

This, That, and the Other Thing

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I want to thank the organizers for putting this conference together. Unless you have organized a conference, you don't realize just how much work is involved in getting something like this put together, organized, the facilities rendered. This is only done by volunteers. And so anyone that decides that they're going to volunteer and arrange for a conference is shouldering a fairly significant burden in order to get it up and done. And so it's really an achievement. And there will be a group of people who have helped out on this that will sleep better tonight than they did for the last several months. But I want to thank them.

There's a matter of business I want to conduct. And before getting to the culmination of that, I want to start with an explanation about a tradition that began at the time of Adam. Following the Fall and three years previous to his death, he gave a patriarchal blessing, and that set a precedent that has been followed a number of times throughout history, whenever there has been a dispensation of the gospel underway.

The original organization of the entire world was familial. There was no church, and there was no State. It was just a family.

- The grandfather and the grandmother would be the ones in charge of what, in our vocabulary, would be a city (or a ward in a church).
- The great-grandfather and great-grandmother would be the ones who took care of the branch of the family that we would regard as a county or as a stake.
- The great-great-grandfather and grandmother would be the ones who would preside over the state.
- Adam and Eve were the ones who presided over the entirety of what would be regarded as a church or a nation.

There was ten generations that were alive at the same time when Adam gave his patriarchal blessing. (I'm gonna look that up real quick since I have a new set of Scriptures, and I want to make some use of them.) This is from paragraph 19 of the Teachings and Commandments [section 154]:

Three years previous to the death of Adam, he called Seth, Enos, Cain[an], Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch, and Methuselah, who were all high priests, with the residue of his posterity who were righteous, into the valley of Adam-Ondi-Ahman, and there bestowed upon them his last blessing. And the Lord appeared unto them, and they rose up and blessed Adam, and called him Michael, the Prince, the Archangel. And the Lord administered comfort unto Adam, and said unto him, I have set you to be at the head; a multitude of nations shall come of you, ...you are a prince over them forever.

And Adam stood up in the midst of the congregation, and, notwithstanding he was bowed down with age, being full of the holy ghost, predicted whatsoever should befall his posterity unto the latest generation. (T&C 154:19-20)

In this instance, the blessing that was given was prophecy, and the prophecy was fulsome, reaching down to the latest generations that would live on the Earth. Much of the subsequent prophecy that we get from other prophets in later dispensations are a reiteration of something that had originally been pronounced by Father Adam three years previous to his death.

In paragraph 21, it says,

Now this same Priesthood, which was in the beginning, shall be in the end of the world also — [and] in other words, at the end of the world, the final dispensation will restore again the pattern of the first, or Adam's, dispensation. (Ibid. ¶ 21, emphasis in original)

You can also see that same prophecy in Genesis chapter 3, paragraph 14. I'm going to talk more about that in July in a conference in Colorado, but part of what needs to be addressed today needs to have reference generally to this topic.

Apostasy ended the first line of the patriarchs and, therefore, terminated the government of God. Later, after there had been a restoration, there was another example of a patriarchal blessing that we find at the end of Genesis (the book of Genesis—in traditional numbering, it is Genesis chapter 49, the entirety of that chapter; and in the RE edition that we have, it's in Genesis chapter 12, beginning at paragraph 19). And there, Jacob goes through each of the 12 sons and gives to them blessings about what would befall them and what would befall their posterity. The other example that we can read is in the example of Lehi giving blessings to all of his sons that you can find in 2 Nephi chapters 1 and 2 (it's also in the LDS numbering in 2 Nephi 1:1 - 3:25).

Blessings are given by the oldest father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and so on. And it's because it's the traditional role of that eldest father that they're called patriarchal blessings. It's the role of the mother to choose what blessings someone would receive or what appointment they would get, but it's the role of the father to provide the blessing. And patriarchal blessings have generally included instruction; they've included advice, they've included a call to repent; prophecy; revelation; and they've included warning.

The father in the family should be the one to give it, but among us, it is sometimes the case that there is no father or grandfathers who are part of the faith, believing, and in a position to provide a patriarchal blessing. And there are some fathers who just outright refuse—but they shouldn't. It's a responsibility, and it belongs to them. But there are circumstances in which there are people who deserve to have the opportunity to receive a blessing from, in effect, a surrogate (or a replacement to provide the blessing) when they cannot, within their own family, go to a believing father or a believing grandfather to secure a blessing that would properly come within the family unit.

It is not appropriate for us to have a patriarch that supplants a believing father or grandfather. That role belongs to and should be required to be occupied by the father or the grandfather.

But we have a requirement that when anyone is baptized, part of the responsibility has been to gather the names of the people who have been baptized and those names kept in a book, and the names belong to the Lord. The book is our responsibility to maintain, and therefore, after baptism, the name of someone who has been baptized needs to be submitted so it can be added to the book.

The book is not electronic. It is handwritten. It is only a name. It doesn't have contact information, because the requirement imposed upon us by the Lord is to keep the names. He hasn't asked us to keep any personal data, and He has not required of us to prepare something that could be hacked. There's only one copy. It is handwritten, and it is maintained by what's called the Recorder's Clearinghouse, which is essentially a place you can send [it] in [to], but you can also telephone, or you can send a letter to the recorder of the entire movement—and that is Keith Henderson. If someone's name has not been submitted and they have been baptized, then they need to get their name into the book. But the book is closed out annually in terms of the list. So if you got baptized years ago and you did not submit your name, you really need to go get re-baptized and submit your name now in order for it to be kept annually with a turning of the page.

If the name is not recorded at the Recorder's Clearinghouse, then the requirement at the time of the baptism to submit the name has not been met; and if there is no name in the Recorder's Clearinghouse, then it isn't appropriate for the patriarchal blessing to be provided. We do not expect any blessing to be given to someone whose name isn't in the book or who doesn't come personally to present themselves in order to receive the blessing; it's not something that ought to be done over the phone or by Zoom or remotely.

So, I've had a number of people for a number of years asking me if I would give a patriarchal blessing, and I've consistently refused to do so, but I've known that this is an issue that at some point needed to be addressed. Consequently, it began to weigh on my mind a great deal lately, and as a matter of prayer and as a matter of inquiring of the Lord about the matter, we had someone last month identified to me by the Lord as the man to whom we should send those who qualify to receive a patriarchal blessing. And Thursday, I set him apart to perform that role. But that role is not one that is appropriate for the community without first taking a vote. And in consulting with and being guided by the Lord, it is not a matter that is to be accomplished by common consent (that is, by a majority vote). It's something that needs to happen by a unanimous mutual agreement, and therefore, I need to take a vote at this point to find out if we do have mutual agreement.

