

Modern English Translation

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Stanley, Idaho

Denver C. Snuffer, Jr.

Before I start, I want to note that, unlike other faiths/groups/religions/people, everything we do requires that there be sacrifices made, and when someone decides that they're gonna do a conference like this, it imposes a phenomenal burden on the person that's gonna undertake the enterprise. Doug (who was just up here) and Tonia, his wife—the Atwoods—have made a tremendous sacrifice in getting all of this setup. And then, in addition to having the tent set up, the covering that we've got on the ground was made possible by a bunch of people volunteering to scrape and flatten out and then put down the ground cover that we've got in here, and set up all the chairs. I mean, this was a tremendous amount of work, and I want to particularly note and thank Doug and Tonia for doing that.

Also, Rock Waterman asked me at the outset of my talk to thank those who have been praying on behalf of Connie—because the prayers have had remarkably good effect on her behalf, and despite the broken leg, she is now back home and in Rock's care instead of being trusted to others.

I want to thank the other speakers who have gone before me and note that this conference began on the 180th anniversary of the death of Joseph Smith, which got acknowledged at that opening session.

There was an extravagant waste of Joseph Smith, an incalculably foolish waste of what Joseph Smith represented. He had an opportunity to accomplish a great deal more than was accomplished while we had him here. Instead, it was neglect and doubts, opposition and infighting, sycophants, aspiring and jealous men, ignorance and traditions that blinded that bogged down what it was that Joseph could have done on our behalf and that resulted in, essentially, an aborted restoration at the outset. It didn't need to be that way, but in fact, that's how it turned out.

Like Peter before him, Joseph Smith's name has now been used as a magic talisman to claim that Joseph Smith stands as the foundational route from which corrupt religious institutions derive their authority and their power, and none of them are anything like the Prophet Joseph Smith; none of them bear any of the imprint of what one would expect from a prophet of God. All of them are profiteering. All of them are practicing priestcraft. All of them are looking for the honors of men. All of them are looking for wealth. And none of them do what this group of people do—and that is sacrifice.

Every person here has had to pay their own way, myself included. Everyone here has had to take time off of what they do in their daily life, myself included, in order to be here/in order to participate. And there are people here who have come long distances at some personal inconvenience—because conferences that get called by us happen when people are willing to make the sacrifice to make a facility/a venue and organize an event for our benefit. Other religions hire, pay, or own facilities. And Peter's continuing lamentation from behind the

veil about how his name has been abused could be echoed by the Prophet Joseph Smith because of corrupt institutions, likewise, using his name for their benefit.

People generally crave order, government, and rules that they can enforce against others. I've resisted that, but I am not ignorant of the desire or the impulse or the many advantages that come from imposing governmental rule upon others. I'm not at all ignorant of that. But I'm deliberately not going to adopt any model that has already failed. Why would we do it again? Why would we shuttle ourselves into a trap that can be waylaid merely by the acquisition of central control by corrupt, aspiring, and evil men? And make no mistake about it: They ARE evil because they are not serving the Lord and pursuing the Lord's will, desires, and following His principles. You have to control your desire to follow traditions that have only (in the past and at present) given power to our adversary. We're not going to do that. I'm not going to do that. Be patient. Let what the Lord is doing unfold. He knows exactly what He's doing, and it will unfold.

In 2017, we got a revelation as part of a covenant conference, in which the Lord instituted the covenant because of Scriptures that He had allowed us to recover. The condemnation that was originally given in 1832 about the corruption, He undid. The Lord declared the following, referring to the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Book of Mormon: *The records you have gathered as scriptures yet lack many of my words [and] have errors throughout...[they've] not been maintained or guarded against the cunning plans of false brethren...*

When the Scripture project was done, because we were leaving behind what the Lord had criticized, they were given new names: The Old Covenants, The New Covenants, the Teachings and Commandments. These names were given to them because they were, in fact, new volumes of Scripture. The Lord said,

...many parts were discarded and other parts were altered... Conspiracies have corrupted the records, beginning among the Jews, and again following the time of my apostles, and yet again following the time of Joseph and Hyrum. As [you've] labored with the records [you've] witnessed the alterations and insertions, and your effort to recover them pleases me and is of great worth...

Then we were told:

You are permitted to...update language to select a current vocabulary, but take care not to change meaning — and if you cannot resolve the meaning, either petition me again or retain the former words. (T&C 157:12-15)

The work of recovering the Scriptures took a group of volunteers years before the work was completed in 2017.

But I want to remind you of earlier history: The Book of Mormon was published BEFORE The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized. It belongs to the entire Christian world and not a single denomination. When the text was recovered for the Scripture project in 2017, the earliest surviving portion of the translation and the printer's copy were used. The printer's copy was a hand-copied version of the translation given to

E.B. Grandin's print shop for use in typesetting. That copying of the original into the printer's copy resulted in numerous transcription errors. Joseph Smith was attempting to correct those errors in 1842 for a later edition of the Book of Mormon. Not all of those errors were corrected, and the 2017 project attempted to finish recovering the earliest, most correct text.

