disciples:

Take heed, that no man deceive you, for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many.

Apparently, if you've got the Lord setting an example and fulfilling things that are contained within the Scriptures, then anyone can pick up the Scriptures and say, "Oh, that needs fulfilling," and imitatively say, "Look, I fit that pattern too! Me too! Me too! Me too!" And so He's saying there's gonna be a whole lot of the "me too's." As soon as someone does it, as soon as someone lays out the course, as soon as someone provides the example from which you can reach the conclusion that Scripture and prophecy can be fulfilled by the efforts or actions or teachings of someone, then I can imitate that too. And therefore, there will always be those who are imitative.

...I am Christ, and shall deceive many. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted...

...and so on. And He adds a little later,

...many false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that remains steadfast and is not overcome, the same shall be saved. (Ibid. ¶ 3)

Then He warns them about the desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. And He tells them to flee to the mountains and tells them that there will be distress that falls upon Israel in that day that will be greater than any distress that Israel will experience later—which is almost hard to imagine because we all know from our vantage point about the Holocaust and what was done to the Jews in Europe, behind Hitler's rule. But if you read the accounts of what happened, there were literally mothers killing their children, roasting the bodies of their children, and eating them because of starvation. They despaired for the life of their children because of the circumstances. So rather than wait for their child to die, they killed them. And then rather than bury or show respect for the body, because of the hunger, they ate their dead infants. I mean, it's hard to imagine the distress that they felt. But the Lord said it'll be greater at that point than it ever will be at any other point in history. And in fact, that is true. But that's not the end of the suffering of the Jews, as history will tell us.

Now, He jumps way ahead because they've asked Him two things. "When's the Temple of Jerusalem going to be destroyed?" He gives them that, and then He jumps way ahead because they've also asked, "What's the sign of your coming at the end of the world? Or in other words, when are the wicked gonna be destroyed?" And He jumps way ahead:

...after the tribulation of those days which shall come upon Jerusalem, if any man shall say...Look, here is Christ, or there — believe him not; for in those days there shall also arise false christs...

“In those days” = contemporaneous with us.

...there shall also arise false christs and false prophets...

Dude, that “false Christ” thing—there's some guy who keeps mailing me books about the... Nah, never mind.

...and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders...

Yeah, that fits there. Yeah.

...insomuch that if possible, they shall deceive the very elect, who are the elect according to the covenant. Behold, I speak these things unto you for the elect's sake. (Ibid. ¶ 6)

There **has to be**, at some point, an “elect according to the covenant,” in order for the subject that He is discussing to become relevant. And He's saying, almost as a matter of fact, “There will be a covenant body in the last days,” and there are gonna be people who are trying to deceive them left and right. They're gonna show signs and wonders, they're gonna be out...

Now I show into a parable...

And this is where the Lord allows the information that He is conveying to drift off into the requirement that you have some interpretive ability to understand prophecy so that, through the gift of the Holy Ghost, the words of prophecy become clear unto you.

...[I'll] show...you a parable. Behold, [where] the body is...

Keep that thought in mind.

...there will the eagles be gathered together. So likewise shall my elect be gathered from the four quarters of the earth. And they shall hear of wars and rumors of wars — behold, I speak unto you for my elect's sake — for nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in diverse places. And again, because iniquity shall abound, the love of men shall wax cold. But he that shall not be overcome, the same shall be saved.

So, there are a body of people that are called the elect; they have a covenant. The elect people get gathered; there will be a body that gets gathered. (He'll clarify that there's more than that later.) But He says that's gonna happen, and the people who are there are gonna hear about nation rising against nation, kingdom against kingdom. They're going to hear about famines. They're gonna hear about pestilences. They're gonna hear about earthquakes in diverse places. They're gonna see the iniquity abounding. They're gonna see the love of men wax cold. But the people that are there—who are not overcome—they'll be saved.

And then this remarkable statement (and this is the Joseph Smith Translation or clarification or inspired restatement):

*And the gospel of the Kingdom will be preached, in the whole world, **to a witness** over all people; and then will the end come, or the destruction of the wicked.*

...a singular individual who will witness about what is called the “gospel of the Kingdom.” It's going to come to a **witness**, and that witness will be **everyone's** warning—even if they ignore or reject it—because it is to a witness “over all people.” Being over all people doesn't require you to have any authority or position or rank or bully-pulpit. It just requires that the message be God's message, relevant to all the people...

...and then will the end come, or the destruction of the wicked. And again shall the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, be fulfilled.

And immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun[’ll] be darkened ...moon...and...Powers of Heaven...be shaken.

And He says about these events,

*This generation in which these things shall be shown forth shall not pass away until **all I have told you** shall be fulfilled. (Ibid. ¶ 7-8, emphasis added)*

And then the Son of Man's sign appears in the heavens, and all the tribes of the earth are going to mourn, and the Son of Man is going to appear in the clouds of Heaven...

...with power and great glory. And whoever treasures up my words shall not be deceived, for the Son of Man shall come, ...he shall send his angels before him with the...sound of a [great] trumpet...

And so now, this is **after** the **appearing** of the Lord, and they that [the angels who've now come with Him]...

*...and they shall gather together the **remainder** of his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Ibid. ¶ 9, emphasis added)*

So, He's now told us **two** things about the covenant group that will exist (called the “elect” in the last days). There is one “gathered together in a body,” where the angels will be gathered, from the four quarters of the earth—and they will be in one place. And then there are a number of other people who are also elect that are scattered far and wide, in an ungathered state. And after His appearing, the angels “shall gather together the remainder of his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to [an]other.” So we tend to think that there's one and only one [gathering], and the Lord is talking about, “No, that's not...” It's probably not even possible for that to happen, but it's not **going** to happen. And then He says,

Now [let me tell you] a parable of the fig tree.