The individual who was identified by the Lord to me earlier this week is our recorder, Keith Henderson, who I asked to be here today.

[Speaking to Keith] And you told me you didn't want to stand up, but would you stand up so those who don't know what you look like can admire your visage? Yeah. [Laughter as Keith removes his hat.] It's one of those things where hair and brains don't stick together.

So with that, I would like everyone who can approve the assignment that has been given to him to fulfill the role of providing a patriarchal blessing to indicate... I'd like you to do two things: I'd like you to raise the hand when you vote, and I'd like you to be audible and to say, "Yes," if you're voting in favor of this.

So, all of those who can approve the assignment that has been given by the Lord to Keith Henderson, would you please raise your hand and say, "Yes"? [Numerous "yes" votes.]

Okay. Those who are opposed to this, would you similarly raise your hand and say, "No"? Any "no's"? [Silence from the audience.] Well, I'll be damned. [Laughter, cheering, and clapping.] I don't think we've ever been able to attain mutual agreement on whether it's daylight or nighttime!

Okay. So since... I mean, "This, That, and the Other Thing." I'm done with "This." We're moving on to "That."

Since "The Perfect Mousetrap," some have assumed that that talk gave them permission to insult and berate others, improperly focus on others, and refuse to look inward, disclose just how to project onto others what is within themselves, oblivious to their identical conduct. In Paul's letter to the Romans, he wrote,

Therefore, you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are, that thus judges; for wherein you judge another, you condemn yourself — for you who judges does the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them who commit such things. And do you think this, O man who judges them who do such things and does the same: that you shall escape the judgment of God?

That's a description given by Paul of something that is called 'projecting'; that is, you see on someone else what is really in you, and it bugs you because you're unwilling to acknowledge it within yourself. But you see it in them clearly because it's part of you, and therefore, you project onto them, and that results in accusing. And one of the sayings that I really like is that "accusing is admitting." And if you think about that and you contemplate the things that you have accused others of, you might have some reason for reflection.

I believe that most have instead chosen to reflect in private upon their own shortcomings. Upon realizing their own failings, they've chosen to repent; and obtaining forgiveness from God, that they have in turn forgiven others all of their offenses. I trust God will divide the sheep from the goats and gather the sheep peaceably into a society of equals. And I trust the Lord to allow the goats to continue to butt heads.

I want you to remember that the talk includes this statement, quoting from "The Perfect Mousetrap":

I've read some of what people believe to be discussing their disagreements. Instead of identifying assumptions and stating needs, people have used insults, demanded apologies for imagined offenses, employed emotional manipulation, and worn their self-justification on their countenances.

Conversations go nowhere. No attempt is made to understand the other viewpoint. No questions are asked, and emotional outbursts are hurled at the other side. When things like this happen, progress is impossible. We should all realize that we may well misunderstand the other person, and only they can help us. If we give them a chance, we can learn that they're not irrational, not our opponent, and not preventing any of us from getting to Zion. The perfect mousetrap being developed for us has begun to catch us in its snare. But if we awake and arise, we can bypass the trap and emerge stronger, more godly, and more unified. It can be an opportunity to advance one heart, one mind, and unify our society. But that requires us to recognize the trap for what it is and what it has succeeded in accomplishing. ("The Perfect Mousetrap," paper, pg.33)

I think the talk helped us to clarify and identify one another. I think it served a godly purpose. We are not under the control of a hierarchy. We have freedom, and therefore, we are required to make choices; and for those choices, we become accountable. "The Perfect Mousetrap" was intended to direct your attention inwardly. To the extent that it's failed to do so, re-read the talk. So, there's "That."

Now, I want to talk about some background information that might help people understand. Because I believe that what has happened in my life is not atypical of what has happened in the lives of many of the people that identify today as Covenant Christians.

I was an active Latter-day Saint for 40 years. And it was a very difficult thing to become a Latter-day Saint. I didn't grow up in Tehran, but I did grow up in Idaho, and everything is polarized in Idaho. I mean, the "damn Mormon legislature" was a phrase that just went together. You didn't hear about the legislature without hearing damnation for Mormons, because the Idaho legislature was dominated by people of that faith.

And I was not part of that community. I had friends who were LDS, but they never proselytized. I think the town I grew up in had a *huge* stake center, and it didn't have a baptismal font in it, which just goes to show you how insular they were. They built another branch building out at the Mountain Home Air Force Base—just off base—and they put a font into that building. But they didn't have one in the stake center, which was pessimism on stilts, I suppose.

It was hard for me to become a Latter-day Saint because my mother had indoctrinated me into the Baptist viewpoint, although I didn't join the Baptist church. But there was a book called *The Kingdom of the Cults* that my mom, you know, prominently displayed, and Mormonism was included within *The Kingdom of the Cults*. And I had listened to Dr. Walter Martin, a notorious anti-Mormon. And I had a lot of anti-Mormon background, even though I was indifferent to the whole thing.

So, when I was in the military and stumbled upon missionaries in New Hampshire, that was a real novelty to me. I mean, what on earth was a Mormon doing out in the wilds of New Hampshire? I thought they were confined locally to a corridor, starting in Alberta and running down to the colonies in Mexico and occupying, you know, the western corridor.

When I joined, I left behind friends, family. It took an enormous cost to convert to become a Latter-day Saint, but I felt an obligation to God to do so. And so, joining the LDS Church was an act of profound sacrifice. Essentially, I was giving up everything in my life and hopping into something new. And I really didn't identify much with the culture and the people and their wholesomeness. I mean, we entertained ourselves in Idaho (growing up) with keggers on the weekend, much of the alcohol procured through the assistance of the local police department in Mountain Home, Idaho. And so, you know, teetotaling... And my friend and I went to one of the discussions in an LDS family's home, and we brought a six-pack of beer and cigars with us to listen to the missionaries that evening. And so this was an enormous cultural, religious separation that was going to completely alter the course that my life took.

But I thought God had answered me in prayer, and therefore, I dared not offend God by refusing to be baptized. Whether I could endure to the end was a-whole-nother matter. I was not expecting to be able to achieve that. But I did keenly feel the obligation to be baptized, and I took that sincerely, and I was baptized. And things changed.

My mind being enlightened as a consequence of the baptism, I read the Scriptures, and they came alive to me. I comprehended things that had been hollow and superficial and not comprehensible until after baptism. And then it appeared to me, for all the world, that whatever was going on in the New Testament text in the days of Paul and James and Peter, it was going on again now in the form of a religion founded by a martyred prophet, Joseph Smith, and breathing life and intelligence, light and understanding.