But the Book of Mormon (in the form that it existed when it was translated by Joseph Smith and then typeset) was translated in what has been referred to as Elizabethan or Shakespearian English that is most correctly called "Early Modern English," and it was the language that was in common use between 1485 and 1714. It wasn't in use in common vernacular in 1830 when the Book of Mormon was translated by Joseph Smith. Many of the words were in common usage before the creation of the King James Bible in 1611. Accordingly, when the Book of Mormon first appeared in 1830, its formal language was **already outdated** and **hadn't been in common usage for more than a century** (and it went back as much as four centuries earlier). Instead of the early 19th-century American English, the initial translation was awkward—yet, sometimes poetic—English language that dated from the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries. Because of this, relying on Noah Webster's 1828 first edition of *An American Dictionary of the English Language* as a reference to understand the text is going to be inadequate. It's **not** the language the book was translated into!

Seven years ago, the Scriptures were approved by a conference that accepted the corrected, updated, recovered, and more complete texts at a conference in Boise, Idaho, and were adopted at that time as scripture. Since 2017, work has continued on the Book of Mormon following the approved process and confining the work to the Lord's direction: *...you are permitted to proceed to the end with your plan to update language, to select a current vocabulary, but **take care not to change meaning*** (ibid. 15, emphasis added). Seven years of effort have resulted in a new version of the Book of Mormon in modern English.

When the recovered Scriptures were presented to and accepted by the Lord in 2017, He offered a covenant to believers and asked of us to *receive the scriptures approved by the Lord as a standard to govern you in your daily walk in life, to accept the obligations established by the **Book of Mormon** as a covenant, and to use the scriptures to correct yourselves and to guide your words, thoughts, and deeds* (T&C 158:3, emphasis added). For this reason, as the project to restate the Book of Mormon in modern English neared completion, the Lord gave it a new title. It's now titled: Covenant of Christ.

That new title is the direct result of the Lord's 2017 covenant; the updated language is essential for those who accept the 2017 covenant. During the final stage of the project, the Lord declared the original Book of Mormon translation was to get THAT generation to be willing to accept it as Scripture. They needed it to **mimic** the King James Version language. But **this has a different purpose**. This is to help a new generation understand the content to help with the Lord's return. There is as much divine attention and assistance in getting this new version completed as before. Inspiration from the Lord has assisted throughout the process of finalizing this updated volume of Scripture.

This volume is not intended solely for those who accept the 2017 covenant but will have value for **anyone** who wants to read and understand the Book of Mormon. This format for this volume will allow readers to locate specific verses or paragraphs from other published versions of the Book of Mormon. The LDS version of the Book of Mormon has unique chapter and verse divisions—that was done by Orson Pratt in about 1878 when he divided the whole book up into new chapters and assigned to it verses. This new... All the RE version paragraphs and LDS verses are intended to do is to give you the geography so that you can locate something in a specific place within the text. So if you're sitting among people that use an LDS version and they want you to read a verse, you can find it in this book. If you are a Latter-day Saint and you want to understand the Book of Mormon better, and you want to take it with you and read the verse they ask you to read in your gospel doctrine class, you'll be able to locate it in this book. It's available for everyone.

The RE paragraphs are intended to take you away from the bumper-sticker-sloganizing-use of the Book of Mormon that versification has caused and make you read the sentence inside its host paragraph, and it's divided into chapters the way that it was originally set by Joseph Smith. So within the text, you will find a larger number that is an LDS chapter number; you will find smaller numbers that are LDS verses; then you will find at the top of one, a citation of where the page begins in the LDS, and on the other, you will find where the page ends in the RE version. The RE version paragraphs are retained, and they have Roman numerals beside each paragraph; and each chapter in the RE version is a chapter beginning in this book. So once you get your copy and you look at it, you'll be able to navigate, and it doesn't matter who you're talking to and what citation they give to you, you'll be able to find it with the geographical bearing that is afforded to you in this text.

The Covenant of Christ is the most important volume of Scripture for the present day. The original text from 1830 was not a commentary, not an interpretation, neither a narration nor an explanation. It presented itself as original, authentic ancient Scripture. This new edition renders the text into modern, present-day language that we speak.

During the first phase of this project (which took four years to complete), it involved treating every word in the text with care and diligence. There were some archaic elements, words, and syntax that weren't recognized as archaic until we go deep into the project. As the project progressed, the unique flavor and personality of the text became far more noticeable. It became a challenge to update the language and still preserve the uniqueness of the text. It was apparent that some words and phrases struggle to yield an acceptable modern equivalent. Each word has undergone numerous independent and collaborative verifications, ensuring that this has precise accuracy. Unfortunately, there doesn't exist a lexicon of archaic early modern English terms and their modern equivalents that would have been useful in the project. Phase One required many years and thousands of hours of research, utilizing a consulting scholar's experience and expertise who specialized in "etymological source of English word origins" by looking at all of the earliest existing literature. His expertise in the field of philology, word origins, and providing interpretation of archaic and obsolete words was indispensable in getting this project done. All of that would have been otherwise unavailable without having someone with that expertise.

Painstaking care and inspiration were taken in the selection of vocabulary to replace archaic or outdated words, phrases, and idioms.