This is a new one.

When its branches are yet tender and it begins to put forth leaves, you know that summer is near at hand. So likewise, my elect, when they shall see all these things, they shall know that he is near, even at the doors. (Ibid. ¶ 10)

So He's saying, "If you're gonna see any of this stuff begin to take place, then you need to recognize/you need to realize that something's afoot." And it's going to culminate in the destruction of the wicked and the final gathering together—after His return—of all the elect.

But as it was in the days of Noah, so it shall be also at the coming of the Son of Man, for it shall be with them as it was in the days which were before the flood. For until the day that Noah entered into the ark, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away; so [also shall] the coming of the Son of Man be. (Ibid. ¶ 11)

I see some of that kind of behavior going on right now. So He then describes how gathering will take place: not everyone is going to be gathered, even if they're "elect."

...two shall be in the field, the one shall be taken...the other left; two shall be grinding at the mill, ...one [shall be] taken...the other left.

...know this: if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to have been broken up, but would have been ready. Therefore, you [also be] ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man comes.

Who then is a faithful and [a] wise servant, whom his lord has made ruler over his [house], to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his lord (when he comes) shall find so doing. And truly I say unto you, he shall make him [a] ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delays his coming, and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunk, the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looks not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and shall appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. (Ibid. ¶ 12-14)

So, you know, He's using graphic language here to describe things about people in the last days who pretend or think or even have the conviction that they are a servant, but they begin to get abusive and to smite the fellow servants. Well, I would take that word "smite," and I would cross reference it into the letter that Joseph wrote about the restrictions that ought to be employed by anyone who claims to have the priesthood; that is, you don't get to cover your sins, to gratify your pride, to exercise your vain ambition, or to have control or dominion or compulsion in any degree of unrighteousness. So when you begin to *smite your fellow servants*, it involves the very kind of behavior that got recently defined as what it means to sustain someone when you raise your arm to the square.

And then He tells the story of the ten virgins. And the virgins—as I heard Steve VanLeer mentioning—all of them knew there was a wedding, all of them knew what was coming, all

of them had been invited, all of them were preparing for the event; it's just that five of them were *still foolish*.

And then He tells the story of a man traveling into a far country; [he] called his servants, and gave them five and two and one talent. And then some of them increased the amount that they were able to produce from the talents they were given, ~~and some of them buried them~~ and one of them buried them in the ground. And he took from those that didn't produce, and he gave to those that did.

*When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then he shall sit upon the throne of his glory—the sheep on His right hand, and the goats on His left. And He's going to say that when He separated the sheep from the goat, some of the goats are gonna complain and say, "HEY! Uhh, we don't belong here!" But more interestingly, some of the sheep are gonna say, "I'm not sure... Lord, I'm not sure I'm really a sheep belonging on your right hand." And the Lord's gonna explain to them, *I was hungry, ...you gave me food. I was thirsty, ...you gave me drink. I was a stranger, ...you took me in; naked, and you clothed me. I was sick, and you visited me. I was in prison, and you came [to] me.* And the righteous is gonna say, *When did we see you hungry, and [feed] you? Or thirsty, and gave you drink? When did we see you a stranger, and took you in? Or naked, and clothed you?* And He says, *Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me.* And then the others—the goats—weigh in and say, "Wait a minute! We didn't abuse you in that fashion!" And He said, *Inasmuch as you did it **not** to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it **not** unto me.* (Ibid. ¶ 21-25, emphasis added)*

So we've got ourselves an interesting opportunity that has been presented to us because the Lord has, in our dispensation, done pretty much—over a period of years and generations, because when you reject the covenant and you kill the one through whom it was being offered, then you have to wait four and five generations before it can be renewed—but it's **the same pattern** as the one that was had at Bountiful: The voice speaks, they don't hear it (1832-38); the voice speaks, they don't hear it (1841 through the end of that generation); the voice speaks a third time, and they open their ears, and they heard it.

It's really incumbent upon us to decide whether or not we're interested, willing, and capable of doing what has been asked of us—because the Prayer outlines the kind of conduct that **fails**; it defines for us what they were up to that **provoked His judgment**; it tells us what not to do...and then **they got worse**. When the offer was made in 1841...

Clearly, if you don't humble yourself and accept what the Lord has offered and you rebel against Him, and in your pride, you look up, curse God, and die (as the Scriptures say)—which is exactly what they did. I mean, cursing the people through whom the Lord administered punishment to humble you is the same thing as cursing and rejecting the Lord! It's like the Catholic nun that gets the ruler out and bangs on your knuckles, "Do you understand me now, Jake and Elroy Blues?" It's the same thing. And when you say, "There's nothing wrong with what I have done, and I can lie, and I can cheat; I can commit adultery and engage in all of the kinds of misbehavior" (even worse than what had provoked your judgments in the first place), well, then the outcome turns out pretty much like it has. And

you see, right now, the restoration petering out everywhere, **except among us**. The loss of light and truth, of understanding, and of comprehension is falling day by day, just like was foretold at the time the covenant was offered in Boise about the eclipse that had occurred recently before that conference. An eclipse that crossed from ~~border to~~ sea to sea, border to border, and there's another one coming. It's almost as if the Lord is doing everything He can to call attention to the fact that He really is up to something. This really is His work. And signs in the heavens above and on the earth beneath are being given, and the question is, Will any heed at all be given to that?

In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.