And as it turned out, instead of it being problematic, difficult, and alien, I fit immediately and comfortably into the community that I had joined by baptism. I spent 40 years as a member of the LDS Church, and in all candor, I loved every minute of it. I liked the people. I liked the meetings, the social gatherings. I liked everything about it.

I did, however, immediately upon being baptized, begin to study the faith that I had now adopted. I bought a history (*Documentary History of the Church*) that was attributed to Joseph Smith (it was gathered by B.H. Roberts). And then I read the *Comprehensive History of the Church* by B.H. Roberts, six and seven volumes each. I bought and read the biographies of every single one of that first generation, insofar as they had biographies available.

There was a sister in the ward who had back—what was called back then—a 70's Mission Bookstore. And I went to her house and bought, as soon as I read one and finished it, I went and I bought another. And I began to aggregate a library about the history and the content of the doctrine of the church that I had now joined (first church; the only one that I'd ever belonged to) and began to plumb the depths.

They asked me to become a gospel doctrine teacher, and I got stuck in the role of being a gospel doctrine teacher and taught classes in wards in Pleasant Grove, Utah; Alpine, Utah; multiple locations in Sandy, Utah.

Got called to be on the Stake High Council. I was the one on the High Council who gathered all of the materials for the rest of the High Council to be able to give a talk on High Council

Sunday. And I went to BYU Education Week as an instructor on multiple years and taught in BYU Education Week.

They had a failing graduate institute program at the law school at the University of Utah. And the second in charge of the institute program was a member of a ward where I had taught gospel doctrine, and he asked me if I'd be willing to go teach institute at the University of Utah Law School. And I did that for a little over two years. I agreed to do it for a year, and we got such a good response. By the end, we had 100 kids coming every week to hear an institute class.

But I continued to examine the faith. I never lost track of the purpose behind the conversion. I wanted to know, study, embrace, and expand my understanding of truth. As I increased in understanding, it became increasingly apparent to me that the institution was not candid, honest, and forthright in the claims that it was making, in the history that it was presenting, and in the authority claims that they make. That was something I was perfectly willing to live with as a matter of internal awareness and the contradiction between what the church was saying and what the truth was. I could live with that.

I used to look at anti-Mormon stuff as a lark (primarily to see what new foolishness the devil was offering in opposition to truth), but some of the anti-Mormon stuff actually... They actually landed on a point or two worth keeping.

I went to the open house for the Nauvoo Temple when it was rebuilt: rented a motorhome; learned that you really do need to fully insure the motorhome if I'm going to drive it. I think we had part of the rooftop air conditioner left; the awning was dysfunctional; and I turned the rear bumper into a pretzel. So if you insure it, then you can happily go to Nauvoo and back with your family. (And I won't tell you about offloading the black stuff in the... I made a mess of Missouri.)

Anyway, the visit to the Nauvoo Temple, we parked the motorhome right in front of a store that had been rented out by a group of anti-Mormon zealots, and I sent two of my sons into the anti-Mormon literature place to gather any pamphlet against Mormonism that they could find to bring it back out in the motorhome. They did that; they brought them out. I said, "Okay, now you figure out what's wrong with these, and if you can't figure it out, ask me." And so they poured over the anti-Mormon stuff, and we had a great discussion. There were only a handful of things they couldn't figure out on their own.

I was an apologist for the church, and I knew where the soft spots were. Increasingly, it became apparent that there were very big problems with the LDS narrative. However, it didn't alienate me. I was still paying tithing. I was still holding a temple recommend. I was still, you know, on their team.

I had a son who (my only son that went on a mission) came back, lost his testimony, asked for his name to be removed. He didn't tell me about it for years because he was worried about what my reaction would be. And when I finally found out that he had drifted off into disbelief and had lost any affiliation either with the church or the Restoration, I sat down, and I wrote a book to reclaim and re-instill faith in that son and other friends who had departed from the faith. That book was called *Passing the Heavenly Gift*.

Now, *Passing the Heavenly Gift* is not easy history if you are unacquainted with the problems of the church's narrative. In fact, there's a great deal in there that anti-Mormons had not yet stumbled upon, but I went ahead and included it because I wanted people to know that I've taken a careful look. That book was intended to preserve faith, to keep people affiliated with the LDS Church. However, if you've never stumbled across problems in LDS history, you'd probably be shocked.

Now, the book was not advertised. It wasn't promoted. I didn't go asking anyone to read it. I gave it to people that I thought would be interested in solving problems of faith in a circumstance in which your institution is faithless and has abandoned significant parts of what they should have been preserving. I wanted to preserve faith.

I had a law partner at that time. He had been on a high council. He had been through church courts (just like I had been through church courts), and he had realized that the proceedings and the treatment was somewhat un-Christian. And he had left the LDS Church, and he became a Catholic lay-deacon and still held on to religion, but it just wasn't the LDS Church. I gave to him a copy of *Passing the Heavenly Gift* and asked him to read it. He read the book, and he said, "If I had read this before I departed from the church, it would have kept me in the church. But I am not going back."

My son's faith was restored.

However, a bunch of LDS priesthood men (probably should be called 'ladies-in-waiting' because they behave like effeminate men incapable of confronting a dilemma head-on and dealing with hard issues that this world presents to you), these ladies-in-waiting—and it came down from the very 'top'—sent out Russell Nelson (then president of the Quorum of the Twelve) to release the former stake president who defended me and to call a new stake president, at which time, in the hallway, Russell Nelson of their Twelve handed my records (my church records) to the newly-called stake president and said, "The committee has decided that this man needs to be dealt with," whereupon a year and a half of dialogue took place between me and the new stake president, with him presenting the problems that they had funneled to him, and me responding to the complaints that had been handed off.

He would not proceed, because he got adequate answers from me. It got to the point where he was getting pressure from downtown, but he was getting answers from me, and he felt that I had overcome the problem. So he called his two counselors in, and so the entire stake presidency met with me, in which they were going to interrogate me in order to build a case to justify the excommunication.

I sat and answered their questions for 20 minutes, maybe, I don't know, and I finally said, "We're not getting anywhere. You don't know what you're looking at. You just don't understand what the hell is going on here. OK? Let's go in the high council room." We went in the high council room. I took the board—it was a large white board—and I walked them through issue after issue that I thought that they needed to address, and they needed to understand. One of the stake presidency afterwards came up and hugged me, and he said, "We cannot lose someone like you," and all of them were content; all of them were satisfied.