It was clear from the outset that there was a clear, limited mandate set out in Scripture: We were only permitted to update language to select a current vocabulary, and we were warned not to change the meaning. We were also instructed: *...take care not to change meaning — and if you cannot resolve the meaning, either petition me again or retain the former words* (supra). This, therefore, became a very narrow, tightly-confined assignment. This project had **constraints that were set by the Lord**. The criteria prohibited simply rewriting or interpreting and did not even give us permission to clarify the text. What already existed **could not be changed**, and therefore, the task was solely to render existing content into a modern, more readable format.

That does not allow for any change! Some of the difficult or complex language structures from the original text could not be smoothed into modern language while maintaining fidelity to each verse in the original. To remain faithful to the original, this modern English version tracks the versification provided by Orson Pratt to the LDS Book of Mormon that allows readers to do a verse-by-verse comparison. I just said we couldn't do it respecting verse-by-verse. Here's a problem that was encountered (my recollection is this happened at least three times in the text):

A paragraph begins with a clause; it's an incomplete thought. The thought doesn't come around to being completed until the end of a whole series of intervening, interrupting thoughts that go on inside the text. So if we're trying to render it readable to the modern reader, I changed it one of two ways: I either took all of those intervening clauses and I made them staccato, short sentences that are introducing the conclusion—and then the beginning and the end were put together, and now you have a complete thought, not interrupted by all of these others. (This is a challenge that's also being presented in the Hebrew translation project that's ongoing.) When we have done that, you will find, as you read, that you're going along reading verse 8 and 9, and now you're looking at verse 17, and then you get to 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16. The verses will line up, but they will line up in a coherent, readable way to the modern reader. So if you want to find out what we started with, the easiest way would actually be to go to an LDS copy and look at their verses, because the translation process went verse by verse (which was often phrase by phrase) in order to work through all of the materials. But the versification numbers remain true to the original.

This book owes its existence to many things. The first is the nature of the original text. To create this new edition, we utilized *The Book of Mormon: The Earliest Text*, 2nd. ed., edited by Royal Skousen, as the base or foundational text. This earliest text was very important in terms of textual accuracy; it presents the book in its purest state, guiding us back to the original manuscript, carefully reconstructed, and even capturing the exact words as initially dictated by Joseph Smith. We used the *Oxford English Dictionary*. We used *The Book of Mormon Critical Text Project*, six volumes, and *Analysis of Textual Variance of the Book of Mormon* in a six-volume set. (I spent a lot of money buying text material, to the dismay of my wife; we don't have enough bookshelf space for all we've got, and now we're getting... Anyway...)

After the initial undertaking was completed and an acceptable draft manuscript was prepared (I was only consulted interveningly during that early process, and I only handled the most difficult passages; most of that work was done by others), it was then given to me to edit and finalize. That was a commission demanding intense mental focus, and I examined the initial draft multiple times, making thousands of restatements and corrections. I completely rewrote and transformed the “phase one” text with inspiration from the Lord. After several months, I returned the text with instructions about formatting and usage consistencies. It was reviewed, formatted, and returned to me for a final pass-through. In that second pass-through, I made hundreds of additional restatements and edit clarifications. (I’m calling it “first” and “second”—that’s time divisions. I think I went through it... I think I’ve read and reread the Book of Mormon cover-to-cover a dozen times between December 10th of last year and June 20th of this year in order to get through the text and accomplish what needed to be done.) Those who worked for years to provide the initial text for review then reviewed the formatted document a final time. During the entire process, the Lord has been petitioned, and **He has responded**, and His influence is reflected in this current, published volume. This book has been designed to be easier for a modern reader to understand than the original, which was the primary goal of this project!

There are a number of works in the 18th and 19th century that were written in the style of the King James Bible, but the style ended its popularity in the first half of the 19th century. You can find some stuff, including a project that Benjamin Franklin undertook, “A Parable Against Persecution,” and *[The] American Revolution: Written in the Style of Ancient History*, which ~~Benjamin Franklin~~ [Richard Snowden] composed. There’s no question that the effect of the King James Bible on Western culture and thought affected all areas of life and society. Its influence on language is undeniable. The King James Bible has been, at least in the mainstream, unchallenged for 270 years. Eight or nine generations have read that book. Its language, even archaic in 1611, derived from a form of English that stopped being used sometime earlier—but it sounded like the Voice of God (see Adam Nicholson, *God’s Secretaries: The Making of the King James Bible*). And because of this, the assumption in 1830 would be that if you wanted to hear the voice of God in a book, you needed to read it in the “same kind of language familiar to the reader” of God speaking in the King James Version of the Bible. And so, the Book of Mormon got rendered in that fashion.

The Bible took hundreds of years, over thousands of writers’ lifetimes, in order to compile; the document had to gradually come together from various times, locations, and authors. The sheer number and age of various biblical manuscripts overwhelms anyone that has looked into it. Until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, dating from the third century BC to the first century BC, the oldest Old Testament manuscripts in existence are the Ben Asher Codex that was written in 895 AD. There are some 5800 Greek New Testament manuscripts, 10,000 in Latin, and 9300 in various other language manuscripts. In Joseph Smith’s day, people didn’t have access to ancient manuscripts from the Old World; the Egyptian language couldn’t be read or understood. And Babylonian, the oldest known form of writing, is still difficult to decipher today!