And so I got called by the stake president to then visit with a returned missionary attending Brigham Young University who had lost his testimony, and he wanted me to see if I could help this now faithless young man attending BYU. I left the stake president's office and stopped at that kid's house on my way home, and we made an appointment. And he came with his list of problems, and he had a list. And I said, "Well, let's start with your first on the top of the list. Let's deal with that one." And we started with polygamy.

So we dealt with polygamy for about a month, at the end of which he said, "Okay, I'm satisfied," and then we moved on to a second problem. By the time we had addressed the first two problems, over a two-month period, he threw all the rest of his complaints away, and he returned to activity and happily went back to BYU and got his temple recommend, and he was on his way.

In the meantime, the stake president was called in for training. [Imitating Church Leadership:] He was reminded "by those in authority" of *The Church Handbook of Instructions*, which not only strays from the gospel of Jesus Christ but imposes a new edict of control over those who would want to be members. And so, having been instructed, he called me in and said, "Here's the problem: This is the definition... [in the church handbook] ...this is the definition of apostasy. You were denigrating the church authority, Heber J. Grant."

And I said, "Well, okay, wait. Heber J. Grant's mother told him that he was too much concerned with worldly things and that he was not a spiritual enough man to occupy his role. *She* said that to *him* (her son); *he* wrote that in his journal about himself that his mom had said. *I* quoted Heber J. Grant's journal. So if you've got an ax to grind with someone, you've got to go to Heber Grant's mom or Heber Grant. All I'm doing is telling you what he put in his own journal." Well, it wasn't sufficient. So they proceeded to hold a court to kick out a person who would never have left if they'd left me alone.

I'm telling you this because, in my view, the LDS Church liberated me from obligations that I respected and honored, and once they liberated me from that obligation, I no longer felt the necessity of pulling punches, of being cautious.

Don't get me wrong; I do not cheer on the current decline in the LDS Church. I believe that that institution helps a community. Very often, when people depart from the LDS Church, they depart into agnosticism or atheism, and I wish it were not so. But the LDS Church is its own worst enemy. They inflict upon themselves wounds that are unnecessary to suffer. More and more people are realizing that there's a lack of candor about the history that they tell, about the teachings that they offer, about the consistency that they hold with what Joseph Smith had originally restored. And the gulf is widening, and not only widening, it's alienating progressively more year after year.

The book, ultimately, the edict came down that I must either withdraw the book from publication or my membership would be revoked. And I knew that the book had helped people retain faith in the Restoration. It may have diminished (somewhat) people's view of the people who are leading the church, but that's inconsequential. Faith needs to be in God,

in the Restoration, in the Scriptures, in a relationship with the Almighty—the kind of relationship that had brought me aboard in the first place.

I felt like there were things that needed to be said and things that needed to be taught. And the Lord was imposing upon me to do and say some things that, in my view, as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, it would be disloyal for me to do so. And so I prayed and told the Lord, “If I do what you’re asking that I do, I believe I will violate agreements that I have made between myself and this institution. And if I do that, I’m compromising ME. And if I compromise me, you can’t use me, because I’m not solid. I’m not consistent.” And I told the Lord if what he wants is a broken man, that that seems ill-fitted for anything that He could ever thereafter use. And the Lord said to me, “I’ll take care of it.”

And so, 12 members of a high council and three members of a stake presidency—on the date that I had been a Latter-day Saint for 40 years—unanimously had agreed upon and then announced to me that I was no longer a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, whereupon I continued driving to Boise, Idaho, and delivered the first of the ten talks, because that was the anniversary date of having been 40 years in Mormonism.

But I didn’t leave because I was faithless. And I didn’t leave because I disbelieved in the Restoration or in the things that had brought me aboard in the first place. They did not even ask that I return my temple recommend (and this was long enough ago that they couldn’t deactivate it by, you know, pushing a button; there was no bar[code]; there was nothing other than all the signatures). Heavens, the whole time they were interrogating me, I had an active temple recommend and could (and often did) go to attend a temple session.

While this storm is brewing, my son reconverted. I believe that almost all of the members of the High Council who were involved in that, along with several of the members of the stake presidency, the reports I get is that (overwhelmingly) the children of those men have departed from the faith. I believe if they had defended me and given that book to their children, that many of their children would have been preserved in the faith. Admittedly, it’s tough history. It’s unpleasant material. But it gives you a reason for faith. And it’s no more disturbing than the Old Testament.

I believe many who have, are, and will leave the LDS Church would have remained if they had read *Passing the Heavenly Gift*. Instead of suppressing that book, they should have put it into the Deseret Bookstores and recommended it as reading for people interested in the faith.

I’m here to tell you that, in my view, the LDS Church has forsaken the Restoration! Your LDS Scriptures are corrupt. In the LDS Scriptures’ Doctrine and Covenants 84 (or the Teachings and Commandments 82)—this is about a year and a half after that; this is September of 1832—a revelation came to the Church of Jesus Christ (I don’t think they had added “Latter-day Saints” yet:

And your minds in times past have been darkened because of unbelief, and because you have treated lightly the things you have received, which vanity and unbelief have brought the whole church under condemnation. And this condemnation rests upon the children of Zion, even all, and they shall remain

*under this condemnation until they repent and remember the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon, and the former commandments which I have given them, **not only to say but to do** according to that which I have written, that they may bring forth fruit meet for their Father's kingdom. Otherwise, there remains a scourge and a judgment to be poured out upon the children of Zion, for shall the children of the kingdom pollute my holy land? ...truly I say unto you, Nay. (T&C 82:20, emphasis added)*

So this condemnation happens in September of 1832. Also in September of 1832, there is a project that the Lord gives as a commandment:

And a commandment I give unto you...

This is the Lord speaking to Sidney Rigdon.

...a commandment I give unto you ...you shall write for him [that is, for Joseph Smith], and the scriptures shall be given, even as they are in [mine] own bosom, to the salvation of [mine] own elect. (T&C 18:6)

So a project then began in what is now called the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible. That was commanded in eight revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants, and it would be addressed in another seven revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants. And that project that Joseph Smith was commanded to undertake is called the “fullness of the scriptures.” In October of 1831, at a conference, Joseph Smith warned, “...except the Church receive the fullness of the scriptures, they would yet fall.” That’s preserved in *The Joseph Smith Papers, Documents*, Volume 2, on page 85.

The fullness of the scriptures was a project that Joseph Smith undertook, but which never got published during his lifetime. It was left in Nauvoo in the possession of Emma Smith, who would later turn it over to the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. And then the Reorganized Church would later, through a committee, eliminate some of what Joseph Smith had done, and then the committee added some things of their own, and they would publish that as the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible.

Right now, the only publication of the Joseph Smith Translation—the fullness of the scriptures, that set of Scriptures without which “the Church will fall”—is only in our possession. We are the only ones that have ever:

- eliminated the emendations of a committee,
- included everything that Joseph put in there, and
- gone to the trouble of finding other places where Joseph Smith had said, “I could give a plainer translation” of some passage in the Bible during talks in Nauvoo. Those were gathered and added into the Joseph Smith Translation.

So if you believe in the ministry and the divine calling of Joseph Smith and the revelations that were given through him about the importance of having the correct Scriptures in order to know the mind of the Lord (or the Scriptures as they exist “in mine own heart,” according

to the Lord), then you need the Scriptures that we alone put into print. We have the fullness of the scriptures. Only us. Period.

The “Old Covenants” (which is volume 1 of our Scriptures) is the Joseph Smith Translation of the Old Testament. Because it does not end on a signature,¹ to finish out the signature at the back of the book, we have lined pages for people to write notes in. But that is the Joseph Smith Translation of the Old Testament.

The New Testament is in volume 2: the Joseph Smith Translation of the New Testament. But in addition, volume 2 includes the Book of Mormon—not the version that is published by the LDS Church, which descends from an (essentially) bootleg copy that got reprinted and retyped/set in England while the Twelve were over there as missionaries, and then they brought those to Salt Lake. And that’s what they handed down and gets printed through the Deseret Book auspices.

We went to the trouble of going back, insofar as the original translation survived (and only about 22% of that survived) and the printer’s manuscript (which is entirely available), and it allowed us to look at what Joseph Smith was doing in 1840 when he was going through and making corrections to the book: He was trying to bring what was in print back into conformity to the original translation. But we only have 22% of that. We have 100% of the printer’s manuscript. But we know from what we’ve got of both that they made about one mistake every page and a half in copying errors. We also know (and everyone knows this) when the printer’s manuscript was handed off to E.B. Grandin’s print shop, the entire thing was typeset by John Gilbert, and it was one long sentence that Gilbert punctuated. And so all of the punctuation in today’s LDS-published Book of Mormon is punctuation supplied by John Gilbert, an employee of E.B. Grandin.

We eliminated a lot of the punctuation. One of the things that we did—and I did this in a talk (one of the ten talks)—I pointed out that the Trinitarian mischief that you see in the Book of Mormon comes from John Gilbert’s placement of commas and periods and semicolons. And if you eliminate or allow me to repunctuate it, I can make it read consistent with Lectures on Faith. So our version of the Book of Mormon eliminates a lot of the punctuation to give the reader more material to deal with in their own choice of punctuation. You can put whatever commas or periods or semicolons you want to in there. The version that we have printed of the Book of Mormon in our Scriptures is the most correct version that you will find.

Volume 2 includes not only the New Testament (Joseph Smith) and the Book of Mormon in its most correct form, but it also includes what’s called a “Glossary of Gospel Terms,” which is a gathering of material that will give you a better theological education than many schools of divinity would give you. If you read through the “Glossary of Gospel Terms,” it helps you understand the vocabulary that gets used in scripture. And that’s volume 2.

¹ A signature in bookbinding is a single large sheet of paper printed with multiple pages (typically 4, 8, 16, 32, or 64) that is folded down to a smaller size, forming a section that is then sewn or glued together with other sections to make a book.

Volume 3 includes... Called "Modern Covenants," volume 3 includes revelations that were given to Joseph Smith in the form that Joseph Smith provided. When the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants were being put together for publication, Oliver Cowdery had gone over to Missouri and they'd established a press there (one that got broken up, by the way, by a mob), and he had put together a Book of Commandments. He felt it was within his stewardship to be able to revise and to be able to editorialize, and so he made a number of changes in the Book of Commandments to the things that Joseph Smith had received.

Those were taken back to Kirtland (where the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants was being put together), and the Book of Commandments got incorporated, and it was put together by a committee who also felt like it was their prerogative to do some editorial enhancement of the revelations that Joseph had received. In the meantime, Joseph Smith had spent months working on the doctrine that would be added to the Book of Commandments. The doctrine was a series of lectures that had been given in the School of the Prophets in Nauvoo. So doctrine is put first, and covenants is put second (and the covenants reflect Oliver Cowdery's mischief in Missouri and the committee's mischief in Kirtland, Ohio, before it went into print). And Joseph Smith, so far as the historical record tells us, didn't look over there; he trusted them. He spent his time revising, correcting, improving, and making clear the doctrine, or the Lectures on Faith. So the Lectures on Faith went in first; it's the first part of the book (Doctrine and Covenants in the first edition). It's not only the first part, it's printed in larger type. It's first in the book, it's larger in print, and the revelations appear after that.

What we did was restore the Lectures on Faith back into the modern revelations. It was canonized by a vote that was taken in 1835, but it was never removed by a vote of the people. We put it back in, but we put it back in with a vote of the people.

We also went through the revelations that Joseph Smith had received, and we pared it down to what he actually got as a revelation. Consequently, many of the things that appear both in the Doctrine and Covenants, on the one hand, and the Teachings and Commandments, on the other hand, are significantly shorter in the Teachings and Commandments because what's in the Doctrine and Covenants is editorially expanded. It's inflated. It's suffered from 'revelation creep.'

The volume 3 of the book also includes a project that took years to complete that is a modern English version of the Book of Mormon called the Covenant of Christ. And all of that is intended by us to be the statement of our faith.

Scriptures anchor God's Word. Without them, changing leaders provide changing messages. Leaders always sound an unsteady note if they are not controlled by, subordinate to, and respectful of scripture. The problem that institutions that allow men to speak, propound, and declare is that once you unanchor it from scripture, you're tossed by every wind of doctrine.

These Scriptures—and we know they're not perfect; we know that there are weaknesses in men, and there are weaknesses in everything that we do here on this side of the veil—but

these Scriptures, and these alone, are endorsed by the Lord. “These scriptures...” and I’m quoting the Lord,

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. (T&C 177:3)

After years of effort... I tried to do the math; it was only based upon estimates, based upon all those that were involved. A century of effort, of combined effort by the people, went into producing these.

After years of effort, I’m now in a position to tell the world, you have been warned!

First, the Joseph Smith fullness of the scriptures is now available.

Second, if you don’t understand the scriptures, we’ve provided you a glossary of terms that will help you comprehend their content.