The Book of Mormon was given to us already organized, already edited, already translated, and delivered as a single text. The modern English version is intended to make it accessible,

clear, and as succinct as possible. It—the Covenant of Christ—is once again a modern revelation from God to the world. I have read, taught, expounded, and written about the Book of Mormon for 50 years. This modern English version is the first time I've understood the genius of the book.

This is an extraordinarily tightly written book. It emphasizes only a small handful of themes. Everything in the book that got included is designed to support the handful of themes. The war chapters (that seem to be so long-winded and superfluous) are tightly focused on illustrating the theme that they just told you about, in order to show you exactly how God vindicates His word when He warns people, and they choose to reject His warning, and then reject the prophets and either drive them away or kill them. What happens flows naturally as a consequence. Even though the way in which the results get to occur may seem happenstantial/random; they are not. Everything is designed tightly.

There are some changes that we made deliberately in the book in order to communicate some concepts. These concepts belong within the original, but the way in which they worded it is different than the way we chose to word it. In this version of the Covenant of Christ, the word “church” is always negative—it is always apostate; it is always corrupt. And God's people are called the “congregation.” If you encounter *congregation*, you are reading about the people following God. If you encounter *church*, you are reading about people that are corrupt, priestcraft being practiced, an effort to gain authority and control and influence.

Another change that will appear in here that is clarifying the text... So don't think, “A-ha, we caught you making a change!” Didn't happen. There's an incident that occurred in the Book of Judges in which a man was killed by a woman; she took a nail and drove it into his temple. As a result of doing that, he died, and the nail driven into the temple is called, in the text, “smiting off his head.” In the Book of Mormon, based upon inspiration at the time the text was being rendered, you will no longer find that Nephi **decapitated** Laban and then took the clothes of the decapitated corpse and put them on himself. It's described differently. It harmonizes with the same way in which a fatal head wound was administered in the Book of Judges, but it doesn't involve decapitation.

I believe that if you look and read it in the format of the RE version, you will find that the text is far less injured than it is in the LDS versification that constantly interrupts thoughts and doesn't allow them to be completed. If you read it in the RE paragraphs and chapters, I think you'll find you're getting a lot more out of the text.

I want to point out something about the text of the Book of Mormon. We view what happened after Mormon takes over with the Words of Mormon as an abridgment of the Book of Mormon. Nephi provided an abridgment himself. He had written for at least three decades on other plates that he was then commanded to abridge into the small plates that he was commanded to make some 30-40 years after they had departed from Jerusalem. So what we've got in the Small Plates of Nephi is an abridgment by Nephi. If you read carefully the book of Jacob, what you will find is that Jacob finished his text three times. He wrote his main text, and he wrapped it up. Then something happened that he needed to add, and so

he added that, and he wrapped it up. Then something else happened, and he added that, and he wrapped it up. I believe the first part of the text was, by Jacob, also an abridgment.

I believe what we got in the Book of Mormon is entirely (with the exception of the people that Omni and Jarom and those fellows that write, in one case, "I saw my brother write what he wrote the day he handed me the plates. Now I'm writing in the plates, and I don't have anything to add"—I don't think that's an abridgment; I think that's authentic; it's authentic contemporary journalism at its best), but Nephi set a pattern.

Nephi wrote his text, recognizing that some of the message that he wanted to convey existed in an earlier prophetic form in Isaiah. And so he took the Isaiah materials and he embedded it into his, but it was to convey his own message. I've written about this in the book *Nephi's Isaiah*. He gives you his adoption of the Isaiah text, and then he gives you an interpretive key in his last chapters of Second Nephi to tell you why he put it in there and how you ought to interpret and understand what he had done there.

Then along comes his brother, Jacob, who does essentially the same thing. He gives you his account, but he incorporates into his account the allegory that was written by Zenos, and he adopts it entirely. He tells his people, "Come up to the temple. I'm going to prophesy to you." They come up. The allegory that Zenos wrote he then delivers to them, and he says, "Here's now my prophecy. Now that I've read you this allegory, my prophecy is: Those words are true." So he's delivered his message and his prophecy.

In the case of Nephi and in the case of Jacob, they give attribution to the source material that they used in their prophetic writing. I don't believe Mormon did the same thing, even if the writers that he's abridging did it in their original. I believe that Mormon, in making his abridgment, simply put in the material without attribution. But I believe that the entirety of the Book of Mormon has lengthy, adopted passages taken from what are called the Brass Plates and simply incorporated right into the narrative without attribution. And that when you are reading the Book of Mormon, you are actually reading not just Mormon's abridgment of their stuff; you're reading a great deal of content that comes directly from the earlier Brass Plates that we are told will one day shine brightly. I believe the shining of the brightness of the Brass Plates has already been embedded into the text of the book that we now have.

I believe that evidence of quoting without attribution is clearly present in the case of explanations about details from the life of Melchizedek and details about the Holy Order and descriptions and discussions that are given from the life of Adam and Eve that we don't have in the Genesis text, but we do have in the Book of Mormon. I believe that what we've got in the Book of Mormon is a continuous quoting from earlier Scripture without attribution—because Mormon didn't bother doing that, unlike Nephi and Jacob who did.