Third, if you don’t understand the history of the Restoration following Joseph and Hyrum Smith’s murders, Teachings and Commandments section 156 is an inspired prayer on 9 July 2017 that recounts the history. That prayer was given by God to us as the prayer we offered, and that prayer is the Lord’s retelling of the history of the Restoration. You want to know what went on? Read Teachings and Commandments section 156.

Fourth, if you don’t understand the Book of Mormon language because it’s turgid and early modern English, our Scriptures include the Covenant of Christ written in modern English.

Access to the Scriptures is available free to anyone, anywhere in the world, at the website www.scriptures.info. You can purchase print-on-demand copies of the Scriptures through Amazon. There is a body of materials available through the Restoration Archives at www.restorationarchives.com. They preserve numerous talks, including the ones that will be given... well, the ones that are ending today. So, I can say with absolute confidence to anyone, anywhere in the world, you have been warned!

Now, it doesn’t matter that you don’t care, that you’ve ignored it, or that it didn’t come to your attention. The Lord’s obligation is to sound the warning. Then the burden shifts.

If you were really interested in Him and what He’s up to, you would have paid attention. You would have done something to inform yourself. Failing to do that, it is not His fault that He is going to proceed with exactly what He has foretold He intended to do. So, you are now accountable.

Before I move on to another thing, I want to take just a moment and tell you about a little gal, a pretty little blonde-haired girl sporting a ponytail in the back of the room, who came to her parents as a gift from God and who is profoundly handicapped. And I took a few minutes yesterday talking with her father.

Her parents would love to contribute more to the ongoing effort, but little Sophia requires a lot of care, a lot of time, a lot of attention, and that prevents them from doing more of what they would like to do because of the amount of care required on her behalf. I told the father that, really, he ought not worry about making a greater contribution, because Sophia is a gift that was given not only to them but the entire community. And if we really understood what God was up to, Sophia would not be the burden that she is upon her parents. She would be a gift for the entire community, and the care that she needs would be shared by others who likewise view her with charity and with love and with kindness.

And so, we have once again an opportunity presented to us—this time in the form of Sophia—to give us a chance to exhibit the very things that my wife read from King Mosiah this morning about bearing one another's burdens; because a child with such profound needs should attract the concern, the care, the attention, the support, the love of an entire community *if* that community actually be Christian.

So, going back, I want to be clear that I believe Joseph Smith was, first of all, a good man, not responsible for introducing polygamy—in fact, was opposed to it—that he brought disciplinary proceedings to excommunicate those that he found to be involved, and that I believe that part of the record that says he intended to bring Brigham Young before the high council when Brigham returned from his mission because of the allegations that Brigham Young was involved in this wrongful conduct.

Second, I believe that Joseph Smith was called by God to do a work. I believe he translated the Book of Mormon by the gift and power of God. I believe he received revelations and authority from God. I believe he restored scripture, expanding greatly what we know about pre-Earth eternities in the creation; Adam, Enoch, Abraham, Moses; the scattering of Israel; and events that will happen before the Lord's return.

As a group, we have taken seriously and are working to bring the Restoration to two groups identified in the Book of Mormon as targets for the Restoration: the Jews and the Native Americans. The modern English version of the Book of Mormon is called the Covenant of Christ.

We are a body of believers, but are non-denominational. We would accept anyone of any faith to be baptized. We intend to build a temple. We meet informally; we meet in houses or in borrowed/rented facilities like this one. We don't spend money on structures. Our fellowships are voluntary, gathered in houses or in public places.

Tithes that we gather are dispersed to those in need, and 100% goes to help people. No one is paid; everything is voluntary and not compensated. For conferences, some contribute to help, and the organizers are not paid.

We reject polygamy as a principle. That being said, if a polygamist wants to join us, we would allow them to do so and would baptize them. But the purpose of the Restoration is to gather all truth. I have found that the Restoration is invigorating, joyful, exciting. It's fun! This thing—this gathering of truth—there's nothing more exciting or nothing more edifying than the Restoration. We invite everyone to be baptized. We plan to welcome the Lord's return in glory.

Now, look, I want to talk about another subject, which is prophecy. The Lord comes right out and tells Isaiah the purpose behind prophecy: The purpose behind prophecy is not to tell you something before it happens in order for *you* to play the right stock market choice, or *you* to buy property in the right location, or *you* to invest in a prudent scheme that will further the Lord's purposes *and make you rich!* Prophecy is not intended to tell you beforehand the details.

No matter how much detail you may think that there's there, it's not enough. The purpose of prophecy is not to tell you beforehand what you need to prepare for or do, or where you should buy your food storage, or how much medical stuff you want, or ammo. (You need ammo. I mean, we all know that, ok?) That's not the purpose! The purpose is, after it has happened, for you to be able to say, "While man didn't know it, God certainly did," because He told us it was going to happen. We didn't recognize it when it happened.

So, I want you to think about the primary objectives of all scripture. Primarily, it focuses upon two events, the first coming of Jesus Christ and the second coming of Jesus Christ. There are a lot of little intermediate prophecies that take place. Primarily, it is those two things.

So, how good a job did the scribes, the Pharisees, the lawyers, how good a job did those people do with their study, their intensive fidelity to the Scriptures? How well did that help them recognize Jesus Christ when He came? I mean, they killed Him. Clearly, their Scriptures didn't do... I was going to say it didn't do a damn thing for them, but it did damn them. So, their Scriptures did a damnation for them. So, it probably worked just like it should have. They didn't get it. They didn't get on board with it. They didn't recognize the Lord. They opposed Him. They criticized Him. They rejected Him. He was too much this, and He was too little that. And He clearly couldn't be [sigh], "A carpenter from Galilee? Now, what good thing comes out of Galilee?"

So, the Scriptures did not help. In order for the Scriptures to help, it would have required an absolutely dramatic vantage point change.

There was a Pharisee. That Pharisee's name was Saul. He came from Tarsus. He was well-read; he not only opposed, based on scripture, everything that Jesus stood for and did, he also wanted to assist in the process of eradicating Christians. And so he stood by, holding the coat at the time of the stoning of Stephen, consenting to his death because Saul of Tarsus was absolutely secure in his scriptural viewpoint and his scriptural understanding. Then he encountered the Lord on the road to Damascus, got a new name—Paul. And that same Pharisee who was befuddled, misled, enraged, and opposed became a suffering convert who sacrificed to preserve, perpetuate, and spread the Christianity that had come to him only by conversion on the road to Damascus.

So, think about all of the rather grandiose, lofty, impressive descriptions that were given in the prophecies about the coming of the Lord the first time, when He came as a sacrifice. And then think about how modest and how *de minimis* (it's a phrase you learn in law school; it means "the minimum"), how almost undetectable the entry of Jesus Christ into the world, His life and teaching, and His death was to the contemporaries. Now, a very small

band of the contemporaries preserved and testified of it, and the resurrection of the Lord helped spread it, and Christianity became a dominant—absolutely dominant—cultural, religious, and social juggernaut. But that took centuries and a couple of millennia.

That single generation to whom Christ came and personally ministered, He was hardly a ripple on the surface of the pond, because so few were believing; and those who believed in the same religion as Him did not believe the form the religion took *in* Him. They wanted nothing of it.

So now, think about what is the absolute minimum. What is the most modest? What is the least that could happen to fulfill the prophecies leading up to the second coming of the Lord? Now, His return, all mankind will behold it; but the overwhelming majority will become ashes under the feet of those who are prepared for His coming. The prophecies require that the overwhelming majority never figure out what is happening right now under their noses—because I'm telling you, if you want to see what it is that fulfills the prophecies leading up to the return of the Lord, you had better pay attention to what we've been doing, because prophecy after prophecy, promise after promise, foretold event after foretold event has been occurring.

And once again, I repeat to all the world, it doesn't matter if you notice or you don't. You have been warned. And it won't be any more dramatic than what we're doing now and what I'm saying today. We still have things to do. We can use help, and we can use assistance. But if we don't get it, we're going to soldier on, and we're going to get it done because the Lord is backing us.

So now here's another thing. I want to talk to the young people. The adults can eavesdrop. I want to talk to the young folk, the people who have not yet solidified in their hard hearts like these cursed adults have become and are still looking forward to a future, the level of uncertainty about which increases daily because of events happening in Washington, D.C., and in the Persian Gulf, and in the laboratories of the artificial intelligence people.

I think to prepare for life, you ought to consider practical skills. There are still going to be enormous needs that will never be displaced by automation or by artificial intelligence. Practical skills. I heard someone talking the other day that the wealthiest people from their high school were either plumbers or anesthesiologists. The electricians, the practical skills that are necessary to keep a community functioning, those things ought to be looked at. They're not only going to be solid and enduring for, still, your lifetime, but they will be necessary if we're going to create a survivable community.

Artificial intelligence is programmed to give you an answer. And so when you engage with artificial intelligence and you pose a problem to it, you're going to get an answer. But artificial intelligence does not concern itself with truth. It will give you an answer, but the answer that you get may not be true.

Therefore, separate and apart, you can use artificial intelligence to give you suggestions. Never trust it with an answer that you haven't also studied out in your own mind and gone to the trouble of understanding. Studying and developing the ability to think critically is absolutely necessary, because all around you, in the generation that you're growing up in,

all around you, the kids that are growing up today are not developing the ability to think critically, to understand, to evaluate.

Just driving here this morning, my wife went in and bought a couple of cups of tea, one for her, one for me, on our way here this morning. And she paid the guy with a \$20 bill. Now, it was an older guy, okay? And he was kind of amused that money would be used to make a payment because he thinks that's going to, he said, "That's gonna go away." But he counted out the change.

Then he told my wife a story that he had gone into a store, and he had bought something, and he had given more dollars in bills than the bill required, but the change he had given separately. So let's assume it's \$15.33. He gave a \$10 bill, a \$5 bill, and 50 cents. And the gal at the register handed it all back to him and said, "Tell me how much change I need to give you if that's your bill." And she could not do the arithmetic. Arithmetic! This is what schools are producing!

You need to be able to read and write cursive. You need to be able to read and understand. You need to be able to think. You need to be able to challenge the result or the answer on AI and evaluate it independent of the computer to determine whether or not you agree or you disagree.

There are lawyers who have been disbarred because they used artificial intelligence to write briefs, and artificial intelligence insists on giving you an answer. The answer cites to a fictional case with a fictional ruling and a fictional outcome that the lawyer is offering up to the judge. And the judge checks: There's no such case in the library; there's no such holding; there's no such rule of law. And he wound up in serious trouble, and his license got revoked.

Comprehending is far more important and far more valuable than *answers*. You need to be able to comprehend. You should make it an absolute rule in your life that you are going to compose your own letters, your own papers, your own essays, and your own documents. You compose them! You can turn them over to AI after you've done the work, and you can let AI edit it (don't turn it loose, even with editing, without critically looking at what edits were made and whether you agree with or disagree with them). Because AI is going to make cripples of your peers. Cripples. There's no reason for you to join them in that problem.

Oh, here's something for you young people. And I want to be obvious and blunt. They are called "reproductive" organs because they are intended to produce offspring. That purpose should only be accomplished within the confines of a marriage. You will only get offspring with a male and a female. You can write down the equation: male + female = offspring (...and you've done a little bit of arithmetic right there).

Don't be confused about the things that are in this world. Family is more valuable than anything that can be bought with money. Family will frustrate you, challenge you. It will make you, well, eventually you'll look like Keith Henderson if you've got a family, because it's just gonna use you up, chew you up, and spit you out. But you know what? You're gonna recover from that, and you're gonna get older, and you're gonna get grandkids. And holy crap, is that better than kids!

Your role, young people, is to revolutionize the world. You are supposed to establish a new order of things. To overthrow the existing order is absolutely necessary. But it's going to fail on its own. We don't need to go try and bring it down. The consumption decreed is going to make a full end of all nations. That's gonna happen. Your job is to be prepared to stand in the gap after it fails and to form a new society that is based upon faith, hope, and charity; one that really will endure for a thousand years.

So with that, here's a few other miscellaneous thoughts as I wrap up.

[phone dinging] They need to hold my texts while I'm here. I'm going to turn that over so I don't... If you have my number and you're texting me, pox on you.

So when the early days of the Restoration were underway and they were trying to get the Book of Mormon into print, Martin Harris had agreed to ante up, to pay E.B. Grandin, and to get the book into print; and then they were gonna sell the copies of the Book of Mormon, and they were gonna repay the obligation that had been incurred: the pledge by Martin Harris. And in a revelation to him, the Lord told Martin Harris this: *...you shall not covet your own property, but impart it freely to the printing of the Book of Mormon* (T&C 17:7). I thought that was an interesting way for the Lord to put it, to put it in terms of "covet[ing] your own property."

There are plenty of opportunities to sacrifice on behalf of the Lord, on behalf of the work that is underway; don't ever deprive your family in the process of doing so. But when you have means to do so, keep it in mind that we can covet our own property.