The first writer that commissioned all of the Scripture-writing that he and those who followed him would undertake, says this: *...but on these plates, I only write the things within my soul and quotes...from the brass plates* (2 Nephi 3:6 CE, emphasis added). And by the way, when I'm reading from the Book of Mormon today, I'm only reading from Covenant of Christ. I'm not using language that died centuries earlier.

Alma gives this **extensive** explanation about Melchizedek. And he's teaching things about Melchizedek that are unheard of except within the Book of Mormon. And after he finishes this lengthy exposition about things going on in the life of Melchizedek—in what happened, who he was, and how it unfolded—he says, *Now I don't intend to explain [all] this at length; what I've said is enough. The scriptures are readily available to you; if you deliberately misinterpret or distort them, it will be to your own destruction* (Alma 10:2 CE). So after explaining a great deal about Melchizedek, he says, “I don't need to go on about this stuff. You already have the Scriptures.” Well, what you've been saying to us, Alma, isn't IN our Old Testament! Where on Earth would we read from the Scriptures about what you just told us? Well, it's gonna be the Brass Plates. So I think we've got a good deal more of “Brass Plateage” than we think we do in the Book of Mormon.

One of the great themes of the Book of Mormon is that if you reject the truth after it has first been taught to you, that makes you worse off than remaining ignorant. And that point is proven over and over in the Book of Mormon. Alma 21:

Now these defectors had learned the same truths and prophecies from the Nephites and were taught the same knowledge of the Lord. Yet despite this, it's odd but true...not long after defecting, they became more hardened, unrepentant, uncivilized, wicked, and savagely cruel than the Lamanites, eagerly adopting Lamanite traditions, giving in to laziness and all kinds of lustful behavior, indeed, entirely forgetting the Lord who is God. (Alma 21:30 CE)

Then in Alma 14:

And so it becomes apparent that after people have once been enlightened by God's Spirit and possess great knowledge about the requirements of righteousness and then fall into sin and transgression, they become very hardened; and the result is worse than if they had never known the truth. (Alma 14:12 CE)

Abinadi, in Mosiah 7:

You shall not use the name of the Lord your God to accomplish your ambitions, for the Lord will not forgive him who advances himself using God's name. (Mosiah 7:21 CE)

Did you hear that? And I'm not just trying to call this to the attention of the people here. I wish this were written on the walls of the corridors of 47 E. South Temple in Salt Lake City. You men who call yourself “Brethren” (as though that made you elevated) need to listen carefully again to what I just read: *You shall not use the name of the Lord, your God, to accomplish **your** ambitions. For the Lord will not forgive him who advances himself using God's name* (ibid. emphasis added)—one of the great themes of the Book of Mormon. Apostasy leads to rebellion against every authority, because false religious ideas create megalomania.

See, the people ~~in~~ who rejected the conversion effort of the people of Ammon when they went to them, and they wanted instead to elect kingmen. When they lost the election, they not only rebelled against the religion, they went on to rebel against the government. They

became completely ungovernable. They began to rebel against their king, rejecting him as their king.

But I also want to point out something interesting about repentance—because the Book of Mormon is designed to call us to repentance, and it doesn't distinguish between what we would regard as really, really serious, crappy things that people do and just being a Lamanite king who suddenly realizes that he's accountable for his people, whose heart is softened, and he decides to change the course for both himself and his people. There's a character who's called and sent on a mission, and Alma the Younger (who's the father), after the mission, looking back in retrospect, gives his son, Corianton, some commandments, and he says:

This is my complaint against you: You proceeded to brag of your strength and wisdom. But this isn't everything, my son. You made me ashamed when you abandoned the ministry and traveled to Siron near the border of the Lamanites to chase the harlot Isabel. (Alma 19:1 CE)

Well, that kind of sucks! I mean, what...? We don't want a guy like that around us! We certainly don't want him pretending to be a missionary—and he was full of braggadocio, and this is crappy stuff. But years later—this is **years** later—this is the same father talking about the very same son:

There was continual peace among them and great prosperity in the congregation because of the attention...diligence they gave God's Word, which was preached to them by Helaman, Shiblon, Corianton, Ammon, his brothers, and so forth, and by all those who had been ordained by the Holy Order of God. (Alma 21:42 CE)

Years later, the same reprobate is responsible for helping to save souls. And then, probably the most surprising passage to me of all, about this same Corianton:

In the 39th year of the judges' rule, Shiblon died as well. And Corianton had sailed to the north, to take supplies for people who went there. Therefore it was necessary for Shiblon, prior to his death, to confer those sacred things on Helaman's son, who was named Helaman after his father. (Alma 30:5 CE)

Helaman, who wrote the book of Helaman, only got to be the writer in the book of Helaman because Corianton had already left on a mission to help supply people who needed resupplying and was unavailable. **But for that**, the Book of Mormon would have included a book of Corianton. Now, that's a sobering thought because we tend to believe **not in repentance**, we tend to believe in “get it right the first time, damn it,” and if you don't, then, you know, you're wicked, and we don't want any part of you.

The Book of Mormon is an extraordinarily comforting, reassuring text. Genuine repentance results in genuine forgiveness. And Corianton is probably someone, in this book at least, that we ought to be talking about a little more frequently by giving hope to people.

Here's another... This is an absolutely major theme in the Book of Mormon, and it creeps in through the side door, but it's “there,” it's “there,” and it's “there”—over and over. It's not

until we get all the way into Third Nephi and Jesus is talking before we finally have him just lay it out bluntly and say, “Here's the deal. You've been reading this book for quite a while, but here's the deal. Here's something that, if you go back and you look, you're gonna find everywhere. In fact...” (This is Christ talking now in the modern English version:

*In fact, I give you a commandment to study these things diligently, because Isaiah's prophecies are critical. He clearly focused his prophecy on My people, who are part of the house of Israel. **Therefore he necessarily prophesied about the Gentiles.** (3 Nephi 10:4 CE, emphasis added)*

Let that sink in for a minute. Christ is saying... *Great are the words of Isaiah* (ibid. RE) is the way it is in that old English version. He's saying: “Isaiah's [words] are critical. He clearly focused his prophecy on my people, who are part of the house of Israel. **Therefore, he necessarily prophesied about the Gentiles.**” If you want to understand what the Lord has been up to with the house of Israel through all of the generations, you have to take into account **the Gentiles**, because the Gentiles are simply part of the house of Israel that lost their identity.

We have two groups of the house of Israel who have retained an identity that we can point to and say, “Oh, they're remnants.” One of them are what we call Jews; the others are what we call Native Americans. Despite the fact that the Native Americans, like the Gentiles, have lost their personal identity with the tribes of Israel, they are nevertheless a remnant of the house of Israel. So in the allegory (that we get an encounter as early as Jacob—in the RE version—chapter 3; in the Book of Mormon LDS, chapter 5), when you encounter that, those branches that are being scattered around the vineyard necessarily include groups that have altogether lost their identity. And the purpose of the Book of Mormon is to awaken people and bring them back. And it goes so far as to say, “I don't care what your bloodline is. If you reject the **covenant**, you're no longer my covenant people. And if you accept my covenant, you are part of my covenant people.” And he's putting back together root and branch to have the natural fruit return. And that's the great work of the Book of Mormon.

Alma describes the Lord's conditions for this land in Alma 21. This is what the Lord has said:

The land will be cursed to destroy any people on this land who do evil, whether they belong to any nation, tribe, or language, when they're fully ripe. And just as I've said, so [it will] happen. Indeed, this is God's cursing and blessing on the land, because the Lord can't tolerate sin to any degree. (Alma 21:3 CE)

Moroni adds his caution to us:

This is a choice land; and any nation that inhabits it will be free from enslavement and captivity and from all other nations under heaven if they will only serve the God of [this] land, who is Jesus Christ, who's been revealed to you through the things we've written. (Ether 1:7 CE)

And then Jesus Christ talks about the potential for the Gentiles achieving something remarkable on the land:

But if the Gentiles repent and hearken to My words and don't harden their hearts, I'll establish My congregation among them. And they will enter the covenant and be included with the remnant of Jacob, to whom I've given this land as their inheritance. They will join with My people, the remnant of Jacob, and all those of the house of Israel who come, so they can build a city that will be called the New Jerusalem. Then they will join with My people, who are scattered throughout the land so they can be brought in together to the New Jerusalem. Then the Powers of heaven will come down among them, and I will be with them as well. Then the Father's work will be underway, when this gospel is preached among the remnant of this people. (3 Nephi 10:1 CE)

See, there are people who believe that the New Jerusalem is something that's gonna fall down from Heaven and that there doesn't need to be a New Jerusalem actually built. Jesus just clarified: It's gonna be built! It's gonna be built first, and there are gonna be people who have to build it. It has to exist. And then, when that happens, they will be joined from above, who will come to join with them. They **both** happen. But the first one that has to happen is the building of the New Jerusalem by people here.

And then we have this really sobering message: Christ speaking, describing **exactly** where we are at this moment on this land. (This could be a headline from a responsible news agency today—if you could find one.) This is exactly what is happening, and it's Christ's words:

Yes, woe to the Gentiles unless they repent: For when that day come, says the Father, I'll take away your strength from you, and I'll destroy your security. Your cities will fall and I'll break open your guarded borders. Your sciences and learning will turn into foolishness, and your false beliefs will cause your failure. I'll expose the fraud of those in authority, ...your trusted institutions will lose every[body's] loyalty. (3 Nephi 9:12 CE)

The new Covenant of Christ is intended to tell you exactly where you are and exactly how we got here. It is a revelation from God.

So, as we approached the end of the project—and after I had done what I considered my best, and I contributed all that I could—it struck me that this is the kind of a project that ought not be presented to the Lord informally, but it deserves a formal dedication to Him and petition. And so, I composed a prayer that I'm now going to read that was offered to the Lord as this project was approaching completion.