Joseph Smith in Liberty Jail had the voice of the Lord come to him and say (among other things) this to him, while in Liberty Jail:

...fools shall have you in derision, and hell shall rage against you, while the pure in heart, and the wise, and the noble, and the virtuous shall seek counsel, and authority, and blessings constantly from under your hand. And [the] people shall never be turned against you by the testimony of traitors, and although their influence shall cast you into trouble, and into bars and walls, you shall be had in honor. ...your God shall stand by you for ever and ever. (T&C 139:7)

Joseph Smith right now is being held in derision by the LDS Church. If you read their essays about justification for the obscenity, the abomination of polygamy, you will find that they accuse the prophet Joseph Smith of sexual coercion of minors. It is rubbish. It is nonsense. It is bad history. It is untrue. And there is no reason for the Lord to say that the wise and the noble and the virtuous are going to constantly seek blessings from under his hand—that is, under the things that were composed: his revelations—they're gonna constantly do so? Why would anyone ever seek blessings under the hand of someone who is as the LDS Church defames and portrays him?

They hold him in derision. They will be held to account for that. It is a lie, and I'm telling you that the Lord has said, "*...your God shall stand by you for ever and ever*" to Joseph Smith while making no such similar promise to 'the brethren.'

Well, that's this, that, and the other thing, and I want to thank all of those who have talked before me. I thought that the talk that was given by Ianthus had some really great material in there, and I think if you didn't hear what he had to say, it's been recorded. It's gonna go up. You ought to listen to it. I thought Dr. Otteson did a good job of introducing my wife. And I thought Micah Spicer did some great things. And I'll talk to Shahram in due course about his mischief. (You know, there are people that were not vetted that got in from Iran, and we've now got you on video here; so it was a great talk, but he still has family back there too, so you should guard you and your family).

Let me end by just taking a moment to say that it really is true that the Lord is behind what we are doing. He is the author of what's currently underway. It may seem modest and underwhelming, but I'm telling you, what was happening when Jesus was here appeared modest and underwhelming. Rumors were flying about, and the typical attitude that was held by the religious establishment was that He was some kind of a sorcerer employing the devil's power to render cheap magic tricks, and that He certainly wasn't the Messiah.

Well, I'm telling you, God is behind this work. He is the author of the things that have and are going on. The production of our new volume of Scriptures is in itself only made possible by the Lord's direct help. Many volunteers assisted, but the Lord was directly involved. It is miraculous that we have gotten as far as we have in as little time as it has taken. And we know we are going to soldier on, fully expecting that we're going to receive a command to build a temple, with every intent of doing so.

One of the strides that we have made was taken today. It's not just in making possible a substitute for those who have no father or grandfather to give them a patriarch's blessing. It's not just that. It's that we have, by mutual agreement, agreed to accept that.

Now, you might think that I shouldn't spring such things on you when something as serious as that is going to take place in a conference. It ought to be advertised. It ought to be told beforehand. You were all invited to this conference. We might do stuff like that again without announcing it in advance. So maybe instead of sitting home and watching it on the YouTube, you ought to show up, make your voice be heard, and participate in the ongoing movement of the Restoration forward.

There's going to be a talk (I have worked on for some time) given in July, on a subject that has suffered collapse in the Restoration—but it's returning in due course. But before it returns in fact, you need to understand what it is, and why it is, and where it once was, and why it's coming back again.

Between now and the next conference that we have, some of what I said today was intended not just for your ears to hear, but as material that you can use—you can show the recording of this conference if you like—but something you can use so that those who are fleeing from the LDS institution have a place to land, rather than winding up atheist or agnostic, and faithless and unrooted.

I believe that from Alberta, Canada, through Idaho, Utah, Arizona, into northern Mexico, and over to Nevada and Colorado, that whole communities are benefited by activity in the LDS Church and having a religion. I believe that the decay of the LDS Church, which is taking

place at an accelerating rate, injures all of those communities. Anything that the LDS Church can do to slow that, I welcome. I encourage people, if they can, to remain a part of an organized faith.

We aren't trying to co-opt or steal members of any church from any other denomination. We just believe in accepting the truth, in being baptized to follow Christ, and then to pursue the course of truth wherever it takes us. If that allows you to fellowship with a Presbyterian or a Catholic, do so, but be unmistakable about where the truth lies. The truth is HERE, and God's work has commenced among us. And while there are many corners of the earth on which God is engaged in activities, the fulfillment of the promises and the prophecies are going to happen in a very modest way among this people.

When I was finishing law school at Brigham Young University, they offered to make a class ring for you if you were willing to ante up the money to do so. I didn't have the money to do so, but I had an old class ring from high school, and I wondered if they would exchange, and they agreed to exchange it. So I traded a high school class ring for a law school class ring; and I don't always wear it, but it's from the J. Reuben Clark Law School. Because law school had made everything arguable—I mean, you might be representing the plaintiff, or you might be representing the defendant, so everything was arguable—the entire world was reduced to gray. So when I ordered the class ring, I got white gold and black onyx, so I had something still black-and-white left in my life after law school.

What I have found is that there still are places of black and white. There still is truth and error. If your tolerance for error is increasingly creating a gag reflex for you in the LDS Church, don't throw the Restoration away. Look over here. See if you can preserve your faith—because we still respect, honor, believe, and trust in the restoration of the gospel that came through Joseph Smith. And I testify, I proclaim, I affirm, I declare unequivocally, God is talking to us!

We have His word, and it is ongoing. He does not forsake us. The events that happened today are as current as the moment we're living in right now. The Lord's work is afoot. Whatever mistakes, whatever shortcomings, whatever difficulties we have, the Lord says He owns it. He stands by it.

It's His word. It's His warning. It's His counsel. It's His guidance. It's His comfort. He has sent that to us, and He intends that we be the grateful recipients of that.

None of us are ever going to achieve perfection in this life. Unfortunately, all of us are expected to achieve perfection "by and by." But that's like Homer Simpson eating mayonnaise with a large spoon out of a jar, being told, "That's gonna ruin your health," and him saying, "That's a problem for future Homer. Boy, I feel sorry for that guy."

The game afoot right now does not require us to do anything more than to repent, have faith, be faithful to His purpose, and support His work. We may do that poorly, haltingly. We may do it with regrets every time we lay down at night thinking of what might we have done better that day. Bear on, carry on, soldier on—because the ultimate end of this is a victory, not for us, but a victory for the Lord. Our victory merely consists in being able to survive the burning!

Let me close by bearing testimony that Jesus Christ lives, speaks, is engaged, has His eyes upon all the earth, and many of the details that you think are happenstance in your life are not so. The Lord is involved everywhere, and He is involved in every life.

I bear testimony of that in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.