Heavenly Father, it is I whom you named David, asking you in the name of Jesus Christ to answer this petition. We are grateful for the covenant you ordained in 2017 and hope to obey it. We remember what you said about our scriptures in your Answer:

The records you have gathered as scriptures yet lack many of my words, have errors throughout, and contain things that are not of me, because the records

you used in your labors have not been maintained nor guarded against the cunning plans of false brethren who have been deceived by Satan.

... the records you have received have not [been] transmitted that which was first written in holiness,

... many parts were discarded and other parts were altered. False brethren who did not fear me intended to corrupt and to pervert the right way, to blind the eyes and harden the hearts of others, in order to obtain power and authority over them.

Conspiracies have corrupted the records, beginning among the Jews, and again following the time of my apostles, and yet again following the time of Joseph and Hyrum. As you have labored with the records you have witnessed the alterations and insertions, and your effort to recover them pleases me and is of great worth. You may remove the brackets from your record, as I accept your clarifications, and you are permitted to proceed to the end with your plan to update language to select a current vocabulary, but take care not to change meaning — and if you cannot resolve the meaning, either petition me again or retain the former words. Nevertheless, you labor with an incomplete text.

These words about how the scriptures have been treated by those in the past warn us about how we treat your scriptures today. We are afraid of making errors again by failing to maintain or guard the scriptures. We have acted on your permission to proceed to the end with our plan to update language to select a current vocabulary, and we took care not to change meaning of anything in the Book of Mormon. You promised us that you:

... will lead all who come to me to the truth of all things. The fullness is to receive the truth of all things, and this too from me, in power, by my word, and in very deed. For I will come unto you if you will come unto me.

Therefore we have asked for your guidance, direction and inspiration to be able to fulfill obligations assigned to us. In the 2017 Covenant you asked:

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

Therefore, you ordained the Book of Mormon as the Covenant for us. But you also permitted us to proceed with our plan to update language to select a current vocabulary, while taking care not to change meaning.

You directed us to:

... Seek to recover the lost sheep remnant of this land and of Israel and no longer forsake them. Bring them unto me and teach them of my ways, to walk in them.

To recover the lost sheep of Israel also requires a Hebrew language version of the Book of Mormon, and therefore we are doing that work and expect it to be completed soon and ask for it to be accepted when finished. As for [the] other lost sheep of Israel the text needs to be updated for English language readers to understand it. Many passages use words and grammar that confuse rather than inform today's readers. To obey the Covenant requires people to first understand it, and the language has become a barrier.

You instructed us to:

... study my words and let them be the standard for your faith, and I will add thereto many treasures.

Our study will be improved by rewriting the book into modern English. Therefore we ask you to approve the modern language [English] version as an acceptable Covenant version of the Book of Mormon. We do not want to make any change[s] that fails to maintain or guard the language. We do not want to make the same errors as in the past for which ancient Israel was condemned. Isaiah wrote:

The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.

We will not use the new English language version as part of the Covenant without your approval. We are asking for that approval, keeping in mind your previous revelation stating:

You have asked to know if the scriptures are acceptable and approved, or if there is more to be done:

The work that has been done is acceptable and sufficient for the labor now underway. You were permitted to update language, select a current vocabulary, and you were warned not to change any meaning. I reminded you that you do not understand the glory to be revealed unto my covenant people. You were instructed to complete the agreed upon labors, and you have done as was required.

These scriptures are sent forth to be my warning to the world, my comfort to the faithful, my counsel to the meek, my reproof to the proud, my rebuke to the contentious, and my condemnation of the wicked. They are my invitation to all mankind to flee from corruption, repent and be baptized in my name, and prepare for the coming judgment.

For ~~four~~ [seven] years following the Covenant we have continued working to update the language of the Book of Mormon, trying to not change any meanings. On December 10, 2023 after years of labor by others, that project was turned over to me, and I have been working to complete the work of restating the text in modern English language. As I worked with the book, on December 22, 2023 you informed me:

The original Book of Mormon translation was to get that generation to be willing to accept it as scripture. They needed it to mimic the King James Version language. But this has a different purpose. This is to help a new generation to understand the content to help with the Lord's return. There is as much Divine attention and assistance in getting this new version completed as before.

I acknowledge your continuing assistance while laboring with the book, and now ask [you] whether it has accomplished your will. You provided a new name for this version of the Book of Mormon, calling it Covenant of Christ. Therefore, we ask: will you authorize this Covenant of Christ updated version to be accepted as your Covenant?

That was the prayer that I offered. But before the Lord answered, I was instructed to review the entire text again, which I did as a repetition that required a lot of hours and late night. So, before the Lord answered, I was instructed to review the entire text, during which several changes were required to be made.

On June 20, 2024 the word of the Lord came to me, saying:

It is enough. I have given to you my direction both now and as the work was underway, and therefore I say to you: It is enough.

I labored alongside you in this work. My word is truth. My word is spirit. As you worked with the text I gave you my word and it is to be kept as it was given. My word carries with it the power of truth, and you are not called to alter it, but are to defend it. As you have considered comments from others you have feared man more than me. The corruption of scripture has been caused by men fearing others and failing to heed my word. You were told to update the language, and that included restating my doctrine, sacrament and baptismal prayers but you hesitated and needed to be commanded to do so. Let your work of updating the language now end with the words I have given you.

Publish it for ~~the~~ [my] people to read. Then, have the voice of the people determine if they will accept it as my Covenant, as they will be judged by their voice on this matter. Once the voice of the people has been heard, if they accept it let it be your Covenant version to guide you. No one should be forbidden from using the earlier text, nor compelled to use only one of these two, but if approved by their vote it will be your Covenant text to guide you.

As for my doctrine, sacrament and baptismal prayers, use the new language but you are not to forbid using the earlier language, as I will accept either wording for these ordinances.

In the future when translating the Book of Mormon into other languages, use this Covenant of Christ version as the source for that work.

And again, let this be how you proceed with the Hebrew translation also underway: When it is finished let your fellow servant Jaqim pray and ask if I will accept it, trusting the answer he will receive from me. Then let him find twelve believing Jews who speak and read Hebrew who will sustain it as scripture, have them meet and vote, and once sustained by their vote let it be published as scripture with their names testifying to it, and I will hold the Jews accountable for how they respond to the testimony of Jaqim and the other twelve who witness.

...

Hear me now: Let every person take care in how they use my name, as if I had part in their every dispute, for many things provoking arguments among the people are born from pride, stubbornness, aspiring for control, and reckless indifference toward me and one another. I bear with the people still, and patiently await the return of natural fruit in my vineyard. Do not be misled by my patience, for the time is quickly approaching for the harvest of my vineyard. Amen. (Full text of the prayer and answer provided by Denver Snuffer; strike-through and bracketed words indicate changes made during the reading.)

Now that “having the people vote to sustain it” is akin to what happened earlier in 2017, when the material was made available for people to read early in the year at a conference, but it was not sustained until the end of the year in a follow-on conference. Therefore, no one should sustain anything in ignorance. It needs to be made available to the public.

An hour before I began speaking, copies of this became available to order online through www.covenantofchrist.org where you can order either a hardbound copy or a softbound copy. We have also... (Steph, would you take Brent and Taylor Ward and Vaughn Hughes and... Is Eric Martineau here? Yeah, would you take them to the car?) We also had 100 copies of the text printed to hand out to you who are attending here in the conference. You don't have to buy these. We're giving them to you, but we only have a hundred copies, and there's more than a hundred of you here. So we would really like to give a copy to each family, and then if there are family members who don't live together, if you don't live in the same house as other family members, we'll give copies to people until the hundred copies are all distributed.

I've got an earlier copy, which I used in going through the final read-through, that also has an earlier cover. The cover got updated as we went along, and what you're about to receive is prettier than the version that I've got, because everything was being worked on, including the cover of the Covenant of Christ. It's available for sale on www.Amazon.com right now in the (I think it's the) hardcover version, and it's available in the softcover

version through Lulu, because the quality of printing by those two is different. They're bringing those in, and they're gonna hand those out.

I'm gonna continue talking for just a few minutes. But if you try and... Try and read them in your families. I'm assuming that the planned conference that is being put together by Mark Barlow for (I think in) October, that that will give people enough time to read through this volume and to decide whether or not you're willing to sustain it.

There were a number of interesting things that occurred as I worked with the text, including some changes that I was absolutely loath to make because, in my view, it was going to result in people saying, "You've changed the ordinance!" If you update the sacrament prayer, people are gonna say, "The sacrament is an ordinance; you've changed it." So I left the language of the sacrament prayer, the baptismal prayer, and that Doctrine of Christ statement unchanged, and I didn't want to deal with the argument that that constituted changing it. I was ultimately persuaded by one of the people here today that that didn't make any sense, and it was gonna be alienating. It was gonna make the Lord look like He is the caricature that the King Jamesian language sometimes gives the impression of, and so I went ahead, and I prayed about that. And as you can tell from the answer, it didn't please the Lord at all that I was worried about the reaction of other people.

Here's another problem: **After** I'd gone through and made the final changes, **after** I had gotten the answer to the prayer, and **after** it had been finalized, I got a suggestion from someone that I thought was really good and worth making, so I went ahead, and I made that change. Within seconds of having sent the email, I learned that He really did want me only to defend and not change the text. So, if any of you feel that you've got the prerogative of changing the text, great—good on you! But I'm supposed to defend it, so I can't participate in making any further changes because I'm confident that, as for me and as for this project and as for the prayer and the answer, it's done. The only thing left and the only question left hanging is, Will the people, after having read it, sustain it as the covenant version of the Book of Mormon? Because if we do, then I think in the next printing of the Scriptures, we can include this version as what will be in the leather-bound texts. But if we reject it, then I don't know that we would print it, but I will—I think the instruction I got is—I will use it.

So having said that, this is what I'd like to do now. I'm gonna stop talking. This will be a little disruptive. They're gonna bring in and distribute the books. I think we should bring them in here and distribute them. What are you thinking?

[Stephanie responding from the background]

Oh, do it at a table? Okay. But I'm going to turn the time over for a little song and dance thing here that's coming up that Doug told us about before I began talking. But I'm gonna wrap up now and...

[Stephanie talking in the background]

Oh, okay. Very good. Okay! What she said! And you people online? Hah! You didn't hear my wife!